God puts all rulers in place, so if you rebel against them, you are rebelling against Him, and he will punish you for it (Romans 13:1-2).

[1] Let everyone submit [PPM, ὑποτασσέσθω] to the governing [PAP] authorities [ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις],
[G] since 1.) there is [PAI] no authority [ἐξουσία] except [from God],
2.) [S] and *the authorities* that exist [PAI] are [PAI] instituted [RPP] [by God].
[I'] [2] So then, 1.) the one who resists [PMP] the authority [τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ] is opposing [RAI] God's command,
2.) [S] and those who oppose it [RAP] will bring [FMI] judgment [κρίμα] on themselves.

God's rulers reward good and punish evil, so submit to them, not because you have to, but because it's right (Romans 13:3-5).

[G] [3] For rulers [ἄρχοντες] are [PAI] not a terror [φόβος] a.) to good conduct,
b.) [A] but to bad.

a.) [C?] Do you want [PAI] to be unafraid [PMN, μὴ φοβεῖσθαι] of the one in authority [ἐξουσίαν]?
[E] Do [PAM] what is good, [P] and you will have [FAI] its approval.
[G] [4] For it is [PAI] God's servant [θεοῦ διάκονός] for your good.

b.) [A] But [C?] if you do [PAS] wrong,
[E] be afraid [PMM, φοβοῦ],
[G] because it does not carry [PAI] the sword [τὴν μάχαιραν] for no reason.
[G] For it is [PAI] God's servant [θεοῦ διάκονός], an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does [PAP] wrong.
[I'] [5] Therefore, you must submit [PPN, ὑποτάσσεσθαι], a.) not only [because of wrath] [external threat]
b.) [A] but also [because of your conscience] [internal will].

God's rulers work for you, so pay them what you owe, both your taxes, tolls, respect, and honour (Romans 13:6-7).

[P] [6] And [G] for this reason you pay [PAI] taxes,
[G] since *the authorities* are [PAI] God's servants [λειτουργοὶ θεοῦ], continually attending [PAP] [to these tasks].
[7] Pay your obligations [AAM] to everyone:
1.) taxes to those you owe taxes [external],
2.) tolls to those you owe tolls [external],
3.) respect to those you owe respect [internal],
4.) [S] and honour to those you owe honour [internal].

This is how I parse Greek verbs:

- I use a three-letter combination in square brackets (e.g. [PMI] for Present, Middle, Indicative) after a verb, which I underline.
  1. First letter indicates the tense. Tense deals both with time and kind of action.
  2. Second letter indicates the voice. The relation of the subject or agent to the action.
  3. Third letter indicates the mood, participle, or infinitive.
- Tense:
  - P: present, continuous or linear action.
  - I: imperfect, continuous action in the past.
  - F: future, both progressive and punctiliar action.
  - A: aorist, expresses punctiliar action that has happened.
  - R: perfect, represents an action that is complete but has an ongoing resultant state of being.
- Voice:
  - A: active, reflects the subject that performs the action.
  - M: middle, the agent participates in the results of the action.
  - P: passive, subject is being acted upon by someone or something else.
- Mood/participle/infinitive:
  - I: indicative, reality, that which is actually occurring.
  - S: subjunctive, likely to occur.
  - M: imperative, a command that is possible.
  - P: participle, participles are verbal adjectives that behave like a verb and an adjective..
  - N: infinitive, verbal nouns that use the preposition "to", and they can also be used with "ing".

This is how I indicate the function of conjunctions:

