

Romans

Romans Chapter Thirteen Romans 13:1-7

June 26, 2011

This is lesson number **94** in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: The Will of God for Believers in Society.

The text for today, Romans 13:1-7, has been abused and misused ever since Paul wrote his letter to the Christians at Rome.

What the apostle is doing in this passage is to continue to teach Christians how to live like a Christian.

Beginning with Chapter 12 and to the end of the letter the apostle very plainly lays out how a believer is supposed to prove the perfect will of God.

The purpose is not to discourage anyone so that they will say, “Oh, I give up; being a Christian is too hard for me.” No, What the Holy Spirit desires through Paul, is for us to learn how to think like Christ and to actually live in a sacrificial way for Christ.

In Romans 8:5-8 Paul gives the clearest **definition of Christianity** to be found anywhere in the NT [Martyn Lloyd-Jones]. Very simply a Christian will follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and the unbeliever will continue to follow whatever his sinful nature suggests to him.

Turn to **Romans 8:5-8** and listen to the definition of a Christian:

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans

So in the book of Romans, after doctrine and definitions we come to the application of the teaching. If you want to know how the Holy Spirit leads a believer you must heed the instructions that He gives us in the word of God as to how to live our lives.

In Chapter 12, at verse 1, we are told to appreciate the mercies of God by presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, which is our reasonable service of worship.

As we learn to obey God we are proving “what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” [12:2].

In verses 12:3-8, we learned that the will of God for believers when they meet with the church is to not be prideful and to respect the gifts of the Spirit as members of one body. Every member of the body is to exercise his or her gifts for the benefit of the body and not for any personal gratification.

In verses 12:9-21, we learned that Christianity must follow us out into the world when we leave the assembly of believers and that to think and act like a Christian is the opposite of the way the world thinks and acts. That is why we must not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

The world says to get even.

The Holy Spirit says, “Repay no one evil for evil.”

The world says to be pushy and always try to have your own way.

The Holy Spirit says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you live peaceably with all men.”

The world says that when you are wronged to take revenge.

The Holy Spirit says, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves.”

So Chapter 12 is the leading of the Holy Spirit for the believer when they meet in the **church** and when they go out into the **world**.

Chapter 13 gives us the will of God regarding **authority** in verses 1-7 and the will of God regarding our relationship to our **neighbors** in verses 8-14.

Romans

What is the believer's relationship to higher authorities?

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says the Christian lives in two kingdoms.

He is a citizen of the society in which he lives and at the same time he is a citizen of the kingdom of God.

How should Christians relate to authority?

The Will of God for Believers in Society.

Romans 13:1-7

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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

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. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. 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. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

When confronted with this passage many Christians follow their emotions and not what the Holy Spirit says.

In only seven verses Paul addresses the sovereignty of God, civil disobedience, capital punishment, pacifism, taxation, and honor.

The only way to understand what the apostle is teaching is to understand the principles he sets forth. It is not my objective to give you all the pro and con arguments that I have studied for this lesson. What I will do is to give you my honest conclusions that are based on the analogy of Scripture, i.e., comparing Scripture with Scripture, both OT and NT.

The first thing that must be absolutely clear in our thinking is that God is sovereign and that nothing "just happens."

When a Saddam Hussein rules a country like Iraq it is because God had a reason for him to be in power.

Romans

Romans 9:17

17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."

Be very careful not to conclude that God approves every act of those He puts in authority. Rulers and governors will answer to the very God who put them in authority.

What we need to know about those in authority is that **God put them in authority**. And also know that "every soul" will answer to God for his or her submission to those higher authorities.

There is no qualification here that we must agree with the authorities or that the authorities must be good people. Most authorities are not Christian and they usually have a worldview that is anti-Christian.

As believers we do not have the option to choose which authorities we will submit to and which we will refuse to obey.

When Paul wrote this letter the Roman Empire under Nero had not yet begun its systematic persecution of Christians. But the Holy Spirit does not give us a principle that may be changed by circumstances.

So do not conclude that this principle of obeying authority is only when times are good.

What then is the principle then regarding civil disobedience?

1 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.

All authority is from God. The authority of the state comes from God.

Romans

John 19:10-11

10 Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"

11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

Since God gives the authority to the state, when the state is in conflict with God's Word we must obey God. The state does not have any authority to go against the word of God.

Just a few examples:

Acts 4:18-20

18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them," Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

Acts 5:22-32

But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, 23 saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" 24 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. 25 So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Hebrews 11:23

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

Romans

So the principle is to obey the authorities unless what they order is contrary to the word of God. Obey God and be ready to take the consequences.

We have seen this very principle being tested in Alabama.

A few years ago there was a lot of contention about the Ten Commandments monument in a state building and Christians were divided over Judge Roy Moore's refusal to obey a higher court order to remove the monument.

There was a lot of emotion and very little objectivity displayed by those on both sides of the issue.

Personally, I support the Ten Commandments monument being on display.

