

Commentary on Romans Chapter 13 and 14, by Chuck Smith 10.17.21

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October memory verse, Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

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CHAPTER 13

As Christians, what should be our attitude towards government? Paul declares,

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God ([Rom 13:1](#)).

The Bible does not allow for civil disobedience. For we are commanded by the scriptures to be in obedience to those governing bodies that are over us. Paul wrote this at the time in which Nero was ruling in Rome. And we oftentimes, say, "Well, you know, we should be in obedience as long as we agree with what is being legislated." I do feel that there are rare occasions where the law of God does supercede the law of man, and on those occasions I must be obedient to God. In this period of the early church, when they were required to declare that Caesar was lord or be executed, they chose death by martyrdom rather than acknowledging the lordship of Caesar. When Peter was ordered by the magistrates, or by the council, actually, of the Jews not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, he said, "Whether it is right to obey God or man, you judge, we know that we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard" ([Acts 4:19-20](#)). And so when it becomes a matter of my conscience, then I must be obedient to God. But for the most part I am to be obedient to those governmental forces over me. I am to obey the law. Being a Christian does not give me an immunity from the law, for the powers that be are ordained by God.

Why does God, then, allow evil men to reign if God is the one who establishes it? Basically, because men want evil men to reign over them, and in order that they might be brought to judgment, God will allow those evil rulers to lead the people in order that they might receive that rightful judgment of God. But I am told here as a child of God to be subject unto those higher powers because they have been established there by God.

Whosoever therefore is resisting the power is resisting the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [or condemnation] ([Rom 13:2](#)).

That is, you will be brought into judgment and thrown in jail, is actually what he telling us here.

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For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Will thou then be afraid of the powers? do that which is good, and you will have praise of the same ([Rom 13:3](#)):

In other words, be a decent law-abiding citizen and you don't have to worry about the authorities. The only time I worry when I see a black and white is when I am exceeding the speed limit. You know, if I'm going the speed limit or under I don't worry when I see the highway patrol go by. But if I'm exceeding the speed limit, then I think, "Oh, Oh." You know, you look in your rear view mirror and see the thing down a mile or so with the lights flashing, and the first thing you do is look at your speed and see how fast you're going. And if I'm exceeding the speed limit, I think, "Oh, oh", you know, and I sort of ease back to the speed limit and stay in my lane and cruise along. And breathe a great sigh of relief when he goes shooting past. But for a little bit my heart begins to beat, but if I look down and I see that I'm in the speed limit, I think, "Oh, that's great, he's not after me." They're only a terror to the evildoers, not to the good. And thus, if you are living a good life, you need not be terrorized or be in terror of the authorities.

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if you are doing that which is evil, then be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that is doing evil. Wherefore ye must needs subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake ([Rom 13:4-5](#)).

So as a child of God I am to be an obedient citizen and a subject, an obedient subject to the authoritative government over me.

For this cause pay taxes also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing ([Rom 13:6](#)).

I agree with that, they're attending continually on this very thing.

Render therefore to all their dues: the taxes to whom the taxes are due, custom to whom the custom; fear to whom fear; and honor to whom honor is due ([Rom 13:7](#)).

Render to each one their due. We are not to try to escape our taxes, nor are we to try to smuggle Rolex watches into the United States that we bought overseas. Pay the custom to whom the custom is due. This is something that the scripture commands us to be faithful and obedient, not to cheat on your tax report. Fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shall not commit adultery, Thou shall not kill, Thou shall not steal, Thou shall not bear false witness, Thou shall not covet; and if there is any other commandment, it's briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law ([Rom 13:8-10](#)).

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Jesus was asked one day, "What is the greatest commandment?" And He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Then He said, "The second is likened to the first, thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself, and in these two you have all the law and the prophets." Everything that God has commanded man, how we ought to live in relationship to God and the relationship to each other, is all summed up in these two: love God supremely, and love your neighbor as you love yourself. And if you do that, you will be doing all that God requires of you. Love is the fulfilling of the law. And so it is interesting that the law was placed, really, for the most part, in the negative; thou shall not steal, thou shall not kill, thou shall not bear false witness, thou shall not covet, and so forth, and it was mainly placed in negative, but Jesus turned around and put it in the positive. And Paul here follows the example of Jesus Christ and he too puts it in the positive. And he says, "Look, all of these commandments, not commit adultery, not kill, not steal, they're all summed up in this saying, namely: thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." That's the summation of it. For love will not work ill to his neighbor. If I'm loving him, I'm not going to be lying, stealing, cheating or whatever from him. Especially if I love him as I love myself. So love is the fulfilling of the law.

