

THE EPISTLES TO THE ROMANS

ROMANS 12:1-15:13, THE PRACTICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
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 - a. Devotion to God and humility toward others (12:1-8)
 - b. Exhibiting love to everyone in every situation (12:9-21)
 - c. Concerning Christian obligations (13:1-21)
 - 1) The Christian's obligation to governing authorities (1-7)
 - 2) The Christian's obligation to the Law (8-10)
 - 3) The Christian's obligation in light of Christ's return (11-14)

B. Comments on Romans 13

1. John Stott, *In Romans 12 Paul has developed our four basic Christian relationships, namely to God (1-2), to ourselves (3-8), to one another (9-16) and to our enemies (17-21). In Romans 13 he develops three more—to the state (conscientious citizenship, 1-7), to the law (neighbour-love as its fulfilment, 8-10), and to the day of the Lord's return (living in the 'already' and the 'not yet', 11-14).*
2. Concerning Paul's inclusion of Romans 13:1-7 which deals with submission to governing authorities.
 - a. John Stott, *That church and state have different roles, and that Christians have duties to both God and the state was clearly implied in Jesus' enigmatic epigram, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's' Mark 12:17).*
 - b. Grant Osborne, *It would be logical for Paul to follow up a discussion on persecution with a section on the major source of persecutors for Christians, the Roman government. The challenge in 12:9, 14, 17, to respond to evil oppression with good deeds would naturally lead to this section, so it makes perfect sense just where it is.*
3. William Hendriksen, *Paul does not, within the compass of these few verses, give us a complete treatise on the respective rights of church and state. He does not give us explicit answers to such questions as, "If the government orders me to do one thing, and God, through his Word, tells me to do the opposite, what must I do?" and "Does the moment ever arrive when, because of continued governmental oppression and corruption, the citizens have the right, and perhaps even the duty, to overthrow such a government and to establish another in its place?"...inquiries into such matters lie beyond the sphere of Paul's immediate interest.*

ROMANS 13:1-14, CONCERNING CHRISTIAN OBLIGATIONS

A. The Christian's obligation to governing authorities (1-7)

1. Christians are to be subject to governing authorities (1a), ***Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.***
 - a. Introductory notes
 - 1) John Witmer on the context of Paul's discussion on submission to governing authorities, *Rome was the imperial capital, the seat of the empire's civil government. As residents in Rome, Paul's initial readers were aware of both the glory and the shame of that city in the days of Nero, who reigned from A.D. 54 to 68. But they were also citizens of Christ's kingdom (Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:13). Appropriately, therefore, Paul discussed a Christian's relationship to his government and civil rulers.*
 - 2) John Stott on historical models concerning the relationship of church and state, *Relations between church and state have been notoriously controversial throughout the Christian centuries. To oversimplify, four main models have been tried—Erastianism (the state controls the church), theocracy (the church controls the state), Constantinianism (the compromise in which the state favours the church and the church accommodates to the state in order to retain its favour), and partnership (church and state recognize and encourage each other's distinct God-given responsibilities in a spirit of constructive collaboration). The fourth seems to accord best with Paul's teaching in Romans 13.*

