

Date: November 4, 2012

Subject: God's Ministers - Rom. 13: 4-7 pt. 2

Greetings once again my beloved friends, how are you doing today? Well this week, I hope to conclude our study of Romans 13; but first, let's begin with a word of prayer together.

"Dear Father, O Lord we thank Thee for bringing us together in spirit to praise and worship Thee. O Father, we pray for those on the East coast who were affected by the storm, we pray Lord that Thou wilt make Thyself manifest unto multitudes who do not know Thee and that they will seek Thee early in their afflictions, for Thou delightest to have mercy upon sinners. And O Lord, we pray for Thy people to shew forth Thy mercy by helping their neighbours; yea, even strangers, and not focusing upon their own losses and hurts, but extending their gifts for the service of others, may You be glorified all in all. And now O Father, we ask Thy blessing upon this letter, may it be faithful, plain, loving and edifying; and may it be a blessing to Thy people to bring forth fruit unto Thee. We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen."

Last time we were in Romans 13, we got through the first three verses, so let's begin this week by rereading verses 4-7. Speaking about our governing authorities:

"For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

This whole passage (Rom. 13:1-7) deals with our submission to our authorities, not just because of the fees, penalties, confinements, etc. that they may impose upon us; but chiefly because they are appointed by God over us to preserve and protect us so that we may live a "quiet and

peaceable life" (1 Tim. 2:1). Our depraved nature opposes roles placed upon us, even when they are beneficial to us. Therefore the Apostle Paul directs us to look above our authorities, to the God who has appointed them thereto.

verse 4 "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil."

The officer you see on the side of the road and tracking the speeds of the vehicles; or the one patrolling ~~the~~ your neighbourhood; or the prison guard who confines you during your prison term - all these and so many more, are examples of ^{what} God has intended ^{by} the use of officers, captains, judges, etc. for our good, and not to harm us or hinder us.

If we ignore or rebel against this authority, "I'll do what I want to do, when I want to do it!" If someone should hold to such an attitude,

"be afraid," the Apostle writes. It's as if the Apostle said, "Thou knowest the rules and do well to live in obedience therein, but if thou refusest warning and wilt rush forward disobeying the rules which 'God's ministers' have decreed (and are not contrary to the law of God), then thou hast no ease nor comfort given thee. Thou hast forfeited a peaceful conscience and thine own liberty also. Therefore, be afraid..."

"for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil."

God has not left His ministers with whistles and lollipops, but ^{they} have been given the rule by God to even execute life itself. By doing so, God gives even unsaved mankind the need to reverence His appointed authorities. For a Christian, his or her desire should be to obey the authorities because they are ordained of God, and also because they desire to please God and be obedient unto Him; but to the rest of ~~the~~ unsaved mankind who cares not for the authorities nor ^{for} pleasing God, God brandishes His ministers with "the ~~sword~~ sword," as if to say,

"If thou wilt not do good to please God, and if thou thinkest that His authorities are nothing and art not afraid of disobeying them because of thy stubborn heart, then you will fear that sword which he bears..." and so a great amount of evil is restrained thereby.

verse 5 "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

One thing about disobeying the law is not only the punishment it carries, but living in that "terror" (vs. 3) before getting caught. Looking over your shoulder constantly, trying to be so careful to not get caught, sometimes you become afraid that the people you trust will turn on you. Such is the conscience of those who live in rebellion to the laws of their land, even if nobody is aware of their crime yet, they live in a constant state of fear. Proverbs 28:1

"The wicked flee when no man pursues: but the righteous are bold as a lion."

It's an exhausting way to live, and ^{they} are in danger of having their "conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2).

verse 6 "For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."

If you're like me you may wonder, "Why does this verse begin by repeating the same word twice, 'For, for...' is this a typo?"

In the beginning of this verse, the Greek reads thus, "dia touto gar..." The first two words form a common idiom, "for this reason" and is often translated "therefore" or "wherefore" in our King James Bibles.

"And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore ["dia touto"] I cannot come."

Luke 14:20 see also Mat. 13:13 etc.

The word "gar" is another Greek word that carries the same basic meaning: "for, therefore, etc." (see for example John 4:8 ("For...")).

The meaning of these words "dia touto" and "gar" is to show the connection between two clauses; they can either refer back to what has been said previously; or they can point forward as what will be said. ~~and~~ I believe our passage falls under the latter reason; namely, with what follows. Therefore we could read verse 6 thus:

"And for this reason pay ye tribute also:
[now comes the reason why] for they are
God's ministers, attending continually upon this
very thing."

Part of us paying "tribute" or taxes to the Government is to fund our authorities with money to pay for the expenses of the officers' salaries, vehicles, firearms, etc. They are not to pay for these things themselves, but are provided by God's great design for us to reciprocate ~~to~~ them for serving us, by our serving them. Such is the beauty of all of God's creation, the lesser helps the greater and the greater protects the lesser. Like the small fishes that attach themselves to a shark, the small fishes attend to the body of the shark and the shark protects the small fishes.

Notice also how our authorities are said to attend "continually upon this very thing." Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, "God's ministers" patrol the streets and answer calls of distress. The difficult and demanding nature of their function, and the tireless role they fulfill commands our deepest reverence and respect for the vital duty they serve.

Verse 7 "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Here the Apostle gives us some particulars on how we are to maintain our Government. The first two (i.e. "tribute" and "custom") we perform by giving ^{of} our money; the latter two (i.e. "fear" and "honour") we perform by giving ~~to~~ ^{the} them reverence as God requires us.

As a little child I had desired to be a police officer when I grew up, but along the way my natural depravity being stimulated by friends, television, video games, etc., I grew rebellious towards all authorities. This letter is important not only for adult Christians who desire to please God ~~more~~ more and so will

now have grown in reverence to "God's ministers," but it is important for parents as well, to teach their children diligently - from Scripture - to reverence "God's ministers" ^{"also."} ~~also~~ The "pride of life" surrounds us beloved, and whereas ~~they~~ our children are fed the ways of the world so much in their little life, it is all the more important to teach them what God requires of even them, and that, from His own Word, the Bible.

Remember that God sees everything, so even if you can hide things from other people - even our law officials - you can't hide them from God. May we search our ways and love God more, by reverencing, "God's Ministers."

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns feel free to write. Gratefully,

Your servant for Jesus' sake,

Del O. Uhlen