

Romans 13

Romans 13
Tape #8132
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Romans, chapter thirteen. I must admit that I do have difficulty with the first part of this chapter. And so often, I think, we are prone to sort of dismiss it as a rather cultural thing. And yet it is not just here, but it is teaching that is consistent through the Word, where Paul declares, *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.* When Peter wrote his first epistle, he said somewhat the same thing. There Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:17-18, Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. In verse thirteen he said, submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

The clear teaching of the Scriptures is that I am to be subject to those powers and authorities of government. Not just if I agree, but as a matter of principle. For all power and authority is ordained of God. Now this was said when the Roman government, which was also corrupt in many forms, was the world power of that day. And Paul was writing to those who were in Rome, the capital city of the Roman Empire. People that were used to the excesses practiced by those in the Roman Senate, the abuses. And yet to them Paul writes that they are to be in subjection to those higher powers because there is no power but of God and the powers to be are ordained of God.

In the book of Daniel, we remember the story of the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had of the tree that grew, the birds that lodged in its branches, men found comfort under its shade and so forth. Now the tree was cut down. From it there grew of course another tree out of the stump and none of these counselors could interpret the dream. Daniel was brought in. Daniel said to him, you know, this dream is one that your enemies are going to like, because you have been lifted up with pride, because of the great kingdom that God has given to you. But the warning was that God was going to allow him to go through a very bitter experience of insanity until he knows that the most high God rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whom so ever He wills. All power is of God. The governments are ordained of God.

Now the difficulty that I have is that is that I realize that many government officials are corrupt. Many men in places of power are corrupt. Why would God ordain corrupt leadership? That's the problem that I have. I said it's a problem. I didn't say I was going to give you answers. It's just a problem that I have. We do know that in the Old Testament, take the northern kingdom of Israel, they really didn't have one decent king. The kings led them into idolatry. They led them away from God through their rule they finally brought them into the judgment of God and captivity to the Assyrians. Even in Judah there were such kings as Manasses, who was corrupt and horrible. It is hard to understand how that it can be said that all power is of God or that God gives the authority to those whom He wills. And yet this is the clear teaching of the Scriptures. I believe there becomes a time in the nation when it has turned its back upon God and deliberately and willfully has defied the rules and the law of God. That, that nation is to be brought into judgment. I do believe that God sometimes raises up corrupt leaders as a form of judgment against the people who have rebelled against God's authority. It's sort of like, God says, okay, you don't want Me to rule over you? Then I'll let him rule over you. See how you like that. I think that sometimes God allows corrupt leadership because we have rejected His rule over our lives. It is a form of God's judgment upon a nation, upon a people when the form of government becomes corrupted. People get what they want. If they want to rebel against God, God will allow that rebellion, but it can't come except at the cost of judgment.

So Paul goes on to say, ²*Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment (condemnation) on themselves.* Now there are several movements today. Militia type movements, that go by different names, constitutional movements and all, they are advocating the overthrow of our government. I do not believe, as Christians, we are called to take arms to overthrow a government. I think

that Paul lays it out here quite clearly, even if the government is not what it should be. God has of course provided the means of overthrowing the government through the ballot box. And if the people have voted and have desired such leadership, then we are to be in subjection to that leadership accepting that this is God's will. And God has allowed it. It would not be unless God had allowed it to be. I may not be in agreement with it, but I'm to submit to that authority because God has allowed that authority to rule.

Paul said, 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.* Do what is good and you will have no problem. If you keep the law, if you are obedient to the law, you're not going to have any problems. If you are a violator, then you will fear the authority. But if you keep the laws you will have the praise of the same.

And this is again, I told you I had problems, ⁴*For he is God's minister to you for good.* Now sometimes that is awfully difficult to accept when you are tied up in the bureaucratic red tape of trying to get a building permit. I love that bumper sticker that says, make welfare as hard to get as building permits.

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.* So the teaching of the Scriptures is not one of defying of the government or the powers of the government, but of submission to them.

