

Render Unto Caesar
Dr H. Powell Dew, Jr.
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
June 18, 2023

Text: Romans 13:1-10

Purpose: God has called us to “Render unto Caesar” the things that belong to Caesar. We also need to “Render unto God” the things that belong to God. We need to submit and support our governmental authorities. In doing so, we have done our spiritual duty.

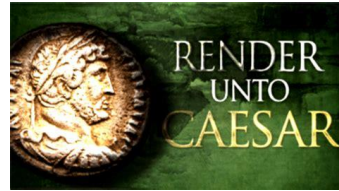
A new business was opening and one of the owner's friends wanted to send flowers for the occasion.

They arrived at the new business site and the owner read the card. It said, "Rest in Peace."



The owner was angry and called the florist to complain. After he told the florist of the obvious mistake and how angry he was, the florist said, "Sir, I'm really sorry for the mistake, but rather than getting angry you should imagine this: somewhere there is a funeral taking place today, and they have flowers with a note saying, 'Congratulations on your new location.'"¹

Today we come to chapter thirteen in the Book of Romans. Last week we began to look at the service of Christians. We have been gifted with various gifts and we need to put them to work in the body of Christ. But is that the only loyalty we are to have in this life? Paul reminded us that we are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, but we are also citizens of an earthly kingdom.



Jesus was asked by His enemies one day, “Is it lawful to pay tribute (taxes) to Caesar, or not?” Jesus asked them to show Him a coin. Apparently, Jesus didn’t have one in His pocket to pull out. He asked whose image is on the coin. They replied, “Caesar.”

Then Jesus responded with the wisest advice ever given. He said, “*Then render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar and render unto God the things that are God’s.*” (Luke 20:25) Upon giving that advice, His enemies walked away.

They wanted to trap Him into denying God or denying Caesar. Either answer would have entangled Him.

Three Institutions Ordained by God²

As we look at our society, we see there are three institutions that have been ordained by God.

The first one is the family. A family is a small community of related people that care for one another. Within that family, there should be fellowship, sharing, and mutual caring. Within that family,



God has designed the husband to be the head of the family to lead and guide them, not lord over the family members. The wife is to help her husband and the children are to submit to the parents. When things are out of place in the family circle, there is confusion and turmoil in the family.

God also ordained the church. The church is a community of believers that have submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in their life. They are interested primarily in the worship of God, using their gifts in service for God, and providing mutual care of one another. The head of the Church is Jesus Christ and the members are to submit to the Lordship of Christ. The pastor is to lead the church as God directs him in conjunction with the church leadership and its members. When God’s order is maintained in the church, there is blessing and harmony. When that order is violated, there is division and hurt.



God also ordained the government. It may be hard to believe that God ordained it, but it is true. The government is a larger community of people who are brought together under central leadership. The government should have, as their primary interest, the mutual good of all its citizens. For government to effectively work, there needs to be submission on the part of its citizens to produce a peaceful society.



Today I wanted to focus on that third area in which a believer is to submit themselves. Rendering unto Caesar is a duty of Christians.

I. The Submissive Aspect of our Duty (13:1-5)

As I was describing the three institutions ordained by God, there was one word that all three used. It is the word “submission.” No one likes the word “submission.” We do not like to submit to others – we want to be in control. When it comes to government, Paul tells us that we need to submit. We may not like it, but we need to do it.



A. The Command of God (v. 1)

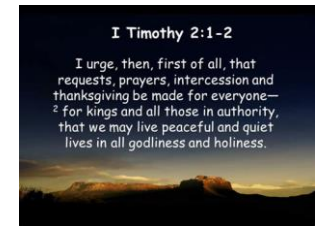
“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.” (v. 1)



When you consider the political climate in Rome when Paul wrote these words, they are quite remarkable. Rome was being ruled by a crazy man named Nero. He was one of the most wicked rulers of the Roman Emperors. He even executed his own mother and wife because of his paranoia. He is most notorious for his blaming of Christians for starting a fire that almost decimated Rome. The result of this shifting of blame caused the deaths of thousands of believers and their bodies to be burned as night lights in the courtyard of Nero.

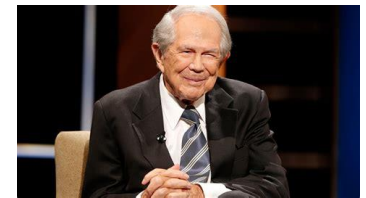
Paul was well aware of how evil Nero was, but he still insisted that believers submit to the governing authorities.

Paul gave advice to young Timothy concerning this topic of submission and prayer. *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.” (1 Timothy 2:1-2)*



Many people have a problem in this area. Yet the command is still clear. Recently our nation has seen the result when a leader fails to pray for a governing authority.

