

Cultivate Respect

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[0 : 00] Please turn your Bible to the book of Romans, chapter 13.! We're going to be reading verses 1-7, but in particular we'll be focusing on verse 7.

! Romans chapter 13, we'll be reading verses 1-7. This morning's sermon is titled Cultivate Respect, and some of you might remember that this is a part of an extended series that we're doing over this year.

So far we have done three of them. This is the fourth one. And each one of these sermons is encouraging us as a church to cultivate a particular value.

A particular value that really, I think you would agree with me, is these are values that have been lost, or we've lost our grip on them as strongly as we used to have them, and we need to seek to cultivate them again in our midst.

So the first sermon that we did was titled Cultivate Community, and the second was titled Cultivate Servanthood, the third Cultivate Generosity, and then this one Cultivate Respect.

[1 : 31] The remaining ones are Cultivate Humility, Cultivate Honor, and Cultivate Gratitude. But again, the motivation behind these sermons is to encourage us and to help us as a congregation to grow in these values and virtues with God's help.

I'm going to allow for questions and answers this morning as well, and my hope is to move through this rather quickly, and I'm aware that I'm not going to cover everything, but I want to briefly lay some foundations for us, and I trust that areas that I don't cover would be covered as you ask questions and have answers to those questions, and hopefully that will get us into the area of application as well.

Romans chapter 13, beginning in verse 1. Now remind us this morning that we're not going to be reading just the words of a mere man.

These are not just the words of the Apostle Paul. Let us remember that this morning.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God. And those that exist have been instituted by God.

[3 : 19] Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed. And those who resist will incur judgment.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority?

Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval. For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid.

For he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Therefore, one must be in subjection. For he does not bear the law of God's wrath. For he does not bear the law of God's wrath. For he does not bear the law of God's wrath. But also for the sake of conscience. For because of this, you also pay taxes.

[4 : 22] For the authorities are ministers of God attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them. Taxes to whom taxes are owed.

Revenue to whom revenue is owed. Respect to whom respect is owed. Honor to whom honor is owed. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank you for your word this morning. And we thank you, Lord, that as your people, we are gathered to hear your word and to sit under its instruction.

Father, I pray that above my voice, you will cause us to hear your voice this morning. And Lord, more than hearing your voice, would you help us to obey your voice?

Lord, help us to cultivate the value and the virtue and the practice of respect.

[5 : 30] And Lord, we pray that as we do so, it would point not to ourselves, but it would ultimately point to you. So we ask, Lord, that you would speak to us today as only you can.

And we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, even those of you who are not interested in the sport of golf, you've probably heard the name Tiger Woods.

Tiger Woods is considered by many people to be the greatest golfer of all times. Well, Tiger Woods is a personal friend of the President of the United States, Donald Trump.

And in a recent interview, he was asked what he would say to people who would question and wonder and find it interesting that he has a relationship with President Trump.

And really, it was a trap. It was a trap by a liberal reporter who was seeking to get Tiger Woods, while he was on camera, to distance himself from the President publicly and throw him under the bus, or to identify with him and then be attacked by the liberal media and the left in all different directions.

[7 : 00] So it was a trap question. And Tiger Woods showed that he is more than just a good golfer, but he is a quick thinker. And he responded in a brilliant manner.

Here's what he said. He is the President of the United States. You have to respect the office. No matter who is in the office, you may like, dislike personality or the politics, but we must respect the office.

So Tiger Woods did not fall into the trap that was set for him. And instead, he taught the reporter and really anyone else who would listen, a very important lesson.

Respect is owed to certain offices or positions in life. And our respect to the person in that office is not based on the person or the merits of the person or the demerits of the person.

It is based on the office. Tiger Woods taught that reporter, and again, anyone else who would listen, this very important lesson.

[8 : 16] Tiger Woods didn't quote scripture, but scripture supports what he said. This passage that we just read, verse 7 in particular, supports what Tiger Woods said.

