

Romans 13 • Christians and the Law of the Land

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · October 02, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Open your Bibles to Romans chapter 13 as we continue our study through the book of Romans. We're going to read through the chapter and then we're going to open in prayer. Follow along as I read. It goes like this. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God.

For whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good and you will receive his approval. For he is God's servant for your good.

But if you do wrong, be afraid. For he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes.

For the authorities are ministers of God attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them. Taxes to whom taxes are owed. Revenue to whom revenue is owed. Respect to whom respect is owed.

Honor to whom honor is owed. Owe no one anything except to love each other. For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet and any other commandment are summed up in this word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone.

The day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to

gratify its desires. Let's pray. Father, as we get into your word, we pray for your Holy Spirit to guide and direct us.

We pray that you would open our hearts to the ministry of your Spirit to bring truth, to bring clarity, to bring understanding. And also, Father, we pray for the strength to carry out your word and to walk it out in wisdom. And we thank you, God, that you provide all of these things. Bless this time now as we spend this time in your word, for we ask it in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

The very first verse of chapter 13 really is a summarizing statement for at least the first seven verses, if not even further. But it says once again, let every person be subject to the governing authorities. And then the Apostle Paul gives the reason why he is giving that statement. He says, there is no authority except from God. And those that exist, he says, have been instituted by God.

And there are a few interesting and important reminders that we need to make concerning this statement. The first is the phrase governing authorities probably means exactly what you would think it means. It refers to any person, any person who represents the authority or the power of the state. And so that could be a judge. It could be a law enforcement officer.

It could be even a politician for that matter. And he says, to those individuals, you are to be subject to them. And that's the second thing that we want to bring out is that simple phrase, be subject. It is a single Greek word that simply means, well, it means more actually than just obedience. It means to rank under.

And that clarifies that believers are to stand under the authority of the government for the purpose of order and lawfulness. And the third thing I want to point out about this statement that I think is very much worth mentioning is the fact that the Apostle Paul wrote these words, knowing full well the kind of government that he was living under and that the people that he was writing to were living under. It was the rulership of Rome. And I want you to think about that for just a moment because Rome was far from a perfect government organization, and they had conquered many nations, including the nation that Paul called home, the nation of Israel. So I want you to think about for a moment if you would be able to say the same words that the Apostle Paul says here, which is, I want you to be obedient to the government.

And you're literally speaking of a government that came into your land uninvited, conquered your military, and set up a military state inside your government and basically said, we're going to call the shots from now on. We'll give you a limited amount of power and authority, but for the most part, we're in charge. Now on top of all that, the leader of the Roman government at this very time was a man by the name of Nero. He was the emperor, and he was certifiably insane. The man was a crazy man.

He was a cruel and vicious man. And it is to this man and his government that the Apostle Paul is saying to believers in Rome and to you and me as well, I want you to be subject to the governing authorities. I want to also remind you of the fact that it will be under this very government that the Apostle Paul will eventually lose his life. He will be beheaded under this very government that he is calling for believers to be in subjection to. And that creates a better understanding because often I will hear from other Christians when they read this passage, they will say, well, what about, and we'll talk more about this in a bit, but they'll say, what about a government that is corrupt?

What about a government that is immoral? Am I to be subject under that government? Well, we're going to talk more about this here as we go on, and hopefully I'll be able to answer that question for you. What do you do when you have a government that's corrupt? What do you do when you have a government that even asks you to do things that are ungodly, unbiblical even, or potentially even illegal?

We'll deal with it. Paul goes on to say in verse 2, therefore whoever resists the authorities, resists what God has appointed, and then he goes on to tell about the consequences. And he says, and if you do resist, you're going to incur judgment. And he's not just talking about the judgment of the government, although that's there as well. He tells us in verse 3 that rulers ultimately are not a terror to people who are willing to abide by the laws.

The way he words it is rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but they are there to punish bad conduct. And he says, if you don't want to have any fear of the governing authorities, then just do what is good. In other words, follow the laws. Now he's talking about the laws of the land that are in place to bring about law and order, to bring about a peaceful society. He goes on in verse 4 to tell us that those who have been given authority within the context of a government, he says, are God's servants.

He says he is God's servant for good. But if you decide that you're going to break the law, you're going to do wrong, he says, well, you know, hey, listen, the servant of the Lord in the government doesn't bear the sword for no reason. And he's there to carry out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. That's an interesting statement. So he says that, let's say, let's bring it into the modern day.

