

ROMANS

Lesson 13

Romans Chapter 13

With this lesson, we conclude our study of my two favorite chapters in all of the Bible, Romans Chapters 12 and 13. As I mentioned in the previous lesson, these are what I call my life scripture: the teachings that I try to live by. They provide me spiritual insight into my life and to the world around me.

In Chapter 13 of Romans, Paul will begin to tell us how to live in this world as citizens of it. That is, even though we are now Christ's, we are also expected to obey civil law and live as upright citizens where God has placed us. This section of Chapter 13 is often difficult for followers of Christ to understand, as we look at corrupt and immoral leaders and government officials all around us; and yet it applies to us today just as it did at the time of Paul's writing under the persecution and injustices of the Roman Empire.

Read Romans Chapter 13 from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) below, or from your favorite version.

Romans 13

Obey Rulers

¹Obey the rulers who have authority over you. Only God can give authority to anyone, and he puts these rulers in their places of power. ²People who oppose the authorities are opposing what God has done, and they will be punished. ³Rulers are a threat to evil people, not to good people. There is no need to be afraid of the authorities. Just do right, and they will praise you for it. ⁴After all, they are God's servants, and it is their duty to help you.

If you do something wrong, you ought to be afraid, because these rulers have the right to punish you. They are God's servants who punish criminals to show how angry God is. ⁵But you should obey the rulers because you know it is the right thing to do, and not just because of God's anger.

⁶You must also pay your taxes. The authorities are God's servants, and it is their duty to take care of these matters. ⁷Pay all that you owe, whether it is taxes and fees or respect and honor.

Love

⁸Let love be your only debt! If you love others, you have done all that the Law demands. ⁹In the Law there are many commands, such as, "Be faithful in marriage. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not want what belongs to others." But all of these are summed up in the command that says, "Love others as much as you love yourself." ¹⁰No one who loves others will harm them. So love is all that the Law demands.

The Day When Christ Returns

¹¹You know what sort of times we live in, and so you should live properly. It is time to wake up. You know that the day when we will be saved is nearer now than when we first put our faith in the Lord. ¹²Night is almost over, and day will soon appear. We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light. ¹³So behave properly, as people do in the day. Don't go to wild parties or get drunk or be vulgar or indecent. Don't quarrel or be jealous. ¹⁴Let the Lord Jesus Christ be as near to you as the clothes you wear. Then you won't try to satisfy your selfish desires.

These past two lessons we've taken a slightly different approach to our study. Our goal in doing so is to understand what Christ meant when he said "I am not of this world," and what Paul in Romans is telling us that we must change in order to also not be of this world.

We will be examining three main areas that Paul wants us to focus on: (1) our responsibility to obey our rulers, (2) our responsibility to love everyone, and (3) our responsibility as we near the coming return of Christ. He includes this third piece, Christ's return, because he points out that what we are experiencing today is a further indication that His return is coming soon, and we are to act accordingly—again, not acting as the world does, but as followers of Christ and as God's ambassadors.

Consider the following questions.

1. Reread Romans 13:1-7, then read the following verses and note what they tell us about being citizens in this world while following Christ (who is not of this world).
 - a. Philippians 3:20
 - b. Colossians 1:13
 - c. 1 Timothy 2:1-4
 - d. Romans 12:16
 - e. Daniel 4:17,25 and Daniel:4:34-35
 - f. Matthew 22:21
 - g. Romans 13:7
2. In Romans 13:8-10, Paul talks about love being our only debt. He is telling us to follow the law. Clearly, if we are to live at peace as best we can with everyone, we will need a tremendous amount of love. Is Paul talking about our relationships with other believers, or could he be referring to our personal relationships with everyone around us? Read the following and jot down what they tell us about this love:
 - a. Matthew 22:39 and Mark 12:31
 - b. John 13:34-45
 - c. 1 Corinthians 16:14

- d. Colossians 3:14

 - e. 1 John 3:14 and 1 John 4:7
3. Paul now turns our attention to the coming day when Christ will return. Read Romans 13:11-14; then read the scripture below and list what he tells us about the world we live in and the time in which we live, as it relates to the coming return of Christ:
- a. Ephesians 5:1-20

 - b. 1 Peter 5:8

 - c. Hebrews 9:28

 - d. 1 John 3:1-3

 - e. Romans 13:12

What a powerful two chapters we have studied in Romans 12 and 13! Paul shows us what it is like to live as Christ followers in a fallen world. In our next two lessons, Romans Chapters 14 and 15, Paul will take our transformed lives and show us how to live with other followers of Christ.

May God bless you as you continue to study His Holy Word with us.

In Christ,

Wes