Verse 7, again, if you would look there, Brothers and sisters, God's word teaches us that respect is a debt.

Respect is an obligation that is owed to some people. Now, to really appreciate the gravity, the weight of these words that we have read in Romans 13, verses 1 through 7, but verse 7 in particular, it's important for us to remember that the Apostle Paul was writing to believers in Rome. The Apostle Paul wrote at a time when the Roman Empire was ruled by a wicked, ruthless, ungodly man by the name of Nero. Nero hated Christians.

Nero was so ruthless that he murdered his own mother.

[9 : 57] And some three years later, he murdered his wife. And this was not lost on the Apostle Paul. Events of this nature would have been very, very public.

When the Apostle Paul called believers in Rome to give respect, to whom respect is due, he was not absent-minded about Nero and his wickedness.

He was not absent-minded that a wicked man occupied the seat of emperor of the vast Roman Empire. Now, Paul was very mindful of that.

And yet, he said to believers in Rome, give respect, pay respect to whom it is due.

Now, why was Paul calling these believers to live this way? Was he just telling them to be nice and be different from other people around?

[11 : 01] No. There was a basis for him to call believers to live this way and to respect those in authority. In the letter of Romans, when you follow how the letter was written, the Apostle Paul takes the first 11 chapters, or the first section of the letter of Romans, and he expounds on the gospel.

He talks about the good news of Jesus Christ and how sinners are converted and transformed through the good news of Jesus Christ. He talks about what God has done for sinners in Christ in the first 11 chapters.

And then, chapter 12 marks a transition in the letter. And here's the transition in the letter. Paul writes in verse 1 of chapter 12, That's the transition that we find in the letter.

What Paul is, in essence, saying is, he's saying, in view of what God has done. Actually, in the New International Version, it starts and says, Therefore, in view of God's mercies, live this way.

So, what we see in chapter 13, this call to subject or submit ourselves to those in authority, to respect those in authority, it flows out of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

[13 : 02] And what Paul is saying is, that is a logical implication of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We have to live in view of God's mercies. This call points back to God.

It points back to God. We have to live in a particular way in view of God's mercy. So, that's the context of these words.

The context is, you have this wicked ruler, Nero. And then, the context also is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And so, Paul is saying, in light of that, in light of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, we are to give respect to those whom respect is due.

So, here's how I would summarize the point that I trust that we will see from the sermon this morning from this text. Mindful of God, believers are called to pay the debt of respect to whomever it is owed.

Mindful of God, in view of God's mercies, believers are called to pay the debt of respect to whomever it is owed.

[14 : 28] And respect is owed and is to be paid to every person who occupies a position of authority authority that is directly or indirectly instituted by God.

We're told in verse 1, look again at what it says, Romans 13, verse 1, let every person be subject to the governing authority, for there is no authority except from God.

And those that exist have been instituted by God. Now, I think most people would agree that God sets up governments.

He sets up prime ministers and presidents. But what about police officers? What about teachers? What about magistrates and judges?

These are other office holders who have been appointed by those whom God has instituted and they, therefore, are to be respected.

[15 : 38] Remember, Jesus said something. He said, if you disobey me or if you don't respect me, you don't respect the one who sent me. And so, when someone who has been instituted by God or when an office instituted by God appoints someone else in an office, that person as well is to be seen as an authority and is to be given the due respect.

The due respect based on that office. As I said, we're going to be confining our attention this morning to verse 7.

And what I want to do in our remaining time is I want to just talk about three areas in which we, by God's grace, should seek to cultivate respect.

Three areas. And they are number one, the home, number two, the church, and number three, the world. The home, the church, and the world.

Again, there's more that can be said about these than I have time to say. So I trust that what I do say will be sufficient to help us to grow in some ways in these areas.

[17 : 03] Let me first start by defining respect. If you were to do an online search on the online dictionaries to see the meaning of respect, you'll find all kinds of definitions.

