



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## Servants of God (Romans 13:1-7)

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### **Bible Study Schedule**

- **Tuesday, May 13, 7 AM in HHR #5**  
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, May 13, 8:30 PM in Office #225**  
(Sen. Wayne Wallingford's office)

A hymn by Martin Luther (1483-1546).

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,  
on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,  
were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;  
Lord Sabaoth, his name, from age to age the same,  
and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure;  
one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;  
the Spirit and the gifts are ours, thru him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill; God's truth abideth still;  
his kingdom is forever.

## INTRODUCTION

As we wrap up this legislative session of 2014, I want to remind you of what the Scriptures say about those who are civil servants.

It is not the purpose of this study to fully discuss the role of government as prescribed in the Bible. The purpose is to simply focus on the person of those whom the Apostle Paul calls “governing authorities” and “rulers”. The focus is not on legislation or policies, but rather on the position, the character, and the attitudes of government officials.

Romans 13 is a familiar passage to Bible students concerning the relationship between Christians and their nation’s government. It comes at a

point in Paul’s letter to the church in Rome where he is discussing a life that has been redeemed and is now living to please God. Part of that discussion includes the believer’s attitude and action toward those whom God has placed in positions of government leadership.

*Romans 13:1-7 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. <sup>2</sup>Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. <sup>3</sup>For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; <sup>4</sup>for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. <sup>5</sup>Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. <sup>6</sup>For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. <sup>7</sup>Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.*

The “governing authorities” that Paul makes reference to could be a king, parliamentarian, president, senator, representative, governor, commissioner or another office in a nation’s government. The Bible does not teach a particular form of government, but it does say much about the character and attitude of those who are in a government office.

## ESTABLISHED BY GOD

The first thing the Apostle Paul noted in this passage is that those in governing positions have been placed there by God. Three times in the first two verses of Romans 13, Paul taught this truth. All governing authorities of all nations and peoples have been set in their respective positions according to the sovereign hand of God.

This truth can be observed throughout the Old Testament:

- o Judges 3:9—God raised up the judges to deliver Israel
- o 1 Samuel 9-10—God chose Saul to be king of Israel

### CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, LOBBYISTS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS, LOBBYISTS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #225

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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- o 1 Samuel 16—God chose David to be the next king
- o 2 Kings 9:3—God anointed Jehu as the next king of Israel
- o Hab. 1:6—God said "I am raising up the Chaldeans" to punish Judah
- o Daniel 1:1-2—God gave Judah over to Nebuchadnezzar
- o Ezra 1:1-2—God stirred up the heart of King Cyrus and Cyrus stated "All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given to me."

And in the New Testament:

- o John 19:10-11—Jesus told Pilate that he would no authority unless it was given to him from above
- o Romans 13:1-2—All authorities on earth have been established by God.

No one is going to sneak by God and get into office without God's knowledge and consent. The next president, governor, senator, congressman, legislator, attorney general, county assessor and administrator will ultimately be chosen according to God's plan to carry out that which He has designed for the history of His creation.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, since God is the one who establishes the rulers and governing authorities, He is the One who has the right to call them His servants.

### A SERVANT OF GOD

Two times in Romans 13:4, Paul called the rulers a "minister of God". The Greek word is *diakonos*; the same word translated "deacon" in 1 Timothy 3:12ff. *Diakonos* is a reference to someone who is a servant or a minister. In Romans 13:6, Paul used another word, *latouryos*, to describe rulers. This has a sense of one who is a "hired servant"—which makes sense for these servants are not always unpaid for the tasks they perform, but are worthy of people paying their taxes.

This description is quite revealing for a couple of reasons. First of all, when put in context, the vast majority of rulers in the Apostle's time were anything but followers of Jesus Christ. They followed many "deities". Or in the case of the Caesars, they were looked upon as "gods" themselves. In the early years of the church, Roman officials turned a blind eye to Christians considering them a sect of Judaism. But as the years rolled along, especially during the reign of Nero, the Roman government grew more hostile toward the people of God. Yet, Paul still called them "servants of God".

Secondly, this designation instructs as to whom the governing authorities of a nation ultimately are responsible to. Regardless of position or style of government, a nation's leaders are responsible to God; they are first and

foremost, His servants. Paul Butler, retired professor from Ozark Christian College in Joplin, elaborated on this:

The idea in the Greek word *diakonos* is portraying the "servant" in relationship with his work. Government officials are "servants of God" in the civic workplace. They are not merely civil-servants, but are servants of the Most High God. Their first allegiance should be, therefore, to God. It is Him to whom they will give an account for their stewardship.<sup>2</sup>

So what does this mean? As servants of God, governing authorities are to pay heed to the commands and desires of God. In other words, what God has said is right and wrong comes before what constituents or parties or leadership say is right and wrong. Governing authorities are to obey God first, rather than man.