Now, there are, of course, exceptions. When Nebuchadnezzar had built that huge idol and had commanded that everyone at the sound of the music, bow down and worship that idol, though Nebuchadnezzar later was brought to understand and to know that he only reigned at God's caprice. That it is God who rules over the affairs of man and set into the powers those that he will. Yet Nebuchadnezzar had given the command that at the sound of the music, everyone was to bow and to worship this beast or this image that he had set up in the plain of Dura. And when the three Hebrew children refused to bow, they were brought before Nebuchadnezzar. He chastised them for their failure to bow. He said I'll give you one more opportunity. And if you don't bow, then you will be thrown into the burning, fiery furnace. And they said, Oh, king, were are not even careful how we answer you because the God that we serve is able to deliver us from your burning fiery furnace and if He doesn't we still won't bow. There was an open defiance to the decree that was made by Nebuchadnezzar, because to obey that decree would violate their own conscience before God. Bowing to an idol when that was strictly prohibited in the Scriptures.

So if laws are made that would violate my Spiritual consciousness or my Spiritual conscience, and to obey that law would cause me to violate my principles, now Paul wrote this to the church. Yet Paul himself, ultimately was slain by Rome. And the refusal was to declare Caesar as lord. During the times of the great persecutions in the early church, anyone could escape death by martyrdom by simply confessing that Caesar is lord, and the sentence would be commuted. But thousands, millions of early Christians, went to death rather than to acquiesce to the Roman government and to declare Caesar is lord.

So we are talking about the basic laws of the land. We are not to be violators. Why does your heart pump when you are going down the freeway and you see a black and white? If you are on the freeway and doing sixty-five, you don't need to worry. They are not going to bother you. Your heart only begins to beat faster because you look at the speedometer and it says seventy-five or eighty. And your old heart begins to pump when you see him make a U-turn. It's because you are violating the law. That's what Paul is saying. It is a terror to those or they are terrors to those that are violating the laws, but if you keep the law then you have nothing to fear.

⁶*For because of this you also pay taxes* (Now this is again one of those things.), *for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.* I agree with that. They attend continually on this very thing. It's an interesting thing about society in that we have to hire people to protect us and to watch over us, because we don't have enough sense to watch over ourselves. If man were left to himself you would have absolute chaos. If suddenly there would be no law enforcement officers, everyone would be dismissed, how long do you think our society would last? You probably wouldn't get home from church tonight. No one would obey stop signs, red light, or speed limits. I mean it would be one crazy, chaotic world. The next time a CHP officer pulls you over, you should thank him for watching over you because you don't have enough sense to drive safely. He's keeping you from killing yourself.

⁷*Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs,* The next time the custom officer goes through your bag, make sure that you have made the declarations correctly. Let him go through, I've declared everything. If I have gone over my spending limits, pay the custom. It's part of the law.

fear (reverence) to whom fear, honor to whom honor. So our duty as a Christian to the government, to obey the laws, to respect the authority, recognizing they are the instruments of God, because God is a God of law and God has established laws. They are for the purpose of the protection of man and the perpetuation of a society. Pay your taxes. Pay customs and honor those who have been placed in authority by God.

The next part I like a lot more! ⁸*Owe no one anything except to love one another,* Now that doesn't mean that you can't buy a car on credit. It doesn't mean that you have to pay cash for your house. It means when the monthly bill comes due, pay it! Owe no man anything really is not a law against credit buying. Of course, many people have gotten into big trouble with credit cards. But it really isn't a prohibition. Some people interpret this very narrowly that you should never borrow money because you become a debtor and thus owe no man anything. But that is a legalistic kind of interpretation.

for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. Now in the Ten Commandments there were two tables of stone. The first table of stone dealt with your relationship with God, laws that affect your relationship with God. On the second table of stone were the laws that affected your relationship with those around you, with fellow man. There were four commandments on the first table of stone. There were six on the second table of stone. But Paul is saying that if we love one another, actually we have fulfilled the law.

You remember that a lawyer, one day said to Jesus, "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and strength. And the second is likened to the first, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. And in these two are all the law and the prophets." Now when you go through all of the laws in the Old Testament, and you go through the prophets and the commandments of God to the people, they can all be summed up very easily in just, "Love God supremely and love your neighbor as yourself." If you do that, if you have that kind of love, you will in that love, fulfill the laws. You won't be doing things that would harm your relationship with God. Nor would you be doing things that would harm your relationship with your fellowmen.

