

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 6- How then shall we live?

Sermon Title: Week 1: Respecting the Government- Really?

Date: 04-28-19

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– **Today we begin part 6 - chapter 13 (of 16), as Paul continues to answer the question- because all that is TRUE of the Gospel, HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?**

† **How then shall we live?**

In Christ, how we relate to **GOD** Romans 12:1-2

In Christ, how we relate to **OTHER BELIEVERS** Ro 12:3-13

In Christ, how we relate to **SOCIETY** Romans 12:14-21

– **And now, Paul turns his attention to how...**

In Christ, how we relate to **GOVERNMENT** Romans 13:1-7

– **Really Paul? Cmon! Now you are meddling! Please don't tell me I need to respect, honor, the govt! Paul! Don't you know the two topics polite people always avoid? Religion and politics! Do we have to talk about government as well?**

– **HEAR! As challenging as this text is, God's word to us here is one of most relevant of all Pauls ethical teaching, in our culture today. PRAY HERE!!**

– **HERE GOD calls us to place Christ at the center of how we relate to government- STRUCTURES OF AUTHORITY- and that we- I - NEED TO HEAR**

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> 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 you will be commended. <sup>4</sup> For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. <sup>6</sup> This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup> Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

– **Woah! HOW DO WE TREAT THIS? LOT I WON'T COVER! Hope to make us think, take text seriously**

– **START with two crucial matters of CONTEXT. Paul's context was...**

† **The context of early imperial Rome**

– **Emperor's Claudius and Nero. Bad!**

– **For church in Rome, Paul addressed the very real question of how do you relate to a people- a system- that at any time might persecute you.**

– **IMPORTANT- Paul doesn't assume a 'wishful thinking' perfect government, but the government that actually existed. In Paul's time, the govt DID provide a basic needed societal order, ALSO loomed as an ever-present threat**

– **BUT BY FAR, the most important context of Pauls message here wasn't the nature of the Roman authorities, but the MOST IMPORTANT consideration that drove Paul's entire ministry. This context is a lens that is crucial for understanding almost all of Paul's ethical teaching, not only in Romans, but his other letters as well. THIS MOST...**

† **The most important thing: We must see Paul's ethical teaching through the lens that the most important answer to the question "How shall we live" is for the sake of the GOSPEL.**

– **HUGE- entire sermon to itself- sum up, as followers of Christ, when we think about how we live as FREE PEOPLE, our BIGGEST CONCERN is not what is FAIR, what is DUE ME, or how things SHOULD BE according to my own system of justice- RATHER, our chief**

**concern is how our actions, decisions, impact the message, integrity of the GOSPEL in our lives.**

**1 Corinthians 9:19-23** *Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

- **Paul said “Im Free!”, but he surrendered his freedom- he conformed to on cultural norms (and instructed the church to do so), he chose to subject himself to situations that in all fairness he shouldn't have had to deal with- WHY? Because of the sake of the Gospel. His greatest concern was not his personal rights, but how his life might reflect- in the most impactful way- the truth of God's message**

**Titus 2:9-10 (NIV: “Doing Good for the sake of the gospel”)** <sup>9</sup> *Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, <sup>10</sup> and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, **WHY! Why isn't Paul's priority for them to escape the injustice of slavery? Is Paul condoning slavery here? NO.. rather...***

*so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.*

- **BECAUSE OUR LIFE, identity, hope, freedom is in CHRIST, not in this world, OUR guiding PRINCIPLE for how we RELATE TO this world-- is that our actions, choices... are an expression of our faith in Christ, NOT just claiming our own rights.**
- **True in our personal relationships, true in business, social circles... TRUE in how we relate to govt and the authorities we are under.**

✠ **What's not said here...**

- **This (and other similar passages) are not comprehensive about how we relate to power, especially when power violates its responsibility**
- **Paul does not tell us when it is acceptable to rebel against tyranny**
- **Conflicts between religious and civil authority**
- **What Christian should do when state fails in its role as an authority under God**
- **MOST IMPORTANT, Paul HERE doesn't tell us what to do when what the state demands conflicts with how God calls us to live. BUT, SCRIPTURE is not silent here.**

**The essential balance: As Disciples of Jesus, our ultimate authority is GOD!**

**Acts 5:27-29** *The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. <sup>28</sup> “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.” <sup>29</sup> **Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!***

✠ **What is said to those in authority**

- **We- the governed- may struggle with this passage, but it should be more cautionary for those in power.**
- **Government authority is delegated from God. It does not exist as its own end. Not absolute!**
- **Person in power is God's servant- and to serve God is to serve People! HUMBLE term. To use power to enrich yourself, or to your own ends is against God.**

- Government has **NO** moral authority **OF ITSELF**, but only the authority given to them by God, which is **LIMITED**, focused on basic issues of justice and the institutions necessary for a functioning society.
- “Divine right of kings”- perversion of this text
- Even if Govt doesn’t recognize God, they will be held to account **BY GOD**- and that should be sobering to those in places of power.
- **BOTTOM LINE: INSTITUTIONS** of human Government are part of God’s plan for humanity during this age! Therefore, we must hear...

