

# BIBLE & BAGEL

## Romans – Our Common Faith

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Many churches suffer splits not because of doctrinal issues, although it does happen, the majority of church splits and conflicts are caused by human issues. Character clashes and opinions regarding things such as the use of money and position. In this passage Apostle Paul deals with the human heart regarding these things, he tells us that love is the solution. Read on ....

### Romans 13:6-7

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

As we have seen in the last study, when Apostle Paul spoke about submitting to the rulers, he was not really speaking about the emperor of Rome and the government which was idolatrous and immoral. He was speaking about the rulers of the synagogue which Gentile believers were also a part of and here he was exhorting them pay their due taxes which were the Temple taxes that Jews everywhere would collect and send back to Israel. Some Gentiles apparently were unhappy to pay this tax because even though they paid it they were not allowed to participate in the activities of the temple, or anyway the temple was far away in Jerusalem. The Apostle's concern here was not the money but harmony between Jews and Gentiles and by giving their dues, whether it was money or honor or whatever was required by the synagogues, they give it so as to keep the peace in the assembly of the believers.

I have personally seen how money issues can divide people in a church. People argue whether we should give the tithe, since there is no longer a temple and many other reasons. We often value money above relationship and desire to be right rather than to humble ourselves and keep the harmony within the house of God. It does not mean we just follow what the leadership says, there is a time and an avenue by which we may voice our grievances but ultimately we must let money or pride be a barrier of our relationship within the church.

### Romans 13:8-10

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. NKJV

Apostle Paul tells us here that love is the ultimate command, all the Torah hangs on the command to love; to love God and to love our neighbor, Yeshua said this clearly in Matthew 22:37-40 and Apostle Paul was repeating what Yeshua had said. Apostle Paul was giving the command to the congregation in Rome because there were potential rifts that could occur, rifts as we have seen in the form of racial divisions between Jews and Gentiles, between those who were willing to pay the temple tax and those who refused. He was commanding that people should act in love towards one another.



We need to ask ourselves whether we are acting in love to others in the church that we are a part of. Today church has become somewhat of a “spectator sport”, many people come to church on Sunday the “watch the show” or to put it in more religious terms “to be edified”. That is not God’s design for the church we are meant to be involved in what God is doing in the church, but to do so we must be submitted to our leaders; yes we must speak out when we see things that may not be right but we must do everything we can to keep the peace in the body. Apostle Paul uses the analogy of a body to describe the church. If your arm is not functioning well you do not immediately amputate it do you? In the church we breaking relationship is something we must do everything possible to avoid. The Apostle Peter tells us that we must love each other deeply or fervently because love covers a multitude of sin<sup>i</sup>. This is what we as believers today need to do; love each other deeply.

#### Romans 13:11-14

11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. NKJV

The Apostle reminds the believers that time is short and the completion of our salvation is nearer today that we when we first believed, because of this we should cast off sin and put on the armor of God and live sober lives not in drunkenness or lust or arguing and fighting. We must put on Messiah Yeshua and give no place for our own selfish thoughts and desires.

The root of all sin is self, when the serpent tempted Eve and Adam he appealed to their sense of self; they could be like God, that God was preventing them from being all they could be. Selfish desire is at the root of all sin and conflict. In the church when people only think of themselves; wanting to gain position and acclaim they will cause division whether knowingly or unknowingly. Putting on Messiah (Christ) means becoming more and more like Him in character and attitude. He who came to be king washed His disciples’ feet. Our heart should be the same, to be willing to serve each other in the church, if we are all like this the world will see Christ in the church.

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<sup>i</sup> 1 Peter 4:8

