**Romans Chapter 13**

There were several kinds of government in the Bible.

* 1. Tribal – The Patriarchs were semi-nomads. Therefore, it was a loose system of leadership with no centralized figure where elders played the collective role of authority. But, the father was the head of his immediate and often extended families. Gen. 25:13-16; 35:23-26; Josh. 7:16-18
  2. Monarchy - There were Paraohs and kings such as Saul, David, etc.. They were the singular focus of headship. 1 Sam. 9:16; 1 Kings 1:39; 21:8; 2 Kings 11:12
  3. Theocracy - Government by 12 Tribes of Israel headed by leaders of the tribes. Moses initiated it. He was the figurehead who conveyed the decrees from God. At the return of Christ, Jesus will set up a perfect rule among His people. He will be the perfect 'head of state' of the body of Christ.
  4. Empire – Rome was first a representative republic that became an empire with a single ruler, Caesar.[[1]](#footnote-1) Luke 3:1; Acts 12:1-6; 23:11

# Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

* 1. The context is the rule of the Roman Empire, which was, for the most part, orderly and fair. Paul even appealed to his Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37; 22:25).
     1. In Rom. 13:6, below, Paul says that "rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing."
  2. But this was also before the persecution of Nero, Emperor from A.D. 54 to 68. He became a treacherous and evil ruler who murdered people and had Christians burned alive to light his orgy festivals.
  3. We must be aware that God ordains all things (Eph. 1:11), and the particular issue of bad governments is challenging for believers. But ordination does not always mean direct causation. God ordains by direct hand and indirect means.
  4. Question: Could it be that any governmental system filled with Christians would work well?
  5. Established
     1. τάσσω *tássō*; fut. *táxō*. To place, set, appoint, arrange, order
        1. Matt. 28:16, "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated."
        2. Acts 13:48, "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."
        3. Acts 22:10, "And I [Paul] said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'"

# Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

* 1. We are not to resist the authority that God has established, yet we do not follow government if it contradicts God (Acts 5:29).
     1. Acts 5:29, "But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."
  2. But what do we do with governments that are socialist, communist, or like the Nazi's Socialist Party?
  3. We resist the evil within them.
     1. Physical self-defense is permitted, but it is not an obligation (Exodus 22:2; Luke 11:21; 22:36).
     2. We have the right and obligation to defend others (Psalm 82:4; Prov. 24:11; Luke 22:36).
     3. We are not to take vengeance (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:35; Prov. 20:22; Matt. 5:38-39).
     4. We are to seek peace whenever possible (Psalm 34:14; Rom. 12:17-18; Heb. 12:14).
     5. We can flee to avoid persecution (Matt. 10:23; 24:15-16; John 10:39; 2 Cor. 11:32-33).
     6. We are to pray for our persecutors (Matt. 5:44).
     7. We are to love our enemies (Luke 6:27, 35).
     8. We are in a spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12)
     9. We must defend the true gospel (1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:15).
     10. We are to resist evildoers, whether small in number or large (Psalm 82:3–4; Isaiah 1:17), as well as bad governments (Exodus 1:15-17; Acts 5:29; 2 Cor. 11:32-33).
     11. Our suffering is granted to us by God (Phil. 1:29).
     12. Many Christians have accepted death as a testimony of their faith in Christ (Acts 5:40; 7:58-60; 16:22-24; Heb. 11:36-40).
     13. In light of possible violence, Jesus told his disciples to buy a sword (Luke 22:36). He even used a scourge to drive people out of the temple (John 2:15).
     14. Consider how our actions will affect unbelievers and their trust in the gospel of Christ.
     15. Suggested Order of Action:
         1. Pray for and love our persecutors (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35).
         2. Seek peace with them (Psalm 34:14; Rom. 12:17-18; Heb. 12:14).
         3. Seek a verbal self-defense (1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:15).
         4. Seel a legal self-defense (Acts 25:8-11).
         5. Flee persecution (Jer. 6:1; Matt. 10:23; Luke 21:20-21; 2 Cor. 11:32-33).
         6. Use physical force if necessary to protect oneself and others (Exodus 22:2; Psalm 82:4; Prov. 24:11; Luke 11:21; 22:36).
  4. We ought to resist tyranny but do it without violence if at all possible.

