

Romans 13

Well we are in the final section of the book of Romans as we are now looking at a portion of this book that has so many exhortations and encouragements for believers in Jesus.

I am always amazed that what was applicable to the church some 2000 years ago is just as applicable to what you and I go through in the modern-day church.

If you remember in Romans 12:1 Paul said the word therefore and began to say that in light of the mercies of God that believers in Christ should be living our lives as a living sacrifice unto the Lord.

Paul said we should not be conformed to the world but instead we should be transformed in our minds. He also spoke of the need to use the spiritual gifts that God has given to each one of us individually.

And then last week we looked at over 20 exhortations that Paul had for the church which included that you and I are to love without hypocrisy, that we are to abhor what is evil and cling to what is good, we are to honor others as better than ourselves, we should also be fervent in spirit, steadfast in our prayer lives and patient in tribulations.

Paul also spoke of our need to maintain our witness in the world even when we are persecuted or taken advantage of. We are to repay no one evil for evil and have regard for the fact that God is the One that is our avenger.

In addition to this Paul spoke of how you and I are to rejoice with those that rejoice and to weep with those that weep and we as believers are to distribute to the needs of the saints.

Last week was a loaded section of scripture for sure and I don't know about you but it challenged me and even convicted me to some degree as I was studying through it.

Now as we come to Romans 13 we are going to have three sections we will look at today. The first is going to be the government and our response to it, the second is again going to focus on how to treat our fellow man, and the third is going to speak of how we should live in light of the fact that Jesus is very soon going to return.

Now I know you are all excited to talk about the government so let's go ahead and look at verse 1 of our text which says this **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.** Well for some of us this may be a hard pill to swallow. Paul here says that we are to be subject to those that are in authority over our lives. This means we are to submit to the authority that is over our lives and we should do so willingly.

I wanted to begin our study about government by saying that God has created this world with multiple layers of authority within it.

In the early chapters of the Bible in the book of Genesis we see that God has made the family in a specific order allowing the man to be head over the wife and you might just note Ephesians 5 as a good section of scripture to develop that further...We also see that man was placed in authority over creation in the Garden of Eden.

We even see an authority structure in the church as Christ is the head of the church and everyone else is below Him.

I say all that because we should not be surprised that Paul speaks of the authority that a government has and that you and I as believers should submit to it.

Notice it says here that there is no authority except from God and that the authorities that exist are appointed by God. That's an interesting thing to think about for it means that when someone is allowed to be the leader of a country or people group that God has allowed them to be in that place to accomplish His will.

I like what we learn over in Daniel 2:20-21 and this is when Daniel was getting ready to interpret the dream of a powerful king of Babylon named Nebuchadnezzar. Those verses say this **Daniel answered and said:**

**“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and might are His.**

²¹ And He changes the times and the seasons;

He removes kings and raises up kings;

He gives wisdom to the wise

And knowledge to those who have understanding.

Jesus also spoke of authority coming from God when he was on trial before Pilate. Pilate was questioning Jesus as to who He was and if you remember that Lord had stayed silent and then in John 19:10-11 we see this **¹⁰ Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”**

¹¹ Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

That's pretty amazing to me...at the moment of Jesus' greatest difficulty speaking to a man that from a human viewpoint had power to give life to Jesus or take it, the Lord Jesus simply states that there is One who has higher authority and is in charge of the affairs of men.

We might even remember that God has His sovereign hand over those who are in authority **when we read this over in Proverbs 21:1 which says The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.** There is no question that God knows what He is doing. He can elevate one leader for a time and then remove them when He wants to. He can allow a tyrant to rule and steer the events of history in the direction that He desires. God's ways are certainly beyond our ways but the reality is that yes God appoints those in authority and has established authority as a divine instrument to minister to humanity.

I might even remind us that one day the Lord Jesus will be king of the world when He returns to reign for 1,000 years in a time called the millennial reign. Of Jesus over in Ephesians 1:20-21 the Word says ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

One day we are told in the book of Philippians that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Right now we

live in a fallen, broken, degrading world but one day all things will be made right once again.

Let's look at verse 2 which says this ²**Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.** I wonder today do we have a rebellious spirit in our lives? Let me ask, do you find yourself grumbling constantly against the government? Do you find yourself resisting the ordinances and laws that have been established?

I want to say to believers that when it comes to submitting and honoring the government that we should be setting the example, we should be a beacon of light to the world around us...I expect the world to reject authority but the Word is clear that believers of all people in the world should be the example.