So Paul gives us some of the things from the second table of 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,"* (Giving you some of the things from the second table of the law, our relationship with each other.)

and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." So the love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹⁰*Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* Interesting how that in the law, it was put pretty much in the negative. Thou shalt not. Thou shalt not. Thou shalt not. Jesus turned into the positive. He said, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Paul picks it up and reiterates the same. If you love, you are not going lie, you are not going to steal, you are not going to covet. If you have true love for your neighbor then it would solve all of the contentions, all of the strife, all of the things that are hurtful in our society today.

Then finally Paul closes the chapter by saying, ¹¹*And do this, knowing the time,* God, I believe, has deliberately intended from the beginning of the church in the Book of Acts that the church should be constantly be expecting the return of Jesus Christ at any time. I believe that it was by deliberate design that God did not give any prophecies that would have to be fulfilled in order for the church to be raptured but always left it as an eminent event. It could happen at any moment.

Surely the disciples had this feeling through the teachings of Jesus. After His resurrection we are told that for about forty days he was appearing to His disciples, at different times, and on different occasions. And He was talking to them about different things of the kingdom. And the day that He was caught up into heaven, taken out of their sight, He had told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father which He said I have told you about. For John indeed baptized with you water unto repentance but you are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days.

The disciples then asked, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Lord, are we only a few days away from the setting up of the kingdom? Jesus just said it isn't given to you to know the times and the seasons that were appointed by the Father. But they were anticipating the immediate return.

There were rumors that were going around in the church that Jesus was going to come again and establish the kingdom before John died. And in the last chapter of the gospel of John, he corrects that rumor. As He was talking to Peter, lovest thou Me and so forth, and then He began to tell Peter what was going to happen to him. How that when he was young he went where he wished and so forth, but when he gets old they are going to lead him where he doesn't want to go as He was talking to Peter about the fact that Peter would be crucified. And when Jesus said this to Peter, typical Peter, he looks over at John and he says, what about him? There had been this sort of competition between Peter and John all the way along. John let you know that he was a faster runner than Peter. And they had this sort of competition going, what about him? And Jesus said, if I will that he should live until I come again, what is that to you? It's none of your business. You follow Me. That's the business. So because He said, if I will that John lives until I come again, the rumor went around. John's not going to die until Jesus returns. So John as he recounted this statement of Jesus is careful to point out that that's not what Jesus said. Jesus only said, if I will that he should live until I come. But not that He said that he was going to live. But yet the early church was living in anticipation of the immediate return of Jesus Christ.

When Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, he was writing to comfort them concerning some of the believers who had died. Because they had the misconception that because these believers had died before Jesus returned, they were going to miss the kingdom. Oh, what a shame. They died and Jesus hasn't come back yet. They are going to miss out on the kingdom. So Paul wrote to them to comfort those concerning those who had already died. That they would not sorrow like those who had no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so will Jesus bring those that sleep with Him when He comes. For we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord are not going to precede those that sleep. And so they were expecting the immediate return of Jesus Christ at any time to set up the kingdom.

Throughout church history there has remained in the hearts of the believers that anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ and each generation believing that He was probably going to come in their generation. And I believe that that was deliberate, that the Lord intends us to live to live with that anticipation of the immediacy of His return.

John said, beloved now are we the Sons of God. It doesn't yet appear what we are going to be, but we know when He appears we are going to be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. And he who has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure. I think that the Lord intended that we live in the expectancy of His return so that we would have an incentive towards pure living. That we would have an incentive not to get deeply involved in the material things of this world, but keep our touch with the world just as light as possible. That it was by divine intent that each generation lived in expectation and the hope, the blessed hope of the return of Jesus Christ. And so in this generation we live in the hope, the anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ. And I think we are right. I do believe that Jesus is coming soon.

Now Paul said, knowing the time. The Bible indicates that the Lord intended for us to know the signs of the times. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and asked for a sign, He said in the evening if the sky is red, you will say it'll be a fair today tomorrow. But in the morning if the sky is red, you'll say, oh we are going to have some bad weather today. He said you know how to read the signs of the heavens. You know how to tell the weather by the redness of the sky but you don't know the signs of the times. He was rebuking them for not knowing the signs of the times because there were many signs that indicated that the time of the Messiah had come.

