

## ROMANS CH.13

### MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED IN TRANSFORMED LIVING

#### Hymn: #185 Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending

*(Modified Outline of John A. Witmer- Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; SP Publications; 1983; p.438)*

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### **E) Relating to Governmental Authority (Ch. 13:1-7)**

- i) V.1-4 Today, rebellion against Governmental authority around the world is seen on the nightly news, and one can't help but feel frustrated for those who are living under regimes where corruption and the abrogation of their responsibilities results in human suffering. So how do we not only make sense of but also apply these verses to our lives today?
  
- ii) First, let us understand the political and personal circumstances in Paul's day:
  - (1) Nero became emperor of Rome in 54 AD and reigned 14 years until 68 AD
  - (2) Paul wrote these instructions three years into Nero's reign in 57 AD
  - (3) Nero was a debauched, narcissistic, lunatic who murdered his own mother. In a petulant moment of madness in 64 AD, Nero ordered Rome to be set alight and burned to the ground. Foxes Book of Martyrs describes it:
    - (a) "Among other diabolical whims, he ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards, and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up to the tower of Macaenas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy, and openly declared that 'he wished the ruin of all things before his death.' Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousands perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins. This dreadful conflagration continued nine days; when Nero, finding that his conduct was greatly blamed, and a severe odium cast upon him, determined to lay the whole upon the Christians, at once to excuse himself, and have an opportunity of glutting his sight with new cruelties. This was the occasion of the first persecution; and the barbarities exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves. Nero even refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them. This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity. In the course of it, St. Paul and St. Peter were martyred."
      - (i) The first of 10 periods of persecution then broke out against Christians across the Roman Empire.
        - 1. Nero 64-68
        - 2. Domitian 81-95
        - 3. Trajan 100-117
        - 4. Aurelius 161-177
        - 5. Severus 203-210
        - 6. Maximin 235-237
        - 7. Decius 250-255
        - 8. Valerian 257-260
        - 9. Aurelian 276
        - 10. Diocletian 303-310 (Ken Johnson; The Ancient Church Fathers; p. 18-20)
      - (ii) Paul was beheaded and Peter crucified upside down on the same day in Rome on June 27, 67 AD.

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- (iii) Nero committed suicide on June 9, 68 A.D., when he learned that he had been tried in absentia and found responsible for the fire and was condemned to death as a public enemy.
- (4) Did the Holy Spirit writing in and through Paul make a mistake when He told those in Rome at that time to submit to THESE governing authorities? Of course not!
- (a) Peter says the same things “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right...For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.” (1 Pet. 2:13-14;19)
- (b) Paul wrote the same thing to Titus who was ministering on Crete saying “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good” (Titus 3:1)
- (c) Paul wrote to Timothy amongst the Ephesians calling them to pray for governmental authorities; “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:1-2)
- (d) Paul’s instructions, by the Holy Spirit, were neither naïve or isolated.
- (5) The second thing we have to understand in order to make sense of these instructions is that Governmental Authority is established, instituted and exists by God Himself.
- (a) Human Government was instituted by God not man and was the Third Dispensation (Noah; Gen 8:15-11:32) instituted by God following the Dispensation of Innocence (Adam pre-fall; Gen 1:28-3:6) and the Dispensation of Conscience (Adam post-fall/Cain & Abel; Gen 3:7-8:14).
- (i) The Dispensation of Conscience failed when Cain, against his conscience, murdered his brother. This was wrong, but God was not going to allow any individual to avenge Abel, so he put a mark on Cain so that no one would kill him (Gen. 4:15-16). But sin was running rampant and God brought the flood to purge the world of sinful humanity. Because sin was not purged from humanity and the threat of universal flood as judgement was no longer there, God instituted a new dispensation and responsibility upon man in order to restrain sin.
- (ii) “This dispensation began when Noah and his family left the ark...Up to this time no man had the right to take another man’s life....God instituted a corporate relationship of man to man in human government. The highest function of government is the protection of human life, out of which arises the responsibility of capital punishment. Man is not individually to avenge murder, but as a corporate group, he is to safe guard the sanctity of human life as a gift of God which cannot rightly be disposed of except as God permits...Where as in the preceding dispensation restraint upon men was internal (Gen. 6:3) as God’s spirit worked through moral responsibility, now a new and external moral restraint was added, that is, the power of civil government” (Scofield Reference Bible Notes; Gen 8:15)
1. Gen. 9:5-6 “And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too,

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I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man."