- I put a letter in square brackets before a clause to indicate a logical relationship.
  - [S] - SERIES, Each proposition makes an independent contribution to the whole (and, moreover, furthermore).
  - [P] - PROGRESSION, Each proposition is a further step toward a climax (then, and, moreover, furthermore).
  - [A] - ALTERNATIVE, Each proposition expresses an opposite possibility arising from a situation (or, but while...).
  - [W] [Ed] - WAY-END (ACTION-MANNER), Statement of an action and one which tells more explicitly what is involved in carrying out this action (in that, by).
  - [/] [/] - COMPARISON, Statement that clarifies an action or idea by showing what it is like (even as, as…so).
  - [-] [+] - NEGATIVE-POSITIVE, The relationship between two alternatives in which one is denied so the other is enforced, implicit in contrasting statements (not…but).
  - [Gn] [Sp] - GENERAL-SPECIFIC, Statement of a whole and one or more statements which set forth parts of the whole.
  - [Ft] [In] - FACT-INTERPRETATION, Statement and clarifying statement; does not set forth a distinguishable part of the preceding whole.
  - [G] - GROUND, Statement followed by the argument or reason on which it stands; supporting proposition follows the supported proposition (for, since, because).
  - [I'] - INFERENCE, Supporting statement followed by the conclusion drawn from it; supporting proposition precedes the supported proposition (therefore, wherefore, consequently).
  - [C] [E] - CAUSE-EFFECT (ACTION-RESULT), One action and another action which results from the first as an automatic consequence (that, so that, with the result that).
  - [C?] [E] - CONDITIONAL, Like cause-effect except existence of the cause is only potential (if…then, if, except...).
  - [M] [Ed] - MEANS-END (ACTION-PURPOSE), One action and another that is intended as the goal or purpose of the first (in order that, that, lest, to the end that).
  - [T] - TEMPORAL, Proposition and the occasion when it occurs (when, after, before).
  - [L] - LOCATIVE, Proposition and the place where it can be true (where, wherever).
  - [Adv] - ADVERSATIVE, Main clause that stands despite a contrary statement (although, yet, but, nevertheless).
  - [Q] [A] - QUESTION-ANSWER, Statement of question and answer to that question (question mark ?).
  - [S] [R] - SITUATION-RESPONSE, The relationship between a situation in one clause and a response in another.
  - [B] [L] - BILATERAL, A proposition which supports propositions in both directions, rarely used.

This is how I use colour highlighting:

- Orange: structure indicator, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- Yellow: verbs, Greek, and Scripture reference.
- Green: keywords.
- Red: repeated words.
- Pink: imperatives.
- Blue: main idea.

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

1. **How has the author organised this passage?**
   a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
   b) Tools: Identify the text type, and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
   c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.
2. **How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?**
   a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
   b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
   c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
   d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.
3. **What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?**
   The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.
4. **How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?**
   What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.
5. **What is the main point you will argue to your audience?**
6. **What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.**
   The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).
7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- 4) must be found in the text.
- 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- 6) should flow from 5).
- 7) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5).

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Romans 13:1-7

1. How has the author organised this passage? *a) An outline, b) Tools, c) The emphasis.*

a) 1) God puts all rulers in place, so if you rebel against them, you are rebelling against Him, and he will punish you for it (Romans 13:1-2).
2) God's rulers reward good and punish evil, so submit to them, not because you have to, but because it's right (Romans 13:3-5).
3) God's rulers work for you, so pay them what you owe, both your taxes, tolls, respect, and honour (Romans 13:6-7).

b) I identified discourse and used syntax analysis. Paying attention to the verbs (especially the imperatives, submit, do/be afraid, and pay), conjunctions (especially the inferences), and prepositions. The structure emerged after observing the imperatives with inferences: a principle (submit... ...therefore in Romans 13:1-2), an application (do/be afraid... ...therefore in Romans 13:3-5), an obligation (pay in Romans 13:6-7).

c) Submit to God's rulers in all things, because He puts them in place as His servants for your good.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? *a) Literary, b) Historical, c) Cultural, d) Biblical.*

a) In Romans 12:17-21, Paul tells us to not take revenge into our own hands. In Romans 13:1-7, Paul shows that God has given His rulers the job rewarding good and punishing evil. This matters because, it shows that submission to God's rulers isn't about giving up on justice, but trusting God's system for justice, protecting us from harm, and allowing us to live peacefully.

b) Christians reading this lived in Rome, under emperors who claimed to be gods, and persecuted them. This created a tension between following Jesus and obeying Caesar. This matters because, our submission to God's rulers is not about agreeing with everything they do. It is a deliberate act of faith, trusting that even in a flawed system, God has put them in place and we can obey Him by submitting to them, because He is our protector.

c) The sword was a symbol of the state's power to execute people. Taxes were collected by corrupt officials who often stole. These were not abstract ideas but real, hated parts of daily life. This matters because, Paul tells us to pay and submit even in this context, proving that our submission in all things, even taxes in a corrupt system, is not based on the ruler's character, but on our duty to the God who put them in place as His servants.

