

# The Epistle of Paul to the *Romans*

## **Application: The Behavior of God's Righteousness (12:1 - 15:13)**

Paul spent the previous chapter <sup>Romans 12</sup> emphasizing personal submission to God, he then focused this chapter <sup>Romans 13</sup> on submission to governing authorities <sup>v.1-7</sup> and Godly living <sup>v.8-14</sup>. There are aspects of this teaching which are hard to embrace at times, but Jesus didn't ask us to agree or like everything He taught - He commanded us to "obey [his] teaching" <sup>John 14:23</sup>.

**13:1-2 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.** Mankind has a responsibility to God

to pray for <sup>Ezra 6:10, 1 Timothy 2:1-2</sup> and "submit" to <sup>Titus 3:1-2, 1 Peter 2:13-14</sup> those in civil authority.

As creator <sup>Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:16</sup> and sovereign ruler of the universe <sup>Psalms 22:27-28, 66:7, 103:19</sup>,

God has the right and ability to determine who should govern. This is another choice He

makes <sup>Daniel 2:21, John 19:11</sup> outside of time and possibly in response to what the people deserve.

Paul made it clear: rebellion (without cause <sup>see below</sup>) "will bring judgment" (by an authority).

The Greek word translated "submit" (*hypotassō*) means "to be put in subjection" <sup>Ephesians 5:21</sup>.

This Greek word was used to indicate a soldier's absolute obedience to his superior officer.

The Greek word translated "judgment" (*krima*) means "condemnation" <sup>Romans 3:8, 2 Peter 2:3, Jude 4</sup>.

The Bible presents several precedents <sup>Exodus 1:15-17, Daniel 3:1-6,10-18, 6:7-14, Acts 4:1-20</sup> for the one exception to the command of submission to governing authorities. This rule can be set aside when obedience to the governing authority would require disobedience to God and His Word.

God has instituted 4 earthly authorities: (1) the government over all citizens, (2) the church over all believers, (3) the parents over all children and (4) the masters over all employees.

**13:3-5 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.** In general, even the worst godless governments deter crime and will not bother law-abiding citizens. God's plan for every authority is for the good of the people, including exacting punishment on lawbreakers. God ordains governments

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to inflict penalties up to/including capital punishment <sup>Genesis 9:6, Leviticus 20:9, Matthew 5:17-18, 15:4</sup>.

Paul pointed out that being submissive to government authorities should be the result of both the fear of punishment and responsibility to God ("conscience" <sup>Genesis 20:6, Acts 23:1, Hebrews 13:18</sup>).

God is also sovereign over who rules and holds them accountable for how they rule <sup>Luke 12:47-48</sup>.

Paul was able to promote good by using the rules of an evil government <sup>Acts 16:37, 22:25-29, 25:9-12</sup>.

**13:6-7 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.** Due to the fact that God has ordained human government and commands submission to it <sup>v.1-5</sup>, Christians (all people) are obligated to "pay" the required "taxes" (personal income/property taxes) <sup>Mark 12:13-17</sup>, "revenue" (taxes on goods), "respect" (fear) and "honor" (esteem). During His earthly ministry, Jesus taught and modeled the principles of paying the required taxes to the corrupt Jewish leaders <sup>Matthew 17:24-27</sup>, as well as to the ungodly Roman government <sup>Matthew 22:15-22</sup>.

The Greek word translated "respect" (*phobos*) has the general meaning of "fear" <sup>Luke 12:5</sup>.

In a dictatorship or a monarchy, the nation's citizens do not have any control over the laws, which are determined by a small, select number of individuals. However, in a representative republic (as in America), the citizens elect the individuals who write the nation's laws. Therefore, if the U.S. citizens do not like the laws, they only have themselves to blame.

Regrettably, many people who claim to be Christians choose to not get involved or even vote. Worse yet, many voting Christians do not apply Biblical principles to determine how to vote.

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion ... Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." (John Adams)

"I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever."  
(Thomas Jefferson)

At this point, Paul turned his attention to the Christian's responsibility to live righteously.

**13:8-10 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.** Paul transitioned his emphasis from the

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Christians' "debt" to civil government to their "love" debt. The saints are required to love other believers <sup>1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 John 4:21</sup>, as well as non-believers <sup>Matthew 5:44</sup>. He quoted four of the Ten Commandments <sup>Exodus 20:14,13,15,17</sup> dealing with human interaction and then stated they are "summed up" by the supreme principle of human relations <sup>Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39</sup>. A Christian (or anybody) desires the best for themselves, so when they follow the command "Love your neighbor as yourself", it will be natural for them to want the same for a neighbor, and will result in the Christian never violating the human relation laws <sup>Matthew 7:12, James 2:8</sup>. In the Bible, a Christian's neighbor is anyone they come in personal contact with <sup>Luke 10:25-37</sup>. Paul later explained to his protégé: the ability to obey the command to "Love your neighbor" "...comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." <sup>1 Timothy 1:5</sup>.

In saying "Let no debt remain outstanding", Paul was not prohibiting lending/borrowing money. The Bible both permits and guides the lending of money <sup>Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35-37, Matthew 5:42</sup>. However, Paul affirmed the Christian's responsibility to pay their debts when due <sup>Leviticus 19:13</sup>.

**13:11-14 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.** Paul's point is that, while the directives he has presented are difficult to carry out, if believers will put them into the context of what is happening in the world during their lives, obeying will come more naturally to them. Christians must "wake up" <sup>Isaiah 26:19, Revelation 3:2</sup> from their Spiritual apathy or laziness, because each day brings them closer to the completion of their "salvation" (justification, sanctification, glorification) at the Second Coming <sup>Titus 2:11-14</sup> ("the day"). And Paul was exhorting believers to prepare themselves and others for that glorious day (the "Day of the Lord" <sup>Obadiah 1:15, 2 Peter 3:10</sup>) by living as Christ-like as possible. He reminded Christians to live for God by being outwardly focused, and not be inwardly motivated by wicked behaviors like "orgies and drunkenness" (sexual revelry) <sup>1 Peter 4:3</sup>, "sexual immorality and debauchery" (general indulgence in sensual pleasure) <sup>1 Corinthians 6:18-20</sup> and "dissension and jealousy" (strife and greed) <sup>1 Corinthians 3:3</sup>.

In referring to "the night" <sup>v.12</sup>, Paul was speaking about the time of man's evilness and Satan's dominion <sup>2 Corinthians 4:4</sup>, and "the day" denotes Jesus Christ's return & reign <sup>Revelation 19:11-16, 20:4</sup>. Paul exhorted saints to "put aside" <sup>Ephesians 4:22, Hebrews 12:1</sup> the "deeds of darkness" <sup>Ephesians 5:8-12</sup> (sin <sup>Colossians 3:8, James 1:21, 1 Peter 2:1</sup>) and "put on the armor of light" <sup>Ephesians 6:10-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:8</sup>.