2. Government is established by God "to do you good" by protecting life and "to bring punishment on the wrongdoer". This is the "sword" of God's "servant" which Paul referred to in v.4.
  - (b) Daniel Ch. 4 reminds us three times that God the "...Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men."
- (6) V. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.
  - (a) Punishment, because the authorities bear the sword against the wrong doer.
  - (b) Conscience, because to resist the authorities is to resist what God ordained.
  - (c) Thus, to rebel against Human Government is to rebel against God and that NEVER ends well.
- (7) So the two things we must understand in order to make sense of this passage and apply it in our day is:
  - (a) First, to remember that Paul and the Holy Spirit said this in a day in which being fed to the lions or turned into a human street lamp were very real possibilities...and that by Governmental decree.
    - (i) While there are equally barbarous atrocities happening in various parts of the world at this very moment, they are not happening here and now to us...yet. In other words, if this was the Spirit's instruction to believers in a worse situation than you, what right do you or I have to disregard it under less threatening circumstances?
  - (b) The second thing we must remember is that Human Government was God given to maintain order in an increasingly disordered world.
- (8) But what about Governments that run amuck and forces us to obey ungodly decisions? Three things:
  - (a) First, we continue to respect the God given governmental authority and office even if we cannot not respect the officer.
  - (b) Second, we recognize that while our battle is not against flesh and blood, it is against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly realms who are manipulating like "puppeteers" the Christ rejecting rulers, authorities and powers of this dark world (Eph. 6:12).
    - (i) It is for this reason that Paul urges "first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:1-4)
  - (c) Third, there may be times when these satanically manipulated authorities make decrees in which we have to obey God rather than men. But even then, we entrust ourselves to our faithful creator even as the authority may come against us.
    - (i) Acts 5:27-29 "Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest." We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem

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with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

- (ii) Dan. 3:16-18 "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."
- (iii) Dan. 6:6-10 "So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered-in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So King Darius put the decree in writing. Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." "...My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."
- (d) Right now in Australia, we are on the verge of just such a situation. The "marriage equality" survey currently underway is simply a ruse by which, once enshrined into law, will allow the real agenda of a Christ rejecting 1.2% of the population to come into full swing; namely the repression of religious liberty, freedom of speech and parents' rights to keep their children from being sexually indoctrinated into 1.2%'s unbiblical view of gender fluidity and same sex marriage.
  - (i) As Dr David van Gend has pointed out in his recent book "The Injustice of Marriage Equality", "...there has never been an institution of homosexual 'marriage' since it could serve no vital social purpose. As a rare aberration that proves the rule, the ancient Romans did have one case of homosexual 'marriage' in the year 64 AD, but that was the emperor Nero- whom the contemporary historian Tacitus described as "corrupted by every lust, natural and unnatural". Even the historian in decadent Rome had trouble concealing his disgust: "The emperor, in the presence of witnesses, put on the bridal veil. Dowry, marriage bed, wedding torches, all were there. Indeed everything was public which even in a natural union is veiled by night." (p.15) Yes...that means what you think.
  - (ii) Van Gend goes on to warn us "...the raging spirit of idolatrous Nero, chief persecutor of the first century Christians and pioneer of gay 'marriage', can make a contemporary comeback. The gentle, sexually constrained truth of marriage and family will be banished again to the catacombs; the faith founded on Bethlehem, on the near sacred love between mother and baby

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and devoted dad, will be persecuted with two millennia of pent-up hatred.”  
(p. 218)

(iii) “Nero” can and does appear to be making a comeback ...right now! This is a very sobering assessment and one that every true disciple of Jesus must take stock of...right now! Let us never forget that Godly convictions are established in one's life, long before they are challenged by this world.

iii) V.6-7 Few things are more irksome than to have to pay taxes to corrupt, wasteful and evil acting governmental authorities. More wars and rebellion have ensued over the issue of taxation than just about anything else. The Boston Tea party sparked the American Revolution over “Taxation without representation”. Even today, tax evasion and tax avoidance are rampant in our culture. But for a Christian to be involved in such things is not only sinful but unnecessary:

(1) It is sinful because rebelling against God given authority MUST violate one's conscience if he is a believer. And to do anything with an unclear conscience is to act without faith. Paul will later tell us in the next chapter v.23 that “... everything that does not come from faith is sin.”

(a) “A conscience problem is always worse than a cash problem”.

(b) Conscience is far more authoritative in God's sight than questions of a given laws validity because it wasn't properly gazetted in the process of governmental institution.

(2) It is unnecessary for because of Jesus' example and promise:

(a) The Example: Matt. 22:17-21 “Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar's,” they replied. Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.”

(i) What is it that belongs to God? A life of faithful obedience and a clear conscience.

(ii) This issue of conscience is going be seen in much more detail and importance in Chapter 14.

