

# Sermon Growth Guide

Author: Rev. Dr. Jeff McCrory



## HONOR IS DUE | Romans 13:1-7

August 16, 2026

**Key Verse:** Romans 13:1 - "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established."

**Big Idea:** God establishes and judges all authority. Thus authority is both an ordering power and also a judged power under God.

### Foundations

This admonition from Paul consists of three words repeated five times each and one opening qualification in 13:1. This is a huge signal for us in how to read and apply teaching on authority.

**1. Submission** and its cognate words, the Greek word *tasso*, meaning "appoint," as in appointed rule dominates the passage. Five times in seven verses this word occurs. The admonition is about submission to authorities.

**2. Authority** also occurs five times in this passage. The Greek word is *exousia*, meaning an existing (*ousia* meaning being or substance) authority. Authorities are existing structures of power under which we submit.

**3. Fear** also occurs five times. Fear can range from respect to actual anxious trembling. Fear is the emotion and action due to authorities to which we submit.

So, how are we to read this passage about submission, authority, and fear? If Paul did not introduce the admonition with 13:1, this would be an order to respect and fear political authority. But Paul raises this admonition from the political to the theological. All political authority is set and judged by God's transcendent authority.

### Understanding God's Word

Our secular age (Charles Taylor's word) sets everything on an immanent footing, fancy word meaning there is no transcendent power such as God, only the political that operates on a secular plane. Thus everything is now political. This is where the arguments regarding authority lie. We in the church with Paul need not to neglect the political but set it in its proper hierarchy as penultimate not ultimate.

### Applying God's Word

There is one Kingdom of God, Jesus's favorite phrase for the rule of God not only in heaven but on earth. We begin the Lord's Prayer with the words, "Your Kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We are to act within all the complexities of earthly authority under the final authority of God's Kingdom. The penultimate questions and critiques we apply should always be tempered with the ultimate question, "What is God's will in this situation?"

### Witnessing God's Word

Our witness regarding submission in fear to authorities should always lift the power differential to the theological level and never leave it to the political. The psalmist says wisely, "Do not trust in princes or in the son of a human in whom there is no salvation," Ps 146:3.