Putting On a New Drip
Series: Righteousness Revealed
Romans 13:1-14
Chadron Bible Church

This week I spent some more time going down the rabbit hole of Gen Z slang terms. And some may roll their eyes, think it sus (suspect), but each time I go down that hole I find new and fresh ways to express old truths.

For example, when our younger generations want to talk about looking stylish or cool in a new outfit, they talk about dripping. A new set of clothes or accessories might be a new drip. So you might say "So and so was really drippin' this morning at church" or "What do you think of my new drip?" In contrast to dripping, if something's no longer cool or trendy, they call that cheugy. That outfit pastor was wearing was so cheugy.

Well, if you will allow me to be a little sac religious this morning, I'm going to suggest that if you want to make disciples and change the world—it doesn't matter if you're a boomer, millennial, gen z, gen alpha, or somewhere in between—you need to be "dripping" with the Lord Jesus Christ. To clothe ourselves with Christlike character. Christlike conduct. That's what we want to talk about as we continue our journey through Romans. This time tackling Romans 13 together. So if we've given our life to God, so far we have: (12:1-2):

1. **Harbor <u>humility</u> in God's household. (12:3-8)**
2. **<u>Love</u> others as Jesus loves us. (12:9-21)**
3. **<u>Clothe</u> ourselves with Christlike conduct. (13:1-14)**

…in particular, how we should operate in society. Government and society. So, while we're not to be of the world (Romans 12:1-2), we're still in the world. We still have civil responsibilities. So it's really relevant stuff. Stuff of life.

I. The Christian & <u>government</u>. (13:1-7)

1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities.

Alright, that's it. That's enough. Not what I wanted to hear. Lol. No. Hey, while we're not of this world, we're (every person) still subject to the laws of this world. Paul says to be in subjection to governing authorities/rulers (an intentionally vague term; national, local, state officials; police to president). Submit to them. It's a military term which means stay in rank. Don't usurp authority here. Listen, he didn't say you can't disagree with the government and things they do. It doesn't mean you can't voice your opinion. It doesn't mean you can't work for change but, at the end of the day, when the law is the law, then you abide by the law, as long as it doesn't go against God's laws.

The reason why Paul has to teach this is because people, and Christians, in his day struggled with it just like we do. Christians maybe more so. It's easy for us to say, "I've got Jesus as my King" and write of earthly kings.

At the time Rome was vexed with antitax agitation. People hated tax collectors right. There were heavy tax laws on citizens that the people were bucking just like today.

- There are only two things that are certain: Death and taxes.
- What the difference? Congress doesn't meet every year to make death worse.

Rome taxed the air that you breathed, the fish you caught, the number of wheels you had on your cart. And it was an incredibly inefficient government. But not paying taxes, a major issue in this section, wouldn't be helpful for the cause of Christ.

Christians was already slanderously made out to be troublemakers. On top of avoiding taxes, there were all sorts of rumors going around that Christians did promiscuous things in their meetings. They were accused of secret "revolutionary" meetings, immoral things, even cannibalism due to the Lord's supper. Wherever Christianity went with Paul, no thanks to Judaizers, Christianity was also made out to be a disrupter of peace—something that could get you killed in the Roman Empire.

It was typical for Jews, and there are Jews in this mixed congregation he's writing too, to practice strict separatism from the world. They only obeyed the authorities when they had to, and when they did, they did it with disdain. They could be a real pain in the neck for authorities.

So when Paul says be submissive to the governing authorities, he's just saying, "Be a good citizen. Be a model citizen when and where you can."

It's tempting for us to read this and think, "Well, Paul wasn't living in 2024 where we have all of this corruption going on like in our government." But actually, at the time Paul wrote this, Nero was the ruler in charge of Rome. He was an unspeakably immoral man. He killed Christians. History says he lit the city of Rome on fire and blamed it on Christians. He'd coat them in tar, hang 'em up, and light em on fire to light the streets of Rome. This is a government that Paul and Peter and others would be martyred by. If you study history, it makes you grateful for our messed-up government. Nero is the last one we would want to be subject too, but Paul knew unnecessary rebellion wasn't the answer.

Now we get into the reasons to submit to governing authorities:

1. **Rulers are <u>established</u> by God.**

For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

So when we submit to government, we submit to God-generally speaking.