As a matter of fact, you'll find some new definitions. Some that just came out this year. There are people who define things based on experiences they have. And so some of the common ones that I saw are admiration.

Respect means admiration or being polite or being kind or being considerate and many others. but the one thing that they all have in common is they are all rooted in behavior.

They're all rooted in conduct. But that's not biblical respect. That's not the respect that Scripture calls us to.

Not at its root. Not at its root. all respect will certainly be manifested in conduct. But what Scripture calls us to is a respect that is not rooted in conduct, but it is rooted in the heart.

[18 : 20] It's rooted in attitude. In the original language, the word for respect is the word from which we get our word for fear or reverence.

it's more of an inward attitude, an inward experience, as opposed to an outward. It certainly will come out.

It will be lived out in a particular way, but that's not where it starts. And so the respect that we are being called to pay in Romans 13, 7, is more than being polite.

It's more than being courteous. It's more than being kind towards someone we admire. or we esteem. Instead, the respect that we are being called to is an attitude of reverence that is due to those who occupy positions of authority that are instituted by God directly and indirectly.

And notice that it's not connected to the person, it's connected to the position. And so you can have a person who is in a position and in that position, respect is due to them.

[19 : 33] Well, if that person moves out of that position and somebody else comes in that position, now the new person is the one to whom that respect by virtue of the position is now due.

But the respect is not rooted or the respect is not a debt that is due innately to the person, it is due innately to the position.

And so we respect these positions of authority and it matters not who occupies the position, the respect is still due in terms of recognizing the position.

So having defined that biblical respect is first an attitude of reverence before it becomes one of conduct, let's now consider respect in the home.

And I believe that we all would agree this morning that the person who occupies the position of primary authority in the home is the person who is owed primary respect in the home.

[20 : 46] I think we would all agree on that. And when we think about how God has organized authority in the world, this is the, this is base one, this is the starting point in the home.

And so ideally, the home is structured with a husband and a wife and the husband is the one to whom primary respect is owed by virtue of his position of leadership.

And a wife occupies a position of secondary authority, so respect is also due to her. But in the outworking of all of this, the wife is to respect the husband and the children are to respect the husband.

Now, obviously, that looks different in terms of the way a wife relates to her husband because of relationship is very different from the way children relate to their father.

So while respect is commanded from all of them, it will look differently in terms of the roles that they actually play.

[22 : 07] Now, in a situation of a single parent, male or female, that single parent is the primary authority in the home and that person is owed the respect by virtue of occupying that position of primary authority in the home.

Again, this is first an attitude, an attitude of reverence, an attitude of respect before or it becomes conduct that is lived out in a manifest way.

So respectful speech, for example, is to be rooted in a hard attitude of respect, not just being gentle in speech, but really rooted in recognizing that respect is due to this person, my mother, my father, who is in this position of authority.

I believe that one of the things that we are overlooking today in our society as one of the root causes for a lot of the problems that we're having is that we are not sufficiently attributing responsibility to our homes for teaching children the responsibility of responding to those in authority with respect, with an attitude of respect.

I think largely we're failing in our homes to teach our children in this way. Many of us who would be from my generation and older, we are grateful.

[23 : 57] We should be grateful because parents took the time to teach us these things because we don't learn them automatically. you don't just pick up respect automatically.

No, it has to be taught and teaching takes time and teaching requires patience. And we mislead our children and we do a disservice to our children but we don't take the time to teach them about respecting those in authority beginning in the home and giving that respect to their parents.

You don't respect your parents just because they feed you and just because they could beat you. You respect them because that is what God says that we are to do.

We are to respect those who are in authority. So parents have this duty to teach their children to respect authority beginning with teaching them authority in the home.

When we fail to do that, children have a skewed understanding of the world and how it works. The world works best with authority.

[25 : 11] It works best with systems of authority to help us to organize society and how we are supposed to live. Now beyond the home, for those of us who follow Christ, the next sphere of authority where respect is to be shown is in the church.