- b. Paul's command to *every person* is to Christians, specifically.
- 1) It should be applied to the unsaved, as well, as noted by Douglas Moo, *Submission to governing authorities is especially incumbent on Christians who recognize that the God they serve stands behind those authorities, but it is required even for those who do not know this.*
 - 2) C. E. B. Cranfield, *The phrase is emphatic: no Christian is to imagine himself exempt from the obligation indicated.*
- c. *be subject to the governing authorities*
- 1) *be subject*
 - a) It means *to submit to the orders or directives of someone.*
 - b) It had been primarily a military term, *to rank under.*
 - c) Titus 3:1, *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,*
 - 2) *governing authorities*
 - a) The word *governing* carries the meaning *to tower, to surpass, to amount to more.*
 - b) The word *authorities* means *government officials.*
 - c) Paul is not speaking of the emperor only but those who have positions of authority over others.
 - d) 1 Peter 2:13-14, *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.*
 - 3) The best understanding of *be subject* is *respect of position*. Obedience is not obligatory solely based on the governing authority's position but on his command which is or is not in line with God's Word.
 - a) C. E. B. Cranfield, *...the Christian's (submission) to the authorities is limited to respecting them, obeying them so far as such obedience does not conflict with God's laws, and seriously and responsibly disobeying them when it does...*
 - b) Douglas Moo, *Paul calls on believers to "submit" to governing authorities rather than to "obey" them; and Paul's choice of words may be important to our interpretation and application of Paul's exhortation. To submit is to recognize one's subordinate place in a hierarchy, to acknowledge as a general rule that certain people or institutions have "authority" over us...It is this general posture toward government that Paul demands here of Christians. And such a posture will usually demand that we obey what the governing authorities tell us to do. But perhaps our submission to government is compatible with disobedience to government in certain exceptional circumstances. For heading the hierarchy of relations in which Christians find themselves is God; and all subordinate "submissions" must always be measured in relationship to our all-embracing submission to him.*
 - c) John Stott, *We need to be cautious, however, in our interpretation of Paul's statements. He cannot be taken to mean that all the Caligulas, Herods, Neros and Domitians of New Testament times, and all the Hitlers, Stalins, Amins and Saddams of our times, were personally appointed by God, that God is responsible for their behaviour, or that their authority is in no circumstances to be resisted. Paul means rather that all human authority is derived from God's authority, so that we can say to rulers what Jesus said to Pilate, 'You would have no power [exousia, authority] over me if it were not given to you from above.' Pilate misused his authority to condemn Jesus; nevertheless, the authority he used to do this had been delegated to him by God.*
 - d) William Barclay, *...we cannot entirely dissociate ourselves from the society in which we live and have a part. No one can, in conscience, opt out of the nation. As a part of it, we enjoy certain benefits which we could not have as individuals; but we cannot reasonably claim all the privileges and refuse all the duties. Just as individual Christians are part of the body of the Church, they are also part of the body of the nation; there is no such thing in this world as an isolated individual. Everyone has a duty to the state and must discharge that duty even if someone like Nero is on the throne.*
 - 4) Grant Osborne gives *three critical caveats* to Paul's command in Romans 12:1a.
 - a) *Submission does not indicate inferiority but a willing subordination.*
 - b) *The power of government over the saints is not absolute. Whenever society's rules contradict God's will, believers are obligated to pursue civil disobedience.*
 - c) *Submission does not depend on how "good" government is, and the Christian does not get a pass on submitting if government is evil.*

