

Leader's Guide

LESSON 22

Dr. Jerry Nelson

In response to the sermon on February 17th.

Romans 13:1-7 **God's Sovereignty in Governing Affairs**

Key Points

After examining the practical application of love for one another, love for both believers and unbelievers, we turn our attention to our attitudes and actions in one of the most difficult challenges of Christ-like love: respect and honor for rulers and authorities. In this passage we will face challenges as it relates to:

- Submission to governing authorities
- Temptations for rebellion and disrespect
- God's divine appointment for those in authority
- Paying what is owed: taxes, respect, honor

As we consider the corruption of government, misspent funds from hard-working taxpayers, political doubletalk, the gay agenda and abortion rights, we shake our heads in disbelief and raise our fists in outrage. We fear that the United States is quickly becoming a godless nation. Do we owe corrupt officials honor or respect? How do we respond with a Christ-like attitude to the suffering enabled by sin? As a believer, what is our response?

This is the challenge of our text today. The Apostle Paul was not writing to a people living in an ideal, political climate that was free from corruption. It was quite the contrary. If you recall the story of Antonius BarDavid (pg. 7 of the Introduction), you will be reminded of the difficult circumstances that Christians faced under Roman rule. Yet it was to this very audience that Paul addresses this topic of respecting and obeying those in authority.

Corruption produces injustice, and injustice usually results in anger. When is it righteous anger, how do we respond in a godly manner? Conversely, when do we cross a line and spill over into unrighteous acts of disobedience that bring dishonor to God and to ourselves? Our current political climate sets us up for all kinds of temptations that we must identify and resist, lest the name of Christ be dishonored and we, ourselves, succumb to sin.

Personal Reflection

- This topic stirs deep emotions within each of us. We see so much sin and injustice in our nation today. Sin and suffering, especially when it can be prevented, gives way to outrage. How do you respond? Make a list of ways that you are tempted to respond in an ungodly manner. What do these produce in you and in others? Make a list of ways that you can respond in a manner that is consistent with scripture and pleasing to God. What makes you want to choose list A over list B? How do you resist these temptations? In what ways can you live out this passage?
- Pray diligently. Many in your group may struggle with this passage, yet the truth of the scriptures must stand. We must have the courage to live counter-culturally, especially when it is popular within our culture to ridicule the government. Unless the Spirit grants understanding and insight, these discussions could produce divisions and/or disunity. May God grant us love for one another that supersedes our individual political views.

Discussion Questions

1. Who are the authorities to whom God would have us submit?
2. Why and how are we tempted to rebel against those authorities?
3. Would it ever be right to rebel against them? If so, under what circumstances would it be permissible to rebel?
4. Does this passage contradict the teaching found in Acts 5:27-32 (Sanhedrin told the Apostles not to teach about Jesus) if the government were to prohibit the teaching of scripture?
5. How can we have a joyful heart about paying taxes? How does this message (Romans 13:1-7) compare with the laws and moral standards of the USA?
6. The culture makes sport of our governing officials. From comedians to talk show hosts to the media, every word, personal mannerism, and contradiction is up for scrutiny and mockery. Sound bites are often taken out of context to further an opposing political agenda. Is this disrespect?
7. Do we owe respect to our politicians when they live seemingly hypocritical lives? Is it ever okay to dishonor or disrespect them?
8. Are there godly ways to respond?