And that, [he said,] knowing the time ([Rom 13:11](#)),

God expects us to be aware of the time in which we live and of the time of God's working. For this purpose God gave us prophecy, which is history in advance, so that we would be alerted and aware of the days in which we live. Knowing the time, we are not ignorant of the time, nor should we be. For we are not the children of darkness, that the day of the Lord should catch us as a thief, but we are children of the light, and therefore knowing the time,

it is high time that we wake up from our sleep ([Rom 13:11](#)):

I believe that, for the most part, the church is in a general state of lethargy. I think that it is indeed tragic that men are so concerned with their scholarly research to determine whether or not there were two authors of the book of Isaiah or perhaps three, and their concern of the authorship of Isaiah is so great they don't pay any attention to what Isaiah said. I think it is tragic when a man becomes so scholarly that he thinks that he is smart enough to challenge the Word of God, or to challenge the writer of the Word of God. And I think that it borders on blasphemy for a man to suggest from his position of scholarly achievement to suggest that Matthew was embellishing his account of the story of the life of Christ. And that he actually inserted things that really did not happen in order to make the story more exciting. And he does this in the name of Biblical scholarship in an evangelical college. Sad indeed!

The people are sleeping today, because this kind of scholarship will put you to sleep. It is high time that we awake out of this lethargy. I do not know how we seem to just be sleeping when all of these decisions were being made by the Supreme Court, putting prayer out of school, the favorable mention of God out of our schools. How we were sleeping when the humanists took over the public school system.

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And we slept, the church was sleeping, but it is high time that we awake out of our sleep.

for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent ([Rom 13:11-12](#)),

I really cannot see how we can sink much lower. I really cannot see how we can go on much longer. How many more years can we exist adding a hundred and ninety two billion dollars to a federal debt? How much longer can the banks keep holding Brazil and Mexico and these other countries that are unable to pay their debt? Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent,

but the day is at hand ([Rom 13:12](#)):

The Bible does face reality, and it does see the darkness of the night, but thank God the Bible does give us a hope in Jesus Christ. After the dark night is over a new day is going to dawn, the day of God's glory that is going to cover the earth. And that hope sustains us in the dark night.

but let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting [or revelry] not in drunkenness, not in immorality and shamelessness, not in strife or in envy ([Rom 13:12-13](#)):

These are all a part of the flesh, and the life after the flesh.

But put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof ([Rom 13:14](#)).

I believe that today there is an evil spirit that has invaded the land, this evil spirit operating through the pornography. I believe that people can become addicted to pornography just as much as they can become addicted to alcohol or to drugs. And it has the same powerful hold over their lives as does alcohol or drugs. They are drawn to it. They are attracted by it. And when they get away from it, they say, "I'll never do that again," and they are ashamed by what they've done. But somehow they seemed to be lured and drawn back to it again. And it can get hold on a person's life and he can become a slave to this spirit and power that is there. Operating through this it can get a hold on a person's life and you can become a victim, desiring more and more and more and different types of pornography. It seems to be a progressive thing like drugs and all, where you have to go deeper and deeper and more and more.

There are many homes today being destroyed because of pornography. Because of the, what Paul called here, chambering, or immorality, the Greek, *koite*, the desire for the forbidden bed. Many marriages being destroyed today because of incest. Many marriages being destroyed today because of the pornography and these things. And it is tragic to see a person that is a victim of these things. I believe that it is a work of Satan in the last days, and I believe that our only power against it is prayer. I believe

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that it is definitely a spiritual battle and the Bible says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strongholds of the enemy" ([II Corinthians 10:4](#)). But I think we have to use spiritual weapons. I don't think that just nagging a person or getting on a person's case for it is going to do it. That's using carnal methods. It is a spiritual battle and we must combat it with the spiritual weapons that God has given to us, and in this case, that weapon of prayer and intercessory prayer.

