

(1) We are to submit to the governing authorities, and in doing so we submit to God, 13:1.

- To trust and obey ... Or not ... ?

(2) When we resist these authorities, then we resist God, 13:2-4.

- We leave ourselves open for punishment, 13:2b-3a.
- We invite unnecessary fear into our lives, 13:3b.
- We oppose the good that God would bring through his servant, 4a.
- We change the stance of the servant of God from worker of good to avenger, 13:4b.

(3) When we submit we avoid punishment and bless our conscience, 13:5-7.

- We pay taxes and fees to all whom we owe these things, 13:6-7a, cf. Matthew 22:15-22.
- We pay respect and honor to all whom we owe respect and honor, 13:7b.
- This is the will of God, cf. 1 Peter 2:13-17.
- This is our good work as the redeemed of God, cf. Titus 3:1-11.
- This becomes part of our prayer life that we may walk in peace and quiet, godliness and dignity before the Lord and man, cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-3.

- **These seven verses contain the clearest and most specific New Testament teaching on the Christian's responsibility to civil authority.** Every Christian, no matter what form of government he lives under, is under command from the Lord to maintain proper and useful submission to that government for the sake of leading a peaceful life and having an effective witness. This recurring theme of submission to society's controlling power is nowhere more forcefully dealt with than here.
- Many evangelicals believe that Christians should become active in political causes, relying on social action and pressure tactics to change laws and government policies and practices that are plainly evil and to protect cherished religious rights that are being encroached upon.
- Even social and political activities that are perfectly worthwhile can deplete the amount of a believer's time, energy, and money that is available for the central work of the gospel. **The focus is shifted from the call to build the spiritual kingdom through the gospel to efforts to moralize culture—trying to change society from the outside rather than individuals from the inside. When the church is politicized, even in support of good causes, its spiritual power is vitiated and its moral influence diluted.**
- John MacArthur.

ON TAXES ...

The Roman government of New Testament times was pagan, despotic, and often merciless. Some of its emperors declared themselves to be gods and demanded worship from every person in the empire.

Also as noted before, the empire had many more slaves than freemen. During its latter years, Rome degenerated into a giant welfare state, in which fewer and fewer people worked for a living and more and more became dependent on the government. **As in many countries today, those who worked had to pay increasingly higher taxes in order to support the growing number who did not work.**

And of special concern to Jews and Christians was the fact that part of the Roman taxes were used to support pagan temples and other religious institutions throughout the empire. In Israel, as in most other parts of the empire, nationals of the country were appointed (usually after paying a high fee) as tax collectors and were given specified amounts to collect for Rome each year. They were free to charge virtually any rate they wanted and to collect taxes almost as often as they wanted, under the protection of Roman soldiers.

Whatever they collected over the prescribed amount for Rome, they could keep for themselves. As would be expected, abuse was rampant, and because most of them were fellow countrymen, tax collectors often were more hated than the Roman officials and soldiers. The gospels vividly reveal how much the tax collector was despised in Israel (see, e.g., Matt. 9:10-11).

Such was the backdrop for Paul's teaching about the Christian's obligation regarding taxes.

- [MacArthur, John (1994-05-09). Romans 1-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary Two Volume Set (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Serie) (Kindle Locations 17024-17035). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.]

- Because most Jews of that day believed the Messiah would come as a political deliverer, many of Jesus' disciples expected Him to free them from the Roman yoke.
- **But He made no call for political or social reform,** even by peaceful means. **He never attempted to capture the culture for biblical morality or to gain greater freedom.**
- He therefore spoke to the hearts and souls of individual men and women—never to their political, social, economic, or racial rights or physical pain and plights.
- MacArthur, Romans.

- **The mission of the church is not to change society—**although that is often a beneficial by-product of faithful ministry and living—but to worship and serve the Lord and to bring others to saving faith in Him. Much like liberal Christians at the turn of the century, many evangelicals have lost their focus on eternal values and become enamored of temporal issues, creating what amounts to a politically conservative version of social Christianity.
- MacArthur.