



Sermon Transcription • Romans 13:1-7 (NIV)

God and Government

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

So, my wife and I got a letter in the mail the other day that was from our fine government. It was from one of the bylaw enforcement officers of our city. I didn't know we had them until I got the letter, cause I've seen lots of bylaws not being enforced, so... apparently it is enforced on me. It was about my dog. We had registered our dog as good citizens so that we paid our 25 or 35 dollars a year so that if he ever gets lost, which he won't cause he doesn't go anywhere, but if he ever got lost they would collect him and then bring him back to us for... it's like an insurance policy for your dog I guess. And so, we had failed to pay it because I think when it came, when the bill this year came, we were like... who cares? If the dog gets lost, "Goodbye." <laughter> So I opened the letter and in the letter it said that because you didn't pay your \$25, you owe \$200 now for your dog. I immediately thought the dog is not worth \$200. So, my wife and I started having a discussion, she said, "Of course, we have to pay it." Because she has integrity. And I was like, "Aw, come on. Like really. So, if I don't... so we don't pay this, what's going to happen?" She said, "Well what if they come to the door?" They're... Honey they're not going to come to the door... <threatening voice> "Show me your dog." You know. I don't think ... I don't think they're coming to the door... door by door to check whether the dog... and if they did come to the door, we'd just say he was dead or something like that, 'cos honestly, I can hide him, they're not going to find him. All right? You know? The picture's in my mind of them chasing through the floor, "where is the dog?" No, that won't happen. Of course, it won't happen. She said, "No, but we should... we should pay it." "Well, let's pray about it," I said to her. [laughing] I just go away and we'll pray about it. Oh God make it so that the government stops being so mean.

Anyway, this raised a question for us and has... it's a question that's come up over and over again and it does quite honestly almost in every day of our lives. Every one of us. And that is, what should our posture be toward the government of the land? As Christians I mean. How should we react to the government who wants to tax us, who wants to pass laws at times that we don't like, or we didn't vote for or we end up, you know, whole provinces don't vote for the Prime Minister, but now they're supposed to listen to the Prime Minister. How do you deal with it if you're a Christian, what do you owe the government? Should you obey them? No matter what. In the states - I was there the other day, and there's a bumper sticker that says, "Not my President." And I was thinking, "Really? I'd like to see you try that. And just say, 'Listen I'm not listening to anything that guy says no matter who it is because, you know, I didn't vote for him.'" Is that the way it works? As Christians, we only... you vote for them, and they get in, then you listen to them. But if not, you are free to do as you like. Is that the way the Bible would talk to us? What if they're wicked though? Not just the Prime Minister or the



President or the King or the Queen, like what if they're really wicked? What if they want to kill Jews? <pause> What if they want to bomb other countries? What if they want to lynch black people? <pause> Are we obligated to obey the government in moments like that? Romans 13 actually deals with these questions. It fits in the place in the book of Romans - if you remember, the whole book of Romans, basically goes like this: we are all sinners, deserving of God's wrath, Christ has made a way for us not to deserve that God's... or not to pay that wrath of God, instead he's taken our place. That's offered to everyone regardless if you're Jew, Gentile, black, white, purple, green, or yellow. Doesn't matter. We're all bound under sin and we're all given the freedom to respond to Jesus Christ. The grace that God chose in Christ is passed on to us, it's not by our works, he didn't... it's not something we've done, we've just been received... received this rich grace and so in light of that grace of God doing all this fantastic stuff on our behalf, how should we then respond, Romans 12. Well you should offer yourselves as a living sacrifice. And don't be conformed to the pattern of this age but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. It is a different way of thinking about the world you inhabit now. There is the world that is caught up under sin, and death and the darkness of the world, and that's what you used to inhabit and now you've come to faith in Christ, and you are inhabiting God's... the kingdom of God's precious son. And so, the rules that you live by now are different. You are a renewing of your mind so that you know what those rules, the good and perfect and pleasing will of God. And one of those things that is the good pleasing perfect will of God is the way that you view your government now It should be different. It should be marked by - and the word is *submission*. So that's what we're going to learn here. Listen, I did not plan this. I did not plan this. We, about a year and a half ago, we made our sermon schedule, and then Justin Trudeau decided to call the election for just the week before we did this. So, see? Trudeau's just doing what God wants, right? So that we can study this... we can study this week. And it really works out great, it's a lovely twist of divine providence. Before we do this, I got to tell you, I had a pastor who was in seminary, there was a pastor who visited one of my classes in seminary, and one of the students asked, "What are the... what are the kinds of sermons that you've preached where you've gotten the most, like, vicious feedback." And he said there's a list of them. If you ever talk about the doctrine of election, you'll get a lot of vicious feedback, if you ever talk about human sexuality, you'll get vicious feedback, if you ever talk about gender roles, whether or not, you know, women in the ministry, and stuff like that, that fight, you'll get lots and lots of feedback. If you ever talk about divorce and remarriage, good luck with that. But the one I've gotten the most feedback ever, he said, is when I talk about politics. So, I figure we've done all those other things, we might as well just do politics today. You know? So here we go. Right, we're going to talk about politics.