Paul tells us that we might take them from the captivity of the enemy who is holding them captive against their will. If a person opens his mind and opens the door to these kind of things, it can actually get a hold on that person's life.

Satan is holding many people's lives today as captives, captives of their own lusts. But God has ordained that you be the instrument through which God delivers them from that captivity. And it comes by intercessory prayer. Holding that person before the Lord and binding the power of Satan that is holding them captive.

We have the authority in the name of Jesus over all the principalities and powers, for they are subject unto Him. And when we come against them in the name of Jesus, they must yield. And thus, through the power of the name of Jesus, we can set people free from the captivity of Satan. We can set free from that binding force that he is exercising over them, that blinding influence that he has. Because people who are being held captive by Satan are also blinded and they don't even realize their problem many times. "For the God of this world," the scripture says, "has blinded their eyes and they cannot see the truth" ([II Corinthians 4:4](#)). So through prayer I can bind that work of Satan so that their eyes can be opened. Through prayer I can set them free from the power of Satan that is holding them, that influence that is keeping them a slave and captive to those things. And I need to exercise this intercessory prayer in delivering them from the power of the enemy that they might come unto the glorious liberty and freedom in Jesus Christ.

Therefore because we're living in a dark world and the night is far spent, the only way we are going survive is by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and not making any provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. It is a heavy spiritual warfare, and it is becoming heavier every day, and is going to continue heavier every day until the Lord snatches us out. Things are not going to ease up. Evil days, the scripture says, "shall wax worse and worse." Jesus said, "Because the iniquities of the world will abound, the love of many shall wax cold" ([Matthew 24:12](#)), talking about the time of His coming. In fact, He said, "When the Lord comes will He find faith?" Yes, He will, if we will be determined to walk and to live after the Spirit and put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for our flesh to fulfill the lust of them. How opposite that is from the world today where the doors have been opened for man to live after his flesh in any matter that his mind can imagine. We think of the words of Jesus concerning His coming, "and as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of man." And one of those conditions of the days of Noah said, "And every man did that which was right in his own eyes." They didn't restrain themselves from anything. We are

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living in that kind of an age today where there seems to be no restraints. Men living after the flesh.

Chapter 14

In the fourteenth chapter Paul deals now with another issue.

Him that is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations ([Rom 14:1](#)).

Don't get into arguments with them, doubtful disputations, a person who is weak in the faith. And in this case, the person weak in the faith is the one who has very limited or narrow convictions.

For one man believes that he can eat anything: another, who is weak in the faith, is a vegetarian ([Rom 14:2](#)).

There are some religious groups today that advocate being a vegetarian. There are some who believe that we should follow the dietary law of Moses, and thus, we shouldn't eat lobster or shrimp or pork or the other forbidden unclean animals of the Old Testament. But there are others who say, "I like pork chops and I like lobster." So those that are strong in the faith, eat meat. Those that are weak in the faith, eat vegetables.

Now should we get into big fights and arguments over this? Should I say to that vegetarian, "Oh, that is stupid. There is nothing wrong with eating meat, that is just plain dumb"? Should he point his finger and say, "Ah-ha, you can't be a Christian because you are eating meat, man God is going to damn you to hell because you are eating meat"? It is sad that these kinds of things have brought this kind of division within the church. Because someone is convicted of something and they want to convict everybody else of the same thing, or make everybody yield to their convictions.

Paul says,

Let not him that eats [eats the meat] despise him that doesn't eat meat; and let not him which eats not the meat judge him that eats: for God has received him ([Rom 14:3](#)).

So in this matter our convictions are to be personal things. In these areas where the scripture does not give us precise definite teaching. There is a latitude. I am to have sympathetic understanding towards those whose convictions are narrower than mine. I am also to have a sympathetic understanding for those whose convictions are broader than mine. That is where I have my problems. I can sympathize with a person who is a vegetarian. That is all right. You don't want to eat meat. That is fine. But some fellow who has convictions that are a little broader than mine and is doing some of the things that I don't feel that I can do as a child of God, I have an awfully hard time not judging him. How can he do that? So that is where my problem lies, no problem dealing with those who have stronger convictions as long as they leave me alone. Don't lay your trip

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on me. But when it is the other way around, how I would love to lay my trip on some people. Rebuke them for the things they are doing which they feel the liberty to do.