On June 8, 2023, the beloved television commentator of Christian Broadcast Network, evangelist and once Presidential candidate, Pat Robertson died at the age of 93. I am not sure if you remember this event, but in August 2005, Pat Robertson on national television responded to a story about the Venezuelan President. Instead of praying for President Hugo Chavez, Pat made an unplanned comment that the United States needed to send a team of soldiers into that country and assassinate him.



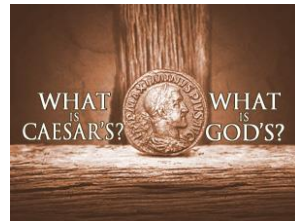
The response by the Venezuelan president was swift. He systematically began canceling all visas of all people from the United States. When this happened, I received an email from a missionary with New Tribes Missions and they were being forced from the country



because they were accused of being “imperialist CIA spies for the Untied States.” I received another email from BBN (Bible Broadcast Network) that their radio station employees are leaving due to visa problems with a South American country.

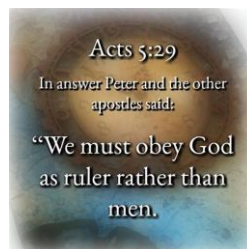
What Pat forgot was that he was a representative of Christ. I went on the web site of Pat Robertson’s 700 Club and sent him a note reminding him of our duty as Christians to pray for governmental leaders and not take it upon ourselves to be judge, jury, and executioner for leaders put in place by God. A few days later, I received an email back. He stated he had publicly apologized for his comments and was sorry for any problems that had resulted in the “unplanned comments.”

Whether we like it or not, we are supposed to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. We need to honestly fill out our taxes and pay what we owe. We need to submit to their authority in our lives. But there is always that nagging question about civil disobedience.



When the state comes to the place of trying to govern the conscience of man, then God is to be obeyed over the state! But when the laws of the state do not contradict the laws of God, then the state should be obeyed.

Yet if you clearly obey the teachings of God and it contradicts the laws of the state, then we should obey God. There may be consequences from the state for this disobedience, but you must follow



God. In Acts 5:25-42, Paul openly violated the orders of the authorities because he was directed by God to preach the good news to the people. As a result of obeying God, they were beaten and sent on their way.

God has placed governing authority over us for a purpose.

God not only has commanded this; He also controls it.

B. The Control of God (v. 1b)

Throughout the Old Testament, we see that God is ultimately in control of who the rulers of a nation are. We see that Joseph was placed second in the kingdom of Egypt for God’s purpose. We see king Nebuchadnezzar was ruler and king during Daniel’s day. The King became so boastful that he was the one in control that God caused him to lose his mind for a period of seven years. During those years, the King roamed the country side like a wild donkey and was fed grass like an ox. (Daniel 5:21)



We may think we are in control of our government, but God is actually directing the affairs of the nations of the earth.

C. The Council of God (v. 2-4)

Once we understand that God commands and controls those in authority, we are given two basic ordinances.



“Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For his is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” (v. 2-4)

1. Obey Governmental Laws

We are commanded to obey the laws of the land. God has placed them in those positions to reign evil in and punish law breakers. Here in the United States, we have a unique opportunity to participate in the governmental process. The person who is a believer is going to oppose bad government (bad laws, bad rules, injustice) and support good government (punishes crime, seeks justice, treats all equally). But once the laws are written, as long as they don’t contradict God’s commands, we are to obey them.



2. Observe Governmental Leaders

The bible makes it clear that the government is the arm of the Lord to maintain order in society. To walk in step with the laws of man is to enjoy peace. To rebel is to feel the wrath of man. God has handed judgment to men and we are under obligation to obey them as they rule our countries, even when we disagree with them.

II. The Supportive Aspect of our Duty (v. 6-7)

We are to be submissive to those in leadership and we are also supposed to be supportive.



“For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore all their due taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.” (v. 6-7)

A. Our Duty to Render Monetary Support (v. 6-7a)

These verses have to do with the matter of paying taxes. I don’t know about you, but I really don’t like paying taxes. I pay social security taxes, (15.3 %). I pay federal taxes (15.0 %), state taxes (7.0 %), sales tax (7.0%) on my electric bill, phone bill, grocery bill, gas tax, property tax, and when I die; my estate may have to pay a death tax. If paying taxes doesn’t kill you, filling out those forms might!



We may not like it, but it honors the Lord when we do that.

B. Our duty to Render Moral Support (v. 7b)

Not only do we support with money, we support by giving respect and honor to those in leadership or authority positions. If you want to make a policeman angry, simply get an attitude with him. You may not have done anything wrong yet, but if you mouth off at him, he will find some

reason to give you a hard time. If you sincerely give the officer respect, you may receive some grace from him that day. Honor those in authority.

