

Notes on Romans 13

This is a synopsis with minor modifications and additions of the relevant section of NT Wright, *The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*: New Interpreter's Bible, Volume X (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2002).

c' Living under God's regime in the present age: Relations with civil authorities 13.1-7

It's customary to separate 13.1-7 from its surroundings, but it belongs closely with the end of 12.14-21. Once we see this, we can address the problem that has vexed commentators more than anything else apart from the central questions of justification, Torah, and Christology: What does 'submit to the ruling authorities' (13.1) mean, and why did Paul command it?

After a century in which governments have devastated continents, decimated nations, and dehumanized and murdered billions, it's scarcely surprising that 13.1-7 is problematic. Indeed, many wicked and powerful governments have appealed to Rm 13 to justify their rule. People have done that with the words of Jesus himself.

To begin with, we should avoid taking this paragraph as a full-blown 'theology of Church and State'. Indeed, our post-Enlightenment notion of a 'state' would have been rather foreign to Paul. Paul's point here is quite simple, and it fits into the line of thought of Rm 12-13 as a whole, and indeed it needs to be there to balance what has just been said.

Many theories have been advanced, predictably, as to what Paul was talking about and why. Here are the major ones:

- (1) This passage is a general statement about ruling authorities. It applies to all legitimate authorities at all times. It's based on a general belief in the desire of the creator God for order within all societies.
- (2) It's a particular statement about the Roman Empire (which, of course, some people thought of as existing right down to 1453, or 1806, or 1917), based on

(a) Paul's belief that it was in some sense God-given, and (b) his experience of sensible magistrates protecting him from persecution, and looking (c) for the safety of the Jewish and/or Christian community in Rome at this historical moment.

- (3) Nero's early years were promising, so Paul believed there was at least a moment when the church should trust Rome and live content within its world. Unfortunately, Nero's later years were terrible, so we can ignore this.
- (4) As a result of Jesus' victory over the powers of the world in his death and resurrection, he is behind them now, no matter how bad they appear!

No. (4) is just mistaken; Paul doesn't argue his point on the basis of Christology or the good news. And among other things, the passage is so close to various Jewish writings of the period and before, that there's no reason to suppose that this is a new viewpoint arising from the good news of the resurrection.

People sometimes appeal to Rm 13.1-7 as an argument against a 'political', that is, counter-imperial reading of the *rest* of Paul. However, if Paul really did mean 'submit to the ruling authorities' (13.1) as a general statement, based on God's appointed order in creation (as per item (1) above), the *less* it stands in the way of a counter-imperial reading.

If it's specific to the Roman Empire, it's not necessarily relevant to other times and places. If it's general, it can't be taken to glorify Rome in particular, so that Paul would legitimate the very tyranny that within a decade or so was doing grievous violence to the church. But by having Paul declare that the Roman Empire is a good thing (and thereby having him say little about other rulers and gov-

ernments), interpreters do make themselves unable to see other parts of Paul as subverting the Roman imperial ideology. And we should not be blind to the deeply anti-imperial message of Paul's good news as a whole.

Paul is well aware, from his own experience, that persecution may come. But just as in 12.14-21 he seems to have drawn on traditions about the words and actions of Jesus, so there may be a sense here that even when they are grievously deceived and almost demonic, ruling authorities still have a certain level of divine authorization (see Jn 19.11; cf the interesting exchange in Ac 23.1-5). More especially, though, 12.14-21 dovetails exactly into 13.1-7. One must not call down curses on persecutors, nor repay evil with evil, nor seek private retribution; punishment is God's business. Paul believed in a final judgment (1.32; 2.1-16; 14.10) when all wrongs would be put right, but he now articulates, as a central point in 13.1-7, a standard Jewish belief: that God wants order in the present world, and that he isn't going to allow chaos even in the present evil age. Chaos and anarchy enable the powerful, the rich, and the bullies to come out on top, and they invariably do. Authorities exist because God desires justice and order, even in this world that has not yet confessed Jesus as Lord. When magistrates and judges fail badly, resistance will sooner or later arise. Certainly Paul saw the church itself as the site of an alternative justice: 1Co 6.1-8.

