

Living Christianly in a Colony of Heaven: Part 2
Tom Rempel – Faith Bible Church
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Romans 13:1-14

We're in **Romans 13** this morning. I want to read **Romans 13:1-7**. This is not all that can be said about this topic, but it's what Paul said to the Romans who were a colony of heaven living in the heart of Sin City regarding the government authority under which they lived. So, there are entire books written on this, obviously. I was talking to one of the brothers between services. Wayne Grudem who wrote this great book on systematic theologies about this thick, he actually has a book on the Christian and government that's also that thick. So, if you think that in the next forty minutes, we're going to answer all your questions, it's not going to happen.

It will probably upset some of you, and others, you just have a lot of questions to be answered, so I just want to remind you it's mikeh@fbclnk.org, whatever those are.

Romans 13:1-7

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore (That's a bridge. When there's a "therefore," you ask, "What is it there for?" It's moving to the application.), whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore (another bridge, another application), one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you (shall all) pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

My son gave me a wake-up call, a reminder, about the time of year that we are in. He's an elder at the Free church out in Seward, and over coffee

Thursday, he said “Dad, you know,” he said, “with the family health issues and some things we’ve addressed with the extended family,” he said, “we have found that we have been more often not a church this summer than we’ve been there.” So he said, “After being gone a couple of weeks,” he said, “last week we pulled in the parking lot, and went in and realized the pastor was preaching somewhere in **Acts** which he had been doing all summer long, but,” he said, “we didn’t exactly know where he was, and there’s this feeling like, well, we’ve missed a couple of weeks. We don’t know where they are, and maybe we ought to just show up when they move to a new book and just give up on trying to do that.” He said, “You know, people coming and going.”

So, if you did like I yesterday and scrubbed the bugs off your front bumper, then perhaps it would be helpful for me to bring us up to speed. How did we get where we are in **Romans**? So, going way back it started here. **Romans 1-3** said that everyone of us is a rebel at heart. We are all naturally resistant to authority which is why when you read a text like **Romans 13** there is a reflexive response to pushing back. It’s like, “I’m to submit to whom?” God says that all of us have a rebel heart within us.

But the second part of **Romans**, chapters four through eight says that God’s grace has made a way for the rebel, that those of us that are enemies of God by our sin and by our behavior, God in His grace has provided a way where we can be reconciled to Him. And then **Romans 9-11** tell us that even for the most unsavable sinner among us that there is sovereign saving grace that God has chosen before the foundation of the earth, before you could ever do one thing good, one thing bad, He has chosen to call many to faith in Himself.

So that brings us then to the end of **Romans 11** where the Apostle Paul, thinking back over the fact that we’re all rebels by birth but God has provided a way by grace that even the most unsavable is savable because of His sovereign saving grace. He just kind of just explodes into this doxology of worship:

Romans 11:33-35

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

35 “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

And then he just wraps it up ...

Romans 11:36

For from him and through him and to him
are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

But what happens in **Romans 11** and **12**, there's a hinge in the book. It's typical of Paul. These are the things that are true. These are the things we believe. These are the things we build our lives on. Hinge: What are we supposed to do about that? What's the practical application of the truths we've just learned? And he makes that pivot.

What that tells us is that when you understand your unique blessing from God that you were the unsavable sinner, but He chose you, you have to do a new paradigm of thought. You have to approach with a new worldview. Suddenly it's not all about me. The universe doesn't revolve around me. I am not the center of all things, that God didn't create all of this for my pleasure, for my enjoyment, for my control. But instead it's all about Him because it's from Him and through Him and to Him. In light of that, how are we to live as a colony of heaven here on earth?

Then in **Romans 12** which we covered two weeks ago, he kind of ... let me just give you a summary of what he says. He says first of all we are to give this life back to Him totally and completely. He purchased it with His own shed blood, therefore, He owns it. What greater price could He pay? Therefore, I give it as a living sacrifice, as it were.

