

# **SRMBC Family Bible Study**

## **Romans: A New Lifestyle**

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### **Lesson 16: Submitting to Authorities      Romans 13**

For many people, the word authority conjures up images that are oftentimes unpleasant. Those in authority are viewed as oppressors, and too often the impression is correct.

Paul was no stranger to the abuses of authority. He had experienced severe persecution at the hands of civil and religious authorities all around the Mediterranean. In light of this, Paul's view of authority may be surprising.

#### **Group Discussion: What comes into your mind when you hear the word authority? Why?**

From my old Army Days – I see images of old Drill Sergeant ("Push-Up" Brooks)

- Fear
- Belligerence
- Sometimes Anger
- Pride – "Nobody tells me what to do!"

#### **Why?**

- It seems like the we have a built-in resistance to authority (the first word a baby learns to say "No!").
- Nobody likes to be told what to do (even if it's for their own good).
- Our sinful nature inherited from Adam.

#### **Read Romans 13.**

#### **1. What is Paul's view of authority and those who exercise it (vv. 1-5)?**

##### **Paul's View of Authority**

- Inclusive - Let **every soul** be subject.
- Authoritative – Higher Powers
- Derivative – Ordained by God and His Power
- Protective – Established by God for good to keep order

##### **Paul's View of Those Who Exercise Authority**

- They ought to be obeyed
- They ought to be respected
- They ought to be revered (given honor)
- They ought to be prayed for (good conscience)

## **2. How would Paul's view of governing authorities apply to wicked and perverse rulers such as Nero or Hitler?**

There are two ways to deal with this problem:

(1) Paul is presenting the norm here, i.e., the ideal for government, which is certainly that of punishing evil and rewarding or encouraging good. If this is the correct interpretation, then we can understand why Paul warns against rebellion and makes no allowance for revolutionary activity. This interpretation does allow for revolution in cases where rights are denied and liberties taken away, since the state has ceased to fulfill its God-appointed function. At the very least, when justice collapses, the Christian community is obliged to voice its criticism of the state's failure and deviation from the divinely ordained pattern.

(2) The other possibility is to introduce the principle of 8:28, whereby God finds ways to bring good out of apparent evil, so that even in the event that the state should turn against the people of God in a way that could rightly be termed evil, he will bring good out of it in the long run.

## **3. What are some reasons Paul gives for submitting to those in authority (vv. 1-5)?**

### **Reasons To Submit**

- There is no authority except that which God has established.
- The authorities that exist have been established by God.
- Whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against God and will face judgement.
- When you do what is right and you will be commended.
- The one in authority is God's servant for your good.
- They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.
- As a matter of conscience – It is the right thing to do.

## **4. Do you think it is ever appropriate to resist rather than to submit to the authorities? Explain.**

- Acts 4:19-20 provides a scriptural basis for civil disobedience.
- When obedience to God would be compromised or excluded by obedience to those in authority.
- In such cases those in authority have gone beyond the limits of the authority given to them by God.

## **5. In verses 6-7 Paul suggests some practical ways we should submit to those in authority. What other examples can you think of?**

### **Paul's Examples**

- You pay taxes.
- You give leaders (whether you voted for them or not) reverence. (Daniel 3:16 – 18)
- You give leaders proper honor (for the sake of God and the office).

### **Other Examples**

- Obey the just laws.
- Pray for all leaders.
- Honor the national customs and protocols.
- Vote – Participate in citizenship actions/activities

### **6. How does the focus of the passage shift in verses 8-14?**

#### **Focus Change**

- From obedience to authorities to command to fulfill the law by showing love for one another/others.
- From love to living in such a way that looks forward to the return of Christ.
- From being subject to earthy authorities to recognizing a Higher Authority.

### **7. In verse 8 Paul says, “Let no debt remain outstanding.” Does this mean Christians should never incur any type of debts (mortgage, car and so on)? Explain your answer. Why is love a debt that can never fully be paid (vv. 8-10)?**

- Absolutely not. While we should be careful not incur too much debt (Proverbs 22:7) it is not sinful as long we are faithful in our agreements to repay (Psalm 37:21; Matt 22:21).
- Love is a debt we owe to every man, as a man, being all made of one blood, and in the image of God. It also the way God in Christ has loved us.
- God Law is good and we at our best do well to fulfill it as Christ fulfilled it during His earthly ministry.

*“Compassion can’t be measured in dollars and cents. It does come with a price tag, but that price tag isn’t the amount of money spent. The price tag is love.”—J. C. Watts Jr.*

### **8. In verses 11-14 Paul uses several vivid images to describe “the present time.” How does each one give us a picture of how we should (or shouldn’t) live?**

<b><u>Image</u></b>	<b><u>Remarks</u></b>
The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber.	Because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed – Wake and act like you know...
The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.	So, let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
Let us behave decently, as in the daytime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not in carousing and drunkenness,</li><li>• Not in sexual immorality and debauchery,</li><li>• Not in dissension and jealousy.</li></ul>
Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.	And do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh

*Pray for those in authority over you. Ask God to give you the grace and strength to submit to them in the proper way.*

### *Keys for Living*



When we understand and appreciate the power and authority of Lord our God, we will find it much easier to submit to the authorities He has placed over us.



There are times when we need to stand for the Lord in opposition to the authorities when those authorities attempt to coerce believers to disobey the Word.



The command to Love God and to love others extends to everyone regardless of their position or even how they treat us.