Isaiah spoke of pagan rulers accomplishing God's purposes. Jeremiah urged Israel in exile to pray for the welfare of Babylon, because if Babylon was prospering, Israel would prosper as well.¹ Sundry writings of Paul's period insisted that God intends for there to be good and wise rulers, and if rulers know what their business really is they will seek divine wisdom to help them (e.g., Wi 6.1-11).² Rm 13.1-7 belongs squarely on this map. It's similar to the views of the Hillelites, who as moderates among the Pharisees were content to live and let live, though still believing in the age to come and the worldwide rule of the Messiah; the fiercer Shammaites were less willing to compromise. Paul's conversion may have made him more like a Hillelite than the Shammaite he had been before, but this only shows how 'natural' a position like this would seem to a Jew of his day.

Paul has hinted several times in Romans itself that the good news and reign of Jesus the Messiah, the world's true Lord, subverted the good news and reign of Caesar, whose cult was growing fast in precisely the cities where

he spent most of his time.³ So this is part of his point: If the good news of Jesus, God's Son, the King who will rule the nations (1.3-4; 15.12) does indeed unveil God's justice and salvation, which put to shame the claims of Caesar (1.16-17; Ph 2.5-11; 3.19-21); if those who accept this good news will themselves exercise a royal reign (5.17)— then it's important to make it clear that this doesn't mean an anarchy based on the Messiah has already abolished all earthly governments and magistrates. All creation will be renewed (8.1-27), and every knee shall bow at the name of Jesus (Ph 2.10-11), but excitable little groups of Christians should not take matters into their own hands in advance. In particular (and with events in Palestine in mind), it's important that his readers not take his covert polemic against the imperial ideology as a call to a 'Christian revolution'.⁴ The riots under Claudius were not good, whatever the Christians may have had to do with them. God doesn't intend for Christians to be agents of anarchy, replacing tyranny with gang rule. The overthrow of pagan power comes by the means that Paul has outlined in Rm 5-8. Rome could cope with rebellions. Rome could not cope, as history bears witness, with a community owing allegiance to the crucified and risen Messiah as the world's true Lord.

In fact, reading Rm 13 against the extravagant claims made in the burgeoning imperial cult highlights the point that the rulers are not divine; they are set up by the One God, and they owe allegiance to him. Rm 13 severely demotes Rome's arrogant and self-divinizing rulers and undermines modern corporate totalitarianism as well. The rulers are to judge within their sphere of authority, but will be judged by the God who set them up. Paul describes the rulers twice as God's 'servants' (*diakonoi*, 13.4), and if God's servants in the good news will be judged on how they have performed, his servants within the civic community will be so judged as well.⁵

In the context of 12.14-21, Rm 13.1-7 raises a question, which Paul doesn't touch on here: What happens when the 'governing authorities' are the 'persecutors' (12.14), and are using their God-given power for that purpose? Since Paul doesn't raise the question here, we can't press this passage for an answer; but we might compare Ac

¹ Isa 10.5-11; 44.28-45.5; 46.11; Jr 29.4-9; 27.6-11; also Dn 1.2; 2.21, 37-49; 4.25,32; 5.18; Ezr 6.10; Pr 8.15-16; Bar 1.11; 1Mc 7.33

² See also Josephus *The Jewish War* 2.197; *Against Apion* 2.75-77.

³ See Richard A. Horsley, ed. *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997); and Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation, Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000).

⁴ This is the point made by Borg in 'A New Context for Romans xiii'. The 'Fourth Philosophy' is Josephus's way of demarcating the Jewish revolutionaries as a separate party alongside the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes.