And I am to learn to think in a brand-new way. My mind and my habits, my behaviors were all conditioned by my lostness, but my culture, by the world around me that hates God. Suddenly, I have to look at life differently. That's what **Romans 12, 13, 14, 15** is. How do you look at life differently now that you understand your relationship with Christ?

The third thing is that we have to allow God to work through us to meet the needs of others. Before it was all, “What would God do for me?” But now that we have been born again by His grace, it's not about me. Others before self and Christ before all, that's that change. So, let God meet their needs through you.

The fourth one is that we are to be committed to a genuine, authentic Christian faith. On our Thursday Bible study down at the Haymarket, we're reading through the book of **Isaiah**, and one of the comments we keep making is, "Look, they still claim to have the same relationship with the True and Living God they respect and honor, but the reality is they keep trusting these idols, these counter-gods, these false gods. So, it just becomes aware ... you know, my generation, when I grew up, we were going to reject the church because every time you went there, you were seated with a whole bunch of hypocrites. They look like one thing at Sunday church, and the rest of the week when you ran into them, they looked like something else. So, all of us reject the church, and suddenly your reading in **Isaiah**, and you're going, "WOW, hundreds of years ago the people of God were surrounded, they were infected by hypocrisy. It's the same all the way. He says we're to be authentic in our Christian faith.

Then we are to restrain ourselves when we're offended. Legitimate injuries or offenses happen in the colony of heaven, in the community of believers, just like in your family. When my family used to travel, my dad taught in a Christian high school during the school year. Then in the summer for eleven out of twelve weeks, we would travel all over the Midwest, and he would preach at Bible camps everywhere. They would squeeze six of us into a car, a sedan, that was made for five. We didn't know anything about a mini-van or a soccer bus or anything like that in those days. So, there were always these conflicts in the car. So, my dad ... you've probably been there ... he would draw these imaginary lines in the back seat, and you're not to go over this line.

My poor sister always had to be Switzerland. She had to sit between my brother and I. "So, why did you hit your brother?"

"Well, he hit me first," was always the argument.

Paul said this new mindset says that when I am legitimately offended, I restrain myself to make room for God. We'll pick it up again in **Romans 13**.

And then, on top of that, there has to be a counter-cultural response to acts of unkindness. So, when somebody legitimately does an offense against you

and all at once you're aware of a need in their life, rather than rejoice and say, "God knew, and He got him," He uses you to meet their needs.

Linda and I are constantly reflecting back to the book of **Proverbs**. It says, "When your enemy falls, don't rejoice lest God repent of His discipline in their life, and He blesses them instead."

So, it's like, "YES. They had it coming. Let 'em have it."

Then God turns around and blesses them because He says, "No, you're not supposed to rejoice when your enemy stumbles and falls." And the point that he gave here is when the neighbors down the street, it's a houseful of idiots. Everybody that lives there's an idiot, and everybody went to bed, and nobody banked the fire, and they woke up in the morning, and the house was cold, there was nothing to cook the breakfast on. In humiliation the neighbor walks to your home asks you, "Could you just give me one coal out of your fire so that I can cook the meal and warm my family?"

And you say, "What kind of idiots are you? Why wouldn't somebody ...," and instead you go, "No, let me do you some more. Let me give you a whole bunch of coals," so that as you're walking home, every step of your way home you realize, "He could've shamed me. I have injured him, and instead he blessed me."

And then the last thing he says in **Romans 12** is never lose your awareness that there is spiritual warfare. It's real. It's continual.

Notice ...

Romans 12:21

Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

Kill 'em with kindness. You're in this battle of evil. That's **Romans 12**. That brings you up to speed, so, if you've missed a few events, you can go on our website, and these messages are recorded there. And they're also there in manuscript form. Our brother, C.H. Hagstrom, I can't believe ... , probably the worst ministry in the church. He listens to these sermons three times over and creates manuscripts of those and posts them so that you can read it, not listen to it. Can you imagine what a ... it's like doing penance or something, or whatever. Anyway, if you take the CD's, we have warning labels on them: DO NOT LISTEN WHILE DRIVING, THEY CAUSE DROWSINESS. You can get caught up with us if you go there.

