

THERE IS NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT FROM GOD
July 3, 2016 morning service
Romans 13:1-7

Amen. Not the best looking bunch we've ever had out here but I'm telling you, they sounded great this morning. Thank you, guys, choir, and orchestra. Well done. Amen. You know that little word Amen is a powerful word in scripture. It means so be it.

I sat for an hour on the tarmac at LaGuardia Airport last week. There was a little boy sitting across the row with his momma, or two of them. One looked to be about three and the other one about five. That little three-year-old, we'd been there about 40 minutes and it was just dead quiet in that plane. He said, "I'm tired of this!" All across the airplane you heard, "Amen. Amen. Amen." I thought I was at a revival meeting, I'm telling you. I hollered out, "Preach it, young man. Preach it." Amen. Well Amen for the life we ought to live in Christ. Wonderful music. We'll sing some this afternoon out there in the heat. It'll be a good, good day.

Well happy Fourth of July. You doing alright? Amen. Well I want you to take your Bible this morning and go to the book of Romans chapter 13. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ then you are citizens of two places. You're a citizen of the country in which you hold a passport. I'm a U.S. citizen but I am also a citizen of heaven according to Philippians 3:20. I am not just a citizen of this world but I am a citizen of the next world. That's what caused Augustine to write the city of God and he spoke in that book of the city of man and the city of God. Those two were set in a tension with each other. The Bible speaks about this tension. While we follow Christ we yet remain as citizens of a country here. For those of us, the majority in this room would be U.S. Citizens. Others are citizens of other countries that worship with us here but we are in Florida, in America. Thus, we are American citizens here and we are citizens of the kingdom of God. There is a tension in that and scripture gives us some insight. Romans 13. Remember now. Paul is writing to Timothy. Paul is in a Mamertine Prison writing to the Romans. Nero rules. You don't name your kids Nero today. You name your dog Nero. In that Roman context Paul writes to the Roman church, later to write to Timothy while in that prison and he speaks about government. He has a good word for us today to think about this tension between our heavenly and earthly citizenship. Paul to the Romans, chapter 13.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God [there is my sermon topic today, no authority except from God], and those which exist are established by God. Therefore [since there is only authority from God and those that rule and exist are established by God, therefore] whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good.

But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; [And that last phrase. I want you to gather this up in your mind today.] honor to whom honor.¹

Giving honor to whom honor is due. I want us to think this morning of how followers of Jesus give honor unto our nation and unto those that lead us and serve us. Honor to whom honor is due. How in the world? Well you have to understand that God is the only eternal authority and yet there are earthly authorities in our life and we must honor those. How do we do it? First of all I would submit to you that we are to honor governmental authority. He says so right there in verses 1 and 2. We are to be in subjection. That is the very same word that he speaks to ladies being submissive to husbands, wives to husbands. We preach on that about as much as we preach on this. Submission, in subjection, that we come under the authority.

Listen to me. If we do not have governmental structure in any nation, we have anarchy. That is why, beginning in Genesis 9, there were governmental structures put in place. That's why in Rome there was a government put in place. For those long, long, long years Rome ruled the world. You realize that book, *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, was penned the same year as our Constitution. Rome fell not from the external but from the internal and the same will happen in these United States of America. It will not be the external. We've got more bombs to blow up anybody. You've got to be careful about that today because of computers. Warfare is changing but mind you, there is power, power. Just go down to Fort Walton and the War College will scare you to death if you knew what was in there. It's not the bombs outwardly you ought to fear. It's the bombastic spirit inside our country you should be concerned about. But we honor governmental authority. We do not flout the government but we respect it as a means by which God rules the world.

I saw this week where the leader of Canada, the President of America, and the leader of Mexico were together. What that says is that there are borders between those countries. It's not one long deal. There are three nations. There are Canadians and there are Mexicans and there are Americans. Those governmental leaders came together. That's how God rules the world. America is born in this tension of ultimate authority being God's and yet there is authority on this side. Now this tension can always twist and it did in the book of Acts. You remember? The fifth chapter of Acts. Paul, who writes these very words, "Be in subjection," and yet when that government said to Paul and the leaders in Acts, "Stop preaching the gospel," he stood and said, "We must obey God rather than man." And the tension was tight. He was a Roman citizen and yet he said, "I will not obey Rome when it says, 'Stop preaching the gospel.'"

¹ Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

I will die if need be for I will obey God rather than man.” And that tension is always among us.

