

“Citizens For Christ”
Romans 13:1-4

Introduction:

1. In The Bible:
 - The Church:
 - Is Described In Different Ways!
 - The Church Is Called:
 - The Body Of Christ:
 - Which We Saw Back In:
 - Romans 12:5 - Which Says:
 - “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another!”
 - We Are The Body Of Christ:
 - With Christ Himself:
 - As Our Head!
 - The Church Is Also Called:
 - The Flock Of Christ:
 - Which Means That:
 - As Psalm 100:3 Tells Us:
 - “We Are His People, And The Sheep Of His Pasture!”
 - So - We Are The Flock Of Christ:
 - With Jesus Himself:
 - As Our Great & Our Good Shepherd:
 - Who Gave “His Life For The Sheep!”
 - The Church Is Also Described As:
 - The Kingdom Of Christ!
 - Now - There Are Certainly Different Dimensions:
 - To This Kingdom:
 - But As Christians - It Is Said In Philippians 3:20:
 - “Our Conversation / Citizenship Is In Heaven; From Whence Also We Look For The Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - So - We Are The Subjects Of Jesus Christ!
 - And Jesus Christ Is Our Lord & King!
 - And - Even Though Our Feet:
 - Are Planted In The Soil Of This Earth:
 - We Are Citizens Of Heaven Itself!
2. However - As We Return In Our Bibles:
 - To The Book Of Romans - And:
 - Romans 13 - We Discover That:
 - We Are Not Just:
 - Citizens Of Heaven!
 - We Are Also:
 - Citizens Of Our Own Countries:
 - Which God Has, In His Good Providence, Placed Us!
 - In A Sense - Christians Hold:
 - Dual-Citizenship!
 - **IE:** Just Like Someone Who Is Born Overseas, But Whose Parents Are Citizens Of The US! Depending On The Country, They May Be Given “Dual-Citizenship!” Some Countries Allow You To Hold Both Citizenships For Your Entire Life! Other Countries Make You Chose One Or The Other - When You Become An Adult! But Either Way - For A Time - With Dual-Citizenship - Instead Of Being A “Man Without A Country” - You Can Be A Man Or Woman With Two Countries!
 - And - It Is In That Sense:
 - The Apostle Paul Continues To Outline For Us:
 - What The Responsibilities Of Christians & Churches Are To Be:
 - To Those Who Are On The Outside Of The Church:
 - In Order To Bear A Christ-Like Testimony & Shine A Christ-Like Light:
 - To The World Around Us!
3. So - Not Only Are Christians:

- Citizens *Of* Christ:
 - And His Heavenly Kingdom!
 - We Are Also To Be:
 - Citizens *For* Christ:
 - In The Country We Call:
 - Our Home In This World!
- And So - It Is For This Purpose:
 - The Apostle Paul Writes Romans 13:1-4:
 - “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. / Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. / 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!”

4. Now - We Have To Admit That:

- The Command That We Are Given:
 - In 13:1 - Is A Hard Command!
 - It Is, In Fact, So Hard That:
 - Immediately We Want To Qualify It In Some Way:
 - With Conditions & Exceptions & Situations!
 - And Yet - In This Verse - *Without* Qualification:
 - All Christians - No Matter Where Their Earthly Citizenship May Be:
 - Are Told - “Let Every Soul Be Subject Unto The Higher Powers!”
 - This Simple Command:
 - Is Not Only A Clear Command:
 - It Is Also A Comprehensive Command!
 - It Is Comprehensive As To Its Audience!
 - “Every Soul” Is To Obey This Command!
 - And Especially - “Every Soul” Within The Church!
 - There Is No Condition Or Exception Given!
 - And That Can Be *Hard!*
 - It Is Comprehensive As To Its Assignment!
 - Because We Are All To:
 - “Be Subject” - Or Submit Ourselves:
 - Not Just In Our Actions:
 - But Also In Our Attitude!
 - And That Can Be *Very Hard!*
 - It Is Also Comprehensive As To Its Authorities!
 - As Christians - We Are To Submit Ourselves:
 - “Unto The Higher Powers!”
 - Which Means - Those Who Have Some Kind Of Superior Authority:
 - Over Us!

