

## **Romans 13**

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Now Paul tells us how God has set up the governing bodies on earth to enact His common Grace among all humans. In doing so, Paul makes it very clear that when one resists one of these authorities the person is actually resisting God.

**Rom 13:1 “Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.**

**Rom 13:2 Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.”**

Paul is first to make clear that all authority is from God. God set up the authorities on earth to enforce His laws. Everyone who resists this authority is in opposition to God and everyone who opposes these laws and authorities will receive conviction upon themselves. Paul starts this book telling us that man has no excuse because all of the heavens declare the glory of God. He then explains to us how evil we naturally are in comparison to the holy God and he explains how God has established for His chosen people a way to become holy children of God. Paul then tells us how we should act with other children of God and with the world. Now Paul is telling us that He has established laws and authorities on earth to enforce His laws and thus perpetuate His common grace upon all of mankind. If it were not for this common grace and the laws and authorities He establishes, the world would quickly have returned to the state it was in at the time of Noah. In fact, even with all of this common grace, protection, laws, and authority that God provides, God tells us that one day the earth will return to the state in which it existed at the time of Noah.

*Matt 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*

*Matt 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.*

*Matt 24:37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.*

*Matt 24:38 “For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,*

*Matt 24:39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”*

We are certainly seeing the corrosion of the authorities set up by God as man again tends to do as he thinks best rather than as demanded by God. When we resist these laws and authorities we are resisting God and will receive the judgment of God.

**Rom 13:3 “For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;**

**Rom 13:4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.”**

When you are driving and you suddenly see the flashing red lights behind you, what is your reaction? Probably first a bit of adrenaline causes your stomach to jump. Then your eyes go to the speedometer and you remember the speed limit of the zone in which you are driving. Then you think back to try to remember if you rolled through a stop sign or perhaps even went under a traffic light when it had just turned red. If you feel that you really are innocent then probably your stomach calms down and you put on your breaks and try to get out of the way of the police because you know that they could not be after you. Am I generally right in this analysis? I think so, because I have been there! But if I have really not been a law breaker then I have no fear of God’s enforcer. The fear is for the lawbreaker who knows that indeed he has been caught and he is going to have to be accountable for his breaking of the law. The nice policeman might even give you a citation for being an excellent example for all people to observe driving!

I thank God for the police for these people are here to protect me and my family and friends as long as we all are obedient to the laws of the land. But for the ones who are breaking the laws they certainly should feel fear. The bearing of the sword is a phrase that means the death penalty for the purpose of the sword is to bring death. It can also be a phrase meaning a weapon to force the lawbreaker into a dungeon or other place where the person cannot hurt the people obeying the laws. In both cases the bearer of the sword is a person who is God’s enforcer on the earth to enforce His laws. We should all respect those people who are appointed by God to catch the lawbreakers and those who are to enforce our laws according to the penalties of the crimes. All of this “law and order” is established by God as part of His common grace upon mankind. The real woe will be upon the world when the law and order is corroded by the wills of people who reduce the laws to relatively ineffective suggestions. Then the world will have returned to the time of Noah and the next judgment of God will not spare even eight people.

**Rom 13:5 “Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.**

**Rom 13:6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.**

**Rom 13:7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”**

The children of God will not obey the laws and authorities of God just because of the fear of the wrath of the authorities, but we want to obey the laws and authorities of God because they indeed are representatives of Him. We obey because we love God and our consciences are turned toward the law and love of God. We obey out of gratitude for what God has done for us in the double imputation process and we are awed that God has taken our filthy selves and turned us into pure, holy children of God. Praise God!

The rulers of our country are put there by God and they have set up the tax structure of the country that pays for the enforcement of God's laws. Therefore we pay taxes gladly because here also we are acting in obedience to God.

Does verse 13:7 remind you of something said by our Lord? Yes, you are correct. Jesus said something very similar to this verse.

**Rom 13:8 "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.**

**Rom 13:9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**

**Rom 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."**

We have a great debt to each other in that we are commanded to love each other. A true love for each other results in actions as indicated in verses nine and ten and other places in the great teaching given us by our Father. Our neighbor is anyone in whom we come in contact such as the neighbors where we live, our fellow workers, the fellow drivers on the interstate or other highway, the cashiers at the stores we visit, the people sitting near us at restaurants, the other people at the golf course, the other people at the sports games, etc. Think about so many people in whom we come into contact and then give some deep remembrances about how we treated them. A good prayer: pray that God will put you in direct contact with someone today to whom you can demonstrate your love for Jesus Christ.

How do you feel about the person in front of you in line somewhere who is having difficulty dealing with finding change to pay for a purchase? Do you feel impatient or do you smile and show mercy toward the person. How about the person bagging your stuff who is very slow? Think about the many times that you have felt impatience toward someone and purposefully try to show mercy and peace toward similar people later.

**Rom 13:11 "And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.**

**Rom 13:12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.**

**Rom 13:13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.**

**Rom 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."**

There are so many ways that we can awaken from sleep. I think that most people go through most of their life in some sort of sleep state and by that I mean that they do not pay close attention to their surroundings. Certainly for all of us, the time when our salvation will be complete – our glorification – is nearer than it was when we first believed. How much progress have we made in our sanctification in that time? How do

we respond to situations where God has allowed us to be tested? Sometimes I feel like shaking myself by the head and saying: “wake up!” The precious time that God has given me is flying by and I certainly don’t make the most of it. I need to show more respect for my neighbors. I need to show more respect for the authorities whom God has put over me. The night to which Paul refers is the time that we spend here without the direct self-perceived presence of God. The day will be the time when we are always in the presence of God and there is then no need for the sunlight. We are going to receive rewards and punishment for deeds done during the time we spend here not in the direct presence of God. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and we should always act like we really are the temple of God. God stopped dwelling in temples made by human hands over two thousand years ago and ever since then He has been dwelling in the temples made by His hands. Since we really are such a temple, where we go, what we do, what we allow ourselves to see, what we say, etc. should always reflect the reality of that temple.

These last two verses relate to our daily behavior. It used to be that most crimes occurred in the time and places when there was little or no light. Now more and more crimes are occurring in the daylight. But his reference here is to the fact that still more crimes occur during the absence of much light. Even though we are now children of God, we still have the old Adam nature. It is only as we consciously “put on” Jesus Christ that we will grow in our sanctification. Every second of every day we choose which nature we will feed.

### **References**

1. All Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, Moody Press, 1975.
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