- What this <u>means</u> is that the officer who wrote you a ticket recently was sent by God. That judge that issued you a fine and public service was sent by God.

- What it doesn't mean is that God approves of everything government does, but principally speaking,

God establishes government and He has since Genesis 9. The Bible doesn't let you escape this fact. Proverbs says that king's heart is like water in the hands of the Lord and He turns it wherever He wishes. Daniel and other OT passages reveal God's sovereignty over rulers. He sets them up and tears them down as He sees fit. We obviously have trouble with that, but I believe that Paul believed that whether the government was good or corrupt, God would use it to bring about His will somehow. We see through the Bible, from Exodus to Acts, God using government to bring about His plan. Whether they opposed God or not, God uses them. Remember, when Jesus was on trial, He actually said to Pontius Pilate, "The only reason you have this authority is because my Father gave you this authority." God used messed up Pilate.

2. **Rulers are servants of God to promote good and punish evil.**

2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

So verse 3, I think, reveals at its most basic sense, the biblical role of government: to promote good and punish evil. Government exists so we can live in peace and safety. Everything else the government does is up for discussion, but that's the main thing and for that we can be thankful.

- What's worse than a bad cop is no cop.
- The Jewish Talmud wrote, "Just as fish of the sea, the greater swallow up the smaller ones, so with men, were it not for fear of government, men would swallow each other alive."

Paul actually says government is His servant/deacon to promote good and punish evil. It indirectly does His will, putting a check on sin in the world. To exercise His wrath indirectly through use of the sword—an allusion to the power to punish or even carry capital punishment. Capital punishment is instated in Genesis 9 in response to murder. If any man sheds another man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. There is a level of law needed in a sinful world to keep man from destroying himself.

One of the book I read recently that I thought was helpful was a book called David & Goliath by Malcom Gladwell. It talked about how if you have too little law, the people destroy themselves. There's no order. But too much law, and you have tyranny—which happens more when a government forgets God. You need a balance.

When a Government Forgets God

But if a government forgets God, it tends to become God. And since we have a government by the people, we have quite the responsibility as Christians to vote don't we? We have more responsibility because we are the government voting for what we think is good and evil.

3. **Our <u>conscience</u> requires us too.**

5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

I thjnk you'd be surprised to hear how much Paul talked about conscience and how important that it is to our overall health to keep it clear. When you steal something or you get citation, a ticket with a court date, that weighs on you, doesn't it? If you've done something illegal, it can grind away at your soul for years until you deal with it.

I heard a story this week about a man who couldn't sleep at night because he felt guilty about not paying taxes. So he wrote a check to the IRS and said I couldn't sleep at night so I wrote a check. If I still can't sleep after this, I'll send the rest.

As Christians, we should try to operate in such a way that we always keep it clear. If you have something weighing on you, you need to deal with it. I think it can rob your joy.

So deer season began yesterday. In the past 5 years, I have made two big mistakes while deer hunting. One was putting the deer on the wrong tags. The other was shooting a deer on the wrong side of the creek. The ranch I was hunting on had land on both sides of the river and I could only shoot on one side. Well, I get home and am happy with my mule deer. But I'm getting ready to call it in and realize my mistake. No one would've ever known about it but I decided I didn't want that on my conscience. So I called the game warden and told him what happened. They said normally I would get a $2,500.00 fine but because I turned myself in, I only got a warning and they took my deer to feed the hungry. I was fine with that because my conscience was clear. Was it easy to make that decision? No. But it was the right decision. I didn't want to stand in the pulpit that next Sunday with a guilty conscience and preach about integrity. The deer that you harvest legally, taste better. They don't bring up bad memories. I would be miserable.

Well, let's move on. The state needs funds to operate.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Again, Rome at the time was wracked by antitax agitation. Did they overtax? Probably. Does ours overtax? Certainly. I'm not always happy with taxation. Land taxes are ridiculous in Nebraska. I don't agree with them. I try to change them. But I still pay them because I'm commanded too. Paul and Jesus say, Pay your taxes! In fact, most people believe Paul is alluding to Jesus' teachings here from the Gospels.

Remember what Jesus did? He asked for a coin and said, Who's face is on it? Caesars. Then give to Caesar the things that are Caesars and to God the things that are God's.

On one occasion He even pulled a coin out of fish's mouth to pay tax. Here's what I believe based on that miracle: If God tells me to pay taxes, I'm going to pay them, trusting He'll provide all I need to pay them because I'm doing what He says. I don't have to worry about not having enough. However, if I don't, then I have a guilty conscience. Pry won't have enough.

