

# Human Government and Rendering What is Due

📖 Romans 13:6-7

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

📅 January 24, 2016

🌐 [fbgbible.org](http://fbgbible.org)

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

We are working with a very important topic in Romans 13:1-7; the responsibility of every soul to the governing authorities. That responsibility may be summed up in one word; submit. The word submit is a key word because it implies that there is an authority structure in place and that we are to line up in the proper order of rank. It is an authority structure that was arranged by God. He is the one who gave human government. We are to submit to them. In our country that message is not being well-received anymore. There is a lot of resistance to the government. What has happened that led to this resistance? What has happened over the course of many decades in our country is first, a decrease in decisive leadership and second, an increase in rebellion against authority. It is axiomatic that when decisive leadership disappears rebellion appears. The problem really got going in our country in the 1940's in the homes when fathers stopped exercising decisive leadership. Those under their charge, both wives and children saw an opportunity to rebel and they took it. Tom Brokaw said that the WWII generation was the greatest generation but he was sorely mistaken. That generation by and large had many problems people do not want to see and they made a great contribution to the problems we are facing today. Lack of decisive leadership then moved out into society as manifested through the civil rights movements of the 1960's and 70's. This was saying we don't like the authority structure; we want to be the authority. Every man was doing what was right in his own eyes. This is a society that is working apart from any absolutes. It moved into the church, which had its own movements parallel to the civil rights movements in the formation of liberation and feminist theology. This is simple rebellion and it formed in a context where decisive leadership disappeared. That is always the way it is.

Now our society and the whole world is racing toward rebellion and lawlessness and there is no letting up on the accelerator. It is my contention that when the Church is removed at the rapture the final pillars of law and order will have been removed and the world will plunge into a time of unparalleled lawlessness. That is one reason it is so important that we do not contribute to this lawlessness. Ryrie says, "Christians today must be certain they are not contributing to this climate of lawlessness in any sphere of life."<sup>1</sup> He is correct, we are to be the last vestiges of law and order in society. Let me assure you that Paul did not just say this here in Romans 13:1-7. He also said this in Titus 3:1, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good

deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men." That is very similar to Romans 13:1. And let me assure you that Paul was not the only one who said this. Peter said this too in 1 Peter 2:13, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." It is important that we are law-abiding citizens and that by doing good the mouths of men who might condemn us are silenced. This is especially important now since we live in a world that is racing toward total lawlessness. It seems to me that if we are to be the last vestiges of law keeping and order in society then when we are removed it will be a deep and dark plunge of the world into lawlessness. According to history it will not take long for them to grow tired of chaos and begin to call out for a king, someone who will restore law and order just like the Israelites did at the end of the time of the judges. What lawlessness provides is the perfect context for a powerful dictator to move into position. That powerful dictator will be the anti-Christ. He will make great boasts of his abilities to restore peace and world order. Accompanied by signs and wonders the whole world will be deceived by his wickedness and will enthrone and worship him. Ironically he is described in 2 Thess 2 as "the lawless one." So a lawless one will, under the guise of law and order, come to power. This is the direction the world is going and so it is so important that we remember Romans 13:1, "to be in subjection to the governing authorities" and Titus 3:1, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities," and 1 Peter 2:13, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution." We do not want to contribute to the lawlessness and chaos. We want to follow the law, lead by example and insist that the governing officials also follow the law and lead by example.

It is interesting to note that not one passage in the NT gives any exceptions to this rule. What we do find is examples of Christians being faced with governing authorities who require Christians to disobey God. For example, Peter was told he could not preach the name of Christ. What did he do? He committed disobedience against the rulers of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Another example is Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego who were told they must worship a phony idol. What did they do? Committed civil disobedience. So then *the balance and conclusion of the issue is that Christians have two realms of responsibility, one earthly and one heavenly, and that the only justification for disobeying the earthly is that it is in conflict with the heavenly.*

