

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

ROMANS LESSON 11 (Chapters 13-16)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Ben Bailey:

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1). I’m Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

And I’m Timothy Sparks. Welcome to our study of the Book of Romans. This message is brought to you by individual members and congregations of the churches of Christ. We hope that you will visit the church of Christ in your area, and let them know how much you appreciate their support of this program. We also would like to invite you to visit our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com. We have streaming video and audio lessons available. If you would like to request a DVD or CD of this broadcast, or any of our other series, we will be happy to make those available to you free of charge. We’ll even cover the postage. You may send us an e-mail, write us, or call us with your specific request.

We now begin a study of Romans 13. Here, we learn that Christians are supposed to be the best possible citizens. Paul tells us that we are to make sure that we submit ourselves to the powers that exist within government. God has decreed that the government has the power to enforce justice, and that in so doing, it will be God’s servant to keep things running properly. For example, God has empowered the government to enforce the death penalty, because, as Paul notes, “the government does not bear the sword in vain.” One of God’s ways of taking care of these things is by setting up the government, and then empowering it to deal with evil doers. This might remind us also of what Peter said when he wrote, “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters” (1 Pet. 4:15). We’re not to suffer as a murderer, as a thief, as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other people’s affairs. But if we suffer as a Christian, we are not to be ashamed, but are instead to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16). Romans 13 teaches us that Christians need to be the best citizens possible.

Ben Bailey:

Being good citizens means that we will obey the laws of the land. If those laws do not contradict the law of God, then it is my responsibility to obey them. For example, if the law states that on the Interstate I can go 70 miles an hour, and I decide to go 80, then I’m not doing what I should be doing. When I disobey the governing laws, Romans 13 says that I also disobey the laws of God. Another example might be that of taxes. Jesus taught that we should render to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and give to God what is God’s (Mk. 2:17). If someone cheats on their taxes, they think they’re cheating only the government. But according to Romans 13, they’re really sinning against God. So as we think

about practical matters relating to such things as the speed limit or paying taxes, we need to remember that those are things that help the Christian be a good example. Isn't this really why Paul would say something like this? Paul's not trying to give honor to an ungodly government. Rather, he's trying to teach us to exhibit Christian character in an ungodly world. If we as Christians (who are supposed to be the best citizens of all) don't obey the speed limits and other laws, how will the world look at us? If we do those things that are ungodly when we are supposed to be the ones who are trying to do right, what will that say to those around us about Christianity? All of this, of course, must be considered in light of Acts 5:29, where we are instructed to obey God rather than men. We must **always** put God first. If our government was to institute a law which said that we couldn't worship God, then in that instance it would be acceptable to break the law of the land in order to obey the law of God. But if God's laws and the government's laws go hand and hand and do not contradict one another, then it is a command of God that we obey the government's laws. The point of Romans 13 is that we are to submit to the governing authorities, so long as that does not require us to violate God's laws.

Timothy Sparks:

In Romans 13:7-8, Paul says that we are to render to each person whatever they are owed, and to render honor to whom honor is due. Then he says in verse 8 that we are to "owe no one anything, but to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." Christians should be people who pay their debts. This is part of being a good citizen, and it's part of being a good steward. We must pay others what we owe them. We need to be right in God's sight by being right with other people. We are to owe people nothing but love. This is a universal law of God. We owe each and every individual love. Why is this the case? John says, "We love because He first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19). The only reason we love at all is because God first loved us. Owing love to each and every individual is something that God requires of us. This was true under the Old Testament as well. Leviticus 19:18 teaches that we are to love our neighbor as our self. When the people asked Jesus about "the greatest commandment," He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:37-39). Jesus teaches us that we are to be people of love. Jesus tells us to love our enemies. We are to pray for those who persecute us (Mt. 5:44). This is very difficult to do. In Romans 12:18, Paul said that, as far as possible, we are to live at peace with all people. We are to do good to our enemies. If our enemies are hungry, we are to feed them. If they are thirsty, we are to give them something to drink. By so doing, we will heap coals of fire on their heads. So, when we come to Romans 13:8, and Paul says, "Owe no one anything except to love one another," he is telling us that we owe love even to our enemies. God so loved that He gave His own Son (Jn. 3:16). From Romans 13:8, we learn that we owe a great debt. Paul began the Book of Romans by saying, "I am a debtor to preach the gospel" (Rom. 1:14). Paul was a debtor to preach the Gospel, not only to those whom he liked, but also to his enemies. Those enemies persecuted him so much so that they even dragged him out of the city and left him for dead after having stoned him. Yet he still owed them love. Stephen (Acts 7) gave his life, yet his dying request was that the Lord would not lay the sin to the charge of his persecutors. He wanted them to be saved. That was the kind of love that Stephen had. So, when we look at Romans 13:8, we see that we, too, owe a great debt of love. This means that we will do what is in another person's best interest, even when it's not necessarily pleasant, because it is what God would have us to do.