5. “Higher Powers” Can Include:

- The Biblical Authority Of:
 - Parents Over Children!
 - Husbands Over Wives! And Even:
 - Masters Over Servants!
- But The “Higher Power” That Paul Deals With Here:
 - Is *Government* Authority!
 - And So - Once Again:
 - We Are Told - “Let Every Soul Be Subject Unto The Higher Powers!”
 - And This Can Be *Very, Very Hard!*
 - *IE:* And - This Last Year - We Have All Seen Just How “Hard” This Can Be - With The Different Restrictions & Demands & Mandates That Governments, Of All Kinds, Have Placed Over Their Citizens! Including Our Own!

6. But - What We Find:

- In Romans 13 - Is Not A Political Statement!
 - Instead - It Is A Spiritual Statement!
- Because - How You Respond:

- To The Earthly Authorities:
 - God Has Placed In Your Life:
 - Will Reflect - Your True Response:
 - To The Heavenly Authority Of God:
 - In Your Life! (2x)

7. So - This Morning:
- In These Four Verses:
 - We Will Look At Four Reasons Why:
 - God Wants Us To:
 - Live Lives Of Submission:
 - To The Governmental Authorities We Live Under:
 - As The “Dual-Citizens” That We Are!

* First - We Need To Submit To Our Superiors Because Of:

1. *The Foundation Of Their Authority!*

- Which Describes The First Reason Paul Gives Us:
 - In 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 Primary Reason Why:
 - God Wants Us To Live Lives Of Submission To Our Authorities & Superiors Is Because:
 - They Were Given That Authority & Superiority:
 - By God Himself!
 - We Find In 13:1 - That:
 - The Authorities Over Us:
 - Have Been Given Their:
 - Authority From God – And His Power!
 - As Paul Writes:
 - “For There Is No Power But Of God!”
 - This Is Another, Very Comprehensive Statement!
 - Any Authority In Your Life:
 - Is **“Of”** God!
 - So - Any “Superior” Authority:
 - That You Have In Your Life:
 - Has Been Given That Power / Authority:
 - From The “Supreme” Authority!
 - Even The Mighty King Nebuchadnezzar Of Babylon:
 - Eventually Understood This - When:
 - In Daniel 4:17 - He Said - “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men!”
 - So - When Governments:
 - Are Good & Just:
 - Their Power Is “Of God!”
 - But - Even When Governments:
 - Are Evil & Unjust:
 - Their Power Is Still “Of God!”
 - And, As Christians:
 - We Must Never Forget:
 - God’s Role In - Not Only:
 - “Removing Kings” & Leaders & Governments:
 - But Also - “Setting Them Up!” (Daniel 2:21)
 - But Also:
 - Those Authorities Are:
 - Appointed By God – According To His Plan!
 - At The End Of 13:1 - Paul Adds:
 - “The Powers That Be Are Ordained Of God!”
 - This Means That God:
 - Has A Over-Arching Plan & Purpose In Place:
 - Even For The “Powers That Be” & Exist Today!
 - Now - We Must Not Forget:

- That When The Apostle Paul Wrote These Words:
 - He Was Writing About:
 - The Government Of The Roman Empire! And:
 - He Was Writing To:
 - The Church That Existed In The Capital City Of Rom Itself!
- And - Even Though, At Times, Paul Experienced:
 - Some Of The Best Benefits:
 - Of Being A Roman Citizen:
 - He Also Experienced:
 - Some Of Rome’s Worst Abuses As Well!
 - And Yet - He Could Rest In The Fact That:
 - “The Powers That Be Are Ordained Of God!”
- And - It Is For These Reasons:
 - As Citizens *Of* Christ:
 - And Our Heavenly Home!
 - We Need To Be:
 - Citizens *For* Christ:
 - In Our Earthly Home!
 - And - “Be Subject Unto The Higher Powers” That:
 - God Himself Has Placed:
 - Over Us - In Order To:
 - Further & Fulfill His Purpose!
 - And Then - Rest Assured That:
 - God Remains The:
 - Supreme Authority:
 - Over All Other Authorities:
 - In This World!

