

**“How to Pick a President, Part 2”**  
*What to Do After They’ve Been Picked*  
**Romans 13:1-7**

**Introduction**

- Well, it’s over. The die has been cast. The red and blue states have been assigned. Tremendous emotional capital has been invested. The votes have been counted. A lot of votes. Voter turnout this year may end up being higher than the 62.5% who voted during the Nixon-Humphrey race in 1968. Some of you are euphoric over the events of the past week. Others of you are still suffering from the post election blues. So what now? As the body of Christ, what now? What’s next for the follower of Christ?
- Two weeks ago we talked about how the best political strategy we have as Christians is to live out our calling as the Church. I am more convinced of that now than ever before. We have a responsibility to become the kind of good we wish to see in the world irrespective of the person or party in power. We talked about how we must learn to see ourselves as resident aliens. 1 Peter 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world.* We aren’t Democrats or Republicans. We’re Christians—citizens of a heavenly kingdom. Our status as resident aliens shapes and informs how we live in a nation state that is not our home. Because of our status we view the political process with a measure of detachment.
- We also briefly looked at Romans 13:1-7 and the role of government. From our perspective as resident aliens, from the bottom up, the ordained role for government is the establishment of order so the good of Christianity can run wild. This morning I want to look at that same passage from the top down, from God’s perspective. [Slide #2] Romans 13:1-7 says that...

**Proposition**

- **Responsible resident aliens submit to Government**
- Look at Romans 13:1. *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities.* Regardless of who’s in power, and as resident aliens, citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we have a responsibility, before God, to submit to Government. Peter says the same thing is said in 1 Peter 2:13. *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men.* As resident aliens, we rejoice that our kingdom is not of this world, John 18:36. And until our King comes, until His Kingdom comes in all its fullness, until then we submit.

**Transition**

[Slide #3] With this in mind Paul gives...

**Organizational Sentence**

- **Four reasons to submit to Government**
- Ever heard of a video game called *Grand Theft Auto*? The *GTA* franchise is one of the most popular in history. If you’re a male under the age of 25 there’s a 95% chance you’ve played the game. The release of *Grand Theft Auto IV* earlier this year broke all kinds of sales records—3.6 million units on its first day of release. \$500 million in gross sales worldwide the first week alone. That’s more than most movies gross their entire theatrical run. It’s

estimated that the *GTA* games will account for 3.2% of all the software purchased worldwide in 2008. Think about that for a second.

- What’s really interesting about the *GTA* series of games is what you can do in the game. The game cultivates and encourages rebellion against authority. As a character in the game you can do all kinds of things you would ordinarily never do in real life. You can drive like a madman. You can drive while intoxicated. You can mug people, car jack their rides, rob stores, and a host of other unspeakable things.
- What does *Grand Theft Auto* have to do with you and me and submitting to Government? Everything. Because even if you’ve never played the game many of us play a version of it in our heads. Generally speaking, we hate authority. It’s part of our identity as Americans. We pay our taxes while berating the IRS. We drive the speed limit when Mr. Policeman is watching. But when he’s not, watch out. We participate in the political process and when our preferred candidate fails to win we rant about the jerk in office. We submit in name only. As followers of Christ we are called to a higher standard. **Responsible resident aliens submit to Government.** No mental *Grand Theft Auto* allowed.

### Transition

Look at Romans 13:1-7. Four reasons to submit to Government. **Reason number one.** [Slide #4] **All Government is appointed by God.** Verses 1-2. Listen. *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. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*

### Main Points

- What do you do after the President has been picked? Even if the one elected is not the one you wanted in office? You submit. *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.* We are called to submit to Government because God is the source of all authority. Not some authority. Not just the good governments. All authority. All Government is appointed by God. Look at the text. *The authorities that exist—all of them—have been established by God.* The communist regime of **Mao Zedong**? Established by God. The Pharaohs of Egypt? Established by God. An **Obama** presidency? Established by God. God appoints, he establishes all authority and therefore, to rebel against Government is to rebel against God. Which is why Paul says in **verse 2**, *consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted.* Why do we submit? **Because Government has been appointed by God.**
- Frankly, that’s hard to swallow isn’t it? It’s somewhat easier to submit to Government when Government does what is right, when Government does what we approve. But bad governments? Corrupt governments? Evil governments? God appoints those too? Submit to those? Yes. *For there is no authority except that which God has established.* Period. Let me ask you, something? Which is more reassuring? A sovereign God who appoints all authority, all government—even corrupt evil governments? Or a God who has no say, no control, no power over the corrupt evil rulers of the earth?

