

LESSON 27: ROMANS 13:1-7
MARCH 17, 2021

OVERVIEW

- . The starting point: God's sovereignty – Romans 13:1-2
- . Obeying the government – Romans 13:3-4
- . Because of conscience and to each his due – Romans 13:5-7

THE STARTING POINT: GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY – ROMANS 13:1-2

- . The first of three reasons Paul gives for the statement that “everyone”, not only Christians. “must submit . . . to the governing authorities
 - . We must obey the authorities because “there is no authority except that which God has established”
- . Examples of how evil or less than godly rulers have factored in to God's plan
 - . The Pharaoh of the Exodus
 - . Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites and arrogantly resisted Moses' demand that he let his people go
 - . Evil as this man was, he had nevertheless been put into his position by God
 - . Paul quotes God as telling Pharaoh; “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth– Exodus 9:16
 - . Nebuchadnezzar was another arrogant ruler
 - . He thought he was superior to Yahweh because he had been able to conquer Jerusalem
 - . In the end Nebuchadnezzar learned that God alone was truly sovereign
 - . God's dominion is an eternal dominion . . . He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth Daniel 4:34-35
 - . The example of Jesus before Pilate
 - . Jesus had the power to shut Pilate up
 - . Jesus could have summoned His legion of angels and wiped out the evil authority
 - . Christ recognized that it was God's will that Pilate prevail, even though on the surface it looked God was losing the battle

- . Jesus helps us understand the god-given role of civil government and the right relationship of the church to the state
 - . "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above"
- . The authority that was given to Pilate was a delegated authority because it had to be given to him by above
- . Pilate had the right to try Jesus and render judgment as he thought right
- . But, he was responsible to God for what he did and for how he did it
- . The sin of the Jewish leaders was greater than the sin of Pilate because they were sinning against their consciences

OBEYING THE GOVERNMENT - ROMANS 13:3-4

- . Paul gives a second reason for obedience
 - . Not only will we be disobeying God so that God may punish us, the state will also punish us
 - . This raises some legitimate questions
 - . Must the government always be obeyed
 - . Are there any circumstances under which civil rebellion against an existing authority might be justified
 - . Must obedience be absolute or are there limits
 - . Can we obey the state in some areas but not others
- . We can get some answers to these questions through Jesus' teachings
 - . "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" - Matthew 22:21
 - . This is the basis for Paul's teachings in Romans 13
 - . "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes"
 - . Then Jesus continued making an important contrast - "and to God what is God's"
 - . The first part of His answer reinforced Caesar's authority
 - . The second part drew limits, showing that although the state has legitimate authority, God's is greater
 - . Therefore, those who know God must ultimately obey Him, even if that means disobeying "Caesar"
- . Jesus' words suggest four options that are useful in dealing with the states authority and the biblical limits on a Christian's compliance with it
 - . God alone as an authority - monasticism
 - . Christians who separate themselves from the secular world
 - . They have only Christian friends, work for a Christian company and sometimes even refuse to vote in elections
 - . The reject any meaningful involvement with their country's government

- . Caesar alone as an authority – secularism
 - . This is the most dangerous of the four options because if God is put out of the equation, Caesar is left with no ultimate accountability
 - . If we reject God, we are at the mercy of our governors
- . The authority of God and Caesar but with Caesar dominant
- . The authority of God and Caesar but with God dominant
 - . The last option is the only valid biblical one
 - . Christians recognize the importance of civil law and order
 - . They obey the laws, pay their taxes, vote in elections, support worthy endeavors
 - . They are good citizens
 - . But they also have a responsibility to speak up when God's moral laws are questioned
 - . They must do this by words, not by coercive power
 - . No government has the right to command Christians to perform sinful or non-Christian acts
 - . When the state flagrantly ignores either righteousness or justice, Christians have a responsibility to speak out

BECAUSE OF CONSCIENCE AND TO EACH HIS DUE – ROMANS 13:5-7

- . "Therefore, it is necessary to submit to authorities not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience"
 - . Conscience involves our sense of what is right and wrong
 - . More important, it's our awareness of needing to do what is right
 - . Paul is lifting the discussion of submission from a merely pragmatic level to the highest possible plain
 - . Christians should have a higher motive for obeying the state than others have
 - . We must obey because obedience is right
 - . Being responsible moral agents we ought to do the right thing
- . We also need to give to each other what is due
 - . These last two verses contains two parts
 - . The first is about paying taxes
 - . The second is about giving honor to those who deserve and who should be shown honor
 - . Paying taxes is one important responsibility of a Christian
 - . Government is expensive, but all benefit by it in countless ways, even if they have a bad government
 - . The Christian must be grateful for however much or little the government provides through taxes
 - . Show respect and give honor
 - . This verse is the bridge to the next section in which Paul is going to write about loving one another

- . Christians do what they do for God's honor
 - . They can be used by God to raise society to where those who deserve honor are given honor
 - . When this happens a nation becomes morally strong and justice becomes a reality
 - . Nations do not become strong by laws but by the character of its citizens
 - . When we begin by showing respect to those to whom respect is due and giving honor to those to whom honor is due, above all showing honor and respect to God, then other people may learn something of God through us and eventually come to respect, honor and love God too

NEXT LESSON - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021 - ROMANS 13:8-14