d) There are no direct citations in Romans 13:1-7.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to *his audience?*

Trust God by submitting to the rulers He puts in place for your good.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The ultimate reason we can trust God by submitting to the rulers He puts in place is because Jesus did it first. He is the perfect model of this command. Though He was God, He submitted to human authorities, even the corrupt ones who crucified Him, trusting that His Father was sovereign over them all (John 19:11). He obeyed all the way to the cross, and God then exalted Him as the ultimate King (Philippians 2:5-11). Now, because we belong to Him, we are called to walk in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). We can submit not in fear, but in the freedom of knowing that our ultimate Judge has already declared us righteous, and our ultimate King is already on the throne.

5. What is the main point you will argue to *your audience*?

Trust King Jesus by submitting to the rulers God has put in place for your good.

6. What applications will you make? *a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.*

a) I want you to feel a deep sense of freedom and security, knowing that your ultimate destiny is held by King Jesus, not by any political leader or policy. Therefore, this week, I want you to actively and respectfully pay a tax, toll, or fee, or offer a genuine prayer for a government official, as an act of obedience to and trust in Christ.

b) I want you to feel the weight of your own rebellion, not just against a human ruler, but against the God who appointed them and to whom you will give an account. Therefore, today, I want you to stop and consider the claim of King Jesus, who submitted to authority to save the rebellious, and transfer your ultimate trust to Him alone.

7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? *a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.*

b) No kings above our King!

a) 1) The POWER behind the throne (Romans 13:1-2)
2) The PURPOSE of the throne (Romans 13:3-5)
3) Our POSTURE toward the throne (Romans 13:6-7)

Pray

Read Romans 13:1-7

[1] Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God,
and *the authorities* that exist are instituted by God. [2] So then, the one who resists the authority
is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves.
[3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the
one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. [4] For it is God's servant
for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no
reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. [5]
Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience.
[6] And for this reason you pay taxes, since *the authorities* are God's servants, continually
attending to these tasks. [7] Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to
those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honour to those you owe honour.

Introduction

In 1660, a man named John Bunyan was arrested. His crime? Preaching the gospel without a state license. The state ordered him to stop unlicensed ministry or face prison. His reply echoes through the centuries. *If I were out of prison today, I would preach the gospel again tomorrow, with the help of God.* For twelve years, Bunyan sat in the Bedford jail, and then in the notorious Tower of London. He chose the stone floor over a compromised pulpit. He understood a truth we must grasp today. There is a line the state cannot cross. When the state demands the keys to the kingdom, *We must obey God rather than people* (Acts 5:29).

A recent White Paper by the Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Rights Commission, a state institution created under Chapter 9 of the South African Constitution, is calling for the same kind of state overreach. The CRL has proposed a peer-review council for churches in South Africa. This would be a state-appointed body responsible for licensing preachers. Regulate doctrine. Decide what an acceptable spiritual practice is. How are Christians to respond?

In Romans 13:1-7, Paul does not give the state a blank cheque. He defines its God-given job description. And when we understand the state's true purpose, we also understand the limits to its authority. Paul paints a big picture for us. Trust King Jesus by submitting to the rulers God has put in place for your good.

We'll see this in three moves. The POWER behind the throne. The PURPOSE

of the throne. And the POSTURE Christians should take.

1) **The POWER behind the throne** (Romans 13:1-2)

God puts all rulers in place, so if you rebel against them, you are rebelling against Him, and he will punish you for it.

Let everyone submit to the governing authorities. This is a command. Universal. Clear. No one left out. But what if I disagree? What if they are corrupt? Paul answers by laying out a foundation for Biblical submission to authority.

There is no authority except from God. No president holds power by his own strength. No king reigns by his own hand. God permits their position. And *the authorities* that exist are instituted by God. God is not passive. He does not merely allow rulers. He actively sets them in their place. Establishing their rule. Ordaining their term. Paul's claim does not mean rulers are impeccable or that the state may demand what God forbids. But that the power behind every throne is His sovereign hand.

So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command. Here is the conclusion. All authority is from God. So, rebellion is not political. Rebellion is theological. To fight God's ruler is to fight God who placed him there.