We'll talk about law enforcement officers. He says that this person is a servant of the Lord, and that this person doesn't bear the sword for no reason, and he will carry out the wrath of God. Isn't that interesting? So here's what we learn from this. Our God is a God of order.

He is a God of peace, and he wants us to live in peace. He wants us to live in a lawful attitude toward the laws of the land. And these are commands that Paul echoed elsewhere in the Scripture. Here's a

passage on the screen from Titus chapter 3, verse 1. He writes to Titus, and he tells him that he wants him to remind the people to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.

And then Peter also wrote about this same thing. He said, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. So Peter reminds us that there's a testimony that is at stake here as it relates to our lawful obedience to the governing authorities. And you can see it from these various passages, including the one that we're studying here in Romans 13, that Scripture calls us to be law-abiding citizens.

And again, this is because our God is a God of order. He is a lawful God. Because you see, the opposite of lawfulness is lawlessness. And when we act in a lawless way, we are acting in a way that is consistent with the enemy, who is referred to as the lawless one. Check out 2 Thessalonians 2.9.

Paul writes, the coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan. He's talking about essentially the Antichrist, who is empowered by Satan. And because he is empowered by Satan, and Satan is lawless, that the Antichrist will be lawless. And he will come, of course, as it says, with all power and false signs and wonders. So you can see that lawlessness, or rebelliousness, is in keeping with the enemy.

He is the ultimate rebel who rebelled against the purposes of God. And so, you know, and we're also told elsewhere, you know, Paul wrote to Timothy, and he gave him kind of a prophetic snapshot of what the last days are going to be like. And he said that people are going to be lawless during that time. And frankly, that's what we're seeing right now. In our culture, we see lawlessness all over the place.

People who get pulled over by an officer, or even when an officer tries to pull, they won't pull over, they'll just keep driving. And when they finally do pull over, they refuse to, you know, do anything the officer says. That is an attitude or a spirit of lawlessness that is pervasive in our society today. Well, now that we've established our calling as believers, which is to recognize and submit to the governing authorities, there are these nagging questions that we've already alluded to that I want to address at this time. I got a comment on our YouTube channel recently from a person literally coming out and saying, what about if my government is corrupt?

What if my government is ungodly? It's literally anti-Christian. This person asked, how can I be subject to that kind of a government? And the answer to that question is to understand the question itself,

because that question proceeds from what I believe is a fundamental misunderstanding about what the Word says about obedience to governing authorities. It assumes that our obedience to the governing authorities must be absolute.

In other words, what people see when they read Romans 13.1 is that I need to be in absolute obedience to the government. But here's the question, is that true? Are we called to absolute obedience to the governing authorities? In other words, are there ever any exceptions to our obedience to the government? And as you consider that question, I'm going to advance even two more for your consideration.

We'll put them on the screen for you. These are they. First, how should we as believers react if our government ever created a law forcing us to violate the Word of God? That's the first question. And the second one is similar.

It says, how should we as believers react if our government were to contradict our nation's previously established and currently standing laws? Now, these are two more really challenging questions for us to think about, but I want to start with the first one. How should we as believers react if the government were ever to create a law that simply violated the Word of God? And we assume that they would try to force us to be obedient to their law over and above what God had said. You might say, well, how could that ever happen?

Well, pretty easy. Remember that in the Great Commission, Jesus told us to go and make disciples of all nations, including our own, and that means we are to evangelize. We have been given a commission by our Lord Jesus to evangelize, and that means to share Christ, to tell people the good news about what Jesus did on the cross. Well, here's the deal. What if the government suddenly criminalized evangelizing?

And they said, you may not do that. You cannot talk to anybody about your religious persuasion. You can't. If you do it, you are breaking the law, and you are subject to fines, imprisonment, and that sort of thing. Well, what would we do?

That's the question of the hour. Do we say, well, hey, you know, the Lord gave us a commission, but, you know, hey, the government countermanded that. They said we can't do that. And since we're told in Romans 13.1 to be subject to the laws of the government, well, then I guess we can't evangelize. Okay, let's just carry on with our work.