* But Then - Second - We Also Need To Submit To Our Superiors Because Of:

2. ***The Force Of Their Authority!***

- Which We Find In:
 - 13:2 - “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation!”
 - In This Verse - We Find That:
 - Submission To Authority Is - At Its Core:
 - A Spiritual Issue:
 - Not A Political One!
 - Because - How You Respond:
 - To The Earthly Authorities:
 - God Has Placed In Your Life:
 - Will Reflect - Your True Response:
 - To The Heavenly Authority Of God:
 - In Your Life!
 - So - What Is It Like:
 - When You Are Not “Subject Unto The Higher Powers?”
 - It Results In:
- Active Rebellion!
 - To “Resist The Power” Is The Polar Opposite Of:
 - Submission To Power! (13:1)
 - It Has The Idea Of:
 - Subversion!
 - So - I Believe - This Does Not Mean:
 - That Authorities & Governments:
 - Can’t Be Questioned Or Held Accountable By Its Citizens!
 - But - When There Is Active Rebellion:
 - To The Point Of Seeking To Destroy:
 - The Existing Order:
 - And Even - Any Order:
 - Through Anarchy & Lawlessness:
 - That Is Wrong!

- And Christians Are Not To Be Involved:
 - In Any Way!
- Because - There Is A Big Difference:
 - In Pursuing Change:
 - In Society & Government:
 - With An Attitude:
 - Of Submission!
 - Than With An Attitude:
 - Of Subversion!
- And The Reason Why:
 - We Are Not To Resist & Oppose Authority:
 - In A Rebellious & Subversive Way:
 - Is Because It Reveals:
- Active Resistance:
 - Against God Himself!
 - 13:2 - “Whosoever Resisteth The Power, Resisteth The Ordinance Of God!”
 - The First Word Translated “Resist” Is Different Than The Second Word Translated “Resist!”
 - And Even Though:
 - Both Words Can Have The Same Meaning:
 - I Think There Is A Subtle Difference:
 - That I Think Will Help Us Understand Why:
 - Samuel Told Saul In 1 Samuel 15:23 - That - “Rebellion Is As The Sin Of Witchcraft!”
 - To “Resist The Power” Is More Of:
 - An Outward Resistance & Rebellion!
 - But - It Reveals An Even Greater:
 - Inward Resistance & *Stand Against*:
 - God Himself!
 - So Rebellion Against Authority:
 - Is An Outward Expression:
 - Of An Inward Resistance:
 - Against God & His Authority!
 - And So - Rebellion Against Authority:
 - Is A Spiritual Issue!
 - And You Need To Deal With This Issue:
 - Through The Gospel!
 - In Colossians 1:21 - Paul Reminds Us:
 - That We Are Born Into This World:
 - As Rebels Against God!
 - All Of Us Were:
 - “Alienated And Enemies In Our Minds By Wicked Works!”
 - But - Out Of Nothing But His Own Grace:
 - God The Father Sent Jesus His Son:
 - 1:20 - To “Make Peace Through The Blood Of His Cross, By Him To Reconcile All Things To Himself!”
 - And So - The Solution For:
 - Our Rebellion *Against* God:
 - Is To Be Redeemed & Reconciled *To* God:
 - Through Jesus Christ:
 - His Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection!
 - And When You Turn To & Trust In Him:
 - To Save You From Your Sin:
 - He Will Give You The Soft, Submissive Heart You Need:
 - To Respond To *All* Authority!
 - However - If You Persist In:
 - Resisting The Authority Of Man & The Authority Of God:
 - There Will Eventually Be An:
- Active Rebuke!
 - 13:2c - “And They That Resist Shall Receive To Themselves Damnation – Judgment!”

