

Romans 13

Key Questions

- Is all leadership ordained by God?
- Is there a time that we should stand against higher powers? (observe what God hates, unbalanced scales, etc)
- How do we judge our leaders?
- Are the leaders spoken in this chapter religious or secular?
 - o Can a non-Christian leader be “a minister of God to thee for good”(verse 3)?
- How do we love our neighbor as ourselves?

Family Notes

Notes

Verses 1-7: Be Subject to Higher Powers

Verse 1

- We should be subject to higher powers
 - o **Titus 3:1**
 - o Higher powers == Governing Authorities
- “The powers that be are ordained by God”
 - o While leaders are ordained by God, this does not mean that He approves of them.
 - o Daniel 2:21
 - o Hosea 8:4
- The rulers can reveal God’s mercy or God’s Judgement
 - o Mercy:: **Numbers 1:13-16,24**: Moses Interceding for Israel: Moses was the leader who interceded for the people and God relented
 - o Judgement:: **Isaiah 3:1-15**: God took away leader from Judah because of their disobedience
 - JIC: Women rule over them is not a prescription but a description of societal order, God’s judgment on failed male leadership

Verse 2

- Whosoever resists the power, resists the ordinance of God and is subject to damnation (judgement)

- This judgement (gr. κρίμα, “krima”) is not necessarily an eternal judgement, but a judgement based on disobedience to God’s ordained rulers. This does not omit eternal judgement

Verse 3

- True rulers are not a terror to good works, true rulers fight against evil
- How can we be afraid of a force for good, how can we resist this force?
- A leader who does good will have their followers who do the same.
- What if a ruler does not fight for good?
 - **Acts 5:22-29** – After the apostles were imprisoned for preaching the gospel in Jerusalem
 - If government violates God’s word, we are to resist.

Verses 4-6

- Proper leadership includes punishment of evil
- The sword is a symbol representing the authority given to the government to protect its citizens by punishing those who do what it has determined as wrong.
 - **Acts 24:16** – Hold no offense toward God and men

Verse 7

- We are to pay taxes, fines, etc to the government.
 - **Matthew 22:21**

Verses 8-14: Love One Another

- We are to owe no man anything, but to love one another
 - **Matthew 7:12**
 - Note: this is not an indictment against debt, but the spiritual and social debt of committing deliberate evil on another person
- Love thy neighbor as thyself.
 - **James 2:8**
- **1 Corinthians 13** – Love Chapter
- Sleep – insensitivity to the demands of Christ on the Christian life
- Every day, the day of Christ comes near, which means we should be prepared
 - **Matthew 24:36-42**
 - The night represents the time that Christ leaves and the world is controlled by the prince of the power of the air
 - **Ephesians 2:2**
 - The day is the time that Christ comes back to reign in righteousness
- We should not make provision for the flesh

- **Romans 8:13** – Mortify the deeds of the flesh through the spirit
- **Romans 6:6-7** - We are no longer slaves to sin
- **Job 29:14**
- **Colossians 3:10**
- How do we not make provision for the flesh?

Reflection

Romans 13 offers two different commands: one, to be subject to rulers and authorities; two, to love one another. As a western person, it is difficult sometimes for us to be subject to rulers. Democracy has allowed us to become more independent of government. It has also allowed us to speak our minds against things we find unfair. This is good for mankind but may leave many with a tendency to over-question government in all things that do not pertain to the laws of God. To fight injustice is a godly endeavor, but when the definition of injustice changes, we must be anchored in the unchanging law of the Lord. Yes, corruption should be toppled down from government as God hates unbalanced scales (**Proverbs 11:1**), hands that shed innocent blood, accepting bribes (**Deuteronomy 27:25**), and feet that run swiftly to do evil (**Proverbs 16:7**). One key aspect to this is which provides for discernment is **Verse 4**: “For he (ruler) is a 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 an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”. Therefore, we must ask ourselves if our leaders are avengers for the Lord or are they avengers for themselves and the system they work to preserve. God’s word allows us to clearly see if a ruler is an avenger for justice or a corrupt person. When Christianity begins to mesh with the world, lines become blurred and division follows, however, when we are anchored in the word of God, there is no dissension. While shorter than other chapters in Romans, entire books could be written about this chapter and one reflection does not do justice the depth of nuance needed to make the right decisions for when to defy rulers.

The second section is much less obscure as we are to love one another. This is echoed through the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus. It is important to distinguish between biblical love and sensuality. I heard a great traveling minister say once that sensuality is love devoid of truth. In other words, sensuality is love without truth-emotionalism without righteousness. We know from **1 Corinthians 13:6**, that love rejoices in the truth. How do we best love? When is what we believe is love instead manipulation, people pleasing or compensation for deeper needs? These are questions we must pray about. We must seek the Lord for His wisdom in these matters of the heart. The heart is deceitfully wicked (**Jeremiah 17:9**) but the Lord searches the hearts of man (**Jeremiah**

17:10, Psalm 139:23-24). He knows our hearts better than us. Constantly for me as someone who struggles with people pleasing, I must be careful about doing things for the Lord and not for man. Thanks be to the Lord for His mercy and forgiveness. “In weightier matters of the gospel—such as the fallen nature of humanity (**Romans 3:10**), the eternal consequences for rejecting Christ, and the sovereignty of God in salvation (**John 6:44**)—we must walk in love, knowing that the wisdom of God is often considered foolishness by the world (**1 Corinthians 3:19**).” To love the world is to be in enmity with God (**James 4:4**). We see from Christ’s sacrifice the love of God that we might be saved (**John 3:16**). What do we sacrifice for love? Do we sacrifice or compromise?