Now, naturally this is in scriptural limitations. There are things that the scripture tells us are wrong and with that there is no question. But in these areas where the scripture does not speak specifically, then we are to have this latitude in the receiving of each other.

For who are you to judge another man's servant? ([Rom 14:4](#))

Who are you to judge me? I am not your servant. Now, if I were your servant then you would have a right to judge me. But I am the Lord's servant, therefore the Lord is my judge and He shall judge me. In the same token, you are not my servant, so I have no right to judge you. Again, you are the Lord's servant so He will judge you.

before a man's own master he either stands or falls. Yes, he will be held up: for God is able to make him stand ([Rom 14:4](#)).

God has helped a lot of people to stand when I was sure they were going to fall. The way they were living, I knew they were going down the tube, but God held them up and He was able to make them stand. And to the surprise of a lot of people, He has helped me to stand.

On the issue of eating meat, but then it also goes over on the issue of the respect of the holy day.

One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind ([Rom 14:5](#)).

Now, on what day are we to worship the Lord? On Saturday or on Sunday? If we worship on Saturday, are we then to follow the Jewish custom of the day begins at sundown and should we began worshipping God on Friday evening as the sun goes down and worship until Saturday evening sundown? Or is Sunday the day that we should worship the Lord? There are those who are very vehement in their feeling that Saturday is the only day to worship the Lord, and if you worship the Lord on Sunday that is paramount to taking the mark of the beast, for Sunday worship is the mark of the beast because Sunday was actually named after the sun god-Sunday. And thus, it was after the sun god. Thus, we ought to worship on Saturday, but they don't tell you that is named after the god Saturn.

One man esteems one day above another. "Oh, this is the only day." I am in the second category here myself. Another esteems every day alike--that is me. It don't matter. I worship God on Saturday, or Monday, or Wednesday or whenever. Doesn't matter to me what day I worship God; I worship the Lord everyday. As far as I am concerned, every day is the Lord's day; I live my life for Him. So, I worship the Lord every morning. I

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worship the Lord all of the time, and every day is alike to me. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks. For none of us live to himself, and no man dies to himself. 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 ([Rom 14:6-8](#)).

And this, of course, is my feeling entirely. My life I live for the Lord, I am not living for myself. I won't die for myself. But whether I live or die, I am the Lord's.

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother? or why do you set at nought your brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God ([Rom 14:9-11](#)).

Paul is really discouraging this practice that we have so often of judging each other within the body. To commit that judgement unto the Lord, because we are all going to appear before this judgement seat of Christ. He is the one that we must answer to. He is our Lord, the one that we serve, and thus, the one to whom we will ultimately answer.

For every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. And thus, my relationship to Him is something that He will judge.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. 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 ([Rom 14:12-13](#)).

Let's not judge each other, but as we are living together, let's let love be the rule of life. Loving our neighbor as ourself, and in love. Let's not do something that will cause a brother who is weaker to stumble. You may have liberty in a certain area, don't flaunt that liberty before a weak brother, nor should you try to argue a person out of their convictions. If a person comes to me and says, "I believe it is a sin to eat salt." Then it would be wrong for me to try and argue him into the folly of that kind of a position. Why, there is nothing wrong with salt. It is calcium chloride; there is nothing wrong with that. It might bother your heart a bit if you get too much, moderation. And I might try and talk him out of his conviction. I shouldn't, because if he feels that it is a sin to eat salt, to him it is a sin, because that is the way he feels. I say, "Oh, try a little salt," and I shake a little salt on his potato. Potatoes are so flat without salt. "Just try a little salt." I am encouraging him into something that he has conviction against and he takes that potato and says, "Oh, that is good. My flesh can go for that." But then every time he is using salt, because he has that conviction, and thinks, "Oh, I am a sinner." And he is troubled now with his conscience and I have stumbled him. I have caused him to stumble.

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Therefore, you can come to me and tell me any kind of weird conviction you have and I will sympathize with you. I won't try and talk you out of your convictions. I don't think that that is my place. We are not to put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in our brother's way.

