

Romans 13:1-7  
My Godward Relationship to Government

**Introduction:** He says these things to those who live in the heart of the empire. This is not the only passage in the Bible on a believer's relationship to government. John Stott reminds us: four main models have been tried—**Erastianism** (the state controls the church), **theocracy** (the church controls the state), **Constantinianism** (the compromise in which the state favors the church and the church accommodates to the state in order to retain its favor), and **partnership** (church and state recognize and encourage each other's distinct God-given responsibilities in a spirit of constructive collaboration).

**Remember this** (from Ben Witherington): Emperor Claudius was eliminated in A.D. 54 by family plotting. More specifically, he was killed by Agrippina, his wife since 49, who wanted to advance her son Nero to the throne. Nero was only sixteen in 54, and so required advisors and those who would serve in a sense as his guardians. His military advisor was A. Burrus, and Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, served as a spiritual and moral advisor. It is due largely to the tutelage and guidance of these two men that the first five years of Nero's reign were not noted for corruption or disruption.

Nero had been coached enough and so was wise enough to allow the Senate more power and to do away with private treason trials of prominent persons, a vice in which Claudius had indulged. He also immediately allowed Jews to return to Rome on his accession, which was three years or a little less before Paul wrote Romans in the spring of 57.

**1) I must submit in a Godward way to government—13:1-5**

- a) The command to submit ourselves—13:1a
  - i) <sup>1</sup> *Let every person be subject* [pres. mid. impv. **u`pota,ssw**] (submit themselves) *to the governing authorities* [evxousi,a].
  - ii) This is arranging one's self under authority, not blind obedience.
  - iii) The church is not a *nation* among nations, as Israel was. (T. Constable)
- b) The reason God wants Christians to do this—13:1b
  - i) *For* [ga,r] *there is no authority* [evxousi,a] *except from* [u`po,] *God*,
    - (1) God established human government in Gen. 9:6 after the Flood.
    - (2) Dan. 4:17
  - ii) *and those that exist have been instituted* [**ta,ssw**] *by* [u`po,] *God*.
    - (1) But God does not approve of corruption, brutality, and tyranny.
  - iii) God is the ultimate authority, even over human government. This would be offensive to the Roman emperor who viewed himself as a god.
- c) The consequences of not obeying God by obeying government—13:2-4
  - i) Resistance is sin—13:2
    - (1) <sup>2</sup> *Therefore whoever resists* [pres. mid. ptc. **avntita,ssw**] *the authorities* [evxousi,a] *resists* [pf. act. ind. avnqi,sthmi] *what God has appointed* [**diatagh,**],

- (a) To actively resist a secular regime is to rebel against God. (Moody)
- (2) *and those who resist* [pf. act. ptc. avnqi,sthmi] *will incur judgment* [kri,ma] (from God through human rulers).
- ii) The reason for this judgment—13:3-4
  - (1) The principle: <sup>3</sup> *For* [ga,r] *rulers* [a;racwn] *are not a terror* [fo,boj] *to good conduct, but to bad.*
  - (2) The question: *Would you have no fear* [fobe,w] *of the one who is in authority* [evxousi,a]?
  - (3) Approval for doing the good:
    - (a) The command: *Then do what is good,* [poie,w o` avgaqo,j]
    - (b) The promise: *and you will receive his approval* [e;painoj],
    - (c) The reason: <sup>4</sup> *for* [ga,r] *he is God's* (unwitting) *servant* [dia,konoj] *for your good* [avgaqo,j].
      - (i) Nebuchadnezzar—Jer. 25:9 (God's servant)
      - (ii) Cyrus—Is. 44:28 (God's shepherd); 45:1 (God's anointed)
      - (iii) This does not reinforce totalitarianism but rather undermines it.
  - (4) Wrath for doing the wrong:
    - (a) The hypothesis: *But if* (3<sup>rd</sup> class condition) *you do wrong* [poie,w o` kako,j],
    - (b) The command: *be afraid,* [fobe,w]
    - (c) The reasons for fear:
      - (i) *for* [ga,r] *he does not bear the sword* [ma,caira] *in vain* [eivkh/].
        - 1. This may refer to capital punishment, but it more likely refers to the delegated use of force to maintain order and enforce acceptable social conduct.
      - (ii) *For* [ga,r] *he is the servant* [dia,konoj] *of God,*
        - 1. *an avenger* [e;kdikoj] *who carries out God's wrath on the* (habitual) *wrongdoer* [kako,j pra,ssw].
    - (d) When government rightly uses force to prevent anarchy to execute justice, this is good.
- d) Summary: the necessity of Godward submission—13:5
  - i) The obligation: <sup>5</sup> *Therefore one must be* [avna,gkh] *in subjection* [u`pota,ssw],
  - ii) Negative reason: *not only to avoid* [dia,] *God's wrath*
  - iii) Positive reason: *but also for the sake of* [dia,] *conscience.*
    - (1) No government has the right to command a person's conscience.

## 2) I can demonstrate practical Godward submission to government—13:6-7

- a) Support them by paying your taxes—13:6
  - i) Their current obedience: <sup>6</sup> *For* [ga,r] *because of this you also pay taxes* [tele,w fo,roj],
  - ii) Why? *for* [ga,r] *the authorities are ministers* [leitourgo,j] (our word liturgy) *of God, attending* [proskartere,w] *to this very thing.*
    - (1) People who have left their real life jobs to work for the government.

