

***Lesson: Politics, Protest, and the Power of God (Rom 12:3-13:7)***

Romans 13:1-7 has been one of the most abused passages in all of Scripture. In modern times, many tyrants and pastors inclined towards supporting tyranny have used the text to say the state cannot be questioned because it has been ordained by God. The problem is that this is not what Paul was saying at all. When looked at within the context of Romans 12, we see this text the proper understanding of our political identity within a corrupt world, the use of our protesting abilities, and where God’s power truly lies.

**Biblical Takeaways (Rom 12:3-13:1a)**

1. 12:3-8: We have received the power of God to do ministry. Paul outlines several different super powers the church has received in order to show forth the power of God towards one another within the congregation and those in the world. If we have been transformed by the renewing of our mind, and we are not conformed to this world (12:1-2), then our job is to transform it. Through the “gifts” of God, we have been given abilities and the Spirit enables us to make a difference.
2. 12:9-16: Paul explains the ethical commitments the church must make as a super powered people. We are to treat each other kindly, blessing each other, empathizing with each other, and rejoicing with one another. The church is meant to be a safe place, a haven of love and forgiveness where those who are being oppressed by the world can find refuge.
3. 12:17-21: If the church is all these things, then the church cannot ever join the side of evil. Being gifted can cause people to lose themselves, forgetting that they still live in a world of limitations. If we become prideful in our gifts, we may think we can make the rules and do evil, which is essentially making up right as you choose. But God calls us to not ever be evil but to overcome evil with good.
4. 13:1a: All types of governments are better than no government and it is, in one shape or another, God ordained. God ordered the world in such a way where there would be a ruler, whose job was to keep the world from slipping in the chaos. Government officials do just that, even when they are corrupt. Thus, we cannot be corrupt thinking of ourselves as righteous we must be submissive to laws inasmuch as they do not contradict the Word of God.
5. 13:1b-5: Paul describes good government which tries to curb the spread of evil. We cannot protest to the point where we hinder this. If we are to be fearful, be fearful of resisting the good of government, otherwise we will find ourselves fighting God.
6. 13:6-7: Consequently, the key issue of the matter is even though governments can be corrupt we need to still pay our taxes to live as peaceably until the Lord returns. Christians were fully aware that taxes in Rome were being used for idolatrous and corrupt purposes. But one still has to go along to get along until one is challenged to give up Christ directly. Then, we rely on the power of God to resist the state.
7. Final Comment: Jesus taught us something similar (see Luke 20:20-26). We are to give the government what we can but this does not obligate us to worship the government in any way. Our allegiance is always to Christ above all else.