Rebellion has consequences. Those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. Do not get on the wrong side of real power. God's wrath is a fearful thing. And He will not be mocked. He will judge those who oppose Him.

God's Word reveals that God is the sovereign over all spheres of life. Sovereign over the family. Over the church. Over the state. In the family, He gives parents authority over children. In the church, He gives elders authority over members. In the state, He gives rulers authority over citizens. It would be an abuse of God given authority for a ruler in one sphere to usurp rule in another sphere. The church must not take control of the family. The family must not take control of the state. And the state must not take control of the church.

The state's authority, while real, is not total. This divine boundary is what the CRL Commission now threatens. The proposed peer-review council for churches in South Africa seeks to licensing preachers. Regulate doctrine. Decide what an acceptable spiritual practice is. This is not the state punishing evil. This is an overreach. A usurpation of a role God has not given. When you understand the power behind the throne, you see the line the state cannot cross. To grant it the keys to the kingdom would be to disobey God.

God is in charge of our rulers. And so our submission to them is an act of trust in His sovereignty.

But what is God's PURPOSE in placing these rulers over us?

2) **The PURPOSE of the throne** (Romans 13:3-5)

God's rulers reward good and punish evil, so submit to them, not because you have to, but because it's right.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. This is God's blueprint for civil authority. The state is not a threat to those who do right but to those who do wrong. The state is a guardian of good. A restrainer of evil.

Do you desire a quiet life? From a knock on the door? Flashing blue lights? Court summons? Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. Be a good citizen and you will generally find the state is not your enemy but your protector. For it is God's servant for your good. When serving as intended, the state is a gift from God for our good.

But what about those in society who do wrong? They should be afraid. Of consequences. because it does not carry the sword for no reason. The state does not benefit the lawbreaker. It is his terror. Because the state swings the sword. Not a ceremonial prop. Ultimate power. The power to arrest. To punish. To execute. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. Those who rule are more than civic officials. They are executors of divine wrath. When criminals are justly punished, God's wrath against evil, administered through His human agents, is on manifest display.

Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. The fear of external punishment results in shallow obedience. We submit out of our inner moral compass, calibrated by God's Word.

But see the boundary. The state is to punish evil. Use the sword for our good. The CRL commission proposes a peer review, which will define spiritual evil. Approve spiritual practices. Not rightly punishing wrong. Wrongly defining orthodoxy. This is no servant for our good. This is a supervisor of our faith. While we must always submit to rightful authority, we cannot obey misapplied authority. When laws run contrary to divine mandate, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

Our submission is not about the character of the leader, but about the character of God. And our trust in His good design. We submit because we believe God uses even flawed human systems to protect life. Promote justice. And provide order. This transforms our obedience from grumbling compliance to a conscious, conscience-driven faith.

What does this look like in my everyday life? That's what Paul makes crystal clear in our final point. What should be our POSTURE toward the throne?

3) **Our POSTURE toward the throne** (Romans 13:6-7)

God's rulers work for you, so pay them what you owe, both your taxes, tolls, respect, and honour.

And for this reason you pay taxes. This is the conclusion. The logical outcome. Because God is behind the throne. Because His rulers serve His purpose for your good. Pay. Not a suggestion. An expected response of a trusting heart.

Since *the authorities* are God's servants. Public servants minister on behalf of God to man. Continually attending to these tasks means this is their God-given occupation. Policemen. Nurses. Municipal servants. These are holy callings. When they work hard for you, they are ministering before God.

Here is the comprehensive command. The final imperative. Pay your obligations to everyone. This is not a voluntary donation. It is a debt. You prove your submission to God by paying your debts to man. Look at the scope. It is practical. It is total. Taxes to those you owe taxes. Income tax. Company tax. We fund the functions of government. Tolls to those you owe tolls. Indirect fees. Business licenses. E-Toll's. Television licenses. The costs of a functioning society. Respect to those you owe respect. An internal attitude of esteem. Reverence for the office, regardless of the man who holds it. honour to those you owe honour. This is public recognition. The way we speak about our leaders. Our tone.

Consider Paul's audience. The Christians in Rome. Under Nero. A man who would soon burn them alive. The tax collectors were corrupt extortioners. Yet the command stands. Pay your taxes. Give your respect. Submission is not a performance review. Submission is a faithful response to a faithful God.

