

He's Got the Whole World, In His Hands Romans 13 (1~7)

I'm afraid, that often times we serve a very "*small God*." One that is limited as to what he can do and what He can accomplish, one that is hindered and detoured by the actions of men... But nothing could be farther from the truth.

Each of us has our own perspective of God; we all have a certain concept that comes to mind when we think of God. Problem is, most of the time, it's one that is derived out the imagination of our minds, instead of the God revealed in scripture. Scripture was given to reveal to us, the one true living God. To help us better grasp just who He is. Outside of scripture, we are prone to come up with a perception of God, that is *far inferior* to who He really is. The best we can conjure up does not even begin to do Him justice.

We see this in the "*golden calf*" that Israel made at the foot of Mount Sinai. The story has it, that as a result of Moses being gone for so long from the camp, the children of Israel became restless, and approached Aaron about making an "*image*" to represent God and move on, *seeing that we don't know what has become of this Moses*. To which Aaron agreed, and called for all the gold earrings of all the people to melt down to make this image. The end result... *a golden calf*. When Moses came back down, he saw the calf, and called for a separation, and three thousand men were slain that day.

I am convinced that they made this calf, not out of "*evil intentions*," but rather from "*ignorance*." I'm convinced they had "*good intentions*," just a "*bad perception*." What I'm trying to say is, they meant well when they made this golden calf, but it was out of *ignorance*. The reason I say that is, realizing where they had just come from... Egypt! They had been in Egypt for over 400 years, surrounded by all the idols of Egypt, the so-called gods of Egypt. Up until now, that's all they knew. In making this golden calf, I can imagine that it was the "*Best*" of all the images they had seen. Made of pure gold, skillfully crafted... And it was to represent the "*gods*" that brought them out of Egypt.

(Ex. 32) ⁴*And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

I'm convinced, it was made with the best intentions, but nonetheless, it was a product of ignorance. Problem was, rather than "*glorifying God*," it rather symbolized the ignorance of man's understanding of who God really is! To bring the God of the universe down to a form of any kind, is degrading and dishonoring, regardless of how glorious and splendors it may be in man's eyes. Anything that man can make (*regardless of its splendor*) does not even begin to reveal the glory of God's majesty. Anything we could make would be a poor representation of WHO God really is...

It's interesting, that at that very moment, when they were making this "*image*," God was giving the Law. (Ex. 20) ⁴*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God...*

In other words...there is nothing on heaven or earth that could accurately describe the majesty and glory of the living God. So don't make ANYTHING! To do so, is to degrade and dishonor the Lord...

I say all that to say this... **How big is the God you serve?** We often need to be reminded WHO God really is. We often serve a "*small god*," one that is subject unto man, one that is limited in what he can do and accomplish. A god that is hindered and detoured by the actions of men... But that's just not true. The truth that Paul reveals here in this passage is one that helps correctly shape our perception of God.

¹*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. **For there is no power but of God:** the powers that be are ordained of God.*

Do you see the “*Image*” that Paul gives us of God... It’s a far cry from the *golden calf* I’ll tell ya. (Illustration: [Globe](#)) “*He’s got the whole world, in His hand.*” We serve a God, who is in complete control... **All authority is under His authority!** All the powers that be...are under His power!

We may look at all the things that are going on around us in this world, and become troubled in heart, if we don’t keep a proper perspective of WHO it is that we are serving. Things may look bad, things may appear to be out of control, but it’s not. Rest assured, everything is going according to plan.

¹*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*

T: As Christians, we are to live in this world, in complete subjection and submission to those who are in authority over us...in the understanding that all who are over us, are under Him!

Human Government was not man’s idea, but God’s idea! The powers that be, exist because God made them. Not only did God create the heavens and the earth, but He also created human government.

God uses human government to promote good and to punish evil...thus establishing world order.

²*Whosoever therefore resist the power, resist the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.* ³*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shall have praise of the same:* ⁴*For he is the **minister of God** to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

Paul refers to those in positions of power, those is government over us...as *ministers of God*. Serving in positions that were established by God for Gods purposes. They are there to promote good, and punish evil, to establish and keep world order. So that those who get out of line will be punished by these powers, and those who submit to them can live in peace.

He exhorts us here to submit to these powers, because they have been given the authority by God to execute wrath on those who resist! The statement, “*for he bears not the sword in vain,*” refers to death! It means that God has given authority to those in authority over us, to carry out punishment of the Law to it’s fullest extent...the taking of a man’s life. Many don’t agree with capital punishment, but it is biblical. We don’t have the right to take a man’s life, but the powers that be have that authority! Human government has been given this power by God Himself.