We now come to 13:6. This is still dealing with our relationship to the government. It is our responsibility to pay taxes. I don't know anyone who likes paying taxes. But this is necessary as a corollary to government. If you don't have a government then there are no taxes but if there is a government, and God gave government, then there are taxes. And if you don't pay your taxes eventually you're going to be audited, arrested and fined or imprisoned. That is what happened to a Christian man named Kent Hovind who had a young earth creationist ministry. He had some good stuff but he made some bad arguments and some worse decisions. He refused to pay his taxes for a number of years because he disagreed with our government. He ended up obstructing federal agents and was sentenced to ten years in prison. That was back in January of 2007. He just got out on probation in August of 2015. It ruined his whole ministry. Is that what you want? Your credibility before the world to be

shot? We have a responsibility to pay taxes in order to support the governing officials. It doesn't say only some forms of government. It just says the government. Form is not the issue, it doesn't matter whether it's an aristocracy, a democracy, an oligarchy, a monarchy or the republic for which I stand. Whatever nation on earth a Christian is a citizen of, he is responsible to pay taxes.

The Greek word **pay** is *τελειτε* and carries the sense of "carrying out an obligation." The Greek word translated **taxes** is *φορους*. It comes from the word *φερω* which means "to bear, to carry." Together the picture is the obligation we have of bringing something to the governing authorities and in our case money. Two reasons are set forth in 13:6. First, **because rulers are servants of God**. In 13:4 the rulers were said to be **ministers of God**. These are two different words. The word **minister** applied to a civil authority seems strange to many who view the pastor or a deacon as a minister of God. However, seeing that all civil authority is given by God we can understand that they are ministers of God as well. The difference is pastors and deacons minister in the spiritual sphere whereas civil authorities minister in the physical sphere. The two spheres of ministry are not contradictory but complementary. That was verse 4. Now in verse 6 a different word is used of governing authorities. Here they are said to be **servants of God**. This is the word *leitourgoi* and refers to one who serves in a public office. Importantly it was used of the priests who served in the temple. Remember that the priests were supported by the tithe in Israel. The tithe was a tax. There were three taxes. First, a 10% tax on your annual income was used to support the priests. Second, another 10% tax on your annual income was used to have a big party in Jerusalem. Third, another 10% of your annual income was used every third year to support local Levites, foreigners, widows and orphans who couldn't hold title to land. So the average annual tax in Israel worked out to 23 1/3%. Why then did Paul choose this word? The answer seems to be tied up with the fact of public service and the next phrase. Second, they **devote themselves to this very thing**. The Greek word **devote** means "to be busily engaged in." Paul is saying they offer a public service that they are busily engaged in. This means they spend their days in public service and so they don't have time to earn a living by working another job. This is true of both governing officials and the priests. Both are servants of God in public office, both are busily engaged in their service and therefore both are to be supported by tax dollars. So governing officials are very similar to priests and therefore both are described as **servants of God** and should receive support from tax dollars.

Now the problem Paul is probably addressing at Rome is the fact that many Jews had a difficult time bending the knee to Gentile rulers and paying taxes. Once God redeemed them out of Egypt at the Exodus they were freed from Gentile bondage and paying the taxes was a form of bondage. When they went into Exile to Babylon and God gave sovereignty to Gentile kings and kingdoms it caused a problem for many Jews. Certain Jews like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were specifically given as examples for how a Jew could live in submission to Gentile rulers so long as those rulers did not command something contrary to what God commanded. So this went on for several centuries under Babylon, then Medo-Persia, then Greece and finally Rome. During these centuries various groups and their response to Gentile rule developed. These groups are all present in the gospels; the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians and the Zealots. They all had different views.

The Herodians for example, favored the rule of the Herod's, they thought it was politically expedient to pay taxes to Rome. Then there were the Zealots. They were on the opposite end of the spectrum, they hated Roman rule and they refused to pay taxes. The Pharisees were not as radical as the Zealots but they were definitely against paying taxes to Rome.