No more talking about Jesus. Is that what we would do? Well, first of all, I don't think anyone would agree that we should disobey a command or commission or calling of the Lord. But if we do obey the Lord over and above the government, now we've answered the question that the government's obedience

or their call to obedience or our call to obey the government is not absolute. In other words, if we were required to disobey the Word of God, our first obligation is to the Word of God, and we would follow His Word over and above anything the government would tell us to do.

But remember, this isn't rebellion. God is not giving us permission to rebel. He's simply saying my authority comes first. Well, do we have any biblical sort of backing for this? In other words, did the early disciples ever run into this issue?

Well, the fact of the matter is they did. You might remember that Peter and John were on their way to the temple for prayer, and they met a man who was crippled, and they healed him. And for healing the man, they were arrested and hauled in before the Sanhedrin. Now, you need to understand something about the Sanhedrin. Even though Rome was in charge of the land overall, they had the sovereign right, they allowed the Sanhedrin, which is also referred to as the ruling council of Israel, they allowed the Sanhedrin to continue to function.

And the Jews considered the Sanhedrin to be their law. They considered that that was the law that they were going to obey. So the Sanhedrin is not just a figurehead. They are truly the law for Israel. And so if the Sanhedrin tells you don't do something, you don't do it.

So what happens in this situation? Well, on the screen we're going to look at Acts chapter 4. Check this out. It says, But when the leaders of the Sanhedrin had commanded Peter and John to leave the council, so they talked to him first, and they told him to leave. You go out, we're going to talk.

It says, They conferred with one another, saying, What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak. speak no more to anyone in this name." So they called them and charged them. Listen to this.

This is strong language. They charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. So they're not just cutting out evangelism, they're cutting out Bible studies, any sort of a teaching situation. They said, you may not speak or teach in the name of Jesus. Now I want you to notice Peter and John's response.

But Peter and John answered them, whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge. For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. So what do we see as an example in this passage from Acts chapter 4? We see the example that no human leader or lawgiver has the right to demand absolute obedience. We have one absolute ruler in our lives, and that is God.

And it's really the same thing we tell women when they get married. You know, the Bible tells women that they are to be subject to their husbands and the word that is used for subject is the same word used here in Romans 13, 1. She is to be under her husband in that sense of his authority. However, we tell wives all the time that does not obligate you to do anything that would be unbiblical, immoral or illegal. You know, if your husband says that he wants you to help him cheat on his taxes, you have no obligation to do that.

Why? Because you don't, he does not have absolute authority over you. He has authority insofar as he walks in godliness. But if he refuses to walk in godliness, if he in fact speaks in a way or asks you to do something that is unbiblical, ungodly, immoral, you have no obligation. Your obligation is first to God.

This is a very important understanding that we have about this idea of walking in submission, frankly, to anyone. God is our ultimate authority. All right. So we've answered the first question, but now let's consider the second one. And that second question was, how should we as believers react if our government were to contradict our nation's previously established and still standing, I might add, laws?

And the reason I bring up this question is because this is exactly what we faced during the pandemic. This is what caused so many people to lose faith in the government and to stand opposed to the mandates and the rules that some people were passing down. You might remember during the pandemic there was a term that we heard a lot, it got passed around a lot, and it was the term government overreach. Boy, we heard it a lot during the first couple of years there of the pandemic because when Christians were faced with certain mandates such as not to gather on Sunday for worship, the Christian community was genuinely divided on that particular issue. There were a lot of Christians who said, well, we've got to do what the government says, Romans 13.1.

But there were other Christians, many voices, in fact, that argued with that from the standpoint that we had previously installed laws in our government, specifically the First Amendment, protecting our right to gather and for the government not to interfere with those gatherings under any circumstances. In fact, it's referred to as the Assembly Clause, and a lot of people cited it. In fact, the Assembly Clause states, quote, the right of the people peaceably to assemble, end quote. And the whole idea there is without government intrusion. And a lot of people said, listen, these mandates that are coming down, telling us we can't gather, this is government intrusion in this sort of a situation.

And there was, again, as I said, there was a great deal of disagreement on this particular issue related to whether we should walk in obedience to the governing authorities regarding these mandates. First of all, you've got to understand something about we who live in the United States of America, we are under a

very rare sort of a situation in the fact that our government is based on the voice of the people. That wasn't the case with the Apostle Paul. You know, in Paul's day, if the Roman government decided to overturn a government rule, for whatever reason, Paul had no voice, he had no ability to stand against it. You know, there was nothing he could do.