Let me share some scriptures with you about government and how we as believers should be living without resisting what God has allowed. Listen to what Titus 3:1 says when it says **Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,**

1 Peter 2:17 says ¹⁷**Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.**

In the same chapter 1 Peter 2:13-14 says ¹³**Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.**

And then over in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 the Word says Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ²for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

I think it's clear we should honor authority and submit to what God has established.

Look with me at verse 3 of Romans 13 which says this ³For 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. Now this verse is pretty logical to me and I can apply it to my own life. Before I came to Christ because of the activities I was engaged in when I saw a policeman what would happen? Well, I would get nervous, I would start to look for a way to get away from being near them, I would start to get paranoid as I went through life and that was because I knew that I wasn't living my life submitted to the authority around me.

When I came to Jesus and I began to live my life in submission to the authority and the laws God had ordained I found that I wasn't afraid of the police anymore....In fact I started to respect them and even be appreciative of them...and I think verse 4 explains why my thoughts about authority changed when it says ⁴For 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. It's interesting here that Paul says that the authorities are God's minister and that word for minister is the word *deaconos* and means to serve or to help in some capacity.

That's what authority is SUPPOSED To be for you and I. The authority that God desires should be looking to help the people, to keep order in a country, to prosecute those that do evil.

It says here that they do not bear the sword in vain and that means that the authority CAN and SHOULD come against those who do wrong. It's a sad reality today but in our society it seems that there are many that have the idea that anytime a policeman or an ICE agent does their job arresting those that have done wrong that they are the bad guy.

I would say a society is in trouble when laws and ordinances that are good for the people are suddenly said to be evil. Isaiah spoke of a society like this in Isaiah 5:20 which says Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;

Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

I would say that if you and I want to be free from the fear of authority that submitting to it is God's prescription.

Verse 5 says this ⁵Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. So because God has established government and has established authority and it's His desire we submit to it and we should do so willingly and then as a result we will have a clear conscience.

Again those that live in rejection of authority are always going to be watching their backs and checking their rear view mirrors. If you live rightly in submission then you have nothing to worry about, your conscience won't bother you.

Look with me at verses 6-7 which say this 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.

Well if you have a pen in your hand you might have the desire to strike these words from your Bible...but God has seen fit to watch over these words for 2,000 years and listen the simple reality is that we need to pay our taxes to our government.

Now I'll be honest and my wife can attest to this that I'm not so happy with the constant upward surge of property taxes that keep going on here in the location that we live...I may not like it and I may say I don't like it but I also without question pay that which is owed to our national government and local government.

Now I'll tell you that I would fully support anyone's desire to get every tax break that they can and you should seek out every deduction that you can find but at the end of the day we should file our taxes in all sincerity and honesty...and really I believe we should do this along with every other action in our lives as unto the Lord. We should view paying our taxes and honoring our government as something we can do as living sacrifices unto the Lord.

We are also told here that we are to honor those that God has placed in authority. I can probably speak for all of us that there have been president's and leaders in our country that I have not agreed with...But we must be very careful that we don't bad mouth and speak ill of those God has allowed to be in power. We can disagree with them as that's our right in this nation, we can vote against them as we have

that right, but at the end of the day we are instructed to honor those in authority and even pray for those in authority as the scriptures instruct us.

Now before we move on I do feel the need to address a topic that relates to submission to government and that is when do you and I as believers have the right to be civilly disobedient to those in authority. Is there ever a time that we are to disobey government orders?

I am going to say that YES the Bible does support refusing the orders of a government but it's much more limited than we may desire...I believe the scriptures indicate very clearly that you and I the moment our government begins to say we are to do things that are directly against the commands of God have a responsibility to refuse to obey.

Let me give a few scriptural examples. Two are found in the book of Daniel. The first one is in Daniel chapter 3 when Nebuchadnezzar decided to construct a massive golden statue that was 90 feet tall by 9 feet wide and this king demanded that all the authorities of his kingdom come and when the music was played the people were to bow and worship the idol. Most likely this idol was made to look like the king himself.

Well there were three Jewish men in the presence of all those who had come whose names were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and these 3 men had already purposed in their hearts that they were going to honor God in their lives and so they refused to bow.

They were then threatened that if they refused to bow they would be thrown into a fiery furnace and these men said that no matter what they were going to honor God and refuse to bow even if it meant

death. If you are familiar with the story then you know that God certainly came to their rescue and they were saved.

Then we have a second example from the book of Daniel in chapter 6 of that book. The king this time a different one decided that for a certain period of time that everyone in the kingdom was to pray to him only. Daniel heard this and very deliberately disobeyed as he went up to this room three times a day and prayed to the God of heaven.