[God Appoints Governments]

Four things that you should know about God, our government, and how God expects us to act toward that government. Ok. Four things. Here they are. Number one, God appoints governments. He appoints them. Govern the land that exists, exists there because God has made it so. Well, wait a minute, we voted for them! Yes. God uses means like voting and democracy and sometimes the death of a king that raises up another king, or whatever. But they are there by God's providential decree. Here's what it says in Romans 13:1,



“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. [We all recoil at that comment, so he says it again. That’s right.] The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

Don’t you love it, that he doubles down? That language “be subject” that word actually means submit, right. And submission is something that happens when you don’t agree. You know that, right? So, when you submit to another, you’re submitting to them only in places where you don’t agree. Because if you already agree with them, it’s not submission. <deep voice> I’m willing to submit to you in paying no taxes, government. It was a good idea. I agree with it. </deep voice> Wait a minute, no that’s just you submitting to you. It’s when you don’t agree, when they want you to go in a direction that you don’t think you should go in, that’s when you’re actually going to have to practice submission or being subject to the government. A good image is when I was younger, we used to play in high school this game called *Mercy or Uncle or Submit*. We used to call it *Submit*. And you’d get your hands like this [holds hands palm out in front], and you would grasp your friend’s hands. You’d always pick someone smaller than you so you could prove your strength, you know. And you would start, Go! And you’d twist their hands as far as you can. And you’d try to get them to a position, right, where their arm is going to break. Good fun, right? Good fun. And they would have to say “Mercy” or “Uncle”. I don’t know why “Uncle” right, like maybe uncles are just jerks or something, I don’t know. Or “Submit! Submit! Submit!” so you’d get them in that position, and they’d say “Submit”. This is a good image, because what you’re doing is, you’re saying, “I want your hand to go in this direction,” and they’re saying, “I don’t want my hand to go in that direction, I want it to go in *that* direction.” And you press and press and press until the point where they say, “OK, I’m willing to give in *my* will to *your* will, even though I don’t agree.” So, when I get the letter from the government, the bylaw officer saying, “You need to pay \$200,” that’s them metaphorically grabbing my hand and twisting it behind my back and I’m like, “Oh no no no no!” and finally I said, “Submit.” Well my wife said, “Submit,” and I’m still mad about it. That’s true submission though. Because I didn’t want to do it. I don’t think they should get \$200 for nothing. They don’t do anything to my dog. My dog doesn’t do anything. They should get nothing for my dog. But that’s what submission looks like. So, you - he’s saying, be subject, submit, to your government. Which happens when you don’t agree with what they’re telling you to do. Why? That’s a pretty big call, right? That’s a pretty big command. Why should you do this? Well he answers it, in the verse, you saw it there, Romans 13:1,

“... for there is no authority except that which God has established. [And in case you missed it the first time] The authorities that exist have been established by God.

The reason you submit to them is because they are God’s servants. They are God’s agents. They have been placed there by the Almighty God. Now that is something that I think I might need to prove to you. This is the... when Paul writes that he’s following through a good long line of Biblical truth. So, we’ll go back to the Old Testament, Jeremiah 27:5,

“With my great power [this is the Lord speaking. With my great power] and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it [we presume to govern, I give it] to anyone I please.”



