

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 19TH - 20TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

AUTHORITY (ROMANS 13:1-2)

THE REALITY OF THE EMPIRE

Ch. 12 is about us being a "living sacrifice" to God in every aspect of our lives. That sounds great until we reach a topic like government.

- To understand just how radical ch. 13 is, we need to understand a little bit about the extreme hedonism, violence, and paganism of the Roman Empire in the 1st century (Caligula, Claudius, and Nero).

BECAUSE WE LIVE IN AN EVIL EMPIRE

Though we're rapidly moving that way, we haven't reached the hedonistic levels of the Romans yet. In light of this chapter and Paul's culture, **we should do some serious self-reflection about our attitudes and actions towards governmental authority.**

- The message of honor in the middle of a godless culture is very much for us today.

"EVERYONE SUBMIT TO THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES"

Paul gives the Romans a wild command to submit to the same pagan government that was ramping up opposition to their beliefs. Why? "...since there is no authority except from God."

- This means that **God is sovereign and all authority is in power because He has allowed it** (Daniel 2:21).

SO, WHAT IF WE ARE IN REBELLION TO THE GOV'T?

Paul makes it very clear that opposition to government and law is opposition to God and it will "bring judgment upon" us, most likely from the governing authorities.

- This means when we speed, we cannot complain about a ticket. Or, if one commits a felonious crime they should expect jail time.

WHAT ABOUT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE?

The key to discerning this chapter is Paul's words "**instituted by God.**" This shows us an assumption that the law of the land is God-honoring, and not a contradiction to His Word.

- Gov't was instituted for our protection. **Whether laws are given by godly people or not is not the point. If the law doesn't contradict scripture, we're to follow it.**

SO, WHAT ABOUT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE?

There are appropriate times to disobey the gov't. Daniel, Peter and John (Acts 4-5), Bonhoeffer, and MLK all disobeyed laws that contradicted scripture.

- Though this is appropriate at times, **we must also disobey appropriately.** Rm. 12:17 tells us to "**not return evil for evil.**" So, how we fight evil matters!

AND THIS IS WHERE WE HAVE GOTTEN IT WRONG

We are to live within this system without rebelling against non-essentials. We are also called to "not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of [our] people" (Acts 23). This is a problem on both sides of the aisle.

- We're only able to spread the gospel if we live the gospel. The question should always be, "Does this honor Jesus?"**

RESPECT AND HONOR (ROMANS 13:3-7)

IDEALLY, THE GOV'T SERVES THE PEOPLE

Paul says "rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad." This means that if we are upholding the law, we have no reason to have tension or fear of the gov't. This is assuming the gov't is upholding a basic moral standard.

- The Christian shouldn't live in fear of gov't if we are close to Christ and living by His commands.

WE CANNOT EXPECT A CHRISTIAN STANDARD

Though we should expect basic moral laws that reward the good and punish the bad, we cannot expect a Christian society.

- Many Christians expect Christian ideals from people that don't follow Christ. **Many also expect that we will win a cultural or political war: two things Jesus never came to win.**

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF JESUS?

The question we need to be asking is: what are we trying to save? If our goal is to save political systems, gov'ts, or even our country, we've missed the mission of Jesus.

- Christianity has put so much energy into trying to save a house that the Word has told us would burn. Our mission is to save souls, not human institutions.**

"AND FOR THIS REASON YOU PAY TAXES"

Now we flip it the other way. Though our hope and mission is not human institutions, we are to pay our fair share for the liberties and luxuries that we experience through gov't.

- This means we are to pay taxes and our "obligations" to those we owe. Notice the Word doesn't say "if they do what you want with the taxes."

RESPECT AND HONOR

To say that one loves God but they act in defiance and arrogance to the governing authorities is a stark contradiction according to the Bible.

- Lack of respect and honor for positions of authority is a cancer in our society and antithetical to Jesus' teachings.** Again, this is prevalent on all fronts.

OUR NEIGHBORS (ROMANS 13:8-10)

THE ONLY GOOD DEBT

The key word in V1-7 is submission. The key word in V8-10 is love. Paul tells us that the only debt we should really be in is love because we have received it so graciously from God.

- When we love others, we are "fulfilling the law" of Jesus (Gal. 6:2). Our problem is we inaccurately define love, therefore limiting it.**

60% OF THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

A majority of the 10 Commandments focus on our relationship with other people. This means how we treat others, even those that treat us poorly, is pivotal to God.

- Jesus said everyone will know us by our love and Paul said the greatest attribute is love, but again, **we must follow God's definition of love through the Word.**

"LOVE DOES NO WRONG TO A NEIGHBOR"

First, our neighbor is everyone we come in contact with. Not just like-minded people or people next door, all people.

- If we take the Bible at face value, **we are to simply treat others in the manner we would like to be treated regardless if they reciprocate that love.** Can we truly say we do this?

THE LIE OF OUR DAY

We have been told a lie that disagreement equals hatred and bigotry. This is not the truth. We as Christians have two major obligations: **to love all people and to not compromise the integrity of God's Word.**

- Honesty, love, and truth are our only ways to truly invite people into God's kingdom.**

COVERING UP (ROMANS 13:11-14)

IT IS TIME TO WAKE UP

Paul's main argument in this section is to encourage us to **understand the time we live in.** For the Romans, it was the Empire. For us it is the idol of **individualism and Americanism.**

- Paul is saying that we don't have time to waste. **Everyday that passes is one day closer to Christ's return, so we are to live alert and focused.**

ONLY BY THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The only way our eyes are opened and we have the ability to discern our culture/society is by the leading of God's Spirit and His Word.

- In Rev. 3 Jesus asks the churches if they have "ears to hear." As the "Day of the Lord" gets closer, the Christian will feel it, and **as evil increases, so will the gospel. Are we looking, praying, and listening?**

"LET US WALK IN DECENCY..."

What a simple yet profound statement of how we are to live! We are to **live in the "daytime,"** which means we live godly lives with nothing to hide.

- Though there are more ways to sin, Paul clearly says **not to engage in partying and drunkenness, sexual impurity and promiscuity, arguing, or jealousy.**

"BUT PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST."

When we put something on, it is covering us wherever we go. In the same way, **our relationship with God should be active in every corner of our lives as it filters our desires and leads our actions.**

- In order to follow Christ we cannot "make plans to gratify the desires of the flesh." **We are to lay down self and pursue Jesus.**

HOW WILL WE LIVE UNDER "NERO?"

- How do we respond to a culture and society that is not Christian? Do we trust God is in control? **Can we honestly say we honor and respect authority?**

- Is our hope in policy or theology?** Do we follow the Word even if it contradicts our political parties?

- Are we trying to win an argument or a soul?

WHO DO WE LOVE?

- The pursuit of happiness has replaced picking up our cross and following Jesus. Do we pursue God and the truth more than our selfish desires? **Are we in love with God, or just the benefits of knowing God?**

- If we love Jesus, we will love all people. This means we want the best for others, even if they don't want the best for us.**

- 1 Peter 2:17

ONLY BY GOD'S SPIRIT

- All we've heard today is only possible if we have a strong relationship with Jesus.
- We are not to live in isolation and fear of the world or its leaders, but instead **insulate ourselves with the Holy Spirit so we can go into the darkness and bring the Light.**
- Insulation is only possible through **desire, prayer, study, and obedience.**