

Rom. 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.

This is a very powerful and thought-provoking verse. Being aware of the world around me and recognizing the powers that are in authority, it is hard to accept that these people are in authority because God has ordained (assigned, appointed) it to be so. We can try to argue the point that God has only authorized the position and not the person, but scripture would not agree.

*Daniel 2:20-21 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: **he removeth kings, and setteth up kings**: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding....*

I don't think you can take this to mean that God sets up every king personally because scripture also declares that kings have been put into power without His approval.

*Hosea 8:3-4 Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him. They have set up kings, **but not by me**: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.*

The important truth to remember is that God is Sovereign in spite of our ability to make choices and that His purposes will be accomplished in spite of those choices. We have no way of knowing who has been put into power specifically by God and who has just been allowed to rule at the choice of the people. Because positions of authority have been ordained by God, we are to be subject to those authorities in submission to God. Sometimes God uses evil rulers to bring about His purposes, e.g., Pharaoh, the king of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar, etc.

The only time we are excused from submitting to the authorities over us is when that submission would cause us to disobey God.

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

The apostles and early Christians were imprisoned, beaten and even killed for refusal to submit to authorities in disobedience to God. Submission doesn't include disobedience to God, but does include submitting to the consequences for disobedience to the authorities unless God provides deliverance.

Rom. 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

This continues the thoughts from the previous verse. The Christian has to recognize that to resist (oppose, stand against) the authorities established by God is to resist God. Those who oppose God will be punished accordingly.

Rom. 13:3 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:

Rom. 13:4 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.

Again, this is a very hard truth to accept in the light of evil rulers. History has shown that there are rulers who are a terror to good works (Nero, Hitler and Sadaam Hussein come quickly to mind). I'm not sure how to reconcile that fact except to view these verses in light of rulers who aren't regarded as evil. I have to go back to the thoughts connected with the truth of verse 1. God has either specifically put these people in authority or allowed them to be in authority according to His Sovereign will, and we are to trust Him implicitly. This is one of those areas I again have to claim Isaiah 55:8-9.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Rom. 13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

The NLT expresses this truth more clearly: *So you must obey the government for two reasons: to keep from being punished and to keep a clear conscience.*

What is our conscience? Webster defines it this way:

"The faculty, power, or inward principle which decides as to the character of one's own actions, purposes, and affections, warning against and condemning that which is wrong, and approving and prompting to that which is right; the moral faculty passing judgment on one's self; the moral sense."

As Christians, we have the ministry of the Holy Spirit to guide us into making choices that would honor God.

Ephesians 5:9-10 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

Rom. 13:6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

Rom. 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

I like the wording of the NLT for these verses.

Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid so they can keep on doing the work God intended them to do. Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and import duties, and give respect and honor to all to whom it is due.

The Greek for the word *ministers* is “public servant.” Again, governmental authorities are ordained by God. Our obedience to these authorities is to be viewed as obedience to God (except when they demand we disobey God). The respect and honor shown are for the office they hold—not for the person apart from the office. There are some people that we respect and honor that hold no positions of power, influence or authority. They have earned our respect and honor as individuals because of their submission to God and the visible outworking of that submission in their lives.

Rom. 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

At first read this sounds like the believer is never to be in material debt. Even human reasoning would conclude this to be the wisest mode of living. However, in doing some word searches I found that the Lord established guidelines for borrowing and lending.

Exodus 22:25 If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.

Usury is a reference to the charging of interest.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.

We should always be willing to help those in need if we have the means.

Matthew 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

This verse extends the scope of our lending to anyone in need, not just those in the family of believers.

There are times that the child of God may find himself in a position of need that necessitates establishing debt. It seems that scripture teaches that the need be met by others in the body of Christ. Spiritual wisdom would again affirm that reasoning.

Oh that Jim and I had had good scriptural understanding for management of our finances. We have certainly learned the hard way and are still trying to come out of the hole. I believe the “church” as a whole has fallen into accepting worldly money management principles rather than scriptural financial principles. We have quickly justified the immediate satisfaction of our desires through the incurrance of debt—and that to heathen corporations. We have not been taught

to differentiate between true *need* and *desire*. I believe that the Lord does not define our *needs* in the same way that we do.

The one commodity that we are justified in fact commanded to incur as a continual debt is love to one another. Paul makes the point that loving one another is action that fulfils (satisfies) the law (God's law). Jesus stated it this way.

Matthew 22:36-40 *Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

The phrase "love one another" is used 13 times in the New Testament (including this verse in Romans). It's interesting to note that 11 of these 13 uses are by the Apostle John.