# For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

* 1. When governments are doing what they're supposed to, we should not fear for good behavior.
  2. But good behavior, especially now, is being threatened and, in many cases, punished by our present government in the United States.
  3. 1 Peter 2:13, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority."

# for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

* 1. One of the goals of government is to resist evil
  2. The biblical form of government
     1. A representative form (Exodus 18:21-22)
     2. Self-governance (Matt. 18:15-17
     3. Private property rights (Exodus 20:17; Acts 5:4).
     4. The principle of liberty and freedom and the promotion of them (Gal. 5:1; 1 Pet. 2:16)
     5. The principle of self-defense (Exodus 22:2; Luke 22:36)
     6. The principal defense of others (Psalm 82:4; Prov. 24:11)
     7. Principles of capitalism (Matt. 21:33-41; 25:14-30)
     8. Rate of taxation (Luke 20:24-25)
     9. Not to have foreign rulers (Deut. 17:14-15
     10. Do not follow government if it contradicts God (Acts 5:29)

# Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

* 1. We will be subject to its discipline if we resist the government unrighteously.
     1. Imprisonment for murder, treason, avoiding paying taxes, etc.
  2. The Bible tells us to be at peace with people whenever possible (Rom. 12:18) and to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21).

# For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

* 1. As mentioned above, the governmental system that Paul is talking about is one that, for the most part, is good. This is why he says what he does here in this verse.
  2. But as stated above, we are to resist tyranny. But how we do that is different in various governmental systems. But we are to resist peacefully as much as possible.

# Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

* 1. Paul admonishes us to pay our taxes and carry out our legal obligations to the representatives of the government in which we operate.
  2. Render them according to what belongs to the magistrates
  3. Matt. 22:21, "They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' Then He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.'"

# Owe nothing to anyone except to love [agape] one another; for he who loves [agape] his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

* 1. Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another
     1. Why do we 'owe' each other love? Because we are obligated to do what is right. After all, God is the standard of righteousness manifested in Jesus – in what He has done. Therefore, we love others.
        1. Col. 3:13, "bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."
        2. Rom. 15:7, "Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."
        3. Eph. 4:32, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."
  2. For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law
     1. Lev. 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord."
     2. Matt. 7:12, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."
     3. Matt. 22:35–40, "One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'"
     4. Love - Agape, ἀγαπάω agapáō – Intensely devoted, divine love but also ungodly love. The word occurs 143 times in the New Testament in three main categories.
        1. Positive Agape
           1. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."
           2. John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."
        2. Negative Agape
           1. Luke 11:43, "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places."
           2. John 3:19, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."
           3. John 12:43, "for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God."
           4. 2 Tim. 4:10, "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia."
           5. 2 Peter 2:15, "forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;"
           6. 1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
        3. Other Agape
           1. 2 Tim. 4:8, "In the future, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."
           2. 1 John 3:18, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."
        4. Different kinds of Love
           1. Phileo, φιλέω philéō – brotherly love. Five occurrences in the New Testament (Rom. 12:10; 1 Thes 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7)

Rom. 12:10, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;"

* + - * 1. Storge – στοργος, storgos, familial love. The word is not found in the Bible, though the concept occurs where love between family members is exhibited. For example, it is found in the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32, where the father tells the eldest son about his devotion to him - see verse 31.

Also, consider the word ἄστοργος ástorgos, where 'a' is the negator. It occurs two times in the New Testament.

Romans 1:31, "without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful."

2 Timothy 3:1–3, "But realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,"

* + - * 1. Eros – ἔρως, érōs,Physical love. The word is not found in the Bible, though the concept exists.