Daniel 2:20-21,

“...Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;
wisdom and power are his.
He changes times and seasons;
he deposes kings and raises up others.’ “

I could give you thirty verses that basically deal with that same idea, that the government that is existing right now has appointed by God. He's raised them up. Now you and say in response to that, “OK, I'm willing to go with that, as long as we understand that, no, God would not appoint a bad government, he appoints the good ones. The bad ones kind of just slip in under his radar.”
<questioning sound> Exodus 9:15, now this is the section in Exodus, where Moses is going on behalf of the Almighty God and he is speaking to the Pharaoh. You know “Let my people go!” Out of slavery. He's speaking to the Pharaoh. And this Pharaoh is the same Pharaoh that has basically enslaved the entirety of the Jewish population. So, I just want you to think about that. Here is Hitler before Hitler. He hates Jews. He wants many of them dead, and if not dead he wants them as slaves for his people making bricks. So, Moses goes to him and he speaks for God and here's what the Lord says, Exodus 9:15-16,

“For by now [he says to Pharaoh. For by now] I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth [Pharaoh]. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

You're in power, in this present moment, to achieve a purpose that I have planned long ago. Even though I don't like your viewpoints on Jews and your killing people, and these sorts of things, I raised you up. Jesus himself gets in the conversation with Pontius Pilate who is the representative of the Roman government. So, Jesus is on trial. It's a mock trial. And Pilate comes to Jesus and wants to find out who he thinks he really is. Now what you need to know about Pontius Pilate is this guy is a murderous cretin. He killed many of his family members, and again, liked to kill Jewish people. Again, Hitler before Hitler. He oversaw them, anybody who fought back against them, he would crucify them, anybody who said bad words about them, he, they would secretly die by poison, although nobody knew that. He was a wicked, wicked guy. So here he is, standing across from Jesus, and he's going to question him. So here it is, John 19:7-11,

“The Jewish leaders insisted, ‘We have a law, and according to that law [this Jesus] must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.’ [Saying this to Pilate.]

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. [You can just see him, marching up in front of Jesus, you know.] ‘Where do you come from?’ he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ‘Do you refuse to speak to me?’ Pilate said. ‘Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?’ [Don't you know who I am, boy?]



Jesus answered, 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.' "

Whoa, wait, what? The guy who's crucifying Jesus is placed in his office by God, from above? Doug Moo, he's a commentator on Romans, he said,

"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."

It doesn't matter how it is that they came to their power, God used that process to bring about the person, the party, that he wanted in office, for that time, for a purpose. In other words, the leaders over us are appointed to office by God himself. [pause] Even Trudeau. [pause] Even Trump. God gives them their power. But listen now, they're responsible with how they use it. And he will hold them to account for it, right? My son was given, we gave him a drone. I was going to say a clone, I hope not. A drone. It was a cheap one because we were worried about what he might do with a really expensive one, right? But it can go around our little neighbourhood, you can fly it by the neighbours' houses and spy them and their, you know, hovering outside the window while they're making dinner, and stuff. It's good fun. So, he's... we gave it to him for Christmas a few years ago. he went outside, and he started... and immediately when you give it to a thirteen-year-old, and it goes in the tree, and you're like, "Why? Why did we buy this drone?" So, somebody's up in the tree and they get it out. And then he's flying this drone all over the place. A drone is a powerful tool, it really is. So, I want you to imagine that my son, which, by the way, what I'm about to tell you, he would never do. I think. So, what if, though, he decided to weaponize the drone? There are lots of weaponized drones around the world. And he's American, he might think about doing this, right? So, he weaponizes the drone. We have a - our next door neighbour, they have a dog. God bless, I love our neighbours, some of the best. We have a next door neighbour whose dog barks at all hours of the day and night, you know? So, my son, his bedroom is right on that, and he does not like the dog barking in the mornings. So, imagine my son, weaponizes the drone, and he starts shooting sidewinder missiles, or whatever, at the dog, wipes him off the face of the earth, and goes to the neighbour's and does all this stuff. Now, he's of course going to get arrested, rightfully so. And he goes to trial, and he says, here's his defense, "My Dad, it's his fault. I mean, who gives a kid like me a drone?" What's the court going to say to him? "Son, it's your fault. See, a drone can be a good thing and it can be a bad thing. Your Dad didn't weaponize it, your Dad didn't use the powerful tool to destroy the neighbour's dog, you're the one who did that sort of thing." See, listen, just because God gives somebody a powerful tool like government and power in the government doesn't mean that he is saying "Hey, you know what, you get a pass for anything you do in that government, man. And anything you do is basically my fault 'cos you know I raised you up." No, it's your fault. And God will hold the governments to account. But you and I, our responsibility is to submit to them because God has appointed them.