- b) Support them in tangible and intangible ways—13:7 <sup>7</sup>*Pay* [avpodi,dwmi] *to all what is owed* [ovfeilh,] *to them*:
- i) Tangible support:
    - (1) Direct symbols of submission and dependence: *taxes* [fo,roj] *to whom taxes* [fo,roj] *are owed*,
    - (2) Indirect normal duties: *revenue* [te,loj] *to whom revenue* [te,loj] *is owed*,
      - (a) Includes sales tax, tolls, fees for services, etc.
  - ii) Intangible support:
    - (1) Respect their status: *respect* [fo,boj] *to whom respect* [fo,boj] *is owed*,
    - (2) Respect their value: *honor* [timh,] *to whom honor* [timh,] *is owed*.

**3) Things to remember:**

- a) There are numerous examples of Godward disobedience toward government.
  - i) OT: Ex. 1:17; Dan. 3:10-12; 6:9-24
  - ii) NT: Acts 5:29
- b) There is a significant difference between Godward disobedience and sinful rebellion.
- c) Government does **not** have absolute rights over its citizens because government itself is subordinate to God himself. (D. Moo)
- d) God is calling us to do nothing less than what Jesus did toward government during His earthly ministry.

Romans 13:8-14  
The Combination of Love and Holiness

**Introduction:**

**1) The authenticity of love—13:8-10**

- a) We need to love—13:8 <sup>8</sup> *Owe no one anything, except to love [avgapa,w] each other,*
- i) The Bible does not forbid loans or credit. It wants us to be current in our financial obligations. As A. T. Robertson said, “This debt can never be paid off, but we should keep the interest paid up.”
- (1) The emphasis is on the ongoing obligation to love other believers.
- ii) Why? *for [ga,r] the one who loves [pres. act. ptc. avgapa,w] another has fulfilled [pf. act. ind. plhro,w] the law.*
- (1) Demonstrating that mere external conformity is not what God expects.
- (2) Love is self-giving.
- b) The Law shows this to be true—13:9 <sup>9</sup> *For [ga,r] the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery (7<sup>th</sup>), You shall not murder (6<sup>th</sup>), You shall not steal (8<sup>th</sup>), You shall not covet (10<sup>th</sup>),” (Ex. 20; Deut. 5) and any other commandment, are summed up [avnakefalaio,w] in this word: “You shall love [avgapa,w] your neighbor as yourself.” (Lev. 19:18)*
- Some Greek manuscripts contain, “You shall not bear false witness.” (9<sup>th</sup>)
- i) Paul is teaching Gentile believers that love has always been the expectation for people who claim to follow after God. When Gentile believers love one another authentically, they are fulfilling the principles God revealed in the Law to Israel.
- ii) This is not a command or justification to love ourselves. Rather it recognizes that we already love ourselves. We should love others with the same instinctive regard we have for ourselves.
- c) Summary—13:10 <sup>10</sup> *Love [avga,ph] does no wrong [evrga,zomai kako,j] to a neighbor; therefore [ou=n] love [avga,ph] is the fulfilling [plh,rwma] of the law.*
- i) Love desires what is best for the other person within the limits of God’s Word.
- d) This echoes Jesus’ teaching in Matt. 22:34-40.

**2) The urgency of holiness—13:11-14**

- a) We need to be spiritually alert—13:11-12a
- i) Avoid a spiritual daze: <sup>11</sup> *Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep.*
- ii) The return of Jesus is imminent:
- (1) *For [ga,r] (our future) salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.*
- (2) <sup>12</sup> *The night is far gone; the day is at hand.*
- iii) Jesus is coming to take us to the Father’s house!

- b) We need to embrace our personal responsibility for holiness—13:12b-14 *So then* [ou=n] ...
- i) **Three-fold responsibility:**
- (1) Negative: *let us cast off* [avpoba,llw] *the works of darkness*
  - (2) Positive: *and put on* [evndu,w] *the armor of light.*
    - (a) This is spiritual conflict illustrated from the elite military forces.
  - (3) Appropriately: <sup>13</sup> *Let us walk properly* [peripate,w euvschmo,nwj] *as in the daytime,*
- ii) **Negative: things to CAST OFF:** all are works of the flesh
- (1) Things that demonstrate a lack of self-control: *not in orgies* [kw/moj] *and drunkenness* [me,qh],
    - (a) These are typically nighttime activities.
  - (2) Things that hinder sexual purity: *not in sexual immorality* [koi,th] *and sensuality* [avse,lgeia] (shamelessness),
  - (3) Things that hinder unity: *not in quarreling* [e;rij] *and jealousy* [zh/loj].
- iii) **Positive: things to PUT ON:**
- (1) <sup>14</sup> *But* [avlla,] *put on* [evndu,w] *the Lord Jesus Christ,*
    - (a) Appropriate His virtues and imitate Him by grace
  - (2) *and make no provision* [poie,w pro,noia] *for the flesh* [sa,rx], *to gratify* [eivj] *its desires* [evpiqumi,a].
    - (a) Don't plan out specific ways to sin.
    - (b) We need to deny ourselves the opportunity to express these desires.
- iv) **THE POINT:** To use a military analogy, not only do “the weapons of light,” v. 12, issued to a soldier by his commander, distinguish him, but particularly. his uniform likewise designed by the same commander (Isa. 59:16-17; 61:10). So the faithful soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, along with his fellow infantrymen, ought to be easily identifiable by means of his issued equipment and uniform. (Horner)

### 3) **Something to remember:**

- a) We are called to have the same loving regard for the needs of others that we instinctively have for our own needs.
- b) In other words, if the **inclination** (transformed by God) is present because of the regenerating gospel, then the **imperative** will have inevitable fulfillment. (Horner)