How do we respond to the state regulating religion in South Africa? We engage the process with respect. We make submissions to the CRL Commission. We pray for our leaders. We sign petitions. We speak before parliament. We exhaust every democratic system God has provided to us to voice our concerns. This is giving what we owe. This is rendering what is due. This is being a model citizen. But, at the same time, we must refuse to render what is not due. We cannot grant the state the keys to the kingdom. To license the gospel. This is not rebellion. This is a confession that Caesar is not Lord. And, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

So what is our posture? It is of willing duty. Paying taxes is worship. Showing respect is worship. Rendering honour is worship. These are your spiritual acts of trust in the God who is in control.

This POSTURE points us to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Connect to the gospel

The ultimate reason we can trust God by submitting to the rulers He puts in place is because King Jesus did it first. He is the perfect model of this command. Though He was God, He submitted to human authorities. Even the corrupt ones who crucified Him. He trusted that His Father was sovereign over them all. Behold, He obeyed all the way to the cross. Therefore, God exalted Him as the ultimate King of kings and Lord of lords. Now, because we belong to Him, we walk in His steps. We can submit not in fear, but in freedom. The freedom of knowing our ultimate Judge has already declared us righteous. The freedom of knowing our ultimate King is already on the throne.

Unbelievers

I want you to feel the true weight of your heart's rebellion against God. Your disdain for human rulers is a matter of the heart. Rebellion against God, who appointed them. And He is the One to whom you will give an account. You don't have a bad government problem. You have a rebellious heart problem. A heart that refuses to bow. You chafe against human authority because your soul is at war with divine authority. And judgment against you won't come from a court in Pretoria. It will come from the throne in heaven. God’s wrath is real. His judgment is certain.

But there is hope for you. King Jesus submitted to authority. The perfect One stood before the corrupt. Trusting His Father’s sovereign hand all the way to the cross. Why? To save the rebellious. To rescue you.

Today, stop. And consider His claim. Rebellion leads to death. You must put your trust in the King who died for rebels. Bow your knee to King Jesus. Confess your rebellion. Trust in His sacrifice. For He alone can pardon the rebellious.

Believers

I want you to feel a deep sense of freedom and security. Knowing that King Jesus holds your ultimate destiny.

This week, as an act of trusting King Jesus, I want you to do something. Pay a tax, a toll, or a fee. Or offer a genuine prayer for a government official. Get informed about the CRL commission issue. I'll post a link on the church notices WhatsApp group. Pray for wisdom for our leaders. And for the preservation of religious freedom. Both are acts of submission. Fulfil your civic duties. Be a watchful citizen who cares about the state staying within its God-ordained role.

Conclusion

The CRL has proposed a peer-review council for churches in South Africa. This would be a state-appointed body to license preachers. Regulate doctrine. Decide what an acceptable spiritual practice is. How are Christians to respond? Maybe you're thinking, pastors won't get locked up for what they preach. Or if they don't preach without a licence. That happened in 1660. But it won't happen in 2025.

On weekends in the early 80s, my family took drives to Craddock. Not to holiday. We went to visit pastors locked in detention for 30 days without trial. My father is an Anglican priest. In the 80s, the Apartheid government incarcerated clergymen for preaching against the state. I remember my dad shouting messages from wives and children through tiny jailhouse windows.

On another occasion, I remember my mom and dad sitting in our lounge after a Sunday service in tears. Praying. They worried my father would be arrested. That morning, men in brown suits, with Afrikaans accents and thin paisley ties, had visited the service. They took notes on my father's sermon. They were surely from the state police.

South Africa has lived through dreadful times. We know the state can be a terror to good conduct. It's happened before. And it's entirely possible that it will happen again. A state-appointed body to license preachers. We cannot. A state-appointed body to regulate doctrine. We cannot. A state-appointed body to decide what is acceptable spiritual practice. We cannot.

God has defined the state's job description. And when we understand the state's true purpose, we also understand its limits. May the Lord grant us freedom. To trust King Jesus by submitting to the rulers God has put in place for our good, unhindered. And for His glory. Amen.

The benediction

Adapted from Hebrews 13:20-21 and 1 Timothy 6:15, Now may the God of peace, who sovereignly ordains all authority, make you complete in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, be with you all. Amen.