



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Matthew 14–28 Sermon Series

Supports Session 10: Honor

Sermon Title: “Responding to Authority” (Romans 13:1-7)

Connection to Session 10

During His time on earth, Jesus was frequently targeted by the religious leaders who tried to trap Him. One of their tactics involved questioning His stance on submitting to authority. The apostle Paul later addressed this same issue in his letter to the church in Rome, which is the focus of today’s message.

Introduction/Opening

If we truly study God’s word, we will soon discover that it contains some difficult commands. For example, Jesus said, “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). It is much easier to curse our enemies than to pray for those who actively hurt us. Paul also taught difficult truths, and we are going to look at one of these today. We will see that all who are in authority have been placed in positions of leadership by God and He wants us to submit to them. This is a hard truth, and God wants us to be obedient to His commands.

Outline

We are called to submit (Romans 13:1-2)

It will help us if we look at a few key words in this passage. The first is “everyone.” This means everyone. Paul is writing to the church, and he does not leave any wiggle room as to whom this command applies. The second key word is “submit”. When we look at this in the original language, we see that it has military undertones to it. When the officer in charge called everyone to attention, the response was to submit to the command and fall in line. The command for us today is to submit and fall in line.

If we are being honest, this can be difficult in our day and time. Let’s recall the context of when Paul was writing this. The government officials then were far from the Lord and were actively persecuting those who were striving to follow the Lord. Yet the command was still given, and it still applies today.

We may be able to find some comfort in the fact that Paul goes on to articulate that all those in authority have been placed there by God and no one is in authority apart from His sovereign hand. We can find comfort in this truth because we know that God is good and He shows us this through offering Jesus as our substitute for our sins. We also need to trust that His ways are not our ways nor are His thoughts our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

We cannot leave this subject without addressing the question of how a follower of Jesus should respond if someone in authority asks us to do something against God’s Word. The answer is found in Acts 5. Peter and the apostles had been thrown in jail for preaching the gospel. They continued to preach after they were told to stop. They responded with, “We must obey God

rather than people” (Acts 5:29). The key to this, however, is making sure we know what God’s call is as outlined in His Word.

We are called to do good (Romans 13:3-5)

Here is a little-known fact that may prove to be helpful. If we do not speed, then we will most likely not get pulled over. I know this can be shocking for some of us, but it is true. In a similar manner, if we find ourselves following more laws than breaking laws, then we are less apt to have to stand before governing officials to give an account for our behavior. Let’s recall, once again, that Paul was writing this to the church when the governing officials were far from following the commands outlined in Scripture.

The command in this passage to the church is to “do what is good” (v. 3). This is written in the present tense, which means we need not delay. It is also written as an imperative, which means it is not a suggestion. If we have ever started a day and actively asked God to show us His will, then we are in luck. His will, according to this passage, is to personally and actively do what is good.

The question now becomes, what is good? As we learned in this morning’s Bible study, the religious leaders asked Jesus to name the most important command. Without hesitation He said we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40). So, if we want to do good, then we can start by loving God with all that we are and loving others the way we want to be loved.

We are called to honor others (Romans 13:6-7)

Paul began to summarize his teachings on this matter and call the church to action. He said, “for this reason you pay taxes. . . . Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes.” If we are honest, none of us enjoy paying taxes. As stated at the beginning of this message, the Bible has difficult teachings for us, and this is another one. We, as followers of Jesus, own nothing; it all belongs to God. The Bible does not add a conditional clause to this command. We are not responsible for how the funds are used; we are responsible to pay our taxes.

We are also called to show honor and respect to those in authority. This can be a government official, someone at the office, or a parent in the home. Once again, this does not mean that we agree with everything they do. Our calling is to walk in God’s commands and to trust He knows best even when it does not make sense to us.

Conclusion

Let’s conclude today’s message with a question. What is something difficult we have done we didn’t think was possible? Then, when we turned in the project, beat our fastest time, said we were sorry, or whatever it was, we felt confident because we proved to ourselves it was doable. The calling we have as a follower of Jesus Christ is to submit to authority, do good, and honor those in authority. These commands come from the Lord. These can be difficult at times, but God never promised it would be easy. He did promise, however, that He will be with us always, even to the end of the age.

Tod Tanner has degrees from Texas A&M University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, TN, and he serves as the executive vice president of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation and interim pastor.

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