So let's consider respect in the church. In the church there are two primary offices. The first one is the office of pastor or elder and that is a governing office and the biblical pattern that we see is that it is a group of men who are responsible for exercising authority and leading and caring for the church.

The second office is the office of deacon. deacon. The office of deacon is a serving office. It is an office that is appointed by the elders, by the pastors and the deacons are to assist the elders in their care for the church.

But both are offices in the church and both are to be respected. And the respect goes to the people who occupy the offices, whether we like them or we don't.

I know there are people who relate to others based on, as Bahamians say, if my spirit takes to them. My spirit don't take to him, my spirit don't take to her, so I relate to him or her, if my spirit takes to them.

[26 : 45] That's not the way biblical respect works. It doesn't matter what our spirit takes to, who our spirit takes to. we are supposed to respect because respect is due to the office and accrues to the office holder who occupies that office.

Now, what about other roles in the church beyond elder and deacon? What about teachers in children's church or teachers in youth ministry or the person leading the worship team?

What about these other offices? How does respect apply to them? Well, they too are to be respected because they have been appointed in those roles to serve in ministry or to take responsibility for people and so those roles as well have to be respected.

And again, it begins in the heart. It begins, it is an attitude in the heart and it is keeping God's mercies in view.

Ultimately, respect is about our view of God and our respect for him and our obedience to his word. We do not detach the call to respect those in authority from God's word and the one who told us this is what we are to do.

[28 : 16] And again, parents, we're responsible to teach our children respect. We are responsible to teach our children to respect authority in the church in the same way that we are responsible to teach them to respect authority in the home.

And we don't just do this verbally. We do this by our own example as well. We teach our children to respect in word and in deed.

And so, for example, if our children were to hear us or see us disrespecting authority, then we can be sure that it's not likely that they're going to listen to our verbal instruction.

And this is true whether it's in the home or in the church. If, for example, just going back to the home for a moment, a wife who is disrespectful to a husband but meanwhile trying to teach respect to the children, the children are going to watch more the disrespect of the wife than they hear her words of instruction.

And if, as an adult, in some area of the church, you're disrespecting a person in authority, visibly or audibly, and your children are exposed to that, it's not very likely that your words of respect will go very far for them.

[29 : 43] And I will tell you that where this really rubs for us, it really rubs for us in an area where we have to show respect to someone who, for whatever reason, we don't want to show respect to that person.

We don't like the person. We think the person's objectionable, and they may be. But respect is not respect when we give it to someone who we think deserves it.

respect is respect when we give it from the heart, mindful of God who has called us to do it, leaving all the things to be reconciled up to him, and he will reconcile them.

If God overlooks one injustice, if God overlooks one wrong, he is not just, but he will not.

And sometimes we take God's patience, we take God's long-suffering to believe and to mean that he overlooks things, he sweeps them under the rug, he gives people a pass, he gives no one a pass, except those who put their trust in Jesus Christ.

[30 : 55] trust. So we need to respect those in positions of authority, and we need to teach it to our children.

And I think it's appropriate for me to say this morning that even beyond those who may hold official roles, I don't think we do our children a service if we say to them, well, you know, respect the pastors and respect the deacons and respect your children's church teaching, we tell them these people in some official roles, I think that we would serve our children well by giving them an attitude to defer with respect to adults in general, especially for very young children, to encourage them and to teach them that they are to respect adults in general, so that a person doesn't have to have an official position of authority in order to be respected by your children.

As I was writing this particular part of the sermon, I thought about something that we regularly see here at the church. Prior to our meetings, but generally after our meetings, we have young children who love to see one another on a Sunday morning and they get really excited and they run and they play and they do all sorts of things.

And sometimes an adult, myself or others, would pull them aside and say, hey, you need to stop running, you need to stop jumping around, don't do that. And they say, okay.

And then you turn away and the next minute they're really right back to it. We need to teach our children that when adults give them instructions, when adults try to help them in those kinds of areas, they're to be listened to.

