

# GOD'S WORD IS LIFE

## The Book of Romans

### Session 12 Study Outline for Romans 13

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#### Introduction: Living as Citizens of Two Kingdoms

In Romans 13, Paul shifts to the theme of Christian responsibility within society, focusing on how believers live as both citizens of God's kingdom and as members of earthly communities. This chapter calls Christians to view their lives as ordered by God's will, even within earthly structures of authority. The believer's submission to governing authorities is not a compromise of faith but an acknowledgment of God's work in ordering society, even if imperfectly. This passage confronts the temptation to view civil obedience as optional for believers, emphasizing that, as baptized Christians, our love and service extend to all spheres of life.

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#### Purpose:

Paul's instructions remind us that the Christian life is lived fully in this world, with all its complexities. His call to submit to governing authorities is not a surrender to worldly powers, but a call to recognize God's hidden hand in maintaining order. In this way, Paul challenges us to live under the cross—trusting in God's mercy and showing love to others, even in matters of civic duty. This passage highlights the tension of the “two kingdoms,” where Christians are called to serve both God and neighbor faithfully in the world.

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#### Themes:

- **Obedience to Authorities as Service to God:** Recognizing governing structures as part of God's hidden work in the world
- **The Call to Love as the Fulfillment of the Law:** Living out our baptismal calling by serving our neighbors through our various vocations.
- **The Urgency of Faithful Living:** Walking in the light of Christ, aware of His imminent return
- **Two Kingdoms Doctrine:** Balancing our allegiance to God's kingdom with our responsibilities in the world

## **Objective:**

To understand that Christian responsibility includes faithful citizenship, where love for others and obedience to legitimate authorities become extensions of our faith. Christians live under God's mercy and grace while respecting earthly structures, understanding that all authority is ultimately accountable to God. This life of service is shaped by the cross and oriented toward Christ's return.

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### **I. Submission to Authorities (Romans 13:1-7)**

Paul begins by urging believers to submit to governing authorities, framing it as a duty that honors God's ordering of society.

- **Verse 1-2:** Paul states that every authority is instituted by God, encouraging believers to see civic obedience as part of their faith. This is not about blind allegiance but recognizing that God's providence works through the law even in flawed systems.
  - **Verse 3-4:** Earthly rulers have a role in restraining evil and promoting justice, even if imperfectly. As Christians, living under law in many forms, our compliance is a witness to God's desire for order and justice in a fallen world.
  - **Verse 5-7:** Paying taxes, showing respect, and honoring authorities are acts of service that honor God's structure. This is a call to live peaceably, avoiding rebellion, and reflecting God's grace in public life.
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### **II. Love as the Fulfillment of the Law (Romans 13:8-10)**

Paul explains that love for others fulfills the law, underscoring that true obedience is not legalistic but flows from our new identity in Christ. He is the Vine, we are the branches.

- **Verse 8:** The only debt we owe is love, which aligns with Jesus' teaching on the greatest commandment. Our actions flow from a heart transformed by grace through faith, extending to all people.
  - **Verse 9-10:** Paul reminds us that the commandments are summed up in love. Love does no wrong to a neighbor, marking it as the core of Christian obedience. We will love imperfectly but this love is not a means for achieving righteousness but God's love working through us, His children, who are already justified by faith.
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### **III. Living in the Light of Christ's Return (Romans 13:11-14)**

Paul closes by urging believers to live with a sense of urgency, "putting on" Christ and rejecting the deeds of darkness.

- **Verse 11-12:** The time is short, and believers are to live as children of light. This anticipation of Christ's return shapes our conduct, reminding us that we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom that will be revealed in its fulness.
- **Verse 13:** Paul contrasts the works of darkness with a life of faith and honesty. Living in the light is an expression of our baptized identity. We dare to live now by faith that God is working through us according to His purpose.
- **Verse 14:** To "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" is language that points to the new person that has been brought out of death to life through baptism. This is a call to that faith trusts baptism's promise that daily and continually renews us in the forgiveness of sins.