III. The Spiritual Aspect of our Duty (v. 8-10)

As we render unto to Caesar the things that are Caesars – Submission and Support, there is also a Spiritual aspect of our Duty.

A. We Are to be a Liberating People (v. 8a)

Verse 8 tells us, *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”* We are to not to be in debt to others. The idea of



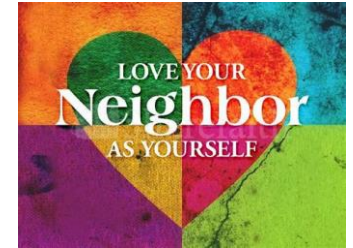
this passage is related not so much as financial, as it is to the above idea of our relationship with one another as well as our association with our government. Financially it is best if we do not owe anyone anything. Debt free living is a wonderful thing. But we need to render honor where honor is due, customs where customs are due, and pay our taxes to whom taxes are due.

Paul was telling the Roman Christians that they were to meet all their social and governmental obligations without fail. This command applies to us today. Whether we agree or not, we are to honor those in authority. In the military I am told you are to honor the uniform and position and not the person. You may despise the person in that uniform, but you are to obey and honor their position.

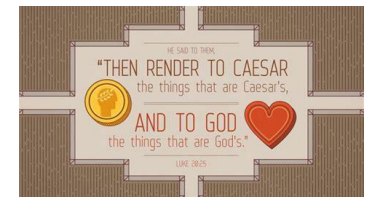
When we live owing no one, we actually are free.

B. We Are to be a Loving People (v. 8b-10)

We are to be liberated and loving. In verses 9-10 we read, *“He who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments say, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.”*



When we love God as we should, we will always love others as we should. When we learn to love like God, we will learn to live like God. Jesus said that the world would know we are Christians because we have love one for another. Keeping the commandments of God demonstrates our love for Him. He has commanded we *“Render unto Caesar, the things that are Caesars, and unto God the things that belong to God.”*



Conclusion

What exactly are the things that belong to God? God has given us breath, life, health, wealth, gifts, talents, abilities, and knowledge. Our heart, our loyalty, our obedience, our submissiveness are the things we can give back to God.

Have you ever yielded your life to God? He is calling us to bring our sins back to the cross and lay them there. Until our life is brought into alignment with the cross of Jesus Christ, all the other areas of our life are in vain. We are as

dead men until we are transformed by the power of Christ at the cross. At the cross we find forgiveness of our sin. At the cross we find fellowship with God. At the cross we find peace for our restless spirit.

The story is told of a little girl that spied a little plastic necklace in the dime store. The girl fell in love with this fake pearl necklace and wanted it more than anything in the world. She asked her mother if she could buy it. The mother said it costs \$2.00 and that the little girl would have to earn the money to buy it.



So that evening the little girl emptied her piggy bank and got out 17 cents. She got a list of chores from her mother that she could do to earn a little more money to buy that necklace. She visited her neighbors and earned a little more money doing odd jobs around their house.

Finally, she collected enough money to buy that priceless necklace. She wore that necklace every day as if she was the Queen of England. One evening as her father came to tuck her into bed and say her nighttime prayers with her, her father asked her if she loved him. The little girl replied, “You know I love you daddy.” The father then asked the little girl, “If you love me, then give me your necklace.” The little girl insisted again that she love her daddy but did not want to give him the necklace.

The father smiled and kissed her goodnight and she went to sleep. The next night the father asked the girl again for the necklace and again the little girl didn’t give her dad the necklace.

After about a week, the father came upstairs to say prayers with her and she was sitting on the bed Indian style. In her hand was the plastic string of pearls she had bought earlier. She reached up to her father with tears in her eyes and said, “I love you daddy.”

The dad smiled and reached into his pocket and handed the girl a genuine pearl necklace that he had ready waiting for her. He wasn’t able to bless her until she was willing to let go of the other necklace.



God wants us to surrender our plastic, fake life, and in turn, He will give us a new, shiny valuable life in exchange. When we surrender our heart to Him, He places a new heart within us and makes us new creatures in Christ. The old sins that once weighed us down are now forgiven and we can walk in the newness of life. We are free.

God calls us to “Render unto Caesar” the things that belong to Caesar (i.e., taxes, honor, respect, and obedience to the laws) and to “Render unto God” the things that belong to God (i.e., our heart, life, and obedience).

Have you done that in your life? Then determine in your heart to set things right – with both Caesar and God, today!

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Mike’s Funnies, May 4, 2017 – A Flower Funny

²Outline from Sermon Notebook – Romans 13_1-10 – The Believers Secular Duty