For I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteems any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean ([Rom 14:14](#)).

Now Paul is saying, basically, "Look, I can eat ham. I can eat pork chops. It is not unclean of itself. It is not going to damn me. I know that. I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus there is nothing unclean of itself, but if a man esteems it to be unclean, to him it is unclean." Here is the matter of faith, and herein I feel that the church has done a great disservice. In preaching conviction, or convictions on people for some of the things that they do that are not things that are relative to the person's eternal salvation. When I was growing up as a child, over and over and over again I heard it preached that you could not go to heaven if you smoked. That this was a damning sin and no person who smoked could expect to enter the kingdom of heaven. I heard that preached so much that I was convicted that it was true. Now, in a sense I am glad that I had that preaching, because it kept me from ever smoking a cigarette. I have never smoked one in my entire life, and I don't feel I have missed a thing. I am happy that I don't smoke. But not for spiritual reasons, but for physical reasons, and I happen to distaste smoking extremely.

Now many of the young people who were my contemporary's who went to church with me, and as they were growing up, as boys do, they began to experiment and pick up cigarette butts and light 'em and smoke them. I grew up in the days of the depression. You couldn't go out and buy a pack of cigarettes. Nobody had that kind of money, and a lot of them started smoking. But, coincidentally, when they are starting to smoke, they also left their walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, because they believed that you could not be saved and smoke because that was what was preached at them. So the minute they started to smoke they left their fellowship with the Lord, because they felt that fellowship with the Lord was impossible as long as you were smoking. And so I grew up in that kind of background. Imagine my shock when I heard that Spurgeon smoked cigars. I can't believe it. He is the guy that I admired the greatest preacher almost in the history of the church. G. Campbell Morgan had a pipe, oh no, how could you? Smoking is not a damning sin, unless you believe it is. But if you believe it is, then it can be, you see. If a man esteems a thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Now I definitely esteem it to be unclean, therefore I could not. If I smoked it would be a sign of my rebellion against God. But on the same token, I can accept the fact that Christian's do smoke.

But if your brother is grieved over your liberty to eat meat, now you are not walking in love. Don't destroy him with your liberty to eat meat, for whom Christ died ([Rom 14:15](#)).

We are not to flaunt again our Christian liberty before the weaker brother. If it offends him, if it is hurting him in his walk to see my liberty, then I should not exercise my liberty

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before him. Why should I destroy one for whom Christ died just because I feel, "Well, I have a right to eat meat anytime I want"?

Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat or drink ([Rom 14:16-17](#));

These are not the true issues of the kingdom. People like to make them the issues. They are not. The kingdom of God is:

righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in these things serves Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby we may build up one another. And for your liberty in eating meat do not destroy the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eats with offense ([Rom 14:17-20](#)).

It is evil if I would exercise my liberty in such a way as to offend a weaker brother in Christ.

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak ([Rom 14:21](#)).

Thus, I live in the law of love a more stringent life than my own convictions. Because I would not want to do something that would stumble someone else. Though I feel a personal liberty that I could do those things without hindering my fellowship with Jesus Christ, I will not do them for love and for love's sake. So that I would not be a stumbling block to someone else.

Do you have faith? then have it to yourself before God ([Rom 14:22](#)). Let it be a personal thing, don't do it openly where it can hinder someone else.

For happy is he that condemns not himself in the thing which he allows ([Rom 14:22](#)).

But he that doubts is damned if he eats, because he is not eating of faith: for whatever is not of faith is sin [to that individual] ([Rom 14:23](#)).

If you can't do it in faith, if you are being condemned as you do it, then to you it is sin. For him that esteems something to be unclean, to him it is unclean. So my Christian liberties, how am I to exercise it before God in private. Not to stumble someone else by those liberties that I may feel. Again, the whole ideal goes back to chapter 13, "walk in love, for he who loves has fulfilled the whole law." Loving one another, walking in a loving relationship with each other, and because of my love for you and my love for Jesus Christ, not doing anything that I know could be offensive to or might stumble you in your walk. Because of love, living a life more stringent than my own personal convictions so that I would not stumble a weaker brother. God help us to live and to walk in love, even as we are commanded.