2. Reasons why Christians are to be subject to governing authorities (1b-5)
 - a. God will judge those who resist governing authorities (1b-2), ***For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.***
 - 1) All governing authorities have been instituted by God.
 - a) *Authority* in verse 1b is the same word Paul used for governing authorities in 1a.
 - b) Supporting verses
 - 1] Daniel 2:21, *He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;*
 - 2] Daniel 4:17, *...the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.*
 - 3] John 19:11, *Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."*
 - c) Comments
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *God has established three institutions to control life in our dispensation: the family (Gen. 2:18–25), the civil government (Gen. 9:1–7), and the church (Acts 2). In each institution there are authorities to whom we need to submit for God's will to go forward.*
 - 2] C. E. B. Cranfield, *...it is God who sets up (and overthrows) rulers, and that no one actually exercises ruling authority unless God has, at least for the time being, set him up.*
 - 3] Douglas Moo, *From a human perspective, rulers come to power through force or heredity or popular choice. But the "transformed mind" recognizes behind every such process the hand of God.*
 - 4] Grant Osborne, *God's authority is not restricted to the religious sphere. This is his created world, and he is in final charge over it. Officials do not possess authority inherently or due to political connections but entirely because God has given it.*
 - 2) There is judgment for those who resist God's appointed authorities.
 - a) *Resist*
 - 1] It means *oppose, be hostile toward, rebel, to set oneself against*
 - 2] Acts 18:6, *And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."*
 - 3] Douglas Moo, *As submission denotes a recognition of government's position over the Christian by God's appointment, so resistance is the refusal to acknowledge the authority of government. It denotes the attitude of one who will not admit that government has a legitimate right to exercise authority over him or her.*
 - b) *Appointed*
 - 1] It means *instituted, ordered, commanded.*
 - 2] Thomas Constable, *The Christian should acknowledge that the government under which he or she lives has received authority from God to govern regardless of whether it governs well or poorly.*
 - c) *Incur judgment*
 - 1] It means *bring condemnation resulting in punishment on oneself.*
 - 2] Jude 4, *For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*
 - 3] Douglas Moo, *...those who persistently oppose secular rulers, and hence the will of God, will suffer condemnation for that opposition.*
 - 4] Thomas Constable, *Refusal to submit to one's government is tantamount to refusing to submit to God. Those who resist God's ordained authority can expect to suffer condemnation by the government.*
 - d) *Judgment* may mean *civil punishment and/or divine punishment.*
 - a] C. E. B. Cranfield, *It is probable that...divine judgment is meant, and not just the civil power's reaction.*
 - b] John Witmer, *An individual who rebels against the authority, therefore, is rebelling against (lit., "has taken a stand against") what God has instituted (lit., "the ordinance of God"). Such persons are thus actually rebelling against God, and bring civil and/or divine judgment on themselves.*

- c] Grant Osborne, *This rebellion is not just a single act but a settled attitude, an ongoing life of opposition to the things of God. People's continuous refusal to obey God's laws will "bring judgment on themselves," probably both divine judgment and the legal penalties of the law courts...the emphasis is on immediate punishment (the human side) leading to final judgment (the divine side).*
- 3) Concerning Christian civil disobedience
- a) Acts 5:28-29, ... *"We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.*
- b) John Stott, *How, then, can it be shown that Paul's demand for submission is not absolute? Granted that the authority of rulers is derived from God, what happens if they abuse it, if they reverse their God-given duty, commending those who do evil and punishing those who do good? Does the requirement to submit still stand in such a morally perverse situation? No. The principle is clear. We are to submit right up to the point where obedience to the state would entail disobedience to God. But if the state commands what God forbids, or forbids what God commands, then our plain Christian duty is to resist, not to submit, to disobey the state in order to obey God.*
- c) Charles Colson on the purpose of Christian civil disobedience, ...*to demonstrate their submissiveness to God, not their defiance of government.*
- d) Charles Hodge, *The gospel is equally hostile to tyranny and anarchy.*
- b. Obedience to governing authorities brings God's approval since their purpose is to maintain order in society (3-4)
- 1) Introductory note
- a) Paul appears to be using chiasm where two or more points are made with the middle point being his emphasis.
- 1] The chiasmatic structure of Romans 13:3-4
- a] A1 concerns doing evil (3a).
- b] B1 concerns doing good (3b).
- c] B2 concerns doing good (4a).
- d] A2 concerns doing evil (3b).
- 2] I believe Paul is emphasizing his points to Christians who should be seeking to do good.
- 3] Christians should obey governing authorities established by God as a way of honoring Him.
- 2) Governing authorities are to discourage evil (3a, 4b), ***For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad...But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.***
- a) The proper role of governing authorities is to be a terror to bad conduct not to good conduct.
- 1] 1 Peter 2:14, *or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.*
- 2] John Stott, *Not only has God appointed them (v. 1b), but he has also entrusted to them an important role in maintaining order in society. By punishing those who do wrong and rewarding those who do good, secular rulers are carrying out God's purposes in the world...Christians need only do the good that they are called to do under the gospel (cf. 12:2, 9, 17, and 21) if they want to avoid fear of the authorities.*
- b) They carry out God's wrath on those who do wrong.
- 1] Grant Osborne, *God has established the rulers of this world, so the one who "rebels against the authority," and the laws that God has instituted, rebels against God and brings judgment down upon their head.*
- 2] Warren Wiersbe, *God established human government because man is a sinner and must have some kind of authority over him. God has given the sword to rulers, and with it the authority to punish and even to execute.*
- 3] William Hendriksen, *The ruler bears that sword in order to instill fear of doing wrong; and, in order to inflict punishment when wrong has been done.*

