

Study 14 – The epistle of Paul to the Romans, by Neville Clark, 2017

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The righteousness of God in Practice

Reading: Romans Ch 13

Present your bodies a living sacrifice

Well it has been a little while since we last looked at Romans because of various reasons so I thought at the very beginning let's just reacquaint ourselves with where we are in the argument that the apostle is making in this book. The first 11 chapters you will be aware are the doctrinal section of the epistle to the Romans, that section concerning the subject of the Atonement and various doctrinal matters surrounding that issue. When you come to chapter 12, however, everything changes. No longer are we into doctrinal treatise, like a logical argument, as we have been having for the previous 11 chapters, instead now, we are dealing with practical issues. Those practical issues that should result from our understanding of the doctrinal matters of the first 11 chapters. And the link between Chapter 12 and the doctrinal matters of the first 11 chapters I think could no more powerfully be illustrated by the opening words of Romans Ch 12, where he says in v1, "I beseech ye therefore brethren by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." And you remember we made the point in our last class that the reason he beseeches us by the "mercies" of God is because that links directly to the word mercy that you see throughout Chapter 11v31-32. The point being that God has had mercy upon mankind, that the doctrine of the Atonement is after all, a doctrine of mercy. Well, given what God has done for us, rescuing us from the plight that we have discovered ourselves to be in, in these 11 chapters, "Present yourselves therefore a living sacrifice acceptable of God." On the basis of the mercy that God has had upon us, there ought to be a response, and that response, you see, in Ch 12 is the commencement of the practical section, the practical response, to the doctrinal matters in the previous 11 chapters.

The Practical Response

Well what does that practical response look like? Well here is the breakdown then of chapters 12, 13, 14 and a little way into Ch 15. This is the last section "The righteousness of God in Practice." Ch 12, as you will recall, divided into three sections, the opening couple of verses, explaining the large concept of a renewed life, a renewed mind, non-conformity with the world, and then v3-8, "Right conduct in ecclesial life," particularly in relation to our various ecclesial abilities. And then v9-21 of Ch 12, "Right conduct in daily life, especially in relation to love." Well, you can see from my headings, Ch 13 develops the issues of daily life that are raised in the last half of Ch 12. Ch 14 develops the issues of ecclesial life that begin to be raised in Ch 12v3-8. So in fact those 3 chapters really do form a block with Ch 13 and 14 elaborating the issues that are commenced, in embryo, if you like, in Ch 12. But what that means is that when you come to Chapter 13, what we are going to find, is in elaboration of those things in the last portion of Ch 12, that is from Ch 12v9-21, and once again Ch 13 breaks into 3 sections. V1-7, our obligation to rulers, that is, the authorities of our land, v8-10, our obligations to all men, and v11-14 of Ch 13, the urgency of applying these principles in our lives, which I have called here, our obligations to God.

The civil powers

Let me show you how Chapter 13 expands on the issues that are raised in the latter portion of Ch 12. If you just cast your eye across the final verses of Rom 12, it concludes with a section on the subject of vengeance, that is not taking our own vengeance. "Vengeance is God's." V17-21 of Rom 12. "We ought not to avenge ourselves" he says, because at the end of v19, "vengeance is God's." Well of course, the way God very often exacts his vengeance is through the civil powers, that's how Ch 13 begins. The civil powers of the world are often the method by which God does exact his vengeance. You might recall, for example, Isaiah 10v5, the Assyrian was the rod of God's anger towards Israel. The civil powers in ancient times are used against his own people, so the civil powers may well be the instrument of God's vengeance. And you see that, for example, in Ch 13v4, the last lines of Rom 13v4, he says, "For he," that is the authorities of our day, "is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." So you see, you've got a link immediately between the closing verses of Ch 12, and the first section of Ch 13. But the connection is deeper than that because look at Ch 12v21, the last verse in the chapter, "Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good," so good and evil are both spoken about as Ch 12 winds up. Well, look at Ch 13v3, "Rulers are not a terror to good works but to evil." V4, "for he is the minister of God to thee for good, but if thou doeth that which is evil, be afraid," there is no contest really. It is obvious that the chapter break doesn't really exist, and here at Ch 13, we are merely rolling on elaborating upon those things which were commenced in Ch 12, the very deliberate flow of argument between the two chapters.

