

Romans 13

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[0 : 00] The Christian faith dominates the whole of life. Abraham Kuyper said there is not one square inch of this world or this life where Jesus does not cry my.

! To be a Christian, to be somebody who is in Christ means that every area of our lives are our work, our play, our home life must be dominated by the Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity is not an extracurricular activity. Christianity is not something that maybe you come to on a Tuesday, you occasionally go to on a Sunday. To be somebody who is in Christ, to be somebody who is a Christian, to be somebody who knows God as their Father must impact all of life.

A phrase, isn't it? Jesus is either Lord of all or he is not Lord at all. And so Jesus must be Lord of your relationships. And Jesus must be Lord over your work.

And Jesus is Lord over our government. And Jesus has got something to say to every part of our lives. Whether you're retired, whether you're in college, whether you're working in the council, whether you're a lawyer, whether you're an architect, whether you're a policeman.

The Christian gospel dominates everything. And so that's really the section we're in in Romans. And in Romans 13 verses 1 to 7 we come to the governing authorities.

[1 : 39] Those who rule over us. Ealing council. Houses of parliament. Paul earlier in this letter has taught the gospel and he's defended it. And now from chapter 12 he's been given practical teaching. How Christians are to obey the gospel in various relationships.

And so in chapter 12 verses 1 and 2 it talks about how we are to live out our lives in relationship with God in chapter 12. And in verses 3 to 8 with ourselves and then with one another. And in verses 17 and 21 we saw how we live out the Christian life with our enemies.

But now in chapter 13 verses 1 to 7 he discusses how individual Christians are to obey God in the nation in which they find themselves. When he was writing it was the Roman Empire and for you today it's the United Kingdom.

If you are a Christian what sort of citizen ought you to be? And it's important to be clear on that. Throughout history the church has argued over it and have been divided over it.

So for example there's something called Erastianism which teaches that the state controls the church. And the church is to do what the government tells it to do.

[2 : 51] The opposite of that is like a theocracy. And that is the church controls the state. The church is over the state. And the state has to do what the church tells it to do.

We see that don't we in some Roman Catholic countries. That's what's believed and practiced. That the church is in charge. But actually it seems to me that the New Testament holds that neither of those views are right.

The best view I think which is the biblical view is that there is a partnership between the state in which we live and the church. Both the church and the state have responsibilities.

They are not to govern each other. The church and the state are not to tell each other what to do. But they are simply to recognize the power and responsibility of the other one.

And they are to respect that. And it seems to me that's closest to the teaching of the Bible. Now what I'm going to do this next time is I'm not going to talk about that in a general way. To do that you've got to bring in a lot of the teaching from different parts of the Bible.

[3 : 51] And you'd be here all night. But I want to see how it applies to you as an individual. What is your duty to the nation? As well as to the church.

And there are sadly are there many Christians that forget that they have a duty to the world around them. The nation. They think all the responsibility they have is to the church. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 22-21.

He said render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. And to God the things that are God's. Jesus says you have two responsibilities. Of course your main responsibility is to God.

But you've also got a serious responsibility to whoever governs you. Caesar in those days wasn't a great figure. But Jesus says don't ignore Caesar.

Don't fight Caesar. Don't hate Caesar. He says give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. And that's really what we want to look at this lunchtime. There are four points in the passage.

[4 : 52] It's not an easy passage. But I want us to look at four things in this passage. First of all the simple instructions verse 1. That every person be subject to the governing authorities.

Every single one of us is to recognise the government. We are to recognise its authority over us. And deliberately and willingly we are to live understanding that authority.

And accepting their authority. And we take their authority seriously. And we obey it consciously. We are to be subject to it. That's all we have to think about. I am not only to be subject to God.

But to be subject God tells me in his words to my government. Now most citizens in our country. They do that in general. Most people are subject to the government.

They don't go out robbing. And stealing every evening. They don't break into people's houses and steal things. They don't murder people. They don't destroy the world in which we live. Most people in general obey the government.

[5 : 56] And law. They may ignore it many times. But the majority of most people. Well they are subject to the government.

