



The Use and Abuse of Power

The Gathering ~ Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale



Romans 13:1-8



Submitting to the Governing Authorities




Romans 12:9

Paul is writing about how Christians are to relate to others.



This included government officials.




Paul consistently taught that Christians should submit to established authority in the context of the household and the government.



Ephesians 5:21

Submit to one another out of reverence
for Christ.




Perhaps Paul is calling for this submission to the governing officials because he wants to ensure that Christians act as good citizens, avoiding civic conflicts.



They were now “citizens of a new Kingdom”, the Kingdom of God.

Philippians 3:20 says, “Their commonwealth is in heaven.”




He wants to ensure that believers don't see their freedom as license to ignore the earthly governing officials.



Discussion

What are your feelings about authority and the use of it in America today?

What is the best way for people to address their negative feelings about authority and those who have it?



Everyone is to submit to
the governing authorities
because their authority has been
established by God.



The Greek word here is *exousia* which means:

1. Freedom of choice, right to act or dispose of
2. Ability, capability to do something
3. Authority, absolute power



Daniel 4:17



God is the ultimate source of
power and authority.



God gives authority to leaders for
the good of the people they serve.



Titus 3:1

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.



I Peter 2:13-14

Submit yourself for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among people: whether the king, as the supreme authority, or the governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do good.




I Peter 2:12

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits.




Discussion

How do you feel about Paul's teaching at this point? What can you agree with? What do you take issue with and why?



Three times in this text Paul calls these governing officials, “servants” of God in 13:4, 6. The Greek word in verse 4 is “diakonia” which means “deacon” or “minister.”



Paul uses it here to refer to government officials who are ordained by God to serve his purposes not theirs.




Discussion

Is Paul saying that we are to obey those who are unjust and unfair, who injure their people and deny folks their civic and legal rights?



The concept of civil disobedience.



Civil disobedience is the public,
nonviolent and intentional violation of
laws to protest perceived injustices and
advocate for political change.



Discussion

How do you feel about civil disobedience? Are you in favor of it or not? Under what circumstances would you participate in it? Do you think it is approved by God or not?




Shiphrah and Puah – Exodus 1:17



Daniel 3:12-14



Acts 5:29



We must obey God
rather than humans.



Discussion

Have you ever felt like you had to make a choice to obey God rather than humans?

If so, what were the circumstances.



Jeremiah 29:7

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.



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