

Facilitator Notes for *Set Free!* – A Study in Romans  
**Lesson 18 ~ Wake Up and Smell the Coffee! Romans 13**

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.  
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

## Questions

Read **Romans 13:1-7**.

1. What is your initial reaction to what Paul says in **Romans 13:1-6** about Christians and government? What questions do these verses raise in your mind?

It is important to understand that Paul is not trying to address **every** situation concerning Christians and existing governments. He is **not** addressing the problem of unjust rulers or rulers who abuse their authority. Nor is he speaking of the problem of governments that persecute Christians or command them to do something that God forbids or forbids them to do what God commands. Rather, he is simply addressing the issue of whether the state has any legitimate authority over a Christian. If any of the Roman Christians were wondering if submission to the state was incompatible with the Lordship of Christ and their freedom in Christ, Paul had a very definite answer!

2. What are the reasons Paul gives as to why it is right to submit to governing authorities (**13:1-2, 5**)? **There is no authority except what God has established; the authorities that exist have been established by God. If we rebel against authority, we are rebelling against what God has instituted and we will bring judgment on ourselves. We obey government for two reasons: to keep from being punished and to keep a clear conscience. (Submission means cooperation, loyalty and a willingness to obey.)**
  - ♥ Do the words *governing* and *authority* have a positive or negative connotation for you? Why? Who are the authorities in your life? How well have you related to them? How can you do better?
  - ♥ How do you react to the words **obey** and **submit**? In what ways do you struggle to obey and submit?
  - ♥ What was the attitude toward government in the home where you grew up? Has your attitude changed? Why or why not?
3. What is God's view of governing authorities and how does he use them (**13:4,6**)? **All authorities are sent by God to help us and to punish those who do wrong. Governing authorities are God's servants.**
  - ♥ Even though God has established governmental authorities, does this mean that everything a ruler or government does is what God desires? Why or why not? **Governing authorities are human beings who are given free will just like anyone else. God does not dictate what each person does, but he will use everything for His purposes. Things are never "out of control" as far as God is concerned. God will use even bad governments for his purposes. Even in bad governments, Christians can share the good news of Christ with others. That is more important than whether a government is good or bad.**
  - ♥ How do you think God views wicked and evil rulers like Nero and Hitler? **Evil is evil and God never calls evil good. For the believer, he promises to work all things together for good no matter what kind of evil touches them. When governments distort or betray their God-given purpose and function, those who run them will answer to God. Is bad government better than no government at all? Even a bad government is better than lawlessness. Living in a society where there were no restrictions and anyone could do whatever they wanted to anyone else at any time would truly be frightening. Why or why not?**
  - ♥ Do you agree to Paul's statement in **13:3**? Why or why not? What is Paul's point? **13:3-4 is talking about officials who are doing their duty. Generally speaking, when we do what is right we have nothing to fear.**

4. Why is rebelling against governing authorities a serious matter and what are the consequences (13:1, 2, 4)?

When we rebel against authority, we are rebelling against God and we can expect to pay the consequences. God has given governments the authority to punish those who do wrong. Paul is not talking about those who may challenge or question the government if they think it is doing wrong. He is talking about those who blatantly do evil or disobey because they think they are “under God” and not under any government.

- ♥ Are there ways you try to get around your obligation to submit to authority? How so? What effect do these actions have on your conscience toward God? As Christians, we have to be careful that our “rebellion” is not really a problem with submission. Although submitting to God is our most basic responsibility, God has placed us in situations that offer daily lessons in submission. We can learn how to submit to God by submitting to those whom God has placed in authority over us.
  - ♥ What attitude do you think Christians should have if they think they are being punished for what is right? What action should they take? If we think a wrong is being done, we can always appeal to God to intervene. We are fortunate to live in a democracy where legally challenging what we think is wrong is permitted. We should make full use of any legal tools given us. The Romans that Paul was writing to lived under political powers that were there by birth, connection, wealth or ruthlessness. The masses had no power, could never expect to have any power, and would never think that they could change the status quo. We have to read Romans 13 in the light of who it was written to.
  - ♥ Have you ever rebelled against or disobeyed civil authority? What were your reasons? Would you do it again? Why or why not?
5. Summarize the main ideas concerning governing authorities in each of the scriptures listed below.

