

Romans 13
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Recap

- I. Written around 57 AD
- II. Written by the Apostle Paul
 - A. Paul was the overall author but **Phoebe** what the one delivering the message to the church.

Textual context leading up to ch.13

- III. Chapters 12-13 are command heavy verses
 - A. There's been a total shift from what we've seen so far in Romans.
 - 1. Paul has been WAITING to say these things.
 - 2. He's wanted to shepherd the members of this church, He's just had to level the theological playing field for 11 chapters so both side of the fence will listen to him.
 - a) Paul needed to break down the existing walls of what divided them: the culture, their social status, finances, & their theological history.
 - b) Unity = functioning church
- IV. *This section definitively fits with the charge of ch.12:1-2, **everything** we cover in this chapter will be ways of presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice & transforming your mind.*

Cultural context of ch.13

- V. Overall theme → Unity
- VI. Cultural context for Jews/Jewish Christians:
 - A. The Jews were kicked out of Rome in 49 AD by emperor Claudius.
 - B. When Claudius died in 54 AD, Emperor Nero took his place and let the Jews back into Rome.
 - C. When the Jews returned to the city, the church was in a totally different position than when they left (5 years in between).
 - 1. The church was predominantly Jewish from it's inception up until the Jewish expulsion; but upon their return, it was largely a Gentile church.
 - 2. On top of this, the Jews were not well off financially.
- VII. Cultural context for Gentiles:
 - A. They took over the church after the Jews were expelled and got rid of all Jewish traditions.
 - 1. Traditions aren't inherently bad, forcing them on the Gentiles was
 - B. Gentiles did not take well to Jewish traditions being forced on them.
 - C. Gentiles were on top of the social ladder.
 - 1. Most of them were richer than the Jews and held more influential positions within Roman society.

Sections

VIII. Text broken into 3 sections

- A. V.1-5 → Submitting to governing authorities
- B. V.6-10 → What submitting looks like
- C. V.11-14 → The counter-cultural way of life Christ called us to must be lived now!

A. Submitting to Governing Authorities

D. V.1 Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God.

- 1. Paul begins to disarm the government to show who the real power is.
 - a) 'Takes the teeth out of the command'
 - b) He says that any authority in existence is instituted and authorized by God.
 - (1) Example of Israel's kings
- 2. The command becomes much less about submitting to Rome, and more about submitting to what God has allowed.
 - (1) Christian persecution
- 3. So for us and now, do we just blindly do what the government tells us to do?
 - a) The short answer is no.
 - (1) Context

E. V.2 So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves.

- 1. This is the logical conclusion to verse 1 (especially for Jewish Christians in the room)
- 2. He's saying: you want to seek God's with your works, then submit to what he has authorized for this time and place.

F. V.3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval.

- 1. Unafraid - Paul asking this question would've perked up the ears of his listeners.
 - a) Fear of Rome, because they see what they do to those who disobey (mentioned in v.4, the sword, or what they did to Jesus).
 - b) Being unafraid of Rome was desirable
 - c) Formula to not fear... do what is good!
 - (1) '**Good**' = **Agathas** → 'that which is perfect in its kind, so as to produce pleasure & satisfaction'.
- 2. Paul's referencing something here that would've been obvious to both the Gentiles & Jews in the audience; reciprocal benevolence
 - (1) **Reciprocal benevolence**- social custom in Rome at the time of the writing. Where gifts, often financial, are given to the emperor and the donor will expect recognition for their gift or special benefits/privileges for the donation. (ex: lobbying arm)
- 3. Why say this Paul? It's a social custom they would be familiar with to show that they can do the same thing, on a different level of course.
 - a) Paul is saying that the good works that the Jewish Christians do are, in the eyes of the emperor, a gift to him, and they will find his approval in doing the good works.