Right conduct in daily life

But that is not all, if you scan your eye now down to Ch 13v8, this is the second section, our obligations towards each other. "Owe no man anything but to love one another. He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Wow! Ch 12v9 says, "Let love be without dissimulation." That is, let love be genuine. V10 of Ch 12, "be kindly affectioned one toward another with brotherly love," he says, so you can see that Ch 13 is simply expanding on the issues that are raised in the latter half of Ch 12. So Ch 12v9-21, the right conduct in daily life, that is the subject of Rom 13. Well then Rom 13, what is it all about? Three sections as we said, our obligation to rulers, our obligation to all men, our obligations to God. The chapter commences by speaking of our submission to the civil power, to the authorities of our day. And you will appreciate it is a relevant issue for the apostle to be considering with this ecclesia. If, for example, as a consequence of our coming to the truth we serve a righteous king, we are looking for a kingdom to come, but what obligations do we have to the kingdoms that exist now? If the kingdoms of today are corrupt and immoral and idolatrous which they are today, which they were in Paul's day, and they depend for their existence upon the taxes we pay them, should we financially support such institutions? And if these institutions were to make laws which contradict the laws of God, perhaps, they may make laws even against religion. Perhaps they even persecute the saints, should we obey them? And you can see, these are the very sort of questions that this ecclesia would have asked, particularly as they are going to find the persecution of the 1st Century was beginning to increase, as numerically Christianity became an increasingly established religion. But what is the answer, Ch 13v1, "Let every soul," he says, "be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God.

The powers that be are ordained of God

Now that is going to require a bit of an explanation, let's just pull this verse apart from bottom to top. "The powers," that is the government of our age is "ordained of God." Your margin tells you the word "ordained" means 'ordered,' 'arranged' or 'instituted.' The fact is that God has put these powers in place. Dan 4v17 says that "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will." The Roman power of the apostle's day in the 1st century was none other than the 4th beast of Dan Ch 7. So the governments of this world, be it our day, or the 1st Century are simply put in place by God for the furtherance of his will. They are "ordained," or "ordered" by God. As a consequence of that, they have, as it says a little further up "no power but of God." That is they derive their power from God. At his trial before Pontius Pilate, the Lord Jesus Christ made that precise point. He said in Jn 19v11 to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." You see? "There is no power but of God," and it was on that basis that Christ submitted to Pilate because God put Pilate there. Therefore he says, as the verse opens, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." The "higher powers," the RSV says, "to the governing authorities" we are talking about the governments that rule over us.

It matters not whether the government is good or bad

Now it really makes no difference whether that government is good or bad, and Gen 41v14, "Joseph shaved his head and changed his raiment" before he came in before Pharaoh as a sign of respect. Daniel was always respectful before Nebuchadnezzar. Nehemiah was always respectful before Ahasuerus. Jer 29v7, Jeremiah told the Jews to pray for the peace of Babylon, an act which was considered to be treachery by many of his countrymen, but which nevertheless was God's will. Babylon would invade the nation of Israel, and would take them captive, but good things would go to Babylon and the bad things would be destroyed where they stood. Jehoiakim understood that, he didn't try and try and fight the prophecy of God. He gave himself up to Nebuchadnezzar was taken to Babylon and lived the rest of his days in Babylon in luxury. Zedekiah never understood that so he had his sons killed before him and his eyes put out before much of his city was destroyed and burned. It makes no difference, you see, whether they are good or bad, they are ordained of God, they are appointed of God, and there are obligations that we have before them. And he begins the verse by saying this, "Let every soul be subject unto those higher powers." Now that is an interesting way to begin, why does he say "let every soul," why doesn't he say, "be subject to the higher powers?" What's his point? Well, that is actually a quotation, or perhaps an allusion.

Come back with me to Rom 2v9 "Every soul," there is an issue in this Ecclesia you see, "Let every soul." "Every soul," is simply a phrase that encompasses all mankind, be they Jew or Gentile, but look at Rom Ch 2v9. This is speaking about, in v6, "God rendering to every man his deeds," and to those who are disobedient, v9 they receive, "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil of the Jew first and also of the Gentile." So every soul in Rom 13v1 simply means, both Jew and Gentiles. Well that isn't too difficult to understand, why would we need to labour the point, why would the Apostle need to say that? Well, because you see, from the day he was born, the Jew had a problem submitting to governments, particularly

foreign governments, an enormous problem, he could never ever settle down. He could never ever submit to a foreign power, he would forever rebel, it was happening in Israel in these very days, and here is an ecclesia who is 50% Jewish, or something like that. And in the 1st Century the Ecclesia was seen as an offshoot of Judaism, and so the ecclesia had to exercise a special care lest they be regarded by the authorities of their day like the Jews were, and the authorities of this day had a pretty dim view of natural Israel. I mean, they did destroy them, you remember in 70AD because of their continual uprising. Well that's fine but the Jews, of course, for their reason had scripture behind them, or so they believed. Deut Ch 17v15 says, "Thou shalt in any wise set him a king over thee whom Yahweh thy God shall choose. One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee. Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee which is not thy brother." And so on the basis of Deut 17v15, they could only ever appoint a Jewish king over themselves, therefore they argued that they could never accept a Roman emperor. There are at least two problems with that interpretation. The first is that the Roman emperors wasn't appointed by the Jews. Deut only deals with kings that they could appoint themselves. God put the Roman emperor in place. He never gave the Jews the liberty of choosing that king. It was God that put the Romans in power, so Deut 17 doesn't apply. That's the 1st problem the 2nd problem is this. There was a day in the 1st Century of course where the Jews were given the choice to accept a Jewish king. And in Jn 19v15, Pontius Pilate said, "shall I crucify your king?" And they said "We have no king but Caesar" and on that basis crucified the Lord of Glory. So for 2 reasons, you might say, the Jews are out of line thinking that they should not submit to a Roman king. No 1, Deut 17 only applied to kings that they could appoint, and No 2, they chose the Roman king in Jn 19v15.