Ben Bailey:

In Romans 14, we learn that we must not do anything that could cause another person to stumble. In Romans 14:13, Paul says, “Let us...resolve not to put a stumbling block, or a cause to fall, in our brother’s way.” As a Christian, I not only have to think about **myself**, but I also have to think about **others**. Sometimes, we must bear the scruples of the weak, as Paul would say. We have to look to our other brothers and sisters, and make sure that even though we may have the liberty to do something, it must not offend someone if we exercise that liberty. The example Paul uses in Romans 14 concerns the eating of meats that had been offered to idols, and that were then being sold in the market place. If someone purchased this meat and served it at a meal, those who knew that the meat had been offered to idols might have a problem with that, and say, “Why are you eating meat that was offered in an ungodly way to idols? Don’t you know that’s wrong?” Really, there’s nothing wrong with eating meat that has been offered to an idol, is there? It’s still “just meat.” “But,” Paul says, “if it costs my brother his soul, I’ll never eat meat again.” That’s the attitude we ought to have. If something we do is causing others to sin, although we may have the right and to do that thing, we ought to have the mindset that if it’s going to cause people to be lost, then we won’t do it. Interestingly, when you talk with people about this idea, especially as it relates to matters of their dress or the way they live, many get angry and say, “That’s my Christian right, and that’s what I’m going to do—whether people like it or not!” That’s not at all the mindset of Jesus. Many people are too concerned about self, and too unconcerned about others. We must make sure that whatever we’re doing doesn’t offend people. This is a classic example of Christian love, and of one Christian submitting to another.

Timothy Sparks:

As we look at Romans 14:17, Paul says, “The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Paul’s point is that if we are going to be part of the kingdom of God, we sometimes must forego certain things if they are going to cause a weaker Christian to stumble. The kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It’s about doing what is right. That’s what righteousness means—doing what is right. Joy is what we experience as a result of being saved in Christ. Don’t we want a weaker brother or sister to possess that same joy? We don’t want to cause other people to fall back into sin by something we do, even if we have a right to do it. Whenever we can forego certain things in regard to non-doctrinal, optional matters (which is what Paul is discussing in Romans 14), then we should do so. Paul makes it clear that we need to “put first things first.” As Paul said in Romans 14:23, “Whatever is not from faith, is sin.” We need to always act from the convictions we possess as a result of our study of the Word of God. We must not violate our conscience, and we must not cause someone else to violate theirs. They may think that doing something is wrong, even though it’s really not. As far as possible, we are to yield to them so that we don’t cause them to go astray. Paul is not dealing here, of course, with matters that are doctrinal in nature. God has already spoken concerning those things. Paul is dealing with optional matters. Should we have one cup for the Lord’s Supper, or should we have multiple cups? If it causes others to stumble because they think they are sinning by using more than one cup, then perhaps we need to do whatever we can to accommodate them. We must remember, however, that Romans 14 is dealing with optional matters where Christians are in fellowship with one another. Of course, we can always do as Aquila and Priscilla did when they took Apollos aside and “taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly.” We can take people aside and show them that doing something is not necessarily wrong. But we must do that in a gentle, loving, kind man-

ner, understanding that “whatever is not from faith is sin.” We need have our consciences educated by the Word of God. We must not go against what we know to be right and true. This is not to say that we are to let our conscience, by itself, be our guide. We are to let **the Bible** be our guide. We are to have our minds informed by the Word of God, so that our zeal and enthusiasm are in accordance with the knowledge we glean from that Word. We do not want to be like the Jews whom Paul discussed in Romans 10—people who “had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” Our zeal must be tempered by our knowledge of God’s Word.

