

# Citizens

May 17, 2020

Romans 13:1-14

In our text today, Paul is urging the church to become model citizens. Just as children watch and learn from others, so too the world watches the church and, depending on how we live, can learn what a life of faith looks like.

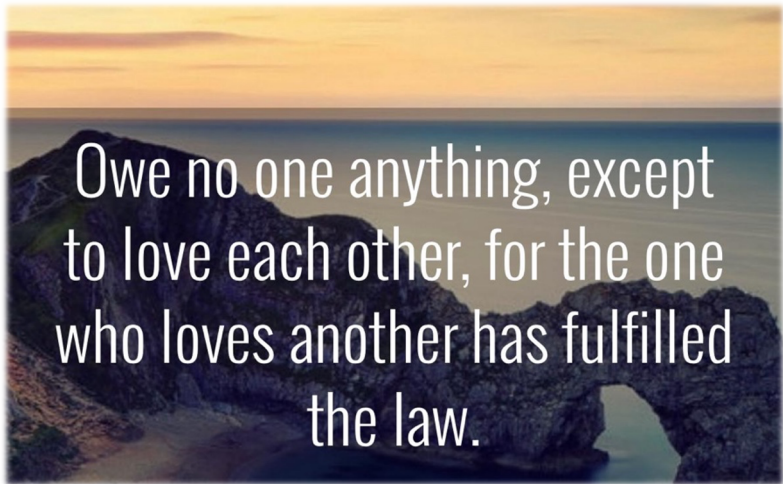
Paul wrote, "... for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9). This gives the church the opportunity to put the righteousness of Christ on display.

Paul is urging Christians to submit to governing authorities while recognizing that the Lord is sovereign. Thus, he writes, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God" (Romans 13:1).

Paul is not urging Christians to blindly follow immoral leaders who will lead them to disobey Christ (Acts 4:19). But he is commanding them to trust God in all things. Ultimately, the purpose of trusting God's sovereignty is to reveal the love of God. As we follow Christ, the world is watching us. Let's learn to live like Him. [excerpts from Travis Biller Pastor, Immanuel Baptist, Elizabethton]

## Submit (Romans 13:1-7)

- Here Paul calls for submission to authority, balancing government's God-given right to rule with our submission to God, who alone holds absolute authority.
    - **"be subject to the higher powers ... the powers that be ordained of God"**
      - Paul told Titus to remind the churches "to be subject to rulers and authorities"
      - Peter exhorted believers to submit to the authorities (1 Pet. 2:12)
      - Jesus instructed "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, ..." (Mark 12:17)
  - Why does the Bible (God's word) tell us to submit to government? What if we don't agree?
    - First, no authority exists outside the scope of God's authority.
      - Those who resist obedience (submission) to government are resisting God.
    - Second governing structures were put in place by God (see John 19:11).
      - Not only did God ordain the governmental structures that exists, He has given them the task of maintaining order in society.
  - Paul told his readers they had nothing to fear from the governing authorities as long as their conduct was proper. But if their behavior was bad, they had every reason to be afraid.
  - Wait a minute. What if government tries to keep us from doing God's will? What then?
    - God's authority is absolute. When Peter and John were told to stop preaching about Jesus, they continued to preach (Acts 4:18-19).
    - Always evaluate demands of authorities in light of the gospel.
- **Can you be a good citizen and evaluate the demands of authorities in light of the gospel?**
- **How do Christians live in a totalitarian country?**



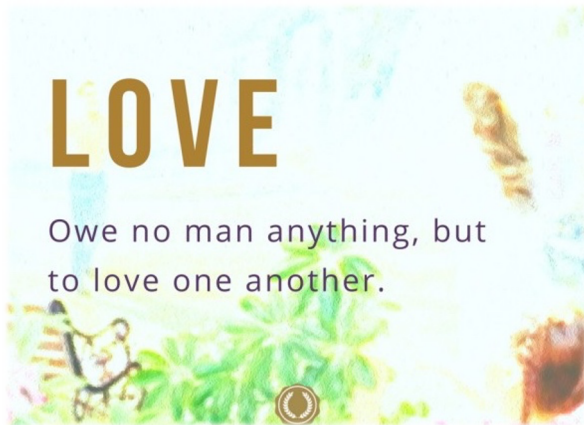
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Romans 13:1

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## Love (Romans 13:8-10)

- Paul uses the concept of debt to show believers are to fulfill their obligations - **“owe no man anything”**
  - Paul’s exception left one obligation open. One that cannot be fully repaid – **“but to love one another”**
    - ‘one another’ – other believers and non-believers
    - Remember Jesus definition of neighbor (Luke 10:25-37)
  - Why should we love others?
    - **“He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law”**
  - Paul lists four commandments from the Mosaic Law that deal with human relations:
    - Thou shalt not commit adultery
    - Thou shalt not kill
    - Thou shalt not bear false witness
    - Thou shalt not covet
  - All of these commands are summed up by the command **“love thy neighbor as thyself”**.
    - See Old Testament Leviticus 19:18 and New Testament Matthew 22:37-40.
    - **“love worketh no ill to his neighbor”** – love does no harm but instead does good.
  - The law is fulfilled in loving one’s neighbor (Galatians 5:13-14). The law’s ultimate purpose was to create a Spirit-governed community characterized by selfless, sacrificial love for one another.
- **How is love shown to others; as a child, as an adult? Are words or actions more important?**



## Anticipate (Romans 13:11-14)

- Paul wants us to understand the time in which we live. The timing of Jesus return is uncertain.
- **“it is high time to wake out of sleep”** – it is time to be ready for Christ’s return.
  - There is urgency for Christians to be spiritually alert and for holy living.
  - Salvation is nearer than when we first believed.
- A new day is dawning (**“the night is far spent”**). It’s time to get dressed for the new life.
  - **“Cast off the works of darkness”** - the activities and character of the old life.
  - **“Put on the armor of light”** – believers will engage in conflict with the world.
- How should believers live in these end times as we await Christ’s return?
  - **“walk honestly”** – live a life that is proper and appropriate
  - **“as in the day”** – believers are the light and must live as such, a witness to the world
  - **“not in carousing and drunkenness”** – excessive drinking and partying
  - **“not in sexual impurity and promiscuity”**- wantonness, sensuality, debauchery
  - **“not in quarreling and jealousy”** – a life consumed by pride.
  - Instead, **“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”** – let Christ live His life through you!

## ➤ **What can you do this week to show love to others?**

**Biblical Truth: Believers should seek to represent Christ well in their communities and world.**

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 1 Peter 3:13-17