The prophecy of Daniel from the time that the commandment goes forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto the coming of the Messiah the Prince will be seven sevens and sixty two sevens. It has now been four hundred and eighty three years almost since the commandment went forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. They should have been looking for the Messiah! And there were so many prophecies, there were over three hundred. But we have even more prophecies that deal with the second coming of Jesus Christ, things that are being fulfilled before our very eyes. We see the very program being set up now that will be used by the antichrist in the setting up of his cashless society. We read constantly of the coming cash less society. We see the forming together of the

united states of Europe. We see so many things that are the pre cursors to the coming of Jesus Christ in His second coming. So Jesus said to His church, when you see these things beginning to come to pass, then look up and lift up your head for your redemption draws nigh. Knowing the time, the Lord expects you to know the time.

What time is it? He said, it's high time. *that now it is high time to awake out of sleep;* In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus assumed that the church would be sleeping at the time of His return. The parable is in the context of the question of the disciples, what will be the signs of your coming and the end of the world? And so Jesus gave them the signs of His coming, the end of the age. And then, having given them the signs to look for, as it was in the days of Noah, things of that nature. Then Jesus gave them parables. The thrust of each parable was you don't exactly when it's going to happen so you be ready so that no matter when it happens, you'll be ready. You be watching. Throughout the history of the church, I believe that Jesus has intended that we be watching and that we be ready and to realize that He could come at any time, is one of the greatest incentives towards walking in holiness and purity, that I know. High time to awake out of our sleep.

Jesus said concerning the ten virgins, they all slumbered and slept. They are a type of the church in this parable. They all slumbered and slept. Until the cry went forth, behold, the bridegroom cometh, let us go out to meet Him. And we know the story of how they began to trim their lamps. The foolish virgins found they didn't have sufficient oil. They asked to borrow some, but the wise said, not so, unless we would be short too. Go to those that sell and get. While they were gone, the bridegroom came. Those that were ready went in! Then the thrust, therefore, be ye ready for the Son of Man is coming in an hour in which you think not. Time to awake out of sleep. You see, he also recognized that the church for the most part is asleep.

Look how the church in the United States has slept while our nation slowly has sunk in paganism. Look at how we have slept as our schools have been taken over by atheistic concepts and teaching. Look at how we have slept while laws have been taken off the books that once protected us from pornography and from many sins that have become so blatant today. These things should have awakened us. They should have caused us alarm. They should have stirred us from lethargy. But yet we seem to just sleep.

Paul said, it is high time to awake out of our sleep. Why? *for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.* That old hymn, One sweetly solemn thought comes to me O'er and O'er. I am nearer heaven today than I've ever been before. I'm one day closer to the coming of Jesus Christ.

We need to live in that expectancy and anticipation. As we see the conditions of the world and we realize our helplessness, our inability to really do much to stem the tide of evil that has engulfed our nation. As we see the minds of our children being twisted, perverted, destroyed through the various rock and rap groups, the influence that they have over the minds of the kids. As we see them acting out the violence and all that is advocated by these artists, we feel such helplessness, when the media is so controlled. But rather than just throwing our hands and quitting the battle, we realize that these are signs of the times, and rather than getting us all discouraged and down and just oh, you know, this is horrible and all, you know. We say, all right the Lord is coming soon! It keeps you going! It keeps you buoyed. When there is no really good reason to be in good spirits, when you look at what is going on in the world, unless you knew that now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. And the coming of Jesus Christ is drawing near.

¹²*The night is far spent*, The night of evil is almost over. The times of the Gentiles have about been fulfilled.

There is an interesting prophecy of Jesus in Luke's gospel, chapter twenty-one, as He is talking about the last days, where Jesus said, and Jerusalem shall be trodden under the foot of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

In 1967, the Jews or Israel recaptured Jerusalem and established the capital of the nation in Jerusalem. Now in 1948 when the nation was established, they had a part of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem was a divided city. And to go even to the old city, the temple mount area, you had to go through the barbed wire and the "no man's" land. But today it is under Israel's control. The times of the Gentiles according to the promise of Jesus have been fulfilled.