The Divine Right of Kings

Well on account of that the apostle continues in Rom 13v2 and says, "Whosoever therefore," given that the powers that be are ordained of God, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation," he says. If you therefore resist the authorities, you resist God, because God is the one who put the authorities in powers, and therefore condemnation will follow, firstly from the authorities and secondly from God. Now of course, as you might expect, from the government's point of view, this verse, or verses 1 and 2, say everything they could ever want. Rom 13 you see, in fact, is the basis for a medieval doctrine called "the Divine Right of Kings," in which it was believed that since the king was appointed by God, he could act like God and did not have to answer to man at all.

And this is how it works. James the 1st, that is King James of the King James version fame. The King James was authorised and published in 1611 whilst King James 1st of England was on the throne. The divine right of kings is a political doctrine in defence of monarchical absolutism, ie, that the monarch is an absolute ruler, which asserted that kings derive their authority from God and not from the people and could not therefore be held accountable for their actions by any earthly authority such as a parliament. So no Pope, no parliament no senate could ever tell the king what to do because he received his authority direct from God. Also it was believed, and you will appreciate, it is very convenient for kings to believe in the divine right of kings, they have no accountability. And a theory came to the fore during the reign of James 1st of England, and was used to justify the king's absolute authority in both political and spiritual matters. He uses Rom 13 to defend that doctrine.

Ultimate authority not given to the authorities

Well of course in a modern democratic government such as we find ourselves in today, the government doesn't claim the same right as kings, medieval kings, used to. But they would however refer to these verses if we had a war, if we had a conscription, to pressure conscientious objectors into doing what the king said. Now the first time that this issue became an issue in the brotherhood was during the American civil war of 1861-1865, where brethren had to make a stand against taking up arms on behalf of the state. And in the context of the publications made to the governments of the states of America, I was very intrigued to read the following" This is an excerpt from one of the letters written by brethren in Virginia. Now they were all called Nazarenes, because of course, this letter was written in 1862 and the Christadelphian name wasn't actually adopted until 1864. So these were brethren, they were believers, but they called themselves the Nazarenes, and this is what they said. Now the thing that struck me was how intelligently they had read Rom 13, to argue that Rom 13 did not allow the government to force them into military service. "We most cheerfully, and heartily," they say, "recognise the powers that exist in any locality in which we may at any time sojourn in the capacity of civil magistrates as God's executors for the time being, for we are explicitly commanded to do so, but we are nowhere commanded to obey them as military commanders. God has given them authority to exact from his own children, tribute, custom and honour, but he has not given them control over their persons, unless of course they should forfeit their relationship to God, by violating the laws of that state.

What that is simply saying here is 'God has put you in a position, but he hasn't given you ultimate authority over everything, he's given you limited authority over some things. You do not have authority over men to compel them to break the commandments of God. If those men, however, were to do so, to comply with your wishes and to break the commandments of God, they say, they should forfeit their relationship with God.' And I looked at that and I thought, 'Hmm, that is a very careful and diligent reading of Rom 13, don't you think?' There's the skill of the answer, but you see they've drawn a line between what rights God has given the authorities over people and what rights he hasn't. And taking military action, is forbidden the saints in Scripture.

Rulers not a terror to good works

Well the apostle continues in v3 that "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." Rulers, he says, are not a terror to good works. Now, the fact is, sometimes they are. If they are to persecute the ecclesia, they clearly are, a terror to good works. But Paul here is speaking in a general sense. Generally speaking the authorities do things which are for the good of the population. If we comply with the law therefore, made by those authorities, we will have no trouble from them, they are not a terror to good works. And then he says, "Wilt thou then, not be afraid of the power?" Now it is not worded very well in that particular sentence. Literally, what that Pharaoh, "Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power," what that literally means is, 'Do you want to have no fear of the power?' The NIV says, 'Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right.' If you want to have no fear of the authorities, do what is right. If you want to have no fear of traffic officers, don't exceed the speed limit, wear your seat belt, don't talk on your cell phone while you are driving. You want to have no fear of the taxation office, pay your tax, pay in full, pay on time. The authorities are not a problem to people that they regard as good citizens. In fact, quite the reverse, he says, at the end of the verse, "If you are a good citizen, thou shalt have praise of the same." The authorities will praise you, they will commend you for being a good citizen. V4, "For he,' that is the governor, the authority, "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." He will use corporal punishment, he might use capital punishment, he would use physical coercion if he needs to. "For he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject." Do as you are told, don't break the law, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." Obey the authorities, Paul says, for 2 reasons, No 1, fear of retribution, No 2 for conscience sake, because of course, they are appointed by God. And generally, even corrupt governments are better than no government at all. They are for our good, he says in v4, they maintain law and order, and in Protestant countries such as ours, Protestant Christian countries, such as ours, they allow ecclesias to exist unmolested, even though they know nothing at all of the truth.

