



Civic Responsibilities
(Romans 13:1-10)

Today's Passage

Romans 13:1-10

(English Standard Version)

Romans 13:1-5

- 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 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 one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

Romans 13:6-10

- ⁶ For because of this you also 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.
- 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.**

What background information do we need to know?

1. We Have Dual Citizenship:

- a. “Civilian Life”: Civic Responsibilities to Society
- b. “Spiritual Life”: Spiritual Obligations to the Lord

For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations. Psalm 22:28

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

What background information do we need to know?

2. Demagogues and Dictators Need Not Apply

“The principle is clear. We are to submit right up to the point where obedience to the state would entail disobedience to God. . . . As Peter and the other apostles put it to the Sanhedrin: ‘We must obey God rather than men’ (Acts 5:29). . . . When Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the newborn boys, they refused to obey (Exodus 1:17).

--John Stott, *The Message of Romans*

What background information do we need to know?

3. God's "Super-Vision"

a. Praiseworthy Leaders Appointed by God (Nehemiah, Daniel)

"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 2:21)

b. Wicked Leaders Allowed by God (Pontius Pilate, Sennacherib)

- Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. (John 19:11)

What are some civic responsibilities of a Christian?

1. Obey Civil Authorities (12:1-5)

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- 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 one must be in subjection, **not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.**

What are some civic responsibilities of a Christian?

1. Obey Civil Authorities (12:1-5)

a. Authorities Give Rewards



What are some civic responsibilities of a Christian?

1. Obey Civil Authorities (12:1-5)

b. Authorities Give Correction

“Ochlocracy”: “Mob Rule”

What are some civic responsibilities of a Christian?

1. Obey Civil Authorities (12:1-5)

b. Authorities Give Correction



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b. Authorities Give Correction



What are some civic responsibilities of a Christian?

1. Obey Civil Authorities (12:1-5)

c. Avoid God's Wrath and Have a Clear Conscience

--Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. (2 Corinthians 1:12 NIV)

--Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. (Hebrews 13:18 ESV)

--The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1:5)

What are some civic responsibilities of a Christian?

2. Pay What You Owe (12:6-10a)

- ⁶ For because of this you also 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.
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- *Whom do you owe that you are called to do these things? God.*

What are some civic responsibilities of a Christian?

2. Pay What You Owe (12:6-10a)

a. Pay Your Current Bills (12:6-7)

The wicked borrows but does not pay back,
but the righteous is generous and gives; (Psalm 37:21)

b. Pay an Unending Debt of Love (12:8-10a)

--I am under obligation both to Greeks and to non-Greeks, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. (Romans 1:14-15)

--A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)

What are some civic responsibilities of a Christian?

3. Understand that Love Fulfills the Law (12:10b)

- ³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”
(Matthew 22: 34-40)
- The Ten Commandments
- Pharisees’ system: 613 laws

How do we apply what we've learned?

3. The Bible is Our Legal Standard

¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

¹⁰⁶ I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

(Psalm 119:105-106 KJV)

Psalm 119:7-11

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
⁹ the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

How do we apply what we've learned?

1. Example of a Spiritual/Civil Law: Micah 6:8

- He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to **do justice**, and to **love mercy**,
and to **walk humbly with your God?** (Micah 6:8)
- **Most issues are more complex and nuanced than we care to admit**
- Example: How are we to apply both “justice” and “mercy” at the same time?
- **The need for humility as we pray for discernment to determine how to proceed**

How do we apply what we've learned?

2. Case Studies: Abortion

- “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you (Jeremiah 1:5)
- For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well. (Psalm 139:13-14)
- Therefore, abortion (the killing of babies still in the womb) is just plain wrong
- Complication/nuance: An abortion should be allowed to save a woman’s life

How do we apply what we've learned?

2. Case Studies: Immigration

- ³³ “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:33-34)
- Therefore, do not be mean to immigrants, nor blame them for every problem we have in this country
- ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? (Luke 14:28)
- Complication/nuance: even though we are a wealthy nation, we cannot afford to let everyone come here who wants to

How do we apply what we've learned?

2. Case Studies: Social Programs

- Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:37-40)
- Therefore, support programs that help those in need
- ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. ¹¹ For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)
- Complication/nuance: Those who are able to work should be required to do so

What are some takeaways? Civic Responsibilities

1. Renewing Your Mind (Read the Bible regularly)

2. Avoiding Political “Ideology” (No political party is perfect)

3. Being Humble (God is in control: we put our faith and trust in Him)

--Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)

--Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land,
who do his just commands;
seek righteousness; seek humility (Zephaniah 2:3)

--Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, (Colossians 3:12)

--In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:6)

A silhouette of two hands holding a glowing cross against a sunset background. The hands are positioned in the center-right of the frame, with the fingers spread and the palms facing each other. A bright white cross is centered between the hands, emitting a strong glow and lens flare. The background is a warm, golden sunset over a body of water, with the sun low on the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and spiritual.

Let Us Pray