



"Disagreement is one thing; disrespect is quite another."
—Richard V. Reeves

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Submission (Part One)

According to SocialMediaToday.com, the average person spends almost two hours each day on various forms of social media. Over the average person's lifespan, that works out to more than five years! If we spend even a fraction of that amount of time, we cannot help but read or hear about the disrespect shown to people in authority: teachers, police, or government officials. The behavior of our fellow citizens is abysmal—and growing worse!

Regardless of which political party is in power, [God](#) counsels His children on how to have [peace](#) in an anything-but-peaceful world. He does this through the words of the apostle Paul in [Romans 13:1-7](#) (*New International Version*):

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but 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. For the one in

authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 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, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 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.

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome in AD 56-57. At the time, the emperor of the Roman Empire was Nero, who had ascended to power in AD 54, while yet a teenager.

We often complain about our politicians, but few have reached Nero's level of corruption. Nero's elevation to the throne was accomplished with the help of his ambitious mother, Agrippina the Younger, who became his chief advisor and near co-ruler. After his father died when Nero was two, his widowed mother married the Roman Emperor, Claudius. She convinced the emperor to adopt her son, Lucius, who would later take the name, Nero Claudius Caesar.

Claudius had another son, Britannicus, who was pushed aside when Nero married Claudius' daughter-his stepsister-Octavia. After Claudius died suddenly in AD 54, Nero became emperor. Some have speculated that Nero's mother, Agrippina, caused his stepfather's death, allegedly by feeding her husband poisoned mushrooms.

Despite owing his position to Agrippina, five years later, encouraged by his mistress, Poppaea, Nero had his own mother put to death. During his fourteen-year reign, Nero killed his first wife Octavia, his stepbrother Britannicus, and later Poppaea, who was by then his second wife. In addition, he is suspected of starting a catastrophic fire in Rome in AD 64 that heavily damaged or destroyed ten of Rome's fourteen districts, blaming Christians for the catastrophe. As punishment, many Christians were severely persecuted, tortured, and put to death.

Nero remained emperor until June 9, ^{AD} 68, when he committed suicide after being tried as an enemy of the people, convicted *in absentia*, and sentenced to death by the Roman Senate. According to various sources, Nero had Paul beheaded sometime in the late ^{AD} 60s (perhaps ^{AD} 68), shortly before the disgraced emperor's own death.

With that back story, our submission to governmental authority should not seem hard at all. Our political leaders have nothing on Nero! Even so, some claim that these verses in Romans 13 were written, not about submitting to civil governments at all, but about religious authorities. Still others claim that these verses were a later addition to provide political leaders cover for their own despotic and tyrannical rulership. But those claims are mere suppositions. We should take what we read at face value. People are always looking for excuses not to obey or submit to government, so such conjectures seem reasonable.

However, Romans 13 does not stand alone in its counsel. The Bible provides many verses showing that God is actively involved in the rulership of this world. For instance, consider [Daniel 4:17](#): "This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men." The apostle Peter advises us in [I Peter 2:17](#), "Honor all people. [Love](#) the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." Scripture is consistent on Paul's point in these verses and in many others.

In Romans 13, Paul was encouraging his fellow disciples to live at peace in [the world](#), and his words are not strange or out of place at all, lining up perfectly with God's fifth commandment: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you" ([Exodus 20:12](#)). In [Ephesians 6:2](#), Paul calls it "the first commandment with promise," that is, the first one with a promise of good included in it.

In Part Two, we will pursue the close connection between [Romans 13:1-7](#), the fifth commandment, and our submission as Christians to authority placed over us.

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Submitting \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

In matters of submission, God wants us to think things through rather than merely comply through blind obedience. The bitter fruit of multiculturalism (without God's guidance) has demonstrated that unless someone is willing to submit, we have the makings of conflict and chaos. In order to have peace, order, and unity, both Israelite and Gentile have to subordinate their traditions, submitting to the traditions of Christ (Ephesians 2:19). Conflict between all cultural traditions will never end until they are all brought into submission to the traditions of Christ. We have to overcome our cultural mis-education and our desires to gratify the self. Liberty without guidelines will turn into chaos. We will be free only if we submit to the truth (John 8:32). All authority, even incompetent and stupid authority, ultimately derives from God's sanction (John 19:11).

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Promise in the Fifth Commandment \(Part One\)](#)

by David F. Maas

In Ephesians 6:2, the apostle Paul designates the fifth commandment as "the first commandment with promise." What is the connection between honoring our parents and long life? David Maas, observing the declining family in America, reveals a vital link between honoring parents and wisdom that can lead to "length of days."

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