

Romans 13¹

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.²

1. **When teaching the difference between law and grace, the question always comes up about civil laws and authorities. Civil laws and religious laws are two different issues. We are not under religious law, but we are to obey civil authorities and law with one exception. If a civil authority requires that we behave in such a way to violate our conscience before God (morally or in defiance to God), then we are “to obey God rather than man”.**

a. **Without civil laws, those who have no internal spiritual direction would tend toward selfish and destructive behaviors.**

i. **Believers are guided by God’s grace and His Spirit. Even without civil laws, they will behave in a godly manner.**

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Titus 2: 11-14

*For the **grace of God** that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*

b. **Even the Law of Moses still serves a purpose. Civil laws serve a similar purpose. They are not made for law-abiding citizens, but for those who don’t obey the civil laws. If everyone just “did what is right”, there would be no need for laws (Utopia), but the fact is, people are often selfish and evil.**

1 Timothy 1: 8-11

*But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ knowing this: that **the law is not made for a righteous person**, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.*

2. **Paul has just taught the believers in Rome CLEARLY that they are not under law, but under grace. It might have been that some concluded that they were not under civil laws or authorities. Paul is making this correction. God sets civil authorities in place to govern all people, especially those who are governed by nothing else.**

¹ In this lesson, the number of the comment corresponds with the number of the verse.

Unless otherwise stated, all scripture is from the New King James Version (NKJV) Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

² Unless otherwise noted, scripture is taken from the NASB Nelson Study Bible.

© C.D. Hildebrand 2012

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

3. Here we get a clue as to what type of leader Paul is discussing. He is not talking about an evil dictatorship. He says that the rulers are not a terror to good works. They aren't opposed to you doing good, but they are opposed to you doing evil. You won't need to be afraid of civil authorities if you are doing good. In fact, you will be praised for doing good. This is assuming the civil authority is good not evil.
4. Paul is making it abundantly clear. If you break the law, you will suffer the consequences of breaking that law (speaking of civil laws). Paul is saying that God uses civil authorities to punish those who are practicing evil. He is not talking about eternal judgment, but judgment for committing evil within a society. Even though we are believers, if we break a civil law and get caught, we will pay.

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

5. Paul is pointing out the two motivations.
 - a. One, we obey the law because we are afraid of being penalized (wrath of the authorities).
 - b. Two, we obey the law out of a good conscience. Both are valid. The second, of course is a superior motivation.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

6. Paul argues that paying taxes is a way of making sure that these "ministerS" of civil authority can do their job.
7. We are to pay taxes and customs and also respect those in authority.
 - a. In some countries, such as the USA, the people are allowed to participate in the government. If they think a law is unjust, they are able to go through certain legal procedures to eliminate that law. If they think taxes are too high or too low, they are able to call their representatives or pass out petitions or conduct public rallies against a law or tax.
 - b. We are to show respect to those in authority, and this respect due will depend on the particular country.

c. There are exceptions!!! We are not required to obey man when it comes to morality. This would be to put man ahead of God.

- i. If a civil authority is demanding to be worshipped as God, we are to disobey that authority.**

Daniel 3:8-30

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.⁹ They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; ¹¹ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ **But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.**”

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²² Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”

They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”

²⁵ “Look!” he answered, “**I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.**”

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

28 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, **“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! 29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”**

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

- ii. If a civil authority required an immoral act, such as requiring a family to abort children so that the population would be controlled, we do not comply.

Exodus 1: 15-20

Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiprah and the name of the other Puah; 16 and he said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, **if it is a son, then you shall kill him**; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.” 17 **But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.** 18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?”

19 And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them.”

20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. 21 **And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.**

- iii. If a government mandated that the gospel could not be shared, we are free from this law.

Acts 5: 17

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 **“Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.”**

21 And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, 23 saying, “Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!” 24 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered

what the outcome would be. 25 So one came and told them, saying, **“Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!”**

26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!”

29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: **“We ought to obey God rather than men.** 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

Gamaliel’s Advice

33 When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them. 34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. 35 And he said to them: “Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. 36 For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. 37 After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. 38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.”

40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, **they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus,** and let them go. 41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 **And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.**

d. Paul knew his rights as a Roman citizen and insisted on them.

Acts 22: 22-29

And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!” 23 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air, 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. 25 And as they bound him with thongs, **Paul said to the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?”**

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, “Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.”

27 Then the commander came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?”

He said, “Yes.”

28 The commander answered, “With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.”

And Paul said, “But I was born a citizen.”

29 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; **and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.**

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

8. Paul is not talking about legal debts. He is mostly focusing here on our debt to love each other. When we love each other, we fulfill the law.
9. Paul, who has just successfully taught the Romans that they are not under the law, is not contradicting himself and now teaching the law. He is making a point. He does not quote the whole law, but only those which specifically reflect our relationships with others.
10. He is saying that if we love each other, we will not harm each other. We will automatically be following the law because the law was based on loving ones' neighbor as oneself.

11 And *do* this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we *first* believed.

11. Paul encourages them again to love. Wake up! Our salvation (His coming) is nearer than when we first believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

12. Because our ultimate salvation is nearer, let us lay aside any dark work and put on the armor of light.
13. Because our ultimate salvation is nearer, let us walk as we should, not as those hiding in the night but as those living in the light; not putting on behavior that is not a representation of what Christ has done in us.
14. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and don't make room for fulfilling your lustful desires. If we are told to do this, then we will have the grace to do it. The key to not fulfilling the lusts of our flesh is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.