

Romans 13

Verse by Verse



Previously in Romans

Previously in Romans

- In **Romans 1 – 11**, Paul described **right belief**.
- This was a crash course in Christian theology.
- The **key verse** in this section – and to all of **Romans** – was **Romans 1:16**.

Previously in Romans

- **Romans 1:16** (ESV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Previously in Romans

- Then, in **Romans 12 – 16**, Paul describes **right conduct**.
- Right belief needs to lead to right behavior.
- The opening verses of **Romans 12** are key to the rest of the letter.

Previously in Romans

- **Romans 12:1-2** (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 13 Introduction

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- Paul continues his discussion of **Christian conduct**.
- One area of conduct that Christians have always had to deal with is our relationship to **human government**.

Romans 13 Introduction

- We serve the King of Kings. (1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 19:15)
- Our citizenship is in heaven. (Philippians 3:20)
- Yet we live within earthly nations under human governments that are always imperfect.
- How do we make sense of that relationship?

Romans 13 Introduction

- More on that in a moment.
- And more on the topic of **love**, which brings us to our **key verse** for this chapter.

Romans 13 Key Verse

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- Romans 13:8 (ESV)

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13 Outline

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1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7
2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

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It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the history of the interpretation of Romans 13:1–7 is the history of attempts to avoid what seems to be its plain meaning.

*– Douglas Moo,
Wheaton Graduate School*

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- 13:1-2 The key phrase here is “be subject to governing authorities.”
- There is a structure of rank that Christians are supposed to respect.
- This applies to the president or emperor as well as to the local bureaucrat or traffic cop.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

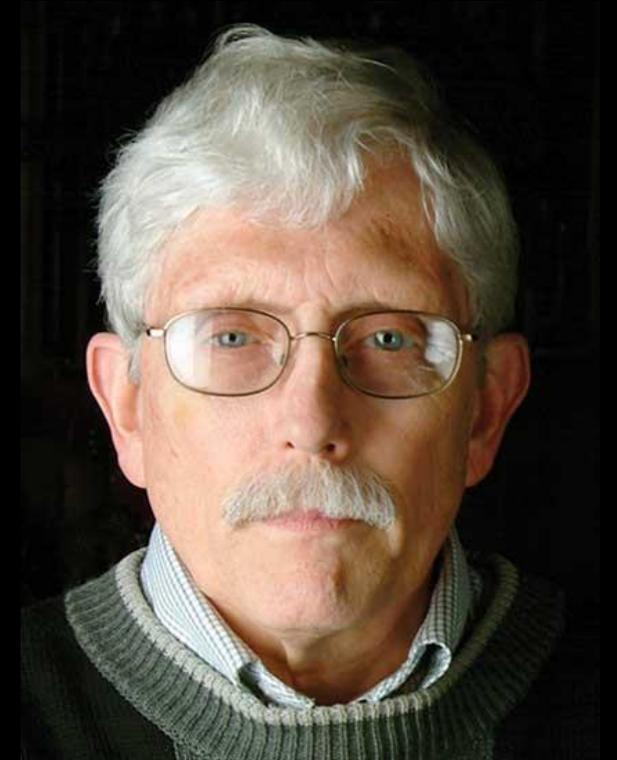
- As Paul instructs his helper Titus,
- Titus 3:1-2 (NIV)

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

We must remember that when Paul was writing this, Nero was on the Roman throne. While he had not yet turned into the evil anti-Christian emperor he was to become, there were definitely signs of anti-Christian activity in the empire ...

