

# Romans (13:1-2)

## *Law & (God's) Order*

Part 74 – June 25, 2006

### ROMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Since Romans twelve, Paul has been talking about relationships:

- Our relationship to God. (12:1-2)
- Our relationship to the church. (12:3-8)
- Our relationship to each other. (12:9-16)
- Our relationship to our enemies. (12:17-21)

Paul will now spend seven verses on our relationship to the government; and it's all *way too* direct and applicable!

He makes the startling claim that the way we treat our governing authorities is an indication of our commitment to the Lord. Cheating on building codes or burning bans, income tax or fire works, seat belts or speed limits is all rebellion against *God*.

Yeah, it's not gonna be pretty!

Take a look for yourself ... if you *dare!* We're goin' in:

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. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. – *Romans 13:1-2 NIV*

There are a few probable reasons Paul takes on this topic:

The simple declaration “Jesus is Lord” is a political statement in a society where Caesar regards himself as a god.

And in 12:2 Paul warned: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.” This could easily be misunderstood and result in the Roman church mistakenly disregarding Caesar's authority.

And also, Paul *just* finished (12:19-21) instructing believers not to *individually* avenge evil; and he wants to clarify that there *are* “agents of wrath” (13:4) (institutions) that God has ordained.

## EVIL AUTHORITIES

And so, he clarifies the Caesar thing immediately:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established (13:1a)

I don't think we need to spend much time trying to figure out what exactly Paul means here. He makes it pretty clear.



Every government is established by God.

Q: But does this include *evil* rulers like Hitler, Stalin, and Saddam Husain?

Actually, Paul *knew* this included wicked rulers, because the OT is filled with examples of evil empires being determined by God.

[The Lord] removes kings and raises up kings. – *Daniel 2:21 NKJ*

Q: Remember the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan Babylonian king who destroyed Jerusalem and exiled the Jews?

Now I [the Lord Almighty] will hand all your countries over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him. – *Jeremiah 27:4-6 NIV*

The Lord even refers to Nebuchadnezzar as: “My servant” because God had decided to employ “Neby’s” misrule to chastise Israel and fulfill an eternal-minded purpose.



And, how about Pilate, who sentenced the Son of God to death?

“Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said [to Jesus]. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. – *John 19:10-11 NIV*

Rulers come and go. Empires rise and fall. But behind them all, the Lord overrules the politics of men. He *is* in control. Regardless whether a king has appointed a son, a tribal chief has defeated a rival, or an American has voted in a candidate.

The authorities that exist have been established by God (13:1b)

And every authority, democracy or dictatorship, just or unjust, has some claim on a true Christian’s submission.

## RIGHT FOOT REBELS

This is uniquely problematic for 21<sup>st</sup> century American believers.

- We (the *people*) wrote our *own* constitution!
- We (the *people*) select our *own* authorities!
- We (the *people*) have the power to boot 'em!

We pride ourselves on our independence and our liberty! But this bleeds over, inappropriately, into our personal lives:

If we don't vote for the person, or we disagree with the policy, we (the *people*) don't feel all that obligated to respect 'em.

- Speed limits? Stop signs? I'll assume those are suggestions!
- Seat belt? No ones gonna tell me to buckle up! Give me liberty or give me death!
- And I don't want to hike to that cross-walk; so I'll grant myself permission to jay-walk ... I'm a trail blazing pioneer!

We're Americans! We don't want to be limited, slowed, stopped, or cautioned!

I just read the other day that the last part of the body to get saved is the right foot! It's so rebellious! And I can prove that it has a mind of its own:

- A. Draw the number six (in the air) with your right hand.
  - Okay, stop; that was just practice.
- B. Now, lift your right foot off the floor and rotate it clockwise.
  - Tell it to keep turning clockwise.
  - Tell it not to spin the other way.
- C. Now just draw that number six in the air again.

We have rebellious right feet! I call mine: Johnny Reb!

But, here's the problem; listen up Johnny:



Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves (13:2)

- Disobedience to civil authority is defiance to God.

We submit to a *human* authority because of a *higher* authority.

## STOP SIGN WORSHIP

This has incredible implications; because if this is so, than the opposite is true as well: obedience to civil authority is *reverence* to God.

- And that means that: Obeying the speed limit is true worship!

Observing a burn-ban; using a cross walk; abiding by a building code; preparing an honest tax return; buying a fishing license; putting litter in its place; buckling up ... it's all worship!

- And seeing these things as reverence makes 'em much easier to obey.



You've heard all the STOP sign jokes about what S.T.O.P. actually stands for: "Stomp Toe On Pedal"; or, "Spin Tires On Pavement"!

- Well, how about this one: Short Time Of Prayer!

The next time you're tempted to *roll on through*, we should use that extra one-and-a-half second, to say, "This is for You!"

- It will be a Satisfying Triumph Of Patience! (Get it? S.T.O.P.)

A fellow in the church once told me how he had decided to stop speeding - even though he knew it would be restrictive and confining. But instead, he found himself anxiety-free, relaxed, enjoying music and talking to God.

- What he thought would be a restriction was in fact a freedom!

Q: Did you notice Paul seems more concerned about submission, humility, and self-denial than about our civil liberties?

This is because Paul sees rebelliousness as a bigger threat and a greater danger to than government injustice.

And remember, he's writing about the government that had imprisoned him and would eventually execute him!



The real battle is with self-rule (ol' Johnny Reb!)

Being treated unfairly or unjustly isn't the reason anyone goes to hell. However, being self-important, arrogant, rebellious, and self-indulgent is why so many will.