

Day 124, Romans 13

by David Servant

David Servant discusses the biblical principles of authority, submission, and the call to holiness in light of Romans 13.

Scripture: John 19:10

Topics: "Civil Obedience", "Moral Law"

Description

David Servant preaches on the importance of submitting to earthly authorities, emphasizing that all authority comes from God, even if it means obeying evil leaders as God can grant and remove authority as He pleases. He highlights instances of civil disobedience in the Bible when obeying earthly authorities would mean disobeying God, such as the Hebrew midwives and the apostles. Servant stresses the need to obey earthly authorities as long as it does not contradict God's commands, even using the example of paying taxes as an act of obedience to God. He also discusses the importance of following moral laws over ritualistic laws, emphasizing the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Transcript

Paul states that we are "to be in subjection to the governing authorities" because all authority stems from God, and thus any authorities that exist "are established by God" (13:1). This was not Paul's original idea. You may recall that when Pilate said to Jesus, "Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" Jesus replied, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:10-11).

From this incident it is affirmed that even evil leaders have their authority only because it has been granted to them by God. If He is the one who grants them their authority, He obviously can take away their authority any time He desires. You might recall the story we read in the book of Acts when Herod accepted praise that belonged only to God. Scripture recorded, "Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:23). Similarly, when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was lifted up in pride, God removed him from his position until the time when he would "recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes" (Dan. 4:25).

But must we always submit to every earthly authority in everything? What if an earthly authority requires that we disobey God?

Certainly scripture teaches us that there is a place for civil disobedience. The Hebrew midwives, who refused to obey Pharaoh's command to kill every Hebrew male baby at birth, are a good example of this. "Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them" (Ex. 1:21). The apostles collectively refused to submit to the Sanhedrin's orders that they no longer speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18-20). And I hope that you have already made up your mind that, should you find yourself living during the time of the antichrist (who will certainly receive his authority only because of God's permission), that you will refuse to take his mark!

As long as earthly authorities do not require that we disobey God, then we are obligated to obey them. This makes even paying taxes an act of obedience to God, as we obey our Lord who told us: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21).

We can praise God that He has established earthly authorities, as lawlessness, anarchy and chaos are the alternative. Can you imagine what would happen, for example, if there were no governing authorities in the United States, where one out of every 31 adults is in prison, or on parole or probation?

Notice Paul quotes four of the Ten Commandments in today's reading, clearly endorsing them as being valid for Christians, and saying that they are summed up in another old covenant commandment which he also endorses for new covenant believers, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (13:9). Notice, however, that neither here nor anywhere else did Paul endorse any old covenant commandments that fall under the category of "ritualistic." Those particular laws from the Law of Moses have not been carried over into the law of Christ. However, everything that falls under the category of "moralistic" from the Law of Moses has been included in the law of Christ. Those laws, of course, pre-date the Mosaic Law, having been written in everyone's consciences from the dawn of human history.

"Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its desires" (13:14). From reading the verses that precede this one, it is clear that our "flesh," or "old nature" as it is sometimes called, if left unchecked, would draw us into "carousing and drunkenness...sexual promiscuity and sensuality" and "strife and jealousy" (13:13), sins that, according to Paul, exclude one from God's kingdom (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Thus we see once more the undeniable fact that just because one is born again, eternal life is not guaranteed. Heaven is only for the holy, which is why Paul reminds his readers that eternity is closer now than ever before (13:11-12).

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-servant/day-124-romans-13/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net