

The Epistle to the Romans

Ch. 13

Billy Graham is in town. Wanting to mail a letter, he asks a young boy where the post office is, adding, "If you'll come to church tonight, I'll tell you how to get to heaven." "No thanks," the lad said. "You don't even know your way to the post office."

Romans superbly contrasts **earning** God's love vs. receiving it **free by faith**. In chapters 1-11 Paul stresses that God's Son was the only acceptable, only perfect sacrifice for our sin. His death on the cross completely satisfied God's justice. By that unrivaled act of love **God forgave all sinners of all sin**. When He rose from the dead, **Jesus conquered death for all who trust Him** -- no human effort required, else it wouldn't be grace (Galatians 3:11-14). If you must perform to deserve God's approval, that's *religion*. What He desires with you is an intimate *relationship*. Chapters 12-16 picture that relationship.

William Tyndale, born in England in 1494, two years after Columbus set sail for the New World, was first to translate the Greek and Hebrew Bible into English, demystifying it for the common man. Religious and government moguls saw this as a threat to their influence and had Tyndale strangled and burned at the stake. The masses discovered the Gospel's invitation is not about our good works. It's simply: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13)! **Let's read Romans 13:1-14 (p 845, NIV).**

Today we enter a potential, moral values mine field. Politics remains off limits here. But when an issue is specifically addressed by Scripture, it's wise to examine what God says (**2 Timothy 3:15,16**).

The Bible is our Maker's manual for godly living. It covers life and death; past, present and future; love and hate; marriage and divorce; wealth and poverty; success and failure. We're not robots. Our choices have consequences; we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7,8). Same for nations and cities like wicked Sodom and Gomorrah which God eradicated in 2050 B.C. (Genesis 19:1-29).

"Render Unto Caesar"

Romans 13:1-7

To preserve civility God instituted human authority. Even under cruel Nero Paul urges Christ's faithful in the Imperial capital to be subject to constituted authorities since God puts them in and out of power (**1 Samuel 15:23,28**; Titus 3:1). They're His servant/ministers to prevent tyranny, enforce justice and foster the common good (**Proverbs 8:15,16**; **1 Peter 2:13-17**). By paying taxes and respecting authority, we avoid punishment and keep a clear conscience (Mark 12:13-17). Believers are citizens of heaven, ultimately answerable to the King of Kings (Philippians 3:20,21).

God puts *all* kings in power, even evil ones like Jeroboam, Nebuchadnezzar and Roman puppet, Pilate (1 Kings 12; Jeremiah 27; **Daniel 4:31,32; John 19:10,11**). God will deal with them, but must we obey them? The Bible says ‘Yes.’ To a point.

When man’s laws contradict God’s, civil disobedience is a God-approved response for Christ’s people. When Peter was ordered to stop teaching about Jesus, he responded, “We must obey God rather than human authority” (**Acts 4:19,20, 5:28,29**).

Persia’s King Darius decreed that worshiping any god would get you a night with the lions. Daniel protested by praying in public (Daniel 6:6-10). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow to Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar and landed in a blazing furnace (Daniel 3). Hebrew midwives ignored Pharaoh’s command to kill newborn Jewish boys (Exodus 1:15-20). Jesus cited wrong behavior by religion’s top guns. God’s people are not to cave, compromise or run but to stand, ready to be His instruments of transformation.

After making Adam, God concluded that man should not be alone. He needed a helper, a companion, another “driver” on the passenger side. So, out of Adam’s rib God fashioned the first “*wo-man*” (Hebrew for “Whoa, man!”) God created the institution of marriage as a binding covenant between a man and a woman. It’s the basis of God’s plan for physical intimacy, ethical decision-making, sexuality, reproduction and child rearing.

Our “In-God-we-trust” USofA is legislating what many cannot conscientiously obey (Proverbs 29:2). A “hate crimes” law has intimidated churches into squelching their pro-marriage views. Recently our state’s voters okayed same-sex marriage, insisting, “God, we know better” (Leviticus 20:13; **Proverbs 14:12; Romans 1:18-32**). It’s not about our tolerance; it’s what will *God* tolerate. He *loves* sinners but *hates* sin.

This fall in Beijing twenty believers were arrested in church. In Pakistan merely being accused of blaspheming Islam means death or life in prison. In Mexico last summer armed thugs raped children in Christian camps. It’s believed that worldwide 163,000 Christians die for their faith each year mainly in Burma/Myanmar, China, Egypt, Iran, Laos, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Vietnam.

DISCUSS: Why would God permit despots to be in power?

Our country has told God to “Butt out!” Will we, like “Sodom and Gomorrah,” reap what we’ve sown (**Genesis 6:9-13**)? Our *Declaration of Independence* says government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed to protect the God-given rights of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. When the will of society and its leaders opposes God’s, “might makes right” breeds tyranny. Karl Marx sought to eliminate God and family. Ultimately, all governments will bow to the King of Kings (Micah 3:1-12; **Philippians 2:9-11**). Will His Deal continue to be free to explore Jesus’ teaching in this public setting as we’ve done for twenty-plus years?

DISCUSS: *Why is this topic either “frog in the kettle” or paranoia?*

“I Can’t Stop Lovin’ You” Romans 13:8-10

Formerly God’s enemy, Paul was awed that God had saved him (1 Timothy 1:15,16). Loving God and others was how Paul said thanks. If we could obey all of Moses’ laws, we’d model perfect love. Only Jesus has done that (**Matthew 22:37–40**). Since the believer is “in Christ,” God credits him with Jesus’ perfection (**Galatians 2:20,21**)!

DISCUSS: *How can believers honor their government leaders?*

Coming Attractions Romans 13:11-14

Accepting God’s forgiveness, you’ve been totally pardoned, never to be condemned again by Him for your sin! Therefore, can we do less than honor Christ in our thoughts, words and conduct as we await His return (Romans 12:9-21; Colossians 3:1-4)?

Jesus comes first to take home the faithful, both living and dead, before He defeats and binds satan (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Then He reigns over a peaceful Earth for 1,000 years (**Revelation 20:1-6**). Next, the battle of Gog and Magog, then the Great White Throne judgment when satan and all unbelievers are tossed into the “lake of fire” forever. Finally, Christ rules “without end” as King of Kings over “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 20:7-22:21).

Until then the Lord arms believers with “the fruit of the Spirit” to show through us His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-26).

DISCUSS: *Why do we get dealt hard times and difficult people?*

Have you begun your walk with Christ? He’s vowed to never leave you, to see you through all of life’s challenges. With His own blood **He paid your sin-debt in full**. To receive God’s permanent pardon, just tell Him now: “Father, thank You for putting all my sins on Your Son on that cross. I humbly accept Your lavish gift of pardon, grace and mercy and welcome your Holy Spirit into my life. Hallelujah!”

His Deal

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