

NORTHEAST HOUSTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

About Romans 13:1-2

1/5/2021

Romans 13:1–3 (NKJV) 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. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

This topical study was spurred by the misuse of scripture by a government official trying to shame people (mainly Christians) into supporting the separation of children, of all ages, from their parents. That is why the scripture tells us to STUDY not just hear and read.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

We must work to divide the truth from the false.

The following are a few of the historical uses of this passage.

- Romans 13 is from time to time employed in civil discourse and by politicians and philosophers in support of or against political issues. Two conflicting arguments are made: that the passage mandates obedience to civil law; and that there are limits to authority beyond which obedience is not required.
- In June 2018, Romans 13 was used by [Jeff Sessions](#) to justify the [Trump administration family separation policy](#), saying:^{[15][19][20]}
 - I would cite you to the Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13 to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained them for the purpose of order. Orderly and lawful processes are good in themselves and protect the weak and lawful.^[21]
 - <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/06/romans-13/562916/> The Atlantic June 15, 2015
- Commenting on the fight to define Romans 13, historian Lincoln Mullen argues that "what the attorney general actually has on his side is the thread of American history that justifies oppression and domination in the name of law and order."^[15]
- [Martin Luther](#) employed Romans 13 in *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*^[14] to advocate that it would be **sinful for a prince or lord not to use force, including violent force**, to fulfil the duties of their office.^[15] He justified the violent suppression of a peasant uprising referencing this passage
- But in a long exposition of the passage, John Calvin took the latter position: "that we might not yield a slavish obedience to the depraved wishes of men". And He argued that *all* the powers that be were ordained by God, including not just the king but also all the lesser magistrates. Those lower ranked officials were expected to resist kings "when they tyrannise and insult over the humbler of the people," and Calvin listed the people in the Bible who had resisted "slavish obedience to the depraved wishes" of lawfully constituted authority. in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
- Romans 13 was used during the period of the [American Revolution](#), by loyalists who preached obedience to the Crown; and by revolutionaries who argued for elimination of the unjust authority of the King.

- Later in US history, Romans 13 was employed by anti-abolitionists to justify and legitimize the keeping of slaves; notably around the time of the [Fugitive Slave Act of 1850](#) which precipitated debate as to whether the law should be obeyed or resisted.^[15]
- It was also used by the [Dutch Reformed Church](#) to justify [apartheid](#) rule in [South Africa](#).^{[17][18]}

Few, if any passages in the Pauline letters have been more subject to abuse than w. 1–7. Paul does not indicate that one is required to obey public officials under all circumstances, nor does he say that every exercise of civil authority is sanctioned by God. No particular government is authorized; no universal autarchy is legitimated. Instead, Paul reiterates the common Jewish view that human governance operates under God's superintendency (Jn 19:11; Dan 2:21; Prov 8:15—16; Isa 45:1—3; Wis 6:3), that it is part of the divine order and so is meant for human good (i Pet 2:13–14; Ep. Arist. 291–2).^[12]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romans_13

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romans_13#:~:text=In%20Romans%2C%20Paul%20is%20addressing,unjust%20authority%20of%20the%20King.

There is no question that God gives power and authority to whom He pleases.

*John 19:11 (NKJV)*¹¹ *Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. ...”*

Daniel 2:21 (NKJV) *21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.*

Proverbs 8:15–16 (NKJV) *15 By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. 16 By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth.*

There are biblical examples of this truth regarding Saul, David, Rehoboam

He gave Israel the king of His choosing, Saul.

*1 Samuel 9:17 (NKJV)*¹⁷ *So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, “There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people.”*

*1 Samuel 16:1 (NKJV)*¹ *Now the LORD said to Samuel, ... “I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.”*

*1 Samuel 16:12 (NKJV)*¹² *...And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him (David); for this is the one!”*

Jeroboam – chosen by God to be king over 10 tribes (Israel).

*1 Kings 11:31 (NKJV)*³¹ *And he said to Jeroboam, “Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you*

*2 Kings 21:2 (NKJV)*² *And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.*

Rehoboam – Was made king but not by God but by the people but allowed by God.