- And - I Don't Believe This Refers To:
 - The Judgment Of Man - But Rather:
 - The Judgment Of God!
- When You *Stand Against* God:
 - By Rebelling Against The Authorities:
 - He Has Placed In Your Life:
 - God Himself Will *Stand Against* You!
- Rebellion Is That Serious To God!
 - And That Is Why - As Citizens ***Of*** Christ:
 - We Need To Live As:
 - Dual-Citizens ***For*** Christ!
 - And - "Be Subject Unto The Higher Powers!"
 - Because When You Don't:
 - Rebellion Against:
 - The Authorities On Earth:
 - Is Just A Symptom Of:
 - A Greater Rebellion:
 - Against The Authority Of God!
- So - We Need To Submit To Our Superiors Because Of:
 - 1 - The Foundation Of Their Authority:
 - God!
 - 2 - The Force Of Their Authority:
 - It's A Spiritual Issue!

* But Then - Third - We Need To Submit To Our Superiors Because Of:

3. ***The Function Of Their Authority!***

- Which We Find Next In:
 - 13:3 - "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!"
 - In This Verse - Paul Transitions From:
 - Authority In General - To:
 - Authorities In Particular!
 - Which Is Why We Know He's Primarily Dealing With:
 - Government Authority!
 - He Calls Them - "Rulers!"
 - So - The Spirit Of Submission:
 - Is Not Just For:
 - The *Principle* Of Authority - Or:
 - The *Positions* Of Authority - But:
 - Even The *People* In Authority!
 - **IE:** I've Seen Memes & Bumper Stickers - Not Just After This Last Presidential Election - But Even After The One Before! Which Says - About The Current President & Administration - "Not My President!"
 - This Is ***Not*** To Be The Sentiment Of A Christian!
 - Because - Under The Government We Currently Have:
 - When Trump Was Elected:
 - He Was Your President!
 - And When Biden Was Elected:
 - He Became Our President!
 - So - This Applies To Everyone - No Matter What "Side Of The Aisle" You Are On!
 - Of Course - In Our Country - There Can Still Be Healthy Debate About The Election & The Issues At Hand:
 - But - Right Now - "The Powers That Be Are Ordained Of God!"
 - And So - We Are To:
 - Pray For Them - And:
 - As Best We Can - Help Them:
 - Fulfill Their God-Ordained Functions!
 - Which Are Two-Fold!
 - First Function - To Restrain Evil!
 - 13:3a - "For Rulers Are Not A Terror To Good Works. But To The Evil!"
 - This Is Part Of God's Design:

- For Government!
 - And - Even Though They Don't Always "Restrain Evil" - But Even Sometimes
 - "Promote Evil!"
- Yet - As A General Rule - Even The Worst Governments:
 - Have - To Some Degree:
 - Promoted That Which Is Good!
 - In Most Countries:
 - Laws Are Used To Restrain Evil:
 - Like Murder & Abuse & Theft!
 - Though There Is Still:
 - A Lot Of Inconsistency & Injustice:
 - There Was & Is Still A Desire For A Society Of Order!
- And - As Christians:
 - Especially In A Country Where We Do Have A Role & Voice In Our Government:
 - We Have The Privilege & Responsibility:
 - To Help Whoever Is In Power:
 - To Fulfil This Function!
 - Restrain Evil!
- Second Function - To Reward Good!
 - 13:3b - "Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same!"
 - Here - Paul Simply Says:
 - If You Don't Want To Be On The Receiving End Of:
 - Government's "Terror" To "The Evil" - Then:
 - "Do That Which Is Good!"
 - Because - What Is Good Before The Lord:
 - Is What Is Best For The World:
 - Whether People Realize It Or Not!
 - Even As We Are Told In:
 - Proverbs 14:34 - "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people!"
 - But - The Best Citizens Are & Have Always Been:
 - Christian Citizens!
 - And We Still Should Be!
 - Even As We Apply What Paul Told Timothy:
 - In 1 Timothy 2:1-3 - "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!"
- And This Is How - As Citizens **Of** Christ:
 - We Can Live As:
 - Citizens **For** Christ:
 - In The Country God Has Given Us!
 - We Need To Submit To Our Superiors:
 - Because Of Their God-Given Functions:
 - To Reward Good & Restrain Evil!