When it comes to taxes many Christians have argued, Well, what about abortions and other ungodly things the state supports with my tax dollars? To that I would say, Jesus' and Paul's governments were worse... And here's the thing: if you're going to follow that logic all the way down, you can't spend money on anything. You could hardly shop anywhere. See, there's a big difference between directly supporting something and something being supported indirectly. What the government does with my taxes that is beyond me—after I vote.

However, there are times—and very few times—where it's necessary to resist the law. For example, if the government ever forces abortions like China, if they ever say you must perform alternative lifestyle marriages, or if you can't preach the gospel, there's a level of tyranny that does need resisted. In that case, we obey God rather than man. One person put it this way:

Being a good Christian means being a good <u>citizen</u>
until being a good citizen means being a bad <u>Christian</u>.

In verse 8, some say Paul changes the subject, but I don't think so. He may widen the application a bit to include society but it's still about law and our influence on the world and society.

II. The Christian & <u>society</u>. 13:8-10

8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

If you want to be the best citizen you can be, you've got to follow the highest law there is: the Law of Christ: love. The highest government Law ever was the Mosaic Law and to sum it up with Love God Love People.

Paul quotes the second half/table of the 10 commandments is about our relationship with others (6-10; the first half is about our relationship with God). Love was the essence of the law. If you love your neighbor, you're not going to be selfish all the time. You're not going to lie to them or steal from them. You're not going to borrow from them and not pay them back. You're going to

keep your word. Pay back what you owe. You're going to serve them, making the world a better place.

Think about this: If we all loved according to God's standard of love, we wouldn't have a need for government and their laws. You really wouldn't need government. In Galatians 5, Paul listed the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and gentleness. And then he said this: against such things, there is no law!

There is, however, laws against the sinful deeds of the flesh as we see in the remaining verses:

11 Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Here Paul is using a word picture of a soldier who wakes up in the morning and would put off his night gowns and put on his armor. In the same way, so we understand that the time of darkness we're living in is almost over. Jesus could come back at any time—the final stage of our salvation (glorification) is near. The night is almost gone—and we need to be ready for that. There needs to be a sense of urgency to the way we live. We don't just sit around and twiddle our thumbs waiting for Jesus to come back. We don't just live however we want. We have a job to do. A mission to accomplish. With every passing day, we're closer to Jesus' return.

So (it may sound ridiculous, but you won't forget it) we should put off—if you will—the cheugy ways of the sin nature and put on the new drip of Jesus Christ. The sin nature is no longer in style for Christians who have been born again spiritually. It doesn't line up with who they are in the present. It's so outdated. But Jesus, He's always in style. Always trendy in God's kingdom. And He's one size fits all.

If we want to make disciples and change the world,
we need to be dripping with Jesus and model His love to the world.

Model His attitude, love, virtue, peace, respect. So I wonder if when Paul wrote that he was thinking of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome before it became a Republic. The phrase "to put on the Tarquin" was an idiom that meant to behave in a way that was tyrannical, domineering, arrogant, or violent. If that's the case, Paul is saying, do the exact opposite. Influence the world with Christlike, sacrificial love. Let Jesus be manifested in all we do. That's how the Christians won over the Roman world. It was more effective than through politics. If you want to change the world, it starts with you. Are you doing your part? Are you loving Jesus? Loving your neighbor?

Put on Jesus and don't make provision for the flesh. Don't provide opportunities for the flesh to spring up. If you know you struggle with something sinful, don't put yourself in a position to be tempted unnecessarily by that. If you're trying to lose weight you don't keep a bowl of M&M's on your nightstand, do you? If you're trying to live for Jesus & the things that matter forever, you put yourself in a position where you're more likely to do that—surround yourself with people and places that will challenge you to grow in Jesus.

Normally I pray at the end of my sermon but today I just want you to take 30 seconds and prayerfully write down what it is you need to change in your life to make this passage a reality: What do you need to start, stop, or continue in your life in order to follow Jesus better? Maybe it's your attitude towards politics. Who you're surrounding yourself with or not surrounding yourself with. Too much screen time and not enough paper time? What's causing the flesh to rear its ugly head and what could you replace that with? Trust the Spirit to guide your thoughts in that.