

"LET EVERY SOUL BE SUBJECT" ([Rom 13:1](#)): RESPECT FOR GOVERNMENT

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[Rom 13:1](#), "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

THE TEXT:

"Let"

Built into the verb "subject"

"Imperative ... used as an auxiliary to express a request, proposal, or command, or to convey a warning or threat" (Dictionary.com)

"Every"

"The well-being of man is dependent upon the active prevalence of a system of constituted authority, whether that constituted authority be a patriarch, chieftain, governor, president, or king. In the absence of a system of constituted authority [sic] every man becomes a law unto himself, and violence, [sic] and anarchy, [sic] prevail to the detriment of all the people" (Rex A. Turner, "A Christian Must Obey God--This Is Primary," *Gospel Advocate*, CXIX, 44, Nov. 3, 1977, p. 689.)

[Rom 13:2](#), "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

"Soul"

[1Ti 2:4](#), "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

[Pro 14:34](#), "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."

"Be"

"To exist or live ... used as a copula to introduce or form interrogative or imperative sentences" (Dictionary.com)

"Subject"

Hupotassestho (Gr. υποτασσεσθω [Present Middle Imperative Third Person Singular]) of *hupotasso* (Gr. υποτάσσω)

Literally: To arrange below

"To *subordinate*; reflexively to *obey*: - be under obedience (obedient), put under, subdue unto, (be, make) subject (to, unto), be (put) in subjection (to, under), submit self unto" (Strong)

[Rom 13:5](#), "Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

[1Pe 2:13](#), "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;"

[Tit 3:1](#), "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,"

THE TRUST

The government will do God's Will--at least, it should!

[Rom 13:3-4](#), "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil."

[1Pe 2:14](#), "Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."

THE TEST

"I don't like what the government is doing"

"All of us are aware, out of our own experience, that it is not easy to be obedient to authority. It appears that there is an innate desire on the part of all of us to be independent and to have our own way. This seems to be an inborn, natural, universal tendency of man. Even our children do not like to be told when to get up, how to dress, what to eat, what to do, and where to go. Any superimposed authority from outside ourselves is likely to be met with resentment.

"There is no more fundamental need among human beings than the need to learn early in life to respect parents, school authorities, elders, employers, government and other properly constituted sources of authority. The trend of our day is toward rebellion. Examples are easy to cite. There is an increase in juvenile delinquency, in hoodlumism, and in racial disturbances. We read the statistics of an ever-increasing crime rate. Assassination is a prominent threat to our leaders. Revolutions rock one nation after another around the world. Altogether there is a general spirit of rebellion and lawlessness. It is like a disease—an epidemic—spreading across the world.

"We see this spirit in connection with government as we witness marching mobs in the streets. We are shocked when men advocate, 'If it is a good law I will obey it; if it is a bad law I will disobey it.' Such people set themselves on the judgment seat to determine what is good and bad and take vigorous action as they think best. This is indeed questionable, for the judgment of any individual may so easily be warped by his own desires and his own experiences. But even more, it is dangerous not only for an individual but for a nation. If everyone in the country decided each time the law pinched whether it was a good law or a bad law, we would have anarchy and chaos." (Batsell Barrett Baxter, "A Citizen Must Respect the Authority of Civil Government," *Gospel Advocate*, CXIX, 41, Oct. 13, 1977, pp. 641,646.)

1Pe_2:13, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;"

Rom_13:6-7, "For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Mat_17:24-27, "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, **What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?** Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, **Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.**"

Mat_22:15-21, "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any *man*: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, **Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money.** And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, **Whose is this image and superscription?** They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, **Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.**"

"The saints in Rome were obliged to pay tribute, but they were not accountable for the support of idolatry funded from pagan Rome's treasury. So similarly, paying justly owed taxes does not imply that we endorse every use of that tax money" (Wayne Jackson, "How Is a Civil Ruler a Minister of God?" <https://christiancourier.com/articles/how-is-a-civil-ruler-a-minister-of-god>)

"The rulers are wicked"

The Roman Caesars were despotic ("Gaius Caligula," xxx, xxxi), anti-Theistic ("Tiberius," xxxvi), frivolous ("Gaius Caligula," xxxvii; "Nero," xxx), perverse ("Tiberius," xliii, xliiv), licentious ("Tiberius," xlii; "Nero," xxvii), incestuous ("Gaius Caligula," xxiv), bisexual ("Nero," xxviii, xxix), abusive ("Tiberius," xlv, lii, liii; "Nero," xxvi), obscene ("Tiberius," xlv; "Gaius Caligula," xxv), torturing ("Tiberius," li; "Gaius Caligula," xxvii; "The Deified Claudius," xxxiv), "cruel and cold-blooded"

("Tiberius," lvii), and murderous ("Tiberius," xlix, lii; "Gaius Caligula," xxiii, xxviii; "Nero," xxxiii, xxxv-xxxvii; "Domitian," x)

THE TEMPTATIONS (Directly quoted from Wayne Jackson, "How Is a Civil Ruler a Minister of God?")

Righteous Civil Disobedience

No Christian can be required to obey a law that violates the higher law of God.

The apostles of Jesus refused government demands to cease preaching Christ (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29).

Christian women in China must not yield to governmental requirements to abort their children.

A gospel missionary may ignore regulations prohibiting the distribution of the Scriptures. A Christian teacher must never submit to a state requirement that he or she teach the dogma of evolution as scientific truth.

What About Violent Protests?

Can Christians participate in riots under the banner of civil disobedience to protest what they perceive as societal injustices?

Though some so contend, I do not believe that these types of law-violations are to be engaged in by the children of God. A Christian must break the law when it requires an act of personal wrongdoing.

But we should work to change what we consider to be unjust laws by exerting influence in legal ways, most especially in the alteration of people's hearts and their convictions (2 Cor. 10:3-6).

Christian people do not bomb abortion clinics or assassinate abortion doctors.

They do not chain themselves together to block doorways or lay down in the streets to bring traffic to a standstill.

There were many injustices in first-century Roman society (e.g., slavery, gladiatorial games, etc.), but there is not a trace of evidence that the Lord's people did anything other than teach to remedy such circumstances.

THE TRIAL

"What the government is doing violates my ability to do the Will of God"

[Dan_3:10-19](#)

[Dan_6:3-16](#)

[Act_4:18-19](#), "And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

[Act_5:27-29](#), "And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey

God rather than men."

Luk 23:1-2, "And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King."

"The only exception to obedience to government is when the laws of men conflict with the laws of God. On such occasions we have clear precedent that Christians must obey God rather than men. ... Even in following this principle, however, let us be very sure that the laws of men are really in conflict with the laws of God. It must not be an imagined or strained interpretation" (Baxter, p. 646)

Wayne Jackson's three principles (Brandon Jackson, "Submit Yourselves to Every Ordinance," *In God We Trust*, ed. Keith A. Mosher, Sr., Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 2012, pp 486,487):

"No Government [sic] has the right to prohibit that which is right."

"No government has the right to authorize what is wrong."

"No government has the right to force the Christian to violate a divine command or biblical principle."

THE TRUTH

"The Christian is an obedient citizen wherever he lives and under whatever form of government he may find himself" (Baxter, p. 646)

1Ti 2:1-4, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

1Pe 2:17, "Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."