- I want you to turn to the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk 1:5. Listen to what God says to his people through Habakkuk. *"Look at the nations and watch--and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. 6 I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own. 7 They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. 8 Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like a vulture swooping to devour; 9 they all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. 10 They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and capture them. 11 Then they sweep past like the wind and go on-- guilty men, whose own strength is their god."*
- Who established and appointed the nation of Babylon? God. And what was Habakkuk's response? Like us he couldn't wrap his mind around how a good God could use an axis of evil like Babylon. Habakkuk was forced to rest and trust in the sovereignty of God. God is in control. Evil can do nothing God doesn't allow. There must be a purpose behind it. [Verse 12](#). *O LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die. O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish.*
- God's sovereignty enables the follower of Christ to submit to Government freely and without fear because we know that the existing governing authorities, the powers that be are established by God himself. In the last few weeks I've heard far too many Christians panic stricken about an Obama presidency. Where is your faith? Where is your trust in the sovereignty of God?
- Let me say a bit more about what it means to submit. I think [Doug Moo's](#) definition is helpful. He says, "To submit is to recognize one's subordinate place in a hierarchy, to acknowledge as a general rule that certain people or institutions have authority over us."<sup>1</sup> Submission describes an inner attitude from which obedience should spring. To submit to Government is to have an attitude of compliance and deference, an attitude of honor and respect for those in power.
- A surface reading of this passage seems to require Christians always, in every circumstance to obey whatever their Government tells them to do. Almost all Christians, including myself, squirm at this idea. And rightly so. Tragedies like the Holocaust suggest there are times when Christian conscience mandates disobedience to Government.<sup>2</sup> I want you to notice something. Paul doesn't say obey. He says submit. There's a difference. Certainly the idea of submission includes obedience. But when obedience to God's law and the laws of Government come in conflict with one another we are obligated to do as Peter and the other apostles declared in Acts 5:29, we are obligated to *obey God rather than men*. And that can be done with an attitude of compliance and deference, an attitude of honor and respect for those in power.
- Let me also add that submission doesn't mean silence. Frequently our silence, our failure to prophetically speak to Government is nothing but tacit approval. By becoming the good we

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<sup>1</sup> Moo, p. 797.

<sup>2</sup> Moo, p. 806.

wish to see in the world we earn the right to speak to Government. And we must graciously exercise that responsibility. We are called to submit. And we can do so willingly, freely because God is in control. Proverbs 21:1 *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.*

### Transition

Look at verses 3-4 for the **second reason** to submit to government. *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. 4 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.* [Slide #5] We submit to Government because **Government is God's servant to encourage good.**

- We talked about this two weeks ago, didn't we? The purpose of government is to provide a well ordered society so that good can flourish; so that we might be the good, do the good. That's Government's role. It serves as God's servant by encouraging good.
- Paul says Government fulfills this role in two ways. Look at the text. By commending what is right, **verse 3**. And by bearing the sword and punishing the wrongdoer, **verse 4**. In punishing evil and commending good Government carries out God's purposes, as his servant. *For he is God's servant*, Paul says. Have you ever thought about Government in that way? God's servant? In other words, the punishment that the governing authority inflicts on wrongdoers is God's punishment.<sup>3</sup> The commendation of good in society by Government is God's commendation. Because God stands behind both we submit to government.
- And just in case you think we might be free from our obligation to submit if Government no longer is able to commend good and punish evil remember the words of 1 Peter 3:17. *It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.* There may be times that in doing good we are punished. We are still obligated to submit.
- So what does it look like in real life? You're driving down Highway 14 on your way to Madison and you're pulled over for speeding. You roll down your window and the officer hands you a ticket. How do you respond? What do you do? Does submitting to Government mean throwing the ticket back in the face of the policeman even if in your mind only? Muttering curses under your breath? If Government is God's servant for encouraging good then as someone once said, "A real patriot is the fellow who gets a speeding ticket and rejoices that the system works."<sup>4</sup>
- Proper submission to government means recognizing that Government is God's servant for encouraging good. The God-given right of government is to punish those who violate its laws. Ultimately, God stands behind that speeding ticket. And by handing out tickets for speeders, Government is encouraging the good; it is fulfilling its purpose as God's servant. And for that we should rejoice.