Today we honor that governmental authority. We have to just be amazed at what God has done with our nation. It's an amazing story. If you have not purchased and read Eric Metaxas' new book, *If You Can Keep It*, I encourage you to do it. You can get it on Amazon for less than half price already. It's a New York Times bestseller. Eric Metaxas, *If You Can Keep It*. The title comes from when Dr. Benjamin Franklin walked out after a hundred days of writing the Constitution and he walked out and Mrs. Powell met him. Mrs. Powell said, "Doctor, do we have a monarchy or a republic?" to which Franklin responded, "Dear lady, you have a republic if you can keep it." Metaxas takes this book title from that and he says, "How can we keep the republic?" and he deals with that. There's wonderful history in his book and wonderful principles of freedom in that book. I challenge you to read it. I've read it and I've given it away to others already to challenge them. Read that.

In that book he tells the story I heard as a little boy. Squanto. You remember Squanto? They sailed from England in the early 1600's. As a matter of fact, they set foot on the shores of America in 1608. Squanto was a 12-year-old boy, a Native American. Not everybody came for the right reason and they took Indians as slaves and they took that 12-year-old boy onto a ship to Spain as a 12-year-old slave. Somehow in Spain he wound up in the hands of Catholic friars, monks, and priests. They introduced him to the gospel of the Lord Jesus, freed him, and when he was 22 having been back in Europe for ten years, he went to London, got on a ship as a free 22-year-old to go back to America to rejoin his tribe. When he arrived on these shores he found all of the tribe of his Indian ancestors dead. They had died from disease that the Europeans had brought. He said as William Bradford recorded it that he tried to connect with other Indian tribes but they were as foreign to him as the Europeans because he now spoke marvelous English, had been trained in European schools in Spain, and he just went into the woods to live.

In 1621 after the Mayflower had arrived with 103 pilgrims, those pilgrims that had been run from England to Holland for religious freedom and then could not live in Holland came on those two ships. One then didn't make it. The Mayflower came with 103 people to the shores of America, half of which died in the first year and they did not know if they would live or die and out of the woods walked a young Indian named Squanto. He taught our forefathers how to plant corn, where to fish, where to find lobster, and how to survive through a wicked winter. It was out of that providential, sovereign hand of God that you sit right here today.

This land was built that way. William Bradford is the governor there. Then a colony and then others and then 13 colonies. Then the same year finally Florida and Texas joined the union. A lot of people are talking about Brexit, Britain exiting out of the European Union. They better not let that be known in Austin. There'll be a Textit in a hurry I guarantee you. Those Texans are sitting on "G" looking for "O" just to get out

any time. They kid about it but they're not going anywhere. We join this union and the land was on.

You are a part of a nation that has struggled with many, many things, having dark, dark days but glorious light for the freedom of religious liberty, the gospel, and the freedom of man to use his own mind to build in his independent freedom that that he wants to build while still being a virtuous land. We are to be in submission. The way we honor governmental authority is to be in submission but there comes a line that they cross that they tell us we must obey what man says rather than what God says and at that time there needs to be another revolution. As a matter of fact, Jefferson said there ought to be a revolution every 20 years in America because the next generation forgets what the one going in front of it taught them. We need a revolution in America, a revolution of civic understanding. I would to God they'd put it back in our public schools where they just teach civics. We need again to understand how we remember our forefathers. Give honor to whom honor is due. God bless America. It's not perfect. Goodness no.

I went to junior college on two scholarships. The first one was a half ride for basketball. The other one was a full ride for public speaking. I got one and a half times the cost of school. I made money going to school the first two years I went to junior college. Then I got books and sold them and I made almost two times when I'd sell the books back because I knew I wasn't going to keep a biology book to do anything with it. I didn't mark it up so it would sell high.

I won a speech contest that my mother wrote, and I gave it. My mother who never had an opportunity to go off to school wrote that speech about independence and she had me memorize those words that are on the base of the Statue of Liberty. She said, "If you'll do this it'll win the day." When I got to that part about lifting that torch, that lamp, the money was mine. I have never forgotten her drilling into me. "Don't forget it's those tired huddled masses yearning, yearning to be free. Be free. Be free." There is no land like this land alive today. We must honor it but we do not worship it. We do not bow down to it. When it's wrong we prophecy to its face. It is the job of the people. We honor governmental authority.

