

Authority; Romans 13:1-2

I. Authority

- A. Sometimes (most of the time really) we view this word with antagonism, disdain, even hate
- B. In the military, while still in basic training, there is a way out if you don't like it — “failure to adapt to military life”
 - 1. It is really a catch-all for those who cannot submit to authority
 - 2. That is really all basic training is — to see if you can follow basic instructions and submit to the authority over you
- C. We, in America, have modeled our lives after the idea that we don't want to be accountable to anyone
 - 1. We work for the American dream — to be our own boss
 - 2. We often try to get around rules (especially at tax time)
 - 3. We look at the letter of the law and not the spirit of the law
 - 4. We even rationalize our own disobedience to the law

II. Pharisaical Thinking

- A. Corban — consecrated as a gift for God and closed to ordinary human use ¹
- B. Mark 7:9–13 (ESV); ⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban” ’ (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”
- C. A Sabbath day's journey
 - 1. Exodus 16:29 (ESV); See! The Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.”
 - 2. The Jewish Targum (the oldest written commentaries on the Hebrew Bible or our Old Testament) has this as an interpretation of Exodus 16:29 — “Let no man go walking from the place beyond 2000 cubits on the seventh day.”
 - 3. The 2000 cubits (about .66 of a mile or 1 kilometer) comes from Numbers 35:5 — the distance from the exterior of the wall on all sides designated as pastureland for the herds and flocks
 - 4. Acts 1:12 (ESV); Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.
 - 5. The Pharisees had created a law and put a distance on how far one could walk on the Sabbath
 - 6. Then they created ways around that law
 - a) You could declare your home to be somewhere else as long as you had food there
 - b) So they would place food and declare their home to be 2000 cubits away from their real home, so they could actually walk 4000 cubits on the Sabbath
 - 7. They had a problem with authority

- D. Submission to authority can be a very difficult thing for us to accomplish

III. Rome

- A. The letter to the church in Rome was written around AD 57
- B. Nero was emperor of Rome from AD 54 to AD 68

¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 559.

1. "Christians were first, and horribly, targeted for persecution as a group by the emperor Nero in 64 AD.
 2. A colossal fire broke out at Rome, and destroyed much of the city. Rumours abounded that Nero himself was responsible.
 3. He certainly took advantage of the resulting devastation of the city, building a lavish private palace on part of the site of the fire.
 4. Perhaps to divert attention from the rumours, Nero ordered that Christians should be rounded up and killed.
 5. Some were torn apart by dogs, others burnt alive as human torches." ²
- C. Romans 13:1–2 (ESV); ¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.
1. Even Jesus honored God instituted authority
 2. Matthew 22:19–21 (ESV); ¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."
 3. Jesus plainly tells Pilate where his authority came from
 4. John 19:11 (ESV); Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."
 5. The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22 is about Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah — verse 7 is a prophetic foretelling of God's vengeance on Israel using Vespasian and Titus, a government instituted by God
 6. Matthew 22:7 (ESV); The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.
 7. Jesus submitted to an unjust arrest, a secret trial by the Sanhedrin, a circus of a trial by Pilate (who wanted to release him) and the sentence of death which He could have avoided
 8. Matthew 26:53 (ESV); Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?
- D. I've often heard the comparison of the state of our country to that of Rome in the 1st Century
- E. Remember, "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1b)
- F. We must remove the Pharisaical thinking from our minds — stop seeking ways around the laws of man
1. Seek to follow them even if they are unjust and cause you harm
 2. Seek to change them (legally) where they disagree with God's law
 3. It is a sad testimony for any Christian to be justly arrested or ticketed for a violation of the law (I know we all make mistakes and these things happen, but we should not actively seek to violate laws like speeding)
- IV. Do Not Resist
- A. We are supposed to be the light shining in the darkness
 - B. We are supposed to be the lighthouse guiding the ships safely through treacherous waters
 - C. We are being closely watched by many who do not know Christ
 - D. Our behavior should encourage people to want to know Jesus and His Father

² Lunn-Rockcliffe, Dr Sophie. "History - Ancient History in Depth: Christianity and the Roman Empire." BBC, BBC, 17 Feb. 2011, www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/christianityromanempire_article_01.shtml.