We are just in a space gap, a comma, a breath, until the Lord comes. The night is far spent, but the glorious day is at hand.

Now the day of the Lord has a couple of meanings. The prophets on one side of the coin say, you know, people are talking about the day of the Lord but it will be a day of trouble, a day of vengeance, a day of wrath. And to those who have rebelled against God and have set themselves against God, the day of the Lord really isn't

something to look forward to. It's something to be fearful of, because He is coming to judge the world in righteousness. The Bible speaks about the great tribulation. There shall be a tribulation, Jesus said, such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again, as God puts the earth through a blood bath to prepare the earth for the return of His Son. But for those who are the children of God, the Day of the Lord is something that we look forward to with great anticipation. When we refer to the Day of the Lord, we are not talking about the great tribulation and the judgment that is coming, but we are talking about the glorious Day of God' reigning over the earth. Our prayers, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" will be fulfilled. We shall ever be with our Lord! And of His increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. And as in the "Great Hallelujah" chorus, and He shall reign forever and ever. The Day of the Lord, a day of rejoicing and gladness! The night is far spent. It is almost over.

the day is at hand. Therefore we need to be alert. We need to wake up.

Our response, *Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.* Realizing that it is high time to awake out of our sleep. Our salvation is near. The Day of the Lord is at hand. We need to cast off the works of darkness.

Writing to the Hebrews, the author says that we should lay aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us. It is so easy to get caught up in sin. It is so easy to fall into the traps of living after the flesh. We are to cast off the works of darkness, the things of the flesh. It is so easy though to become ensnared by them. And there is such a preponderance of available evil, Internet, videos, everywhere. But if you have been caught up in any of these works of the flesh, it is time to cast them off, the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light.

Of course, Paul in Ephesians six, talks about the Spiritual battle in which we are engaged and the necessity of putting on the whole armor of God. The truth, the righteousness, salvation, the Word of God, we need to be fully equipped in this battle.

¹³*Let us walk properly* (honestly), *as in the day*, Jesus said, men of darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They will not come to the light, lest their evil deeds be exposed.

Let us walk properly as in the day, *not in revelry* (rioting) *and drunkenness* (partying), *not in lewdness* (that open defiance of God. It's not only that I do it, but that I appear on Phil Donahue or one of the other programs, and I brag about what I have done. What a world that we are living in when they are scrapping the bottom, the gutters, and letting people brag about, you know, I have five husbands and I don't which one is the father of this kid. You know, just this kind of stuff and it is so bazaar that we can't believe it. So we sit there and watch it. I can't believe it. I can't believe it, you know. It's easy to get caught up in it.) *and lust* (sexual immorality), *not in strife and envy*.

But the answer, ¹⁴*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.* Don't give it an inch! Make no provision for it. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the last days. It's important that we be awakened to that fact. That we cast off the works of darkness and we put on the armor of light. And that we begin to live and to walk after the Spirit, making no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof. That means you go home and you destroy every X-rated video that you have. It means that you go home and you get rid of every magazine that is appealing to the lust of your flesh, intended to arouse you sensually. It means that if you can't handle it, you get a block on your Internet so that you can't get those programs into your home. You get a block on your telephone that keeps you from those 900 numbers. You make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. But we walk in purity. We walk in holiness. We walk in righteousness. We walk in truth because Jesus could come before tomorrow morning. We want to be found in Him in that righteousness which is of Christ! We want to be found walking in the Spirit.

Father, we thank You for these warnings and exhortations and instructions that Paul gives to us here in Romans thirteen. And now, Lord, help us. Help us to awake from that lethargy, Spiritual lethargy and sleep. May the church wake up to what is going on around us. May we get our head out of the sand. And Lord, may we begin to walk after the Spirit and may we begin to wage Spiritual warfare on our knees, interceding, Lord, for our nation. Lord, help us not to be entangled in the things of the flesh. May we lay aside every weight and sin which so easily besets us and let us run with patience this race that has been set before us as we look unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. In His name we pray. Amen.

