

Discussion Guide

Romans 13:3-5

Opening Prayer

Guided Prayer: Pray asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance in understanding and applying the truths discussed.

Recap

Recap of the Sermon and Summary of the Text

In Romans 13:3-5, Paul continues his discussion on the relationship between Christians and governing authorities. He explains that rulers are not a cause of fear for those who do good, but for those who do evil. Paul emphasizes that if you do what is good, you will have praise from the authorities, for they are God's servants for your good. Conversely, if you do evil, be afraid, for the authorities do not bear the sword for nothing; they are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

Understanding the Text

1. **Purpose of Authorities:** According to Paul, what is the primary purpose of governing authorities?
2. **Fear and Good Conduct:** How does Paul describe the relationship between doing good and the response from authorities?
3. **Authorities as God's Servants:** What does Paul mean by calling the authorities "God's servants"?
4. **Role of Punishment:** Why does Paul say that authorities do not bear the sword for nothing?
5. **Conscience and Submission:** Beyond fear of punishment, what other reason does Paul give for submitting to authorities?

Practical Application

1. **Doing Good in Society:** Reflect on your own actions and attitudes. How can you ensure that you are doing good and therefore have nothing to fear from authorities?
2. **Respecting Authorities:** How can you demonstrate respect for authorities in your daily interactions, even if you disagree with certain policies or actions?
3. **Balancing Obedience and Conscience:** What are some practical steps you can take to balance obedience to governing authorities with your conscience and faith?
4. **Engaging with Government:** In what ways can you positively engage with and influence governing authorities to promote justice and goodness?
5. **Responding to Injustice:** How should you respond when you witness or experience injustice from authorities, while still maintaining a respectful and Christ-like attitude?
6. **Prayer for Leaders:** How can you incorporate regular prayer for governing authorities into your spiritual practices?
7. **Christian Citizenship:** What does it mean to be a good citizen from a Christian perspective, and how can you model this in your community?

God Has More to Say

Romans 13:3-5 continues Paul's discussion on the role of governing authorities, emphasizing that rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad. It instructs believers to do what is good to receive the authorities' approval and to submit to them not only to avoid punishment but also as a matter of conscience. Here are related biblical passages that illuminate these themes:

1. **1 Peter 2:13-14:** Peter urges believers to submit themselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.
2. **Proverbs 21:1:** This proverb highlights God's sovereignty over rulers, stating that the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases, reinforcing the idea that God uses authorities to accomplish His purposes.
3. **Ecclesiastes 8:2-5:** This passage advises obedience to the king's command because of the oath before God and states that whoever obeys will come to no harm, emphasizing the importance of respecting authority.
4. **Titus 3:1:** Paul instructs Titus to remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, and to be ready to do whatever is good, aligning with the teaching in Romans 13 about doing good to receive commendation.
5. **1 Timothy 2:1-2:** Paul urges that prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people, especially for kings and all those in authority, so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness, which connects to the theme of respecting and praying for those in authority.
6. **Matthew 22:21:** Jesus teaches, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's," acknowledging the legitimacy of governmental authority and the duty to respect it while maintaining ultimate allegiance to God.
7. **1 Peter 2:17:** Peter summarizes Christian conduct towards authorities by saying, "Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor," emphasizing respect and honor for governing authorities.
8. **Acts 24:16:** Paul states that he strives always to keep his conscience clear before God and man, highlighting the importance of living in a way that is both legally and morally upright, which complements Romans 13:5's emphasis on conscience.
9. **Psalms 82:1-4:** While this psalm calls on rulers to judge justly and defend the weak, it also acknowledges their role as God's representatives on earth, reinforcing the idea that authorities are meant to uphold justice.
10. **Isaiah 1:17:** Isaiah calls for learning to do right, seeking justice, defending the oppressed, taking up the cause of the fatherless, and pleading the case of the widow, highlighting the ideal role of rulers in promoting justice, which believers should support.

Prayer - End with prayer, focusing on specific requests related to the sermon's themes, personal struggles, and applications.