
Oakland International Fellowship Paul J. Bucknell

Living in the World

**Romans 13:1-14 Handout**

Paul first shows how the believer’s relationship is restored with God (chapters 1-11), and then continues on to the end of Romans, step by step directing the believer to righteous living (12-16). After challenging us to fully dedicate our lives to serve God and His people in chapter 12, Paul turns our focus onto right living in the world in this chapter: our relationship with the government (13:1-7) and with the society in general (13:8-14).

# A) Living Subject to Governing Authorities (Ro 13:1-7)

## God’s establishment of governing authorities (13:1)

1 Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God (Ro 13:1).

Romans 13:1 is a very powerful verse:

* “*No authority except from God*”: God has established and leaves occupying societal authorities in control and responsible for carrying out God’s order (contrast Ep 2:2).
* “*Be in subjection*”: God calls every person to be subject to their governing authorities. But please do not conclude everything done by a government is approved by Him.

## Need to subject oneself (13:2-5)

2 Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. 5 Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake (13:2-5).

* “*Resists authority*” (2): Paul clearly shows how those who oppose or resist authority not only oppose the government but also God Himself. If we go against the government, then we set ourselves against God and will find severe consequences for our disobedience.
* “*Not a cause for fear*” (3): One only fears the government when sneaky and doing wrong things. Do good and fear disappears.
* “*Minister of God*” (4): Literally ‘servant.’ God appoints these ‘ministers’ to help restrain evil.

Two reasons: (1) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and (2) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Should we ever disobey government? Yes (Acts 4:18-19 preach gospel). Check motives.

## Paying taxes (13:6-7)

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor (Ro 13:6-7).

* “*You also pay taxes*” (6): Your attitude toward paying taxes follows the previous discussion to pay respect for authority: they are servants of God (like paying a pastor). Allow God to judge them. Meanwhile be faithful in paying taxes and pray for your leaders (1 Ti 2:2).

# B) General principles for living in the world (Ro 13:8-14)

## Love summarizes the laws (13:8-10)

8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law (13:8-10).

* Paul subtly transitions from speaking about governments (1-6) to “all” (7) or “to anyone” (8).
* “*Owe nothing to anyone*” (8): The Greek is composed of very strong negatives, “*Never for no reason*” owe…. Some understand this as a general prohibition against taking loans (OT speaks about usury-interest: Click: => [De 23:2; Pr 22:6-7](http://www.foundationsforfreedom.net/References/OT/Historical/Nehemiah/Nehemiah05.1_05Loans.11.html)) while others limit the prohibition to outstanding debts like taxes and credit card debt. How does it practically work out in our society which applauds debt? Buying a car?
* “*Love one another*” exhorts us to positively give and share rather than to be in obligation to others for money, “custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear; honor to honor” (7).
* “*Love …is fulfillment of law*” (10): As we rightly care for others, we will consequently keep the laws, for love summarizes the law in everyday life.

## Love supersedes impurity (13:11-14)

11 And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. 13 Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts (13:11-14).

* “*Awaken from sleep*” (11): Living in a seductive world where he must remain alert (Mt 25:1-13).
* “*Salvation*” (11): refers not to personal salvation but the final glorification when Christ returns.
* “*Not in drunkenness, not in sensuality*” (13): Fun and love cannot mix with our flesh’s passion.
* “*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ*” (14): By putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, the imagery of putting on a set of clothes or armor, means that we adopt His holy ways as our holy ways.
* “*Make no provision for the flesh*” (14): Forbid even a little room for unholy passion but instead make great allowance for kind and loving acts. List ways to do this:
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Being Jesus’ disciples has great ramifications on the way we live in the world around us. These clear directives help guide our general attitude and approach to political and law enforcement entities – respect them, as well as handling ourselves in the evil-stained culture about us – live holy lives.

### Discussion questions

1. What do you believe about debt? Why? How does this passage affect your decisions?
2. What is one way that you have “put on Christ”?
3. In what ways do you find it difficult to believe that the government is God’s servant?