

Romans – Justified through faith

Week 21 – Romans 13 (The will of God for changed relationships)

1. **Our relationship to the state: conscientious citizenship (v1-7)**

The authorities mentioned in this passage are earthly ones, not spiritual powers (demonic or angelic). However from the overall context of scripture this apparent absolute command to obey the civil power applies only so long as obedience doesn't contravene God's law. If the state is asking you to do something God forbids or forbidding you to do something God commands then God's law takes precedence. See Exodus 1:15-17, Daniel 3 & 6, Acts 4:18-20. There is an implied expectation that the state should understand and uphold the difference between right and wrong (v 4 & 5).

"The gospel is equally hostile to both tyranny and anarchy."

- Hodge

2. **Our relationship to the law: neighbour love as it's fulfilment (v8-10)**

Love doesn't end the need for the law; it's too naïve to rely on love's infallibility. Love is however the fulfilment of the law because love needs law for its direction, while law needs love for its inspiration.

3. **Our relationship to the day: living in the 'already' and the 'not yet' (v11-14)**

Paul's use of the terms night and day almost certainly relates to the concepts of the 'present age' and the 'age to come'. The 'age to come' is the Kingdom of God which was inaugurated by Jesus and will see it's fulfilment at his return. Both Paul and we live in the overlap of these two ages. We cannot afford to sleep-walk through our lives but need to be alert to the coming Kingdom and be living our lives appropriately.

Q1. How far can/should a Christian go to oppose an unjust or evil law or regime?

Q2. Do you think v4 is an endorsement of the death penalty?

Q3. What do you think it means to 'clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ' v14?

Memory Verse:

"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

– Romans 13:14