*1 Kings 12:1 (NKJV)*¹ *And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. He had to be chastised by God (2 Chronicles 12:1–3)*

*1 Kings 12:1 (NKJV)*¹⁴ *And he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD.*

We have here the knowledge of God's sovereign will concerning Jeroboam, and His allowance concerning Rehoboam as king.

I believe the same can be said regarding those in authority by the Sovereign will of God and those in authority by God allowing it to be so. See example in *Matthew 19:7*. God hates divorce (*Malachi 2:16*) but permitted it.

God uses kings and rulers for His purposes

Exodus 9:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ *But indeed for this purpose I have raised you (Pharaoh) up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*

Isaiah 45:1–2 (NKJV) ¹ *“Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held— To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: ² ‘I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron.*

Jeremiah 25:8–9 (NLT) ⁸ *And now the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: Because you have not listened to me, ⁹ I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy you and make you an object of horror and contempt and a ruin forever.*

On March 21, 1933, Germany was in turmoil. Less than two months after the Nazi seizure of power, even people with pro-regime leanings felt disquieted about the draconian measures instituted since the end of January that year.

It was in this context that Protestant theologian Otto Dibelius invoked the biblical passage **Romans 13** to urge Germans to support Hitler. As the nation looked upon him that day, in his sermon in front of the newly elected members of the Reichstag (parliament), Dibelius told Germans that they had learned from Martin Luther that Christians may not fail to support the state, "even not when [the state] acts hard and ruthlessly."

In his sermon, held in Potsdam, Dibelius reminded people how, during his own days, Luther had called upon state authorities to act "without mercy" to restore order. Eighty-five years later, as US Attorney General Jeff Sessions invoked **Romans 13** to tell Americans that they should support the since-abandoned administration policy of forcefully separating children from their parents who crossed the border illegally, it is hard not to think about the parallels.

Thomas Weber is a professor of history and international affairs at the University of Aberdeen and author of "Becoming Hitler: The Making of a Nazi" (Basic Books) <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/22/opinions/jeff-sessions-bible-verse-nazi-germany-opinion-weber/index.html>

<https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-the-real-story-behind-the-nazi-establishment-s-use-of-romans-13-1.6194455>

How has this scripture been used in history?

In the American revolution, loyalists who favored obedience to King and Parliament quoted Romans 13 for obvious reasons.

but Revolutionary clergy quoted Paul directly: "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." (Romans 13:3)

As the Anglican priest and regimental chaplain David Griffith [said](#) in a sermon on Romans 13, Paul “never meant ... to give sanction to the crimes of wicked and despotic men.”

Illinois minister Asa Donaldson [took](#) the quiescent view that “the scriptures everywhere treat the worst of human governments as better than anarchy,”...

But the most radical of abolitionists [came to believe](#) that the Bible did justify slavery, and [rejected the Bible](#) on precisely those grounds.

Black Christians slaves were accustomed to hearing from white slaveholders a bowdlerized gospel that emphasized texts like Romans 13 and [Colossians 3](#) (“Servants, obey in all things your masters.”)

Some “church friends” persist in pointing out, Sessions did not cite [the verse](#) later in Romans 13:9 where Paul writes that God’s laws “are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’” with the word “neighbor” echoing both [parable of the Good Samaritan](#) and the countless verses in the Law and the Prophets...

There is a sermon message series on this subject in the Sermon Notes section “**God Is the Sovereign Authority.**” **Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

Message Scriptures: **Romans 13:1–3**, *2 Timothy 2:15*, *John 19:11*, *Daniel 2:21*, *Proverbs 8:15–16*, *1 Samuel 9:17*, *1 Samuel 16:1*, *1 Samuel 16:12*, *1 Kings 11:31*, *2 Kings 21:2*, *1 Kings 12:1*, *1 Kings 12:1*, *Exodus 9:16*, *Isaiah 45:1–2*, *Jeremiah 25:8–9*,

END