

[Romans 12:12 – 13:1]

~ In our first twenty-seven reports from our Spiritual Safari through Romans, we considered the depths of our sins and the glorious heights of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, is Christianity only about our salvation and sin? Or does it also provide answers to our questions and help to solve our worldly problems? Or is the only benefit of believing a mere hope in some vague concept of an eternal rest in a place called Heaven when we die? I'll be honest with you readers – because I always am honest with you – if eternal life in Heaven is anything like life on this earth – I'll pass. Thank God Heaven is not anything like this earth – not at all.

In this section of Scripture, we're considering the relationship a believer has to other believers in the world from a Christian service perspective. This dynamic concerns a believer's duties, responsibilities and actions towards other believers. In our previous report, we examined how love should never be displayed with hypocrisy mingled in. We are instructed to express our hatred of that which is evil and cling tightly to that which is good.

Two believers who do not know each other are closer in relation than two unbelieving blood relatives. When one is saved and the other is not, there is no relationship. Three men sit before us. Two are identical twins. One of the twins is a born-again Christian, but the other is not. Next to them is a totally unrelated man from the other side of the world. He has a different skin color, different background, different culture, different eyes and a different shape and stature than the twins; but he is a believer. The believing twin and this foreign man are closer in family than the two twins are in God's eyes. Jesus said, *"My mother and My brother are those who obey my commands!"* ~

XII

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

~ I don't know about you, but my circumstances don't always warrant rejoicing. However, I have faith to see the future in the Word of God; and in hope I allow the Lord to project me into other circumstances which are more favorable. How is your patience in prayer holding up in times of troubles, friends? How much time do you spend in prayer? What position do you pray in? I'm not going to suggest a time, duration or posture – but when did you have that talk with God so He could tell you those answers? If you haven't gotten that far with God, you haven't even begun. This is pretty important stuff, my friends....

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

~ This is an area of the Bible that is profoundly neglected today, it is comparable to an abandoned building. Graffiti and broken windows mark a dilapidated structure; vegetation overgrowing through cracks in the concrete and boarded up doors signify years of neglect. Churches usually have a benevolence fund, but they don't use much of it to support some poor Bible teacher – if any. The pittance that is doled out is generally squandered away to a cause that wastes it; or it is insufficient to impact the need of the recipient furthering the Gospel. This is where a correct Biblical understanding of Christian giving comes into play. I won't go into that, but I will say: pay your safari tuition.

We are to seek out other believers to whom we can extend hospitality. That's another reason it is important to find a good Bible believing church and attend and participate. There may be some person out there who desperately needs you to bring them to fellowship with the Lord. There may be someone out there who has something for you! Why don't you pray that the Lord will bring you together with that person that He has designated to be blessed by or to be a blessing to your life? ~

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

~ This seems like a needless injunction as believers should not persecute one another. But, experience tells us it goes on all the time; and it can be very difficult to pray for the blessing of the man who is kicking you. I believe the emphasis is more on the "curse not" – as Jesus said, "be angry and sin

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not.” If we are allowing the Spirit of God to live through us, we will, merely by de facto, become a blessing to others. The cursing part is something we’ll have to work through....

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

~ The old saying says, “... laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone!” That should never be the case in our Christian relationship to brothers and sisters. We’re to have the mind of Christ and be like-minded – not high minded – with other believers regarding life’s problems. Many Christians think they are WAY up above spiritually, but they aren’t. The kind of mind Jesus had – and we are to have – is *HUMBLE!* I think it is a constant temptation for any believer to think he or she is smarter than they are spiritually. Solomon was a man given wisdom from God and he made an interesting injunction: “... seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him” - Proverbs chapter twenty-six verse twelve. Believers also need to learn how to get involved emotionally in the lives of other believers. That is the one thing that makes genuine Christianity so wonderful....

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

~ The final section of this chapter concerns a believer's relationship to unbelievers. We live in a world *full* of unbelievers, friends. The Christian *MUST* be *VERY* careful about his relationship to the lost world. Nothing hurts the cause of Christ more than a dishonest Christian attempting to live with one foot in the world. See, the world is not interested in your Biblical theology. They aren't concerned with election and free will or if you are a pre-millennialist. What they *do* care about is that you tell the truth and pay your debts! The world *DOES* care if you are a person who can be depended upon. Would you make a good friend to an unbeliever? If not – you probably aren't a believer, either. Being honest and dependable is better than preaching, teaching and giving out tracts all rolled into one. See, if you're going to start teaching, preaching or even talking about God, you better have a life that backs it all up – otherwise, you are absolutely wasting your time.