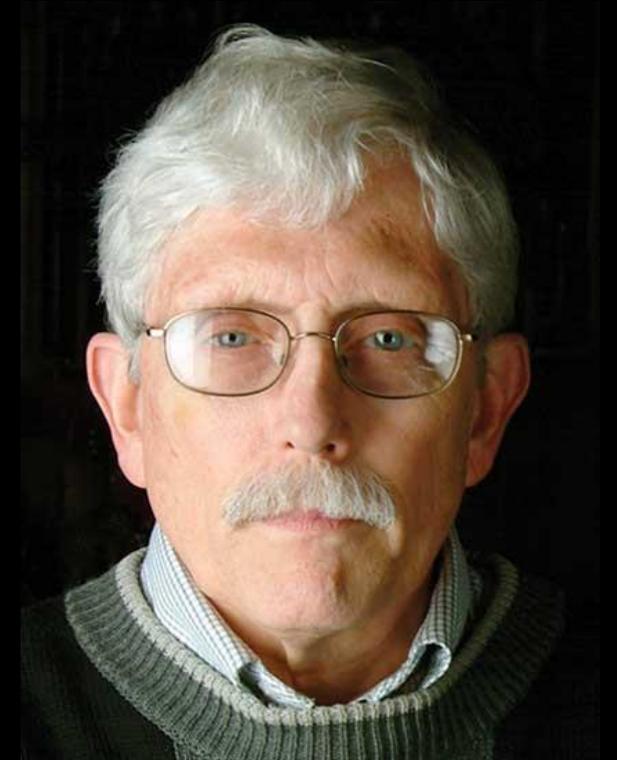
*– Grant Osborne (1942 – 2018),
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School*



1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

... So Paul is not writing this under the kind of government many of us have grown up under, and he still calls upon people to submit.

*– Grant Osborne,
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School*



1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- 13:3-5 One of the main purposes of government is to maintain some level of law and order.
- It really is better for us to have authorities over us in this area than for each of us to fend for ourselves.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- 13:3-5 By maintaining public order, the authorities are acting as the servants of God.
- Submission to them, therefore, is a matter of conscience.
- It is also a practical way to stay out of trouble – and this includes the payment of taxes.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- 13:6-7 taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed
- If this sounds familiar, you may remember the story of the question that was posed to Jesus.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- Matthew 22:16-22 (ESV)

¹⁶ And [the Pharisees] sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ...

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- Matthew 22:16-22 (ESV)

... ¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” ²¹ They said, “Caesar's.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” ²² When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- Paul follows Christ in encouraging payment of taxes.
- Jesus also gives us the principle that helps resolve the conflict we may feel in Paul's instruction here.
- **Matt 22:21** "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- **Matt 22:21** “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”
- In **Romans 13**, Paul gives us the *normal rule*.
- Submission to the authorities should be our default setting – the one we use for *everyday situations*.
- Yet, **obedience to God** allows for rare exceptions.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- The **Hebrew midwives** refused to kill the male children even though Pharaoh commanded it.
- **Nebuchadnezzar** commanded that all worship his golden image – but **Daniel's friends** refused.
- **Darius** prohibited prayer to anyone but himself, but **Daniel** kept praying to God.
- He chose the lion's den instead.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- The Sanhedrin forbid preaching in the name of Jesus.
- Acts 5:29 (ESV)

But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.”

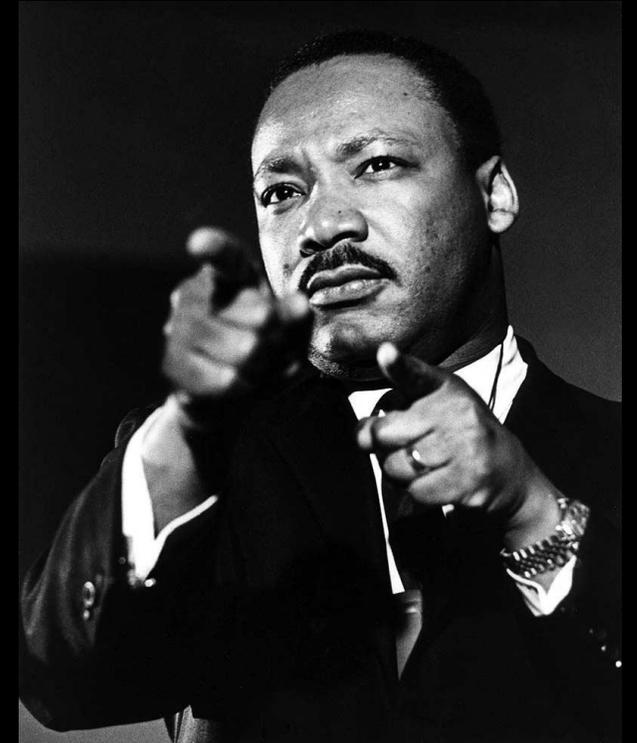
1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- Keep in mind that these occasions are rare.
- They all involved civil disobedience rather than violent rebellion.
- Their goal was obedience to God, not defiance of governmental authority.
- And each of them involved great personal risk.

