

Overview

The first seven verses of this chapter are showing the importance of the Christian being subject to human governments. This helps us to see that all aspects of our lives are a testimony of the gospel. The gospel spoken by a life is always more powerful than a verbal sermon.

Verse 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.*

The Apostle is using the word soul to refer to believers. The higher powers are external human governments to which we are to submit ourselves. We are to give due respect and obedience to such powers.

1 Peter 2:13-15 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

“No power but of God,” is an excellent commentary of God’s sovereign control of human governments or authorities.

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

To resist one of these authorities is to bring us into direct conflict. Pontius Pilate was one of the worst Roman governors Judea ever had; yet Jesus was obedient to him. Paul suffered under Nero, also, a terrible Roman governor of that time period. Neither Jesus nor Paul denied their authority. To resist these authorities will bring us under the judgment of both human government and God’s government.

John 19:11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Verse 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:*

This Apostle had experienced suffering at the hands of many powers in this travels, some good and some bad. Yet he is able to guide people into the proper respect and obedience to constituted governments. It is not our right to criticize these powers because we disagree with them or perhaps they are not functioning to our liking. These beautiful truths of Romans 13 have been abused by good people, both in the secular arena and the religious sector. The principle here is that we must respect these constituted authorities because there is no power but of God. This is true of governments and churches.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Many men have found themselves on the wrong side of the law because they saw themselves as some standard of right or wrong. This same thing has occurred in churches. Is it any wonder that our churches are so weak?

Verse 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.*

Jeremiah 27:6 *And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.*

We see God using an ungodly king, Nebuchadnezzar as His instrument...God had "given" the lands to this king. It is distasteful for us to consider that God used the Germany of WWII to bring about His judgment of the people of Israel. This doesn't mean we are giving consent for the use of violence. However, God sometimes uses strong means to bring about His will. God, at times, uses authorities to bring about His wrath upon him that doeth evil.

2 Peter 2:9-10 *9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: 10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

Verse 5 *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

The exhortation here is valuable. Note, Paul doesn't hesitate to tell us to be subject to these designated powers.

Luke 3:14 *And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.*

"For conscience sake." This recognizes the power of God transcendent over all of us, even to affect our conscience.

Matthew 23:21 *And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.*

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

"For this cause." Because they are appointed by God, they are God's servants. "Pay tribute.(taxes)." Not only submit and obey those that are over us, but we are to pay our part for their support. We should contribute, because to do so is to honor God and recognize His arrangement of the civil authorities. Also, the same submission is needed in our churches. The civil authorities are for our protection and improvement of benefits that serve us.

Verse 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.*

"Render therefore." This advice is often repeated in the Bible.

Matthew 22:21 *They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*

Learning to obey the civil authorities is a part of the Christian overcoming. God's laws are not intended to confuse and disturb civil laws. Our taxes should be paid with the same honesty and promptness as our other debts.

Conclusions of Verse 1-7

- (1) It is our conclusion that the Bible has the final authority for the Christian church. It is true that not everyone understands that principle. However, God will make all final judgments for man according to truth.
- (2) Civil governments are recognized by God. That doesn't mean He agrees, but uses them to suit His purposes.
- (3) Civil rulers are dependent on God. He has control over them, can put down and raise up as He chooses.
- (4) The authority of God is superior to civil authorities. They have no right to enact laws interfering with His authority. However, this conflict has been going on throughout the history of man. Even today, we see our civil authorities making laws about abortion and same sex marriage that interferes with God's people practicing truth. This will bring the wrath of God on this world such as it has never seen in its history.
- (5) It is not the business of civil rulers to regulate the church. Even so, many countries attempt to do so. For example, China is trying to stamp out the church, but the more the church suffers, the more it grows.
- (6) The rights of the church to worship God are given of God, but the world is attempting to control this worship. There will be great judgement from God.

Verse 8 *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* Paul now turns to the Christian community with some excellent exhortations. "Owe no man anything." We should not be indebted to any man so as to injure him or to work ill to him. If we were to follow this command, it would solve many of the problems of our Christian families.

- (a) It would teach us to be content with what we have.
- (b) We would be very careful in contracting debt.
- (c) It would teach us to instruct our families in business.

Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
(d) This would teach us to be industrious, to work hard.

Proverbs 24:30-34 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. 32 Then I saw, and considered sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 34 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

- (e) The scripture says, "Love not the world." It costs money to love the world.

But to love one another... Love is a debt that has no ending. Acts of kindness can never be ended As we practice this love, we are fulfilling the law. This is fully pleasing to God. Obedience to love brings happiness to a man and his family.

Verse 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.*

If our obedience to God rises to its fullness, it will be because we are loving our neighbor as ourselves. Therefore, God has made love available to us.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

To love in this manner requires us to give up our will completely. Jesus said it this way: If any man will follow me, let him deny self and take up his cross and follow me. We tend to make it so difficult to follow him, but all that is necessary is to give up our will.

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

Romans 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

This is the result of giving up our life to God and love fills us and our life becomes fully satisfying and fruitful. Love for God is the heart of all this, and our neighbor will see it and feel it.

Verse 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.*

“knowing the time.” Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for not discerning the signs of the times. When He was warning about the destruction of Jerusalem, He said “You know not the time of your visitation.” Paul says to the Romans, it is high time to awake out of sleep. He also said a similar thing to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

If there ever was a time the church needed to wake up, it is today. There is much talk of the coming of the Lord, but little discussion of being prepared for that coming. Many preachers are saying the whole church will go up in the rapture. This doesn’t seem to consider being ready.

Revelation 19:7 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Ephesians 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Our verse 11 says, “knowing the time.” There is an urgency to discern the time we are living in. In Jesus time, He was telling to be ready. He was there in their midst and they could not see it. The signs of Jesus coming are all around us but we do not see them.

Verse 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 far spent.” It is hastening to a close. The night represents a time of darkness where sin operates, crime occurs.

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

We are living in a time of moral darkness, where men love darkness rather than light. John 1 tells us “the Light shines in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.”

“The day is at hand.” This means it is drawing nigh. Paul uses this thought in the following verses:

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

1 Peter 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

The Apostles and the early church lived in the expectation of the day of the Lord being imminent.

1 Thessalonians 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

“Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” These works of darkness are described in verse 13 and the armor of light is given in verse 14...seen below:

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

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

1 John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

As we consider putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (vs.14):

- (a) It means Jesus Christ becomes our protection as in verse 12, the armor of light for our warfare.
- (b) He also becomes our righteousness

1 Corinthians 1:30

- (c) In addition to righteousness, He becomes our sanctification.
- (d) One of the great needs of the Christian community is His wisdom.
- (e) He being our redemption takes us out of this world's sin condition.

In **Colossians 3:8-10;12, 14**,

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him:

12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Paul uses the expression “put on and put off” 5 times. This action of putting on or off is something we do. This is called applying the word to our lives. It is accomplished in us by the Spirit as a result of our believing. That is a miracle of God that happens to us when we apply faith to the Word.