4. In some sense, Paul is saying that they could earn the government's approval.
 - a) He's saying 'You do good works & they will award you by approving of you.
 - (1) I.E., they won't kick you out of the city again.
5. **Galatians 6:7-9**
 - a) What you plant in the ground is what you're going to harvest.
 - b) Paul is instilling fatherly wisdom
 - (1) He's saying to submit to the government, even though you hate them and have been oppressed by them, as we will see in a few verses - pay your taxes without fighting, show love to your gentile neighbors you live by, ultimately, be a functioning member in the society (i.e. sow these good things, sow *agathas*), and the government will find approval in you (i.e. reaping what you've sown).
 - (2) He's giving them the blue-print for how to not get kicked out again, mend their relationship with their government, and look totally different than the non-Christian Jews.
 - (3) **But also, and much more importantly, he's giving them a blue print to show how much Jesus can change your life.**
 - (a) Paul is encouraging them to behave in this way to show that Jesus' love is powerful enough to truly change anybody.

G. V.4 For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong.

1. Good works= approval bad works= punishment and wrath
2. Sword was a reminder of what Rome does to those who stand against them.
 - a) Video to see the medical perspective of Jesus' crucifixion
3. Not as straightforward as it seems - government's don't always punish bad
 - a) Paul's calling them to suffer regardless of the outcome
 - b) Reference to **1 Peter 3**
4. Something I personally struggled with is this: If God authorized a government to exist & be His servants, but they don't act like it, are they really His servants?
 - (1) Nazi Germany a servant? USSR a servant?
 - b) In *Reading Romans backwards*, Scot McKnight says that just because God authorizes a government to exist doesn't mean He sanctions it's actions.
 - (1) Comparison to us being sealed with the Holy Spirit with the capability to still sin

H. V.5 Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience.

1. THEREFORE, what's it there for?
 - a) Conscience - Odd way to capture the logic I think this was an interest way to capture his logic in the past verses.
 - (1) 'Scripture interprets scripture'
 - (2) Reference to **1 Peter 2:19**
 - (a) Your suffering while doing good is seen by God and is part of your sanctification.
2. Another hope for living on the new Earth: a government that always has our interest in mind
 - a) College professor example - Monarch with a good king is what we look forward to when the new Earth is established.

*I. **RECAP:** To recap all of what's been said in these dense 5 verses, Paul obviously wants the first century believers to submit to their governing authority. This may seem unnecessary & strange to them, but in doing so, they are offering their bodies as a living sacrifice to God by putting their own wants & passions aside and doing what He desires. In doing this, they are transforming their minds to be like that of Christ and thus standing out from the culture they live in.*

IX. What submitting looks like

A. V.6 And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks. V.7 Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.

- a) Verse 6 puts some practicality into Paul's command to submit.
 - (1) This is a way to submit to your governing authority.
- b) "And for this reason" - what reason?
 - (1) Because of your conscience
- c) "Continually attending to these tasks" - other translations say "devoting themselves to this very thing."
 - (1) Calls back to Verses 3+4 - you will reap what you sow
- d) V.7 then is a comprehensive command to be a functioning citizen.

B. V.8 Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. V.9 The commandments, *Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet*; and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: *Love your neighbor as yourself*. V.10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.

1. Some teachers today try to make this verse about debt.
 - a) Context doesn't lend itself to that.
2. The only debt we have is to love each other.
3. But isn't Paul contradicting himself?
 - a) Here he says to not owe anyone anything, but in v.7 he says to pay your obligations to everyone; isn't that contradicting?
 - b) No, he's calling them to love.
4. Command to love is intentionally short & simple
 - a) This forces engagement —> how to love those around you
 - (1) The law is filled to it's full in doing this
 - b) A practical point of application in our lives, how often do you consider how to best love the people in your life?
 - (1) More than thinking good thoughts about them

C. RECAP: To recap these 5 verses, Paul is giving them practical advice on what submitting to their governing authority looks like: paying your taxes. But more than that, they are presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice by paying their taxes even when they don't want to, because who really wants to pay their taxes? On top of this, he is showing them that there is a new law that they are to follow: the law of love. By considering how they are to best love their neighbor, they are transforming their minds to be like that of Christ and not look anything like the pattern of this world.

