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Romans 13

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Romans 13.

Topics.

- Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.
- Pay taxes to the authorities for they are ministers of God.
- Owe no man anything.
- The one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
- Love your neighbour as yourself.
- Salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Paul told brothers and sisters in Christ not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by renewal of their mind and to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord. He warned about pride and told all to think according to the measure of faith that God has assigned them and to love one another with friendly affection. The chapter ended with the words vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

ROMANS 13:1-5

Let every Person be Subject to the Governing Authorities.

- **Romans 13:1-5:** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.
- Remember this is a letter Paul is writing to the Christian brothers in Rome.

The Christian religion was designed to extend throughout the world establishing a Kingdom amongst other kingdoms. Christians profess supreme allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ he is their lawgiver, their Sovereign and their judge therefore Paul addresses the question, "What kind of allegiance are they to render to earthly authorities?" especially considering that the kingdoms of the world were then pagan kingdoms which had been generally founded in conquest, blood and oppression. Many of the kings were not only unprincipled men, but were morally polluted in their private lives and oppressive in their public administration thus Paul is addressing the question, "Should Christians acknowledge the laws of such kingdoms and of such authorities?" Many of the early Christians were composed of Jewish converts who had long been under Roman authority and oppression which was founded in a system of idolatry, thus the difficult question, "How far should they submit, if at all, to heathen authorities?" The circumstances for the Gentile converts was not much different since they would naturally look with abhorrence on the system of idolatry which they had forsaken and regard it as opposed to God, but since pagan religion was interwoven with the civil institutions and authorities there also existed danger that they might denounce the

rulers of government altogether and be regarded as opposed to the laws of the land. Naturally when the laws interfered with the rights of conscience; when they commanded the worship of idols or any moral wrong then it is right for Christians to resist the laws and take a stand, but where is the line to be drawn, the word be subject denotes that kind of submission which soldiers render to their officers it implies a willingness to occupy our proper place, to yield to the authority of those over us, but it does not designate the specific extent of the submission, but rather presents it as a general principal which would be to obey in all things which are not contrary to the Law of God. It is most certain that the authorities Paul had in mind are the Roman rulers since he is writing to brothers and sister in Rome, but by extension the principal he is teaching extends to all generations. The reason Paul says Christians should be subject to the authorities over them is that governing rulers have received their appointment from God and therefore since Christians are to be subject to God they should honour God by honouring the system of government which he has instituted for mankind even if rulers had secured it, not according to justice, but by oppression. This is because once a ruling government is established, how it was established is not the concern of a Christian since it is not their duty to seek to overturn it for without government there could be no society, no security, no private property; all would be confusion and anarchy and all nations would soon be in extreme Chaos. In all nations of the earth there is a constitution (a plan by which a particular country or state is governed) and this constitution is less or more calculated to promote the interests of the community. The civil authority agrees to govern according to that constitution and in this way there is an agreement and consent between the ruling government and those they are governing, but what if the ruler is an immoral man should Christians submit to his rule? If he is ruling according to the constitution nothing can justify rebellion against his authority no-matter how irregular he maybe in his own private life; he may disgrace himself by an improper conduct, but if he is ruling according to the law and makes no attempt to change the constitution nor break the agreement between him and the people there is no legal ground of opposition to his civil authority and every act against him would be considered rebellion and unlawful. No personal misconduct in the ruler, no immorality in his own life, while he governs according to law, can justify either rebellion against him or contempt of his authority since he is accountable only to the people for his political conduct, for his private life and moral conduct he is accountable to his own conscience and to God. Nevertheless, opposition to a ruler can be justified when there are overt attempts on his part to change the constitution or to rule contrary to law. When the ruler acts in this way he dissolves the agreement between him and his people and therefore his authority is no longer binding because it then becomes illegal since he is acting contrary to the laws of that constitution according to which on being raised to the supreme power he promised to govern. His conduct and actions that are contrary to the law justifies opposition to his government, but a wise person will wait for the right time and find a legal way to bring about change according to law.

In conclusion: Paul is stating a general principle of submitting to authorities who are appointed to keep the law and administer justice otherwise you will come under their wrath. The entire focus is on authorities who are appointed to bring the wrongdoer to justice and thereby protect the innocent (meaning they have been appointed for the good of the people not their harm) (v4).

