



# Romans

**Right With God**

# Respect Authority

Romans 13:1-7

**Lesson Forty-One**

*Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum*

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Page 2 of 4

### Respect Authority

Paul did an interesting thing in Romans chapter thirteen. He got into governmental issues. The people to whom he wrote were at the capital city of the Roman Empire. They were in danger from the government. Caesar had, not too many years before, expelled all Jews and Christians from the city of Rome. Also, it was about this time that everyone in the empire was ordered to say, “Caesar is Lord.” This threatened Christians who believed with all their heart that “Jesus is Lord.”

So, Paul is not speaking to people who had no reason to hate the government. But, Paul said that it was important to give respect to the government. He was not the first to say this. Jesus, in Matthew 22:21, said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s...” He was answering a question put to Him by the Jewish leaders. They had asked Him if it was right to pay taxes.

Paul and Jesus weren’t the only ones to refer to this important subject. In I Peter 2:13-17, the Apostle Peter said, “Submit yourself for the Lord’s sake to every authority, instituted among men, whether to the king as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.” He goes on to encourage Christians to “Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the King.”

In Paul’s mind, and as we also see in Peter’s mind, the government was established by God to keep the peace. It was the organization which provided safety and security for citizens. It was what God provided to assist people to have public roads and utilities, places to buy and sell things in safety, and other things they could not provide for themselves individually. Paul saw government as a blessing. Read Romans 13:1-7.

Specifically, Paul said that we were to be subject (obey the laws), pay taxes, be respectful, and honor those who are leaders of the government. There is good reason for doing that. ***He said it is God’s will.*** What a bold statement to make about the government that had destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. It was a government that had become what it was by war and had, in the process, made slaves of a lot of people.

As with all that God created, bad things tend to destroy themselves and good things tend to be stronger and last longer. So it is with governments. God gave humans authority to make laws and enforce laws. That is God’s will. However, humans often abuse what God provides, as did Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When that happens, destruction is on the way.

Interestingly, Paul doesn’t speak of what Christians should do if the government tries to

# Romans

## Right With God

### Lesson Forty-One

destroy Christianity. That was a definite possibility in Paul's day. Since that is not spoken to here, we must assume that Christians should use every means to peacefully oppose such behaviors, and understand that ultimately that which harms people should not be tolerated in any government.

It should be clear that this teaching is as important to Paul as all the other guidelines he has included in this letter. So, respect for authority is as important to Paul as the behavioral issues discussed in chapters two and three. Also, he speaks of this respect for government in the same letter in which he discusses justification by faith. It is important.

Disobedience of the law, disrespect for government leaders and non-payment of taxes is to Paul as serious as the awful sins he mentioned earlier in Romans.

**Scripture Memory: "That is also why you pay taxes—so that an orderly way of life can be maintained. Fulfill your obligations as a citizen, pay your taxes, pay your bills, respect your leaders." Romans 13:7 *The Message***

\*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.

#### **For the Teacher:**

#### **Lesson Goal: To encourage students to respect governmental authority.**

1. Claudius Caesar expelled the Jews and Christians from Rome. The cause seems to have been that they were fighting among themselves and Claudius saw it as a threat to public security. This fact is recorded in secular history and referred to in Acts 18:2. Paul met Aquilla and Priscilla in Corinth. They were among those exiled from Rome.
2. I Timothy 2:1, 2 - "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior..." Titus 3:1—"Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men." These supporting Scriptures indicate that Paul was not speaking only to the church at Rome, and only on one occasion on this subject.
3. Paul often used the authority of the Roman government. He appealed to his Roman citizenship in Philippi, Acts 16:37 and at Jerusalem, Acts 22:25; also at Caesarea, Acts 25:11. He depended on the legal statutes to afford him justice, and on the Roman soldiers to provide him safety.
4. You may be tempted to make a political lesson out of this. Do not do that. Politics, especially petty, partisan politics were unknown in Paul's day. In our day, disrespect for leaders is out of control. Some Christians send political emails, that show disrespect for government leaders, in the name of Christianity. That is in direct disobedience to Paul's admonition here. Political disagreement is not discouraged here. Disrespect *is wrong*, according to Paul.
5. Christians bear great responsibility for the state of our nation. If Christians lived the way that they should, obeying the law; voting for candidates for office who live up to Christian principles, instead of providing sound-bites that disagree with their behaviors; if Christians took responsibility for leadership in their communities, schools, local governments, and encouraged their churches to take part in secular civil discourse, the nation would be significantly different.

# Romans

## Right With God

Lesson Forty-One

Page 4 of 4

### *Student Worksheet*

## Respect Authority

=Paul said that it was important to give \_\_\_\_\_ to the government.

=In Paul's mind, and as we also see in Peter's mind, the \_\_\_\_\_ was established by \_\_\_\_\_ to keep the \_\_\_\_\_.

=Paul said that we were to be \_\_\_\_\_ (obey the laws), pay \_\_\_\_\_, be \_\_\_\_\_, and honor those who are \_\_\_\_\_ of the government.

=As with all that God \_\_\_\_\_, bad things tend to \_\_\_\_\_ themselves and good things tend to be \_\_\_\_\_ and last \_\_\_\_\_. So it is with \_\_\_\_\_.

=Ultimately that which \_\_\_\_\_ people should not be tolerated in any government.

=Disobedience of the \_\_\_\_\_, disrespect for government \_\_\_\_\_ and non-payment of taxes is to Paul as serious as the awful \_\_\_\_\_ he mentioned earlier in Romans.

**Scripture Memory: "That is also why you pay taxes—so that an orderly way of life can be maintained. Fulfill your obligations as a citizen, pay your taxes, pay your bills, respect your leaders." Romans 13:7 *The Message***

#### **A Roman Road to Salvation:**

**Romans 3:23** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Everyone is a sinner and needs salvation.

**Romans 6:23a** "For the wages of sin is death." The law of God is unchangeable. If someone sins the penalty must be paid, the payment is death.

**Romans 5:8** "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us." God loves us so much, according to John 3:16, that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins.

**Romans 6:23b** "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The penalty for sin is spiritual death, but God, through the death of Jesus on the cross, took the penalty for the sins of all people, and now everyone can have eternal life. See also, II Corinthians 5:21

**Romans 10:9, 10** "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." To personally receive the gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus, you trust God to be what He says He is. Believing that "God raised Him (Jesus) from the dead" is to accept all that the Bible says about God and His Son, Jesus. Then you speak (confess) the words, "Jesus is Lord," as a statement of faith. Believing "with your heart" means that you believe with your mind and with everything that you are.

**Romans 10:13** "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." You have the promise of God Himself that if you do what Romans 10:9, 10 says, you will become God's child and have eternal life.

**Romans 12:1, 2** "I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Becoming a Christian is a life-long act of faith and worship.