

**08-10-14 – Attitude Adjustment**

**Rom. 13:1-14**

Pastor David Dykes tells this story... **This is a true story. I have a pastor friend in Alabama named Bill who was driving to speak at a church in another county and he was running late. He was driving about 20 miles over the speed limit, when suddenly he remembered he had a Christian bumper sticker on his car. Suddenly, Bill's conscience started giving him fits, saying, "What do these people think about you when you whip past them doing 20 miles over the speed limit?" So he faced this moral dilemma, and knew what he had to do. He pulled off the road, ripped off the bumper sticker, jumped back in and kept speeding. By the way, you may have noticed I don't have a Christian bumper sticker on my car!**

(From a sermon by David Dykes, Show Me the Money!, 8/20/2012)

**Rom. 13:1-7 – NLT - *Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. <sup>2</sup> So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. <sup>3</sup> For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. <sup>4</sup> The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. <sup>5</sup> So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.***

**<sup>6</sup> Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They are serving God in what they do. <sup>7</sup> Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.**

**Nicky Gumbel - - A man once sent a check for \$5000 to the IRS with a note...**

**"I felt so guilty about not paying my taxes; here is a check for \$5000. PS: If I still feel guilty in a couple of days, I'll send the rest."**

**Hello. My name is Nicholas Franco, and I am a rebel.**

Down deep inside, I am a rebel. I grew up in THE rebellious generation of the 60s and 70s. We rebelled against everything. We rebelled against our parents, our schools, our government, our churches, and any authority, as a matter of principle. We had sit-ins in our school to protest our involvement in the Viet Nam war; we protested against police involvement in our schools and society in general. We were just rebellious and thought that was right. If there was a rule or a law, we rebelled against it.

Then I became a Christian... I mean, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior and gave my life to Him. So, then I became a Christian rebel. Having Jesus to rely on for my life, I felt I could rebel against the government and other authorities in the name of Christianity. So, I guess I was still a rebel!

This is kind of the situation we find ourselves in our text for today – rebellion. Paul felt he needed to deal with this in order to keep or get the church in Rome on the right path.

If you think about it, rebellion is the original sin that condemned humanity in the Garden of Eden. I don't have to try or practice to be rebellious; I just am rebellious. I have to try NOT to be rebellious.

There is some discussion about this passage being stuck in the middle of Paul's main thought of chapters 12 and 14. However, taken in context, we can see that it fits quite well and maybe it is part of Paul's genius of his writing. Paul is brilliant in the way he laces teaching for living into his theology in all his epistles, but here especially.

Let's first look at the passage itself...

He opens this passage by teaching the Christian about our civil duty and responsibility. As is always the case, Scriptural teaching is timeless. So this passage applies just as much to us today as it did to Paul's contemporaries in Rome and other areas.

When we look at the culture and the situation the people faced, we might better understand the attitudes at play here and why Paul felt he needed to step in and offer some correction. Rome and the Roman government is the conquering nation, while Israel is once again the conquered nation now in subjection to a foreign people. Under their own law code and customs, the Jewish people were used to paying temple taxes, etc. They understood submitting to their own established leadership. They were willing to do all that was right and fair and required of them.

I think we all can agree to obeying what we feel is right and fair. What happens to our attitudes when we find ourselves in a situation when we are asked to obey what is not right or fair. What happens when things are just plain wrong and totally unfair? Are we still just as willing to submit and obey then? I don't think so!

Well this is exactly what the Jews experienced. Somewhat suddenly they were in a situation where the government was levying exorbitant taxes on the common people. They were being threatened by a militarily enforced penal code with strict consequences. They were being forced to pay ridiculous taxes, and the tax collectors and soldiers were taking some for themselves too. How unfair was that. Did you ever feel that way about our tax laws and other governmental issues?

They had been waiting for Messiah to come and overthrow the government and rescue them from this unfair treatment. Now they were forming churches of followers of Jesus Christ, Messiah. Maybe He didn't overthrow the Roman oppression, but certainly he would rescue them individually - right? So as most humans, they began to take matters into their own hands. Certainly God would be all for this. He couldn't stand by and let his people be abused and not do something about it. Surely Paul would give them encouragement in this regard.

Then Paul opens this section by hitting between the eyes. **SUBMIT THE THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES.** What? Are you kidding me? He is telling us the same thing today - Submit to the civil authorities because that is God's will for us. He furthermore teaches us that all authority is actually in place by God's design and no authority exists outside of God's instituting. That's a pretty powerful statement. We complain about those in authority at the various governmental levels, but they were allowed to be put in place where they are by God Himself. Can you imagine? Talk about adding insult to injury - what the heck?

