

Lesson 12 21 July 2013

Consecration and Citizenship Responsibilities

Lesson Scope: [Romans 13](#)

Lesson Focus

Practical expressions of Christian living apply to relationships outside the body of believers. Right attitudes toward the world and a proper respect for civil authorities are part of the "high calling" of the Christian. How we obey the injunctions in this chapter greatly affects our Christian testimony and our ability to win souls for Christ.

Christians are to be subject to government leaders regardless of their character. By respecting their position and obeying their laws, we give recognition to the authority God commits to them. Even if they make demands that seem unrealistic, they are to be obeyed unless their demands conflict with direct teachings of Scripture.

The teachings in Romans 13 are written to Christian subjects and not to those in government positions. God does not expect government officials to be nonresistant.

This chapter also gives teaching on our moral obligations in financial matters and on our responsibility to remain detached from the immorality and social sins of the world. To remain free from the world and its evil is a declaration of our heavenly citizenship.

The ecumenical emphasis of our day is undermining the Scriptural teaching on separation of church and state. More and more so-called Anabaptist-based churches are not clear on this important doctrine. Historically, the church has prospered by remaining separate from the state, but she has become corrupt when she failed to do so.

Many in society have a disparaging, rebellious, or even lawless spirit that can easily affect our attitudes toward civil government. Although we understand that any government or society that disregards principles of truth as outlined in the Scriptures will deteriorate, we may not "speak evil of dignities" (Jude 8). Even though we do not endorse all their actions, that does not release us from recognizing their God-given authority. A proper respect for the position of government officials is a part of our being the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world."

The Christian is in the world but is not of the world. The laws of his heavenly citizenship transcend and superintend his earthly citizenship.

Lesson Aim: To identify principles that govern the believer's relationship to the state and to his fellow citizens.

Theme Verse: [Philippians 3:20](#). For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson Text

Subjection

[Romans 13:1-7](#) ¹ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. ² Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: ⁴ For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. ⁵ Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. ⁶ For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Love

[Romans 13:8-10](#) ⁸ Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. ⁹ For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ¹⁰ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

Vigilance

[Romans 13:11-14](#) ¹¹ And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast

off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. ¹³ Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. ¹⁴ But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

Questions for Study

Subjection

1. How will our attitude toward government officials be affected by the consciousness that God has placed them in their positions?
2. According to this passage, what is the civil government's responsibility?
3. What is the Christian's obligation to civil government?
4. What is the proper view of tax moneys?

Love

5. Why is our love for others an ongoing obligation?
6. How does loving another fulfill the Law?

Vigilance

7. In what ways might we be tempted to make "provision for the flesh"?
8. How does "knowing the time" cause us to walk circumspectly?

Analyzing the Passage

Higher power (Romans 13:1) suggests an authority that is above us, namely, government rulers. Paul recognized that all governments receive their authority from God; they are "ordained of God." Ordained comes from the same Greek word translated "set" in Luke 7:8. To hinder or resist their exercise of authority is to resist God (Romans 13:2).

Government officials are minister[s] of God (Romans 13:4). This title indicates a servant. Their service to the people includes the protection of law-abiding citizens and the "punishment of evildoers" (1 Peter 2:14). Because they serve the people, they are entitled to tribute, custom, fear, and honor (Romans 13:7).

"Owe no man anything" (13:8) may well be a continuation of the law given in Leviticus 19:13. While the Ten Commandments did not contain a specific commandment to "love thy neighbour as thyself," it is mentioned in Leviticus 19:18. Verse 9 teaches us that this statement sums up the true exercise of the last five of the Ten Commandments.

The salvation in verse 11 refers to the eternal phase of our redemption. Honestly (Romans 13:13) suggests integrity, transparency, and sincerity.

Chambering and wantonness (13:13) could also be stated as "lust and lasciviousness." The admonition given in Romans 13:12-14 is best understood as continued, progressive action rather than as initial Christian experience.

Principles and Applications

Subjection

1. We are to be subject to civil authorities because God appointed them (Romans 13:1). Paul was likely living under the rule of Nero at this time, yet he taught the need to respect and honor him. God at times uses even the basest of men to accomplish His purposes (Daniel 4:17).

This principle is especially tested when laws are passed that directly conflict with God's Word. It is right to declare what the Bible teaches, but we must not participate in demonstrations and protests against such laws.

2. Civil authorities are appointed for the restraining of evil (Romans 13:3-4). God has given the government the responsibility of maintaining and, at times, restoring order in society. This includes "the punishment of evildoers." The possibility of punishment is a restraint to those who obey simply for fear of wrath. Even though at times God's people are subjected to what may seem unreasonable questionings or judgments by authorities, we must appreciate their work to suppress evil.

3. We should be subject to civil authorities to obey God's commands, not only to avoid punishment (Romans 13:5). Obedience to God is our primary obligation. Our fear of God motivates our obedience to civil laws, unless those laws conflict with the teachings of Scripture (Acts 5:29). If we need to "be buffeted for [our] faults," we must accept it rather than try to excuse ourselves.