[Rebelling Against the Government is Rebelling Against God]

Ok, number two then. If God appoints governments, then number two, rebelling against the government, is rebelling against God. Listen to what he says, Romans 13:2,



“Consequently, [because God appoints the governments] whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.”

The image that he's working with here is really simple to understand. He's... look... when I was very young, I used to play soccer. I was thinner, sleeker, faster, at the time. I used to play soccer, kind of at an elite level. And I remember the week that our soccer coach, who was a very hard man, right, he used to get us all running lines behind him. And he'd yell, "Focus! Focus!" all around the field over and over again. It used to be - we giggled behind him, but you would never giggle to his face because that meant more running. And he was gone for a week. I don't know if he had a business trip or something, and he sent an assistant coach who was usually there but he was like a young guy. He was sitting off in a corner and often times really awkward. The assistant coach took over our practice for the week. Can you imagine how that went? Right? For this drill team who's supposed to "Focus!" and the assistant coach comes along and we're like, "This is going to be the best week of practice ever." We were kicking the ball into the other field, we would run and tackle each other just for fun, and he'd be whistling, "Get back here! We're still in the drill!" And we wouldn't come back. Sometimes a couple kids were out in the field finding grasshoppers and stuff. It was... it was a crazy week. We lost horribly on the weekend. Of course, we did. I remember the head coach came back the next Monday. We had been laughing at the other coach. Whenever he told us to run, we would barely run. Well apparently the assistant coach had told the head coach what had happened and the head coach came back the following Monday, lined us all up in front of him, took a whistle out, and he said, "You won't need the balls today, just your legs. Ready? I want you to line up on the line, and I want you to run here." We did soccer lines all the way down the line, all the way back. We got to the point, honestly, he ran us for a good 45 minutes. Some of the kids were like - one of them throwing up on the sides. And while the kid is throwing up, this guy is yelling out, "It's not funny now, is it?" That's why I quit soccer. But the image here strikes. So, how you treat the assistant, the emissary of the head coach. How you treat the servant of the head coach, his intermediary, is how you treat the head coach. He took it as a personal affront. There was no distinction between how you treat the assistant and how you treat the head coach. You treat them the same. And this is what Paul's basically saying, "If you treat the government with disdain, and say, 'I don't need to do whatever,' you're treating God that way, because God appointed them." So, don't say, "Oh I'm on the Lord's side," when you have a disdain for the government. You're disdaining what God has appointed, and rebelling against the government is rebelling against God.

Now this raises a big - can I push pause. <presses imaginary button> <beeping noise> Pause. We're pausing the sermon. 'Cos everyone in the room right now is going, "Do you know what governments do? Like, do you know what kind of governments there are in the world and in our society? Do you know what kind of laws they pass sometimes? And you're saying that we should somehow obey the government at every turn? That's God's will? What if they're wicked? What if they want you to do things that are really, really horrible, and force you that way?" You guys know the story of Rosa Parks. Rosa Parks was 1955, Montgomery Alabama. She was riding a bus. She's a seamstress. She was just going home after a hard day's work, a black lady. She was seated in the fifth row of the bus. The law at that time was the first four rows were reserved for white passengers. If more white passengers got



