

## ***Romans 13: The Armour of Light***

Paul continues to give practical instruction, setting out our duties (a) to the governing authorities; and (b) to our neighbours. Finally, Paul urges us to “walk properly” with God, using the vivid metaphors of clothing and armour (v 11 to 14).

When you get up in the morning you dress appropriately, depending on who you are and what you plan to do. So, every day we are to “cast off” the rags of darkness and sin, to “put on the armour of light” (v 12), and above all “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (v 14)...

### ***Our duty to governing authorities (Romans 13 v 1 to 7)***

- Why should we be subject to governing authorities? According to these verses, what is the purpose of government in the context of God’s plan?

God appoints a nation’s leaders, but not always to *bless* that nation. Sometimes his purpose is to judge the people, or to ripen that nation for judgment. Paul wrote these words in the days of the Roman Empire – which was no democracy and no special friend to Christians, yet Paul still recognised the Romans’ legitimate authority.

Remember too that Jesus suffered under Pilate, one of Judea's worst governors, and Paul was executed under Nero, one of the worst emperors – yet neither Jesus nor Paul opposed the “governing authorities”.

God uses these authorities as a check against man’s sinful tendencies – government can be an effective tool in controlling the effects of man’s fallen nature. But what happens when the authorities order us to do something that contradicts God’s law? See Acts 4 v 19.

- Why does Paul urge us to be good citizens (v 3)? Remember what that means: be honest and respectful; don’t make trouble; pay your taxes; and, most importantly, pray for the leaders (1 Timothy 2 v 1, 2).
- Why do you think Paul describes government officials as God’s servants or ministers? What does it mean to be a ‘minister’? What might happen if a government fails to punish evildoers? Do you think the reference to the “sword” (v 4) supports capital punishment?
- Is there a sense in which paying our taxes is actually supporting God’s work? So, what do we give to the state (v 7), and what do we reserve for God alone? See Matthew 22 v 21.

Some further questions:

- Does Paul encourage blind obedience to the state (v 5)?
- Is rebellion against government ever justified?
- In a democracy there is a sense in which we are the government – how does this notion encourage us to participate proactively in the democratic process?

***[MORE OVER...]***

### ***Our duty to our neighbours (Romans 13 v 8 to 10)***

- Is it possible ever to discharge the debt of love? Can we ever say, ‘I have done all the loving I need to do?’ or is love a permanent obligation? See John 13 v 34, 35.

In v 9 and 10 Paul echoes Jesus’ words as recorded in Matthew 22 v 37 to 40. So, who is your neighbour? “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (v 10) – it is easy to do all the ‘right things’, but to neglect love. Our love is the true measure of our obedience to God. Recall Romans 12 v 9 (“Let love be genuine...”).

### ***How to walk properly with God (Romans 13 v 11 to 14)***

- Why is it important to “wake from sleep” (v 11) and to “walk properly” (v 13)? How does Paul characterise the “works of darkness” (v 12)?
- So, in this passage, what are we told to do? What are we not to do? What do you think the Lord Jesus Christ, by his Spirit, does for us, and through us?

*Prayer:*

*Lord, we thank you that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed, that the night is far gone, and the day is at hand.*

*Help us, today and every day, to cast off the works of darkness, to put on the armour of light, and to walk properly, as in the daytime.*

*Help us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Amen.*