Now, suddenly, let's come to ...

Romans 13:1

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.

What does it mean for us to be dual citizens? Citizens of earth, at the same time citizens of heaven? One very insightful young man between services came, and he said, "Tom, I think you're wrong on the dual citizenship thing. I think we are citizens of heaven with extended work visas here on earth. Some of us get eighty-year work visas, but ultimately, we belong at home. How do we live as a colony of saints in Sin City while waiting for the invitation to go home? And I take you back to two weeks ago when we read this letter that was written in 130 A.D.

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own (They don't isolate themselves in little communes), nor employ a peculiar form of speech (although we do have a lot of Christian-ese, when you're here, you're hearing phrase that before you knew Jesus meant nothing), nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity (There's nothing that makes them unique or weird.). The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined and following the customs of the natives in respect to (the way that they dress themselves, the food that they eat), and the rest of their (day-to-day) ordinary (activity) , they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life.

They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all others; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men and

are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and restored to life. They are poor yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things and yet abound in all; they are dishonored and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of and yet are justified; they are reviled and bless; they are insulted and repay the insult with honor; they do good yet are punished as evildoers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred. To sum it all up in one word – what the soul is to the body, that are Christians in the world.

The Epistle to Diognetus
c. 130 A.D.

What does it mean to be the colony of heaven in the heart of Sin City?

A couple weeks ago when I was unpacking this text, I wrote myself this question: What do King David, King Nebuchadnezzar, King Herod, Adolf Hitler, Chairman Kim Jong Un, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump have in common?

The answer according to **Romans 13** is all of them are deacons or priests of the Living God.

Look what he says about our vertical responsibility and our relationship. The first thing that he says in **Romans 13** is that all authority, all civil authority, has been established by God ...

Romans 13:1-2

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. (Application) ² Therefore, whoever resists (pushes back against) the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

Just some other texts of Scripture to reinforce that. Daniel says,

Daniel 2:20-21

²⁰ ... Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.

²¹ He changes times and seasons;

he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;

Daniel 4, the great story of King Nebuchadnezzar who walked out one day and looked at his unbelievable, incomparable kingdom, and he said, “Look at this great kingdom that, you yourself have built for your own glory.”

Suddenly God stepped in and said, “I’ll show who’s the king. You’re going to crawl around on your knees for seven years, and you’re going to eat grass like cattle.” It took him seven years to come to his senses. I remember when we read **Daniel** in our Thursday morning Bible study. Doc Hughes, the state veterinarian, was part of the study. As soon as we read that, we were moving on, and he said, “You know, that’s quite a miracle.”

We said, “What’s that?”

He said, “That a man could actually live on grass for seven years.” He said, “Dehydration and diarrhea would have killed him within a matter of days if not weeks.” Then he said, “Maybe God did the miracle of giving the man, the king, the stomach of a cow.” Then he went on in great detail and describe to us the biological structure of the stomach of a cow. It was a whole lot more information than we were ready for, but I’ve never forgotten it. About ten minutes later, we’re on to another verse, and Doc Hughes stepped in, and he goes, “Or maybe He gave him the digestive system of a horse.” And suddenly we now know the difference between the digestive system of a human, a cow, and a horse.

Whatever it is, God did this miracle, but it took seven years to bring King Nebuchadnezzar to humility, and when He did, He said this ...

Daniel 4:34-35

34 ... I (Nebuchadnezzar), lifted my eyes
to heaven, and my reason returned to me,
and I blessed the Most High, and praised and
honored him who lives forever, for his dominion
is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom
endures from generation to generation;
35 ... he does according to his will among the host of heaven
and among the inhabitants of the earth;

... or when Jesus was standing trial before Pilate, and Pilate was quizzing Him, and Jesus just simply stood silently ...

John 19:10-11

¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.”

