

Romans 13: 1 – 14

For the last two lessons, we have been looking at Chapter 12.

Although the Word of God can lift us to the heavenlies, in this section we are definitely where the rubber meets the road.

Last time, beginning at Verse 9, we studied "The Christian and those within God's family."

The bottom line was love.

V 10 said we should be "**kindly affectioned**," or, in other words, we should love and help each other.

We should be given to hospitality, and enter into the joys and sorrows of our fellow believers.

And, finally, we should be in agreement, or,
as V 16 says, being of "**the same mind
one toward another.**"

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Then we looked at the Christian and those
outside God's family.

That is the non-Christians in the community
we live in.

We are not to be swallowed up by the world,
nor overcome by evil, but as V 20 says,
"-- **if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he
thirst, give him drink.**"

In short, we should return good for evil.
That is so hard to do, but with God's help,
we can do it.

And in this unloving world, it works
wonders.

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So with this brief review of Chapter 12, we can now go on to Chapter 13.

The first seven verses cover the Christian's response to government.

I believe some Christians are a little hazy in their thinking concerning the subject of civil rule.

And it certainly seemed that the Christians in Rome needed some updating.

So let's look at Paul's instructions to them in Romans 13:1-2 **"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."

Are you having a problem with the

statement "**For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God**"?

I'm sure the Christians in Rome were.

For instance, the Jewish Christians in Rome were still Jewish, and no Jew ever liked being ruled over by Gentiles.

After all, Israel had been a mighty nation, and were now in the humiliating position of a subjugated people.

And Roman rule, although orderly in principle, could be very cruel, and their rulers where quite often corrupt.

So it was hard for a Jew, Christian or not, to be under Roman rule.

And, to make matters worse, this new Christian sect did not enjoy a good reputation in the eyes of the authorities.

Their leader, Jesus Christ had been brought up before the Roman government by His own people and accused of trying to overthrow Roman rule in Israel.

John 19:12--"**And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.**"

Also, his followers were viewed as enemies to public peace. Indeed, in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas were called "**These that have turned the world upside down.**"

Of course that was a false accusation, but the bottom line was, deserved or not, the Roman government was ready to

pounce on any show of lawlessness on the part of Christians.

Hence Paul's warning in V 4: **"But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain."**

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No doubt it is hard for us who live Canada to imagine their everyday life.

However, if we had lived behind the Iron Curtain or in Communist China, we might have a better idea of the situation that the Roman Christians found themselves in.

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However, the book of Romans was not just written to the Christians at Rome. It is the inspired Word of God, and is written for us also.

Even if our situation should change in the days ahead and our government became as bad as theirs, these verses will still hold true.

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Now, apart from the danger involved in civil disobedience, there were other compelling reasons why the Christians in Rome should be law abiding.

They had just been taught, as we saw in Romans 12:17, not to recompense evil for evil.

Also, it was not fitting for them to exercise personal revenge no matter what the unjust government did.

And even though personal revenge was not proper for Christians, it was fitting and necessary for rulers and magistrates to punish evil doers.

V 4 "--- for he is the minister of God, a
revenger to execute wrath upon him that
doeth evil."

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So then, we also must be clear in our minds
concerning our responsibility to God
and the king.

Yes, our conscience is subject to God's
laws, and we must render to God the
things that are God's.

But also we must be subject to human
government, for it also is ordained of
God.

So let's begin again at Romans 13:1--"**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.**"

Someone will say, *Well, if everyone were Christians, we wouldn't need a police force or jails, etc.*

But everyone is not a Christian, nor will they ever be.

A few lessons back in Romans, we learned that only a remnant will be saved.

So it was necessary that God gave us human government to preserve peace.

Without it, it would be survival of the fittest and the meanest.

So God ordained civil government, and we should be subject to the higher powers.

V 1-2 **"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" (or condemnation).

No, it's not that we personally honour a particularly corrupt and evil judge or ruler.

No, we do not honour the man, we honour the position, and that makes the difference.

It is the higher power, the office that God has ordained that we are to be subject to.

What we need to see is that there are two systems of government active upon our lives.

First, there is God's law that binds our conscience.

But also, as citizens of Canada, we must be subject to Canadian law.

V 3-5 "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."

The point that V 5 is making is that we should obey the law not just because we might be jailed if we don't, but because we must have a clear conscience before God.

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But, what if your government enacts laws that do not agree with your Christian principles--laws like abortion on demand, recognition of same-sex marriages, casino gambling?

What do you do about that?

Well, fortunately, we are not under Roman law.

We still can vote, and we still can lobby the government, and we should.

We need to be salt, and exercise our voice in government.

But civil disobedience is quite another matter.

We should not take part in nor encourage anarchy.

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And because government is set up by God, we should willingly support His ministers with our tax dollars.

No, it is not right to cheat on our income tax, even if we feel the government is spending our money foolishly, or to promote evil laws.

V 6-7 **"For 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."

Jesus upheld this principle of supporting the government, yes, even in the case of the hated Roman government.

Please turn to Matthew 22:17-21. "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

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The next section is called "The law of love toward neighbours," and it covers V 8-14.

By the way, up until now I have been using C. I. Scofield's headings, for the most part.

However, in this case, I can only see his heading "The law of love toward neighbours" applying to V 8-10.

So I am going to divide it this way.

I will use Scofield's title for V 8-10, and assign my own homemade heading to V 11-14.

So let's read V 8-10 **"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."

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V 8 says, "Owe no man any thing."

In our society, the house we live in, and,
usually, the car we drive, are two
things we can only afford to purchase
by borrowing.