Ben Bailey:

Paul has spoken very harshly in the Book of Romans against the Old Law as a way of salvation. Now, as he approaches Romans 15, he has in his mind the idea that some might be thinking that the Old Law is of no value at all—that it’s worthless, useless, and of no value to the Christian. That’s not the case, for, as he says in Romans 15:4, “The things were written before time, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.” The Old Law that he’s discussing here was written before the Christian era. Although it is not the law that presents salvation and proscribes worship, it is nevertheless a wonderful book of history that contains important examples and numerous practical lessons for our lives. For example, in Genesis 6 we learn of the wrath of God. God wants people to be saved, and will do everything He can to help them. But He can also be a wrathful God. As we come down through the sands of time in history, we enter into the Exodus—the time of Israel’s wilderness wonderings. We learn a wonderful lesson about God’s care—how He brought the people out of Egypt, provided them with food, and gave them the Law of Moses to provide a way for them. As we come down through the Kings and the Chronicles, we read about how God allowed the Israelites to have kings, even though that wasn’t His will for His people. We learn from the story of King David that even a great man can fall (2 Samuel 12). We learn that David could be restored, but that he had to repent of his sins. So, as we read the Old Testament and see how loving God is, it should give us comfort. Romans 16, too, should give us comfort as we read about the special people in Paul’s life whom he wanted to mention by name. They were special servants, special workers, who were doing things in the kingdom that aided Paul in all that he did.

Timothy Sparks:

Perhaps one of the most beautiful verses in the entire Book of Romans is Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” God can fill us with hope and joy, but we have to believe in Him and in His Word. We have to have the “obedience of faith” of which the Book of Romans speaks (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). This means we have a faith that completely and wholeheartedly obeys God. In Romans 16, Paul sends greetings to a number of saints. We, too, need to be more liberal in our greetings. We need to be people who go out of our way to meet and get to know other brothers and sisters in Christ. I believe there is also another application that can be made from this text. We need to be willing to greet people who have not obeyed the Gospel—people who are not Christians. We need to be very friendly people who love the lost, and who are concerned about individuals who are not yet Christians. Notice Romans 16:16, “The churches of Christ greet you.” Paul emphasizes “the church of Christ.” Not only is Paul sending his own personal greetings, but also those of Christ’s congregations. Paul also says, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” He’s not emphasizing the kiss. This was a greeting they were

already using. Rather, he was emphasizing, “You need to keep your kiss holy.” Greet one another with a **holy** kiss.” If you’re going to use that form of greeting, make it holy, because he had already said, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:14). In Romans 16:16, Paul emphasizes both holiness and the church of Christ. He is talking about the church that belongs to Christ. If I had a dog, and I told you that I wanted you to see my dog—the dog of Timothy—I’ve not told you the dog’s name. I’ve discussed only the issue of ownership: the dog of Timothy—the dog that belongs to Timothy. So it is with the church of Christ. It is the church that belongs to Christ. It is not a proper name, per se. There are numerous scriptural designations and descriptions of the church found throughout the Scriptures. We learn that it is “the church of the living God” and as “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). We also learn that it is “the church of the firstborn” (Heb. 12:23). We need to make sure that we use scriptural descriptions. We learn that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). The Bible only, makes Christians only, and the only Christians. You cannot become a Christian if you’re not obeying the Word of God. You have to do what the Bible says in order to become what the Bible says people became when they obeyed the Gospel.