Secondly, this text would teach us that we then honor good over evil. Yes we do. We honor good over evil. Notice what he said right here in the text. The rulers, in verse 3, are a cause of fear for good behavior, not a cause of fear of good behavior but a cause of fear for evil. There's a difference in good and evil says, "What is that authority?" Well do what's good and you'll have praise from the saints. You see, the government is a minister of God in verse 4 for good but if you do what's evil be afraid. We must honor our land by honoring good over evil. It is the job of the church to lift up good and expose evil in the culture.

Os Guinness, if you don't read Os, you ought to. If you've not listened to him on You Tube you ought to go and listen to some of the talks that he gives at the city of Socrates. Os Guinness, he speaks about the golden triangle of American freedom. If

you just draw a triangle Os says down on the bottom of that triangle, the first leg is that freedom requires virtue. If you're going to have freedom you've got to have virtue. Virtuous is good. Then he says in the second leg that virtue requires faith. On the third side of the triangle, faith requires freedom and it just goes around and around and around and around. Freedom requires – we must be good if we're going to be free. If we're going to be good, it takes faith to find out what is good and if we're going to have faith, we must have freedom not coercion and a state-run church and people making us believe. We must run our own with our own volition. Believe and when that faith comes, that faith which requires freedom will lead us to a freedom with virtue and virtue requires faith and faith requires – it just moves as Os Guinness calls it the golden triangle.

You see, friend, this culture needs virtue. It needs good. Now I understand the word of God says that there is nothing in us that is good. Our righteousness is like filthy rags but you still understand we know good from evil and we must rise to what is good. We must be salt and light. Our job to honor America is to influence public life by reasoning and by persuading. My Lord, we live in a wicked time in America when virtue has been thrown out the window. It's become legal for a man to marry a man but it's illegal for a basketball coach to pray with his team. My God, there's something wrong in the culture. It's become legal to rip a baby out of a mother's womb. There's something wrong with the culture.

I thank God for these young people that came and lifted this flag today from the ROTC but they were not our first choice to do this for us today. We asked the honor guard from NAS Pensacola to come and they agreed to come but two days ago they called us and said that the legal department of the U.S. Navy has said, "We can no longer send an honor guard to a local church." Something's dead wrong in the culture. When a man can apply from a paper made satanic temple to pray at the opening of the City Council and be given opportunity to do it, something's dead wrong in the culture of Pensacola, Florida. Our job is to speak to evil but to lift up good. I'm telling you, there's a lot of good. We are moving into a post-Christian culture in America and we must continue to have influence.

In the year 2016 – you know about Orlando. You know about San Bernardino. You know about Paris. You know about all of those terror acts that the media wants you to know but if you will Google terrorist acts 2016 there are a list – and I jotted down the number – in the year 2016, the first six months from January to June there have been 831 terror acts across the world, 831. Another one last night as we dip into July. We are in a world gone mad. Somebody said this week, "Everything's falling apart." No, no, no, hear me. Everything's not falling apart. Everything is just falling into place. There's fixin' to be a shout and a trumpet. Everything's just falling into place. You better get your eyes off of this culture and lift up your head. Lift up your eyes to the mountains from which cometh your help. He's coming. He's coming. He's coming. You better be ready for Him to come. You've never seen a terror attack like the one you're going to see if you get left behind when Jesus comes.

We must honor good over evil. How in the world do we do that? Number one. You need to clear your calendar. You need to be at the Bay Center on 9/11. We're going to pack that place, over 8,000 people, and have a prayer meeting downtown. We're going to gather together all the churches we can find. Joey Rogers and myself are going to be the folks leading out but we've got a lot of other folks coming to help us. We're going to put together a 400 voice mass choir. We're going to sing down the glory. We're going to pray. We're going to talk about the gospel. We're going to pray. We're going to pray. We're going to pray. I would that the wind of God would blow in that place. We need to pray.

You need to be thoughtful people of social media if you're going to stand for good and not evil. Don't be stupid. Don't write stuff that's dumb. Know what you're talking about. Think through it. Oh when you're just having conversation fun, okay, but if you're going to try to make a statement be smart. Be wise. As a matter of fact, sometimes the best thing you can do is turn off your device. Leave it to the Lord but there are other times you need to speak out and speak up.

We need to pray. We need to pray on 9/11. We're going to pray this afternoon. We're going to prayer walk this property this afternoon. We're going to put you in groups after we eat. We're going to have a good time. We're going to play but we're also going to pray this afternoon and ask for God to do a work on this corner.

