

Lent Day 30

Tuesday April 4, 2017

Reading: Romans 13:1-7

5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

Reflection

Self-directing. That, I think, would be a good way to describe us as a culture; we are self-directing. We don't really want someone else to tell us what to do, we want to be the ultimate authority of our lives. So, while we have bosses who can assign us work we determine how much power they have over us. We have spouses but we maintain a certain independence — I'll do the dishes when I'm ready to (if that's okay with you!). We have government but we focus more on what they should be doing for us rather than how we should be submitting to them. We don't really want people having a lot of authority over us.

However, when it comes to the renewal that we are asking God for in our lives this self-directing streak can have a detriment. We get locked into patterns and this pattern of not wanting others in authority over us can impact us spiritually. Do we really want God to direct us? To search us and tell us what needs to change and when? Can we give up our self-direction to become Spirit-directed? I think there is a tie here between submitting to human authority and God's authority.

Paul emphasizes that all authority or government is given by God. This doesn't mean that those who hold the office are infallible or above criticism. In fact, when we read Revelation 13 we see there is times to discern and resist corrupt government — though in a cruciform way. But government as government is a gift of God to give a measure of order and justice to his creation in this in-between time of the kingdom which has come and the kingdom which is coming. So, to submit to government is to submit to God.

This claim and connection should cause us to pause and reevaluate our attitudes. Have we been resisting authority over us and has that led to resisting God's authority? Then the flip side is, if I want God's authority to be more present in my life are there places where I need to adjust my attitude to human authority? After all we want to give to everyone (God, person and self) what they are due.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for your gift of order and justice. Help us to submit to authority both your own and human. You are our king. Amen.