

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series two teachers will do Bible study from ROMANS chapter 13.

Romans chapters 12-16 emphasise *practice* and deals with *practical holiness or sanctification*. Chapter 12 taught the Christian's duty with respect to his body and mind and with respect to all kinds of relationships. Chapter 13 teaches the Christian's duty with respect to the governing authorities, the neighbour and the realms of darkness and light.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Romans 13:1-14 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read Romans chapter 13 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in Romans chapter 13. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in **Romans 13:1-7. The Christian's duty with respect to the governing authorities**. The Bible certainly contains teachings about the governments of the world. Paul is here speaking of the civil authorities, because he mentions "bearing the sword" and "paying taxes and revenues". This teaching is very important, because all Christians in the world live under certain governments. In the letter to the Romans this was also important, because in the Christian church at Rome, a considerable portion of the members were Jewish Christians. Many Jews in Paul's day were looking for an opportunity to shake off the yoke of subjection to Rome. They were eager to become politically independent once more. They wanted to have their own king and own governing authorities (Jn 6:15; 8:33; Act 5:36-37). Already in the first half of the first century A.D., there were political disturbances in the city of Rome. A Roman writer, Suetonius, wrote that the emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews from the city of Rome in A.D. 49, because of a continuous revolt of Jews inspired by a certain "Chrestus" (Act 18:2). When this edict was no longer in force, many Jews returned to Rome. The apostle Paul therefore wrote that Christians must submit themselves to the governing authorities in Rome. The reason why Christians must submit to the governing authorities is that God himself has established all governing authorities, and all but the first has limited specific duties.

Which authorities have been established by God? The Bible distinguishes between 7 different "*authority-submission relationships*" that have all been established by God:

One. God has unlimited authority over all people and things.

Two. Man has limited authority over nature.

Three. The husband has limited authority over the wife.

Four. The parents have limited authority over the children.

Five. The government rulers have limited authority over the people in the country.

Six. The employer has limited authority over the employee.

Seven. Church leaders have limited authority over church members. All these seven authority relationships have been instituted by God and man may not change them.

(T) An important truth for me is from **Romans 13:8-14. The Christian's duty with respect to his neighbour and the realms of darkness and light**. Romans 13:8-14 teaches that practical holiness or sanctification is above all characterised by living a life of love and by living a life in the light. Because the time of the end of human history and the complete salvation of Christians is nearing fast, sanctification is urgent! It must be noted that in the first eleven chapters of Romans, Paul has taught much about the law. It is noteworthy that Paul uses the word "law" with several different meanings:

First. The law is God's absolute requirement for salvation and absolute standard for the final judgement. Because the God of the Bible is 100% holy and righteous, he demands that all people live 100% holy and righteous lives and he will punish everyone who does not live 100% perfect lives. The "law" of God is that the absolute perfect God requires all people to be absolutely perfect! However, the Bible clearly reveals that no one in the history of this world will be justified by keeping the law, because no one except Jesus Christ has ever obeyed God's law for 100% (Gal 2:16; 3:10-11; 5:4; Js 2:10). All people have sinned and fall short of God's glory (3:23). Romans 3:19-20 teaches that God's law condemns all people as guilty. It silences their arguments. It holds them accountable to God. God's law can judge and condemn, but it cannot justify or save people. All people will be judged according to their relationship to Christ (1 Jn 5:11-12) and how they have lived their lives (2 Cor 5:10). Romans 3:19-20 teaches that all people are in the sphere in

which God's law operates and has relevance. All people will be judged by their works in the light of what they know concerning God's law (Lk 12:47-48).

Second. The law of God is revealed in the hearts and consciences of all people and in his commandments, prohibitions and teachings in the Bible. Romans 1:32 and 2:14-15 teaches that God's law is revealed to all people in the world, in their hearts and consciences. Whether they possess a Bible or not, all people know that violating God's law means death. The word "law" is also used of God's special revelation, of his will and requirements, which are recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. According to Romans 2:12, the Jews have received this special revelation from God, but the Gentiles have not. According to Romans 3:21-22 and 4:3-8, the law as the Old Testament Scriptures, already revealed that God's righteousness is attained, not by works but by faith.