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**ANYTHING LESS THAN HONESTY AND HUMILITY IS NOT HONORING TO GOD AND DISRESPECTFUL TO PEOPLE.**

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Obviously, this is easier said than done. So how is this practically lived out? First of all, governing authorities are to listen to the command to seek out wisdom. The king of Israel, Solomon, exhorted his son "The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding. Prize her, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her" (Proverbs 4:7-8). If a leader wants to obey God, then he or she needs to know what God wants. This is why Moses told the future kings of Israel to personally write out a copy, study it and to obey it (Deuteronomy 17:19-20).

Therefore, secondly, the governing authorities should conduct their business according to the wisdom given by God. In other words, they should serve people like God would serve them. They should vote for and promote legislation which honors God. Doing this may come with a price, though. There may be a time when a vote which is in line with God's commands goes against that which one's constituents want or that which party leadership desires. When that time comes, the ruler must obey God rather than man.

Again, this is where wisdom is very much needed. A deep knowledge of God and His Word is vital to making right decisions and having right attitudes toward others who disagree. Some issues are quite clear; others are

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not. The arguments of men can be quite persuasive (just ask Pilate), if one is not grounded in the ultimate truth of God's Word.

Thirdly, (applicable for officials in the US), the governing authorities need to be totally honest on where they stand when campaigning. Now, one does not need to pound his or her chest and exclaim "I will only listen to God" (which comes off as quite arrogant and pompous) or quote a Bible verse for everything. But by answering questions with biblical truths without making biblical references with all respect and humility, people will come to know where one stands. If the voters like what they hear, they will vote for them. If they don't, then they will vote for another. Anything less than honesty and humility is not honoring to God and disrespectful to people.

### THE WILL OF THE SOVEREIGN

So what does God want from His civil servants? The following is a small sampling of passages that could be used to answer this question.

- **Follow wisdom.** Deuteronomy 17:18-19 *"Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes..."*
- **Be righteous.** Proverbs 16:12-13 *It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, For a throne is established on righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and he who speaks right is loved.*
- **Not be greedy.** Deuteronomy 17:17 *He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.*
- **To show justice.** Proverbs 18:5 *To show partiality to the wicked is not good, Nor to thrust aside the righteous in judgment.* Proverbs 29:4 *The king gives stability to the land by justice, But a man who takes bribes overthrows it.*
- **Be compassionate.** Psalm 72:1-4, 12-13 *Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's son. May he judge Your people with righteousness And Your afflicted with justice. Let the mountains bring peace to the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, save the children of the needy And crush the oppressor. For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help, the afflicted also, and him who has no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save.*

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<sup>1</sup> Now this does not erase the importance of a believer in the election process. The Christian person should vote. If one desires, he or she should run for office, or support a candidate of their choosing, or put up a sign in

- **To put aside evil.** Proverbs 31:1, 3-5 *The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him: Do not give your strength to women, Or your ways to that which destroys kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, for they will drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.*
- **Be humble.** Proverbs 16:18-19 *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.*
- **Be saved.** 1 Timothy 2:1-4 *First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

I throw out one more passage which is most needed in our day and time. Proverbs 24:23-25 *These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good. He who says to the wicked, "You are righteous," peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him; but to those who rebuke the wicked will be delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.*

### CONCLUSION

The humble, earnest prayer of King Solomon as he took the throne around 971BC should be the prayer of every lawmaker, judge, executive branch official, commissioner on every level of government who is serving today.

*2 Chronicles 1:9-10 "Now, O LORD God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?"*

If you are an elected official, friend, you are first and foremost, GOD'S SERVANT. Therefore, fulfill your task with humble obedience to God, with wisdom that only God can grant and with the utmost respect to others.

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God can and will forgive a person of his or her sins through Jesus Christ-- are you interested?

their yard. Ultimately though, the winner is not determined by the amount of money raised and spent or work put into the campaign, but by the sovereign choice of God. As stated in an earlier study, we are to carry out our duty, but

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leave the results in God's hands for He is the one who is good and wise. He knows what is best for His people and will perform it.

<sup>2</sup> Paul T. Butler, *What the Bible Says About Civil Government* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1980), 102.