

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 13, Verses 1-10
Notes from Tuesday April 12, 2011
Last Revised on April 12, 2011

Songs

Opening Prayer

Introduction

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

Last week we finished **Chapter 12**.

Tonight we will be reading in **Chapter 13**,

and I expect to **finish** at least the first **10 verses**.

Before we begin, let me review a little,

particularly **Chapter 12**,

because I believe that Paul lays some important **groundwork** in Chapter 12

for what he goes **on** to say in Chapter 13.

Review

As we have repeatedly reminded ourselves,

the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is the **gospel**,

which is set forth briefly in the **first four (4) chapters** of this letter.

In the **next** four chapters (i.e. Chapters 5 - 8),

Paul examines some of the **implications** of the gospel,

for those of us who are being **saved** by it.

I the third major section of this letter, consisting of **Chapters 9 through 11**,

Paul examines the sad situation of the Jews who have rejected the gospel.

Yet Paul ends Chapter 11 with an outpouring of praise and worship,

because he has understood (and helped us to understand)

That all of God's ways are gracious and merciful.

And it is based on the "*mercies of God*"

that Paul proceeds to make his appeal to the Christians in Rome,

in Verse 1 of Chapter 12.

where he asks them to dedicate the living of their lives to God from now on (**12:1**).

They must not allow themselves to continue to be conformed to this world,

but instead they are to allow God to transform them, by the renewing of their minds,

and by testing to discern what God wants for them to do and to be (**12:2**).

In Verse 3 of Chapter 12, Paul sounds a note that will be repeated again and again:

we should not think highly of ourselves.

However as members of the body of Christ, we each have our proper place.

This idea is developed in Verses 4-8 of Chapter 12.

Then in the remainder of Chapter 12,

Paul speaks of things that we, as believers, should and should not do.

Things which we mostly do understand in some fashion, and even agree with,

but all of which we very frequently fail to do,

thereby proving just how depraved we actually are.

Here is a quick review of the series of teachings presented in verses 9-21:

First, Paul begins with the key statement: "*Let love be genuine.*" (**12:9a**)

 If we could do this **one** thing (i.e. exhibit **genuine agape**) then we would be **perfect**,

 but we **cannot** and, therefore, we require more **detailed** admonishment.

 we must **abhor** what is evil (**9b**) and cling to what is **good** (**9c**)

 our **love** for the brethren must resemble **brotherly** love, (**10a**)

 and we must honor **others**, rather than seeking it for **ourselves**. (**10b**)

 we must be **diligent** and **zealous** in service to **Christ**, (**11a**)

 as is only **possible** when we yield to the leading of His **Spirit**. (**11b**)

 we must be **joyful**, **hopeful**, **patient**, and **prayerful** when times are tough (**12**)

 and **generous** and **hospitable** with others, especially other **Christians**. (**13**)

 But even those who **persecute** us are to receive our **blessing** and not our **curse** (**14**)

 And this is to be no **cold** and **distant** spirituality.

 Like Jesus did, we must **rejoice** with those who rejoice, **weep** with those who weep. (**15**)

 and live in **harmony** with one others (**16a**)

 Which basically amounts to recognizing that we have **no rights**!

 We should not be **haughty**, and wise in our **own** sight but should, instead, associate with the lowly (**16b**)

 When people do **bad** things to **us**, we must **not** repay them in kind.

 Instead we must do in the sight of all, that which is **honorable** (**17**)

 and do everything is **possible** for us to do to live **peaceably** with **all**. (**18**)

 It may, of course, not **always** lie within our power to remain at peace,

 But we must never seek to **avenge** ourselves,

 which is **strictly** the province of **God**. (**19**)

Rather than to **repay** evil with **evil**,

we are to **overcome** evil with **good**. (20, 21)

Questions? Comments?

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 13, Verses 1-7

Will someone please read Romans, Chapter 13, Verses 1-7, in Japanese.

Thank you . Now will someone please read those same verses in English.

1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Thank you.

Please remember the trajectory of Paul's argument until now,

As I have quickly reviewed it this evening.