How in the world do we promote good over evil? Some of us need to run for public office. Those of us that are not running need to support those that will. You need to encourage them and lift up their hands. I've had more people asking me about voting. I've been writing on a sermon. I don't know if I'm going to preach it or not but I've been writing it. "Can a Christian Vote for a Trump or a Hillary?" That's the title of the message. That's what I'm writing. If God gives me grace this month I'm going to try to preach on it and then I'm going to leave town on vacation for a little while. I've had more people ask me about that. They say, "Preacher, I just can't do either one of those." I say, "What are you going to do? Sit it out?" "I just can't sit out. I've got to be involved." They say, "Well I'm going to write somebody in." Well that's your prerogative. You're free. You can do that. I'm asking you in Jesus' name, don't write my name in there. I don't know. It's the hardest thing but we can't not be involved. We must step up and be supportive.

Do you understand what hangs in the balance? You can just watch the Supreme Court the last few days. You take eight years of someone that'll support way to the left and, dear friend, you will set this country on a course that you can't change for at least 75 years. What a great time to be a Christian. It doesn't take much light in the dark as it is. Just light a little match and it'll light the place up.

Last Sunday when Scott was here I sat on that bench in the second service and God slayed my heart. While he was giving the invitation I got on my face and I buried my face under that pew. I said, "Lord, I want you to forgive me. I'm asking you to forgive me. I've not been as bold in my personal witness as I ought to be." I said,

“Lord, I’m asking you to give me grace to kindly and wisely speak the name of Your Son, my Savior more than ever I’ve done it.” I said, “Lord, give me opportunities to pray, to speak.”

I found myself Friday at the Sanders Beach Center down on the water for Paul Grover’s funeral. You may have seen it on WEAR or in the paper. They wrote it up. A 45-year-old man. He joined our church Sunday before last. He’d been coming here awhile. He died of liver cancer. They asked me to talk at a memorial service. I said, “Lord, what am I going to say?” He said, “You remember you were under that bench over there the other day?” That place was packed. You’ve never seen so many big sinners in all your life. I mean it was a who’s who. My job was to lift up the gospel. Here’s what I did. I took Paul’s Bible. I looked over in the front of it. He had three dates written in his Bible. One, the first one said July 24, 2013 saved. I said, “Let’s talk about that a minute.” So I just talked about what it means to be saved.

Friend, I don’t know who you are in this room today but if you can’t write down saved in your Bible or in your prayer journal or if you can’t write it in your bulletin this morning you need to be saved today. You need to let independence weekend be the greatest weekend of your life. You see, our job is to lift up good. Lift it up. Do it on 9/11 and pray. I encourage you on social media to be thoughtful, to run and support, and then live above reproach. Live a life that people would say, “There’s something different about that crew over there at Olive, something different.” It’s about Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

They called me to come over here to the gym. The Teen Challenge boys and the Pathways for Change boys, two groups. They wanted to play basketball against each other. My soul. There was a lot of competition in that room. All their families came. Brother Stan said, “Pastor, I’d like you to say a little word.” I said, “What do you want me to say?” The Spirit of God said, “Remember when you buried your head over underneath there?” So I took that microphone over here and I preached to the mommas and daddies and aunts and uncles and brothers and drug addicts, recovering alcoholics.

Let me tell you, friend, our job is to lift Him up. That’s what we do in this culture. Hey, don’t get worried. Everybody tells me, “Oh, it’s going to be so bad for my children and my grandchildren.” That’s what your granddaddy said. That’s what he said. That’s what my mom and daddy said. Oh it’s getting darker and darker. It’s getting closer and closer. He’s coming. He’s coming. Nothing in this culture lasts forever. Every nation eventually fails including this one. The flower fades, the grass withers, but the word of our God will remain forever.

We honor by being in submission to governmental authority. We honor our nation by honoring good over evil. There’s a third truth here before I close and that is that we honor the tax code. Notice what he said right down here in verse 17. Render what’s due, tax upon tax. How’d you get to church this morning? Did you come in a car? Did you come on a dirt road or a paved road? I came on a paved road. Two

roads, I paved the driveway at my house and Olive paved Bob Davis Way, but the other roads are county roads. I paid my taxes. Did you pay your taxes this year? I don't like them either. I want them to be less instead of more but I'm here to tell you, if I'm in this culture I honor the tax code. That's what he says right there. Don't take it up with me. Take it up with Paul. Custom to whom custom, that's tax on stuff. That'd be more like a sales tax for us. Fear to whom fear. Honor to whom honor.

