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Romans 13:1-7

No Fear November:

Submission in November

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Website: Every election the country splits in two, people picking sides, parties warring against each other, elections won, elections lost. It's likely that candidates you disagree with will be elected to positions of authority over you, whether at a local or national level. Romans 13:1-7 gives us guidelines for how to live in these times. Should we keep fighting or is there some other solution? Listen to the sermon to find out.

***Sermon outline below.**

Introduction: (Slide #1)

1. How should Christians treat Politicians they disagree with?
2. In 1997, Philip Yancey wrote a book called *What's So Amazing About Grace*.
3. In 1993 he wrote an article, *Why Clinton Isn't the Antichrist*, and got invited to the White House.
4. During this meeting Bill Clinton shared he was a Southern Baptist but felt like a *spiritual orphan* in DC.
5. His staff weren't Christians and evangelicals had rejected him for his abortion and homosexuality views.
6. At one point, he said, "I've been in politics long enough to expect criticism and hostility. [...] But I was unprepared for the hatred I get from Christians. Why do Christians hate so much?" (pg. 226)
7. He felt like Christians hated him, and this was *before* his biggest scandal.
8. The *White House Effect* shows Presidents age twice as fast in office b/c they're stressed and alienated.
9. This election, no matter who gets elected, there's going to be a temptation to hate.

(The early Christians in Rome lived in a time when it would have been easy to hate the government.)

(In AD 49 the emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews, including a sect called Christians from Rome.)

(Eight years later in AD 57, just a few years before Nero's persecution in AD 64, Paul wrote them a letter.)

(In Romans, Paul explains Christians are saved by grace so we should be people of grace, not hate.)

(In fact, we're not to hate the government because God puts politicians and governments in power.)

I. God gives government its authority. (Romans 13:1) (S2)

A. God gives government its authority. (v. 1b)

1. When you think of "authority", what do you think of? Power, privilege, police, judge, military.
2. Some of us have a positive response to governmental authority and others negative.
3. Most of you probably grew up where that power was used to preserve and protect.
4. But a few of you may have grown up feeling abused and mistreated by that same power.
5. The Bible tells us that God "establishes" or appoints all earthly authorities. (S3)

Daniel 2:21 He changes times and seasons; **he deposes kings and raises up others**. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. (NIV®)

6. Even if we don't like or agree with a government, they are under God's control.
7. In v. 12 Paul writes, "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here."
8. One day, every ruler will answer for how they used the authority God gave them (comforting).

(God gives government its authority...)

B. Everyone is subject to this authority. (v. 1a)

1. To "subject" something is to put it under your control; we "submit" by obeying.
2. But should we submit to a government that mistreats us and abuses our neighbor?
3. Paul doesn't address this hard question even though a "sword" will one day execute him (v. 4).
4. When Nero persecuted and killed the early Christians, they're known for dying, not rebelling.
5. They died such bad deaths that the people of Rome felt pity for them and that Nero was unjust.
6. The founder of Christianity, Jesus too, was executed by a corrupt government.

(God gives government its authority and everyone is subject to this authority.)

(Why does God give government authority?)

II. Government gives us its protection. (Romans 13:2-5) (S4)

- A. This summer Monica and I visited my brother, his wife, and three kids, all four and below.
 - 1. At the time, he lived on a ridge along a dusty valley overlooking a winding river.
 - 2. One day they had a family gathering, his infant daughter and her cousin playing outside.
 - 3. His sister-in-law screamed, and my brother instantly knew why. He ran outside...
 - 4. He grabbed a shovel and struck the head off a rattlesnake, lying three feet from his daughter.
 - 5. The locals call that ridge where my brother lived, rattlesnake mountain.
 - 6. One of my brother's God-given roles is to protect his daughter.
- B. God gives government its authority to protect us. (v. 2-5)
 - 1. Verse 2 tells us when we rebel against God-given authority, it's as bad as rebelling against God.
 - 2. The government is supposed to bring judgment (v. 2), terror (v. 3), and bear the sword (v. 4).
 - 3. Paul says "They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." (v. 4)
 - 4. It's the government's job to protect the common good and punish uncommon evil.
 - 5. Sometimes it protects us with violence and other times by simpler means, laws, ordinances.
 - 6. We are to respect these laws and lawmakers, to humble ourselves, to not lash out.

