

## PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT

Romans 13:1-14 (key 13:12)

*“The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”*

In our last passage in shd Khomo’s message was on offering our bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. The lord indeed desires us to live a victorious life in this world. That the Christian life is not only on Sundays or at Church but in every area of our lives Monday to Sunday. We live in a world that does not share similar values and believes we have. How then are we ought to live in a world or under a government that is not ruled by the teachings of the bible? What attitude should we be living by in this world? Today’s passage helps answer some of these questions. The passage seeks to help us have the right attitude towards living in this world. On how we can actually live to honour God while at the same time subjecting ourselves to governing authority. May we put on the armor of light in the way we live as we await the coming of our lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Look at verse 13, “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, **for there is no authority except that which God has established.** The authorities that exist have been established by God.” Everyone here means everyone one most especially believing Christians. However, this may have come as a suprice to many believers. Because we all know that that a number of governments are smeared with corruption. However, the scripture teaches us that we all have to be subject to the governing authorities. As believers our practice in life or what we practice as Christians is governed by what the bible teaches. However, scripture today teaches us that we have subject ourselves to the governing authorities. This means that the Church has to subject itself to the governing authorities. Though our governments are not spiritual or even seeking holiness, yet we have to subject ourselves to the governing authorities. How could this be? How is this in any glorifying to God? Verse 13b says, **“for there is no authority except that which God has established.”** One great illustration of this is the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate. Jesus was imprisoned by the roman solidiers and he was brought before Pilate the ruler. Pilate said to Jesus, “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above....” Men and women in governing positions of authority may not believe in God. However, the authority they hold exists because God established it. One key point here is that, the authorities that exist have been established by God. Therefore, when believers subject themselves to the governing authorities, we would be reflecting our submission to God. We do so because we want to honour God. Meaning that to rebel against the authority is to actually to rebel against God [2].

Look at verse 3-4, “For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.” Terror in our hearts does visit us when we are rebellious against the rules of the land. For example, if a traffic officer stopped us because I was driving above a speed limit. We should always strive to do what is right by being obedient to the law of the land otherwise we will be visited by punishment. The person in authority is God’s servant for our good. And that is also why we pay taxes in order to pay their service in enforcing the authority that have been given. They give their full time to their service in their office [6].

Look at verse 5, “Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.” The conscience that, all these authorities are established by God, and our conscience needs to be clear before God In our submission before these authorities. However, one may ask what if the governing authority requires for me to do something that is in direct opposition to God as taught in scripture. What do we do? We must not submit to governing authorities blindly. We must do so prayerfully. There are times when Christians may be called to obey God, not the authorities. According to Exodus, Pharaoh king of Egypt–ruler of the world power nation of the time–wanted to control the Israelites, who were multiplying like rabbits. So he issued an edict that all the Israelite boy babies be killed at birth by being thrown into the Nile River. This edict carried a penalty of death for disobedience. Moses was born at this time, but his parents did not obey this edict. Hebrews 11:23 says, “By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary

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child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict." Moses' parents did not obey Pharaoh. This did not come from a rebellious spirit, but from their faith. They wanted to obey God and carry out God's will on earth at the cost of their lives. One other example from scripture can be found in Acts 5:28-29 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" Our conscience before God needs to be clear, that we are subjecting ourselves to the governing authorities in honour of God almighty by faith. In our times I believe we did experience that during Covid when Churches were commanded to stop meeting physically. There was one pastor in America who refused to oblige to that rule from government, Pastor John MacArthur. He refused on the bases of conscience before God and teachings of the bible. That as believers our fight is not against flesh and blood but spiritual. As such we cannot be fighting in this war over a screen. Moreover, that believers need pastoral care and cannot happen over a screen. He felt that the governing laws were stripping him off his calling from God as a pastor and caretaker of believers.