The principle is this. We are to obey the authorities that God has placed over us.

A couple of other texts. Turn back in your Bible. Go back near **Psalms** to the book of **Ecclesiastes ... Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes**. Let your eyes find ...

Ecclesiastes 8:1-2

¹ Who is like the wise?

And who knows the interpretation of a thing?

A man’s wisdom makes his face shine,
and the hardness of his face is changed.

² I say: Keep the king’s command, because of God’s oath to him.

Turn to the right from **Romans**, go to the book of **Titus**, the Apostle Paul, sending Titus down to the isle of Crete to establish leadership in the church. Let your eyes find ...

Titus 3:1

¹ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Keep going to the right in your Bible. Find **1 Peter 2**. Those of you who are doing the Faith Bible, just hit a button, and it’s there. The rest of us have to look for it.

1 Peter 2:12-15

¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

¹³ Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise

those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

God's plan for us is that we recognize the government is established by God for God's purposes and that because God is behind all government, on that basis then, we should submit to those that He has appointed. Failure to submit to those is rebellion, literally, against God.

Then notice ...

Romans 13:3-4

³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.

Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority?

Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval

The role of the government is first of all to promote and reward good behavior. The second role of the government is to protect us by punishing bad behavior.

We've been on the road way too much lately, but on Friday we were headed out toward Lexington, and we noticed, we left early in the morning to catch our friends there, and we were just probably a mile or so out past NW 48th Street, and there was a highway patrolman sitting in the middle of the interstate. And it was just fun to watch the people in front of us, the brake lights come on like that.

But they're deceptive, these guys. By the time we got to York, we saw four of them. You know, the mindset says, "Well we saw the patrol, there's nobody here, and people would hit the accelerator, again. Only we got about four miles down the road, and there was another one. The brake lights were all coming on like that, again.

He says, "If you don't want to worry about the authorities, just do what is right." Why is it even when you have your cruise set at seventy-five, you see a highway patrolman, you glance at the speedometer, and you have a reflex? Because the human heart is a rebel. That's the cause, and you know, "If I were doing what I really wanted to do, and I knew I wouldn't get caught, I'd be going much faster than that."

The disillusioning part was that the car that went blowing past us that had to be doing at least eighty-five, but the Christian fish on the tailgate was just magnificent.

I was bothered, most of my illustrations have to do with had to do with driving, because that's something I love to do. I always wondered about those spiritual leaders who will often say, "You know, my car seems to get better gas mileage at seventy-five and eighty than it does at eighty-five." I'm like, "Why do you know that? Why do you know that?" That he rebels against authority is rebelling against God.

Linda said, "We live in a strange world. There is nobody around at all, and you have this strange-shaped sign that is red with four letters on it, and in the middle of nowhere, people will stop their cars, and then start them up and go, again ... and there's nobody there." But there's just this steel thing ... that's what it means for the government to protect us, and to reward us for doing good. The next time you see those bubble-gum machines in your rear-view mirror, and you know that you've had it set on seventy-five, just pull over and rejoice in the fact that the police officer stopped you and said, "Man, I just want to commend you on your great driving. We get so few people that do that. I just wanted to tell you how proud I am of you." Like that.

It's probably not going to happen, but that's what he says the text is. Are you afraid of the authorities and do what is good, then you'll receive his approval

Romans 13:4a
for he is God's servant ...

I want you to notice here the word "servant" means "the governor, the king, the authority" is God's "deacon" ...

Romans 13:4b
... for your good. But if you do wrong, be
afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain.

That is the symbol of his authority, and He expects Him to use it. This comes from **Genesis 9** when they came off of the ark and God imposed capital punishment upon us. And then he said if an animal kills, strikes against the image of God. If an animal kills a person, the animal has to die. If another image-bearer of God kills an image bearer of God, if a man kills a

man, that man who did the killing struck against the image of God, he, too, has to die. That's where this is. The government has the responsibility to punish the wrong in order to protect the good.