So they have these values which are extremely beneficial to people like us. But there is one point to observe here, and that is at the end of v3. "Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same," so if you obey the law, the authorities will commend you. But he uses the phrase that "thou shalt have praise of the same." Now Peter picks up that precise point, using that precise language in 1 Pet 2. Come across there with me, because Peter doesn't just say "we shall receive praise of the authorities," he adds a little more to it. In 1 Pet 2v13, and here is our context immediately. 1 Pet 2v13, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to the governor as unto them that are sent by the King," for the punishment of evildoers, "and for the praise of them that do well," he says, so there's our point. It is exactly the context of Rom Ch 13, and the government "will praise those that do well."

By well-doing put to silence unreasonable men

But look at the next verse, look what Peter adds, "For so is the will of God that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," he says. The word 'foolish' here means 'unreasonable,' it doesn't mean fool as in 'stupidity,' it means 'unreasonable,' ignorant and unreasonable men. There is more to it, you see, than simply receiving the praise of the authorities, in v14, which you might say, creates a good reputation for Christadelphia. This goes further. With well-doing we may put to silence, or we may muzzle the ignorance of unreasonable men. There comes a time, you see, when maybe you can give no answer. I mean, you may have 100 arguments in your pocket, but they won't listen to any answer. Logic will not prevail, you are talking to unreasonable people. And you can imagine if there was a crisis of some kind in the country, such as a war, or any other crisis where people weren't thinking rationally, they needed quick responses and they needed everybody to fall in line and we wouldn't fall in line. Your logical argument may not carry much weight. They may not listen, because, well, because they are going to be unreasonable, they've got a problem, they've got a crisis in that situation. It may be that your conduct may be the only answer you can give. Let's imagine Australia declares war on New Zealand, and claims to have a divine

mandate with which to do so, and therefore would like all of us to join the army. Some of us would have a bigger problem with that than others, but let's stay with my example. Well you might say, well how does that work, because New Zealand is going to respond, and presumably they believe they've got a divine mandate as well. So that now both armies are trying to kill each other in the name of the same God. And there are Christadelphians on both sides fighting each other, I mean, there is something wrong with the logic that would suggest that, isn't there. That if the Australian Government could claim that they were appointed by God and therefore they can do whatever they like, and the New Zealand government were to claim the same, we've got an enormous confusion in a war between two armies appointed by the same God. Well you could present that logic, you see, and I think that is quite a logical argument to show the insufficiency of the case, but it might not have any effect. It might, in fact be, that your actions have to speak louder than your words.

Actions speak louder than words

But now think of the flip side. So you want to be a conscientious objector, but you only attend the ecclesia on Sunday mornings, and your best friends are your neighbours. Actions are going to speak louder than words then, too, aren't they? So your citizenship is apparently in heaven but you vote at political elections, and you are happy to participate on juries and caught of law. Your actions would speak pretty loudly then too, wouldn't they? You are in the world but not of it you say, but you have no problem going to the bar on Friday nights with your work colleagues. If we do any of these sorts of things, we would never ever, put to silence the ignorance of unreasonable men. If the unreasonable man is not going to respond to Biblical logic, what do you think he is he going to do, when you present him a lifestyle which is far from consistent. He is going to be all over it, isn't he, because he wants you in the military, because he is bringing back bags, every day, with more bods in them.

Do you want to see the real power of example? What he is saying in v13-14 "submit to the authorities," because it may be that even if your argument doesn't prevail in v15, your conduct will. Your conduct might win the argument that words could never win. But look at the power of that in v12 of this chapter. This you know, v12 of 1 Pet 2, is one of these verses that sits in the middle of your Bible, you hardly know it exists, or at least I didn't, and it says a remarkable thing, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Now imagine that verse in the context of military conscription. They would look at our way of life among the Gentiles. "They would speak of us as evil-doers," because we didn't join the armed forces, "but would witness our good works," that is, if they were good, if we were consistent. "Which," he says, "they shall behold and will glorify God in the day of visitation." When is the day of visitation? Well it is the day of Christ's return. So what he is saying here there are going to be people here in life who you perhaps you might try to preach the truth to. Perhaps you might try to give them a logical argument, they may be unreasonable, they may be disinterested, you will never convert them, but they will take note of what sort of person you are. And the very fact that they have taken note of that, and have been impressed by it, saves their life in armageddon, saves their life in armageddon, so that as a mortal person they glorify God in the day of visitation when the kingdom age begins. It may be that there are people who enter the kingdom age as mortal people because of what you or I have done now and don't perish with the millions of slain in the battle of Armageddon. Remarkable. So the point is, never give up. I mean we are talking about military conscription, but in the wider context, never give up. It may be that you can never convert this or that person but you might still save their life in a mortal sense for the future age.