✠ What is said to *us*. As disciples of Christ, we agree that:

- We are **SUBJECT** to the temporal authorities because they are subject to God.

**Romans 13:1** *Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

- Word ‘subject’ doesn’t mean mindless obedience. But it does mean a due recognition of the legitimate authority **GOD** has given to government institutions, and that they should be respected, even when we don’t like them.

- To **REBEL** against the institutions of authority is to rebel against God.

**Romans 13:2** *Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*

- Simply put, we don’t have the moral freedom to disregard, or seek to undermine, systems of authority just because we don’t agree with what they are doing. **LIVING WITHIN BOUNDS OF SOCIETAL AUTHORITY** is something Christians are to take seriously.
- **NOW**, are there limits here? Places where we not only can, but **MUST** resist actions of Govt? **YES**- but this is not to be taken lightly, and it’s not just because of how govt impacts us personally.
- **EXMPLE: Some think actors of American revolution were in violation of this. Up for debate!**
- **IMPORTANT! History of govt is also history of rebellion against govt. As the church, we must be VERY CAUTIOUS** against aligning ourselves with a political movement whose aims- while we may agree with them- are **NOT** the aims of God! **OUR ALLEGIENCE** is to God and the **GOSPEL**, no matter who is in power.
- **McARTHUR:**
  - When church is politicized, even supporting good causes... spiritual power, moral influ diluted
  - Mission of church not to change society- although that is often byproduct... rather, to worship and serve God, bring others to faith (**SAKE** of gospel!)
  - When you look at life of Jesus, Paul, first generation, focus **NOT** on social/political reform. No direct effort to eliminate social/political injustice. **PRIORITY** was not changing government, but bringing salvation- not political freedom, but spiritual and eternal freedom.
- **WHAT IS LINE? WHERE** Government demands our allegiance that we can only give to God. **WE MUST OBEY GOD** rather than man. **AND YET**, to easily disregard ordinances of my community because they are inconvenient, offensive, or even unfair to me- this is to disobey my conscience before God.

- Government is not only necessary, it is a necessary temporal **GOOD**.

**Romans 13:3-4a** *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 you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good.*

- **Again! Paul isn't addressing here how we respond when Govt perpetrates moral injustice. HE IS SAYING that as Christians, we AGREE that human government is necessary, should be a force for good, and we should be the best citizens on our block.**
- **People who serve in govt are almost always hated by half of their constituency, if not more. AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, we may disagree with leaders, but we should be those who uphold value of government, not seek to demean, undermine**

- **Subject to God, government has the authority to ENFORCE the law.**

**Romans 13:4b-5** *But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.*

- **"The sword", basically means ability to exact penalty.**
- **Very basic- if you park in no parking zone and get ticket, you need to pay it. NOT JUST TO AVOID PUNISHMENT... but because our CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD is what leads us to be good citizens, even with things that we don't LIKE! This leads to!!**

- **And YES, it is our responsibility to honestly pay TAXES.**

**Romans 13:6-7** *This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup> Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*

- **Remember famous exchange between Jesus and religious leaders trying to trap him... Pay taxes?**

**Matthew 22:21** *Jesus asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."*

- **YES, we give to the government what the government demands, up to the point that they demand the allegiance that we only give to God.**
- **THIS IS KEY, easy to miss in what Jesus said. YES, we give to govt what is rightfully theirs- but ONLY what is rightfully theirs.**
- **WE GIVE TO GOD what is GODS. So, what belongs to GOD?**
- **WE DO. Our hearts, our minds, all of who we are. WE WERE BOUGHT AT A PRICE, and as children of God, in this world, the government that we are under, we are...**

## ✠ **Ambassadors of Life**

**2 Corinthians 5:17-20** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

- **Sum up Paul's entire point... one of the ways that we implore people toward the truth of God... is by living as good citizens, giving honor and respect to a government that may not give it back to us. We do this not because the government deserves it, but because we are GOD's ambassadors in this world- not for our own sake, but for the sake of the gospel**