

Romans 13:5-14
September 6, 2015

Dry Erase Board: Get pyramid ready, but leave the labels out for now.

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

In Romans 13 Paul teaches us that the real author of the institution of government is GOD! Paul established upfront in verses 1 and 2 that we “must submit” to the governing authorities. As we began our trek through chapter 13, I suggested that Paul provides us reasons or motivations as to why we should submit.

In Rom 13:1-4 Paul gives us the first motivation to submit to authority. What was it? [**Fear of punishment** – Make this entry in base of pyramid for the class]

Transition: Our goal today is to finish Romans 13 and fill in this pyramid that describes levels of motivations or reasons as to why we should submit to governing authorities. I think each of us CAN successfully submit to our governing authority BY embracing any one of the four **MOTIVATIONS** that will be revealed in today’s text. Let’s begin by re-reading Rom 13:5-7.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Rom 13:5-7]

V.5:

- Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of **conscience**.

V.6:

- This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing.

V.7:

- Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: Paul invites us to obey the law for a reason other than avoiding wrath or punishment. What is it? [**Conscience** – Write this into the pyramid on dry erase board]

Q: If our government interferes with conscience, then what are we called to do as Christians in those cases? [**We must obey God rather than man. X-Ref Acts 5:29**]

Q: What are some current examples where we see Christians obeying God vs man? See below:

1. Churches being told by government authorities that same-sex marriages should be allowed in the church or you’re guilty of discrimination. **Southern Baptist seminary leaders are among those expressing concern at the U.S. solicitor general’s admission that nationwide legalization of gay marriage could lead to the removal of tax-exempt status from religious institutions that stand for traditional marriage.**

2. Houston mayor asking pastors to turn over their sermons. **The mayor demanded that sermon notes, emails, videos, and any negative comments about homosexuality or the mayor herself, be turned over to her. If the pastors refused, the mayor threatened to charge them with contempt of court and possible fines or jail time.**

Q v.6: Why should we pay taxes? [Because our “conscience” tells us that the authorities are God’s servants who devote their time to governing.]

Q: How do you respond to Christians who don’t pay taxes while trying to live “outside the system?” [Characteristics of those who avoid paying taxes: (<http://www.equip.org/article/the-patriot-movement/>) an obsessive suspicion of their government; a deep-seated hatred and fear of federal authorities; a belief in far-reaching conspiracy theories; and a feeling that for all intents and purposes Washington bureaucrats have discarded the U.S. Constitution. Response: God requires that we yield to our governing authorities. The answer is not to be a part of a rebellious subculture that undermines our governing authorities.]

Q: If we don’t pay our taxes, who are we ultimately disrespecting? [The Lord.]

Q: I know many people think we pay too much in taxes, and that might be true. However, if you lived in France, you might be perfectly content to pay it! However, what should our motivation be to pay our taxes, even if we are unhappy with the bill? [Conscience]

Observation: We may not agree with all that is done with the money we pay in taxes, but we should not violate our conscience by refusing to pay.

Bottom Line (v.7) – If you owe something to someone, take care of it – for conscience’s sake.

[Read Rom 13:8-10]

V.8:

- Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to **love one another**, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

V.9:

- 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.”

V.10:

- Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: Based on these three verses, what should be motivating our behaviors toward others? [Love – As Christians, we have an obligation to express the love of God in all interpersonal relationships. Write “Love Others” into the pyramid]

Observation: “Love one another” is the basic principle of the Christian life. When we practice love, there is no need for any other laws, because love covers it all. If we love others, we will not

sin against them. So a higher level of motivation to submit to governing authorities starts at the grass roots level by choosing to love one another.

[Read Rom 13:11-14]

V.11:

- 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.

V.12:

- 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.(Clean Up)

V.13:

- Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

V.14:

- Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (Devotion to Christ), and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: Paul has come a long way from in our motivations for obeying the law: He started with fear, then our conscience, and then loving others. Now what is he suggesting should be our motivation? [Devotion to Christ (Write this into the pyramid) – we need to be found faithful when He returns. So he’s suggesting we should have the mindset of the imminent return of Christ. We shouldn’t be found participating in the sinful pleasures of the world.]

The bottom line: A Christian citizen ought to be the best citizen. We may not always agree on politics or parties, but we can all agree on our attitude toward the God-ordained institution of government.

LOOK:

Dry Erase Board: Draw a large pyramid and entitle it “The Motivations to Submit to Authorities”

- Base of Pyramid – Fear of Punishment
- Next level – Conscience
- Next level – Love Others
- Tip of the Pyramid – Devotion to Christ

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 557–558). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

For conscience's sake (vv. 5–7). We move a bit higher in our motivation now. Any citizen can obey the law because of fear of punishment, but a Christian ought to obey because of conscience. Of course, if the government interferes with conscience, then the Christian must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). But when the law is right, the Christian must obey it if he is to maintain a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; Acts 24:16).