on than could be fit in the first four rows, the fifth, sixth, seventh row, whatever, would be commandeered by the bus driver for the white passengers. In other words, the black passengers who were sitting in those rows had to get up and move to the back. Rosa was in the fifth row. White passengers got on, they filled up the first four rows and the bus driver came back and said to the four people, four black people sitting in the fifth row, "I need your seats. You need to move to the back." The other three got up and moved. Rosa didn't go anywhere. She just sat there looking out the window. He said, "Did you not hear me? I said you need to get back." And she said, "No, I won't be doing that." Bus driver didn't know what to do. "You know that I could actually have you arrested for this?" She said, "You may do that." And he did. The police came and this was the spark by the way, that lit the fire of the civil rights movement. Was she wicked? I mean the law of the government said that the fifth row, if there's lots of white passengers, you need to move. You're breaking the law! Is she wicked? Corrie ten Boom, is she wicked for hiding Jews from the Nazis? What do we do with the fact that here we have the Bible saying – telling us to submit to the government, but yet there's so many governments and so many times, when the government urges us, forces us, to act in ways that are against God. What do you do when they command that? And here's the answer, Biblically. We don't submit to the authorities when they force us to act in ways that break God's law. In such cases, we have a higher obligation. Even the language of submit really reveals this. So, we submit to the government who's in authority over us, but *they* have a responsibility to the authority over them, and his name is Yahweh. He appointed them. So, when the emissary, when the intermediary is breaking the law of the higher up, we are not obligated to keep the law of the intermediary. We're obligated to keep the law of the higher up. So, you find this in Scripture, I'm going to prove this to you, Acts 4:18. The Sanhedrin, the ruling religious party in Israel is trying to bring judgement against the apostles, the disciples anyway, Acts 4:18-20,

"Then they called them [We're Acts 4:18. Then they called them] in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. [You guys can't be talking about this Jesus and the resurrection from the dead. Remember what happened to him? We killed him. So be careful, 'cos we might do the same to you.] But Peter and John replied, 'Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.' "

See there's a choice we're having to make here, because you're telling us to do something that is the opposite from what your boss God is telling us to do. So, you tell us which one we should listen to. You, the intermediary appointed by God. Or God, who has a different opinion. As for us, we're going to listen to God. We want to listen to you guys. I mean our hearts want to submit to you guys, but you've put us in an awkward position. Another example, one of my favorites, Exodus 1:15. I told you earlier about how it is that the Pharaoh put the Hebrews under slavery. Well, prior to that - the Pharaoh prior to that actually wanted to kill all the Hebrews, little Hebrew boys. Because he didn't want the Hebrew people growing up in the land and then gaining more power. So, we're going to kill all the boys. Exodus 1:15-20,

"The king of Egypt [the Pharaoh] said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiprah and Puah, [You should be naming your kid Puah. Don't you think? No? Okay. Some of you are



expecting, this is an opportunity.] ‘When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.’ The midwives, however, [listen to what they did. They] feared God and [as a result they] did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, ‘Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?’

The midwives answered Pharaoh, [White lie.] ‘Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive. [We show up and there’s babies everywhere!]

So, God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And [verse 21] because the midwives feared God, [by not listening to the governing authorities, but instead listening to God who governs over them] he gave them families of their own.”

You see, yes? You know – you remember, some of you, the history – you know the Nuremberg trials. They put the Nazis on trial after World War II for their war crimes. Basically, the argument of the prosecution was, “You guys should not have killed all the Jews. You should not have done all the things that you’ve done. You should have fought back.” Now the defense for the Nazis was saying, “Wait a minute, how can you say that? We were just obeying the governing authority. We were just obeying Hitler. How can you hold us accountable for this? We were doing, in fact, what you ought to do, which is to listen to the governing authority.” The prosecution came back, and their argument was, “Listen, there is an authority that exists above the governing authority. And that authority says that all human beings are made in the image of God and have inherent worth. And you should know better. You shouldn’t have listened to Hitler, you should have listened to Hitler’s boss, who had a different opinion.” That’s what the Scriptures teach. That you and I are obligated to listen to God when the governments of our day force us to do things that are not in God’s interest. But in all other cases, in all other questionable cases, to rebel against the government is to rebel against God. Okay? >Presses imaginary button> Play. We’re going to push Play on the sermon again. Don’t worry, I’ll take that time out of the sermon. Ok, don’t you worry.

[Governments are Agents of God’s Wrath]

Number three. Governments are agents of God’s wrath. Romans 13:3-4,

“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, [hey, you’re going to obey the law, you’re not going to face the judgement] but [they hold terror] 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. [You’ll be called a good citizen.] For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. [You should be thankful they exist, because they are preserving the world from, you know, evil and wickedness running rampant around us. They are your servant – God’s servant, sorry – for your good.] But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. [They



have a right to punish you, even in grave ways.] They are God's servants, [Here's the line I want you to focus on.] agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

The reason I want you to focus on that last line is because the language that's used there was used only a few verses prior. In fact, the better translation of that is what the ESV, which is English Standard Version, we're using the New International Version of the Scriptures. If we want a better translation here is that they are God's servant, an avenger, you know, Captain America. An avenger who carries out God's wrath on the evildoer. The reason I'm saying *avenger* and *wrath* is those two words appear in Romans 12 just a few verses earlier, here's where they show up, Romans 12:19 (ESV),

"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."