(God gives government its authority to protect us.)

(One of the ways it protects us is by setting up boundaries.)

- C. To protect his children, my brother set up boundaries.
 - 1. They couldn't play anywhere but on the deck, which is higher than the dirt and has a mesh fence.
 - 2. But my niece and nephew didn't like this rule, so they threw their toys over the railing.
 - 3. The yard was littered with signs of their rebellion, neon frisbees, basketballs, and soccer balls.
 - 4. Sometimes the government sets up rules to protect us that we don't like.
 - 5. Every time someone texts me while I'm driving I'm reminded of this protection.
 - 6. How about airport security? We don't like it, but what would happen if it went away?
 - 7. Let's get personal. That water ban! Is it really for my good? B/c it's not good for my yard.
 - 8. The signs of our rebellion are lush grass next to brown grass, angry passengers, fatal car crashes.
 - 9. The government has a God-given right to set up these boundaries, the small or big ones.

(God gives government its authority.)

(Government gives us its protection...)

III. We give government our submission. (Romans 13:6-7) (S5)

(We're called to submit two ways: with our **money** and **attitude**.)

- A. First, we submit to government with our **money**. (S6)
 - 1. I love that Paul ends this section by telling his readers to pay their taxes.
 - 2. We pay our tithes and offerings to show our submission to Jesus.
 - 3. We pay our taxes to show our submission to the government.
 - 4. When I was in seminary, training to become a pastor, I cheated on my taxes.
 - 5. I told the lady helping me file my taxes whatever she needed to get the biggest refund.

6. A couple months later I felt so convicted by God that I went back and filed an amendment.
7. Correcting my taxes cost me about \$300, but it was worth it, because I was obeying God.
8. If your least favorite politician is elected, you may be tempted to skim, but God calls us to pay.
9. If bad laws are passed and you know tax payer dollars will be wasted, God still calls you to pay.

(First, we submit to government with our **money**.)

B. Second, we submit to government with our **attitude**. (S7)

1. In v. 7 Paul says to give government its due; taxes 2x, revenue 2x, respect 2x, honor 2x.
2. Paul is linking money (taxes) to our heart attitude (respect).
3. God doesn't just want an act of submission, he wants genuine submission.
4. How do we show we're genuinely submitting from the heart? By what we say. (S8)

Matthew 15:18 But the things that come out of a person's **mouth** come from the **heart**, and these defile them. (NIV®)

5. We submit to our spouses by not trash talking them behind their backs.
6. We're called to show respect and honor to the worst elected officials.
7. No matter how badly I want to say they're evil or stupid, I shouldn't (counter-cultural).
8. Jesus tells us to love our neighbor, even the one that lives in the white house.

(We submit to government with our **money** and our **attitude**.)

(If I'm honest with myself, I'm never truly going to submit to government.)
(I'll always be upset about who is in charge or how they use tax dollars.)

C. We can't perfectly submit to the government—this is why we need Christ.

1. Jesus submitted to both the earthly and the heavenly government perfectly.
2. He submitted to the corrupt rulers of his time, Pilot and Herod.
3. He paid all his taxes and went like a silent sheep to his slaughter (Isa 53:7). (S9)

1 Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, **he did not retaliate**; when he suffered, **he made no threats**. Instead, **he entrusted himself** to him who judges justly. (NIV®)

4. He didn't fight back or run away, but suffered for you and me.
5. He placed himself not in human hands, but in God's hands.
6. This trust cost him his life, but it lead to eternal life, b/c God raised him up.
7. Now if you submit to Jesus, you get Jesus' perfect submission as your own.
8. This means that in Jesus, no matter how bad I blow it now, I'm still forgiven.
9. I can gladly place myself in the government's hands b/c I know I'm safe in Jesus' hands. (S10)

Conclusion:

1. There are a lot of important issues at stake this November.
2. If all you do is watch TV or read the red voter guide, you might become really afraid.
3. That's why the first week of *No Fear November* we learned... *With Jesus, we're safe, free, and fearless*.
4. Last week I taught us to not trust in any power before God... *Align yourself with Christ the Cornerstone*.
5. This week is a reminder that God is in control and we are called to submit to whoever he puts in power.

**God gives government its authority.
Government gives us its protection.
We give government our submission.**

Preview: Get a free copy of the book and come back next week for Fruitfulness on the Frontline!

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV®)