The first 11 Chapters teach us of God's mercy--- the Gospel of Christ in all its fullness and glory

Chapter 12 says, in view of God's mercy to us, must now live our life for God. (12:1)

Among all of Paul's teachings in Chapter 12, two things really stand out to me and sort of summarize the rest:

We must let our love be genuine. (12:9)

We must not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (12:21)

Now at the beginning of Chapter 13 we read:

(Verse 1a)

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.

Clearly, I think, Paul is continuing with the moral teachings begun in Chapter 12.

Some people find it surprising that, after the lofty tones of Chapter 12, Paul would suddenly start talking about civil obedience.

For this reason, some people speculate that perhaps there was a particular problem with civil disobedience among the Christians in Rome.

For example maybe some of them thought that the gospel of Christ set them free, not only from sin, but also from their obligations to be good citizens or, more likely, good subjects or perhaps even good slaves of the Roman Empire.

That way of thinking is common enough, now and then, but it has never been true, as is consistently taught by the whole Bible.

Christ himself was subject to the governing authorities.

Likewise, Paul says here: "*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.*"

Whether or not there was a particular problem with this in Rome in Paul's day,

is not so important as understand how this teaching applies to all Christians of all time,

as it certainly does.

Here by the way, the word translated “be subject to” is **not** a synonym for **obey**,

It is **not** always right for a Christian to obey the governing authorities.

The term translated “governing authorities” is almost certainly talking about civil, earthy authority, such as that conferred in Paul’s day by **Roman Law**

Just for example, it would have been **wrong** in Paul’s day (or any day) for a Christian to have renounced Christ if and when such renunciation were prescribed by Roman (or other civil) Law.

But setting aside such examples, where our obedience to **God** may bring us into conflict with the governing authorities, we are **otherwise** supposed to be subject to such governing authorities.

Q. Why? --- Why are we supposed to be subject to governing authorities?

A. Their authority is **from God!**

This is the answer given in the latter part of Verse 1, which reads:

(Verse 1b)

For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Clearly Paul is **not** speaking here of Christian Laws, of Christian Countries.

There **were** no such governments in **Paul’s** day.

Perhaps there have **never** been any such governments.

Perhaps there never will **be** any such governments.

Paul is **not** saying that governing authorities are **good!**

He is saying that their **authority** to govern is from **God!**

To be **subject** to them, therefore, is to be subject to **divine authority**.

To **rebel** against them, conversely, is to **rebel** against divine authority.

That is what Paul says in Verse 2, which reads:

(Verse 2)

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

Here the judgment in view, is **God's** judgment and not, merely, the judgment of the human authorities.

When we **rebel** against civil authority, we sin, **because** it is rebellion against God.

This makes it plain why there may sometimes **be** exceptions,

but also why we should be careful in deciding what the exceptions **are!**

And generally speaking a **genuine** Christian believer, one who really **is** living his life for God, **expressing** genuine agape, seeking to **overcome** evil with good...

such a man will be a **model** citizen (subject or slave) in almost every society,

and rarely **would** provoke to anger any civil authority.

This is the **primary** sense of Verse 3, which reads:

(Verse 3)

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

It is **rebellion** in almost every form against which Paul cautions his Christian reader.

Even in **private** matters, we are supposed to repay evil with good.

Certainly this is **also** true in public matters.

So why **would** a ruler persecute us?!

The Christian **harms** no one, and he diligently meets and exceeds his **responsibility** to everyone.

There is only **one** reason why a well-behaved Christian would have any reason to fear human authority:

That is when their legitimate obedience to **God** brings them into **conflict** with human authority.

Even then, though they **must** persist in obedience to God, they should, insofar as it lies within their power, seek to maintain **peace**.

This means meekly **submitting** to whatever sanction there are for our behavior, as Jesus did.

And when we suffer under human authority for our service to **Christ**, we are blessed by such suffering far beyond any **other** blessing that lies within the power of human authority to bestow!

Verse 4 reads:

(Verse 4)

for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

No matter how **good** or how **evil** the intent of any human authority may be,

because it is **from God**,

that authority will be used for the **good** of God's children.

We have no reason to **fear** punishment for the sake of Christ, but should instead welcome it.