The United States Government maintains a “Conscience Fund” for people who want to pay their debts to the Government and yet remain anonymous. Some city governments have a similar fund. I read about a city that had investigated some tax frauds and announced that several citizens were going to be indicted. They did not release the names of the culprits. That week, a number of people visited the City Hall to “straighten out their taxes”—and many of them were not on the indictment list. When conscience begins to work, we cannot live with ourselves until we have made things right.

Romans 13:7 commands us to pay what we owe: taxes, revenue, respect, honor. If we do not pay our taxes, we show disrespect to the law, the officials, and the Lord.

And this cannot but affect the conscience of the believer. We may not agree with all that is done with the money we pay in taxes, but we dare not violate our conscience by refusing to pay.

For love's sake (vv. 8–10). Paul enlarged the circle of responsibility by including other people besides government officials. “Love one another” is the basic principle of the Christian life. It is the “new commandment” that Christ gave to us (John 13:34). When we practice love, there is no need for any other laws, because love covers it all! If we love others, we will not sin against them. This explained why the Ten Commandments were not referred to often in the New Testament. In fact, the Sabbath commandment is not quoted at all in any of the epistles. As believers, we do not live under the Law; we live under grace. Our motive for obeying God and helping others is the love of Christ in our hearts.

Does “Owe no man anything” refer also to the Christian's financial practices? Some people believe that it does, and that it is a sin to have a debt. J. Hudson Taylor, the godly missionary to China, would never incur a debt, basing his conviction on this verse. Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, had the same conviction. However, the Bible does not forbid borrowing or legal financial transactions that involve interest. What the Bible does forbid is the charging of high interest, robbing the brethren, and failing to pay honest debts (see Ex. 22:25–27; Neh. 5:1–11). Matthew 25:27 and Luke 19:23 indicate that banking and investing for gain are not wrong. Certainly no one should get into unnecessary debt, or sign contracts he cannot maintain. “Thou shalt not steal.” But to make Romans 13:8 apply to all kinds of legal obligations involving money is, to me, stretching a point.

In this section, Paul has centered on the very heart of the problem—the human heart. Because the heart of man is sinful, God established government. But laws cannot change the heart; man's heart is still selfish and can be changed only by the grace of God.

For Jesus' sake (vv. 11–14). We have come a long way in our reasons for obeying the law: from fear to conscience to love to our devotion to Jesus Christ! The emphasis is on the imminent return of Christ. As His servants, we want to be found faithful when He returns. The completion of our salvation is near! The light is dawning! Therefore, be ready!

Paul gave several admonitions in the light of the Lord's soon return. The first is, "Wake up!" Relate this with 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, and also Matthew 25:1–13. The second is, "Clean up!" We do not want to be found dressed in dirty garments when the Lord returns (1 John 2:28–3:3). The Christian wears the armor of light, not the deeds of darkness. He has no reason to get involved in the sinful pleasures of the world. Finally, Paul admonished, "Grow up!" (Rom. 13:14) To "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ means to become more like Him, to receive by faith all that He is for our daily living. We grow on the basis of the food we eat. This is why God warns us not to make provisions for the flesh. If we feed the flesh, we will fail; but if we feed the inner man the nourishing things of the Spirit, we will succeed.

In other words, a Christian citizen ought to be the best citizen. Christians may not always agree on politics or parties, but they can all agree on their attitude toward human government.

Witmer, J. A. (1985). Romans. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 490–492). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

13:4–5. Furthermore, a civil leader is **God's servant**, a concept often forgotten today. By commending those who do right (v. 3), a civil leader himself does **good** (v. 4). But on the other hand he bears arms (**the sword**) as **God's servant** (the second time in this verse Paul referred to the ruler this way; cf. v. 6), as **an agent of wrath**. Governmental force, properly used, helps prevent tyranny and executes justice; it brings **punishment on the wrongdoer**. A Christian has two reasons to be submissive to civil authorities—to avoid **possible punishment** (lit., "the wrath") and to heed his **conscience**, which prods him to obey God's ordinances.

13:6–7. A Christian's responsibility to civil authorities involves more than obedience (vv. 1, 5). It also includes support by paying **taxes** (cf. Matt. 22:21). This is because the leaders, as **God's servants** (cf. Rom. 13:4), are supposed to **give their full time to governing** and need support through taxes from citizens, Christians included. So a Christian ought to **give everyone what he owes him** (lit., "repay everyone his dues"), whether substance (**taxes and revenue**) or **respect and honor**.

