



BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT



BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER THIRTEEN



FAST FACTS

ROMANS CHAPTER 13

- Christians must be obedient to governing authorities, because God has appointed these authorities.
- Those who rebel against higher authorities rebel against God.
- Higher authorities, when they fulfill God's purpose, are ministers of God.
- Christians must give the authorities their due.
- Love is the fulfillment of the Law.
- Christ's Second Coming is drawing inexorably nearer.
- In light of Christ's imminent return, Christians should reject the works of the flesh and put on the "armor of light."

ON THE CD

PUT ON CHRIST

DO I QUESTION AUTHORITY?

ZEALOTS

ARMOR OF LIGHT

INTERACTIVE QUIZ

MUCH MORE!

ROMANS 13

St. Paul begins Romans chapter thirteen by stating that Christians must be obedient to governing authorities, because God has appointed these authorities (Romans 13:1). This means that rebelling against such duly appointed authorities is in effect a rebellion against the God Who is responsible for their position (13:2). In Romans 13:3-4, St. Paul explains the central purpose of a good government: to uphold a stable, beneficial social order, and to punish individuals who engage in acts of evil. In fact, when a governmental official fulfills this duty, he or she "is God's minister to you for good" (13:4). When a person engages in evil, however, then the governmental official is "God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (13:4). Christians therefore only need to fear good government when they engage in evil, law-breaking activities (13:3, 4). Ultimately, Christians do not obey governmental regulations because we fear punishment for violating the law: we obey the government "for conscience' sake" (Romans 13:5).

Because Christians obey higher authorities because of their role in God's plan for the world, we must give to them those things - both money and respect - that are their due. Christians therefore pay taxes in order to fund the authorities' God-ordained activities (Romans 13:6; see Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26). Fr. Lawrence Farley explains that Christians further give "custom" or other taxes to those with the authority to collect money from citizens, "fear" (or, as St. John Chrysostom phrases it, "very great honor") to high-ranking authorities who can punish wrongdoers, and "honor" to lower-ranking authorities who cannot punish wrongdoers but nonetheless deserve respect for their position and work (Romans 13:7).

St. Paul summarizes his teaching in Romans chapters twelve and thirteen with one word: love. All the command-

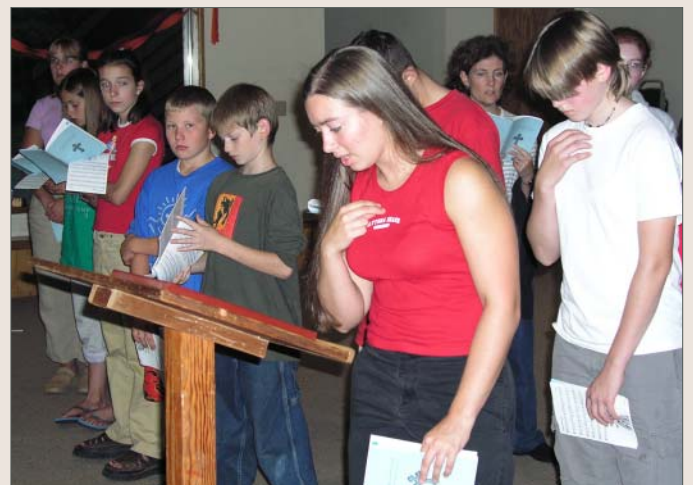
DO I HAVE "HIDDEN" SINS?

Do you engage in activities that you believe are secret, but which can actually be seen by God? Do you:

- Cheat on tests at school?
- Shoplift?
- View pornography on the Internet?
- Drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or take illegal drugs?
- Break your parents' curfew?

A Protestant Bible teacher, Bruce Wilkinson, provides several helpful suggestions if you are guilty of engaging in "hidden" sins.

1. Admit to God that your actions are wrong (1 John 1:9).
2. Tell God that you want to change and that you need his strength to do so (Philippians 4:13).
3. Find a Christian friend in whom you can confide and who will agree to help you to overcome your 'not-so-secret' sins (James 5:16-20).



CONTINUE

ments - against adultery, murder, theft, lying, greed, etc. - are summed up in the words, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Romans 13:9; see Exodus 20:13-17; Deuteronomy 5:17-21; Matthew 19:16-18; Mark 12:28-34). A Christian who truly loves others will be able to live peaceably with them, because love is the fulfillment of the Law (Romans 13:10). To say that love fulfills the Law means, according to Fr. Lawrence Farley, that "all that the Law contains, all its life-giving teaching and power, is in love. If one has love, one has all the reality contained in the Law. That is why the one who loves has already fulfilled the Law's inner demands."

Christians should live in love with the full knowledge that the time of Christ's Second Coming is inexorably drawing nearer (Romans 13:11). Since the moment in which you first believed in God and His promises, the time of Christ's return has continually drawn closer. Because this time draws closer, St. Paul encourages you to "wake out of sleep," which the Church Fathers understand to mean ceasing a life of sloth and spiritual indifference and working to grow in love and holiness.

The night of this sinful age has almost passed, and soon the new day - in which Christ will renew the world - will arrive (Romans 13:12). In preparation for this new day, Christians should cease all sinful works of darkness and instead "put on the armor of light" (13:12), which can be linked to the command to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (13:14). Christians should reject such sinful works of the flesh as revelry and drunkenness, lewdness and lust, and strife and envy (13:13) - all those things which prevent us from living peaceably with others - and instead submit to Christ's authority in our lives.



LOVE

The love that is God Himself is so deep and profound that it entirely surpasses our understanding (Ephesians 3:19). Nonetheless, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - whose fruit of love we must bear - St. Paul describes some of the attributes of true love:

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in all truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

We should note that St. Paul's explanation says not only what love *is* (virtue), but also what love *is not* (vices). St. John Chrysostom points out, "He adorns love not only for what it has but also for what it has not. Love both elicits virtue and expels vice, not permitting it to spring up at all." We can identify a person who bears the fruit of the Spirit that is love in part by the absence of the works of the flesh.

The Church Fathers tell us a great deal about these attributes of love:

Love is not puffed up: "The reason why love does not envy is because it is not puffed up. For where puffing up precedes, envy follows, because pride is the mother of envy" - Blessed Augustine.

"Love is not puffed up...arrogance is like a very tall but rotten tree. All of its branches are brittle and if someone climbs upon it, he immediately falls from the height he has attained" - St. Ephraim the Syrian.

Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in all truth: "Love hates what is unjust and rejoices in what is good and honorable" - Theodore of Cyr.

Love bears all things: "Bearing all things, enduring all things for our love and hope regarding Him, let us give thanks for all things, both favorable and unfavorable alike - I mean the pleasant and the painful - since reason often knows even these as arms of salvation" - St. Gregory Nazianzen.

"A man with this charity fears nothing, for charity casts out fear. When fear is banished and cast out, charity endures all things, bears all things. One who bears all things through love cannot fear martyrdom" - St. Ambrose of Milan.

St. John Chrysostom summarizes the necessity of defeating sin with love: "Love for one another makes us immaculate. There is not a single sin, which the power of love, like fire, would not destroy. It is easier for feeble brushwood to withstand a powerful fire than for the nature of sin to withstand the power of love. Let us increase this love in our souls, in order to stand with all the saints, for they, too, all pleased God well by love for their neighbors." It is for this reason that St. Polycarp says, "He that has love is far from every sin."