

Church and State

Romans 13.1-7

What should our relationship be to governing authority? Is it ever right to break the law? Are we to obey it in any circumstance? It is one thing to live in America where most of the law is good, but what if the situation was different?

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” Romans 13.1

The Challenge to Submit

Our text begins with an amazing command — God’s call to civil obedience for the Christian. It is not a suggestion, but a principle which is to control the Christian’s behavior toward governmental authority.

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities.” Romans 13.1a

The Rational for Submission

In the next part of this first verse, the Lord reveals the reason why we are to live in subjection to the governing authorities.

*“For there is no authority except that which God has established. The **authorities that exist have been established by God.**”* Romans 13.1b

The Nature of Rebellion

Now because of the fall of man, whenever there is a command to obedience, there is also a desire to rebel. So we shouldn’t be surprised when we find within us a desire to resist submitting ourselves.

*“Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling **against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.**”*

Romans 13.2

The Foundation for Civil Obedience

*“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. **For he is God’s servant to do you good.** But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”* Romans 13.3-4

Here is the foundation for civil obedience: It is the foundation upon which governments are established. This is to punish the evil and establish the good.

*“Therefore, **it is necessary to submit** to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.”* Romans 13.5

The Illustration of How This Works

Finally, the apostle Paul illustrates for us the practical outworking of civil obedience.

*“This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. **Give everyone what you owe him:** If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”* Romans 13.6-7