X. The counter-cultural way of life Christ called us to must be lived now!

A. V.11 Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. V.12 The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

1. This is the next logical step after the list of commands given.
2. Urgency here is for them to reflect Christ to those around them.
 - a) Ugliness to hypocrisy
3. "Do this,..." in the NASB
 - a) Refers to all of 12:1-13:10.
 - (1) Part of the renewal of their minds.
4. 'Knowing the time' is a common theme across the New Testament.
 - a) Spoken & taught by all apostles in the NT so they will be ready for His return.
5. 'Armor of light' reference would remind them of the soldiers they're surrounded by
 - a) 'Discard the deeds of darkness' must be done in tandem with putting on the armor of light.
 - (1) Otherwise the return to darkness is inevitable

B. V.13 Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. V.14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

1. "Decency" —> Decorum —> Respect/Self respect
 - a) Act like it's the daytime, all the time
 - b) Shift in the audience to the gentiles
2. The sins listed are pertinent to Roman culture
 - a) Think what believers living NYC or Las Vegas struggle with
3. Putting on Christ is the way to transform your mind
 - a) Commands to not sin bookended by commands to protect yourself
 - b) Remember - these must be done in tandem!
4. 'Provision' = forethought or foresight
 - a) Making a plan to sin, or premeditating sin
 - (1) Distinction between murder & manslaughter
 - (2) Application: how often do you meditate on sin or plan to sin? How often do you make provision (or clear your schedule) to gratify your flesh?
 - (3) We are back at the beginning: don't meditate on sin, but transform your mind
 - (a) Meditate on good things - reference to **Philippians 4**

C. *RECAP: To recap these last 4 verses, Paul calls the Christians in Rome to have urgency in the way they do the thing he's commanded of them in the past 2 chapters. He desires for them to be a living sacrifice now, not later, for the eyes of the culture around them to see. He also warns them to not fall back into the practices of the culture around them, but to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and stand firm until His return to fully & finally save them.*

Conclusion

For them & then:

The believers in Rome needed a practical example of how to be a living sacrifice within their culture, so Paul gave them a task that will challenge them to their cores: Jewish Christians submitting to that which they hate & fulfill the entire law by considering how to love those around them. Gentile Christians leaving the practices their social equals participate in & put on Christ as they wait for his return. In doing these things, they will build to a church that is unified in love, not in social class or tradition.

For us & always:

Christ instituted the governments on the Earth to maintain social order in the societies we live in. His desire for us is that we submit to them so long as we don't sin against him. He also inaugurated a new covenant with us, one that's built on the law of love. His desire is that we would be most active in pursuing love for each other & maintaining the unity He desires until His return.

For me & now:

What disposition do I have to the government I live under? How often do I pray for my politicians, regardless if I voted for them or against them? How often do I think about loving those in my life in that way that most impacts them instead of what's convenient for me? How urgent am I in the pursuit of this?

Referenced verses

Romans 13

1 Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. **2** So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgement on themselves. **3** For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have it's approval. **4** For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for not reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on themselves one who does wrong. **5** Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. **6** And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks. **7** Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor. **8** Do not owe anyone anything, except to love another, for the one who loves has fulfilled the law. **9** The commandments, *Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet;* and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: *Love your neighbor as yourself.* **10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law. **11** Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. **12** The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. **13** Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. **14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

1 Peter 3

8 Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble, **9** not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing. **10** *For the one who wants to love life and to see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit, 11 and let him turn away from evil and do what is good. Let him seek peace and pursue it, 12 because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do what is evil.* **13** Who then will harm you if you are devoted to what is good? **14** But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. *Do not fear them, or be intimidated,* **15** but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as

holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

Galatians 6:7-9

7 Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, **8** because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. **9** Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up.

1 Peter 2:19-20

19 For it brings favor if, because of a consciousness of God, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly. **20** For what credit is there if when you do wrong and are beaten, you endure it? But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God.