A summary of the issues

Well, if I was to summarise all the issues surrounding conscientious objection, it might look something like this. I have simply tabulated here a summary of the issues. We've got various civil obligations, we have to be subject to rulers. To be afraid to disobey them, to do what is good, to pay our taxes, to honour them, to pray for them, to obey their laws, and not to curse them and their are quotes by each of these. These are our obligations to the powers that be, but those obligations are limited. God appoints them. We serve God and we serve these rulers. If there is a disagreement between what the ruler says, and what God says, we serve God first, because God, after all is the one who has appointed the ruler. Not just that we have a primary relationship with God, but even the ruler is subject to God in that sense. And of course, we are not pacifists, the reason in a military context we wouldn't join the army is not because we are pacifists, it is because our commander had not yet come. When he comes, then will his servants fight, and not before.

Our Allegiance

But the crowning principle, you know, surrounding the entire subject of conscientious objection is this, it is the principle of allegiance. The reason we don't fight is because of our allegiance. As I say, if our

commander was here, we would fight, but of course that is because we have an allegiance to that commander. We are in the world, but not of it. We are pilgrims, we are slaves owned by God, we are of a different nationality. I'm not an Australian citizen, I will never be called up to fight in the Australian army. I might be called up to fight in the New Zealand army. If our citizenship is not of this country, we would not participate in the civil matters of this country. Well our citizenship is in Zion, our king is yet to come. We owe allegiance, therefore, to a different king, of a different country, and a different government which is yet, still future. That is the fundamental principle as to why we wouldn't participate in civil events, including military action.

We ought to obey God rather than man

Now let me just draw your attention to one point you might see on the slide. Halfway down the slide I've got a comment under the religious limitation section of, any disagreement we serve God first. And I am quoting Acts Ch 4v19 and Acts 5v29. Well Acts ch 5v29 simply says, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Ok, here is my question, Who said that? Who was it that said "We ought to obey God rather than men?" It is actually more than one person, because there was a group there, but who predominantly? Peter. It was the 12 disciples, Peter and the 12. The same Peter who said in this chapter, 1 Pet 2, that we ought to obey the governing authorities. And Peter of course, can't contradict himself, can he? So we have Peter saying one thing in Acts 4 and 5, and apparently another thing in 1 Pet 2. And in 1 Pet 2 he says "obey the authorities," and in Acts 4 and 5 he gives an exception. What about Paul, come back to Rom 13, that's actually a very powerful point. Peter says obey the authorities. Peter also says, if there is a conflict, obey God first. Rom Ch 13, the Apostle Paul in v1-5 says, "Obey the authorities," but in v9 he says, "Thou shalt not kill," it is the same Apostle. And so you see, he can't contradict himself, especially not in the same chapter, so it would be a bit of a problem to quote Rom Ch 13, and say that compels us to join the military, when Rom 13v9 would forbid the very activity that the military has been created for. That is interesting, isn't it.

Well, in v6-7 of Rom 13, it now moves on to talking about taxes. "For this cause pay your tribute also, for they," that is, the authorities, "are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing." That is interesting, that is the reason we pay tax, "for this cause." Which cause? Well, because, in v4, the authorities are God's ministers for us for good. They attend continually upon this very thing, that is, on government. The NIV in v6 says, "They give their full time to government." They don't know it, but they are the consistent performers of God's will, day after day. So Paul says, pay your taxes, on time, in full, without complaining. Now that might be a difficult thing to do at times, especially, I mean, even if you had the cash flow to do so, especially when you see how your money is spent. But think about what taxes do pay for. They pay for policing, they pay for roads, and for infrastructure, they pay for environmental protection, they pay for labour laws, business regulation, subsidies for impoverished, clean drinking water, medical care, taxes pay for all of these things. Now if you didn't pay tax you wouldn't get any of them, that would be a big problem. Yes there might be inefficiencies, yes there might be corruption, there might be wastage, parliamentarians might spend money on wickedness, but the fact is, we live in one of the most privileged countries of the most privileged age in history. Things could be a lot worse than what they are here. And by the way, Jesus himself paid tax, didn't he. You remember the famous words in Matt 22v21, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." Look again at v 5. Why do you obey the authorities? Two reasons, for wrath and for conscience. We are fearful if we don't, and for conscience sake, because God put them in place. We pay taxes for the same two reasons. We are fearful, so render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and for conscience sake, and render unto God the things that are God's. You see? We pay taxes, the fact is, for the very same two reasons we obey the authorities. And we not only pay tax, we also pay custom, v7. Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." Tribute here is just tax in the most general sense of the word, think of it as income tax. Custom is another tax in addition to income tax, this would be import duties, council rates, GST, motor vehicle registration fees, all the myriad of additional taxes we pay out of tax paid income. Fear, "Render unto them fear, the word means 'respect,' that is and acknowledgement of their authority that they have a job to do and they have been appointed by God to do it. "Honour," render honour, that is a recognition of their status. Sometimes hard to do, particularly if you don't think they are competent. But once again, they have been put there by God. Honour to whom honour is due, fear to whom fear is due.