4. It is our duty to pay our taxes and to honor government leaders (Romans 13:6-7). Tax revenue makes it possible for the government to perform its obligations to the people. Even though imposed taxes at times may seem unfair, or the appropriation of tax moneys may seem unwise, the Christian is not excused from his obligation.

An important part of honoring government leaders is to pray for them.

We should pray for the continued blessing of leading a "quiet and peaceable life," but we should also pray for the salvation of those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

Love

5. We are called to remain current in meeting our financial obligations (Romans 13:8). We often use this concept to teach responsibility for borrowed funds. It also applies to payments we might owe to others, including our brethren, for services rendered to us. Relationships will deteriorate or be destroyed if we are not sensitive in such matters. It is wrong to indulge in unnecessary spending, especially if we have unpaid obligations. "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7).

6. Love is the essence of our responsibility to our fellow men (Romans 13:8-10). If we do not feel an outstanding debt of love to our fellow men, we likely are not loving as we should. Wholesome relationships are built as we esteem others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Living by the Golden Rule enhances all our relationships. True love is manifested by the fruit of the Spirit; "against such there is no law."

Vigilance

7. Spiritual alertness is urgent because the day of Christ's return draws near (Romans 13:11-14). The forces of evil are just as strong and the deceitfulness of sin just as real as they ever were. We must diligently guard the influences that come into our lives and do our best to restore broken relationships. We maintain right relationships with others because it is morally right, but we also reckon with our accountability to God. "Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (Mark 13:36).

8. Those who walk in the light do not live after the flesh (Romans 13:12-14). Our carnal desires will take us away from the light and into darkness. We cannot excuse ourselves for failure, because "the armour of light" is available to us, "if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Romans 8:9).

Important Teachings

1. We are to be subject to civil authorities because God appointed them (Romans 13:1).
2. Civil authorities are appointed for the restraining of evil (Romans 13:3-4).
3. We should be subject to civil authorities to obey God's commands,

not only to avoid punishment (Romans 13:5).

4. It is our duty to pay our taxes and to honor government leaders (Romans 13:6-7).

5. We are called to remain current in meeting our financial obligations (Romans 13:8).

6. Love is the essence of our responsibility to our fellow men (Romans 13:8-10).

7. Spiritual alertness is urgent because the day of Christ's return draws near (Romans 13:11-14).

8. Those who walk in the light do not live after the flesh (Romans 13:12-14).

9. The church and the state are to be separate entities (Romans 13:4-6).

Answers to Questions

1. How will our attitude toward government officials be affected by the consciousness that God has placed them in their positions?

When we understand that God has delegated authority to government officials, we will respect their office and not resist their authority. We will consider the fact that we will need to give account to God for the way we relate to them.

2. According to this passage, what is the civil government's responsibility?

They are responsible to make and enforce laws for the maintenance of order, for the protection of those who abide by the laws, and for the punishment of evildoers.

3. What is the Christian's obligation to civil government?

God's people should be identified as voluntarily law-abiding citizens, whose testimony is one of respect for authorities. We must pray for them. The adage "Pray; Pay; Obey" is a good one to remember.

4. What is the proper view of tax moneys?

God recognizes the right of authorities to receive compensation for fulfilling their God-given responsibilities. Payment of our taxes should not be made grudgingly. We enjoy many freedoms; but even if the government were not tolerant of our beliefs, we would still be obligated to pay. The responsibility of spending tax revenue lies solely on the government.

5. *Why is our love for others an ongoing obligation?*

It is our nature to be selfish, but true love puts others first. God shows His love and forgiveness to us in proportion to the way we love and forgive others (Matthew 6:14, 15; 1 John 5). If we do not have love in our hearts, we will be easily offended by the mistreatment we receive. Without love, we cannot manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

6. *How does loving another fulfill the Law?*

Rather than "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," true love motivates us to forgive and even to return good for evil. To love our neighbor as ourselves requires not only crucifying the lust, hatred, and covetousness in our hearts but also pleasing our neighbor "for his good" (Romans 15:2).

7. *In what ways might we be tempted to make provision for the flesh"?*

We must not allow ourselves to remain in situations that expose us to influences that would corrupt us. We may be tempted to justify ourselves, or be unwilling to forgive, or to do our part in restoring broken relationships. To "keep back part" for ourselves when we declare ourselves honest is deceitful.

8. *How does "knowing the time" cause us to walk circumspectly?*

A consciousness of the imminent return of Christ compels us to maintain our relationship with God and with our fellow men. "If the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched" (Luke 12:39).

Summarizing the Lesson

God superintends national affairs and places men in government positions. The Christian recognizes the authority God has given to those men, and he submits to it. Our respect for authorities is determined by our attitude toward them. Abstaining from becoming involved in government, coupled with a consistent commitment to separate ourselves from evil in every area of our lives, will communicate to civil authorities, as well as to all men, that our citizenship is in heaven. A heavenly citizen will "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

Research Guide

1. Study the chapter on "Civil Government" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.

2. Read 1 Peter 2:13-20 and Titus 3:1, 2.
3. Look up neighbour in a concordance and especially note references in the Pentateuch.