* And Then - Fourth - We Need To Submit To Our Superiors Because Of:

4. The Form Of Their Authority!

- That Is - They Are - According To 13:4:
 - "Ministers & Servants Of God!"
 - "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!"
- I Can Imagine This Being:
 - A Big Shock:
 - To The Christians There In Rome!
 - Because - Likely - At The Time This Was Written:
 - Nero Was The Emperor:
 - Who Was No Friend Of Christians!
- And So - Two Times:

- Paul Gives This As Another Reason:
 - Why We Need To:
 - “Be Subject Unto The Higher Powers!”
 - Its Because:
 - “He Is The Minister Of God!”
- Now This Is True:
 - Whether A Leader:
 - Knows This Or Embraces This:
 - Or Not!
 - Because - As We Are Told In:
 - Proverbs 21:1 - “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will!”
- God Remains The Supreme Authority:
 - From Heaven - Over Any:
 - Superior Authority:
 - He Has Placed On Earth!
- And So - For Christians:
 - They Are:
- Ministers For Good!
 - There Is Much Good & Benefit For The Church:
 - That Comes Through:
 - A Well-Governed Society:
 - Even Like Rome!
 - For Example:
 - It Was The Infrastructure Of Rome:
 - That Was Used By Paul & The Other Apostles:
 - To Travel The Empire With The Good News Of The Gospel!
 - It Was The Peace of Rome:
 - The “Pax Romana” That Enabled Christians To Travel:
 - From City To City - Bringing Their Faith With Them!
 - And So - Even Today:
 - There Is Much Good & Benefit:
 - Derived From Civil Authorities:
 - That We Can Use To Further Our Own Service & Ministry:
 - For Christ!
 - This Is Why - Like The Israelites:
 - When They Were Taken Captive To Babylon:
 - Were Encouraged To:
 - Jeremiah 29:7 - “Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace!”
 - But There Is Still More To Their Ministry:
 - As God’s Servants! They Are Also:
- Ministers Of Wrath!
 - 13:4b - “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!”
 - At First - It Seems A Bit Surprising:
 - That Paul Would Warn The Church:
 - In This Way!
 - But - Is It Really That Surprising? Sadly, Not Anymore!
 - But - We Must Remember That:
 - Even Though We Are Citizens Of Heaven:
 - We Are Dual-Citizens On Earth:
 - And We Are Not Above:
 - Man’s Law!
 - And - When Those Laws:
 - Do Not Conflict With God’s Law:
 - We Are To Submit & Comply!
 - Otherwise, We May Have To Learn The Hard Way That:
 - God Has Also Given Government The Authority:

- To “Wield The Sword” As:
 - An Agent Of Justice!
- Not Only:
 - For The Defense:
 - Of Her Citizens!
 - But For Their Discipline:
 - As Well!
 - Even, When Appropriate:
 - To The Death!
- And This Is Why - As Citizens *Of* Christ:
 - We Need To Live As:
 - Faithful Citizens *For* Christ:
 - In Our Own Country!
 - We Need To Submit To Our Superiors:
 - Because They Are:
 - The Ministers / Servants Of God!

Conclusion:

1. And When Those Superiors:
 - See Evil For What It Is - And:
 - Pursue After Truth & Justice:
 - That Government Is Good:
 - In The Sight Of God!
 - In Fact - Good Government:
 - Is Another Display:
 - Of God’s Grace To This World!
2. But - Even When:
 - Our Government Does Not Live Up To:
 - The Ideal God Has For Them:
 - The Only Qualification We Find In The Pages Of Scripture Is This:
 - Acts 5:29 - “We Ought To Obey God Rather Than Men!”
 - But Even Then:
 - We Do So With A Submissive:
 - And Not A Subversive Spirit!
 - Because 12:21 Still Applies:
 - Even When Our Authorities:
 - Forget Their Functions:
 - And Start Rewarding The Evil & Restraining The Good!
 - “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good!”
3. So - Let Us Remember:
 - By God’s Grace:
 - To “Be Subject Unto The Higher Powers!”
 - And Be The Best Citizens We Can Be:
 - *For* Christ!

Grace Baptist Church
Stephen Elmer, Pastor
 4245 North 200 West
 Greenfield, Indiana 46140
 317-326-2362
www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace
www.growatgrace.org
pastor-elmer@hotmail.com