

## **A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME**

### **GOD'S WORD CONCERNING CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP – PART III**

Romans 13:5 “Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.”

Based upon Paul's first five verses of Romans 13, there are actually two reasons a Christian submits to those in authority. The first is an external one. Refusing to obey those God has placed in authority brings the disobedience under the wrath of God. God punishes disobedience.

The second reason a person submits to those in authority St. Paul writes “. . . is a matter of (their) conscience.” Kenneth Wuest writes, “even apart from the consequences of disobedience, (your) conscience recognizes the divine right and function of the authority and freely submits to it.” For the Christian, the prompting and guidance of the Holy Spirit informs the believers conscience of what is right in God's sight. The conscience prods you to obey God and His Laws.

Government is only one of God's institutions His Law demands we obey. Others include marriage, family (parenting,) and the church/church leadership. All of these institutions God created to form the warp and woof of human society and culture. Since God created these institutions, He stands behind them and wants you to avoid doing that which would violate your conscience. This is the internal voice God has placed into the heart and mind of all human beings. (Romans 2:15)

St. Paul tells us to be law-abiding not because we have to, but because it is the right thing to do. Your motives matter to God. What you do matters to God. He has created you to love, honor and obey Him above all things. (Luther's Explanation to the First Commandment)

St. Paul's exhortation to “slaves” in Colossians 3:22-24 provides the reason a Christian obeys those God has given earthly authority “. . . obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for

one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

Prayer: Holy Spirit, lead me to obey those my heavenly Father has place in authority over me to His glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

The man is ever blessed Who shuns the sinners’ ways,  
Among their counsels never stands, Nor takes the scornors’ place.

But makes the Laqw of God His study and delight  
Amid the labors of the day And watches of the night.

He like a tree shall thrive, With waters near the root,  
Fresh as the leaf his name shall live, His works are heav’nly fruit.

Not so the wicked race, They no such blessings find;  
Their hopes shall flee like empty chaff Before the driving wind.

How will they bear to stand Before the judgment seat  
Where all the saints at Christ’s right hand In full assembly meet?

He knows and He approves The way the righteous go;  
But sinners and their works shall meet A dreadful overthrow.  
(LSB 705)