



LETTERS TO THE CHURCH [ROMANS 13]

Romans 13 is often read primarily as a passage about politics and government, but in its context Paul is painting a much bigger picture. Throughout Romans, he has been describing God's renewed humanity—a people transformed by the faithfulness of Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit to reflect God's kingdom in the world. His instructions about governing authorities are not a detour into politics but a continuation of his vision for what life looks like when Jesus is truly Lord. Christians are called to be people who seek peace, respect legitimate authority, contribute to the common good, and refuse to answer evil with evil. At the same time, our ultimate allegiance belongs to King Jesus, meaning that when earthly authorities demand what Christ forbids or forbid what Christ commands, faithful obedience to Jesus must come first.

Paul then reveals the deeper principle that ties everything together: love. Honoring others, paying what we owe, rejecting revenge, and pursuing peace are all expressions of becoming a people whose lives are shaped by the love of Christ. He concludes by urging believers to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ'—to intentionally live each day out of the new identity they have already received through the gospel. Rather than merely trying harder to avoid sin, followers of Jesus are invited to clothe themselves with His character, allowing His love, humility, and holiness to replace the works of darkness. As God's renewed people, the church becomes a living preview of the new creation, giving the world a glimpse of what humanity looks like when Jesus is King.

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. Paul teaches that Christians should normally respect governing authorities while recognizing that Jesus is our ultimate King. What do you think it looks like to faithfully hold those two commitments together in today's culture? Have you ever experienced tension between them?
2. Paul connects his teaching about government directly to the command to 'love your neighbor as yourself.' Why do you think love is the foundation for all of these instructions? How might asking, 'What does love require of me?' change the way you approach difficult relationships or disagreements?
3. The sermon described the church as God's 'renewed humanity' and a foretaste of His coming kingdom. In what practical ways should our homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, or church community look different because Jesus is Lord?
4. Paul tells believers to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' rather than simply trying harder to avoid sin. What does it look like in everyday life to 'wear' your identity in Christ? Are there specific habits or practices that help you keep Jesus at the center of your daily life?
5. Which part of this passage or sermon challenged you the most? Is there an area where God may be inviting you to 'wake up,' leave behind a work of darkness, or more intentionally

reflect the character of Jesus this week? Share one specific step you want to take and invite the group to pray for you.