1 Cor. 7:8–9, "But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. 9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

# For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love [agape] your neighbor as yourself."

# Love [agape] does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love [agape] is the fulfillment of the Law.

* 1. Paul summarizes the idea that to love one another means that we will not sin against others. It is a simple truth.
  2. If we are loving God and loving our neighbors, we will accidentally keep the whole Law (the moral Law) – because love is other-centered (John 3:16; 15:13)
     1. Moral Law – The Moral Law is based on the character of God, who cannot lie, steal, or bear false witness. The Moral Law is always in effect.
     2. Judicial Law – Instructions on interactions with those who steal, murder, rape, move boundary lines, etc.
     3. Priestly Law – Ordinances, instructions, and practices for the priests in their service before the Lord in temple work.

# Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

* 1. It is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep
     1. "The verse begins with καὶ τοῦτο (literally, "and this")… refers back to what has just been said… and alerts the reader to pay particular attention to what is coming."[[2]](#footnote-2)
     2. This is eschatological. But, the 'hour' is a metaphor for the present need to be dedicated to the things of God.
  2. Salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.
     1. Paul calls us to awaken from the apathy of indifference to spiritual things. After all, we are in the last days, and we must be alert, ready to love, ready to serve, and, if need be, be ready to die for our faith.
        1. Acts 2:17–18, "'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; 18 Even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy."
        2. Heb. 1:1–2, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."

# The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

* 1. The night is almost gone, and the day is near.
     1. ἡ νύξ προέκοψεν, hay nux proekopsen, ("the night has far advanced") "Gustav Stählin suggests that the aorist verb "has advanced, pushed forward" implies "the time of night when especially deep darkness holds sway just before the dawn."[[3]](#footnote-3)
     2. 1 Thess. 5:4–5, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor darkness."
     3. Our attitude should be that though the darkness is around us, the light is coming. We live in a present and fallen world, but the future redemptive work of God, both of our physical bodies and the physical world, will occur. We are to consider it as near. With this attitude, we are always hopeful, expectant, and confident in what Christ has done. Perhaps this is why the entirety of the past two thousand years is called "the last days." See Acts 2:17–18 and Heb. 1:1-2 above.
  2. Let us lay aside the deeds of darkness.
     1. "Let us lay aside" is the aorist, middle, subjunctive. This means it is past tense (aorist tense); the person is performing the action on himself (middle voice); there is a possibility, yet the specific time is not stated (subjunctive mood).
        1. Eph. 5:8–11, "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;"
  3. Put on the armor of light.
     1. "Put on" is also the aorist, middle, subjunctive. This signifies that we are doing things to ourselves in our spiritual walk. As we also lay aside the deeds of darkness, we also put on the armor of light.
     2. The implication is that we put on this armor as though we are putting on clothing. We are performing the action upon ourselves, hence the middle voice.
     3. The "armor of light" is used only here.
        1. Though what this exactly means is not revealed, we can assume it deals with spiritual gifts such as faith, love, salvation, etc.
        2. 1 Thess. 5:5–8, "for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation."

# Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

* 1. People often do in darkness what they would not do in the light of day.
  2. Paul lists varying forms of debauchery that serve only the flesh and reap sin and, ultimately, death.
  3. The venomous selfishness that results in strife and jealousy is often the fruit of the carnality listed above.
  4. This is the opposite of true love and is the result of people's abandonment of the things of God.

# But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

* 1. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ
     1. Gal. 3:24–27, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."
        1. This is a reference to the work of the tutor in the Roman home who would train the Master's children. Once they graduated, they were given a robe to wear. The Law is a tutor to lead us to Christ so that we might be clothed with Christ upon our "graduation," which is symbolized in the reality of baptism.
     2. People see that in which we are clothed. If it's cold, they will see our jackets. If it is hot, they will see light attire. That which we are clothed in suits our needs.
     3. But in this case, our need is to be clothed with Christ so that others will see in Whom we trust.
  2. Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.
     1. Gal. 5:19–21, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."
     2. We are to provide for our flesh, food, and shelter, but not sin.

1. https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/romes-transition-republic-empire/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hultgren, Arland J. 2011. *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI;Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jewett, Robert, and Roy David Kotansky. 2006. *Romans: A Commentary*. Edited by Eldon Jay Epp. Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)