[32 : 59] That it is for their good, not just their physical good, but it is for the good of their own souls that they would listen. Because if they don't, in ways that are hard to see in the moment, it's breeding a disrespect and a contempt for those in authority.

So it's something we should encourage our children to follow, not just for people in official positions of authority, but adults in general, how they should respond to instructions from them.

Well, third and finally, we need to cultivate respect in the world. When we think about respect in the world, I think the first thing that comes to mind is, in terms of authority, we think of governments, we think of the president or the prime minister in our case.

But you realize that societies are filled with positions of authority? This is actually filled with positions of authority. authority. And the more positions of authority in a society are respected, the better that society is.

The better a society is when positions of authority are respected. And again, I think we could see a big part of the problem for us in our country, that we, as a people in general, I think it's fair to say we are lawless.

[34 : 41] You realize that when a person, we have traffic lights, we have rules in terms of how we are to use the road.

Do you realize that those are extensions of authority? Even though the police officer may not be standing at the traffic light, the judge who would judge us is not standing at the traffic light. those are still structures of authority in our country. And when we run through a traffic light or we just wantonly break the traffic laws, essentially we are degrading our country to be less than it can be when we, as a people, would generally obey those in authority and the laws that are passed down for us.

Now, when we think of the Bahamas, we tend to think of the government, prime minister, and those who are elected to parliament as the government. But you know that our system of government is very different from that.

Most of you know that we were formerly a British colony, and so we have a form of British democracy, a parliamentary democracy, and they call it the Westminster system, which really is nothing other than the fact that in Britain, the parliament meets in a castle called Westminster, so it's called the Westminster system.

[36 : 13] But we have this system that is a parliamentary democracy, and the head of the Bahamas, believe it or not, is still the queen. The queen is the head, and then we have these three branches of government.

government. We have the cabinet, which is headed by the prime minister. That's one branch called the executive branch. And then we have another branch that we call the legislative branch, and that is the parliament comprised of the House of Assembly and the Senate.

The House of Assembly is headed by the speaker, the Senate headed by the president of the Senate. And they form parliament, and they pass laws. And then we have the judiciary or the judicial branch of government, and that has two parts, the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court headed by the chief justice, and the Court of Appeal headed by the president of the Court of Appeal.

Those three branches of government, they govern us. And in society, in the world out there, everything is structured under under that in terms of how we live as a society.

And then what those branches do is those branches appoint a lot of other people in positions of authority, and they're all to be respected. And we shouldn't think that, for example, the prime minister doesn't respect anybody because he's the prime minister.

[37 : 48] No, the prime minister is to respect the chief justice. And the chief justice is to respect the commission of police, and so does the prime minister. And the commission of police is to respect

the principal of the school of his child.

We don't, I think one of the most important things for us to remember is that no one, no one is ultimately exempt from being under authority.

authority. And even if you could work it back to the highest person, you say, well, okay, that person is the highest person who they're subject to, ultimately they're subject to God. And many people raise this in the home.

They say, well, the husband, you know, the wife is supposed to submit to him and the children are supposed to submit to them, but who does the husband submit to? He submits to God. And I'll tell you what, it's far easier, all things considered, for a wife to submit to a husband and be accountable for that submission to the husband than for the husband who is to be submitted to a holy, righteous God who overlooks no sin and who will bring all into account.

So this is the way society works. Now in the morning, here's what's going to happen. our children, the majority of them are going to go into classrooms.

[39 : 21] The rest of us are going to go into workplaces. And some of us, except a few who may own your own business, most of us are going to report to bosses and supervisors and we are called to respect them.

not if we like them, not if we have a good history with them. We are called to respect them because that's the authority structure that you are subject to.

And the same way you would expect your children to go into the classroom and respect and be submitted to the teachers and the principal and the other administrators who are in the school, the same is true.

In our world where we work and we have to be subjected to those in authority over us and we have to respect them from the heart.

And if you think about it in this way, where you may be on a job, for example, and you may be the only believer there, there may be some other believers there, but there are unbelievers as well, we should step back and think about what does submission and respect look like?

[40 : 37] from myself, a believer, and other believers compared to the non-believers. It should look different.

It should look different. Because we are called to show respect not based on circumstance, not based on personal preference, we are called to show respect in view of God's mercy.

authority. And in view of the fact that the authority structures that exist in the world ultimately can trace their way back to a God who has established authority in the world for the good of his people. But I believe that you can see the problem. Here's the problem. The problem is this. In our homes, we can lay these things down and we can decide as a family, this is what we're going to do.

We're going to show respect because God has called us to do that. And we're going to do it from the heart, not based on circumstances, not based on how we feel. We can also decide that in the church.

[41 : 46] This is the way we're going to live. We're going to follow God's word. But when we get into the world, the world is divided because not everybody is following this word.

And this is what the Apostle Paul was seeking to do. The Apostle Paul was calling believing Christians in Rome to a higher standard of conduct than what the typical unbelieving Roman was going to be doing and how they were going to be living.

And I think you would agree that even with Christ in our hearts, this sometimes is difficult. This sometimes is very, very difficult.

But it's especially in those difficult moments that we have an opportunity to live out the truth of these words that we're considering this morning. I think believing Americans have a wonderful opportunity to live out the truth of Romans 13, 7 by paying respect, showing respect to a president whose character, whose conduct out of office and even in office, falls far below what we know to be right, what they know to be right.

But yet, they're called to give respect because because of and in spite of all those external demerits.

[43 : 27] Brothers and sisters, we must teach our children to pay respect to all the different authorities in the world and to remind them of the reason that we do it. We do it for God's sake.

We do it because of his mercy towards us in Jesus Christ. And again, we need to remind them that in a very practical way, when we obey the rules, when we obey the laws, they're going to go to

school tomorrow and they're going to be told, don't bring a cell phone.

Or you're not supposed to do this or you're not supposed to do that. You're supposed to do this. And help them to recognize that when you obey those rules, you are showing respect to authority. And when you disobey them, you are denying authority of the respect that is due to them that when they lay down a particular law, that it is to be followed. And what is sad is when parents aid and abet their children in breaking the very rules that undermine respect for authority. You know, when I was growing up, and I know many of you have experienced this as well, parents and teachers were allied together.

[44 : 45] But today, there seems to be this hostility between them. There doesn't seem to be the partnership that we enjoyed where when we misbehaved and our teachers told our parents what we did.

Well, there wasn't even going to be much discussion about that. Parents gave teachers the benefit of the doubt in those days. They rarely would take a child's word over a teacher's word. Now, I'm not saying that absolutely we must do that, but I do believe that we have drifted so far that now what we find is we find disinterest on the part of a lot of teachers parents.

We have an arm's length relationship even with the students and the parents, and so there's not the partnership that can actually come. But we need to encourage our children, help them to see that when we obey laws, we are respecting those in authority who wrote those laws and put them in place, and those laws at the end of the day are for the children's good.

Parents, we must teach these things to our children. It is our duty to do so. Let me close with this one thought. Romans 13 and verse 7 in particular is not a comprehensive treatise on how Christians are to relate to authority and in particular state authority.

[46 : 23] Are those not mentioned here? there are times when it is good and right to disobey authority. There are times when it is good and right to disobey authority.

For example, if someone in authority is calling upon us to do what we know to be wrong, we have an obligation to disobey that person.

but we are still obligated to respect them. And we see a wonderful example of this in Daniel chapter 3 in the experience of the three Hebrew boys who disobeyed King Nebuchadnezzar, didn't bow to his golden statue.

They respected the king as they did so. A wicked king. They respected him, disobeyed him, but they respected him.

They didn't use that occasion to disrespect him, but they disobeyed him and they entrusted themselves to God. And I pray that God would help us to do the same. I pray you'd help us to cultivate respect.

[47 : 37] Let's pray. Let's pray.