Ben Bailey:

In Romans 16:26, as Paul begins to speak again of the obedience of faith, he says in verse 20 that the God of peace is going to shortly crush Satan. He thus brings us back to the scheme of redemption. God, through the centuries, had been working in such a way that the final victory would be the child of God’s. Today, that victory can be yours. The Book of Romans tells us that the Gospel has the power to save (Rom. 1:16-17). You can obey the Gospel, and be one of God’s children. Members of the church of Christ in your area would be happy to study the Bible with you. We learn from the New Testament that there is a clear pattern for obeying the Gospel. Gospel teaching is something that is given in clarity, not in confusion. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:33, “God is not the author of confusion.” The New Testament is something that you **can** read and understand. So, as in Acts 2, we ask the question, “What must we do to be saved?” What must a person do to be saved from sin, and to truly obey the Gospel? There are several steps a person must take. He must believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus Himself said in John 8:24 that unless we believe that He is the Christ, we will surely die in our sins. One of the golden verses of the Bible is John 3:16, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” But, as James 2:24 indicates, faith only will not save anyone. Yes, we must believe, but we must have an active belief. We also must be willing to repent. Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3-5). We must have a changed will that leads to a changed life. It is not just sorrow, but a true changing that takes place in our life. Joel described it perfectly in Joel 2:13 when he spoke of how we must rend our hearts, and not just our garments. That’s what repentance is. It is a tearing away of the old, and preparing for the new. We also must confess Jesus as the Son of God. Romans 10:9-10 tells us that we make confession of Christ unto salvation as part of God’s plan of salvation. Then we have to be baptized for the remission of sins. We live in a world where people are saying that while baptism is something good to do, it’s not at all essential. That’s not what the Bible says. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” Belief plus baptism equals salvation. That’s very simple to understand. Peter made it even clearer in Acts 2:38 when he said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of your sins.” Peter also said, “Baptism does also save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). So when we talk about the plan of salvation, we see that it

requires belief, repentance, confession, and baptism. But it also requires that we live our lives for God from that point on. Revelation 2:10 says that we must be “faithful unto death.” Paul said in Romans 6:4 that we must walk “in newness of life.”

Timothy Sparks:

Romans 11:33 provides a wonderful statement about God’s scheme of redemption. “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” God has given us such a wonderful plan of salvation. We need to obey it, and then we need to live it in our daily lives.

We hope that you will visit the church of Christ in your area. These are people who are deeply concerned about your soul. These are people who study their Bibles. These are people who want to praise God in accordance with His Word. We hope that you’ll also visit us on our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com. Feel free to download our streaming video and audio lessons. We will be glad to send you a copy of this message, or any others we have that you might be able to use in your personal study. Simply write us, e-mail us, or call us. We hope that you will endeavor to discover more of “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today’s broadcast, please write to:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST
607 McLish Ave.
Ardmore, OK 73401

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at www.thegospelofchrist.com. We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where “the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached.”

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS LESSON 11 (CHAPTERS 13-16)

1. What is the main topic of discussion in Romans 13:1-8?
2. How do Romans 13:1-8 and Acts 5:29 fit together?
3. Explain the meaning of Romans 13:8 in regard to financial debts of Christians.
4. According to 1 John 4:19, what makes it possible for Christians to love?
5. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus spoke to the people about “the greatest commandment.” Then, He talked to them about another commandment that flowed from that one. What was “that other commandment”?
6. Explain Paul’s statement in Romans 1:14, “I am a debtor to preach the gospel.”
7. What was Paul’s point in Romans 14:14 when he urged Christians not to put a stumbling block in a brother’s way?
8. Explain from the context of Romans 14 what would be wrong, in the first century, with Christians eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols.
9. What did Paul mean when he said, “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23)?
10. If we disagree with another Christian over a matter of opinion, what are our two options about how to handle the disagreement?
11. In Romans 15, Paul pointed out that the Old Law was not “valueless.” What value does it have for us today?
12. According to Romans 15:13, what is one of the blessings of being a child of God?
13. According to Romans 16:16, to whom does the church belong?
14. Does Christ’s church have more than one scriptural name? If so, list some of those names. Support your answer with Scripture.
15. Paul begins (Rom. 1:5) and ends (Rom. 16:26) the Book of Romans by talking about “the obedience of faith.” Explain what is meant by that term.
16. What famous Old Testament example of “obedience of faith” does Paul use in the Book of Romans to make his point about the obedience of faith?
17. What did Paul mean when he said, “The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking” (Rom. 14:17).
18. In Romans 13:8, Paul said that we should give “honor to whom honor is due.” Explain that statement.