So, in that passage in Romans 12 what you've got is God commanding his people, "Don't take revenge on other people, hand it over to the Lord and he will take revenge on them." And you and I say, "When?" And the response in Romans 13 is well sometimes in the final judgement, yes? But also, sometimes in the here and now through the agency of government. So, here's what this means. What this means is that Christian people like you and me, it is not wrong for us to want governments to punish wrongdoers. In fact, it is right for us to want to see God's wrath come down on the wrongdoer. You and I might personally forgive those people. But when it comes to the consequences before the state, we should want justice to be done. So, we should be appealing, in fact, to the government authorities to execute their justice on the wrongdoers in our midst. For thievery, murder, and burglary, and blah blah blah, whatever. You should be utilizing, in fact, the government authorities even in civil ways to make sure that wrongdoing is put right. So, I'll give you some proof for this in the New Testament. The apostle Paul and Silas are in prison, and there is a Philippian jailer there. They're in Philippi and this jailer in the middle of the night, there's an earthquake and the bars of the jail wave open, and the jailer thinks, "Oh they're all escaped." And in those times to oversee prisoners and have them escape meant that you had to take your own life. So, there he is, about to take his own life. And Paul says, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! We're all here." Jailer comes and looks, he sees that they're all there, he says, "then tell me about this Jesus you serve because he's obviously made a difference in your life and now it's saved mine. So, tell me about him." And they're like, "Cool." They do, he comes to faith in Jesus. Paul and Silas, prior to coming into that prison, were whipped and beaten. There's a problem with that, they were Romans, they're Roman citizens. Being a Roman citizen means that you cannot be whipped and beaten. It's illegal. You can only do that to foreigners. So, at the back end of that story, what you've got is this, Acts 16:35-40,

"When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: 'Release those men.' The jailer told Paul, 'The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.' [Good news. And you and I in that moment, we'd be like, "Sweet, we're out of here."]

But Paul said to the officers: [Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa!] 'They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and [they] threw us into prison. And now do they want to



get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.’ [I want to face the people who wronged me. I am a Roman citizen. I have rights.]

The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they [freaked out. Oh oh!] were alarmed. They came to appease them [the men that they just beat, they came to “We are really sorry about this, you guys, can we you know like give you a ride home, an Uber or something] and [they] escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. [“Could you guys just please leave and forget this ever happened. It was our bad and here’s a couple coins.] After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia’s house, [who lived in the city by the way] where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.”

What you’ve got here is the apostle Paul basically saying, “No, no, no, I have legal rights, and you broke my legal rights and I want to appeal to my government who’s appointed by God to hold you accountable, you magistrates. That’s the way Christians behave. Now I have to make a little clarification here. This is having to do with how Christians interact with outsiders, with secular authorities. This is not talking about Christians interact with each other. Ok? We have passages of Scripture that talk about Christians ought not have lawsuits with each other, should deal with that in the church. But as it pertains to people outside the church, we should be taking advantage of the government authorities. So, when Oscar Arfmann shoots in cold blood a police officer in our city, I heard some people say, “Well, you Christians should be just able to forgive and forget.” Yes, forgive, if you were the one wronged. But not forget. There’s a price to be paid. And you should want that price to be paid. Or when Trinity Western University goes all the way to the Supreme Court trying to defend the rights of Christians to put people in legal positions, to train lawyers, and it shouldn’t matter what your sexual ethics are, they’re in the right to press that legally to the highest court, win or lose. Governments are agents of God’s wrath.

[We Happily Give the Government our Taxes and Respect]

Here’s the last one. Ok, are you ready? He’s going to apply all of this. Wait until you hear the application. Therefore, we happily give the government our taxes and respect. <laughs> I can’t believe I wrote that. But it’s what he says, look at Romans 13:5-7,

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

This is also why you pay taxes, [why did you bring this up Paul, stop it! This is why you pay taxes,] for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing [they need a paycheque. Does it need to be so big?]. 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.”

