

# Bible Reading Notes

## the good way

### 30. '3-dimensional living'

#### Romans 13.1-14

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September – Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September

In the previous chapter Paul underlined the importance of right *thinking*: the Spirit's work of transformation begins with the 'renewal of the mind' – right thinking about God (12.1-2), about ourselves (12.3-8), and about others (12.9-21).

Here he takes it a stage further and shows, as he so regularly does, how our conduct is to reflect the three 'dimensions' of the new life we have in Christ. The 'upward' dimension of faith (vv.1-7), the 'outward' dimension of love (vv.8-10), and the 'forward' dimension of hope (vv.11-14).

In each case it's important to recognise that he's setting out the general principles which are to inform our living, rather than giving a detailed and comprehensive set of precepts.

Exactly how these principles play out on the canvas of our daily living can be challenging and difficult: navigating wisely the dilemmas we face will often be hard, and reaching clear and confident decisions will sometimes seem far beyond us. But part of our growth in Christ flows from our being 'stretched' by our having to address these issues and by our learning, with the help of the Spirit, to apply these principles.

Read the whole chapter and if you're short of time concentrate on 'days' **(2)**, **(5)** and **(6)**, where in each case there are additional questions

## 1) Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September – His lordship

Read [Romans 13.1](#)

*“.. there is no authority except that which God has established ..”* (Rom.13.1)

Jesus is Lord. The gospel reduced to its barest essentials. A unique person (*Jesus*): a significant event (*is* – His death and resurrection): and a necessary response (*Lord*). We give practical expression to the lordship of Jesus in submitting to the authorities.

Why is the way we conduct ourselves as citizens of our state so important?

When there has been a coup, usurping the existing authority, which is the ‘authority’ that God has established?

**Prayer:** *Thank You, O God, for the gift of Your Son: I’m glad that the government is on His wise, kind and strong shoulders! Help me to display His lordship in my living today.*

## 2) Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September – servants of God

Read [Romans 13.2-5](#)

*“.. the one in authority is God’s servant for your good ..”* (Rom.13.4)

The Creator is King, and His world is structured accordingly. It’s not a jungle whose only rule is the survival of the fittest. Whatever the context – the home, the church, the state – authority is a ‘sacred’, delegated responsibility. Honour God in His servants.

What reasons does Paul give in exhorting his readers to ‘submit to the authorities’?

Government restrictions during the pandemic, particularly relating to public worship, created a dilemma for Christians: is it ever valid *not* to submit to the governing authorities?

By what means should Christians stand against government measures which run counter to the Word of God (eg regarding abortion, euthanasia, etc)?

What about tyrants and power-hungry dictators who cruelly oppress? How can they be said to be “God’s servants”?

**Prayer:** *Help those, O Lord, to whom has been entrusted the reins of government. Sustain them in their responsibilities and give them wisdom, compassion and integrity.*

## 3) Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September – ‘honour the emperor’

Read [Romans 13.6-7](#)

*“.. give to everyone what you owe them ..”* (Rom.13.7)

Good government costs. It requires your obedience more than your agreement; your support more than your approval; your tax more than your vote; your respect more than your applause. Honour the lordship of Jesus in what you give to His authorities.

Should believers refuse to countenance both tax evasion *and* tax avoidance – or can the latter be viewed as good stewardship?

Peter exhorts us to ‘honour the emperor’ ([1 Pet.2.17](#)), although the emperor was persecuting Christians: how and why was the emperor to be honoured?

**Prayer:** *Help those who govern, O Lord, both nationally and locally, that they may promote peace and mutual good will within our communities: for Your Name’s sake.*

#### **4) Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September – a debtor to mercy**

Read [Romans 13.8](#)

*“.. let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love ..”* (Rom.13.8)

Out of His great love for us, our debt has been cleared by the Lord. Because we owe everything to the Lord, we’re to owe nothing to others – except an unending resolve to display to do unto others as the Lord Himself has done to us: to live in such love.

Do you have outstanding debts which you should be repaying?

In what sense, and for what reason, is the command to love others a ‘continuing debt’?

**Prayer:** *O may Thy Spirit seal our souls, and mould them to Thy will, that our weak hearts no more may stray, but keep Thy precepts still. Help me, Lord, to live in love.*

#### **5) Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September – doing good**

Read [Romans 13.9-10](#)

*“.. love is the fulfilment of the law ..”* (Rom.13.10)

Loving your neighbour is a summary command. What its content involves is defined by the Lord in His Word, and not by your own or society’s mores. It’s a costly thing, as Jesus showed when in the power of the Spirit ‘He went around doing good’ – not harm.

What significance does the Law of God have for the Christian who is no longer ‘under the law but under grace’ ([Rom.6.14](#))?

**How should the commandments be taught in the church without conveying a legalistic message?**

**To what extent and what ways do the commandments of God reflect His own character and being?**

Read [Lev.19.18](#): are there people against whom you are seeking revenge or bearing a grudge?

*Prayer: Thank You, Lord, that in Your great love You have raised me to newness of life: help me remember that I am Your handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works.*

## 6) Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September – dawn treader

Read [Romans 13.11-12](#)

*“.. the night is nearly over; the day is almost here ..”* (Rom.13.12)

The opening verses of the Bible set out the direction of travel. From darkness to light. There was evening and there was morning. From night to day. In Christ we’re headed towards the light: a new day has already begun to dawn. Time to dress for the day!

‘Darkness’ came over the whole land at the crucifixion of Jesus ([Mt.27.45](#)): why was that significant?

How does the ‘darkness’ or ‘night’ to which Paul refers find expression in our society today (morally, spiritually, politically, socially, etc)?

To what extent are people aware of such ‘darkness’ today?

In what sense is our salvation ‘nearer now than when we first believed’?

What does Paul mean when he exhorts his readers to ‘put on the armour of light’ and why does he use that terminology (v.12)?

*Prayer: You have set me on the path of life, my gracious God, which like the light of dawn shines ever brighter: may my life point others to the light of that coming day.*

## 7) Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September – dress rehearsal

Read [Romans 13.13-14](#)

*“.. clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ ..”* (Rom.13.14)

In Christ, we’re living towards the future. We’re packing our bags and clothing ourselves with the garments of that coming world, the lifestyle of our Saviour God and the lineaments of eternity. Love, not lust. Grace, not greed. The Lord, not the self.

These verses were used by the Lord to effect Augustine’s conversion to the Christian faith in 386AD: what verses (if any!) were key to your conversion?

‘Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ’: how does this exhortation challenge you today?

*Prayer: “Let holy charity mine outward vesture be, and lowliness become mine inner clothing: true lowliness of heart which takes the humbler part and o’er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing”*