

**THE ROMAN REVEALING**  
**Theme: The Reign of Righteousness**  
**From the Sermon Notebook of Dr. Doyce H. Nolan**

**SUBJECT: SECULAR DUTY OF CHRISTIANS**  
**SCRIPTURE: ROMANDS 13:1-10.**

**Introduction**

There are three institutions that have been ordained of God in this world. In each of them, there are levels of submission and authority. Those three institutions are:

**1. The Family** - The family is a small community of related people who have mutual care of one another; this involves submission and authority. God has designated the husband as the head of the family. The wife is to submit to her husband. The children are, in turn, to submit to the parents. This makes for a happy home. When things are out of place, there is confusion and turmoil in the family.

**2. The Church** - The church is a small community of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ which also have mutual care of one another. The head of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole church is to submit to His authority and leadership. Under Him is the Pastor, then the Deacons, followed by other members of the congregation. When God's order is maintained in the church there is blessing and harmony. When that order is violated, there will be division and hurt.

**3. The Government** - The government is a larger community of people who are brought together under central leadership. Their interest is the mutual good of all other citizens. The submission of

the citizens to the authorities of the government will produce a tranquil society.

It is the last of these three institutions that is in view in these verses. Since we are part of a secular society, we have certain responsibilities to that society. How we relate to those who have the rule over us in society, it a very important mater.

## **I. THE SUBMISSIVE ASPECT OF OUR DUTY (1-5).**

No one likes the word "*submission*", especially regarding the government. However, these verses tell us that we have a duty to submit to the authority of the government.

### **A. The Command Of God (1A). Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.**

**1. Consider the political climate in Rome when Paul wrote these words.** Rome was being ruled by a man named Nero. He was one of the most wicked of the Roman Emperors, even having his own mother and wife executed. He is most notorious for his tragic fire in Rome that destroyed every tenth Christian, by shoving a pole upward through their body and placed along the streets and set fire for lights as he raced his chariot through the city. Yet, it is to this man and his government that Paul issues the command for allegiance.

**2. What Paul is commanding is not blind allegiance to wicked men,** but willful obedience to the commands of God. This command has nothing to do with the ruler and everything to do with the spiritual condition of the believer. The command is simple and the command is clear: believers are to willfully submit to secular authorities!

**Elaborate:** Many have a problem with this. Yet, it is still the clear command of the Lord to His people. However, there comes a time when civil disobedience is in order! When the state comes to the place of trying to govern the conscience of man, then God is to be obeyed over the state. Here is the truth that is in view here. When the laws of the state do not contradict the laws of God, then the state is to be obeyed without question. However, when obeying the law of the state forces you to violate the clear teachings of God, then God is to be obeyed, regardless of what the state says. Acts 5:25-42 tells us that this is what the disciples did when they were called before the local authorities.

**B. The Control Of God (1b). For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.**

**1. God controls and oversees the events of history.** Regardless of who is in power, they are there because the Lord has allowed it to be so to fulfill His own purposes. **Psalm 62:11 tell us that power belongeth unto God.** He gives that power to whosoever He wills, and He does so for His own purposes!

**2. This truth is recorded in Daniel 2:21a, He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings:** Friends, God sets up and pulls down human governments at His discretion. God is in control!

**C. The Council Of God (2-4).**

With those truths in mind, we are left with two basic ordinances God has in mind for us.

**1. Obey Governmental Laws (2-3). Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they**

**that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. (3) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:**

**Since rulers rule by the consent of the Lord**, if we rebel against the rulers of the land, then we are really rebelling against the Lord. Of course, we need to remember that there is a difference between laws that are acceptable and those that must be ignored. The clear principle in the Word of God is that you and I are to place God's word first in our list of priorities and man's law second. When man's law contradicts God's word, then God's word must be followed regardless of the consequences.

**Elaborate:** Paul tells us that rulers are not against those who do good. The idea here is not that they will respect our ways or our works. The spiritual end of our behavior is not what we are discussing. The idea is that when we follow the law of the land, we will be found in favor with our leaders. But, when we break the laws of men, we will receive judgment. There is a price to pay for breaking man's law. Paul felt this personally. He obeyed God's law and preached the Gospel, even when man's law executed him for his efforts, **2 Tim. 4:6-8. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.** Notice there is no condemnation of the state from Paul for what he is about to suffer.

**2. Observe Governmental Leaders (4). (4) For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is**

**evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to excute wrath upon him that doeth evil.**

**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 men is to enjoy peace. To rebel is to feel that wrath of men. This is the idea we have already considered. God had handed judgment to men and we are under an obligation to obey them as they rule our countries, even when we disagree with how they lead.

## **II. THE SUPPORTIVE ASPECT OF OUR DUTY (6-7).**

**A. Our Duty To Render Monetary Support (6-7a). For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues:**

**1. These verses have to do with the matter of paying taxes.** Now, there is not a person in this room who likes to pay their taxes. In truth, if the taxes we pay are unnecessary, unethical and illegal. However, we are obligated to pay them nonetheless. Of course, most folks look for any way they can to get out of paying their taxes. However, the Lord would have us to pay the taxes we owe to the government. We may not like it, but it honors the Lord.

**B. Our Duty To Render Moral Support (7b). Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.**

**1. We are commanded to fear and honor those who have the rule over us.** Even if we cannot respect, the person for their positions, their beliefs, or their actions, we still owe them a debt of

respect because of the position they occupy. Remember, they would not be serving there unless they had been allowed to by God! Therefore, respect given to those in authority, is, in effect, respect given to God.

### **III. THE SPIRITUAL ASPECT OF OUR DUTY (8-10).**

#### **A. We Are To Be A Liberated People (8a). Owe no man anything, but to love one another:**

**1. This verse tells us that we are to be in debt to no man.** Credit is an easy thing to acquire. If we are not careful we can become so financially burdened that we are beyond hope of deliverance. However, the idea here, is that we are to render honor to those who are due honor, and fear to those who are due fear, custom to those who are due custom, and taxes to those who are due taxes.

**2. Paul is telling the Roman Christians that they are to meet every social obligation without failing.** We are under the same obligation to obey the rulers of our country and render them the honor they are due, whether we agree with them or not. Therefore, let us determine in our hearts that regardless of what men do, we will honor God by the way we live our lives.

**B. We Are To Be A Loving People (8b-10). For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. (9) For this, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (10) Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.**

**1. If there is to be a debt, let it be the debt of love.** When we love God as we should, we will always love others as we should. When this is true in our lives, we will have no problem obeying the laws of the land and honoring the rights, positions and possessions of others. This was the truth Jesus conveyed in **Matthew 22:37-39**. **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.**

**2. When we learn to love like God, we will naturally live like God.** Jesus left us with a new commandment recorded in **John 13:34-35**. **A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.** He also said that genuine love always manifests itself in obedience **John 14:15**. **If ye love me, keep my commandments.**

**Conclusion:** As we look at the world around us, there is much reason to be concerned and discouraged. Yet, we need to understand that the powers that be are there because they have been ordained by God. Therefore, let us respect their position, honor them as individuals, and obey the law. For when we do so, we are actually performing a service of worship to the glory of God and demonstrating to the rest of the world how godly people live their lives. When we do this, God is honored, Jesus Christ is exalted, and the saints prove the reality of their testimony.