ROMANS 13:6-7

Pay Taxes to the Authorities for they are Ministers of God.

- **Romans 13:6-7:** For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 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, honour to whom honour is owed.

The words, "For this same reason" link back to the previous verses, in which Paul told Christians to do the right thing so that they don't bring the wrath of the governing ruler upon themselves and also for the sake of their own conscience (v4-5) i.e., they will have a clear conscience knowing they have acted according to God's will and mental peace knowing they have obeyed the laws of the ruling government.

NOTE: the phrase God's ministers does not refer to ministers of religion, but the civil officers in all departments of the state, it implies they are working for the good of the people and motivated by a sense of improving the community.

Pay taxes to the authorities: The Romans made all conquered provinces pay tribute (taxes) no doubt many Christians wondered if it was right to support such a ruling government by paying taxes. With all civil governments comes considerable expense in providing for the growth, safety and defence of the community, thus it is only reasonable that those within the community pay a moderate taxation by which the expenses of the state may be covered and the various officers, whether civil or military who are employed for the service of the public be adequately paid.

All this is just and right since the system of civil government is ordained by God, but it should be noted that there is no insinuation in Paul's words that infer an extravagant and oppressive taxation should be paid for the support of unprincipled and unnecessary wars; or the pensioning of corrupt or useless men rather the taxes are to be paid for the support of those who are God's ministers (i.e., the necessary civil officers, from the king downwards), nevertheless if taxes are unjust and oppressive like other evils they are to be submitted to until a remedy can be found in a lawful and proper way.

Owe no man anything: Paul is saying that no Christian should be in debt to any one in anyway, we should give honour, respect and credit to those who deserve it whether they are of our faith or not. The words, "Pay revenue to who revenue is owed" (v7) show that Paul understands that some Christians are going to have debts and loans that require regular payments. Therefore the words "Owe no man anything" in regards to finances in this context does not mean never borrow from a bank to buy a house because as long as a person is able to make the required payments they are paying what they owe since they are meeting the terms the financial contract requires (obviously it is far better not to borrow, but we do not live in an ideal world) nevertheless we should never borrow beyond what we can comfortably afford.

ROMANS 13:8-10

The one who Loves another has Fulfilled the Law.

- **Romans 13:8-10:** Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

These are some of the most powerful all-encompassing and wondrous words recorded in the Bible the only thing in the entire universe Christians are told to owe anyone is love. To please God and the Lord Jesus Christ no-one needs to memorise a list of do's and don'ts or even know the law all they have to do is give away love, do everything in love meaning do what is best for the well-being of others. Have you ever wondered how to put a definition on love? Paul beautifully sums it up in four simple words, "Love does no wrong" (v10). Sadly, much of the secular world thinks Christianity is about keeping a set of rules and avoiding others, but Paul's concept of Christianity is about acting and responding from love it is about doing no harm to another human.

Love your neighbour as yourself: means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land. Leviticus chapter nineteen makes it clear that our neighbour is every other person, showing that the law requires justice to all people. The six commandments regarding mankind should be applied to everyone and we must abide by them ourselves. To love in the biblical sense is not an emotional attitude, but the keeping of these laws in relation to our neighbour. This is the general law of justice, beyond that; our conduct is to be regulated by relationship. We must render honour and justice to all people wherever due, but we have a particular responsibility to care for our families and those who belong to Christ.

ROMANS 13:11-14

Salvation is Nearer Now than When We First Believed.

- **Romans 13:11-14:** Besides this you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. ¹³Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

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Time: in this context time in general (i.e. now is the right time).

Wake: in this context means to awake from inactivity.

Sleep: carries the idea of living for self, contrasted to living for Christ.

The night is far gone: means the horror of Jesus Christ's death is well in the past.

The day is at hand: means it is time to proclaim the Gospel since salvation is now available to Jews and Gentiles alike.

Paul in chapter five: said, "At the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6) and is now saying the darkness of Christ's death is long past it is the season and the right time for those in Christ to rouse from inactivity because the time is ready to proclaim the Gospel of salvation even more so than when they first believed (circumstances have properly made it so) so it is time to lay aside fleshy passions and live to honour the Lord Jesus Christ and establish his Kingdom.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
