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ROMANS 13:1-14, Citizens

We are citizens of two worlds: I am a citizen of the United States of America. Since I have trusted Jesus, I am also a citizen of God's realm—heaven. We have studied how a believer should react to others in our community. Today, we are going to learn how believers are to react to their government.

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.*

After the Flood, God established human government. It is necessary to have an authority or things would be chaotic. Everyone would be doing what they thought best for themselves (*cf. Judges 17:6; 21:25, which says “every man did that which was right in his own eyes”*). God said in Genesis 9:6, **“Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed”**. So human government was established by God and He is in control. The governments of all countries are appointed by God to accomplish His will. This does not mean that God approves of tyrants. It means that sometimes God will put evil people in as leaders of government to bring punishment to a nation that has offended God. In the Old Testament, when Israel would backside too far, God would raise up another country to defeat them. Nero is a good example: Israel had been under Roman rule for a long time when Paul wrote this letter, but after the Jews crucified Jesus, and Paul was spreading the word the world over, God put Nero in power. He persecuted both Jews and Christians. We often don't know God's purpose when He appoints evil leaders, but always be aware that the powers that be are ordained of God. President Trump doesn't exhibit many Christian characteristics, but God is using him to restore many things that are good for our country.

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

Anyone who rebels or disobeys their government is rebelling against what God has ordained. This is hard for us to understand, however, there is an

exception and that is; it is better to obey God than man. If a government orders a believer to do something contrary to biblical instructions, a believer must obey God's mandate (cf. Acts 5:29: "We must obey God rather than men"). By disobeying the government, a believer will suffer at the hands of the government. Even today, many believers suffer and even die because they stand up for Christ (<https://www.prisoneralert.com/>). We must obey the government as long as it does not prevent us from following the way of Christ.

ROMANS 13:3-4. *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: 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.*

You do not need to be afraid of your government if you abide by their laws. You *do* need to be afraid of your government if you break their laws, for you will be punished if you are discovered breaking the law. The original sword of human government was the power to take the life of a murderer. That is what is meant by "the sword" in verse 4. This proves that capital punishment is still God's law against murder.

ROMANS 13:5-7. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*

Remember, your government is a minister of God, not only for the good people, but also to punish those who practice evil. Governments have power to levy taxes, and believers are expected to pay that which is due. Believers are to live in their community at peace with all.

ROMANS 13:8-10. *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 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 thy self. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The first part of this verse means we should not be in debt for non-essential things. We all have bills to pay and this means we should pay on time. Do not be a continual late payer of your bills. If you have the “Agape” type of love for all peoples, you have fulfilled the commandment of Jesus that we should love one another. Agape love is the kind of love God has for us. It is a deep, unselfish, super love given to those who don’t deserve it. I Cor. 13 outlines the characteristics of agape love.

In the Ten Commandments, the first four relate to our reactions to God, the fifth commandment is how we relate to our parents. Here, Paul uses only the last five commandments to show how we should relate to people. These are all sins against God as well as the people we sin against and can be summed up with the commandment “Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself”, which is the Royal Commandment.

ROMANS 13:11-12. *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. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us cast off the work of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*

No human knows when Christ will call out His bride and bodily take her to His home in heaven. But we can study the prophecies and see that the next prophecy to be fulfilled is the rapture of the church. All the prophecies concerning Christ before the rapture have been fulfilled and the rapture could happen at any moment now. We cannot promise to do anything in the future because we may not have any future in this body. So, consider the time is short, the night is almost over, and we need to do away with the sin in our lives and put on the whole armor of God.

ROMANS 13:13-14. *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof.*

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7). If you would like to know more about how you can have the agape love, read the book of I John to prepare yourself for His coming. I will close with this quote from I John 3:1a and 2:

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God! - - - -Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

If you are saved, you already are a child of God and you have eternal life, but when He comes for His bride, you will receive a glorified body just like His and you will be at home with Him in the Father’s house forever.

I pray for each of you that God will nurture and keep you well and healthy and that He will make Himself known to you by the urging of His Holy Spirit.

NEXT SUNDAY, Lord willing, we will have regular Sunday Bible Study and Worship inside the building.