Turn to a passage in Matt 22:15 that addresses this very issue. Didn't Jesus handle this in the Gospels? Didn't this question come to Him? This is where the Pharisees are plotting to trap Jesus. They sent their disciples and some of the Herodians. These were two groups that never joined forces and so the fact they join forces shows they both agreed that Jesus had to go. So they came and tested him saying, verse 17, "Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" "But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." This is a wonderful answer but that is not the answer they were looking for. They wanted a simple yes or no. They wanted Him to get embroiled in a controversy and isolate Himself from one or more groups. But His answer avoided the trap and left them speechless. Basically His answer was that there are two spheres and we have a responsibility in both. This should not have continued to be a problem for Christians but as a matter of fact it continued to be a problem and so Paul had to address it so turn to Acts 17:6. Just because someone becomes a Christian does not mean that all their views suddenly become Christian views. We carry a lot of baggage over from the non-Christian life. Probably some of that baggage is in view in this passage and it led to the charge that Christians were opposed to Roman authority. This was when Paul was in Thessalonica and as was his custom he went to the Jew first. He was at the synagogue explaining the OT scriptures and giving evidence that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again. And of course, some Jews believed this message and some didn't like it at all. Paul faced his greatest persecutions from Jews. So in verse 5 they form a mob and the whole town is in chaos and they're looking for Paul but they can't find Paul and so they go to the house of Jason who was known to have given Paul lodging and in verse 6 we read. "When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting," and watch the charges. This is an interesting charge. "These men who have upset the world have come here also;" Now I don't know how you take that but that's what I consider a backhanded compliment. They mean to criticize them but if I were charged with having upset the entire world by my teaching I would consider that the biggest compliment I ever received and Luke cites a number of these that show the impact Christianity was having on the world. In any case, look further at the charge because if this is anywhere close to the truth then it gives you an idea of what the early Christians were thinking. Verse 7, "and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." If that is an accurate charge you can see that the general public viewed Christians as not loyal to Caesar. So this problem persisted and it carried over to taxes since paying taxes is necessarily related to one's submission to governing authority.

This remains a problem today and one's view toward taxes is reflective of his view of government in general. What are some of the things Christians say about paying taxes? One thing that is argued is that, "the government doesn't spend my tax dollars wisely." I know that many government agencies come to the end of the year and come up with useless projects to spend our tax dollars on just to justify the same amount of funding the next year. But there is nothing we can do about that other than elect representatives that will do something about it or bring lawsuits against them for irresponsible spending. But the bottom line is we still have to pay our taxes. Another argument Christians make is "The government spends my tax dollars on abortion." That is true. The government keeps funding Planned Parenthood and other abortion industry leaders. But again, there is nothing we can do about that except elect representatives that will do something about it or bring lawsuits against them for spending our money on immoral things and take them to court. And this has been done, this is being done. We need to speak out. We don't like it that 57 million babies have been aborted since 1973. We think that is a pro-murder position. We don't like our tax dollars going to that but we still have to pay our taxes. I'm sure that the Roman government did not spend all the tax dollars on moral programs consistent with the Bible but Jesus still said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and that is something we have to live with.

But that is not all that we are to "render." Taxes are one thing but in 13:7 Paul uses the exact same word for "render" that Jesus used in Matt 22, inclining us to think that he is commenting on Jesus' original statement. Here he says, **Render to all what is due them.** The **all** refers to all governing authorities who are servants of God and ministers of God. Something is due all of them and we are to **render** to all of them **what is due them.** First, we are to **render...tax to whom tax is due.** The word for **tax** is the same word used in verse 6 for "tax." It refers to things like income tax and property tax. While I am not a fan of property tax and I think it is more like property theft and I would prefer they levy that revenue from a different kind of tax, it is nevertheless a tax that I must pay. Second, **render...custom to whom custom is due.** The word **custom** is from *τελος*, a word that usually means "end, goal or completion," but here refers to something reaching its destination and so to the tax on items that are imported or exported. Some people try to smuggle things across the border in order to avoid this tax but this is a tax that we should pay. Third, **render...fear to whom fear is due.** The word **fear** is *φοβον* from which we get -phobia. We truly should fear the governing authorities if we have done something evil. But that is not what is in view. The word here refers to "respect." We are to give respect to governing authorities because it is due them and before we comment on this I want to join it with the final thing we are to render. And finally **render...honor to whom honor is due.** The word **honor** is *τιμην* and means a "manifestation of esteem, honor, reverence." In many ways honor and respect go together so we want to spend a little time on this getting our toes stepped on. What this is saying is that we owe governing officials, all governing officials, honor and respect. This may seem impossible considering the fact we may disagree with their policies and lawlessness but this is true nonetheless. Alva J. McClain says, "No matter what the character of a man may be, we are to respect his office because he holds that office by divine commission, and we are to uphold the regular, divinely constituted authorities and