And on the back of v7 he commences the next section, v8-10 is our obligation to fellow men, not to brothers and sisters, but to fellow man. V1-7 our obligation to civil authorities, v8-10 our obligations to fellow man. And what he is going to tell us in this next little section, as that as consistent as the authorities are in their governing of the land, we also have to be in our treatment of each other, but of course for different reasons. So v8 says, "Owe now man anything, but to love one another." So he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. And a link between v8 and the previous section is found in the very first word of v8. This word "owe,"

“owe no man anything.” The word “owe” in v8 is the same as the word “dues” in v7. “Render therefore to all their dues.” So you owe tax to the government, you owe love to fellow man, that’s your dues. Render to every one what you owe them, he says. So if we are obligated to pay our taxes, we are also obligated to love each other. The difference is that when you have paid your tax you have discharged your obligation, at least for that tax year, whereas you never fulfil your obligations to pay love, that’s the contrast.

Love one another

Now let’s just read the next couple of verses because this is only a small section from v8-10. These are not difficult to understand but I will explain when I get done. “Owe no man anything 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, or summarised, in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” It is very simple isn’t it, if you really love your neighbour you wouldn’t do anything to hurt him. So you wouldn’t be committing adultery, you wouldn’t be killing him you wouldn’t be stealing from him, you wouldn’t be doing any of those sorts of things, if you really loved your neighbour, you would do whatever you could to help him. “And if you want one commandment,” he says, “to summarise all of that,” as I say, the word “comprehended” half way through v9. The RSV says “summed up,” “you want one commandment to sum up all of those portion of the 10 commandments it is this, love thy neighbour as thyself,” he says. A quotation from Lev 19v18, and that commandment at the end of v9, “Love thy neighbour as thyself, James calls “The Royal Law,” not because it was given by a king, but because it reigns over all other laws. “Love thy neighbour as thyself,” you can see reigns over all the laws of the first half of v9. It is a preeminent law, you see? And we know that because when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment is, he said, ‘Well in fact there are two,’ one of which was Lev 19v18, why? Well I will show you why. ‘What is the greatest commandment of all Lord?’ he says. Well, there are two great commandments. “Thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind,” Deut 6v5. And “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” Lev 19v18. They are two equally great commandments. “Upon these hangs the whole Law,” he says. Now, if we could summarise the whole Law by the 10 commandments, you would find that the first 4 of the 10 commandments are are commandments relating to our relationship with God. The latter 6 of those 10 commandments are commandments relating to our relationship with fellow man. You want a capital commandment to summarise our relationship with God, that is the first 4 of the 10 commandments, “Love Yahweh thy God.” You want 1 commandment to summarise the latter 6 of the 10 commandments related to our relationship with fellow man, “Love your neighbour.” Love fulfils the Law, be it love for God or love for your neighbour but, of course, in Rom 13, he is only speaking about love for your neighbour, so he only mentions 1 of these 2 great commandments. But you see the point, loving your neighbour fulfils the Law. Now think about the applications of that, because for 1500 years, the nation of Israel had been keeping the Law and they could never ever keep it. Never ever keep it. All the Law could do for them was to expose their failings and their inability to keep it, and illuminate therefore the enormous gulf that existed between them and God. But the Apostle Paul, here, offers a solution to the Jew, doesn’t he, he offers a solution to the Jew. ‘You want to keep the Law,’ he says, ‘you want to keep the Law to its greatest extent. Go and love your neighbour. You do that and you will fulfil everything in the Law of Moses, at least everything in relation to fellow man.

Liberty not licence

So once the Law of Moses was done away, you had a freedom from Law, but the freedom you had was not a freedom to do what ever your liked, it was a freedom to serve in and even greater capacity. It was a freedom to love your brother. You come with me to Gal Ch 5, I will show you what I mean. Now Galatians as you might be aware is like a mini-Romans. So oftentimes you find that various points in the epistle of Romans are summarised extremely succinctly in Galatians. Galatians is a much smaller book, it does not have a lot of the content that Romans has, but it does have this, Gal 5v13, “For brethren,” he says, “ye have been called unto liberty, or freedom, only use not liberty for an occasion for the flesh, but by love, serve one another.” You see what he says, ‘you’ve been freed from the Law of Moses, you no longer have to keep rules, but don’t use your new-found freedom to satisfy your own lusts, use it to serve one another in love, and there is a paradox there, you see. You’ve been given freedom, you’ve got to consign yourself to slavery, or to service, to serve one another, so a paradox. In absence of law, you are free to be a servant. And ironically, if you do choose the service of v13, well then v14, “For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” You find yourself back to law, not to the dictates of the Law of Moses but to the principles of the Law of Moses, and fulfil something the Law of Moses could never, ever get you to do. It is remarkable, isn’t it, you choose a service of love, you fulfil the very law you’ve hitherto been made free from. And once again, which section of the ecclesia do you suppose the Apostle has in mind here? Which section of the ecclesia was it, Jew or Gentile, that had a problem loving their neighbour? Mat

5v43, "You have heard that it was said, Love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." Well the Law never ever said, hate thine enemy. The Law certainly said in Lev 19, "Love your neighbour," it never ever said, "hate thine enemy," that was a Jewish interpretation of the Law. The lawyer, the lawyer who came to the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke Ch 10v29, "willing to justify himself said, And who is my neighbour," which resulted, of course in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Jews had an enormous problem deciding who their neighbour was, and therefore, who they should love. You see v1-7 directed at the Jewish portion of the ecclesia who had a problem serving a Gentile king. V8-10, directed at the Jewish portion of the ecclesia who had a problem loving their neighbour. Not that the Gentiles were immune from the exhortation of these words, but it was tilted toward the Jews, because of course, they were the ones who had big problems in these areas.