- 3) Governing authorities are to promote good (3b-4a), *Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good.*
- a) There should be no fear of governing authorities for doing good.
- 1] 2 Chronicles 19:6, *and said to the judges, "Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment.*
 - 2] Titus 3:1, *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,*
 - 3] Grant Osborne, *Government is a friend to the righteous, but it is the enemy of evildoers, who face nothing but punishment for their crimes.*
 - 4] William Hendriksen, *Under normal conditions and circumstances the ruler, in the sphere of civil government, represents the divine will with respect to the people's conduct as citizens.*
 - 5] Douglas Mangum, *Government benefits its citizens by putting limits on evil. Paul does not deal in this passage with governments who fail to fulfill or exceed their divine mandate.*
- b) There will be praise from governing authorities for doing good.
- 1] 1 Peter 2:14, *or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.*
 - 2] Douglas Moo, *In fact, Paul concludes, doing good will not only bring freedom from fear; it will even result in praise from the rulers.*
 - 3] Some believe approval for doing good refers to public acknowledgment of those who are good citizens.
 - 4] C. E. B. Cranfield adds another emphasis, *The ruler helps the Christian toward 'the good' which God has in store for him, toward salvation...if he is a just ruler, by providing him with encouragement to do good and discouragement from doing evil...*
 - 5] William Hendriksen, *This does not necessarily mean that the person who does what is right is going to receive a merit badge, ribbon, medal of honor, or—speaking in terms of Paul's own day—that a monument will be erected for him. It does mean, however, that the one in authority will form a favorable opinion of that well-behaved person, and will, whether only in his heart or even by means of an openly expressed commendation, approve of him.*
- c) They are God's servant for good for those who do what is good.
- 1] 1 Timothy 2:1-2, *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*
 - 2] 1 Peter 2:13-17, *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, *On more than one occasion in his ministry, Paul used the Roman law to protect his life and to extend his work (note Acts 22:25-29; 25:8-11). The centurions mentioned in the Book of Acts appear to be men of character and high ideals. Even though government officials are not believers, they are still the "ministers of God" because He established the authority of the State.*
 - 4] William Hendriksen, *In his infinite kindness God, through Paul, caused this message to be delivered to the Roman church, in order that its members...might be kept from practicing evil, and might, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, turn to God for pardon and for strength to live orderly and sanctified lives.*
 - 5] William Barclay gives several reasons why it is good for Christians to pray for and submit to governing authorities.
 - a] *The Jews were notoriously rebellious...It may well be that Paul writes here with such inclusive de?nitiveness because he wished to dissociate Christianity altogether from rebellious Judaism, and to make it clear that Christianity and good citizenship went necessarily hand in hand.*
 - b] *...we cannot entirely dissociate ourselves from the society in which we live and have a part. No one can, in conscience, opt out of the nation. As a part of it, we enjoy certain benefits which we could not have as individuals; but we cannot reasonably claim all the privileges and refuse all the duties.*
 - c] *A state is essentially a body of people who have covenanted together to maintain certain relationships between each other by the observance of certain laws....Every ordinary man and woman owes security to the state, and is therefore under a responsibility to it.*

