

Some thoughts on Romans 13:1-7: submission to authorities

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Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-14 had confused generations of Bible students. We should submit ourselves to human authorities, no matter what government we deal with. Even if it's leader is named Adolf Hitler. Let us not forget that the apostle Paul wrote this letter during the reign of emperor Nero.

The simple solution to this dilemma is that we confused the words “submitting” and “obeying”. Romans 13 teaches us that we should “in principle” obey our authorities. We should pay our taxes. But if our authorities ask us to act irresponsible we should obey them. We should obey God more than our authorities (Acts 5:29). Acts 5:29 was aimed at the Jewish Sanhedrin while Romans 13 was aimed at the Roman emperor and written later. Nevertheless we should obey God more than our authorities.