Now everybody take your Bible and go to Mark 12 very quickly and I'm going to be done. In Mark 12, look at this. Jesus in verse 13 is speaking. People came to Him in Mark 12 and verse 13. *Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him [that is to Jesus] in order to trap Him in a statement. They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." [A coin.] They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's." And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's [So yeah, the poll tax, if it's Caesar's and you're going to use his money, then pay it. But also], and to God the things that are God's."*

Most of the time we talk about paying our tax and our tithe but let me tell you that last phrase of rendering unto God that that's God's, the tithe is the easiest part of that you'll do. Let me tell you, when you render to God what's God's, it's your heart, it's your life, it's your family, it's your all. You owe God everything. He gave Jesus for you. You owe Him your all. Your tithe check is the easiest thing you'll do. You've got to give your all. Render to God your life. Render your life unto Christ.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God. They added that in the 50's. Under God. One nation under God. What in the world does that mean? Do you know every nation is a nation under God? It's not just America. We acknowledge it. Everybody does. That's what he said in Romans 13:1 about the government. Every nation is a nation under God. It's under providential care. How does America make it? We're under providential care. We're also under divine judgment. What God finds us doing right, He rewards. What God finds us doing wrong, He judges. One nation under God, indivisible. Oh my. Some people are trying to bust us up today. Indivisible. Liberty. Amen for freedom. Not to do what you want to but to do what you ought to. Justice for everybody. Oh we've not always batted a thousand on that. We don't today.

My wife's stepfather was an attorney. He said to me one time, "You know, Ted, justice is just like everything else in the world. The more money you've got the better justice you get." I said, "What?" He said, "Who drives the best cars? The people with the most money. Who has the best clothes? The people with the most money." He said, "Folks who can afford the best lawyers oftentimes get the best justice." This is an attorney speaking. I said, "I don't think that ought to be." He said, "It shouldn't be but it often is." I said, "What about that blind lady outside the court? She's got that wrap

around her eyes. It's supposed to be that you can't see if they've got money or they don't have or if they're red or yellow, black or white. It's what this country is based on." That's why we must always be in the game. There's a bunch of isolationists today that want to move off and be in a cave somewhere. Friend, we need to preserve the kingdom of God in the midst of a post-Christian culture. We've got to – hey, if the church in the book of Acts can make it through the Roman Empire, I'm here to tell you, the church of the living God will make it through the dumbness of America. Amen.

We have a motto. Do you know our motto? We see it on our money. Get your money out. You'll find it. We're together in one and then we use that word, "In God We Trust." Here's my question to you. Do you trust God? Does America anymore? Some of us do. Some of us don't. In God we trust. That's where we've got to come to is that we trust the living God.

I'll never forget it. I've shared it with you before – and I'm done. I'll never forget that little boy in Romania. He was 21-years-old. I was teaching in his theology class. He said, "I wish we and Romania could go back under communism." I said, "What?" He said, "Well a few years ago freedom came when Ceaușescu died, Communism left, and we came under a different type of government and we now have freedom." He said, "I want to go back to Communism." I said, "Why?" He said, "Under Communism they just told us what we could do and what we couldn't do." I said, "Oh young man, you learned about persecution and persistence under Communism. Sometimes suffering." I said, "Now under democracy you're going to have to learn discernment. You have freedom to choose and you dare not waste your freedom." He said, "It's harder when you have to choose than when somebody just tells you everything to do." I had no context for that. I'd never been under a Communist regime. I came home with that beating in my head. Thank you, Lord, for freedom. Now make me wise to discern between good and evil.

Church, as the soul is to the body, so are we as the church to be to the nation. As the soul gives life to the body, so the church must be the heart and discerning spirit of a nation. We dare be nothing less than that. Jesus didn't die for Americans. He died for the sin of all the world. He died for you. He died for me. If you've never confessed Jesus as your Lord I'm going to invite you to get up out of your seat and walk right here to the front and say yes to Christ. If you've never joined the church and ought to be a part of this one I'm going to invite you to come today. Then we're going to do one other thing at the end of this invitation. As we stand all across this place just now and Brother Jon begins to sing for us, if you're here without Christ, come. If you're here needing a church, you come. You just step out on these stanzas and say, "Pastor, today's my day. I need to know the Lord. I come to say I'm going to trust the Lord Jesus." He died for you. You step out. You come. While Jon's singing, you come just now.