- d] *To the state, ordinary people owe a wide range of services which individually they could not enjoy. It would be impossible for everyone to have an individual water, light, sewage and transport system. These things are obtainable only when people agree to live together. And it would be quite wrong to enjoy everything the state provides and to refuse all responsibility to it.*
- e] *But Paul's main view of the state was that the Roman Empire was the divinely ordained instrument to save the world from chaos. Take away that empire, and the world would disintegrate into ?ying fragments. It was in fact the pax Romana, the Roman peace, which gave the Christian missionaries the chance to do their work.*
- c. Obey governing authorities for the sake of one's conscience (5), ***Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.***
- 1) *Therefore* reminds the reader of the reason for being submissive to governing authorities in verses 3-4.
- a) It is to avoid possible punishment from the government and/or from God.
- 1] Grant Osborne, *...they are a source of fear for lawbreakers, because God has made government his instrument to punish all who do wrong.*
 - 2] Douglas Moo, *It is the Christian's recognition of this function, and the consequent fear of suffering wrath at the hands of the secular official, that should motivate submission...*
 - 3] Thomas Constable, *God's punishment may be during the Christian's lifetime or after that at the judgment seat of Christ. In this case the punishment might involve the loss of some reward that the believer would have received had he or she been submissive.*
- b) The second concerns one's internal responsibility to do what is right, note verse 5b.
- 2) *for the sake of conscience*
- a) *Conscience* means *moral consciousness, moral sensitivity, inner voice.*
- 1] It is the means by which a person may distinguish right from wrong.
 - 2] Douglas Mangum, *The word most frequently refers to the self-consciousness that evaluates one's own behavior as good or bad and encourages choosing what is good...Conscience in the NT is also presented as the witness of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart regarding that person's relationship to God.*
 - 3] W. E. Vine, *...the witness borne to one's conduct by conscience, that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God, as that which is designed to govern our lives."*
 - 4] Douglas Moo, *"Conscience" refers here to the believer's knowledge of God's will and purposes.*
- b) Note several verses.
- 1] Romans 2:14-15, *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them*
 - 2] Romans 9:1, *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—*
 - 3] 2 Corinthians 1:12, *For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.*
 - 4] 1 Timothy 1:5, *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*
- c) *Comments*
- 1] C. E. B. Cranfield, *Whereas the pagan fulfils his obligation to the state (if he does) for fear of punishment and perhaps also because he realizes that the state is, on the whole, beneficial to society, the Christian has a further, and all-important, reason for fulfilling his obligation to it, namely, his knowledge of the secret of the relation in which it stands to God and to Christ.*
 - 2] Douglas Moo, *The "necessity" for Christians to submit to government is therefore no mere practical expedient, a means of avoiding punishment; it arises ultimately from insight into God's providential ordering of human history... "Not being conformed to this world" does not require Christians to renounce every institution now in place in society. For some of them—such as government and marriage—reflect God's providential ordering of the world for our good and his glory.*