⁵ See 1Co 3.10-15; 4.1-5, having described himself and Apollos as God's *diakonoi* in 3.5; 2Co 5.10.

23.1-5. There, Paul declares that God will strike the 'whitewashed wall', the judge who is behaving illegally. When confronted with the fact that this judge is God's high priest, he apologizes formally, recognizing that he should not speak evil of a ruler, but he doesn't retract his charge—the high priest has behaved illegally and will be judged for it. Paul also submits to pagan rulers, but reminds them of their duty as well (Ac 16.19-40; 22.22-29; 25.6-12). Paul could see, not far away, the battle that would come, in which Caesar would insist on an absolute allegiance that left no room for Jesus as Lord. Less than a century later, Polycarp died at the stake because of that; but even he, it seems, held on to a view of magistracy very similar to Paul's.⁶

Paul always insists on seeing the present in the light of the future. The obedience of Christians to earthly magistrates takes place under the sign of ultimate judgment (cf again 2.1-16). As Paul's own example bears out, this doesn't mean one must be politically and socially quiescent until the great renewal of all things. We announce and follow only Jesus, not Caesar, as the world's true Lord in practical, as well as spiritual ways. The church is the presence of the coming regime of Jesus Messiah; and that kingdom is 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit', so it's not inaugurated by chaos, violence, and hatred (cf 14.17). The Messiah's own ways (12.14-21) must be used in living out his regime within the present world.

'Every soul must be subject to the higher powers' (13.1)— and by 'soul' Paul means, as usual, the whole human being from the point of view of the person's interior life, motivation, and intention. Here it is a way of indicating that every *individual* must obey this command. The command itself is to 'be subject' or 'submit' (*hypotassesthō*); not necessarily 'obey', but 'take one's place under', from which obedience will usually follow. The word has echoes of military formation: one must take one's place in the appropriate rank.

But who are the 'authorities' to whom one owes this submission? Elsewhere in Paul there are times when the 'rulers and authorities,' the 'principalities and powers,' are primarily spiritual beings, shadowy but powerful entities that stand behind the visible and earthly rulers (cf 8.38-39). Sometimes it seems as though he intends to refer simultaneously to both earthly and heavenly powers (1Co 2.6-8; Col 2.14-15). It's unlikely that Paul ever made a complete distinction between earthly and heavenly dimensions of civic authority, but here his primary

focus is on the earthly rulers themselves. They are the ones who bear the sword (13.4), to whom one pays taxes (13.6-7).⁷

The problem, of course, at the level of understanding Paul (to postpone for a minute the question of applying him today), is that in 1 Corinthians 2, and again in Col 2.15, Paul declares that the cross of Jesus Christ has defeated the powers. How can he now suggest that one should be subject to them? All things, including all powers and authorities in heaven and on earth, were created in, through, and for Christ, and are also reconciled in, through, and to him (Col 1). If there's a tension between Romans 13 and Colossians 2; it there already between Colossians 1 and Colossians 2. But Paul in this case is just stressing one of the more positive aspects of the 'powers.' In parallel with Col 1.16, he commands submission because the 'powers' are part of God's good created order. The fact that they are in rebellion does not of itself mean that submission is inappropriate.

Paul gives an explanation (*gar*): the authorities have been put there by God. This is a general point about civic authority. It belongs with mainstream Second Temple Jewish tradition, and has parallels in the NT (e.g., Wis 6.3-10; Jn 19.11).