Not only does Paul teach us to submit to the civil authorities, but he backs this up by telling us that they have authority given by God and the Government to punish those who do not submit. So, if we feel the need to rebel and not do what we are demanded to, the officials have been assigned to use their authority to punish us, up to and including capital punishment.

In Paul's time, the enforcers of civil law were the Roman soldiers. Not only did they have true authority granted by the government, but they also were obvious and recognizable. The Roman soldier wore a specific uniform complete with sword - **SHOW SOLDIER IMAGE AND EXPLAIN.**

**Rom. 13:4 (NIV) - *For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.***

Paul explains this symbol of authority by highlighting the sword. All citizens and non-citizens knew about the Roman sword. It was a short sword worn by the soldier. It could be used for close combat or crowd control and as a visual threat to all that they were equipped and prepared to use that sword against enemies and anyone who rebelled against authority. While it was given to protect people from threats of enemies, don't be fooled; it could also be used against people if they were causing civil disobedience.

**Rom. 13:4 – The Message -**

**<sup>3-5</sup> *Do you want to be on good terms with the government? Be a responsible citizen and you'll get on just fine, the government working to your advantage. But if you're breaking the rules right and left, watch out. The police aren't there just to be admired in their uniforms. God also has an interest in keeping order, and he uses them to do it. That's why you must live responsibly—not just to avoid punishment but also because it's the right way to live.***

Today, we can relate this symbolism to the police officer - **SHOW IMAGE AND EXPLAIN.**

Our police are given a uniform to identify them, a shield that confirms their authority, and a gun and baton to show they are equipped and prepared to defend the people against enemies and punish those who practice civil disobedience. Very similar, don't you think?

So, let's just get this straight... We are to submit, obey, and uphold our civil responsibilities whether or not the governmental officials are fair, right, unjust, or not? Yeah! Exactly!

WHY?

Because - obedience to them is obedience to God. If we disrespect them because we don't agree with their ways, we are rejecting God's rule in our lives. Not a happy story is it? Hence, the title of this sermon - **Attitude Adjustment**. That's what all of us need.

Jesus taught to pay our due taxes, etc.

**Matt. 22:17-21 - <sup>17</sup> Now tell us what you think about this: Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"**

**<sup>18</sup> But Jesus knew their evil motives. "You hypocrites!" he said. "Why are you trying to trap me? <sup>19</sup> Here, show me the coin used for the tax." When they handed him a Roman coin, <sup>[a]</sup> <sup>20</sup> he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?"**

**<sup>21</sup> "Caesar's," they replied.**

**"Well, then," he said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."**

He also taught his people they should pay the Temple tax as well...

**Matt. 17:24-27 - <sup>24</sup> On their arrival in Capernaum, the collectors of the Temple tax came to Peter and asked him, "Doesn't your teacher pay the Temple tax?"**

**<sup>25</sup> "Yes, he does," Peter replied. Then he went into the house.**

**But before he had a chance to speak, Jesus asked him, "What do you think, Peter? Do kings tax their own people or the people they have conquered?"**

**<sup>26</sup> "They tax the people they have conquered," Peter replied.**

**"Well, then," Jesus said, "the citizens are free! <sup>27</sup> However, we don't want to offend them, so go down to the lake and throw in a line. Open the mouth of the first fish you catch, and you will find a large silver coin. Take it and pay the tax for both of us."**

So how can we possibly agree to obey and submit to corrupt Government rules and officials?  
Ah - That's why Paul is so brilliant in his presentation of this command to the church.

**Rom. 13:8-10 – The Message - *Don't run up debts, except for the huge debt of love you owe each other. When you love others, you complete what the law has been after all along. The law code—don't sleep with another person's spouse, don't take someone's life, don't take what isn't yours, don't always be wanting what you don't have, and any other "don't" you can think of—finally adds up to this: Love other people as well as you do yourself. You can't go wrong when you love others. When you add up everything in the law code, the sum total is love.***

We need an attitude adjustment. There needs to be a shift from self to others, from greed, anger, and bitterness to loving others. We need God for this shift to take place. On our own we will continue to rebel. Only in relationship with Jesus and the help of the Holy Spirit can we possibly begin to see things differently. It may have to be a process for you, but the goal must be to follow Paul's advice...

**Rom. 13:11-14 - *The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.*<sup>13</sup> *Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy.*<sup>14</sup> *Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.* (NLT)**

As the Message stated...

***That's why you must live responsibly—not just to avoid punishment but also because it's the right way to live.***