Musing #70: Romans 13 through 16

Selected Highlights and Notes of Interest

Romans 13

Romans 13:1-2 (Phillips) Every Christian ought to obey the civil authorities, for all legitimate authority is derived from God's authority, and the existing authority is appointed under God. To oppose authority then is to oppose God, and such opposition is bound to be punished.

— Interesting "legitimate authority" — Does that mean all government?

Romans 13:1-2 (Amplified) Let every person be loyally subject to the governing (civil) authorities. For there is no authority except from God [by His permission, His sanction], and those that exist do so by God's appointment. Therefore he who resists and sets himself up against the authorities resists what God has appointed and arranged [in divine order]. And those who resist will bring down judgment upon themselves [receiving the penalty due them].

Here is how Peter addressed the issue…

1 Peter 2:13-20 For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority—whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right. It is God's will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God, and respect the king. You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. For God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment. Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.

Peter wrote his letter while Nero was on the throne. *Christ suffered under Pilate but never asked for Pilate's removal. David knew Saul was not God's choice, but honored him.*

3-4 The honest citizen has no need to fear the keepers of law and order, but the dishonest man will always be nervous of them. If you want to avoid this anxiety just lead a law-abiding life, and all that can come your way is a word of approval. The officer is God's servant for your protection. But if you are leading a wicked life you have reason to be alarmed. The "power of the law" which is vested in every legitimate officer, is no empty phrase. He is, in fact, divinely appointed to inflict God's punishment upon evil-doers.

Governments purpose…

To teach us self-control • discipline • the power of authority

5-8 You should, therefore, obey the authorities, not simply because it is the safest, but because it is the right thing to do. It is right, too, for you to pay taxes for the civil authorities are appointed by God for the good purposes of public order and well-being. Keep out of debt altogether, except the perpetual debt of love which we owe to one another.

Don't forget… Lawlessness is going to win—for awhile!

11-14 Why all this stress on behaviour? Because, as I think you have realised, the present time is of the highest importance—it is time to wake up to reality. Every day brings God's salvation nearer. The night is nearly over, the day has almost dawned.
Don't live in self-indulgence.

What does God say about the nations? Our model is always Israel in the O.T. God warned them about disobedience. In the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy He warns all the nations that forget God will suffer.

Deuteronomy 28:1-8; 15 If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the world. You will experience all these blessings if you obey the Lord your God: Your towns and your fields will be blessed. Your children and your crops will be blessed. The offspring of your herds and flocks will be blessed. Your fruit baskets and breadboards will be blessed. Wherever you go and whatever you do, you will be blessed. The Lord will conquer your enemies when they attack you. They will attack you from one direction, but they will scatter from you in seven! The Lord will guarantee a blessing on everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. But if you refuse to listen to the Lord your God and do not obey all the commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overwhelm you.

1. **Crops and harvest will dimish**
2. **Family size will decrease**
3. **Governmental confusion will take over**
4. **Environmental disasters will occur**
5. **Enemies will be victorious**
6. **Mental illness will increase**
7. **Divorce will increase**
8. **Children will follow after demons**
9. **Foreigners in the land will become like rulers**
10. **Terrible and incurable diseases will take place**

Deuteronomy 28:45 …all these curses shall come upon you… because you harken not to the voice of the Lord thy God.

God expects His ways to be primary with His people…

Romans 14

Paul warns us of the Christian's favorite sport—trying to change and fix each other!

William Barclay writes: **People are weak for two reasons: (1) They have not yet discovered the meaning of Christian freedom; at heart they are still legalistic…they see Christianity as a thing of rules and regulations. Their whole aim is to govern their life by a series of laws and observances. (2) They have not yet liberated themselves from a belief in the efficacy of works. In their heart they believe that they can gain God's favor by doing certain things and abstaining from others. Basically, they are still trying to earn a right relationship with God, and have not yet accepted the way of grace. They are still thinking of what they can do for God more than what God has done for them.**

Strength means more than just understanding truth. It means acting in a loving way with those who are weak that don't experience God's freedoms. Why are most of our unsaved friends not interested in Christianity? Because they see it as a "do's and don'ts" kind of religion. God can read every heart; our underlying motives. You and I cannot. Most people are doing the best they can. Shaming others is pervasive in our culture. I suggest you work through this brief quiz. Keep track of your "Yes" answers.