When it was found that he did this if you remember he was thrown into the den of lions and once again God rescued him.

And then for a New Testament example you might write down Acts 4 and in this narrative we have Peter and John who were speaking to the people about the love of God as seen demonstrated through Jesus Christ and they were arrested for it and they came before the Sanhedrin which were what you could call the big wigs when it came to religious leaders in the land of Israel.

And these men after hearing Peter speak had a meeting and this is what happened in Acts 4:17-21 which says this ¹⁷ **But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."**

¹⁸ **So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.** ¹⁹ **But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.** ²⁰ **For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."** ²¹ **So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing**

them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

I want to be clear here that you and I are to be obedient and submissive to our government. At the same time we have a higher authority that we submit to in that we are to submit to God's Word and when the government asks us to do things that are sinful or contrary to the call of God on our lives we are to disobey.

Now I want to mention here that if we choose to disobey we aren't parading ourselves around making a big scene we are quietly honoring God above man and as the Lord moves us we are then speaking for the truth of Jesus Christ.

The second section of our study today once again has to do with how we should be loving those around us and we won't spend much time on this today for we have discussed it in detail the last few weeks but look at verses 8-10 which say this ⁸ **Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.** ⁹ **For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if *there is* any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** ¹⁰ **Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law.**

You and I should work to not have debt in our lives...If we borrow something we should pay it back on time and even ahead of time if we can. The Bible does not say we can't take out a loan and we often do that when we purchase a car or even a home. Churches at times take out loans as the Lord leads them...But debts should be repaid

honestly and in submission to the laws of the land and the contracts that were signed.

One debt we can never repay or fulfill is the debt we have to love one another. We should always have a heart that says “How can I love those who are around me” or “How can I lay down my life for another” Sometimes sadly I think we can come to a place that we are tired of loving others, and tired of forgiving others, and tired of laying our lives down for others.

I am sure thankful that Jesus never tires of these things. If Jesus ever ran out of grace, love and mercy we would be in great trouble wouldn't we?

I believe you and I should look at how Jesus loves and work to model that towards the world around us and we should know that as we do love the way God desires us to that we are fulfilling the law that has been given to us.

We might remember that the law is good, it is perfect and there is not one thing wrong with it...The problem lies in ourselves, we are the ones with problems and we are the ones that choose not to fulfill it.

We just looked at this recently on Thursday night but listen to what Jesus said to a scribe who asked him “which of the commandments is greatest” in response Jesus said this in Mark 12:29-31 which says

²⁹ Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. ³¹ And the second, like it,

is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'

If you look to honor others by not committing adultery and not lying and not coveting you are in essence fulfilling what the Word says when it says to love your neighbor as yourself.

Paul says very clearly here that love does no harm to a neighbor and ultimately loving others is a fulfillment of the law.

You and I should work towards honoring others with the same intensity and desire that we love ourselves. Remember Paul said to put others first, to consider others, and to look to provide for the needs of the saints.

Let's look at our third topic today if you look with me at verse 11 which says this ¹¹ **And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.** Paul is really saying here that we need to live our lives as a living sacrifice on a consistent basis because our salvation is nearer than it was when we first believed.

The reality is that Jesus is one day coming back. Paul was waiting for it and every saint to this point in history has been and is waiting for it. I believe the return of Jesus for the church is imminent and that means that Jesus can come back at any time.

Now if you have been here in our church for very long then you know that we believe in what is called the rapture of the church or the catching away of the saints. It is spoken of over in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 when the Word says this ¹⁶ **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and**

with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

You and I should have an expectation that Jesus could come at any moment to take the church away from this world and into His presence in the air.

As such our lives should reflect that we are waiting for Him. Paul even says here that in light of this that those who are asleep should wake up. I wonder today how many of us are asleep spiritually? You know what it's like when you are asleep. You are unaware of what is happening in the real world, you are dreaming of things that aren't true and aren't real.

Some people that name the name of Christ are living their lives in a way that says I don't think Jesus could come back at any moment and as such I am going to live life for the things of this world rather than for His kingdom. People that live this way are sleeping. **They need to wake up and get with the program.**

Some may be highly embarrassed if Jesus were to come back today for you know in your heart that you have secret sin, and you are living for yourself, and you refuse to think of others and you refuse to live in the love of God for those around you.

Some of you might be embarrassed in that you don't submit to the government at all and you are living dishonestly.