Romans 13:4c

For he is (again) the servant (the deacon) of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

So, back in **Romans 12:19** he says, "Don't take your own revenge but leave room for God to God's thing. 'Vengeance is mine,' says the Lord, 'I will repay.'"

And you're saying, "How's He going to do that?" By appointing authorities over us that applaud, bless, good behavior and intervene and punish bad behavior.

Now the sad thing about that tension is that those of you that are Sunday school teachers know what I'm talking about when you say, "Oftentimes when the Sunday school class is over, you realize it's only the troublemaker kids that got all the attention. The good kids are just there. They just kind of did their thing. Then they left, and they got no attention because it's always the troublemakers. He says here the role of government is to reward those, to promote the good and protect and punish the evil.

But also the encouragement here is notice that, **Verse 6**, you pay taxes and because they are ministers of God, he changes the word here, it's not "deacons" anymore but it's "priests." Rulers and authorities are priests of God. Deacon, deacon, and priest.

Let's pull it back to the discipline. No one abuses their authority over you with impunity. Even the very worst is seen and avenged by God. Every abusing authority will one day have his Nebuchadnezzar day.

We say, "God, where is your response to this? God, where are you going to step in?"

I want to point out to you that the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Romans after his illegal beating in **Acts 16** where they brought accusations against him, and they took he and Silas, and they whipped them in public, and then they threw them into the inner chambers of the prison where we had the first Christian rock concert that's ever been recorded. They sang

hymns of praise to the Lord, and the gates shook open, the people are coming, the jailer comes in, and he goes, “What is it going to take for me to be saved,” thinking, “How do I keep all of you there so I don’t take your place?”

They took that opportunity as a segue, and they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you’ll be saved.” And he did, and his family did, and they were, and they were baptized, and he ministered to their physical needs. The next morning, they said, “You’re free to go on your way.”

Paul goes, “Now wait a minute. Is it legal to beat a Roman citizen?”

They said, “No. Are you a Roman citizen?”

He said, “Yes.”

They said, how much did you pay for your citizenship?”

He said, “I didn’t buy mine. I was born a Roman citizen.”

And they’re like ... “Could we just have you slip out of town quickly?”

He said, “No. I’m going to go back and visit my friends.”

The point is with Nero sitting on the throne in Rome, when Christians are being beaten for their faith, even in that context, the Apostle Paul says, “Our responsibility is to submit.”

Here’s the Christian role under government authority. Number one, it is to be submissive. **Romans 13:1** and **5**, “be subject to,” “submit to.” It is a military term for “lining yourself under.” It’s the picture of knowing what our mission is and what my role is in the mission. Every Christian ought to line himself up under the authority to assist the government in accomplishing its purpose for rewarding the good, promoting the good, and punishing the evil and protecting the people. Be submissive.

He also says we are to pay our taxes ...

Romans 13:6

... because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are (priests) of God, attending to this very thing.

Our taxes are in order to provide for those who serve God as deacons to see to the promotion of good and the punishment of evil. That is its purpose, and he calls them “priest” in light of just like the Temple where the priests didn’t have their own businesses and their own property, but they served the Lord, and as a result of serving the Lord, when the people brought their offerings and their gifts, the priests’, their families’ needs were met through that. So, he says, “The government is, as you give your taxes to the government in the context of doing that, you are providing for God’s priests. That changes things, doesn’t it?”

Jesus was asked in **Matthew 22**, **Mark 12**, and **Luke 20**, “Is it right for us to pay our taxes to Caesar?”

And Jesus said, “Take a coin.” He says, “Whose image is on the coin?”

And they said, “Caesar’s.”

And then Jesus’ response to them was this ...

Matthew 22:20 / Mark 12:14 / Luke 20:24

... render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s
and unto God the things that are God’s.

You got this dual responsibility. You pay your taxes to the government because the government’s image is on the coin. But where is God’s image?

It’s on us.

Give your cash to the government, but you give your life to Him. Render to the government the things that are government’s but render to God the things that are God’s. The image of God is on us.