Titus 3:1-2	We should give government with the same respect we give people; we should be obedient, always ready to do good, slander no one and live peaceably with others
1 Peter 2:13-17	Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; we should live as servants of God; fear God and honor the government
Mark 12:13-17	Jesus said it all and no one has ever said it better: Give to God what belongs to God and give to the government what belongs to the government
Acts 5:27-32	God’s direct commands to us always take precedent over the commands of the government. When these two authorities are in direct conflict, then we obey God rather than man. We do not violate God’s law in order to obey government.
Hebrews 11:31	Rahab, by hiding the Hebrew spies, did what she knew was right in God’s sight rather than obey the authorities.

- ♥ Based on the above verses, what are some general principles that can help you when dealing with the power of governing authorities?
- ♥ Which do you have most trouble with – submitting to authority or serving God rather than men?
- ♥ Is there any situation in which God excuses a Christian from paying taxes (13:6-7)? Why or why not? Christians are to pay taxes which, in turn, pay the salaries of those who govern. This was a heated topic at the time that Paul wrote – he does not refer to this in any other letter. Government taxation, and abuses of taxation, were causing great unrest in the city. Christians might be thinking that they could get away with not paying the inflated taxes, but that would inevitably draw the attention of the authorities and put the believers at unnecessary risk. So Paul says to pay. Christians are not exempt from fulfilling the expectations of any government.
- ♥ Is paying the debt of *respect* and *honor* just as important to you as paying your taxes? Why or why not? Our obligation extends beyond government to others to whom we may owe a debt of gratitude, honor, respect, money or anything borrowed. What is borrowed or owed must be paid.

Read **Romans 13:8-10**

6. The idea of owing taxes reminds Paul that there is another debt we owe which can never be paid.

What is this debt and why can't it ever be paid in full (13:8)?

The debt we "owe" everyone is the debt of love. "Love your neighbor as yourself" is the second of the 2 greatest commands that Jesus gave. We are permanently in debt to Christ for the love he has lavished on us. The only way we can begin to repay this debt is by loving others. Because Christ's love will always be infinitely greater than ours, we will always have the obligation to love others. It will never be paid in full because we are never to stop loving.

♥ Why is love a debt (something owed) and why do we owe this debt (John 13:12-17)?

We owe this debt to others because of Jesus' love for us.

♥ Why can't love be withheld until later? Why is it always due?

It would be unloving to withhold love; it is not something we can not do now but do later. Then it wouldn't be love!

♥ Is Paul saying we are to have no outstanding debts of any kind in 13:8? Why or why not?

Some people have interpreted Paul's statement, "Let no debt remain outstanding" or "Owe no one anything" as saying we are never to borrow or go into debt. That is taking this verse out of context. Paul is not against home mortgages or car loans. He is not teaching against borrowing, except as it applies to borrowing things or money that we cannot hope to repay. Careless or deceitful debt is not acceptable behavior for Christ-followers. We are to be responsible to make payments and not borrow beyond our ability to pay. Many Christian leaders advocate not going into debt and this is certainly a wise option, but it is not a command of scripture.

7. To whom, specifically, does Paul say the debt of love is to be paid (13:8-9)?

To our neighbors

From the story Jesus told in **Luke 10:25-37**, write a definition for the term *neighbor*.

Answers will vary –

In the Old Testament when God said "Love your neighbor as yourself" he was talking about close acquaintances, people who lived close and fellow Israelites – people who are much like ourselves. Jesus, in the story of the Good Samaritan extended the meaning to be anyone we come in contact with, regardless of race, creed or social background, especially if they have a need and we are able to assist them. A neighbor could easily be someone who is NOT very much like ourselves.

♥ What kind of actions communicate love to you? How can you do these things for others?

We all have a "love language" which are types of things others do for us that make us feel loved. Some of these might be: acts of service, words of affirmation, physical touch (hugs, etc.) giving of quality time, giving of gifts --

♥ Who, this week, is someone brought into your life by God with needs that you can meet? Are you willing to meet these needs? How will you do this?

♥ What debt of love in your life is past due? When and how will you settle this account?

8. How does Paul explain the debt of love both *positively* and *negatively* in 13:9-10?

The debt of love can be paid by NOT doing things to each other that are harmful and hurtful – do not commit adultery, do not murder, etc. It is NOT doing anything to harm our neighbor. Positively, the debt of love is paid by loving our neighbor as our selves (being as concerned and as interested in them as we are ourselves.)