I would say today along with Paul that if this is you that you should wake up right away. I wanted to paraphrase for you a parable that Jesus spoke of over in Matthew 25:1-13 and the Lord spoke of how there were 10 virgins that were waiting for the bridegroom and they didn't know when he would come. 5 of them were said to be wise as they had oil in their lamps and they were fully prepared while 5 of them were unwise in that they had no oil...Those that were prepared were seen going with the bridegroom when he suddenly came, while those that were unprepared were left out.

I want to ask you today are you prepared to meet Jesus? If He came back right now how would He evaluate your faith? Would you be seen as ready and properly equipped? Or would you be seen as spiritually asleep?

I think we at times forget that our Lord's return is near, you can look at the world and you can see that the signs and the times are all pointing to His near return...as such we should live awake and alert spiritually so that when He does come we aren't found to be full of embarrassment and perhaps today if you are here and you know you aren't living properly today is the day you choose to wake up spiritually and begin to walk with our Lord properly.

Look at verse 12 with me which says this ¹²**The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.** As an exhortation Paul says that in light of the fact that the day of the Lord's return is at hand that we should put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

The idea here is that the old ways of the flesh should be put away and the truth of God should be put on in our lives. Every day we should be

putting on the armor of God in our lives and you can read Ephesians 6 to learn more about that but we must choose regularly to do that which honors the Lord.

I like what Hebrews 12:1-2 says when it says the following **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

I would ask you today are you living in this manner? Are you laying aside the sin that can so easily ensnare us and choosing to run with diligence the race of faith that has been laid out before you?

Verse 13 goes on to say ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. It's very easy to live in the ways of this world even as a Christian...There are many that choose to live in revelry which is essentially a partying lifestyle, there are many that choose to be drunk or high on drugs, there are many that live in lewdness which means to be obscene or indecent in a sexual way and there are many that live in strife with others and envy of what others have.

You and I are to walk properly as we go through life choosing not to engage in the deeds of the flesh. For homework you might take a look at Galatians 5:16-26 which speak of the life of the flesh and the life that is lived for the Spirit.

We've talked about this before but you and I are to be an example to the world around us.

Look at verse 14 which says this ¹⁴ **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.** In this section we are told to cast off the works of darkness and here we are to put on the Lord Jesus...and that means we should live as Jesus lived, we should behave towards others with the same love that Jesus displayed towards others.

And notice it says here to make NO provision for the flesh...we might ask what that means. Well, just for example if you have a problem with alcohol making no provision for that desire means we don't run around with those that drink all the time, we avoid the bars we used to go to and we certainly don't allow alcohol to be in the home.

The same goes for pornography...If that's a problem then you do what it takes to get it out of your life, you put blockers on your devices and you throw the computer out in the lawn or you put it in a very public place.

If you struggle with submitting to the government and you know that's a hot button issue for you abstain from those conversations that you know are going to lead to you speaking ill of authority.

If you have anger in your life be very deliberate to stay away from those things that cause anger to come up in your life.

Ultimately the only way you can do these things is by walking in the Spirit. I believe very firmly that if you are constantly in connection with the Spirit of God in your life that you will find yourself making no provision for your flesh whatsoever...There should be no compromise

in your life when it comes to these things...Our desire should be to see every last bit of our flesh crucified with Christ and we should work towards fulfilling the desires that Jesus has for our lives at all times.

I would ask you today are you ready for the return of Jesus Christ? And not only are you ready in your mind and heart but do your actions prove that you are ready for Jesus to come? If today you are here and you know you aren't living properly, if you know you are allowing the appetites of the flesh to dictate the direction of your life I would simply say its time to repent and turn from that. If that's you today I encourage you to talk to Jesus about it.

And listen if you are here today and you don't know Jesus you need to just understand that Jesus went to the cross for your sins...He paid the price that you could go free and the Bible is clear that if you personally recognize Jesus died for you on the cross and you come to Him in humility and you ask Him to forgive you and to work in your life that He will come into your heart and you will be born again.

If today you need to make a decision to accept Jesus I encourage you to come forward either now as we close in worship or you can come forward after the service as I would love to talk and pray with you and you can accept Jesus Christ in your life.

Let me pray for us.

Romans 13

Cross References

Verse 1

Daniel 2:20-21

John 19:10-11

Proverbs 21:1

Ephesians 1:20-21

Verse 2

Titus 3:1

1 Peter 2:17

1 Peter 2:13-14

1 Timothy 2:1-2

Verse 4

Isaiah 5:20

Verses 6-7

Acts 4:17-21

Verses 8-10

Mark 12:29-31

Verse 11

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

Verse 12

Hebrews 12:1-2