- 3] Grant Osborne, *The unbeliever will be most influenced by the “possible punishment,” the danger of facing the wrath of the government and a fine or prison time, whereas the Christian will be influenced more by conscience...It is the ability to discern what is right and the motivation to pursue what God would have us do, including obeying the laws of the land.*
 - 4] William Hendriksen, *It should be borne in mind that a Christian’s enlightened conscience is his sense of obligation to God. Note the words, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men” (1 Peter 2:13).*
3. Requirements for Christians concerning submission to governing authorities (6-7), ***For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.***
- a. *For because of this*
 - 1) It looks back to verse 5 which specifies the Christian’s responsibility to governing authorities, socially and spiritually.
 - 2) As noted by C. E. B. Cranfield, ... *the real ground of their doing so (paying taxes) is their knowledge of the place of civil authority in the divine purpose.*
 - b. Paul declares that Christians are to meet their obligations to governing authorities.
 - 1) It is because *authorities are ministers of God.*
 - a) Thomas Constable, *Government workers are indirectly God’s servants, and we should support God’s servants (Luke 10:7). Individual rulers may be unworthy, but the institution is not. Governments cannot function without incomes.*
 - b) John Witmer, ...*(Governing authorities) are supposed to give their full time to governing and need support through taxes from citizens, Christians included.*
 - c) *Attending to this very thing* refers to governmental responsibility as *ministers of God* (public servants) who must deal with the collection of taxes.
 - 2) Paul lists specific obligations required by Christians to governing authorities.
 - a) Fiscal
 - 1] *Taxes*
 - a] It means *tribute* as Jews gave to Caesar.
 - b] Luke 20:22, *Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?”*
 - c] Mark 12:17, *Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at him.*
 - d] Grant Osborne, ...*the direct tribute paid to Rome by a conquered nation, including the property tax and the poll tax (a census tax on individuals) collected by such tax collectors as Levi/Matthew (Mark 2:14). Roman citizens did not have to pay such taxes.*
 - 2] *Revenue*
 - a] It means *customs, duties.*
 - b] Grant Osborne, ...*there is the “revenue” or indirect taxes, in which everyone had to participate, such as sales tax, customs duty, and tolls.*
 - c] John Stott, *Taxation was widespread and varied in the ancient world, including a poll tax, land taxes, royalties on farm produce, and duty on imports and exports.*
 - 3] *Comments*
 - a] Warren Wiersbe, *Romans 13:7 commands us to pay what we owe: taxes, revenue, respect, honor. If we do not pay our taxes, we show disrespect to the law, the officials, and the Lord. And this cannot but affect the conscience of the believer. We may not agree with all that is done with the money we pay in taxes, but we dare not violate our conscience by refusing to pay.*
 - b] John Stott, ...*Christians should accept their tax liability with good grace, paying their dues in full, both national and local, direct and indirect, and also giving proper esteem to the officials who collect and apply them.*

b) Relational

1 *Respect*

- a] The word primarily means *to fear*.
- b] Thomas Constable, *He commanded his readers to respect (“fear”) those in positions of high authority because of their office if not for personal reasons.*
- c] Most Bible scholars believe this is speaking of higher authorities than those mentioned as deserving *honor*, note E. Gaugler, *“Fear” is the attitude which is owed to the highest official, the one who is preceded by the lictor, since he can decide between life and death.*
- d] Some believe the strength of the word’s usage in Scripture lends oneself to believe that Paul is speaking of *fearing God* as is His due.

2] *Honor*

- a] It means *respect that one enjoys, honor as a possession.*
- b] 1 Peter 2:7, *So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”*
- c] E. Gaugler, *“Honour” is the attitude, which is proper toward officials generally’*
- d] Thomas Constable, *He called us to “honor” all who serve the public in civil service positions.*

c. Comments on submission

- 1) Thomas Constable, *I believe Paul’s emphasis on submission rather than obedience allows room for civil disobedience when the civil government requires, but not permits, the Christian to disobey God (cf. Exod. 1:17–21). When the will of man conflicts with the will of God, the Christian must choose to do the will of God (Acts 5:29). For example, the Christian’s obligation to submit to a government that requires abortions would be different from his or her duty to one that only permits them. I believe a Christian should disobey a government when it requires him or her to practice abortion but not if it only permits abortions (cf. Exod. 1:15–22). I do not believe a Christian should break the law to protest an ungodly practice that his or her government only permits. If he or she disagrees with a law, that Christian should pursue whatever legal options exist to change the law. I believe that those who choose to break the law to make a statement, even though they are willing to suffer the consequences (e.g., go to jail), violate New Testament teaching on this subject.*
- 2) Douglas Moo, *Christians should give thanks for government as an institution of God; we should pray regularly for our leaders (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1–2); and we should be prepared to follow the orders of our government. But we should also refuse to give to government any absolute rights and should evaluate all its demands in the light of the gospel.*
- 3} John Stott, *Conscientious Christian citizens will submit to its authority, honour its representatives, pay its taxes and pray for its welfare. They will also encourage the state to fulfil its God-appointed role and, in so far as they have opportunity, actively participate in its work.*

****The following points will be addressed in the next lesson****

B. The Christian’s obligation to the Law (8-10)

C. The Christian’s obligation in light of Christ’s return (11-14)