(b) The Promise: Heb. 13:5 “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”

(i) If you listen to your conscience and trust Jehovah Jireh (God our Provider), you may not feel good about how your taxes are being spent, but you will never feel bad about paying them...and you will sleep at night!

### **F) Relating to Financial Arrangements (Ch. 13:8-10)**

i) V. 8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the debt of love, is lit. “Don't keep on owing anyone anything”

(1) In Australia “The ratio of household debt to income has more than doubled between 1995 and 2015, going from 104% to 212%, according to the OECD Data released in 2015. This means if the average person earns \$80,000 net, they are spending \$169,600 per year. (<https://www.finder.com.au/australias-personal-debt-reported-as-highest-in-the-world>) That is, living twice beyond one's means and going into debt to do so.

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- (2) “Total household debt stood at \$1.84 trillion at the end of 2013. This is the highest level in the last 25 years and is equivalent to \$79,000 per person”  
<http://www.primcapital.com.au/australias-in-front-household-debt-to-income/>
- (3) God is giving us clear instructions here to live within our means and do so for the same reason that we pay our taxes; namely for conscious sake and because we have a Shepherd and Provider.
- (4) Hudson Taylor, who was the founder of the China Inland Mission, would never incur a financial debt based upon his understanding and application of this verse. It was the same with the great Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, who held the same conviction. (Wiersbe; Romans-Be Right; p.155)
- (5) Whilst the Bible does not teach that it is always wrong to borrow or to be engaged in a legal transaction that involves interest, it does however explicitly teach us not to charge exorbitant interest or fail to pay back honest debts. Certainly no one should get into unnecessary debt or sign contracts he cannot maintain...for God said “Thou shalt not steal”. To selfishly, wilfully or knowingly go into debt without the means of paying it back or to maintain a position of debt without any realistic ability or intention of paying it back is stealing.
- (6) There is one debt we are to carry and to continue to owe everyone and that is the debt of love.
  - (a) I recently heard an illustration that really resonated with me about what this debt of love looks. David Jeremiah described it as if we, who have no love in our own accounts, were to go the spiritual ATM of God’s Bank and make a thousand dollar withdrawal of agape love....in .20 cent pieces. We are then to distribute them one at a time in little things of daily life and encounter; a smile, making a cup of coffee for someone, choosing not to take offense, listening, a word of encouragement and a million other Spirit led “random acts of kindness”. When all those .20 cent pieces are spent, we’re to go back to the ATM of God’s Bank and go further into debt making another thousand dollar withdrawal of .20 cent coins of love.
  - (b) Paul said in Ch. 8:4 that “the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit”. Here he says here that love is the fulfilment of the Law.
    - (i) The point is clear: The debt of love and the handing our .20 cent pieces of love can only be done when we walk in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and operate out of our regenerate spirit. Apart from Him we can do a whole lot of nothing.

### **G) Relating to The Future (Ch. 13:11-14)**

- i) The imminent return of Jesus was a real and present hope to Paul and it was always a part of his teaching.
  - (1) Here he urges us to submit to governing authorities and to love each other because the new day of the Kingdom is nearing.
  - (2) Eschatology (study of end time’s events) is never just a “nice to have add on” or something to be ignored. It is meant to motivate us to godly living.
- ii) Warren Wiersbe, the 1970’s Pastor of the famous Moody Church in Chicago and founder and bible teacher of the 1980’s radio ministry Back to The Bible identifies three of these motivations here:

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### **(1) First is Wake Up!**

- (a) Jesus' Parable of the 10 Virgins in Matt. 25 highlight the importance of watchfulness.
- (b) Paul taught the Thessalonians "So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet." (1 Thes. 5:6-8)
- (c) As we have said around here for a while, when you go to the mall and see tinsel and Santa's going up you know Christmas (The Second Coming) is near; but we also know that Thanksgiving (The Rapture) is even closer.
  - (i) The day of our salvation is truly much, much closer today than when we first believed. On top of that we tinsel and Santa's everywhere!

### **(2) Second is Clean Up!**

- (a) This hope of the Rapture motivates us to purity.
  - (i) 1 John 3:3 "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure"
  - (ii) "The Christian wears the armour of light, not the deeds of darkness. He has no reason to get involved in the sinful pleasures of the world" (Wiersbe; Romans-Be Right; p.156)

### **(3) Third is Grow Up!**

- (a) "To put on the Lord Jesus Christ means to become more like Him, to receive by faith all that He is for our daily living. We grow on the basis of the food we eat. This is why God warns us not to make provisions for the flesh. If we feed the flesh we will fail, but if we feed the inner man the nourishing things of the Spirit we will succeed." (Wiersbe; Romans-Be Right; p.156)