Romans 13: 1-7 – Submission to the Authorities

7Pay 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.

The more things change, the more they stay the same.  In the days of the Apostle Paul public immorality was commonplace and quite acceptable to the authorities.  Oppression of conquered peoples and those in the lower rungs of society was widespread.  Injustice is justice and immorality is accepted as morality.  In our day are these things all that much different across the globe?  Or even in our backyard?  If such is the state of affairs of this world, why does Saint Paul direct us to pay our taxes and give honor and respect to the authorities?

Saint Paul in his day did all these things.  Although society around him and the government were unjust and corrupt, he willingly obeyed the laws and dictates of the authorities.  When summoned to Rome to stand trial for unjust accusations, he went.  And finally he offered himself to the lion’s mouth (2 Timothy 4: 17) when all else abandoned him, when only the Lord stood by him and gave him strength.  So, my dear brothers and sisters, what are we to make of all this?  As Saint Paul shows us, our Christian faith requires us to engage with the world around us.  We must make do as best we can of unjust laws and customs and bring forth change through our own actions and example while diligently observing those laws that are good.  Regardless of whether the world plays by a different set of rules, we simply do not get to take our football and go home.  Instead we must reach out to the world in the spirit of love and grace of our Master Christ Jesus.  Indeed, the world will mock us even more for it and we will be sent to the lion’s mouth for standing up for our convictions.  Yet the Lord our God will stand by us and give us strength when all else would abandon us.