We do not build our own houses out of logs
as they did in pioneer times, nor do we
live in huts that can be erected in a
few days.

No, in this country of ice and snow, our lodgings are usually something that takes us many years to pay for.

However, with these two exceptions, we should try to live within our means for our daily needs without going into debt.

Today we are encouraged to borrow for our *wants*.

And if we can't think of any *wants*, there are a thousand advertisements around to help us discover them.

Credit cards, and encouragements to purchase things with nothing down and nothing to pay for a year, are inducements to make us spend beyond our means.

But borrowing brings many problems, such as unhealthy worry and stress, and can even cause the breakdown of marriages.

So borrowing should be avoided as much as possible.

And if we really have to barrow, we should be faithful in paying back our debts.

Psalm 37:21 says, "**The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.**"

That should never be said of a Christian.

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So we need to control our desires so that they fit our income.

When you buy something for cash, you have already paid the manufacturer, the wholesaler, the retailer, and the government.

But when you buy on credit, you also pay the lender, and that could more than double the price.

Proverbs 22:7 says, **"The rich ruleth over
the poor, and the borrower is servant
to the lender."**

I saw a bumper sticker once that said, "I
owe, I owe, it's off to work I go."

Yes, **"the borrower is servant to the
lender."**

So Romans 13:8 is a good rule to follow:

"Owe no man any thing."

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But, of course, that isn't the end of V 8,
and there is a debt we should always
carry.

V 8 **"Owe no man any thing, but to love one
another: for he that loveth another
hath fulfilled the law."**

Yes, we owe a debt of love and to our fellow
man.

And, actually, that is a debt we owe to God Himself.

1 John 4:11 says, "**Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.**"

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No, we cannot serve God if we hate our brother.

1 John 4:20 "**If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?**"

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Going back to Romans 13:8, it says, "**he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.**"

To show that, the next verse, V 9, gives us the last five of the Ten Commandments, which are the man-ward ones.

V 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."

These Commandments are automatic if we are truly concerned with our neighbour's welfare, goods, and good name.

To illustrate this, let's look at each of these commandments.

If we loved our neighbour, we would not defile his marriage by committing adultery, and, of course, "**Thou shalt not kill**" should be automatic.

If we loved our neighbour, we would not think of stealing that which was his.

If we loved our neighbour, we would not bear false witness against him, or say anything that would unjustly damage his reputation.

And, finally, if we loved our neighbour, we would not covet that which belongs to him.

So the last five commandments would be fulfilled if we loved our neighbour as ourselves.

V 10 sums it up very well: **"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."**

Jesus gave much the same answer to the rich young ruler.

Matthew 19:17-19 **"And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the**

commandments.

¹⁸ He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

¹⁹ Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Also, Galatians 5:14 says, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

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As I said earlier, I'm giving the next section, V 11 to V 14, my own title. I'm calling it "A wake up call." Sometimes when you are staying in a hotel and you need to get up in the morning

at a certain time, you ask the clerk to give you "A wake up call."

Well, I think V 11-14 is "A wake up call" from God.

Let's read these verses --- **"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."**

Sometimes Christians fall asleep
spiritually.

They do not live circumspectly, or
carefully.

They lose their focus.

They are not looking for Christ's return.

Or, even worse, as these verses indicate,
they can backslide into sin.

They need a wake-up call from God.

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Also, I found an interesting outline for
this section in Matthew Henry's
commentary.

It is a unique way of looking at these
verses.

You might like to jot this down.

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He likens this section to the order of events in a Christian's normal work day.

We are told ----

-when to awake

-how to dress ourselves

-how to walk

-and what provision to make.

First of all, when to awake, V11 --- **"now it is high time to awake."**

It is time to awake out of spiritual slumber.

We need to be looking for His coming, and living in the light of it.

Titus 2:12-13, **"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;**

13 **Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."**

Next --- How to dress ourselves.

We must put off our night clothes --- **"the works of darkness."**

V 12 **"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness."**

And what are we to put on?

V 12 **"and let us put on the armour of light."**

We are to walk in the light, and we are to be soldiers for Jesus Christ in the midst of our enemies.

Ephesians 6:13 **"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."**

And Romans 13:14 gives us more to put on --

"put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

And being clothed in this manner, we will be fortified against the sins of V 13, that is **"rioting and drunkenness," "chambering and wantonness," "strife and envying."**

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The next part of this outline tells us how to walk.

V 13 **"Let us walk honestly, as in the day."**

We are to walk honestly, and with exactness.

Ephesians 5: 15-16: **"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,**

¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

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And, finally, we are told what provision to make.

Well, actually, V 14 tells us what provision not to make --- **"make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."**

We should not allow ourselves to get into situations where we are tempted to sin. The old man still dwells within with all his desires for sin.

So don't put yourself in a compromising position.

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And then there are other provisions **"for the flesh"** that are not really sinful in themselves but hamper our Christian life.

Because we live in a human body, we have certain needs for the normal comforts of life.

We must provide for these needs of the body, and that is right and good.

But to provide for all the many desires of the flesh is to spend our whole life in that pursuit, with nothing left for God.

We can work from daylight to dark and never satisfy all of the desires of the normal flesh.

Proverbs 27:20 **"Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied."**

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Let's close our lesson by rereading V 11-14
"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."

V 11-14 are God's wake-up call for the sleeping Christian.

Yes, we can forget God, and there is more danger of doing that in times of ease than there is in times of hardship.

God warned Israel about that --- Deuteronomy

8:11-14 "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

¹² Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

¹³ And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

¹⁴ Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage".