

A CHRISTIAN'S CIVIL RESPONSIBILITIES

BIBLE TEXT : Romans 13:1-14; 14:1-23; 15:1-33.

LESSON 388 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Romans 13:1-14

¹ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

² Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

⁴ For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil.

⁵ Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

⁶ For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

⁷ Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

⁸ Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

⁹ For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

¹⁰ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹ And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

¹³ Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Subjection to Magistrates

1. Civil government is in accordance with the laws of God and should be obeyed, Romans 13:1, 2;

Titus 3:1

¹ Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

1 Peter 2:13

¹³ Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

1 Peter 2:14

¹⁴ Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

2. Rulers preserve law and order and therefore we should respect them, Romans 13:3-7.

II Christian Duty

1. Christians should love one another, Romans 13:8-10;

Galatians 5:14

¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

James 2:8

⁸ If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 2. Let the Gospel light shine so sinners will cast off the works of darkness and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 13:11-14; I Corinthians 15:34; Ephesians 5:14; I Thessalonians 5:5, 6.

III Wrongful Condemnation

1. Christians should not condemn one another in respect to different kinds of food and observance of certain days, Romans 14:1-6;

1 Timothy 4:4

⁴ For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving;

Colossians 2:16

¹⁶ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:

2. Be charitable toward those who are weak; we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Romans 14:7-16, 20, 21; 15:1-3;

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

⁹ But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

¹⁰ For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

¹¹ And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

¹² But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

¹³ Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his*

chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

¹⁴ But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 14:1-23

¹ Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.

² For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

³ Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

⁴ Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

⁵ One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

⁶ He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

⁷ For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

⁸ For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

⁹ For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

¹⁰ But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

¹¹ For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

¹² So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

¹³ Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

¹⁴ I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

¹⁵ But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

¹⁶ Let not then your good be evil spoken

body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

3. The Kingdom of God does not consist in outward things. Do all in the spirit of faith and for the edification of others, Romans 14:17-23;

Matthew 15:11

¹¹ Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

IV Salvation for Both Jews and Gentiles

1. Scripture proves that Jesus Christ was the minister not only of the circumcision but came also for the salvation of the Gentiles, Romans 15:8-12;

Psalm 18:49

⁴⁹ Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

Isaiah 11:10

¹⁰ And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

John 10:16

¹⁶ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

2. The God of hope can fill you with all joy and peace in believing, Romans 15:13.

V Summary of Paul's Plans

1. Paul tells what God has wrought by him, and of his intended journey to Spain and his trip to Jerusalem with a contribution for the poor saints, Romans 15:15-33.

NOTES:

Civil Government

Civil government is of God who is supreme Governor of the universe. It is true that He delegates authority to whomsoever He will, "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Psalm 75:6, 7). Many times the governor himself may not be a godly man, yet civil government is of God; for without it there would be no society, no security, no protection. All would be confusion.

God revealed to us that He loved order and regularity when He placed the sun, moon, and stars in their orbit and keeps them revolving in their circuits year after year.

In many nations there is what we call a constitution, a plan by which that country is governed. That constitution is supposed to be to the best interest of the people governed. The governor, whether elected, appointed, or received the office by heritage, agrees to govern by that constitution. And as God is the Author of law and order, the governor who administers the laws of a country according to its constitution, is ordained of God.

Obedience to the Law

Paul brings out two reasons why we should obey those in authority: One is to avoid the wrath disobedience would incur, and the other is to keep our conscience clear. These two powerful motives prevent infractions of the law and enforce obedience. Obedience brings a blessing, but disobedience brings a curse.

The Lawfulness of Taxation

Civil government is an order of God and requires much expense in providing for the safety and defence of the community. It is right that those in whose behalf these expenses

of:

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

¹⁸ For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men.

¹⁹ Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

²⁰ For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.

²¹ *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

²² Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

²³ And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

Romans 15:1-33

¹ We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

² Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification.

³ For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

⁴ For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

⁵ Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

⁶ That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

⁸ Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers:

⁹ And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

¹⁰ And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

¹¹ And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

¹² And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the

are incurred should help defray that expense. Lawful taxation is right. On the other hand, excessive taxation by an unprincipled ruler is not upheld by the laws of God. But for conscience' sake the children of God must submit to the law of the country. "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Officials should be respected for the office they hold. If the man in the office is an unworthy person, respect the office and the man on account of the office. Never behave rudely to any person.

