

Romans Summary
Week 22, Wednesday March 22, 2017
Romans 13:1-14

God's order and justice is not just for the future. God gives a measure of order and justice through governing authorities in the present. Government is ordained by God, not particularly those who are in government. However, even government gone wrong, such as the case of Jesus, there is still the understanding that God has ordained government. Therefore, government being a minister of God's justice is also held accountable to God's justice.

Government, at it's best, is to praise what is good and punish what is evil. This is how God's wrath or justice is meted out in the present. So, while it is inappropriate for individuals to try to take justice for themselves, they can resist that impulse only so long as they know government will provide justice. In light of government fulfilling this divine role we Christians are to submit to government as an office, even while naming and holding the office holder accountable to God's standards. And, for that reason, we should give what is due: taxes, customs, fear, honour, etc.

This giving what is due leads to a broader principle: love is owed to everyone and that debt cannot be discharged. Just as Jesus has summarized the Law, so Paul follows suit and summarizes the Law (the heart of it) with this love command. If we are truly loving our neighbour then we will not violate the commands of the law like adultery, murder, stealing, coveting, etc. This is how love fulfills the law.

There is always the risk of the community relaxing their practice so Paul reminds them and us that God's final day is drawing near even at moments when it looks like the minutes are passing but nothings happening — it is. The resulting command is to be daylight people rather than nighttime people. Jesus himself is the armour of light that we need to put on — we need to become like him, leaving no opportunity for our old selves, the flesh.

“Between the Two Thirteens” reflection and discussion questions:

1. How did you feel reading "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities."?
2. Why is discernment "basic to the genius of the Biblical life style"?
3. How does reading Romans 13 in context challenge the old oppressive reading?
4. What does it look like for the Christian to take the government with temporary seriousness?