

Exegetical Notes - Romans 13:1-7

“Living Sacrifices & Authorities ”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

charleshjensen@aol.com

Romans 13:1-7

Verse 1

Let everyone submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

- All Christians are to place themselves under the governing authorities because God has established them. If God has established the governing authorities, their authority is not higher than God's.
- The “governing authorities” are those who occupy positions in civil government. At the time of Paul's writing these words, those authorities would have been pagan and not followers of Jesus. None-the-less they hold office because of God, even if they do not know him.
- Paul gives the same instruction in Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13-16.

Verse 2

Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

- Since God has established these authorities, to rebel against them is rebelling against what God has established. One who rebels against these authorities risks God's judgment simply because God has established civil government.

Verses 3-4a

³For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. ⁴For the one in authority is God's servant for your good.

- Rulers are established by God to protect the innocent. Therefore, a righteous person has no need to be concerned. The ruler will commend him

because he is doing what is right. The authority is the friend of a person who seeks to do what is good.

Verse 4b

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

- Rulers are established by God to punish those who do wrong. To protect the innocent, rulers must punish those who are not innocent.
- The purposes of civil government are two-fold: the protection of the innocent and the punishment of those who do wrong. These purposes are interconnected. The innocent are not protected when wrongdoers go unpunished. The civil authorities lose their authority when they fail to fulfill their God-given purposes.

Verse 5

Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

- When civil authorities work to accomplish the purposes assigned to them by God, Christians submit to them for their protection and because it is God's will for them to do so.

Verses 6-7

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷ Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

- Christians pay taxes to support civil government because governing authorities, working to accomplish their God-given purposes, are God's servants.
- Christians honor their debts (see Romans 13:8). Not all debts are financial. Taxes, revenue (tolls and charges levied to do business), respect, and honor are among the "debts" Christians owe and pay.

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