

Romans 13:1-7 *1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.* Was the American Revolution against Britain in violation of Scripture? Were our founding fathers sinning against God by taking up arms against Britain? Conservative Evangelical Christians are divided on this question. One group says, *"The truth is the United States was born out of a violation of Romans 13:1-7 in the name of Christian freedom....and any blessings God has bestowed on America have come in spite of that disobedience by the Founding Fathers. (John MacArthur)"* Other evangelical leaders disagree saying our Founding Fathers were acting in self-defense and had Biblical authority for the actions they took in throwing off tyranny. The truth of the matter is that Christians were also divided amongst themselves during our war for Independence. About one third of the citizens of the 13 colonies chose to stay loyal to Britain quoting Romans 13 as the justification for their decisions. The Quakers and the Anglicans chose to stay loyal to the British Crown, but the other two-thirds, the Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans and most other denominations chose to fight for a war of defense and for liberty.

Just read through Romans 13: 1-7 and replace Hitler for every reference to high authority, and you will see there are problems with the view that any person who holds a government office is God's chosen representative and must be obeyed as such. A careful reading of the correspondence and publications of the day reveal that our founding fathers believed they were Biblically justified in taking up arms against Britain. According to [David Barton](#), *"Americans embraced two specific theological positions that guided their thinking and conduct in the conflict with Great Britain."* This morning, we shall look at those two theological positions and I think you will agree with me that our founding Fathers were not acting in a spirit of rebellion against legitimate authority.

I. FIRST, THEY WERE FORBIDDEN TO OVERTHROW THE INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT AND LIVE IN ANARCHY, BUT THEY WERE NOT REQUIRED BLINDLY TO SUBMIT TO EVERY LAW AND POLICY.

A. The authorities that exists are appointed by God: What are they?
"the authorities that exist are appointed by God"

- (1). Self-government
- (2) Family government
- (3) Church government
- (4) Civil government

All of these authorities are established by God and we are to be in submission, but not every specific authority that is currently in power is legitimate. Hosea makes it clear that

the wrong people can work their way into positions of leadership against God's wishes:

***Hosea 8:4** "They set up kings, but not by Me; They made princes, but I did not acknowledge them. From their silver and gold They made idols for themselves-- That they might be cut off."*

B. Fathers are the God-ordained head of the family, but those who physically and sexually abuse their wives/children should be removed from their positions of authority.

C. Pastors are the God's ordained leaders in their church, but those who are guilty of grave moral and ethical failures should be removed from that position.

D. Civil leaders and rulers are God's ordained leaders in society, but that does not mean that God endorses every leader or civil government that comes along.

E. "For 11 years our Founding Fathers petitioned the King of Great Britain to cease his unlawful actions against the colonies. Although the monarch ignored their grievances, they remained submissive to his authority until he disowned them and sent 25,000 troops for the purpose of seizing property, invading homes, and imprisoning people without trials. **The King's actions violated his own British common law, the English Bull of Rights and the centuries-old Magna-Carta.**"

F. Our Founding Fathers did not announce their intent to separate from England until King George III started down the path of violent suppression. They'd been at war for almost 2 years before the Declaration of Independence was signed!

G. The following Heroes of the Faith in Hebrews 11 were honored for their actions taken in civil disobedience: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the Hebrew Midwives who refused Pharaoh's command, Moses. Others were honored for rebelling against tyranny: Samson and Gideon. Rahab the Harlot hid the Hebrew spies and refused government agents who demanded she reveal their hiding place.

II. SECOND, THEY BELIEVED GOD WOULD HONOR A WAR OF DEFENSE. "The fact that the American Revolution was an act of self-defense and was not an offensive war undertaken by the Americans remained a point of frequent spiritual appeal for the Founding Fathers.

A. "Great Britain had attacked America, not vice-versa; the Americans had never fired the first shot—not in the Boston Massacre of 1770, the bombing of Boston and burning of Charlestown in 1774 or in the attacks on Williamsburg, Concord or Lexington in 1775."

B. "Illustrative of this belief was the famous command to the Lexington Minutemen, : "Don't fire unless fired upon!" Yet having been fired upon without having broken any law, the Americans believed they had a Biblical right to self-defense.