Why are both statements needed?

NOT doing harm to someone (13:10) does not necessarily mean that we will do positive acts of love. Loving our neighbor is BOTH – doing no harm but also taking the initiative to do good.

♥ Is there a difference between "loving your neighbor" and "loving our neighbor *as yourself*?" Why or why not? If love is demonstrated by meeting the needs of others, what does *as yourself* imply?

Just as we take care of our own needs and concerns, we are to show the same concern to others and actively work to meet their needs. We all work at making sure our basic needs are met – but we are to also be aware of our neighbor's needs and always be considering how we can help others.

♥ Can we ever say, "I have loved you enough. My debt is paid." Why or why not? Just like God's love for us, love is a continuing, on-going commitment that never ends.

♥ Is "love your neighbor as yourself" also a command to love yourself? Why or why not?

We don't really need a command to "love ourselves" because everyone (except perhaps the emotionally or mentally ill) love themselves in that they strive to meet their basic needs (food, clothing, shelter) and they protect themselves from being injured or cheated. All of us are "centered on ourselves" in one way or the other and the command to love our neighbor as ourselves is a command to turn our attention outward, toward others and their needs.

♥ How is our neighbor harmed (13:10) if we *don't* keep the commands that Paul lists in 13:9?

All the commands listed in 13:9 hurt another person in a particular way, so doing them to another causes harm.

9. The first four commandments in the *Ten Commandments* (Exodus 20) have to do with our actions and attitudes toward God. The last six commandments have to do with our actions and attitudes towards others. Paul mentions four of these six commandments in 13:9 as examples of loving your neighbor as yourself. How is keeping each of these commandments a way of loving your neighbor as yourself?

All these commands are examples of treating someone that way we would want to be treated. We want others to honor us or we don't want others to murder, commit adultery, steal, give false witness, especially if we are the victim! Coveting is not an overt sin, but you can't covet what another has or who they are without it having a negative affect on the relationship. Coveting and love cannot co-exist. You cannot covet and still love the other as yourself.

*Honor you father and your mother -*

*Do not murder -*

*Do not commit adultery -*

*Do not steal -*

*Do not give false testimony against your neighbor -*

*Do not covet -*

♥ Why do we not need to be concerned about keeping the law if we are careful to love our neighbors as ourselves? The positive act of love automatically prohibits any negative actions against our neighbor.

♥ How can loving others as ourselves be the solution for low self-esteem? Even if we think poorly of ourselves, we are still self-centered and very aware of low self-esteem. People who focus on others and their needs have less time to have an unhealthy focus on themselves and how they are feeling. Also, when we take care of others, God promises to take care of us. His care of us helps convince us of our value.

Read **Romans 13:11-14**.

10. Why must we be careful to live right and obey all we have been taught (13:11-12a)?

Because the hour is late and time is running out. Our salvation (the end of the age) is nearer than we realize. We don't have "forever" to do what is right.

The Bible divides history into "**this age**" and "**the age to come.**" We know from the New Testament that "the age to come" (known as the Kingdom of God) commenced with the ministry of Jesus. This means that **at present**, the ages *overlap*. We are waiting expectantly for the second coming of Jesus to earth when the old age will be completely over and new age of God's Kingdom will be a complete reality. In these verses, Paul is saying that the new age is closer than we think, so we must be alert and ready. Our *salvation* (which won't be **completed** until Jesus comes) is near!

- ♥ In what ways are you "sleepy" spiritually? How will you "wake up"?
  - ♥ What are some of the consequences if we are complacent and not ready when Jesus returns?
- Everyone will give an account to God for their life and how they lived it with the resources and gifts he gave them. We need to do what we can while there is still time.**
- ♥ Do you think Jesus could return in your lifetime? Why or why not? Are you "ready" if he came today? Spiritually, what are some things you need to do before Jesus comes back (or before you die)?

