

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Police Shootings and The Gospel

Romans 13:1-7

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PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: In light of the recent events in Ferguson, New York, Milwaukee and Kenosha, WI it is wise to consider how Christians must view the authorities in their land. The Christian lives with a different set of standards and with a different perspective as they arrange themselves under the mighty hand of the Lord.

I. Introduction.

- A. A seeming rash of police involved shootings.
 - 1. 24/7 “news.”
 - 2. The internet and social media.
- B. A lot of political posturing by leaders of every stripe.
 - 1. These various events gave rise to t-shirts saying “I can’t breathe” or “hands up, don’t shoot.”
 - 2. Influential pastors weighed in on these situations without any evidence or knowledge.
- C. In our city over the last couple of weeks one police officer is involved in two different shootings. Again many people weighed in on these situations without any real knowledge.
- D. We are witnessing in our nation a very different understanding of civil authority by the populace and too many within the Church in America are making statements that I believe are unwise at best.
- E. Today I want to give a pause to each of you to consider some foundational expectations that our Lord gives to us. Expectations that are non-negotiable. My hope is that these words will come to your mind as you consider those who are in authority over us, whether it be our president or a police officer.
- F. Romans 13:1-7 (read).
 - 1. What is to be the normal way that the Christian is to interact with his or her government?

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2. One controlling command—“be subject” or “be in submission.”
3. This is the standard or foundation from which any Christian must approach the subject of civil authority.
4. It is what I listen for when I am hearing a Christian, especially a leader, speak about politics and police. Is it coming from a foundation of submission and respect or is it from resistance and disrespect?
5. So I ask you to think about yourself as you watch both local, state, and national events unfold on the internet and television. From what foundation do you begin to respond, react to various events? Does your mouth and mind model a heart of submission or rebellion?
 - a. It is a military term that means to arrange yourself under another who has authority.
 - b. To submit means to recognize one's subordinate place in a hierarchy, to acknowledge that others have authority over us.
 - c. This is a common term in the bible and it is something that we need to keep in mind.
 - (1) This term is used of submitting to spiritual leaders (1 Corinthians 16:16)
 - (2) To one another (Ephesians 5:21).
 - (3) To masters (Titus 2:9).
 - (4) Prophets to other prophets (1 Corinthians 14:34)
 - (5) And Christian wives to their husbands (Eph 5:24; Col 3:18).
 - (6) And, obviously, to God (James 4:7).
 - d. In other words, submission is a normal, proper mind set for the Christian.
6. Who?
 - a. Every person, every soul.
 - b. Realize how broad this is. Not one Christian should be known as a rebellious citizen.

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- c. The church should have little tolerance for those who are trying to fight against their government. It is not the will of God.
- d. This is not something unique to Romans:
 - (1) Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, (Titus 3:1)
 - (2) “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.” (1 Peter 2:13-14)
- G. So there we have it, we are to be a people who submit to those in authority over us. But why?

II. Submit to governing authorities — Why (1-5)

- A. No authority except from God, He established them (1).
 - 1. This is an incredible statement that is huge in its implications.
 - 2. This is a declaration of the sovereignty of God.
 - a. God is Lord over all powers and none exist apart from Him.
 - b. This has to be grasped by every Christian in this room. NO authority exists other than those God established.
 - c. So we are to submit to those in authority over us because we acknowledge that they are there by God's will..
- B. To resist authority is to resist God (2).
 - 1. Means that we must be incredibly careful when we advocate resistance.
 - 2. It means we should be very careful how we respond to our civil authorities.
 - 3. These are very strong words from Paul. They are not written in some vacuum; rather they were written while Nero was the emperor of the Roman Empire.
 - 4. Paul's first point is that to fight or rebel against the governing authorities is simply a fight against God.
 - a. This is simple logic.

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- b. Who made the governing authorities? [God] Which governing authorities were made by God? [every] How many governing authorities that currently exist were made by God? [every]
- c. It is a divine institution. It is God's institution.
- 5. This is a delegated authority that all human authority possesses. It comes naturally, built into the very fabric of our world.
 - a. When a child disobeys Mom, he is disobeying really Dad. And behind that he is disobeying God.
 - b. When an employee resists an assistant manager, he is really resisting the general manager. And behind that he is resisting God.
- 6. Our nation itself was born out of rebellion and that spirit runs deep in our veins. So we too must stop and consider what is being said here.
- 7. This is what one Russian leader in the underground church said about submission to the government:
 - a. The question was what the Russian Christians do to protest Russian government, doing things that they don't believe are right?
 - b. He simply said, "we have a basic unwritten law that everyone lives by in the church in Russia and that is that if any Christian is ever arrested, he will be arrested for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, nothing less."
- C. Those who resist will receive condemnation (2b).
 - 1. Judgment is the fitting end for any who decide that those in authority are to be taken lightly, disrespected and disobeyed.
 - 2. And do not think that this is just the government beating up on you, it is God, through these officials, bringing judgment upon you.
 - 3. And it is here that we come to the issue of use of force by the police, for the police are essentially the front line of judgment in our nation.
 - 4. There is always a question that arises of whether this condemnation is from God or from the government.
 - a. False distinction.