Third. The law as God's absolute condition for sanctification. The word "law" is also used of the moral law or the Ten Commandments and as such has two functions. Romans 7:8-9 teaches that the first function of the moral law is to activate sin in the sinful nature of man. Apart from the moral law, sin living in the sinful nature of man is dead or inactive. However, when people consciously consider the moral law or Ten Commandments, which reveals what is right and what is wrong in God's eyes, sin dwelling in their sinful natures springs alive and becomes active. This generally happens just before, during and after a person is converted. Romans 13:8-10 teaches that the second function of the moral law or Ten Commandments is to teach Christians how to live a life that pleases God, that is, how to live a life of love. God's law is God's absolute requirement for salvation or justification, God's absolute standard in the final judgement and God's absolute condition for sanctification.

(S) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 13:1-14 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (13:1-5). What is the Christian's duty with respect to the governing authorities?

(T) First. Submission to the governing authorities is a part of sanctification. To submit himself to the governing authorities is a part of "the good, acceptable and perfect will of God" as Romans 12:2 teaches. In the New Testament we read that the Jews had questions regarding the *rights* of the Roman government (Mt 22:16-17; Mk 12:14; Lk 20:21-22). The Jews had the tendency to *pride* themselves on their independence (Jn 8:33). Among the Jews there were seditious movements (Act 5:36-37). There is evidence in secular history books respecting the restlessness of the Jews under the Roman yoke. The Roman emperor, Claudius, actually expelled the Jews from Rome, probably because of their opposition or even insurrection. In the mind of the Roman authorities, Christianity was associated with Judaism and any *seditious temper* attributed to Judaism would likewise be charged to Christians. This created a situation in which it was necessary for Christians to avoid all *revolutionary aspirations or actions* as well as *insubordination* to magistrates in the rightful exercise of their authority. The teaching is also against any possible *perverted notion of "freedom"* among Christians, especially in view of the fact that all Christians believed in the kingship or Lordship of Jesus Christ. In view of these political realities, Paul teaches that a Christian's relationship to the governing authorities is a part of his sanctification.

Second. Submission to the governing authorities is not without qualification. On the one hand, the New Testament teaches the duties of Christians towards the governing authorities: 1 Timothy 2:1 teaches that Christians should pray for all people in authority. Titus 3:1 teaches that Christians should submit to rulers and authorities by being obedient and by doing good in a peaceable manner and without slander.

On the other hand, the governing authorities often persecuted Christians because they proclaimed the gospel and helped the poor, helpless and oppressed. Therefore the Bible had to draw a clear line between when to disobey the governing authorities and when to obey them. A Christian's loyalty to Jesus Christ in one situation demands disobedience and in another situation demands obedience to the government. Disobedience is outlined in Acts 4:19-20 and 5:29. Obedience is outlined in Romans 13:1-7! As a general rule, all Christians should obey the governing authorities in everything that is not against the teachings of the Bible. However, when the governing authorities overstep their authority and demand that Christians do things that are forbidden by God, or forbid Christians to do things that are commanded by God, Christians should disobey the governing authorities! Whenever there is conflict between the requirements of men and the commands of God, then the word of the apostle Peter in Acts 5:29 must take effect, "We must obey God rather than man."

2nd Question. (13:6-7). What is the Christian duty with respect to taxes and revenues?

(S) First. Christians must pay taxes to the government. Because the governing authorities give their full time to their task, they need to be supported financially. Also the governing authorities must eat and live. Because the

governing authorities do good to the people in society by developing education of children and adults, by maintaining justice through the courts of law and by developing towns and cities with streets and parks, they need money to do all this good. Because the governing authorities must fight crime and corruption, punish the evildoers in society and keep law and order in the society, they need to be supported by Christians. That is why God commands all people, including Christians to pay their taxes and revenues to the governing authorities. "Taxes" are levied on persons or on property gained or possessed (Lk 20:22-25) and "revenues" are levied on imported and exported goods, that is, on business transactions. The payment of taxes and revenues is not a tyrannical imposition of the government, but the necessary and proper participation on the part of the subjects in the support of government.

Second. Christians must show respect to the government. Christians have the duty, not only to pay the governing authorities taxes and revenues, but also respect and honour. Christians should show respect to all people and certainly for people who are in authority. And Christians should honour the governing authorities when they perform their duties in a good way.

But, not only citizens have the duty to support, respect and honour the governing authorities, also the governing authorities have the duty to perform their task in accordance to God's laws and standards. The governing authorities do not have absolute power or rights, because they have received their tasks and authority from God. Because the governing authorities have received these good tasks as their duty from God, they are also accountable to God for how they perform these tasks. On the final judgement day, also the governing authorities will have to give an account to God of how they have executed their duties. And on the final judgement day, all people will also have to give an account to God of how they have paid or not paid their taxes and revenues and how they have shown respect or not shown respect to the governing authorities.

3rd Question. (13:8-10). What is the Christian duty with respect to one's neighbour?

(T) Romans 13:8 says, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." The emphasis in this passage is not on financial debts, but on the debt every Christian has to love his neighbour. This passage teaches that to love one's neighbour is also a part of sanctification.

First. To love one's neighbour is a continuing obligation for Christians. Love is not regarded as a debt that Christians have not yet paid. Paul is simply reminding the Christians that love is *a continual obligation*.

Second. To love one's neighbour is the fulfilment of the law. "He who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law". In this passage, Paul uses the word "law" in the sense of the moral law of God, which is summarised in the Ten Commandments. In this passage, Paul quotes four of the Ten Commandments. This means that the Ten Commandments have permanent and abiding relevance for Christians. It expresses examples of what love really is. The Ten Commandments teach Christians how to live a life that pleases God, that is, how to live a life of love. "Fulfilment of the law" means that there is no law fulfilled apart from love! The Ten Commandments cannot be fulfilled without love! It is only through love that Christians can fulfil the demands of God revealed in all his commandments.

Third. To love one's neighbour means not to sin against one's neighbour. Most of the Ten Commandments are stated in the negative form, "Do not!" "Do not commit adultery." "Do not murder." "Do not steal." "Do not covet." But the law of love is stated in the positive form, "Love your neighbour." Thus, to love has both negative and positive aspects: *You love when you do not do certain things and you love when you do certain things*. While the Old Testament emphasised the things believers should not do, the New Testament emphasises the things Christians should do! Love never overlooks the reality of sin! A Christian cannot deliberately go on sinning and still love. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says that true Christian love "avoids every kind of evil." Romans 13:10 says, that true love "does no harm to its neighbour." True love will not involve one's neighbour in any kind of sexual immorality. True love will not destroy any aspect of one's neighbour's life. True love will not steal any possession from one's neighbour. And true love will not even consider or desire to have or take anything from one's neighbour. Thus, the Ten Commandments are in the negative form, because they never overlook the reality of sin. "Love" in 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 is also expressed in negative terms, because it never overlooks the reality of sin!

Fourth. To love one's neighbour means to take positive action towards one's neighbour. "Love your neighbour as yourself" is an imperative and is stated in the positive form. Love not only avoids the negative things like sin, but turns the command actively in the opposite direction in order to fulfil the positive! For example, love actively protects one's neighbour from every kind of sexual immorality. Love actively promotes the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual welfare of one's neighbour's life. Love actively respects and protects one's neighbour's property. And love actively appreciates and is happy with what one's neighbour has or does. Love not only does no harm to its neighbour, but actively does all kind of good to its neighbour.

4th Question. (13:11-14). What is the Christian duty with respect to the realms of darkness and light?

(S) **First.** Christians have the duty to know the time in which they live. Romans 13:11 literally says, “Know this *time*”. The word “time” here refers to the “present time in the light of the end-time events”. It is to look at the present time, knowing that it is speeding towards the second coming of Christ, the final judgement and the renewal of all things on earth. And Romans 13:12 says, “The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.” “The day”, which is almost here, is a reference to the day of judgement.

Second. Christians have the duty to put off everything that is connected with darkness and put on everything that is connected with the light. According to the Bible, “the present age”, which precedes “the coming age” of Christ’s second coming, is evil. Therefore, Christians must view the present age in the light of the coming age, and live holy lives. Romans 13:12 says, “Put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.” The Christian belief in the second coming of Jesus Christ is the reason why they want to grow in sanctification. “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” is elsewhere called “putting on the new man” (Eph 4:24). Thus, according to Titus 2:12-13, we Christians must “say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in “*this present age*”, while we wait for the blessed hope, namely, the appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

(T) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught you in Romans 13:1-14.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.**

First. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. Use “the five steps” Bible study method to prepare Romans chapter 14.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and preach God’s Kingdom” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.