1. *Do you have difficulty feeling relief when you confess your sin to God or to another person? In other words, do you have lingering feelings of guilt that you've never been quite able to shed?*
2. *When other people are having fun, do you feel uncomfortable?*
3. *When you feel hurt or angry, do you experience guilt for feeling that way?*
4. *Is it hard for you to tell another person how you are feeling because you think they might believe you are not a good Christian?*
5. *Do you feel embarrassed when you experience success?*
6. *Is it hard for you to totally relax and have fun?*
7. *Do you view God as a stern and unfeeling Judge you will never be able to please?*
8. *Do you always feel like you will never be a "good enough Christian"?*
9. *Are you quick to criticize and/or judge others?*
10. *Do you become defensive quickly whenever someone asks you a question and/or tries to offer constructive feedback?*
11. *Are you right now depressed and/or angry after hearing these questions?*

Results

0 - 2 Yes / You've been extremely fortunate regarding religious shame.

3 - 5 Yes / You likely have significant levels of religious shame.

6-11 Yes / You live in a cloud of shame for past sins that are forgiven.

Religious shame is pervasive in our culture. If you have been a Christian for five years or more, you very probably have experienced religious shaming, particularly if you grew up

in a fundamentalist, evangelical background and are more than twenty-five years of age. The longer a person is a Christian, the greater the load of religious shame they carry.

—*Secrets of Your Family Tree* - Dr. Earl Henslin

We have churches filled with Performance-centered people:

- The right words
- The litmus tests of gifts and manifestations
- Liberal versus Conservative views
- Committed versus Worldly beliefs
    - some approve of movies… some not
    - some approve of wine… some not
    - some approve of makeup… some not

Either way, when we judge another, it is our weakness showing.

- Should we eat ham? —Ask the Holy Spirit
- Should we drink wine? — Ask the Holy Spirit

These are not a matter of law… they're a matter of preference.

Judgement is the hallmark of the weak.

10-12 Why, then, criticise your brother's actions, why try to make him look small? We shall all be judged one day, not by each other's standards or even our own, but by the standard of Christ. It is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God'. It is to God alone that we have to answer for our actions.

So, it is not our duty to determine right and wrong in other people…

14-23 I am convinced, and I say this as in the presence of Christ himself, that nothing is intrinsically unholy. But none the less it is unholy to the man who thinks it is….. So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of one another's character… Your personal convictions are a matter of faith between yourself and God… and when we act apart from our faith we sin.

The Doctrine of Rewards: The Judgment Seat (Bema) of Christ

One of the prominent doctrines of the New Testament is the Doctrine of Rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Judgment Seat of Christ is not a place and time when the Lord will mete out punishment for sins committed by the child of God. Rather, it is a place where rewards will be given or lost depending on how one has used his or her life for the Lord.

It is significant that among the final words of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we find these words of the Lord: **Revelation 22:12 Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.** While salvation is a gift, there are rewards given for faithfulness in the Christian life and loss of

rewards for unfaithfulness. Rewards become one of the great motives of the Christian's life.

The Crowns of the New Testament

(1) The Crown of Thorns (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5).
(2) The Incorruptible Crown (1 Corinthians 9:25).
(3) The Crown of Exultation or Rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Philippians. 4:1).
(4) The Crown of Life (Jam. 1:12; Revelation 2:10).
(5) The Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8).
(6) The Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:4).
(7) The Casting of Crowns (Revelation 4:10, 11).
(8) The Many Crowns or Diadems (Revelation 19:12).

Romans 15

13 May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in your faith, that by the power of the Holy Spirit, your whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope.

15 We who have strong faith ought to shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of others and not just to go our own sweet way. Our actions should mean the good of others—should help them to build up their characters. For even Christ did not choose his own pleasure.

Romans 16

17 And now I implore you to keep a watchful eye on those who cause trouble and make difficulties among you, in plain opposition to the teaching you have been given, and steer clear of them. Such men do not really serve our Lord Jesus Christ at all but are utterly self-centred. Yet with their plausible and attractive arguments they deceive those who are too simple-hearted to see through them.

25-27 Now to him who is able to set you on your feet as his own sons—according to my Gospel, according to the preaching of Jesus Christ himself, and in accordance with the disclosing of that secret purpose which, after long ages of silence, has now been made known (in full agreement with the writings of the prophets long ago), by the command of the everlasting God to all the Gentiles, that they might turn to him in the obedience of faith—to him, I say, the only God who is wise, be glory forever through Jesus Christ!

That ends our study on the book of Romans! — Amen