The Basis of Divine Law

The Apostle has been showing us our duty, reverence, and obedience to our civil magistrates. He now shows us our duty, as Christians, to one another. Love is the basis of divine law. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." We are bound to obey the laws of the land because of our conscience; but we are bound to one another by the cords of love. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Faith brings us into touch with Heaven; hope makes us not ashamed; but love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost is the greatest of all.

Disputes Between Jews and Gentiles

It is very likely there were misunderstandings between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians at Rome. There was a lack of charity one for the other. The principal subject of dispute was concerning meats and days.

Some converted Jews held that the Law of Moses should still be observed. They considered some meats as unclean and not to be eaten, and that certain festive days should be honoured. The converted Gentile understood that the Christian religion laid no such obligation upon him. Both Jews and Gentiles could be honest in their way of thinking; and both, being sincere and upright and acting in the fear of God, could be received as heirs of eternal life. Of each it was said: "To his own master he standeth or falleth."

Paul was assured by the Lord Jesus that nothing was unclean of itself. But if a brother was weak and considered a thing unclean, a person should respect his belief and not destroy the faith of one for whom Christ died. Value his soul enough not to cast a stumbling block in his way. This shows that by our unwise acts a soul can be destroyed. How wisely and how charitably should Christians walk before God! "For meat destroy not the work of God." And we could add: For any petty differences cause not thy brother to stumble and fall.

One may consider any creature of God as good, and eat it and give God thanks. Another may refrain from eating certain foods. He eats not and gives God thanks. God accepts both, and they should bear with each other. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It consists not in these outward and material things, but in the pardoning of sins and holiness of heart and life. Peace of soul comes from a sense of God's mercy and of having the love of God shed abroad in our heart.

One has said: "This is a genuine counterpart of Heaven; righteousness without sin, peace without disturbance, joy without any kind of mental agony or distressing fear."

Festival Days

The Gentile Christians looked at the Jewish feasts such as Pentecost, the feast of the new moon, and so forth, as part of the Jewish ritual under the Law and not a part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Jews, having kept them for many years, still

Gentiles trust.

¹³ Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

¹⁴ And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

¹⁵ Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

¹⁶ That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

¹⁷ I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

¹⁸ For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

¹⁹ Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

²⁰ Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

²¹ But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

²² For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

²³ But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

²⁴ Whenssoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your *company*.

²⁵ But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

²⁶ For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

²⁷ It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

²⁸ When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

²⁹ And I am sure that, when I come unto

considered them as solemn feasts and continued to observe them. "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

The question of keeping the Law of Moses arose many times in the days of the early Christian church. The Apostles met together to settle this question and their decision is found in Acts 15. Paul deals with this question in the various Epistles. There are false teachers today who would still bring us into the bondage of the Law of Moses, especially in the keeping of the Sabbath Day. But the Bible says: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days" (Colossians 2:16).

The "first day of the week" was the day on which Jesus rose; it was the day on which he made His several appearances before his disciples after His resurrection; it was the day on which the power fell (Acts 2), at which time Christ's Church was founded. It was the day on which the disciples met to break bread in commemoration of the Lord's Supper, and brought their offerings unto the Lord. For these reasons we consider Sunday the Lord's Day and set it aside as a day of worship.

Our Conscience

"Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." Peace of conscience can be enjoyed only by that man who acts according to the full persuasion of the lawfulness of his conduct. That man is miserable who allows himself to practice anything for which his conscience upbraids or accuses him. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

The Dawning of a New Day

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." We are approaching the dawn of a new era; already the Hand is on the doorknob. The darkness will soon be past. Our time of labour for Jesus will soon be over. Many lost souls will soon be crying. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). Let us work while it is called today, for the night cometh when no man can work. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

QUESTIONS

1. Why should we pay taxes?
2. How did Peter get the money to pay taxes for himself and Jesus?
3. For what two reasons should the laws of the land be obeyed?
4. What was the strife in Rome between Jews and Gentiles?
5. Of what does the Kingdom of God consist?
6. What does Paul say in this letter about time?
7. How should Christians treat one another?
8. How did Paul feel about eating meat if it offended his brother?

you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

³⁰ Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me;

³¹ That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

³² That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

³³ Now the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.