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- b. Notice vs 4. Twice the governing authorities is referred to as what?
 - (1) The word “God” is in the emphatic position.
 - (2) Paul is driving home hard and fast, these are God’s servants.
 - (3) Whether they know it or not does not matter. God has placed them there are you better not resist them.
 - c. Notice vs 6. “Servants of God.”
 - d. In other words, to resist them is to resist God and to be condemned by them is to be condemned by God.
- D. Rulers exist to bring about proper behavior and punish evil.
- 1. It is here that we begin to consider the reality of what police officers are. They are keepers of the peace and their simple presence is designed to bring about conformity to the laws of the land.
 - 2. If you are afraid, ask yourself if you are doing evil.
 - 3. Be a person who actively practices good in your community.
- E. Rulers are God’s ministers to bring wrath and punishment upon evil-doers.
- 1. The sword references capital punishment and by logic anything less than that.
 - 2. Fear of authority is by evil doers is proper and normal in a society. There is a good reason why the police are hated in certain neighborhoods, much evil is taking place.
 - 3. The governing authorities mete out justice and protection.
 - 4. They are used by God to execute social justice and have the right to shed blood.
 - a. The “sword.”
 - b. Genesis 9:1-7.
 - (1) [Walk them through the first few vss].
 - (2) vss 5-6.

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- (a) Here we see what many say is the first clear sense of government in the bible.
 - (b) This is probably not true, for early on they were building cities, but this is the first sense of governing authority.
 - (c) Capital punishment:
 - i) Here is where we see the need for governing authorities, but it is left very open-ended as to the type.
 - a) There are over 40 types of governments.
 - b) Plus many sub-types.
 - ii) There is a need for some type of legal code, when is a killing worthy of death?
 - iii) The need for some sort of judicial system, to determine if this was unlawful shedding of blood. This person needs to give an account for why a person is dead.
 - iv) Notice that not all killing is the same.
 - v) Then there would be a need for some sort of system to bring about the capital punishment.
 - vi) Notice also that the method of killing a murderer was left open too. Each government could determine their method.
 - vii) I might add that the one option not given by God was to let a murderer live.
- F. We also should submit because of our own conscience.
- 1. Our conscience is something very precious.
 - a. Romans 14 makes the strong point that a Christian is not to violate his conscience.

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- b. Paul talks about the need for the Christian to love in a way that comes from a pure heart and good conscience in 1 Timothy.
 - c. In 1 Timothy 1:19 those who do not hold on tightly to sound doctrine and a good conscience can shipwreck their faith.
 - d. And then in 4:2 he speaks of liars who sear their conscience.
2. When we make it a point to be disrespectful and mocking of those in authority. When we make it our habit to ignore the laws and resist those in authority we do great harm to the conscience.
 3. And this is foolish for it leads to greater and greater resistance that ends in a strong reaction by those in authority.

III. How do we submit? (6-7)

- A. Pay taxes and fees.
- B. Show respect.
- C. Show honor.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. Note again why a Christian submits.
 1. Not because of fear—not primarily.
 2. Not because the government is powerful.
 3. But because they see God behind it and in it and that is sufficient.
- B. This then opens up the whole issue of idolatry if you give it thought.
 1. Idolatry is tricky because there are those physical idols we think of in temples and counter tops of certain restaurants .
 2. But there are those greater idols that reside in our hearts. Remember what I have taught you on how to discern those. [sin to get it, sin when you don't get it]
 3. Now apply this to submitting to governing authorities.
 - a. When we do not submit to our governing authorities all we are saying is that there is something greater, more soul-satisfying, more glorious than God.

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- b. Why do I say that? Because God has established those governing authorities and we are saying that He is wrong in this situation or that.
- C. I do think though, that we need to always begin with our Lord, Jesus Christ.
 - 1. This gets back to the center of our purpose as Christians here.
 - 2. We are to be missional-minded. We are to consider how Jesus was sent into this world, for that was the way that Jesus sends us into the world.
 - 3. He came into a world where slavery flourished. A world of hardship and injustice.
 - 4. It was no accident that he came into a world that was dominated by an absolutist type of government.
 - a. Slavery.
 - b. Autocracy.
 - c. Even murder, the power was so great within the government that Herod would be able to order the slaughter of countless innocent young boys as he sought out Jesus.
 - d. All of this was the world that the Father sent His Son.
- D. And in a similar, yet different, way Jesus has sent each of us into a Republic during a very unique time in our country's history.
 - 1. And the question you and I must ask ourselves is this, "why?" "What is our primary purpose for being here?"
 - 2. And the answer is first and foremost, to bring the gospel to this nation and people.
 - 3. To say to all that we are able, that God has made a way to Him, whereby we can be reconciled to Him.
 - 4. That through Jesus Christ we can be forgiven of sin, made right with God and be made whole again.
 - 5. And everything else is subservient to that task.
 - a. Marriage.
 - b. Children.

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- c. Work.
- d. Leisure.
- e. Relationships.
- f. And politics.
- g.

Small Group Questions

- What safeguards do you have in place for the various social media outlets that you are part of so that you don't become one known as a rebel?
- When is criticizing a governing official wrong? Explain to the group how you manifest a heart and life of submission to the various authorities? In fact, have the group list the various civil authorities they have over them.