

## Romans 13

# Study 10

## Living in the Light

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, Paul continues with his explanation of the consequences of the gospel. Christians are to live the way they do "because of God's mercy" (Romans 12:1) - the way we treat one another, the way we treat unbelievers, even the way we respect those who govern us, is a constant display to the world of the way God has treated us.

### READ 13:1-7

### BACKGROUND BRIEFING

As Paul explains the attitude we should have to those who rule over us in the world, remember that he lived in far more difficult and hostile circumstances than we do! Paul was talking to first century Christians who were politically powerless in the face of Roman imperial rule.

For Christians of Jewish background, submission to Roman rule would have been a constant point of tension. Other Jewish movements of the day (like "*the Zealots*") were advocating a violent uprising. In fact, within ten years of Paul writing *Romans*, the Zealots plunged the nation of Israel into a disastrous revolt against Rome. It wasn't just the Zealots who were cranky. Other Jewish groups were refusing to pay taxes, and rioting in the cities of Ephesus and Alexandria.

Where did Christians stand on these matters? Was the Christian church another splinter political group determined to de-stabilise Roman rule? Paul makes very clear the fact that followers of Jesus have a far different attitude!

### GUIDELINES FOR GOVERNMENT, GUIDELINES FOR US

1. From verses 1 to 7, what guidelines can you see for those who rule or govern?
2. Does the fact that some - or many - people in political leadership reject God's claim on their lives change this reality?
3. What benefits does government bring to a society?
4. Why do you feel so rotten when you see the flashing blue lights in your rear-view mirror? (Does verse 3 still apply equally today?)
5. Should we consider ourselves somehow "above the law"? What does the passage say about this?

6. What excuses do people use for "rotting the system"? How should Christians view these opportunities?

7. What two reasons does Paul give for obeying the directions of the authorities that rule us?

Who are we really cheating if we cheat the taxman?

**Read 13: 8-14**

8. As we've worked our way through Romans we've seen that pursuing righteousness by law-keeping only leads to a dead end. Our sinful human natures are too strong for the Old Testament law (7:1-12). But for those that have faith in Christ, the Spirit of God is at work to change hearts from the inside (2:29, 6:17). With this heart transformation, one way of living sums up all those laws. What is it?

9. Write this law in the space below. Hang the old testament laws from it that Paul mentions. Add any others you can think of. How would you explain Paul's summary?

10. Can you think of reasons why this 'love' approach to living is so much better than trying to keep lots and lots of specific laws.

11. Since the Christian life is all about love, it's worth reflecting on the section of last weeks study we're you looked at particular ways of expressing love. Was there things last week you decided you wanted to do. How have you gone? What can you still do?

12. Apparently Roman Christians were getting slack at some of the points Paul is talking about. They are behaving in some very unloving ways. In verses 11 to 14, he tells them it's time to wake up to themselves! List the things Paul says they need to wake up from doing...

Are any of these relevant in your case? Perhaps there are other things? What would Paul be saying to YOU?

13. How does Paul say we Christians should live? How will the state-of-mind described in verse 14 help us do this?