But we are commanded here. As God's people. To be subject to our government. In everything. Everything that is possible. And we as Christians must be those who respect those who are over us.

We must respect them. We must obey them. We must be committed to the state. Second thing which is wonderful is. Paul gives us reasons.

Why are we to do this? Why should we just not ignore the government? Why should we not just disobey it whenever we can? Why should we not just suit ourselves? Do what we want?

Well he gives two reasons. First of all. In verse 2 he says. The government is established by God. The government.

[6 : 56] Every government. Is established by God. It's not created by the people. Or by individuals. It doesn't come about by war. Or by chance. Some of those things might have been seen to be used.

But fundamentally and basically. God establishes governments. And he makes three statements to make that very clear. So I don't think you can miss it. Look at verse 1.

For there is no authority. Except from God. And then the second. The last part of verse 1. And those that exist have been instituted by God.

And then verse 2. Therefore whoever resists the authority. Resists what God has appointed. And so you can't miss it. In three places close together. Paul says God constructs government.

God creates the government. And those who govern. Historians will give us all sorts of definitions. About why there is the existence. Of certain political governments.

[7 : 55] And political experts will tell us. Why we have particular parties in charge. Why the conservatives are ruling now. And what they are doing. And how the coalition failed. And the government before that.

Was a labour government. And they can explain it all. But underneath it all. Behind all of that. Is the will of God. And the power of God. God in his word says.

In Proverbs 8 verse 15. By me kings rule. And rulers decree what is just. And that is the first reason. Why you and I should be subject to the government.

Because government is created by God. And the second reason is in verses 3 and 4. Because the government supports what is good. And punishes what is evil. Look at verse 3. For rulers are not tarot to good conduct.

But to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority. Then do what is good. And you will receive his approval. For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong. Be afraid. For he does not bear the sword in vain.

[8 : 53] For he is a servant of God. An avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. We would add. Wouldn't we to that. Whether they realise it or not. That's who he is. And that's what they're doing.

And so here's another reason for being subject to the government. You'll be treated well. You'll enjoy the support and the benefit of the government. If you are not subjected to the government. And you're not obedient to the government.

You may be punished. You may be damaged. You might find life very hard. Governments are God's means of honouring goodness. And judging wickedness on earth.

And so as you listen. You should have a question in your mind. And the question is this. That isn't always the case. That isn't always true. And of course you're right. So you think.

For 1500 years. Well in the year 1500 for example. The nation of France. It persecuted and killed. And robbed. And exiled. And did thousands of people. Because they were Christians.

[9 : 51] It wasn't good government. In the same century. In the next century. Many many black people were captured. And brought. From Africa to America. Where they were made slaves.

They did anything wrong. To the people who enslaved them. And captured them. In the 1920s and 30s. Millions of people were killed in Russia. And they'd done nothing wrong. Against their nation. Nothing serious. The same happened with China. Adolf Hitler. Can we say that he supported the good. And punished the evil. Well. More often than not. He did the opposite. He did the reverse. And many rulers in history. Have reversed those three. Haven't they? For rulers are not a terror to good conduct. But to bad. Sadly.

Many rulers have been a terror. To good conduct. And today. If we're honest. Many of our politicians. Are not great moral examples. But think about this.

[10 : 48] No governments are perfect. But most of them. Generally support good. And punish evil.

Think about our own government. If you kill someone. You get into trouble. If you steal something. You'll get into trouble. If you destroy something. You'll get into trouble. And when I say government. I mean government. In its biggest sense. I'm not just thinking of politicians. I'm thinking of policemen. Of local government. Of judges. Of courts. Of prisons. Of law and order. How people are to be treated.

Social workers. Doctors. People in authority. People who've been given real authority. And their powers are not completely good. And they are not perfect.

But most of what they do is good. And most of what they do is right. And these things. Keep us relatively safe. And if you were in.

[11 : 44] Almost any country in the world. And somebody robbed you. And attacked you. You would be able to talk to a policeman. Because he should be able to help you. Or do something for you.

