

**All Citizens Christian Church Calgary**

**Bible Study:** Tuesday, September 23rd, 2025. **Topic: THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS 13**

**TEXT: Rom 13**

**THE CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMAN GOVERNMENT**

**INTRODUCTION**: Does Rom 13:1-7 generate any question in your mind? I will be surprised if the men amongst us do not raise any eyebrow about this scripture.

Many tyrannical leaders and their supporters have used Romans 13:1-7 to justify their idolatry, deceit, violence, repression, and imperialism. If those scriptures are to be taken in their face value, Apostle Peter’s statement in Acts 5:29. The three Hebrew Children’s statement in Dan 3:16 and even the words of Apostle Paul in Rom 10:9 would fail.

Romans 13 was written to believers who were living in a country that was rich in legal jurisprudence but weak in morals. It was a violent country, disrespectful and full of bloodshed. To understand Romans 13:1-7, we must understand Romans chapters 1-12 which declares the supremacy of Jesus Christ over the law, ourselves and this time, all governing authorities. We must realise that the Apostle Paul is not preaching submission to the gospel of Ceaser but to the gospel of Christ. Reading Romans chapter 13:1-7 alone, without chapters 1-12, will make some to believe otherwise, thus creating an aberration of the truth.

The Apostle is in Chapter 13:1-7 preaching the message that will unite the Jews and the Gentiles in Rome together with a heavenly focus and be prepared to navigate a challenging terrain of the Roman leaders. He has stated clearly that nothing should separate them from the love of Christ, not even Ceaser. Rom 8:35-38. Also, he says in Rom 10: 9 that Jesus is Lord. A statement that is similar to that made by the three Hebrew Children in Dan 3:16. A careful study of Rom 13:1-7 will therefore show that what the Apostle is trying to answer is how to live wisely as children of light in the midst of the age of darkness?

The first thing you will see in this epistle is that it is not Rome’s virtue, nor its gods that allows Rome to have authority but that all authority is rooted in the God of Jesus Christ. Rom 13:1 (For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God). Through this epistle, Judges and leaders may hence learn what their vocation is. That they are not to rule for their own interest, but for the public good; nor are they endued with unbridled power, but their authority is for the wellbeing of their subjects. In addition, that they are responsible to God and to men in the exercise of their power. For as they are God’s deputy, placed here to do His business, they will ultimately give account to Him. And that the ministration which God has committed to them is for the good of their subjects, therefore they are debtors to them.

Also judges ought to forcibly repress the waywardness of evil men, who are lawless and to inflict punishment on their offenses as God’s judgment requires; for he expressly declares, that they are armed with the sword, not for an empty show, but that they may smite evil-doers and reward those who do good.

John Calvin’s Commentary on Rom 13. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 481

Romans 13 restricts the Christians from engaging in activist rioting, insurrection, and disorder. But do not keep us from peaceful protestations like what was done by Martin Luther King Jnr in the March on Washington. Rather, the Apostle Paul obligates us Christians to confront evil governing officials with holy rebukes to remind them of their God-appointed calling. Unfortunately, this approach is practically impossible in a tyrannical government which makes forceful resistance impossible. How do you proclaim Rom 10:9 in a nation where the emperor is supposed to be supreme.

If our confession, “Jesus is Lord,” is true, he is Lord over all. All political theories and implementations are under Christ’s dominion.

Ardel Caneday (What Romans 13 does not mean)

DISCUSSION:

1. **Should Christians lead riots?** The answer according to Apostle Paul is no. But we must understand the difference between riots and protests. Christians could lead protest like the “March on Washington” by Martin Luther King jnr.
2. **The Bible enjoins us to obey the government?** Why and how should we do this? Matthew 22:15-21, 17:24-27, Rom. 13:5-7. As Christians, Apostle Paul is not asking us to become pawns and sycophants to the government. Neither is he saying that we should be practicing how to be martyrs in the hands of a tyrannical government. We should understand the difference between political persecution and spiritual persecution and be prepared to defend ourselves against false accusations.
3. **What is the difference between submission and silence**? Submission does not mean silence. – there is a difference between obeying authorities and sycophancy. Acts 16:35-37, Acts 25:10-12, Apostle Paul appealed to Ceaser instead of leaving the case in the hands of the wicked Jewish leaders where he knew he would not get justice.
4. **Should ministers comment on political issues**? It is the duty of ministers to remind the governing officials of their God appointed role. By virtue of their leadership role, church ministers are obligated to publicly teach the scriptural truth to the state. This does not preclude all other Christians from doing same at their individual spheres of influence. Apostle Paul was not writing to Nero but to the believers in Rome. Minsters must not be silent when the authorities are perpetrating iniquity against the people. Nathan rebuked King David; II Sam 12:9-10 and Elijah rebuked Ahab; I Kings 21:20-24, Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus: John 19:38-42
5. **Should Christians stand their ground in the face of injustice?** How should they do this? Acts 22:25-29, 23:12-35. Take advantage of who you are for the gospel’s sake. You can preach at certain places in some African countries where others might not be able to do so because you are a Canadian
6. **When our belief collides with the tradition/culture of the people and authorities, what should Christians do?** Dan 3:16. Christians should know the law like Apostle Paul; and like Peter, we ought to choose to obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29. We must not join the crowd to lift up iniquity no matter the party we belong.
7. **How is loving our neighbors the summation of all commandments?** Matt 22:37-40. If we love our neighbors many of us will not support evil government when they see people suffering. They will never take side with iniquity. Any Christian who does so in the name of party solidarity is disobedient to God.
8. **How should a Christian put on Christ?** Rom 13:12-14

**CONCLUSION**: When it comes to Bible interpretation, we must allow scripture to interpret scripture. We must not take one passage and run with it. Romans 13 is one of those passages that would throw us down the cliff if we run with it outside the purview of other scriptures. I hope we learnt a lot from it today.