

# Romans 13:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

## Analysis

**Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers**—The command *πάσα ψυχὴ ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτασσέσθω* (*pasa psychē exousiais hyperechousais hypotassesthō*) uses *psychē* (soul/person) to emphasize universal scope—every individual without exception. *Hypotassō* (be subject) is a military term meaning to arrange under authority, not mere external compliance but heartfelt submission. *Exousiais hyperechousais* (higher authorities) refers to governing powers placed over society.

**For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God**—*Ou gar estin exousia ei mē hypo theou* (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ θεοῦ, 'for there is no authority except from God'). The emphatic negative structure demolishes anarchism—all legitimate authority derives from God's sovereignty. *Hai ousai hypo theou tetagmenai eisin* (αἱ οὖσαι ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναι εἰσίν, 'those existing have been ordained by God'). The perfect participle *tetagmenai* (ordained/appointed) indicates God's past action with continuing effect—governments exist by divine appointment, whether rulers acknowledge God or not.

## Historical Context

Paul wrote this during Nero's reign (AD 54-68), before intense persecution began (AD 64). The early church faced accusations of sedition for worshiping Christ as Lord, not Caesar. Paul establishes that Christian faith doesn't promote political rebellion. This teaching was revolutionary: Roman rule was often brutal, Jewish

zealots advocated violent resistance, yet Paul commands submission. Later church fathers (Tertullian, Augustine) developed 'two kingdoms' theology—Christians honor earthly rulers while maintaining ultimate loyalty to God.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How do you reconcile submission to governing authorities (<em>exousiais hypotassesthō</em>) with civil disobedience when government commands contradict God's law (Acts 5:29)?
2. What does it mean practically that all authority is 'ordained by God' (<em>hypo theou tetagmenai</em>), including corrupt or unjust governments?
3. How should Christians engage politically—as passive subjects, active citizens, or prophetic witnesses challenging injustice?

## Interlinear Text

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Πᾶσα	ψυχὴ	ἐξουσίαι	ὑπερεχούσαις	ὑποτασσέσθω	οὐ				
Let every	soul	power	unto the higher	be subject	no				
G3956	G5590	G1849	G5242	G5293	G3756				
γάρ	ἐστὶν	ἐξουσίαι	εἰ	μὴ	ἀπὸ	θεοῦ	αἱ	δὲ	οὕσαι
For	there is	power	G1487	G3361	of	God	G3588	G1161	that be
G1063	G2076	G1849		G575	G2316				G5607
ἐξουσίαι	ὑπὸ	τοῦ	θεοῦ	τεταγμέναι	εἰσὶν·				
power	of	G3588	God	ordained	are				
G1849	G5259		G2316	G5021	G1526				

## Additional Cross-References

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**Titus 3:1** (Parallel theme): Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

**Daniel 2:21** (Parallel theme): And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

**John 19:11** (Parallel theme): Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

**Jude 1:8** (Parallel theme): Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

**Psalms 62:11** (References God): God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.

**Ephesians 5:21** (References God): Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

**1 Samuel 2:8** (Parallel theme): He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

**Revelation 19:16** (Parallel theme): And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

**Revelation 1:5** (Parallel theme): And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

**Daniel 4:32** (Parallel theme): And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.