It's like you just obey, obey or die sort of a situation. Well, here in the United States, we are encouraged as citizens to speak up in the case where our freedoms are being threatened by tyranny, or excessive control, or if you will, government overreach, even if that comes from the very people that we have elected to function in those government roles. And so because our constitution here in the United States of America gives us the freedom, and not just the freedom, the obligation to speak up if those things are happening. I believe that we can do that without violating the essence of Romans 13.1, as long as our attitude is not one of rebellion. I don't doubt the fact that even during the pandemic, there were certain people that didn't obey the mandates of the government simply because they were rebellious people.

And they were like, nobody's going to tell me what to do. You know, I'm just not going to listen to any of that. It's nonsense. And whether it was nonsense or not, there were others who decided to stand against it not out of a spirit of rebellion, but out of a spirit of patriotism, and a following of the US Constitution, which said, no, I have a right to speak up and even resist that kind of excessive control. So there you go.

This is one of those challenging questions. But it's an important question insofar as we've lived it. We in the last six years, we lived this here in the United States. We walked it out. We know what it is for the government to come in and say, do this.

And when those things actually violate the Constitution, and we need to know how to respond in the future. Paul goes on in verse six and following, he says, for because of this, and this means that the government has been established in these various nations by God, he says, you also pay taxes. And you can see in these verses, Paul is very pro taxes here. He says, in fact, he says, in verse seven, pay what you owe. Pay what you owe.

If you owe taxes, pay taxes. If you owe revenue, you know, pay the revenue. And here he says something else. And even respect. You are to give respect to a governing authority, even if what you find they are doing isn't tremendously respectful.

You know, we respect these people. Because as Paul said earlier, they're in those positions given by God to uphold the law, and to maintain a peaceful and orderly society. And so he says, if you go against

that, you're going against God. So you see the respect is really the respect we give to God. And again, I don't mean to make a lot of connections between husbands and wives, but they exist.

We say the same thing to wives. I've had wives tell me in marriage counseling situations, you know, I'll talk to them about how the Bible says the wife is to respect her husband. And she'll say, well, wait a minute, Pastor, what if I don't respect him? What if he's never done anything that's respectable? How can I respect this man?

And the answer is the same as what we're talking about here with the governing authorities. The reason we respect a governing authority is they've been given authority by the state, and the state has been given authority by God. And the reason a woman is called to respect her husband is because he has been given that role by God. And she is to respect God and his calling upon her husband, even if he's not walking it out. And that's a difficult thing, I know, for women.

It's a very challenging thing, because we're so very used to thinking that this person needs to earn my respect. And there's an element of that that is true. But the respect for his position, because it was given by God, is commanded of wives, and all of us as it relates to governing authorities. When I see a man driving or a woman driving in a patrol car, that has an emblem on the side of it that shows that he or she is representing the city, or the county, or the state, or the federal government for that matter, and I see those lights on top of the car, and all the other things that communicate to me that this person is a law enforcement officer, I respect that. I respect that position, because it was given by the state, county, or city, and those positions were given by God.

And so my respect for God, and his word, and his commands, goes into how I respond to a law enforcement officer. You'll notice in verse 6, again, that Paul refers to these kinds of civic leaders as ministers of God. That's a term that you would expect him to apply to a pastor, or an elder, even a deacon, who's a servant, but he applies it here to government authorities, and you can tell that Paul wants you to make the connection. Speaking of what we owe, Paul goes on in verse 8, he says, Owe no one anything except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. And what Paul has obviously done here in verse 8 is he has used this idea of the taxes that we owe our government, now, to how we treat one another, and how we owe a debt of love to those people.

And this is also a command, and I think you know that. But I should mention that there are some people who read the first four words of this verse, Owe no one anything. And they interpret those four words as a command from God that believers ought never, ever borrow money, such as from the bank, or

financial borrowing of any kind. Now, I will tell you this. It is true that the Bible does remind us, and warn us, in fact, of the dangers of debt and borrowing.

I think that goes without saying, most of us know that there are dangers that go along with that. Debt can be a true ball and chain around your neck, and you've got to be careful of that. However, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts us as believers, saying, Do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. So Jesus literally tells us to lend to people, and he's telling them that it's okay for them to borrow from us. So if all borrowing is wrong, then Jesus just told us to help someone sin, and I don't think he would ever do that.