Your salvation is nearer than when you believed

Well v11-14, come back to Romans now, v11-14 concludes the chapter and it is a bit of a strange section. Here the Apostle is going to speak of the urgency of the times in which he lived, but this is a section that is all about night and day. So let me just read v11-14 and then I will summarise what this is saying on the screen. "And do this, knowing the time that it is high time to awake out of sleep. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," he says, "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. And let us walk honestly as in the day not in rioting and drunkenness and chambering and wantonness and strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Now what does that mean? And if I were to show you it like this, it is making a contrast between night and day. And if I just read down the left hand most column, this is what is happening at night. "Knowing the time," he says, "it is high time to wake out of sleep," because, of course, it is still night, "because the night is far spent," so cast off the works of darkness which are listed here, "rioting, drunkenness, chambering, wantonness, strife and envying, and make no provision for the flesh." "So leave the events of night time and move into the events of day time," he says. Well what are they? Well in the daytime our salivating is nearer than when we believed. That day is at hand. Put on the armour of light, walk honestly in the day and put on the Lord Jesus Christ. So he is making a contrast between night time and day time. And he says in v11, "It is high time to wake out of sleep." The New American Standard Version, "It is already the hour for you to awaken out of sleep." Now sleep, of course, could mean one of two things, it could mean death or it could mean spiritual drowsiness. Which one does it mean here? Well obviously drowsiness because we are waking up under our control. He is telling us to wake up out of sleep. Now if we are dead, we have no control over when we might wake up, so clearly he is speaking to people who are spiritually drowsy, "Because," he says, "our salvation is nearer than when we believed." Now of course, that is obvious, every day that goes by side a day closer to Christ's return. The point must be that time is slipping away. "It is time to shake yourself," he says, "out of apathy, out of lethargy, out of indifference, because the times are going to change. It is high time," he says, "You know the time," he says.

The night is far spent

V12, "the night is far spent," so we are still in night time but the night is coming to an end and the sun is rising, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the army of light." So there are two different forms of clothing being spoken about here, clothing for the night and clothing for the day. He says, take off your pyjamas and get dressed. Well what do his pyjamas look like in v 12? Well you are told in v13, "Walk honestly as in the day, not wearing your night attire, rioting, drunkenness, chambering, wantonness, strive and envying." That's what your pyjamas look like, those 6 sins of the flesh. "Walk honestly," he says, the margin says "decently," the word means 'with decorum,' that is wearing the right clothes. Put very plainly, he says, don't wear your pyjamas during the day time. They are clothes for sleep, they are clothes for informality, they are clothes for relaxation, they speak of unpreparedness, these are the works of darkness, these pyjamas, if ye like, these clothes for the night. Rioting, the word means revelry, drunkenness, means what it says, chambering is immorality or lewd or immodest conduct, wantonness is debauchery, sensuality or lust, strife means dissection or quarrels, and envy is jealousy, they are the works of night time, he says. V 14, "Instead, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Remove your night clothes, put on your day clothes, change your lives. It is interesting in v 13, you've got 6 works of darkness, v9, listed 6 commandments of light. "Love works no ill to its neighbour," in v 10, because "he makes no provision to do so," v14. You know, as you read this section here, clearly, v11-14, clearly it is a move by the Apostle to shake the ecclesia to its senses, to wake them up because of the urgency of the time. You might be struck, you know, by the similarity of the words in those last 4 verses, with what the Apostle Paul writes elsewhere. Come with me to 1 Thess 5, he writes extremely similar things here, and of course, as soon as we read 1 Thess 5 beside Rom Ch 13, we get an explanation of what Romans 13 is really talking about. 1 Thess 5v1, "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have not

need that I write unto you," he says. Rom 13v11, "Knowing the time," remember? Look at v 4 of 1 Thess 5, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober, for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that are drunken, are drunken in the night." These are the works of darkness. "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