1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

I have lived these last few years with the conviction that unearned suffering is redemptive. There are some who still find the cross a stumbling block, others consider it foolishness, but I am more convinced than ever before that it is the power of God unto social and individual salvation.

– Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 – 1968)



1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7

- Under a government system such as ours, the peaceful expression of **opposing views** is expected.
- These free expressions are behind much of the social, cultural and legal changes that we see.
- Still, we may have to **obey a law** even as we express our opposition to it in order to be heard.
- If **disobedience** is required, there may be a cost.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

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- 13:7-8 Pay to all what is owed to them ... Owe no one anything ...
- Christians need to be faithful in paying debts in full.
- This means more than paying off your credit card.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love each other.
- Our obligation to love always has an outstanding balance – there is still more love to give.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love each other.
- We may love incorrectly or unwisely.
- We really cannot “love too much.”
- Christ’s example of dying for his enemies is our standard.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- Romans 5:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person— though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- 13:8-10 the one who loves another has fulfilled the law ... “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ... love is the fulfilling of the law.
- Life is too complicated to allow us to make a set of rules that apply in every situation.
- Any list would be too long to memorize, and it would probably still be incomplete.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- 13:8-10 the one who loves another has fulfilled the law ... “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ... love is the fulfilling of the law.
- Love will help us to do what is right, even when no specific commandment can easily be identified.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- 13:11 We don't want to be caught sleeping when Jesus comes.
- We need rather to watch and be ready.
- Paul reminds each of us that we need to make every effort to finish well.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- 13:12-14 These verses are related to what Paul says in Galatians 5:16, 24 (ESV)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh ... ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- 13:12-14 In that passage he also spells out the alternative. See Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- This is what it will look like to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

- 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
- Let Jesus be our goal and the center of our attention.
- If we serve him first in all things, there won't be room for the flesh.
- Life is short. Live it for Jesus.

Romans 13 What We Just Read

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1. Honoring Authorities 13:1-7
2. Love Fulfills the Law 13:8-14

Romans 13 Key Verse

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- Romans 13:8 (ESV)

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13 Key Points

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On Submission to Authorities:

1. Our place as good citizens is maintained by paying taxes, showing respect and giving honor.
2. We are citizens of heaven under the King of Kings which should make us exemplary citizens on earth.
3. But yes, submission to God takes priority on the rare occasions when the two are in conflict.

Romans 13 Key Points

On Loving Others as the Fulfilment of the Law:

1. Love takes the place of written laws governing behavior.
2. Love helps us to fulfill the law, not disregard it.
3. Spirit-filled love will involve obedience to the commandments – and more.
4. Love prevents us from oversimplifying obedience to God as merely a set of rules to follow.

Romans 13 A Prayer

Romans 13 A Prayer

- Heavenly Father,
- We sincerely thank you that we live in a society in which obedience to authorities is currently easier than it was for people like Paul. Give us wisdom to know how to be good citizens who honor those you have placed over us with the honor their position deserves.
- At the same time, we pray for strength for those who live under systems that make faith in Christ a much more costly thing even now.

Romans 13 A Prayer

- Teach us also to love others, knowing that as believers we owe that to them, and understanding that genuine Christlike love fulfills the law.
- Help us to live lives of obedience to you, meaning lives that express your command to love our neighbor as ourselves.
- In Christ,
- Amen

Romans 13 References

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