

Sent: Wednesday, April 4, 2018 10:29 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Romans 13:1-7

"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and God establishes those, which exist! Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves! For rulers are not a cause for fear for good behavior, but for evil! Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore, it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor!"
Dr. Constable calls this the "premier New Testament passage that explains the believer's civil responsibilities"! Wow! How could it be any clearer! Or could it be?

Paul says essentially the same thing in Titus 3:1-2, but expands on it further: "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for good deeds, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men!"

In 1 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul urged that, "entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men," but, specifically adds, "for kings and all who are in authority," and then adds a "so that" clause: "so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."

Peter, the impetuous disciple, who once drew a sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, the High Priest's servant (recorded in John 18:10, at the time of the arrest of Jesus) apparently changed his tune and later wrote: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men! Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond slaves of God! Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king!"

But, most significantly, it was Jesus Himself who left no doubt about how the believer should behave when it comes to this issue! And specifically about paying taxes! "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's!" (Matthew 22:21)

What is particularly interesting is that all these instructions were given at a time when there was great political tension and turmoil between the Jews and Roman authorities, and when Christians were under constant attack and persecution from ungodly rulers--including from Nero who during this time was Emperor of Rome!

However, there are also exceptions given in Scripture to obeying civil authorities! They concern when obedience to civil authority requires disobedience to God's Word!

Consider how the Hebrew "midwives"--during the time of the Egyptian captivity (Exodus 1) "...feared God and did not do as the King of Egypt had commanded them...in putting to death sons born to Hebrew women" (holding to their belief in the "sanctity of life")!

And how about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's refusal to "worship the golden image," as instructed by Nebuchadnezzar--even if it meant being thrown into the "firing furnace," rather than following the edict of the king! Their response to Nebuchadnezzar is particularly notable! "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king! But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up!" (Daniel 3) You know the rest of that story!

Daniel himself, being cast into the lion's den, after running counter to an injunction signed by King Darius, and resolving to continue "kneeling three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously!" (Daniel 6)

This same principle carries over into the New Testament, as we see Peter and John responding to the summons of the Sanhedrin "not to speak or teach any longer in the name of Jesus" with this: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard"! (Acts 4)

Therefore, we find that while the Bible teaches that a Christian is not to "love the world system," nor be "conformed to its patterns, he is nevertheless called to obey its laws--and pay taxes (due April 15th, by the way)!

Willmington notes that the Scriptures "present both a separation from and a submission to the state--and its governing authorities--on the part of the Christian"!

But, wouldn't you know, there comes a time, and it's sometimes a very fine line, as Dave Brien reminded us last night, when obedience to God demands our first and foremost allegiance and a willingness to suffer the consequences!

It all comes back, in the words of Douglas Moo to, "fulfilling the law through love," and, "living in light of the day," as we conclude Romans 13 in next week's lesson!

Meanwhile, men, let us remember to always "do what is right and good"!

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