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love one another**; as I have loved you, that ye also **love one another**.*

John 15:12 *This is my commandment, That ye **love one another**, as I have loved you.*

John 15:17 *These things I command you, that ye **love one another**.*

1Thessalonians 4:9 *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to **love one another**.*

1Peter 1:22 *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye **love one another** with a pure heart fervently:*

1John 3:11 *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we **should love one another**.*

1John 3:23 *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and **love one another**, as he gave us commandment.*

1John 4:7 *Beloved, let us **love one another**: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

1John 4:11-12 *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to **love one another**. No man hath seen God at any time. If we **love one another**, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

2John 5 *And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we **love one another**.*

Significant observations from these verses are:

- To love one another is a command—not an option; this implies that love is a choice.
- Jesus is asking no more of us than to follow His example.
- Our love is to be sincere (unfeigned) and pure.
- Our love is to be “without ceasing” (from the Greek for *fervently* in 1Peter 1:22).
- This teaching of love for the brethren has been a part of God’s message from the beginning; it is not a new commandment of Jesus.
- Our love for others is a proof that we are “born of God, and knoweth God.”
- The fact that God loves us obligates us to love one another.
- Our love for others is proof of God dwelling in us (in the presence of His Holy Spirit) and that His love is “completed, finished, made perfect” (all from the Greek for *perfected* in 1John 4:12) in us.

Rom. 13:9 *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.*

Paul is saying that to “love thy neighbour as thyself” is a summary statement that encompasses the intent of all the other commandments that address our relationship to one another.

Rom. 13:10 *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Neither in the scripture (most specifically defined in 1Corinthians 13) nor by definition of man (according to Webster) is anything but goodness or kindness associated with *love*. This is as it should be because God is defined as love.

1John 4:8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

Besides verse 8 above, Paul reiterates the fulfillment of the law through love in his letter to the Galatians.

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

James, the brother of Jesus and accepted leader of the church in Jerusalem, also affirms this truth.

James 2:8 *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well....*

Rom. 13:11 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.*

I feel a real kinship to Paul and his expectation of Jesus' return. Only when He comes for us will our salvation, our deliverance from the curse of sin, be complete. As believers, we are secure in our position of deliverance, but we must still wage war against the flesh and the enemy (Satan and his legions) until the Lord comes to take us home. We may not know the day or the hour, but we can always truly say that our salvation is "nearer than when we [first] believed." Just because it has been almost 2000 years since Paul's day, doesn't make the coming of Christ less imminent or less certain than it was in his day. Unbelievers like to chide us for our belief in the return of the Lord. Peter referenced this truth in his epistle.

2Peter 3:3-4 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

Rom. 13:12 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.

The *night* is a reference to "the works of darkness" and the reign of Satan as prince of this world, and the *day* is a reference to all that is true and good and the reign of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

*John 3:17-21 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of **the** only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

In Paul's thinking (and I concur) the night is far spent; Satan's reign is almost over. Peter helps us in our thinking by reckoning time according to God and His Spirit.

2Peter 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

While we are waiting for the Lord to come, we are to "cast off" the works (deeds, acts) of darkness and "put on" the armor of light. This immediately takes my thoughts to Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:11-18 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 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. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

The wearing of armor is meant to protect us from the attack of the enemy. Satan and his legions are ever on the prowl to deceive us and tempt us to sin. Again, the words of Peter clarify this truth.

1Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Rom. 13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

“honestly” = decently, nobly, honorably

This verse has lost some of its impact in the America of today, as well as in many other parts of the world. Decent living is directly opposite to the actions and attitudes implied as being associated with the night—rioting, drunkenness, sexual immorality, lewd and lustful actions, quarreling, fighting, and jealousy. Actions that were considered shameful acts done under cover of night are now acceptable and even encouraged by different groups in our culture and as part of what comprises “entertainment.” There is nothing inherently wrong in competitive sports, but Christians who choose to attend these popular events are often exposed to indecent behavior. TV’s and movies are full of these activities of the night. Even when you choose to watch a decent program on TV, you are usually bombarded with indecent commercials. Scripture teaches us to “love not the world.”

1John 2:15-16 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Rom. 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

I like the wording of The Complete Jewish Bible for this verse.

Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Yeshua the Messiah; and don't waste your time thinking about how to provide for the sinful desires of your old nature.

How do we “put on” Jesus? By turning to Him in faith and repentance as our Lord and Savior.

“make not provision” – This means avoiding people, places and things that are subject to the lust of the flesh. John gets a little more specific.

1John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

The flesh is tempted by our senses and desires and by placing confidence in self rather than God. It is a continual battle to make godly choices regarding how to spend our time, with whom to associate, and to discern what is acceptable entertainment or activities and still be able to be an effective witness for the Lord to the lost world and not stumble believers.