

## ROMANS 13

*Paul, who has just written that the Christian is to seek peace and leave vengeance to God, now reveals one way in which God brings vengeance on the evildoer. The Christian's obligation to submit to civil authorities is now discussed, along with our obligation to love our neighbors, and keeping our conduct decent and godly in this world as our eternal salvation nears.*

### **I) Obligation to Submit to Governing Authorities (13:1-7)**

- A) Every soul is to be subject to the governing authorities (1 Pet. 2:13-14a; Titus 3:1)
  - 1) Civil rulers – earthly governments; enacting and enforcing civil and social law
  - 2) “Subject” – Gk. *hupotasso* – to arrange under; obedient, submissive to higher authority
  - 3) Christian has dual citizenship (Matt. 22:21; Acts 16:37; 22:25-28; Phil. 3:20)
  - 4) No authority except from God, and those that exist are appointed by God (Jn. 19:11; Dan. 4:17)
  - 5) Whoever resists this authority resists the ordinance of God, and will bring judgment on themselves (from God and man)
    - a) “Resist” – Gk. *antitasso* – to arrange against (contrast with *hupotasso* – arrange under)
    - b) “Ordinance” – Gk. *diatage*, akin to *diatasso* – to arrange, set in place
      - i) One who does not arrange himself under civil authority has arranged himself against what God has arranged to be the proper order
      - ii) The only exception to this is when we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)
- B) Earthly rulers are not a terror to good works, but evil (1 Pet. 2:14-16)
  - 1) To be unafraid, do what is good and you will have praise from the same
  - 2) They are God's minister to us for good (1 Tim. 2:2); if do evil, be afraid
  - 3) Does not bear sword in vain – an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil
    - a) “Sword” = power of life and death; means of punishment of evildoers
    - b) Capital punishment (Gen. 9:6; Num. 35:33; Jn. 19:10-11; Acts 25:11)
  - 4) Pray for earthly rulers that they may fulfill their proper role (1 Tim. 2:1-2)
- C) Be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake
  - 1) Conscience follows a true standard causing us to do what we “ought” to do
  - 2) This is the reason to pay taxes – support work of governing authorities
  - 3) Render (lit. *give back*) taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor (Matt. 22:21; 1 Pet. 2:17; Jude 8)

*One way of giving place to God's wrath is to understand one's obligation to be subject to the governing authorities on this earth. God has appointed all such authorities and whoever resists them resists God's divine authority. These earthly rulers are to be a terror to evil, bearing the sword to execute wrath on evil. There is no need to be afraid if we do what is good. This is the ideal of the proper role of earthly authorities. If they fail in this role, the authorities themselves will fall under the condemnation of God. Christians are to recognize existing authorities and seek to be subject in all ways short of disobedience to God (Acts 5:29).*

*In view of this, we are to be subject not just because we fear God's wrath, but for conscience' sake (because it is right) – paying taxes, customs, fear, and honor to whom it is due. This will create a civil and social environment that would encourage a free course for the preaching of the gospel and demonstrate that Christianity is no threat or rival to the existence of earthly kingdoms. As Jesus taught, we are to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:21).*

### **II) Obligation to Love Our Neighbor (13:8-10)**

- A) Owe no man anything except to love one another (Gal. 5:13)

- 1) He who loves another has fulfilled the law [in principle, not in perfection] (Gal. 5:14)
  - a) Loving others more perfectly is a continual obligation
- B) The commandments – not commit adultery, not murder, not steal, not bear false witness, not covet (Ex. 20:13-17; Deut. 5:17-21; Mk. 10:19; Lk. 18:20)
  - 1) These and any other commandments of moral conduct summed up in “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Jas. 2:8-9)
- C) Love does no harm to a neighbor (Matt. 7:12); therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law (Lk. 10:25-37)

*The Christian has a continual obligation to love his neighbor. The moral commandments of the law are summed up in the principle of loving others and doing them no harm. This is further evidence of the transformed life in Christ.*

*“My neighbor, therefore, is any human being or fellow creature who chances to be near me, whether for the moment or permanently. This human being I am to so to love that I would no more harm him, than I would have him to harm me; and more than this, I am to do him whatever good, if in my power, I would wish him to do me. Such is my neighbor, and such the law which regulates my conduct towards him” (Moses Lard, Romans, 406).*

### **III) The Urgent Need for Godly Living (13:11-14)**

- A) Should do what Paul is teaching because it is now high time to awake out of sleep – be alert before it is too late (1 Cor. 11:30; 15:34; Eph. 5:14; 1 Thess. 5:6)
  - 1) Our [eternal] salvation is now nearer than when we first believed
    - a) Each of us drawing closer to the end of our spiritual journey
    - b) Need to remain alert, ready, and vigilant, not apathetic or inattentive (Gal. 6:8-9)
- B) The night is far spent, the day is at hand
  - 1) “Night” = immoral world; “day” = light of the gospel
  - 2) Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light (1 Thess. 5:4-8)
  - 3) Walk properly [decently] as in the day [light] (Gal. 5:16; 1 Thess. 4:12)
    - a) Not in revelry and drunkenness (unrestrained partying and intoxication 1 Pet. 4:3)
    - b) Not in licentiousness and lewdness (sexual promiscuity and unbridled lust Gal. 5:19)
    - c) Not in strife and envy (contentions and jealousy Rom. 1:29)
  - 4) Put on the Lord Jesus Christ (once in baptism Gal. 3:27, now in character Col. 3:1-17)
    - a) Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts (2 Pet. 1:3-4)
      - i) Many plans are made daily to pursue sin and evil; we must not do so!

*The urgency for godly living is seen in the fact that the end of our spiritual journey (eternal salvation) is drawing ever nearer day by day. The new “day” of eternity is at hand for all men, and the Christian must be sure to put on the armor of light and walk properly in the light of the gospel.*

*Paul warns of three classes of immoral and worldly lusts of the flesh: 1) revelry and drunkenness, 2) licentiousness and lewdness, and 3) strife and envy. These illustrate an appalling lack of soberness, self-control, and love that should characterize those in Christ. Life must be an exercise of putting on a godly character, not providing for the fulfillment of fleshly lusts.*

*“...Paul’s exhortation to ‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ’ means that we are consciously to embrace Christ in such a way that his character is manifested in all that we do and say. This exhortation appears to match the exhortation at the beginning of this section, ‘be transformed by the renewing of the mind,’ suggesting that it is into the image of Christ that we are being transformed” (cf. 8:29) (Douglas Moo, Romans, 825-6).*