### Transition

Look at verse 5. [Slide #6] The **third reason** we are to submit to government is because we are **morally obligated to do so**. *Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.*

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<sup>3</sup> Moo, p. 802.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Vaughan, CONTEXT; submitted to [www.preachingtoday.com](http://www.preachingtoday.com) by Brent Wassink, Long Beach, California

- For the sake of conscience we are obligated to submit to government. What does Paul mean by that? What does it mean to submit because of conscience? Any of you who have children know exactly what Paul is talking about here. Which would you rather have said to you? “Daddy, I didn’t steal the cookies because I was afraid of being spanked”? Or, “Daddy, I didn’t steal the cookies because stealing is wrong”? Obviously the latter. Only the latter response indicates an informed and sensitized conscience—the child knows there is a bigger reason for obeying—a reason beyond the fear of punishment. Submitting to government for fear of punishment, for fear of getting caught, ultimately, is not the reason the Christian submits to government. The rest of the world does that. The rest of the world submits to Government out of fear. Christians are different.
- F.F. Bruce says, “The Christian has a higher motive for obeying the ruler than the unpleasantness of the consequences of disobedience; the Christian knows that such obedience is in accordance with God’s will, and by rendering it will preserve a good conscience in relation to God.”<sup>5</sup>
- Because we know who stands behind government, because we know God has ordered human history, because we know he is working out his purposes through Government—those are the reasons we submit. We are morally obligated to submit, not because of fear of punishment, but because of what we know, *because of conscience*. Ultimately you must ask yourself “why am I submitting to Government?” Out of fear? Or because of conscience?

### Transition

There is one more reason, a **fourth reason** we are to submit to government. And it’s probably our least favorite reason reason. [Slide #7] **Paying taxes shows our support of God’s servant.** Verses 6-7. *This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.* When we pay taxes we show our willingness to submit to Government.

- As of 2005, 19% of Americans approved of cheating on their income taxes.<sup>6</sup> 32% of Americans say they wouldn’t report to the IRS \$2,000 in cash they earned from sideline work.<sup>7</sup> Paul says in verses 6-7, the habit of paying taxes shows our implicit understanding of the authority that Government possesses. It’s another way we submit to Government.
- What amazes me is not that paying taxes, in God’s eyes, is a way to submit to Government. Even if I don’t like it, I get that. What amazes me is what Paul says about Government. He says in **verse 6** *for the authorities are God's servants*. Earlier in **verse 4** he said the same thing. Except here in verse 6 Paul uses a different word for servant. Literally it says *for the authorities are ministers of God*.
- With this description of Government Paul uses “a word which in the New Testament and early Christian literature is used particularly of religious service.”<sup>8</sup> In the Old Testament, it’s was a word used for serving in the temple. Paul seems to use this word to indicate that rulers, authorities, the powers that be, even if they don’t know it, they perform a religious function by collecting taxes. They are serving God. And because of this, there are

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<sup>5</sup> Bruce, p. 225.

<sup>6</sup> IRS Oversight Board Fiscal Year 2005 Special Report (March, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Money, 8/94, "To Verify," *Leadership*.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce, p. 225.

implications for the follower of Christ. “The payment of taxes becomes a responsibility that the Christian owes to God himself.”<sup>9</sup> Cheating the tax man is really cheating God. And so the conclusion in [verse 7](#). *Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*

### Conclusion

- I realize there’s nothing glamorous about these verses. Submitting to government, authority, rebellion, punishment, paying taxes. It’s all rather blasé. Don’t ever underestimate the witness you can have by obedience to God in the simple small things of life—submitting to Government, respecting authority, paying taxes, showing deference and honor to the President. Those things matter. Our attitude and behavior reflects positively or negatively on our Savior.
- I want to end this morning by looking at the life of Christ. Turn to John 19:7-11. John 19 is fascinating for the simple reason that Christ himself submitted to the authority of an evil government and a demagogue in Pontius Pilate. Look at verse 7. *The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."* 8 *When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, 9 and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. 10 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."* If our Lord and Savior submitted to the governing authorities by going to the cross, if he trusted in the sovereignty of God his father, should not we as well? Pray with me.

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<sup>9</sup> Moo, p. 804.