11. With each new day, the new age is getting closer. As we wait, what are we **to do** and **not do**?

	Do		Don't
13:12b	Put aside the deeds of darkness; get rid of evil deeds	13:13	Don't participate in wild parties and getting drunk, or in adultery and immoral living, or in fighting and jealousy.
13:12b	Put on the armor of light (the armor of right living and living in the light of Christ)		
13:13	Behave decently (be decent and true in everything we do.	13:14	Don't think of way to gratify your sinful nature
13:14	Clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ (let Jesus take control of us and live through us)		

- ♥ What does the word armor (**13:12**) imply about this present age? **Living the way God wants us to live is a spiritual battle. Satan and his kingdom is working against us.** How do we live in light and not darkness? **Obedience; living God's way and not our way; staying in close contact with Jesus, letting him live through us.** What effect does light have on darkness? **Light and darkness cannot coexist and light is stronger than darkness. Light always pushes the darkness away; darkness does not overcome the light; even if the light is small, there will be no darkness where light is shining.** Where do you live?
- ♥ Do you think of dissensions and jealousy in the same category as orgies, drunkenness, and sexual immorality (**13:13**)? Why or why not? Why are all of these serious sins to be avoided? What effect do they have on us and others? **All these things are harmful to us and to others. That is why they are wrong. The motivation for them is never love for the other.**
- ♥ What do you personally do to "clothe yourself" with the Lord Jesus Christ (**13:14 NIV**)? How is this process like getting up every morning and putting on your clothes? If you don't clothe yourself with Jesus, what do you wear?

## *Response*

Read the Parable of the Ten Virgins in **Matthew 25:1-13**.

- ♥ What does Jesus expect you to do with your life in anticipation of his return?
- ♥ In what ways does Jesus' second coming affect the way you live? How are you staying prepared?

**BELOW IS THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURE FOR THIS LESSON THAT CAN BE PRINTED OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME.**

NIV

Titus 3:1-2 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

1Peter 2:13-17 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Mark 12:13-17 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied. 17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

And they were amazed at him.

Acts 5:27-32 Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Hebrews 11:31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

John 13:12-17 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Luke 10:25-37 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Matthew 25:1-13 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

Matthew 25:7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

9 "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

11 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'

12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

## NLT

Titus 3:1-2 Remind your people to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. 2 They must not speak evil of anyone, and they must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.

1Peter 2:13-17 For the Lord's sake, accept all authority—the king as head of state, 14 and the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish all who do wrong and to honor those who do right.

15 It is God's will that your good lives should silence those who make foolish accusations against you. 16 You are not slaves; you are free. But your freedom is not an excuse to do evil. You are free to live as God's slaves. 17 Show respect for everyone. Love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God. Show respect for the king.

Mark 12:13-17 The leaders sent some Pharisees and supporters of Herod to try to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested. 14 "Teacher," these men said, "we know how honest you are. You are impartial and don't play favorites. You sincerely teach the ways of God. Now tell us—is it right to pay taxes to the Roman government or not? 15 Should we pay them, or should we not?" Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said, "Whom are you trying to fool with your trick questions? Show me a Roman coin, and I'll tell you." 16 When they handed it to him, he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. 17 "Well, then," Jesus said, "give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God." This reply completely amazed them.

Acts 5:27-32 Then they brought the apostles in before the council. 28 "Didn't we tell you never again to teach in this man's name?" the high priest demanded. "Instead, you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching about Jesus, and you intend to blame us for his death!" 29 But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than human authority. 30 The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead after you killed him by crucifying him. 31 Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior. He did this to give the people of Israel an opportunity to turn from their sins and turn to God so their sins would be forgiven. 32 We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey him."

Hebrews 11:31 It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute did not die with all the others in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

John 13:12-17 After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because it is true. 14 And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. 15 I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. 16 How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them. 17 You know these things—now do them! That is the path of blessing.

Luke 10:25-37 One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?"

26 Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"

27 The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

29 The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 Jesus replied with an illustration: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes and money, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

31 "By chance a Jewish priest came along; but when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

33 "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt deep pity. 34 Kneeling beside him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two pieces of silver and told him to take care of the man. 'If his bill runs higher than that,' he said, 'I'll pay the difference the next time I am here.'

36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

Matthew 25:1-13 "The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 The five who were foolish took no oil for their lamps, 4 but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. 5 When the bridegroom was delayed, they all lay down and slept. 6 At midnight they were roused by the shout, 'Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and welcome him!'

7 "All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. 8 Then the five foolish ones asked the others, 'Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.' 9 But the others replied, 'We don't have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.'

10 "But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. 11 Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, 'Sir, open the door for us!' 12 But he called back, 'I don't know you!'

13 "So stay awake and be prepared, because you do not know the day or hour of my return.