But we must **all** fear punishment for behavior that **dishonors** Christ.

And in either case the "sword" of power is wielded to carry out God's **wrath**,

and always for the **benefit** (be it reward or discipline) of God's **children**.

Verse 5 reads:

(Verse 5)

Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

The point here, I believe, is that we do not comply with the demands of the state because

we are **afraid** of the penalty for non-compliance (which we now understand) is a penalty enforced by God as well as by the state.

Instead we must **willingly** and even **enthusiastically** comply with the rules and regulations imposed upon us, because we understand that such imposition is rooted in the will of **God**.

That is the sense of Verse 6, which reads:

(Verse 6)

For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

As the Government goes about the business of collecting **taxes** from us, in furtherance of the authority which God has established for them, they are acting in this capacity as ministers of God.

This means, I believe, that we are as much obliged to pay our **taxes** to the state as we are to pay our **tithes** to the church, and perhaps even more so,

because there is a clearer Biblical warrant for paying **taxes** than there is for paying **tithes**!

In any case, it is a repeated and consistent teaching of Christ and of the whole Bible that we must **give** unremittingly to all who are in need or otherwise have any claim on us, and we are to not to withhold anything for **ourselves**, trusting instead that the Lord will provide what we need.

This is a **hard** teaching of the Bible, but no less clear for being hard.

Clearly Paul means here means to point out, that our obligation to all mankind extends also to all civil authorities that God has appointed over all of us, Christians and non-Christians alike.

We are no more invited to rebel against **government** than to be selfish with our fellow man.

We are to discharge every **debt**. Verse 7 reads:

(Verse 7)

Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Clearly this is not a principle which applies only to **taxes** or other **monetary** debt.

There are also debts of respect and debts of honor.

The children of God are to pay out everything and hold nothing back.

Questions? Comments?

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 13, Verses 8-10

Will someone please read Romans, Chapter 13, Verses 8-10, in Japanese.

Thank you . Now will someone please read those same verses in English.

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Thank you.

As we saw before, Christians are supposed to pay every debt of tax, money, respect, honor, and otherwise that can possibly be owed and payed to men in this world.

But there are certain debts which can never be paid in full.

This is, I think, the thought which Paul now advances in Verse 8, which reads:

(Verse 8)

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

We must own nothing except

Which means there is something we must continue to owe

because we we will never be able to pay it in full.

And this is the love which we owe to others.

Q. **Why** do we owe this?

A. Christ **commands** it.

A. God in Christ first loved **us**.

A. It is the only way we have to demonstrate our love for **God**

A. Therefore, as it says in Verse 8, this is the only way we have to **obey** God.

To love **others** is to **obey** God.

Verse 9 develops this thought. It reads:

(Verse 9)

For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Here Paul's point is fairly simple, I think.

To commit **adultery** is infringe the rights of others in a way that is particularly offensive to God.

Likewise to **murder**, to **steal**, and to **covet** offend man and God in various ways.

These are very far from being the **only** things which offend man and God and against which laws and commandments have been established.

We could make a very long **list**.

Indeed they had a **pretty** long list going in Biblical Israel.

The law codes of any modern country have many **more** laws than that.

But **none** of these many laws would be necessary if we could all keep **one** law:

That is: *to love the other person as we love our self*

Many have argued that this law requires us to first love **ourselves**, or at least to also love ourselves.

But I would agree with Luther and others who hold that this says **nothing of the sort.**

The point is, rather, that we are **all** massively selfish and self centered and so busy taking care of **ourselves**, in one way or another, that we need rules to keep us from eating one another alive!

If we could truly put the interests of **others** ahead of our selves,

forgetting even or perhaps **especially** our own self-esteem.,

then there would need to be **no** laws at all.

And If we could do this, then not only would we be in harmony with all **men**,

but we would also be in harmony with **God**,

because such unselfish love is only possible for those who love **God** perfectly,

and who are fully **inhabited** by God, as Christ was.

Finally Verse 10 reads

(Verse 10)

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

This is clearly implied by all that we have already said.

That is all I had time to prepare for this evening.

Does anyone have any comments or questions?

Closing Prayer