

Romans 13

Life in the Diaspora. Relationships with Officials

Paul continues the theme of chapter 12 of being at peace as far as possible with everyone. This not only includes those in the community, but it also includes those “outside”

The abrupt change from the community to those outside has led some commentators to assert that this part is not authentically Pauline.

It, however, can be seen as a continuation of seeking to be at peace with everyone, not seeking strife if at all possible.

We have a relationship with the outside world, those cities, countries wherever we reside. Paul outlines these relationships.

Who were these rulers? Most commentators identify them as Roman officials, the secular government.

One commentator at least has tried to identify them as Jewish leaders.

- In Acts 28 we see Paul meeting with Jewish elders.
 - This would have implications for “inter-denominational” relationships.
- It certainly includes the secular communities where the Jewish communities lived.

Romans 13 Continued

Governmental relationship

Relationships with governing authorities, and with the laws.

- Following the rules of the community as far as possible.
- Striving to be good citizens, within boundaries.
- Paying taxes
 - Roman taxes were exorbitant in those days.
 - Often levied as a punishment on certain groups. Example: Special taxes on Jewish community. Edicts against them.
 - Yet, these are not excluded.
 - Taxes often went to support what believers would call evil purposes. Idol worship, the Coliseum, and so forth.

This is a special issue for Diaspora Judaism, that is not really addressed in the Torah.

- Jeremiah instructed Judah going into the Babylonian captivity to act in a similar manner. Also Micah 5 speaks of dew and blessings from Judah in exile.

(Jer 29:4-7) Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, Build houses and live *in them*; and plant gardens and eat their produce.

Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.

Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.'

(Mic 5:7) Then the remnant of Jacob Will be among many peoples Like dew from the LORD, Like showers on vegetation Which do not wait for man Or delay for the sons of men.

Romans 13 Continued

Civil obedience, or disobedience

When is it proper, or necessary to be disobedient?

- Forced to participate in idol worship?
 - What about when taxes go to these things? Paul seems to say this is not a reason for withholding tax payments.
 - Our money is not first of all ours. It belongs to G-d, and we should hold even to it lightly. Most arguments against paying taxes begin with the idea that money belongs to the individual.
 - Our heritage is to first think about rebellion, then only in select cases, be obedient.
 - Protestant reformation set a pattern of (self)-righteous dissidence.
 - (Post) Modern day attitudes seem to magnify this attitude of rebellion as a virtue. Yeshua is often characterized as our prototypical rebel, so we must whenever possible, rebel.
- Peter and the Apostles, in Acts 4, provided a proper attitude for not being obedient. A personal command to stop testifying about Yeshua being the Messiah was at the heart of this.

Romans 13 Continued

Vs 9-10. The commandments and fulfillment. Paul's point here is not to ignore commandments, and just love another, The results of that attitude are seen in the terrible effects of the end of the 60s era.

All commandments ultimately are motivated by love.

The word fulfillment is the same word that Yeshua used to speak of His relationship to the commandments. When we seek to walk in the commandments we need to be motivated first of all by love.

- 1 Cor 13. The things Paul speaks of doing are all commanded.
- Self-seeking, while doing a mitzvah is useless. However, if we fail to do the commandments we are not obedient. There is an inward and an outward sense of keeping the commandments. Both are necessary.

Vs 11-14. This is why we act to make peace. We are the visible representation of G-d's mercy on earth. We do not live for ourselves.

- We are the fulfillment of the passage in Deut 4:4-8. We live, not for us, but for His work and His glory.
- Clothed with Yeshua. He is our proper covering, and is a contrast to the world of sin and death.