It keeps us relatively safe. Now I'm not saying it of every government. Some of them are appalling. But I'm saying that on the whole. As you look at the world. As you look at our own nation. The government.

And those in authority. They don't reward us for stealing. And lying. And killing. And that is why we are to support the government. And that is why we are to be favourable to the government.

And subject to the government. The only alternative to government. Is no government. How would you like to live in a land where there's no government? There would be chaos of the worst kind.

So we can almost say. Can't we. That all governments. All the governments. Are better than nothing. It's not the best. Some of them are awful. But nonetheless.

[12 : 42] Better than nothing. And so says Paul. We are to be subject to the government. Because it's established by God. And on the whole. It rewards good and punishes evil. It's not perfectly. Not completely.

Not consistently. But on the whole. That's what it does. It acts on his behalf. And he makes three other statements. In verses 4 to 6. The one who is an authority. He is God's servant for your good. That's what the Bible says. That's what the Bible says about the worldly politician. He is the servant of God. He is the avenger. Who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

The authorities are ministers of God. And. Isn't that an incredible thing? The leaders reeling counsel. So he's using it to be very very critical about the government.

Very sarcastic. And very very negative. And very destructive. And I want to say to you. That is not how the Bible encourages you to live. The Christians in Rome were living under wicked men.

[13 : 46] But they were able to say. By God's mercy. We know that these men. They are not Christians. They weren't Christians. The leaders in Rome. They are not going to heaven. What they do lots of the time.

Is not right. They are immoral men. In lots of ways. But nonetheless. We thank the God. Who's filled the world with governments. Who rule. And do more harm to evil than to good.

And that brings us to the third point. Which is his conclusion. Which is slightly odd. To have a third point. And not the fourth point. But anyway. It's my third point. It's his conclusion. Verse 5. He says. Therefore. Because of this. One must be in subjection. You might not like that verse very much. You may not feel you want to be subject.

To our government. But you and I. We are to obey. And we are to yield to them. We are to respect them. We must remember.

[14:43] That we are citizens. Of two worlds. And God rules both worlds. And in both worlds. He is established rulers. Sub rulers.

In the church. And in the state. And in the state. The government. Are his appointed rulers. And we as Christians. Must remember that. And live by it. He's already given you two reasons.

Why you should do it. And now he gives them again. In reverse. First of all. He says to avoid God's wrath. To act against. The God appointed rulers.

Brings God's wrath. So don't do it. Recognize them. As generally speaking. As giving. What is good. To their people. And so pray for them regularly. To recognize.

That those with authority. In human society. They are responsible. For much order. And much peace. And much law. And much health. And much business. And they are not perfect.

[15:40] They are not sinless. But on the whole. What they do. Is better than what they don't do. Government is your servant for good. Then again he says.

Realize that our holy conscience. Requires us to obey. Those whom God has appointed. Not just because of the practical results. Of obeying or disobeying.

Because deep in ourselves. We know it. To be right. To obey the government. We might like it. We might admire them. But we are called to obey them. And we are called to respect them.

As much as we can. We are called to be thankful for them. All those with authority. In our society. To be thankful for them. As much as we can. You and I.

Must be in subjection. Not only to avoid God's wrath. But for the sake of conscience. And that was a great position. For you and I to be in. It is right.

[16:33] To love. Our country. And to pray for all those that govern. That will do our country good. That will bring answers from God.

That will bring blessings. Christians. And so think back. Over the last few months. In your quiet times. When you've prayed. How often have you prayed. For your country. For rulers.

For your leaders. In work. We know most of them aren't Christians. We know most of them. Don't satisfy them. They might be your political colour.

Your shades. But we are to pray for them. We are to pray for them regularly. To pray for other people in our society. To pray for God's honour and pleasure. But that's not the end of the story. One more thing. In verses 6 and 7.

One more implication. What is the implication of this? He spells it out. What it means in practice. And he's not talking about. This kind of universal implication.

[17:31] In verse 7. Or an absolute implication. You'd have to look at other passages. In the Bible for that. There are times. Aren't there. When we cannot obey our government.

In fact there's more occasions. When that's happening in our culture. There are times. When we must disobey our government. Whatever it does to our reputation.