In general the governing authority enforces things that are good for everyone. The laws of the land forbids stealing, murder and many other laws that are good for the a healthy society. For example in South Africa we have the constitution. Which has been used many times to fight for the rights of others. We have the bill of rights, which states, "In terms of the Bill of Rights everyone has a right to life, equality and human dignity. All persons have a right to citizenship and security. Persons and groups are entitled to freedom of assembly, association, belief and opinion, and expression." I was amazed to hear in the news that Thabo Bester had made a complaint of been treated badly by the police and his complaint was taken seriously where the Police had to explain the situation. This is a man who has already been convicted of being guilty and breaking the law yet he is protected by the law and has human rights. All because our governing authority states so in our bill of rights and the constitution.

Verses 7 to 9 illustrate practically how we can live among one another. Look at verse 7, "Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." As a general rule and out of principle, we need to give everyone what we owe them. This is not only monetary but also things like honor and respect. Out of a clear conscience to honor God and in submission to His authority. Though for example we may feel our tax money is not used well, we still need to subject ourselves to the authority before us. When the jews tried to trick Jesus, they came with a question on whether they should pay tax to Caesar. Jesus response was, "...Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" 21 "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Matthew 22:15-22.

Secondly regarding debt and love for one another, look at verse 8, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law." There are debts we can pay, such as school loans and house mortgages. We must pay all of our debts, being fiscally responsible. We Christians must keep our promises. But there is one debt we cannot pay back. It is the continuing debt to love one another. This debt is owed to our Lord Jesus Christ. While we were still sinners—unlovely, useless, harmful and weak—Christ died for us. Christ poured out his precious blood without holding anything back to purchase our redemption. God accepts his blood as the full payment for our sins. We are no longer under condemnation, nor tormented by guilt and shame because of our sins. God forgave us. God justified us to be righteous. God sees us with great affection through Jesus as his own precious children. God is working through the Holy Spirit to transform us into the image of Christ. God has made us his heirs and co-heirs with Christ, giving us the most glorious inheritance in the kingdom of God. This wonderful new life came to us by the one-sided love and grace of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we must practice the love of Christ toward others. We can never pay this back as long as we live. But we must do our best to practice the love of God. In a dark world, this love of God reveals the glory of God to men. This love begins with the Ten Commandments. No one can love others if he is breaking the Ten Commandments. However, the love of Christ goes beyond this. The love of Christ is sacrificial and gives life to others. Jesus showed us this love. For example, Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand at the risk of his life. We can practice this love when we take care of one person with Bible study and prayer from a shepherd's heart. This love can change the world we live in.

Why is this kind of living important and necessary? Why should we live our lives in view of God's authority over this world. Why should we practice the love of Christ as a debt we owe and cannot even repay to others in this world? Let us all read verse 11-

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12, "And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." We should understand the present time. We should not just live thinking that tomorrow will just be as today, though I myself am guilty of this one. Verse 12 says, the night is nearly over the day is almost here. Jesus may come any time at any second from now. We should not just be believers who go with the flow but really doing things out of routine or expectation but rather really be awake to Christ's coming at any moment. We need to repent from all things that are done in the dark or secret that are not pleasing to God. The day is nearly here where all things will be revealed. We need to put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. The order in these words is very important. The first thing we can do is to put aside the deeds of darkness, then only then can we put on the armor of light. We need to first repent from our deeds of darkness and then put on the armor. An armor is a metal plate formally worn to protect vital body parts from harm in battle. This armor of light is our Lord Jesus Christ, look at verse 14, "Rather, **clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ**, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." We can cloth ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ by firstly repenting from sin, look at verse 13, "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy." and secondly subjecting ourselves to God's authority and striving to continually love one another in view of Christ Love for us. Indeed Jesus Christ is our only hope to live a God honouring life in this world.

In conclusion, we learn how to live a victorious Christian life while looking forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must submit to the authorities with faith in God's sovereign rule. We must practice the love of God as Christians for others. Jesus set the example by his humble submission and sacrificial shepherd life. Let's clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, our true armor in this world and live by faith looking forward to meet our Lord Jesus Christ any moment. Amen!