not to help the world in its chaos of lawlessness." I am as guilty as the next guy on this. What this is saying is that we need to honor President Obama and all other governing authorities, all of them. It is not proper for a Christian to write or advance letters and e-mails that run our leaders into the ground simply because we disagree with their policies, dislike their character, question their motives, etc....When we do that we are acting like non-Christians. We are acting like the world and living by the flesh. Instead we ought to write letters and e-mails and do public speaking that verbally acknowledges our utmost respect and honor for each and every one of our governing authorities. As you know it is very easy to enter the fray into disrespecting the leaders of our country and consequently this is a very serious area of Scripture that is being disobeyed by most Christians, self included on numerous occasions.

Turn to Acts 23 because the Bible has not left us without witness to this very real issue. This is an occasion where Paul actually has a verbal exchange with the authorities in Jerusalem and he didn't know who he was talking to but when he realizes who he is talking to he very much gets back into a respectful posture. Notice 23:1, "Paul, looking intently at the Council," this was the Sanhedrin, they weren't civic authorities but religious authorities and Rome had given them quite a bit of authority. Paul said to them, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." <sup>2</sup>The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth." Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?" So this is Paul holding a governing official's feet to the fire. You can't just break the Law. "But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" That is, are you criticizing a public official? Are you disrespecting a ruler? <sup>5</sup>And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.' " So Paul, for whatever reason did not recognize Ananias, some suggest because he had poor eyesight. But when it came to his attention he immediately backed down from his accusations. Why did Paul do that? Because Paul respected and honored governing authorities and what he was saying was not respecting and honoring them. We need to follow this example and stop disrespecting governing authorities.

Now I realize how easy it is to jump into the fray of criticizing and even disrespecting our President, House Speaker, Supreme Court Justices, and other rulers. I am here to say that it is not only improper but it's sinful and what was once a benign lump has become a malignant cancer in this country. Turn to 1 Tim 2:1-2 and tell me how we can do this with all sincerity and at the same time berate our President and rulers. "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." Are we doing this? How can we in one breath pray for them and in the next berate them? Is that consistent? Does that reflect a proper Christian behavior and attitude?

Turn to James 3:8. This is the most extensive passage on the tongue and the incongruity of so much of what comes out of that filthy thing with lips on the front of your face. What did James say about the tongue that is the

greatest bit of wisdom ever spoken about the tongue? That it is an enigma. In James 3:8 he says, "No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men (the President), who has been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way." He is exactly right. This is the word of God. This is not optional. Nature he says, even itself teaches us this. "Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh." Yet that is what the tongue does. It is a great enigma. With it we bless and pray and then curse and dishonor. Friend, this only contributes to the lawlessness that characterizes our day and further propels our world and nation toward the end of days. What could we do that would make a unique contribution in this lawless nation? What about blessing our President, blessing our Supreme Court Justices, blessing our Speaker of the House and all our ruling authorities. What effect might that have on our political opponents? Might it not heap burning coals on their head? We respect authority and the men who bear that authority regardless of their policies, behaviors and ideology because they are made in the image of God and it is the command of God. We can still project our differences but we must maintain our Christian dignity by doing it with the utmost respect and integrity for those in office. What a difference that approach might make in our nation and our world if only we were willing to lay aside our fury and disrespect and dishonor and pick up our Christian armor and truly live as Christians who are not heirs of this world but of the world to come. Taking this approach we actually come from a place of strength, but to reduce ourselves to the filth of the earth to make our point is despicable and un-Christian in every form and fashion. This is an issue that many Christians need to repent of. We need to have a change of mind about this endless berating of our President, especially when our next breath is to request of God that He bless our country. I do not hesitate to state that He will not listen to that prayer.

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, "The Christian and Civil Disobedience," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127 (1970): 162.