So I believe we have to have a different interpretation of Paul's words, Owe no one anything. And I've got to tell you, I much prefer the New International Version rendering of this phrase. Let me show it to you on the screen. It says, Let no debt remain outstanding, except for the continuing debt to love one another. And what this idea is, which I think is closer to the actual rendering of what Paul is saying, is if you are borrowing, then be true to your word.

If you said you're going to pay it back \$100 a month, then pay \$100 a month or more. If you said you're going to pay it off in a week, then pay it off in a week. If you said you're going to pay it off in a year, then pay it off in a year. Let no debt remain outstanding. And what that means is, of course, pay your debts, but more importantly, be true to your word.

I think that's the most important thing that we see there. And then Paul goes on to remind us of something we've heard before. In verse 9 and following, he says, For the commandments you shall not commit adultery. And then he goes through these various commandments about murder, stealing, coveting, and so forth. He says they're all summed up.

All of these commandments are summed up in this simple idea of love your neighbor as yourself. And he reminds us in verse 10 that love does no wrong to a neighbor. In fact, loving is a fulfilling of the law. And so what we're talking about, we've gone from government relationships to believers, now to interpersonal relationships between believers, and he says we are to love. But this idea that love is the fulfillment of the law, obviously Paul wasn't the first one to say this.

Let me show you Matthew 22 on the screen, which says, And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. He says this is the great and first commandment, and the second is like it. He says you shall love your neighbor as yourself. And then Jesus

went on to say, just as Paul said, On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. There's a summarizing of all these things.

In fact, we are told in the Word that love is to be the ultimate barometer of our obedience to God. And then the final section of this chapter, verses 11 and following, Paul exhorts us here in our daily living, just daily practical getting by. And he said, Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. And you'll notice Paul is using some metaphors in his language here. And he says, Here's the reason why.

Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. And so he uses the metaphors of slumber and awakeness, right? And I think we can all relate to what he means by this. He's not talking literally about people falling asleep in their chair. He's talking about people who are going through the motions of their Christian life, their Christian walk, but their heart is somewhere else.

And again, I think we can relate to this. Probably all of us have had seasons in our life where we needed to wake up. We were sleeping while we were going about our daily routines. Spiritually speaking, we were sleeping. And he tells us that the reason we need to wake up is that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

In fact, Paul says, The day is at hand. Now, that's an interesting phrase. When the Bible speaks of the day, and sometimes it will refer to the day of the Lord, you need to know that it's not speaking of a single day. It's speaking of a series of days when the Lord is going to return and bring salvation. And it's a protracted period of time, but it is referred to as the day of the Lord.

And the common biblical exhortation to you and me about the day of the Lord is this. Be ready. Stay awake. Don't fall asleep. Stay alert.

Right? This is very, very common. We're just told to be awake. And that means don't slip into a spiritual slumber, a spiritual funk, that you are just going about the business of maybe even attending church once in a while, maybe reading your Bible, but you're really not into it anymore. You've just kind of slipped into neutral, and you're coasting.

And Paul is telling us, Don't coast, because the day is coming. And, you know, Jesus reminded us that when he comes, there are some who are going to be caught unaware. We have these various parables, like the parable of the ten virgins and others, that talk about just the need to be alert, the need to be ready for our Lord to return. You know, I get questions from time to time. People say, they'll write and they'll say, What prophetically needs to happen before the Lord returns?

What's next on the prophetic calendar before the Lord returns for his church? And my response is always the same. Nothing. Nothing needs to happen. The coming of the Lord for his church is imminent, and it has been imminent for the entire church age.

And that's why the message to the church has always been the same. Be ready. Stay ready. He could come at any time. It doesn't matter that it's been 2,000 years.

That makes no difference at all. Because there's nothing remaining that has to happen before Jesus comes and catches away the church. So we're to be awake. Here's how Jesus puts it on the screen. From Matthew 24, he says, Therefore stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake. He wouldn't have gone to bed, gone to sleep. He says he would have stayed awake, and he would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. So, be ready.

Now, continuing... With the metaphoric language, verse 12, Paul says, the night is far gone, the day is at hand. And that's that imminent language of the Lord's return. So he says, then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. And now he's using these metaphors again, acts or works of darkness, armor of light, speaking of, you know, moral uprightness and moral depravity.

