

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – August 13, 2023

Theme: The power of God at work in us Topic: The Christian and Civic Authority

Main Texts: Romans 13:1-7

Key verse: Romans 13:1 – *“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.”* (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: In chapter 12 of Romans, Paul gives us some practical advice about how, as followers of Jesus, we should live out our lives, especially in relation to one another and other humans. We are to bless those who curse us and live in peace with all men (Romans 12). Moving from there, he proceeds in Romans 13:1-8 to talk about governments and how believers are to relate to the government. In doing so, Apostle Paul makes two important points concerning governing authorities, *i.) Governing authorities are from God*, and *ii.) Governing authorities are for our good.* (**Romans 13:1, 4**). While we believe these statements to be true as the ‘God-breathed word’, we nevertheless still struggle to reconcile these truths to life under present-day civil authorities. But for the Holy Spirit to cause this section to be included in holy Scriptures, anticipates the ‘dilemma’ civil authorities would cause, especially when they (the authorities) don’t act like “servants of God”.

1. According to Romans 13:1 (GNT), *“Everyone must obey state authorities, because no authority exists without God’s permission, and the existing authorities have been put there by God.”* (a) What is God’s position regarding persons in positions of authority, good or bad? (b) How does your answer in (a) above compare with our typical attitudes towards governments, especially when they perform below our expectation? (c) Considering that God has used persons like Pharaoh, Artaxerxes, Cyrus, to accomplish His purposes, what adjustments do you need to make regarding your attitude towards authority figures? (See Exodus 9:17, Nehemiah 2, Isaiah 45:1-7, Daniel 4:17).

God designed authority to be part of our world. At every point in our lives, we are under the authority of someone else. As children, we are under the authority of parents, elders, care takers and teachers. At work, it is our supervisors, managers, and employers. On the roads, it’s the FRSC and on the planes, it is the FAA, pilot, and cabin crew. In church it is the pastor or church elders. All these people are placed in authority by God and are there for our good, acting as servants of God. These authorities don’t just exist, they affect our lives and actions.

2. (a) Romans 13:7 commands us to give to every civil authority what is their due. Let participants identify at least 5 things citizens owe to civil authorities. (b) In Mark 12:17, Jesus told His audience to ‘*give Caesar what belongs to Caesar.*’ What lessons can we draw from this regarding our civic responsibilities to constituted authorities, good or bad? (c) According to Romans 13:5, what is the implication of complying or not complying?

Romans 13:1-7 shows us that all governing authorities are from God, and they are for good, and are to be obeyed without any distinction to whether they are good or not. What are believers to do when any such authorities command us to outrightly disobey other clear commands of God, like talking about Jesus? Or they command that we kill unborn babies in the womb? Or that we teach our children that God’s biological design for them is not good? When the laws of men violate God’s law, we have a choice to make.

3. (a) In Daniel 3:1-12, the three Hebrew men refused to bow down to the image of King Nebuchadnezzar, a God-ordained ruler at the time. How do we reconcile this to the instructions in Romans 13:1-7? (See also 1 Peter 2:16; Titus 3:1) (b) Read Acts 4:1-3; 7:54. What were some of the consequences of choosing to obey God in defiance to governing authorities? (c) Read John 18:36; Philippians 3:20. What help do these verses offer when we face danger because of choosing to obey God rather than evil civil authorities?

Prayer: *Dear Father, help me to submit to governing authorities in order to keep my conscience clear and in obedience to You. Grant me the grace to know when obedience to man violates Your laws and to obey Your commands above all else, for You are the Ultimate authority. In Jesus Name, Amen*