E. In light of the future (13:8–14).

13:8–10. Discussion of believers' obligations to civil authorities evidently triggered Paul's thinking concerning believers' debts to others. He commanded, **Let no debt remain outstanding** (lit., "Do not keep on owing anyone anything") **except the continuing debt to love one another** (lit., "except loving one another"). This is not a prohibition against a proper use of credit; it is an underscoring of a Christian's obligation to express divine love in all interpersonal relationships. A Christian should never fall short, and so be "in debt," in loving others (John 13:34–35; 1 Cor. 16:14; Eph. 5:2; Col. 3:14; 1 John 3:14, 23; 4:7, 11, 21).

The importance of continually showing love is seen in the explanation, **For he who loves his fellow man** (lit., "the other one") **has fulfilled the Law** (cf. Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31). Love, not mere external conformity to rules, is the essence of the Law (cf. Gal. 5:14).

Paul then quoted various specific commands from the social section of the Ten **Commandments**. These prohibitions—**not to commit adultery ... murder ... steal and covet**—are the 7th, 6th, 8th, and 10th commandments, in that order (Ex. 20:13–15, 17). Paul summed up that entire section of the Law by quoting Leviticus 19:18. The Jewish Rabbis and the Lord Jesus summarized the social section of the Law in the same words (cf. Matt. 22:39). Paul

then expressed this principle in other words, **Love does no harm** (lit., “Love does not keep on working evil”) **to its neighbor**, and then he repeated (cf. Rom. 13:8) his basic assertion that **love** fulfills **the Mosaic Law**. Only in Christ can a person meet this or any of the other requirements of the Law (8:4).

13:11. Expressing divine love is a Christian’s constant responsibility, but it is especially crucial in **understanding the present time** (lit., “knowing the season”). Paul was not referring to time in general but to the end-time and to the imminent return of the Lord Jesus. It is a time, therefore, for spiritual vigilance and industriousness: **wake up from your** (some mss. have “our,” which conforms to the context) **slumber** (cf. Eph. 5:14; 1 Peter 5:8). This need for alertness is **because our salvation** (ultimate or final salvation realized at the return of the Savior; cf. Rom. 8:23; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5) **is nearer now than when we first believed** (cf. James 5:8). Each passing day in the faith brings final salvation and deliverance closer.

13:12. Paul considered the time of Christ’s return and the consummation of salvation for believers (v. 11) as the start of a new **day**. The present time, while Christ is absent (John 14:2–3; Acts 1:11) and Satan is at work (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2), is described as **the night** (cf. 2 Peter 1:19). Since “the day” **is almost here**, Paul urged his readers to **put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light**. Christians are soldiers in a conflict who need to be alert and equipped for battle (Eph. 6:10–17; 1 Thes. 5:8). Upright, Christ-honoring living is often referred to as being in the light (John 12:36; Eph. 5:8, 14; Col. 1:12; 1 Thes. 5:5; 1 John 1:7; 2:10).

13:13–14. In verse 13 Paul repeated his exhortation of verse 12, changing the figure from warfare to lifestyle. He charged, **Let us behave decently, as in the daytime** (lit., “day”). Crime, violence, and wickedness are associated with darkness and the night (John 1:5; 3:19–20; 8:12; 12:35, 46; Eph. 5:8, 11; 6:12; 1 Thes. 5:7; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:5–6; 2:9, 11). Perhaps this contrast was suggested to Paul by his phrase “deeds of darkness” (Rom. 13:12). At any rate the activities and attitudes he listed—**orgies and drunkenness ... sexual immorality and debauchery ... dissension and jealousy** (cf. Gal. 5:19–21)—are certainly “deeds of darkness.” It is interesting that Paul linked jealousy with immorality. Such actions and attitudes have no place in a Christian’s life. He belongs to “the light”; these deeds and thoughts belong to the darkness.

A Christian’s lifestyle must be pure and holy, especially in view of Christ’s approaching return (cf. Rom. 13:11–12; 1 John 3:3). The secret to living chaste lives is for Christians to **clothe** themselves **with the Lord Jesus Christ** (cf. “put on,” Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). At salvation they were “clothed with Christ” (Gal. 3:27), so they should conduct themselves accordingly. Also the secret includes **not thinking about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature** (lit., “and do not make forethought [*pronoian*] for the flesh [*sarkos*; cf. Rom. 8:3–5, 8–9, 12–13] for lusts”). For a Christian to plan out specific ways to gratify his sinful nature is wrong and out of bounds.