



ROMANS 13-14
■ WEEK 5 ■

For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- Romans 14:17

Righteousness in Relationships - Paul is concerned that disagreements over secondary issues will keep those in the church from putting their faith into practice, mainly when living together as a diverse yet unified Church. He calls them to love, service, humility, and unity around the work of Jesus.

WEEK 5, DAY 1
■ **MONDAY** ■
ROMANS 13:1-5

RESPONSIBILITY TO AUTHORITY

The topic of government is an interesting one in Christian culture. It is a topic that immediately brings many opinions from political affiliations to how Christians should respond to the prevailing culture in the world. And yet, these words of Paul's are timeless commands that are rooted not in political parties, but in the Sovereign God.

There seem to be two extremes that believers easily fall into when it comes to the government. Many place an overemphasis on government. They think that electing leaders that align with their ideologies will bring hope to their nation. But this always falls short, because true hope is found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The other extreme is that of a rebellion against all forms of government. This also directly contradicts the commands of Paul in this chapter: We are to respect and honor our government, but a human government has no power to bring salvation – only Jesus can do that.

But the main theme of this passage is not in telling us which political party we should choose, it is to show us the sovereignty of our God. Paul was writing in a time when the government hated Christians and he was not immune from this severe treatment and persecution. Yet despite the injustices that he faced, he rested in the sovereignty of God. Romans 13 commands submission to our governing authorities, but it doesn't tell us to blindly submit. Instead it tells us that we can submit with full and complete confidence that all authority is put into place by God. Romans 8:28 reminded us of the truth that God works all things for the good of His people, and we are reminded of that truth again. We can be assured that even when we do not understand the governmental authority (or any authority we are called to submit to), we can rest in the truth that God is using all things to bring about His purposes.

Jeremy and Kristin Schmucker - Romans: The Gospel-Centered Life Volume Two



REFLECTION

We are not short of feelings and opinions about the authorities of our world. We feel strongly about our bosses, our businesses, and our local and national government. God works all things for His good. We have learned that, but this is one of those areas where we need the faith to believe and live it. Take time today to pray for the authorities you struggle to understand and support. Ask God to help you develop your faith and trust in Him and His plan.

WEEK 5, DAY 2
■ **TUESDAY** ■
ROMANS 13:6-7

RESPONSIBILITY TO PAYING DEBTS

Romans 13 begins with some really tough topics of discussion. Government, now taxes. These are subjects that bring about headaches, division, anger, and anxiety. Why are we looking at this? Simply put, we need to invite God into the things we most desire to ignore or run from. The areas where we don't invite God into our lives are the areas where we need Him to be Lord more than anything. Taxes are, of course, one of those areas through which we need our devotion to the Lord to reign. Have you ever thought about your faithfulness to the Lord while paying a sales tax? Have you considered the goodness of God while paying your taxes in April? Paul is encouraging the church of Rome to continue to pay what is due to the authorities above them. He is encouraging them to stand out by the way they do what is right and required, even when it is difficult or unpopular. We need to take the words of Paul as a reminder to embrace the spiritual practice of being mindful of God in the areas we dread.



REFLECTION

Where do you feel you need to be more mindful of God? This week, when you are confronted with high living costs, frustration with interest rates, or anxiety over debt, consider the Lord. Ask Him to help you. Seek His peace and be mindful of Him in these areas you wish to ignore and avoid.

WEEK 5, DAY 3
■ WEDNESDAY ■
ROMANS 13:8-10

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

On a personal level, the only "debt" we are to carry is the "debt" to love one another - this is a perpetual obligation we carry both before God and each other...Paul echoes Jesus' words as recorded in Matthew 22:36-40. This is one of the two commands upon which hang all the Law and the Prophets.. Love your neighbor means to love the people you actually meet with and deal with every day. It is easy for us to love in the theoretical and the abstract, but God demands that we love real people.

"No man can compass the ends of life by drawing a little line around himself upon the ground. No man can fulfill his calling as a Christian by seeking the welfare of his wife and family only, for these are only a sort of greater self." (Spurgeon)

Love is the fulfillment of the law: It is easy to do all the right religious "things" but to neglect love. Our love is the true measure of our obedience to God.

David Guzik - Enduring Word Bible Commentary



REFLECTION

Have you ever thought about loving others as a debt you owe to them? Surely not. No one wants to be in debt to anyone, but Paul here leans into that. Paul highlights to be a Christ-follower is to be in an obligation of debt. The debt is an obligation to pay towards your neighbor; the currency of that debt is love. Today, process who you feel you may owe a debt of love to. Lean into that question. You may find it being someone you struggle to love, someone you haven't thought of in a long time, or someone you see almost every day but haven't shared the currency of love with lately. During this time of reflection, don't grasp toward the easiest people to love, but the ones you truly believe you have neglected/owe a debt to. Begin to pay your debt today and every day.

WEEK 5, DAY 4
■ THURSDAY ■
ROMANS 13:11-14

BE READY FOR THE LORD

We must live with an eternal perspective. We must live with our heart firmly fixed on the return of our Savior. In this passage, we are exhorted to live not only in light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus, but also in light of His coming. In this creation, fall, redemption, and consummation story that Scripture declares, we cling to the salvation that is found in the redemptive aspect of the story and we set our hope on the day when the consummation of all things takes place. We look to the day when this world will be restored, but even better. And these are not just far off stories, this is our steadfast confidence. This is the comfort that we rest in. Things will not always be as they are. This world will be made new just as we have been made new in Christ. Sin and death will be forever banished and we will dwell in the presence of our God forever. And that hope should pump through our veins and change the way that we live our daily lives.