That’s why he says, “Give yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable.”

The third thing we’re to do is we’re to respect the government. Notice ...

Romans 13:7

Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed,
revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed

“Respect” is the attitude of the heart toward the position of another, not toward the performance of another. That’s why when it says in **Ephesians 5** that husbands are to love their wives, and wives are to respect their husbands. I always people in pre-marriage and usually in the marriage ceremony itself is that you do not respect your husband because of his perfection in performance. He’s a loser. He’s an idiot. You’re crazy for marrying him. It’s going to be a big disappointment on the other side. I’m telling you. You don’t think you need pre-marriage, wait six months after the event. You’re going to need a lot of pre-marriage.

So, how am I supposed to respect this loser? Not because of his performance, because of the position God put him in. God said he’s the head of your home. He’s the provider. He’s the protector. On the basis of that role, you respect him.

So it is with government. Respect is first of all the attitude of the heart. And then he says, “Honor those who are to be honored.” “Honor” is the “outworking of the attitude of respect.” It treats with kindness.

I might be the only one in Lincoln that is totally frustrated by the yellow flashing turn arrows. It’s like, “Why do I have a yellow flashing turn arrow when I’ve got a red light here? Can I go, or should I not go?” Apparently, the guys honking behind me think I should go.

But then just when you finally make up your mind to go, suddenly the yellow flashing arrow turns to red and this turns to green, and then you’re right in the middle of the intersection, but it’ll only last for a minute, and then it turns to green. They’re coming at you at ninety mile an hour, and you’re wondering do I go, or should I not go? You’re sitting there, I don’t know how many times we’ve had this dialogue at these stoplights going, “Who ever thought of this?” Regrettably, it reveals that we have an attitude of disrespect in our heart.

Now I think we could solve the whole thing by just throwing in more roundabouts, but I’ve got a Miata so it’s just like ... put the top down, I go out here on Roundabout Avenue and

What do your children know about your attitude toward the government by riding in your car? What do they know about your attitude toward

government when you're putting together all of those little slips of paper for filing your income tax?

Give the taxes to whom they are due because that's God's provision for those who are His priests. And when you do it, check your heart. Is it a heart of respect? When it's expressed, does it honor?

Brother Matt after the service said, "You missed one. In America we have the privilege of participation." We can get involved in our government. You can't always do that. My buddy Martin over in Kenya, there's so much corruption in Kenya, and he's trying to figure out, "How do we call it out? How we do something?" But he wasn't born into the right family. He's never going to have a government position where he can change the laws and the practice. We have that freedom here. But in doing so, we have to use it respectfully because they are the deacons of God. They are His priests.

So, is there grounds for civil disobedience? At what point do we say the government is wrong, it's not right, and I'm not going to do it?

I think the Scriptures are rather narrow on this. In one of my multiple road trips out to Western Nebraska this month, I was listening to Alistair Begg on **Titus 3**, and he said, "Regrettably we Christians default too quickly to the exception clause." He said, "I would like to suggest," of course, he did it with a great Scottish accent which makes him a whole lot smarter, but he said, "I would like to suggest that we take our time defaulting to the exception clause." There are exception clauses. When the laws of man demand a violation of the law of God, it is the Christian's responsibility to dissent. It's not the Christian's privilege, it's his responsibility.

To know the line, and like I said, it's mikeh@fbclnk.org. To know the difference, you have to know God's law. In **Exodus 1** the pharaoh said that the midwives when a Jewish baby was born, if it was a boy, they were to kill it. And if it was a girl, they could let it live. The Jewish midwives said, "These Hebrew women are so strong, by the time we get there, the baby's been washed, wrapped in a blanket, has a name" They would not kill.

You see, it is wrong to kill the image of God, even if it is a baby. That doesn't mean that just because the law says it's legal to kill children, God says, "That's the image of God."

If you're required to abort your child, then you have to say, "But this is a law of God."

Genesis 9. When the law of man demands a violation of the law of God, you are under obligation as a Christian to dissent.