Cast away the works of darkness

So what is he saying here, it is very simple, cast away the works of darkness, put on the armour of light. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is exactly what the Apostle is writing to the Thessalonians. V9 "For God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom13v11 said, "Our salvation is nearer than when we believed." And the salvation he is speaking about here is clearly eternal salvation, salvation which we will receive when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. And as you read Thessalonians, you see, it is difficult to believe that Romans is talking about anything other than the second coming of Jesus Christ. But the problem is that he is telling them to wake up because salvation is near, and the day is at hand. The difficulty with that you see, is that the coming of Christ wasn't going to be for 2,000 years and the Apostle knew that. So what I am saying is that if you compare what I've got on the screen, that's Rom 13, with 1 Thess Ch 5, it is clear that Thessalonians is speaking about the second coming of Christ, it is using identical language o Rom Ch 13, which you might presume means that Rom 13 is also talking about the second coming of Christ. The problem is, the Apostle is saying, wake up because salvation is near, the day is at hand, and yet Christ was not going to return for another 2000 years. The Apostle knew he wasn't returning for 2,000 years because in 2 Thess 2v3 says, "The falling away" has got to come first, "the man of sin" has got to be revealed." Rom 11v25, "The fullness of the Gentiles must come in," so however long that meant, it wasn't going to be next year that salvation was going to come to the ecclesia at Rome. So what is Romans talking about in the last verses of Rom 13. Come with me to 1 Cor Ch 7, you know their is something actually quite sinister happening at the end of Romans 13. What do you think of this, now Romans was written in 57AD, 1 Cor was written about 3 or 4 years earlier, 53-54AD. And in v26 of 1 Cor 7, speaking on various states of marriage that he discusses in this chapter, he says this, v 26 1 Cor 7, "I suppose therefore this is good for the present distress. I say that it is good for a man so to be." What is he talking about, v27, "Art thou bound to a wife, seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife seek not a wife." 'Stay in the state you currently are in.' Why? "Because of the present distress, because of the uncertainty of the times, because of the trouble that we are currently facing," in what? In the mid 50s AD. Look at v 29, "This I say brethren the time is short. "It remained that both they that have wives, be as though they had none, and they that weep as those who wept not," and so forth. Time is short, something imminent is approaching. What is going to happen? V31, "And they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." AD70 is coming, and there is going to be a terrific time of trouble come upon the ecclesia as a consequence of the events of AD 70, it is the present distress, and things are heating up, you see? "The world in which we live," the Apostle says, "is about to pass away" and that will have a colossal effect on the ecclesia. Jerusalem, the headquarters of Christianity is going to be destroyed. False doctrines, particularly Judaism are gaining a toehold and are increasing. Immorality is creeping into the ecclesia. The Apostles who up to this time have faithfully led the ecclesia for some 30-odd years are being killed. The Spirit gifts are beginning to die out. As Christianity grows in numbers, persecution is starting to increase, and all of that you see, would come to a head in AD 70.

Except those days should be shortened

Do you want a clue as to the significance of that, you come to Matt 24. Mat 24, the Oliver Prophecy, speaks of the imminent events of AD 70, particularly from the point of view of natural Israel. There is a clue here that the events of AD 70 wouldn't just affect natural Israel. Look at Mat 24v22, "And except those days should be shortened there shall no flesh be saved," that is no Jewish flesh would be saved, but for the elects sake, the ecclesia, those days shall be shortened. So you see, there is an immediate link made by the Lord Jesus Christ himself between the events that would affect natural Israel in 70AD and those same events that might effect the ecclesia. And were it not that the events of AD 70 were shortened it would have a devastating effect upon the ecclesia. The elect would suffer terrifically if those days weren't shortened. Remarkable isn't it? V 24, "There shall arise false Christs, false prophets, they shall show signs and wonders insomuch that if it were possible they should deceive, as it ought to be, even the elect." Even the ecclesia could fall prey to the events swirling around in these times. And on the very eve of this event, you've got an ecclesia here in Rome that is falling back to sleep, slipping into apathy, and the vigour and enthusiasm which once characterised them is starting to die out. V12 of Mat 24 says, "When iniquity shall abound the love of many will wax cold," and things were dying out in Rome. For many of them, time would be short. And look at the kind of things that are creeping back into the ecclesia. Wantonness, chambering, strife, drunkenness, things

that they ought to have left behind are starting to creep back into their lives because they have taken their eye off the ball and becoming worldly, become liberal and losing their love for the things of the truth, because, well because of the influence of the times around them. What do you really think the Apostle meant, brothers and sisters, when he said, that “our salvation is nearer than when we believed?” If we parallel Romans with Thessalonians, that salvation must be ultimate salvation at the return of Christ. None of the people alive who read that letter to the Romans in the 1st century would be naturally alive when Christ came, yet their salvation is nearer than what they expected. What can that mean, but that they wouldn't live their threescore and ten! They would lose their lives, and that they didn't have all that much longer, necessarily, to reform, if they had slipped into wickedness. Trouble was coming, you see, trouble was coming. And it is not hard to make the application to our own day is it. I got the same news this morning that I suppose all the rest of you did, that the same-sex marriage referendum voted “Yes.” Iniquity is abounding. The ecclesias are getting weaker, you know that as well as I do. People are lulling off to sleep, the works of darkness are creeping back into ecclesial life, yet salvation is just around the corner. Not just the passing of an epoch, the passing of THE epoch. So now more than ever it is time to put off the works of darkness, put on the armour of light and make no provision for the flesh.

Transcription by Fay Berry 2017.