The point here is, we are not to rebel against the government in the name of God! That those who resist human government, are actually rebelling against God! I’m convinced that the main point here is that rebellion against the government is not the answer! Our agenda in this world is not a political one. Our purpose is not that of seeking to bring about change through fighting the government. To do so, is to be in direct opposition to God’s Will. The change we seek is not that of laws and policies, but rather that of a changed life through the means of the gospel of Christ.

Illustration of “*bears not the sword in vain...*” Peter in the garden. Peter resisted, and stood ready to fight to the death for Christ. But Christ told him, “*they that live by the sword, shall die by the sword.*” Peter, if you resist this power, you will be crushed by it. Christ humbly submitted to the guards, knowing that God was in complete control of the situation.

The only time we should resist the powers of us, is when they try and make us worship another God, as we see in the book of Daniel. Or that it would require us to be disobedient to God's word. But given here in America, we have the freedom of Worship, there is absolutely no need to rebel, but rather we are to submit. I find it interesting that God gave us this instruction, in the letter to ROME. One of the most powerful and ungodly nations that has ever existed. But that only serves to prove his point, that there is none outside the control of God. There is no power acting against the will of God, all power comes from Him, and is used for His purposes.

(John 19) We see the truth of this in what Jesus said to Pilate, as He stood before him on trial...

⁹And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰Then saith Pilate unto him, Speak thou not unto me? know thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? ¹¹Jesus answered, *Thou could have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

Pilate, a Roman Governor, was simply submitting to God's will when he had Christ crucified! If you remember the story, you'll recall, he didn't want to, he found Christ innocent of all the charges. He actually went against his will in having him crucified. His wife even warned and begged him not to do anything with this "just man." But guess what, he did anyway, even when everything within him said don't. Why? Because God is in control, and those in power are under His power, there to serve His will and purposes.

Paul says...⁵*Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

Here Paul exhorts us to humbly submit to the higher powers. And not to do so simply out of fear for wrath, meaning because they have the power to execute judgment, but we are to submit for conscience sake. Meaning that we are to submit because it is right! We are to submit to the powers that be because we know that they are God's ministers, serving Him. To resist them is to resist God! Submitting to them is to submit to God.

Paul wraps up by urging us to not only "submit" to them, but to fully "support" them...

⁶For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. ⁷Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Not only are we to submit to them, but also we are to show our full support by giving what is due them...whether it be financial, or whether it be honor and respect.

"Tribute" speaks of taxes levied on us by the government...something required of all of us to pay. Jesus was asked one time if it was right to pay tribute to Caesar? He was asked this by the leaders of the nation Israel, who were being taxed by the Roman government. They asked him this question to "trap him." If he answered yes, then they would declare him a traitor to Israel, by suggesting they support Rome! If he answered no, they would declare him a rebel, resisting Rome's rule. Jesus' answer confounded all they heard...Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is Gods. Total obedience.

The point here is that we are to show obedience to God by willfully and humbly submitting to them. As Christians, knowing the truth that Paul has revealed to us here, we are to have a much different perspective on taxes than that of the lost. We understand that by doing so, we help support the system that God has set in place.

Not only are to pay taxes, but we are to *pay respect* and honor to those in power over us. I've used this several times, but it gets the point across... Many in our nation are badmouthing our President over Iraq. I hate it as much as anybody, but according to this passage, if its true, then we are there, not solely on the decision of Bush, but of God. Proverbs 21:1 helps me a great deal...

¹*The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will.* God is in control...*He has the whole world in His hands...* The leaders of this world are but his ministers, his servants. All in authority "over us" are "under Him."

Having said that...*we are under their authority!* And Paul emphasizes here, that we are to submit to that authority, not out of obligation, but rather willingly, not simply out of fear but because it is right. We are to show support financially, by offering honor and respect to those in these positions, with the understanding that they are their serving the purposes of God.

Our subjection is not determined whether or not we agree with everything they do or say. Our submission is based on the fact that it is right, that it is the will of God for us! I am convinced, that the reason we struggle so much with submission to those in authority over us, the reason we find ourselves wanting to "bad mouth them," to "speak evil of them" rather than praying for them like we should, stems from the fact we are looking from the wrong perspective. We may not agree with everything they do, there's a lot of decisions they make we don't agree with.

Bottom line is, we struggle with submitting to those in power over us because they are not leading in the way WE THINK they should... To which God simply says...you're not the leader, so just be quiet, and submit yourself to their authority. Your not the one running this country, I am.

Beloved, there is no power but of God. He's got the whole world in His hands. All authority is under His authority... Ours is to submit to that authority...