Daniel 3. Daniel's three friends, Yourshack, Myshack, and a Bungalow were told that they were to bow when they heard the orchestra begin to strike the theme. Big old idol out there in the middle of the prairie, and all these people are standing. As soon as they hear that chord by the orchestra, they all bow down except for three. This is Nebuchadnezzar's image. They're actually worshipping him as God, and Nebuchadnezzar looks and says, "I don't have 20/20 vision anymore, but it seems like there's some shadows in the middle. Go make sure they understand what the instructions were."

And they went there and said, "Do you understand if you don't bow down, he's going to throw you in the fire-y furnace?"

And they said, "Our God can save us from the king and the fire-y furnace, but even if He does not, we are not going to bow."

And they didn't bow, and he threw them into the fire-y furnace, and he said to the guys hanging around, he said, "Didn't we throw three into the furnace, but don't we see four dancing in the flames? And doesn't that fourth one look a lot like the Son of God?"

Again, in **Daniel 6**, Daniel himself. They said, "No longer, there's an edict that no one is to pray anymore to the True and Living God, and Daniel had a life-style pattern of praying: open up the east window and pray toward Jerusalem. He did it every day. They knew that, that's why they got the king to write the law. As soon as he opened his window and began to pray, they came and arrested him. They threw him into the lion's den. The king didn't want to lose him. It's kind of like Potiphar not wanting to lose Joseph because he didn't have to worry about anything in his house. But now they got this trumped up charge of sexual assault, and I've got to throw him into prison to save face.

Suddenly Daniel who was the wisest of all the advisors to the king is going into the lion's den, and the king is like, "I don't want to see that." He

couldn't sleep all night. He came in the morning. In some kind of faith-believing Daniel's God was bigger than the lion's, and he said, "Daniel, are you in there? Are you OK?"

He said, "I'm OK, King."

You see, there are two things going on there. One, Daniel refused to violate what he believed was a command of God that he honor and worship Him.

Two, that the lions looked at Daniel and went, "He's eighty years old. We were hoping for fresh meat." So, they were willing to just leave him alone.

The reality is that when it comes down to doing the man's law or God's law, you have to do God's law. That's why it says in **Acts 4**, this is the default text. **Acts 4**, they hauled them in. It's repeated in **Acts 5**, "We told you don't do ministry in that name anymore."

And their response was, "You guys have to decide. Are we to obey man rather than God? We have to obey God rather than man."

But here's the principle. You are under obligation, I believe, to dissent when man's law violates God's law ... but ... when choosing to dissent, you must be ready and willing to pay the penalty.

God does not promise us that if we do His law in the face of man's law that He will protect us from the consequences of that act of rebellion because they are His deacons and His priests to maintain order, protection, and peace.

And now the horizontal. He moves from the vertical relationship to the horizontal in ...

Romans 13:8-10

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

So, in case you missed the point, if you're using the old-fashioned paper Bible, take your pen and circle the word ... in **Verse 8**, "except to love each other," circle it, "the one who loves," circle it. **Verse 9**, last phrase, "you shall love your neighbor," **Verse 10**, "love does no wrong ... , therefore, love." You've got five times in that short passage. He says, "You are to love." What in the world is he talking about?

Romans 12:9-10

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

I believe **Romans 12** is talking about this community of heaven living together. As difficult as it is to maintain harmony, we are to put the needs of others ahead of ourselves. We are to see their needs and respond to meeting those needs.

I think in **Romans 13** he is taking that internal love for one another, and he's turning it out this way. When he turns it out this way, we are to love those in Sin City that do not know. They do not yet know that they are lost and desperately in need of a savior.

So, we are to love them. When you love them, you fulfill all the law, every commandment. In fact no commandment is necessary if you're driven by the fact that other people's needs are more important than my desires, and I am willing sacrificially to give up my own pleasure, my own comfort, my own resources, my time, whatever it is, to see to it that their needs are met.