There are similar, perhaps not as prominent, symbols of religious icons in federal and state buildings all over the country.

What makes the Ten Commandments monument in Alabama an exception is that Judge Moore himself said it was for the purpose of promoting the Christian faith. As a result of that position a higher authority ordered Judge Moore to remove the monument and he refused to obey that court order.

However, Judge Moore, as a Christian, does not have the prerogative to choose which orders he will obey. Only if the court order is against the word of God should he refuse to obey the order.

There are many issues being discussed such as the moral decay in America, but there is only one issue here in the matter of whether Judge Moore as a Christian should obey a court order.

There is no Word from God that says such monuments are commanded.

There is a clear Word from God regarding obeying higher authorities.

It seems to me that the issue is not whether we would like to see such a monument on display but must a Christian submit to authority.

Most of us will never be in a high profile position such as Judge Moore so let me give you some very practical examples of how this principle of obeying authorities affects all of us.

Romans

God has set an order in creation, in society, and in the home.

Paul commands wives to submit to their husbands and he commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

But the idea is for the wife to obey her husband **as a husband** and not as a godless tyrant. If the husband orders the wife to violate God's Word she must obey God.

Children obey your parents **as parents** because God has put them in authority over you. But parents do not have the authority from God to order a child to steal or sell dope.

We are to obey the authorities over us and not only in those things with which we agree but in any orders as long as what is commanded are not against the word of God.

That is the principle of civil disobedience from a Christian viewpoint.

When we refuse to submit to lawful orders, exactly whom are we opposing? It is not only the authorities who are being resisted; it is God who is being resisted.

When we drive over the speed limit or throw trash out the window to litter the roadside or cheat on taxes or keep a child home from school for no good reason we are **resisting God**.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

The reason Paul gives for us to obey authorities is that it is not only right it is for our good. Behave yourself and most of the time you will be left alone.

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.

Another emotional issue is **capital punishment**. Christians are divided over this issue. Many people who are not Christians are opposed to capital punishment.

4 For he is God's minister to you for good. 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.

Romans

There is no argument that the **sword** is a symbol of the authority of God's ministers, those in authority, to execute an evildoer.

You may be strongly opposed to the death penalty but you cannot honestly support your position from the Bible.

God made a covenant with Noah after the flood and He gave Noah the principle regarding human life.

Genesis 9:6
6 "Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.

Because man is made in the image of God human life is to be respected.

Properly understood the death penalty is not vindictive it is to guard the sanctity of human life.

It is a sign of the degeneration of society that often the murderer is shown more compassion than the victim.

As soon as God gave the Sixth Commandment, "**You shall not murder,**" in Exodus 20:13, He also gave the command to enforce it in Exodus 21:12.

"He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death."

The opponents of the death penalty have twisted the argument to say that capital punishment is not a **deterrent** to murder. The death penalty is not intended to be a deterrent it is intended to protect the sanctity of human life.

An argument from silence in Scripture is a weak argument but when Jesus was being crucified by capital punishment He did not say that the death penalty was wrong because it was according to the Word of God.

As our Substitute He had to die the death of the cross because it was the only way that God could be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans

The same arguments can be made against **pacifism**.

Pacifism is the idea that all war is evil and that the state does not have the right to order men to defend their country. War is horrible but it is sometimes necessary.

Bound up in the principle of “the sword” is the responsibility of government to protect its citizens.

Support for pacifism is not to be found in the Bible.

Harlots are told to go and sin no more but soldiers are not told to quit the army and go home.

Paul used the metaphor of the soldier’s armor to teach us how to resist the devil and his legions of demons. Why would Paul use a military metaphor if the idea of a military is opposed to God’s word?

The reason Paul gives for obedience to the authorities is **twofold**.

The state is a minister of the wrath of God **and** when you disobey the state you violate your own conscience.

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to **wrath**; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” [12:19]

A Christian knows that he must obey authorities because the Holy Spirit is dwelling in him.

Your conscience instructed by the Holy Spirit needs to be clear.

Paul sums up this section with some practical examples of taxes and fees and fear and honor.

Romans

Jesus dealt with the question of paying taxes when they tried to test Him.

Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. 16 And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. 17 Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the tax money."

So they brought Him a denarius.

20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"

21 They said to Him, "Caesar's."

And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

Paul is saying the same thing.

Governments have the right to impose taxes and fees.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

Where he says **fear to whom fear**, I believe he is referring to God.

Jesus taught us not to fear those who can only kill the body but to fear God.

The **honor to whom honor** takes care of respect for human authorities.

You may not respect someone who is in authority as a person because he or she may be morally bankrupt but we must **respect the office** they hold.

Paul instructs Timothy to make intercession for all men, for kings and for all who are in authority and so should we.

Romans

Remember that the apostle is telling us how to **worship God** and to prove His perfect will in the church, in all situations, and in society under civil authority.

Romans 13:1-7

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By God's mercy the next lesson from Romans will teach us how to worship God by being good neighbors.