It is time to wake up. It is time to arise and live like the people of God. The hour has come for our faith to be demonstrated in action. We are told that our salvation is nearer than it was when we first placed faith in this gospel message. Every moment brings us closer to the awaited day when we see our Savior face to face...

We must cast off the works of the flesh. We must shun the supposed self-righteousness we think that we possess. We must abandon our sinful desires and replace them with better desires...we must intentionally fix our hearts on Jesus and fix our gaze on the day we see Him face to face.

Jeremy and Kristin Schmucker - Romans: The Gospel-Centered Life Volume Two



REFLECTION

"...clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 13:14)

Clothes are a status symbol. Clothes are a comfort. Clothes are a means of protection. Clothes are a means of confidence. Paul's encouragement to clothe ourselves, not simply with Christ but with His presence, is so powerful. Paul's ending words for chapter thirteen encourage us to organize our lives around the greatest thing we can look forward to the return and eternal presence of the King. Reflect today on this: how am I clothing myself in the presence of the Lord today? How am I organizing my life around the return of the King? What do I need to begin to reorganize?

WEEK 5, DAY 5
■ **FRIDAY** ■
ROMANS 14:1-9

LIVE AND DIE TO HONOR THE LORD

If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. - Romans 14:8

Paul seems to be getting in the weeds of the Jewish law at the beginning of chapter fourteen. He is talking about not arguing with people about issues that don't determine one's salvation, like what you eat or what day you mark as holy or not. Paul is encouraging the Roman people to care about what we, or others do, to honor the Lord. He is shifting the focus onto honoring God being the primary motivation of our encouragements or criticisms, not our religious preferences. His words remind us that in all we do, we need to filter it through the lens of: is this honoring the Lord? Imagine how different our lives would look if this was a question we asked ourselves before each thought or action. Is what I'm thinking about this person honoring the Lord? Is what I'm saying honoring? Is what I'm spending my money on honoring?

When we live and die to honor the Lord, we not only draw nearer to Him, but we honor ourselves and His people more. We see ourselves as His creations, and in turn, we see those around us as His creations worthy of honor, too. Honor the Lord in all you do so you may, too, find a greater measure of honor for your life and those around you.



REFLECTION

What do you think it practically means for you to begin to honor the Lord? It starts with seeing what areas of your life seem to be dishonoring God. These are typically the areas we hide. These are the areas where we are selfish, vengeful, lustful, or greedy. Spend time today looking at these areas and seek out how you might be able to honor the Lord in these areas of neglect in your life.

WEEK 5, DAY 6
■ SATURDAY ■
ROMANS 14:5-23

DON'T CAUSE ANOTHER TO STUMBLE

Paul's supreme concern in this passage is the danger of so clearing your own path that you end up making it impossible for your neighbours to walk down theirs. It is all too easy, in sorting out our own lives and finding our own way forward as Christians, to make things harder, not easier, for those around us. Since one of the basic Jewish and Christian images for what we call 'behaviour' is that of walking, a natural way of describing these difficulties is the one Paul highlights in verse 13: the danger of putting obstacles' or stumbling blocks' - things that will trip people up - in each other's way.

So, he says with deliberate humour, don't pass judgment on each other - but do use your judgment in not tripping each other up! Just as it is vital for every Christian to make up his or her mind about things which are, as we saw in the previous passage, 'indifferent' - things about which Christians can legitimately differ - so it is vital that, when we have done so, our main concern is then not for ourselves but for those around us. Other people may well be at a different point in the Christian life, and may still be struggling with their conscience over things which we believe to be perfectly good in themselves...

The way forward is to recognize that things can and do become unclean, or even evil, not because of what they are in themselves but because of how people regard them. This is rather like saying that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and it's obviously not a principle which can be applied to all ethical questions and situations. Paul is talking specifically about what people eat and drink, in a context where that was very contentious. We have to use wise judgment ourselves...What (Paul) says in verse 14 is that food can and does become unclean - at the point at which someone considers it so; and, in verse 20, that it can and does become evil (a stage beyond 'unclean') if when you eat it you cause someone else to trip up.

This whole passage is, in fact, looking one way in the argument. It is an appeal to people who are happy to eat and drink anything at all. It is asking them to recognize that there are occasions when they need to hold back from this freedom for the sake of those whose Christian faith would be irreparably damaged by such behaviour.

N.T. Wright - *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 2*



REFLECTION

This is just another area where Paul continues the call that Jesus gives us to honor Him by loving our neighbor. If our freedoms in Christ hinder or confuse someone else's Christian walk, we must weigh whether that is loving or selfish. Essentially, Paul reminds us to be mindful of our Christian brothers and sisters and how to encourage, not discourage, their walk with Christ. Reflect on this idea today.

WEEK 5, DAY 7
■ SUNDAY ■

REST & REFLECTION DAY

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

Take notes on this week's sermon on page 61.



REFLECTION NOTES & QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Romans 13-14 and specifically how God has given us responsibilities to meet that point toward our honoring and loving of one another and God. All that we do is meant to be out of love and honor for God. As we wrap up this week's study, read Romans 14:7-9. Let this be a reminder for your mind, your heart, and your soul that we are made to honor the Lord in all that we do.

Reflect on how these words shape our lives. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to apply this truth about God to your walk with Him?