Whatever it does to our lives. We see that. Don't we? Many times in the Bible. When Bible believers. Disobey the government. And they are right. So you think of.

In Egypt. The king of Egypt. The king of Egypt. The king of Egypt. The king of Egypt. The king of Egypt. Told the Jewish midwives. To kill all the baby boys. That was the command of the government. And in Exodus chapter 1 verse 17.

We see that. We read that the midwives. Feared God. And did not do as the king of Egypt.

Commanded them. But they let the male children live. And they broke the law of the state. Because it was right to break it.

[18:29] Think of Daniel chapter 3. Three young Jews. They disobeyed mighty king Nebuchadnezzar. And they refused to obey him. And worship the golden image. That is the law. But they break the law.

Darius forbids prayer. For 30 days for anyone except himself. But Daniel disobeys the government. He breaks the law. Peter and the other apostles. Are commanded by the council. Not to speak in the name of Jesus.

Or to teach in the name of Jesus. And in Acts 5.29. They reply. We must obey God. Rather than men. So we've spoken all the way through this lunch time.

Haven't we? About obeying the law. And obeying the state. And that is right. And that is the teaching of the Bible. But there will be times. When we cannot do that. And we must not do that. It's happening today in some countries.

And it will happen in ours. Occasionally. So somebody is not willing to work on a Sunday. It's not a helping someone. Or it's not healing someone.

[19 : 29] Or there are doctors and GPs. That refuse to sign the form. For people to have an abortion. Christians that say. I can't do that. Christian registrars. That will not perform.

A gay marriage. And they will say. I can't do that. Because I believe the Bible says. That is wrong. And I'm not going to do that. And when that happens. We have to obey God.

No matter what people say. And so when the government says. To you and I. Actually you cannot preach like that. You cannot teach on that. In the town hall.

Well we say. We will obey God rather than man. And it's so important isn't it. That no matter what punishment comes. We might receive. Well.

We will follow God. Not man. Yet for most of the time. Most of your life. And for most of my life. Paul says.

[20 : 26] Be in subjection. Pay your taxes. Authorities are ministers of God. Render taxes. Unto those whom it is due. There are lots of taxes.

Aren't there? And we see people escape them. And there are loopholes. But Jesus says. Render unto Caesar. What is Caesar's. Paul says.

Pay them. But he says this. Not only give money. But give respect. And give honour to those who are in God's providence. Over. Look at verse 7.

Respect. Respect. Respect. Respect. To whom respect. Is owed. Honour. To whom honour. Is owed. The magistrate.

The police officer. The civil servant. The inland revenue. The social worker. Your boss. Show respect.

[21 : 24] Don't be arrogant. Don't be cheeky. And don't run them. Run them down. It's so hard in the office. Isn't it? When there's a culture of criticism.

To not join in. We are people. Romans has taught us. Who are sinners. And we've been saved by God. And all our sins are forgiven.

And we have to be humble. And gentle. And so we deal with them. With respect. Even when we don't think. There's much good about them. And we accept their work.

And we support their work. And we pray for their welfare. There's a great deal. We can discuss here. There's lots of interesting puzzles. And hypotheticals. What if.

What if. But what I want you to see. Is that. How we live. As a Christian. In a non-Christian world. How we honour God. How we obey God's will.

[22 : 22] How we act in such a way. That honours Christ. Is we actually. Submit ourselves. And we are in subjection. And when we do that.

It will make us. Think about Christ. One closing word. There will be those. Who are here. Who are. In authority. And maybe a number of you.

Exert. Authority. In different kinds. Authority in the home. In your workplace. Police officers. Council bosses. And many.

Many of us. We have authority. In the world. And this passage. Reminds you and I. That that authority. Is given you. By God.

Not that you deserve it. It is God's. God. And he has given us. This authority. And we are. Responsible to him. For exerting. This authority.

[23 : 21] To exert it. In a way. That is true. And right. And honest. And responsible. To him. And so this passage. Changes how we think.

And it changes how we speak. And it changes how we act. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's pray. Let's pray.