This is summarize this whole thing as we bring this to a close. He’s saying there’s two reasons, ultimately, why you obey the government. Number one is fear of possible punishment. And you and I



know this. This is what you do when you drive down the freeway and you see the cop car on the side and you're like, "What?" And you're looking in the rearview mirror, "Don't move. Don't move. Don't move. Don't move. Oh, he's not moving." What are you experiencing there? You're experiencing fear of possible punishment. Why are you now obeying the speed limit, for the next like, one kilometre? And it's because you're afraid of possible punishment. Then there's everything right with that, okay, there's everything right with that. Paul's saying yes you should obey the government because of fear of possible punishment, they don't bear the sword in vain. But as Christians, it should go beyond that. You not only obey them because of possible punishment, you obey them out of conscience. Now what does he mean by that. He's saying, listen, you obey them because you know they've been instituted by God and your conscience should speak to you that they are God's servants for your good. And because they're God's servants for your good, you want to think as positively as you can, possibly about them. So, obey them. Sometimes I send my daughter downstairs in our house, we're about to have dinner, and she says to our two boys, my two sons, "Can you bring some drinks up for dinner?" Now they always obey that. Because they know that if they didn't, I would act as an agent of God's wrath in their life. So, there is a kind of fear that they have. But that's not the only reason that they obey. They also obey because they're like, "Oh Dad, Dad and Mom made us dinner. And they're providing drinks for us for dinner. They seek our good. I can see that what they're asking me to do is actually ultimately in the good interests of our society as a home. I'm going to do this because, not only I'm freaked out that my Dad might freak out on me, I'm actually going to do this because I love my Dad, I recognize his heart for me, and so I'm listening to my sister, the emissary. Even though in all other cases, I don't think I should listen to her, but this, I'm going to do this because of conscience." This is the way we ought to act toward our government. We see them as God's instrument for our good. So, we should be joyfully, in fact, having an attitude as positive as we can toward the government.

Now here's the final piece. That shows up in a couple of places. Number one, we pay our taxes. When I brought a car from Alberta to BC and I stood in the ICBC lobby, and they wanted to charge me tax on this car that I bought. And I said, "So when I sell it, are you going to charge tax again."

"Yeah."

"And then when they sell it, you're going to charge tax again."

"Yeah."

I said, "So, there's a possibility that you're going to make more money on this car than I paid for it, yeah?"

"Yup."

I said, This is ridiculous! All right let me give you a little bit of my thoughts regarding the injustice of ICBC. Alright? Your new laws, signing everybody up who's going to drive my car. Can't loan it out for more than twelve days, what is that about? Who made this law? You're ridiculous! You know, I've lived in fifteen different places in my life, you know." And you let it go. But you know what, our attitude should be - listen, right, if we want to change the laws, we can do it through the right channels and those sorts of things, but we happily pay the bill. Because ultimately... ultimately, the government has a right to collect taxes. And finally, and probably most importantly, we also owe the government respect. Should we really say we hate Trump? Should we really say we hate that idiot Trudeau or whoever it is that you want to use those words for. Is that really as Paul says here, paying honor where



honor is due? Paying respect where respect is due? Should we call them fools? Should we say that they're know-nothings? Should we wish that they were never, ever born. I have heard some terrible things come out of my mouths and others. Does this show them the honour they deserve as God's servants? You've got to remember that Paul wrote this when Nero, the guy who lit Christians on fire, for lights at his parties, he wrote this when Nero was on the throne. And if you and I, or if they showed respect and honour to Nero, man, it's not that hard to show respect and honour to Trudeau. We don't need to vote for them. We don't need to agree with them. But they are due our honour and respect. I will look forward to all of your emails. <laughter> And I will gladly pass them on to Ezra on your behalf. Let me pray for us.

Father, I'm thankful for your Word and for how practical it is. As stinging as it often is, Father, we want to honour you. We want to honour the government, we thank you for them. We pray for Justin Trudeau. Pray for his salvation. We pray, Father, that you would guide him in wise decisions in the days ahead. Father would you help him to see his standing under you as your servant and to honour you with his decisions and the decisions that have to pertain to things in our country. We're so thankful that we live in a place Lord that we can take part in choosing our own government. So, God bless us now, as we consider these things and put them into practice by the power of the Spirit. In Jesus name. Amen.