

Series on Romans for Airdrie Baptist Church, Autumn 2021

Session 10. Romans 13

A New Community within a Larger Society

Like many empires before and after, Rome had its glories and its embarrassments. At the time of Paul's letter, Rome had a ruthless and morally flawed emperor—Nero. His mother was Caligula's sister. She married Claudius and is suspected of poisoning him so that Nero might rise to take his throne. Nero in turn poisoned his step-brother who had a stronger claim to inherit, clearing the way to become Emperor in AD 54 at the age of seventeen.

Paul wrote to Rome in AD 57, Nero was just turning twenty, and had not yet sunk into total depravity. The first five years of his reign were well-regarded by both the senate and the masses. That wouldn't last long, Paul's letter would have arrived towards the end of the "sweet spot."

Nero intentionally caused the death of at least two of his wives, and he also castrated and married two freedmen (ex-slaves) as their husband and married another freedman, becoming his wife. Whoever stood in his way or complained was "disappeared."

So when Paul writes from Corinth, a seaport of equally poor moral reputation, he isn't writing in hypotheticals. How should Christians conduct themselves within the context of a depraved society? What does New Life look like against a corrupt background?

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| A. | New Life Involves Civil Obedience | 13:1-4 |
| 1. | God's sovereignty is expressed through government | 13:1 |
| 2. | To resist governors is to resist God | 13:2 |
| 3. | God empowers governors to administer just punishment | 13:3-4 |
| B. | New Life Involves Civic Responsibility | 13:5-7 |
| 1. | God's displeasure at rebellion plays on our conscience | 13:5 |
| 2. | Pay your taxes | 13:6 |
| 3. | Pay your debts and dues | 13:7 |
| C. | New Life Involves Love for our Neighbours | 13:8-10 |
| 1. | We owe love | 13:8 |
| 2. | We are indebted to love in submission to God's will | 13:9-10 |
| D. | Summation: New Life Involves New Behaviour | 13:11-14 |
| 1. | It's time to wake up to the new reality | 13:11 |
| 2. | Let's behave with moral dignity | 13:12-14 |