When we met this morning, as we do every Sunday, to pray that God would work in a special way among us, we prayed that God would give to our brothers and sisters an awareness, an alertness to one another. There's not a row of chairs in this room where there is not someone who had a really bad week or someone whose life is just on the skids, someone whose heart is absolutely broken.

So, when we gather together, **Romans 12** says we're to be alert to one another, and we are to be willing to sacrifice whatever comfort we have to meet their need. But he also says when we look at the world around us, we are to see their great need for Jesus. And we are to minister to them at all costs. Five times "love." When you do that, the law and the commandments

are fulfilled, and they fade away. You don't need a checklist of right and wrong.

And then the internal, the law of liberty ...

Romans 13:11

Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

... for me that was 1971. For Paul it was about thirty years earlier. For some of them it had only been months. But the reality is that the end of our salvation is a lot closer today than it was. We talk about salvation in **Romans** of being in three movements. The past, that is, regeneration, that first moment when you knew that you desperately needed someone to save you because you could not save yourself. And in faith and humility you cast yourself on Jesus' mercy, and He received you, forgave your sins and gave you a new start. We call that regeneration. We were born again.

And then he talks about it in **Romans 6-8**. It's called the process of salvation is sanctification where day by day under the voice and the ministry of the Spirit through the Word of God, we become less and less like ourselves and more and more like Jesus in our character.

But our salvation is not yet complete. There is coming the day of glorification where he talks about it in **1 John**. He said, "On that day we will see Him like He truly is, and when we see Him, we will be like Him, unstained, undefiled, and holy." He says, "That day of final salvation is closer than it was when you first believed."

So, what is His mandate to us to live in liberty? Number one, you are to wake up. Wake up from your sleep, your salvation is near. That means to be alert, to be sensitive, to be tuned in. And then he says to be cleaned up. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. There needs to be a radical change in us. He talks about it in **Colossians 3**. Take off the garments of the old life and put on the garments of the new. When people look at us, they ought to see that there has been a radical change, a radical renewal that has taken place.

He talks about putting on the armor of light. We come out of the dark, and we shine in this holy colony in the midst of Sin City. That is when you are

changed as a person, the world around you sees the change. The character transformation cannot be denied. You're not the person you used to be.

But most of them don't want that. They're going to do everything they can to drag you back to the life you had before. So, he says you can't help the fact that you're the light of the world. You shine like the light. You're the salt outside the shaker. As the result of that you're not going to be warmly embraced, but you're going to be assaulted. Therefore, put on the armor. You're not going to Sunday school class you're going into battle.

And then he said straighten up ...

Romans 13:13

¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

Just let me quickly define those for you. "Orgies" means "noisy revelers." I think about the pedal bars going through the Haymarket downtown after the football games, and all of the red Solo cups and the taunting of the people on the sidewalks.

"Drunkenness" is simply "public inebriation." "Sexual immorality" is "desiring the forbidden bed." "Sensuality" is "a loss of shame." I no longer am embarrassed by my sin. It's literally "coming out of the closet." "Quarreling" is the "unbridled competition," that drive that I must be number one at everything. "Jealousy" is "that coveting eye on every blessing that others receive." Why do they always prosper? Why don't I get that? For more on that, you can read **James 4:1-12**.

So, if God is planting a colony of heaven in the midst of Sin City, and that colony of heaven is called to live not for themselves but for others, what is the greatest act of love we can do? I summarize it this way. Your greatest act of love will be in living in such a way that people without hope, enslaved by their sin will see something they do not have and seek from you the answer as to where they, too, might find it.

God's plan for the hope of the world is to transform lives in such a way that hopeless, helpless people will see the change that He has accomplished, and they will come to us in order that they might come to Him. So, he closes his exhortation with this ...

Romans 13:14

... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make
no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

We often ask the question in our family, “If a stranger was a guest at one of our gatherings, would they see anything in us that they don’t have but that they would want?” Or the bigger question is, “When they look at me, will other people see Jesus?”