And you know which one connects with which. And he uses these terms that are symbolic, but important for us to see, because he's talking about worldliness versus godliness. Let us put off worldliness and let us walk in godliness, right? He says in verse 13, let us walk properly, as in the daytime. The NIV says, let us behave decently.

And then Paul goes on to define the works of darkness. And he doesn't give a long list. He just talks about orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, sensuality, and even includes, you know, quarreling and jealousy, which are, you know, fits of fleshly outbursts. And a more comprehensive list is found in Galatians. Look on the screen.

It says, the works, Paul writing here to the Galatians, of the flesh are evident. And he lists sexual immorality, which of course covers a host of sexual issues, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, which is hatred, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy. And here he repeats drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. And that passage actually there in Galatians goes on to say that those who live in a perpetual and unbroken lifestyle of such behaviors will not inherit the kingdom of

God. And he wants to remind believers who are inheriting the kingdom of God that you are not to act like those who can't and won't inherit the kingdom of God because you are inheriting the kingdom of God.

So you are to live differently. You are not to live like the world. You are to live like the kingdom of God. And finally Paul says in verse 14, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that's an interesting statement, put on the Lord.

And yeah, this is somewhat metaphoric I suppose, but the idea here is to walk after his spirit and to walk in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit. You have to understand the statement put on Jesus would be impossible had he not given us his spirit. But because he has given us his spirit, Paul can say to you and me, put on Jesus, put him on. And honestly, I think that this final statement that Paul makes here in the latter part of this verse is one of the most important and insightful statements that Paul makes about arresting sin in our lives. And he simply says this, make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

Now I might not say it that way. I might not use those same words, make no provision for the flesh. If I was talking to somebody, I don't know, I would probably say don't give your flesh an opportunity. But that's what he's saying because to make provision for something is to give it free reign, to give it an opportunity. If I was making provision for someone who was homeless, I would give them food, clothing, and a place to stay.

That's making provision. Well, what does it mean to make provision for your flesh to sin? Well, it means giving it what it wants, nurturing it, helping it, opening the door for it. Yeah, come on in, sort of a thing. What Paul is saying here, what he is exhorting us is to make it hard for sin to live in our lives.

He's saying don't feed it, don't clothe it, don't nurture it or stimulate it, don't welcome it in. Instead, we are to starve it. You are to starve the impulse to sin. Refuse to care for it, whatever that takes. People sometimes say, well, I don't know, I'd have to give up a lot of things in my life if I was gonna be obedient to that.

So be it, so be it. You know, Jesus talked about what it sometimes takes to get rid of sin and the things that cause us to sin. And speaking of metaphoric language, Jesus did that very thing when he spoke during the Sermon on the Mount about this. And let me show you this on the screen. It says, if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

For it's better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. Now again, Jesus, he's using language of symbols and metaphors. He's not telling you to mutilate your body or cut off an appendage.

But he's using this language to describe getting rid of things that are precious, even things that are precious.

You have to understand, in the Bible, the right hand and the right eye were considered a man's best. In fact, if you had a son, if you were fortunate enough to have your wife give birth to a son, which was a big deal in biblical times, he would be referred to as the son of your right hand. And you'll notice that where is Jesus seated in heaven? At the right hand of the Father. So you can see that there's a specialness that is connected to the right hand.

So what does Jesus say? If your right hand causes you to sin, that's your best. Get rid of even your best if it causes you to sin. If your right eye is a problem. Now again, I wanna emphasize, it is not your eye or your hand that causes you to sin.

It is your heart. And you can't gouge that out. You have to have God come and change your heart. Again, this is metaphoric language to describe the necessity of getting rid of things that are very precious to us, very useful to us, but in fact are causing sin. And Jesus says, you're better to be without those things and to starve the sinful impulse that is within you so that over time you can get rid of that addictive behavior and to begin walk in the spirit.

And that is where we complete our study of Romans chapter 13. Let's close in prayer. Father, we do thank you for your word. We thank you for the clarity that it offers. We thank you for the wisdom.

We thank you for the warnings, for the blessings, the promises, the commands, the commissions. We thank you for it all because we know that you love us and you want us to live lives of abundance and goodness. And so, Father God, I pray that you would give us all the courage to stand against the impulses of the flesh, to stand against the power and pressures of the world and to resist the works of the enemy that we might walk in the life that you've called us to walk through the spirit, through the power of your grace, love, and mercy. Be with us, we pray. Strengthen us, Lord.

We thank you for this study. In the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen.