

Romans 13

By: Charles Stanley

From: On the Epistle to the Romans

The path of the heavenly man on earth is continued. What is to be his conduct as to the government of this world? He is to be subject. He is to regard the powers of government that be, as appointed of God. He is to be far from lawlessness and insubordination. “And they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment” [or, bring guilt upon themselves].

The Christian is to be, of all men, most loyal (obedient}, even for conscience sake. “Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” Let it be observed, there is no precept here that we should take a place, or part, in the world’s politics; but be subject. The church, or the Christian, is always looked at as not of the world; yet, in it, he must be subject: whatever the form of government, his path is to be subject; and, dear young believer, God is wiser than we are.

Verse 8: “Owe no man anything.” These few words are very comprehensive. Not merely debts when due, but to seek to pay all demands as soon as due. To do this, a Christian should always seek to live below his income, and do his business within his means. This may require much diligence and self-denial, but what misery will he avoid. These words, then, are important, when applied as to income and expenditure. And also, whatever kindness may be shown us, let us seek to return it with large interest. “Owe no man anything, unless to love one another” (*New Translation* of J. N. Darby). Ah, that is a debt never fully paid, for it is to love one another as He hath loved us.

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us (Rom. 5:5). Now, in its exercise, it flows out to others — the love of God in our hearts by the Spirit — and the result is, “he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” Thus the commands as to our neighbor are all fulfilled. “Thou shalt love thy

neighbor as thyself.” This is by the twofold power of the love of God, already shed abroad in our hearts, and by the Spirit which has been given.

This is not putting the Christian under law again, and telling him, if he keep it, God will love him, and give him the Holy Spirit. Neither is it telling him to pray for the Spirit, that he may keep the law. It is the opposite of all this. The love of God and the Spirit he has, and love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. How beautiful the order of God is, and the effect is never put before the cause.

Verses 11-13: Again, there must be intelligence, in order “that, KNOWING the time.” But if Christians do not know the time, but suppose the very contrary, that the world is about to be converted, or to get better, that the night is not far spent, indeed that it is not night at all, but a grand day of development and human advancement — if thus so dark and mistaken, how can they know the perfect will of God for walk, of holy separation from a world doomed to judgment? Is it not impossible?

What a word for this moment! “Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.... The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” What an arousing motive for holiness! Beware of all pretended holiness that has not this intelligence and this motive. What! is the Lord at hand, and we, Christians, asleep? — whether we think of joy to us, forever with the Lord — how near now our salvation — or the day of wrath and judgment on a rejecting world. “Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”

If the world is steeped in dishonesty in this dark night, “Let us walk honestly, as in the day.” What a change there would be in the conduct, even of Christians, if we were really to awake, to expect our Lord, day by day.

Should you like to be found of Him walking in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, or in strife and envying? Surely

not. “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” Oh, that we may awake from sleep, and, waiting for our Lord, thus put Him on. The world will not hear the gospel — they will not read Christ in the word. May they, then, see Christ in us and in all we do — living epistles, read and known of all men.

They will look at us, narrowly will they watch us. They know not how Satan seeks to trip us up. They know not the temptations and buffetings of the believer, and, without constant dependence on the power of God, how liable to

fail. But may the world never see us making provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. The Lord bless these precious precepts to both writer and reader. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Oh, how soon we shall be forever with the Lord!

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