I like verse eighteen because there are some people that you just can't get along with. Some people will not allow you to agree with them; and if we can't get along with them, I think we should try to stay away from them. Every effort should be made to live peaceably together, but it's not always possible. It's going to take a whole lot of prayer to discern and attain to that, too, by the way. This chapter closes with some wonderful insight as to how to get along in the world.

As a Christian, it can be difficult to turn the other cheek. What are we to do when the other cheek is slapped, too? The Lord doesn't tell us what to do when that happens. At that point, most people do whatever is right in their own eyes. I know I find it difficult not to hit back sometimes. However, the minute you and I take *ANY* spiritual matter in our own hands and attempt to work it out on our own – particularly when we've been wronged by others – then we take the matter out of the hands of God and we are no longer walking by faith. This fruit *ONLY* grows in the soil of obedience.

God instructs us to walk with Him by faith. We can trust the Lord to handle our problems and fight our battles for us. All we are commanded to do is stand. See, God can handle it fairly and justly – we can't. Can you trust God in every situation, friends? Can you turn the person who has injured you over to the Lord and then rest in Christ? Some people will lie about you;

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and others will steal. Some will do both. Others will go as far as murder. Do you let God exact vengeance for you, or do you take matters into your own hands? Well, there have been one or two times I have turned it over to God and, I must say: I am amazed at how well He can handle the things and people I can't! He Does things very differently than I would; but much better than I do. Does God do things better than you — or do you really only trust yourself in those critical situations?

God's testing will eventually lead us to the place where there is absolutely nothing we can do about our circumstances; and God will handle these things in His Own way and in His Own timing if we will allow Him to. We need to resist evil during these times. We must overcome wrong by means of knowing what's right. A believer walks through a world that adheres to a strict satanic system. The Christian *CANNOT* fight this world. If you fight the devils system, it will beat you down further each time it defeats you. The believer cannot adopt the worldly tactics of hate and revenge that will be used against them. If we attempt to employ those measures, it means certain destruction. God has given that which is good to the believer – the Holy Spirit. He is our power. We are to walk in the power of the Spirit of God. Only when we live and walk in the Holy Spirit can we resist the devil, stand against evil, and stand behind the Lord as He obtains the victory for us....

XIII

1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

~ Chapter thirteen reveals how a believer has citizenship in Heaven. Simultaneously, the believer is a temporary resident on earth! That brings a two-fold responsibility. If there is ever any conflict, our responsibility is always to the Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven, of course – so we better make sure we have thoroughly prayed about whatever situation we find ourselves in.

The Pharisee's asked Jesus about paying worldly taxes. Jesus said, "*render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's; and unto God that which is God's.*"

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Government is ordained of God, friends. Our leaders have been given certain authority by Him. God said, “*whosoever sheddeth man’s blood shall have his own blood shed by man!*” The government has the God-given right to enforce the laws of the land; including Capital Punishment. That encompasses our regard for human life; which is precious in God’s sight.

I recognize my perspective of capital punishment will make me sound positively barbarian to the soft-hearted and soft-minded liberal. There are those who make an argument for abolishing capital punishment, but a failure to enforce the laws results in anarchy. Locking killers up “*for life*” makes a criminal the hero and an honest man the villain; who also becomes responsible to pay for the criminals housing, food, medical and everything else until they die. That’s wrong. It’s absurd. And if you produce a mountain of paperwork rebutting my statement, it won’t change a thing. Isaiah said days like this would arrive; our society most definitely calls good evil and evil good. Even so, you and I have a responsibility to our government.

1 Timothy 2: 1 *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ~*

This is a prayer we ought to pray ourselves – not leave it to the preacher! The duty of a believer as a citizen of Heaven is a spiritual duty; the duty of the same believer here on earth is *secular*. We need to keep them separate, too. To combine the two is to fail to keep church and state separate and distinct! The Jew in Paul’s day was reluctant to bow before the proud Roman state. Jews had even been banished from the city on several occasions.

The Pharisees rejected all authority in Palestine; because they desired to restore the government to the Jewish people. *THESE* are the ones who masterminded the encounter with Jesus and raised the question “*... is it lawful to give tribute under Caesar or not!*” Of course, the implication smacks of revolution! We must remember the authorities in Paul’s day were murderous drunks. Nero was on the throne at this time, along with

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Herod, Pilate, Felix, Festus and a whole bunch of perverted lunatics. Still, Jesus says to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's!

Paul says, *"... let every soul be subject to the higher powers. There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."* You and I are to obey the law of the land, friends. Any proper Christian is a law-abiding citizen. You cannot call yourself a Jesus person and still carry on with lawlessness and violence that permeates our hour on this earth! That makes you a freak – but not for Jesus. Just a shameful freak. We're going to have a lot to say about obeying the law in our next report – even when you feel the law is wrong – and some of the things I have to say are not going to seem very lovely, either; but I hope you'll travel along with us ~