13.2-4. Paul backs up this initial command and explanation with a short discussion of what happens when people resist the authorities, and of the fact that these results are part of God's appointed order. Resistance incurs 'condemnation' or 'judgment' (*krima*) (13.2), because rulers hold no terrors for those who do good, but only for wrongdoers (13.3a). He does not discuss when rulers are a terror to those who do good. Paul could no doubt have given examples of the latter from his own experience, but his point concerns God's intended order, not its corruptions. He then turns the point around (13.3b-4): if you want to go about your business without fear of the authorities, do what is good, and they will praise you. That is their God-given function. They are 'ministers' (*diakonoi*), 'stewards' of God for this purpose: their delegated task is to praise good behavior. Conversely, then (13.4b), if you do evil, you should be afraid, because authority has the right and responsibility to punish. Once again, the authority is God's 'steward,' this time as 'judicial avenger unto wrath', that is, to administer punitive justice. The authority *must* do what the private individual *may not* do (12.14-21)— a point regularly missed in many popular-level discussions of the judicial role of civic authority.

⁶ Polycarp *Mart. Pol.* 10.2; the whole passage repays study. See also Ac 4.23-31; 1P 3.1.3-17 within the context of the persecution presupposed by the letter as a whole: and 1 *Clement* 60-61.

⁷ See W. Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*. vol. 1 of *The Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 45-47.

13.5. This to-and-fro discussion of the appointed role of 'authority' and the way in which 'you' may encounter it, for good or ill, leads Paul back to his initial command, now with an extra reason: one must therefore submit, both because the alternative is 'wrath' in this sense, and also because, recognizing the God-given role of authority, the educated Christian conscience ought to become disquieted if it finds itself resisting God's 'stewards.' Paul does not often mention the role of conscience in Christian behavior, but when he does, as here, it appears that this is not because it is marginal in his thinking but because he takes it for granted. The word occurs elsewhere in 2.15; 9.1; most of the other Pauline references occur in 1Co 8,10; see also 2Co 5.11.

13.6-7. Conscience, too, prescribes therefore that one must pay taxes. It's interesting that some in Rome at this time were protesting taxation. See Tacitus *Annals* 13.50-51. Nero proposed abolishing indirect taxation altogether, but his council restrained him. Once again Paul gives the authorities a high status: they are God's *leitourgoi*, public servants (in a world where 'public service' regularly had cultic overtones at least, sometimes explicit association with religious functions). They must therefore receive what is due to them, whether direct and indirect taxes (that is the likely distinction between the two words *phoros* and *telos* here) or the non-material dues of respect and honor. This last point shows once more, not least in relation to Paul's own practice in Acts, what is and is not meant. Paul was always ready to honor the office even while criticizing the present holder. Though of course one hopes that the holder will prove worthy of the office, and one knows that sometimes holders prove so unworthy as to need removing from office, being able to respect the office while at least reserving judgment about the holder is part of social and civic maturity. And, for Paul, being able to say 'the existing powers are ordained by God' while living under a system that, as he makes clear elsewhere, was bristling with potential or actual blasphemy and injustice, is part of Christian maturity—a part he urges his Roman readers to make their own.

b' Unity and love:

Love fulfills the Torah 13.8-10

This little passage on love and the Torah is clearly a summary of issues that Paul lays out more fully elsewhere (e.g., Ga 5). In the chiasm of Rm 12–13, the difference between this passage and the corresponding 12.3-13 is that there Paul was dealing with life within the Christian community, and here he appears to be advocating a love for neighbors of any and every persuasion.

'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another' (13.8), if read without a break from what has gone before, looks like Paul is just saying, 'Pay your bills on time'. We must assume that he is still talking about the wider community represented by those who levy taxes and demand respect (13.7). And this view of a wider community alerts us again to a wider reference within Romans. Just as 12.1-2 looked back to 1.18-32, seeing in Christian worship the reversal of idolatry and dehumanization, so the present passage looks back to 2.17-29 ('You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law', 2.23). With 3.27-31; 8.1-8; and 10.5-11 in the background, Paul sketches a brief but telling picture of how the Torah is fulfilled in that love of neighbor which will bring admiration, rather than blasphemy, from the world (cf 2.16-17). The 'true Jews' (see 2.28-29) bring God's light and love to the world. In Ga 5.14, Paul says almost exactly the same thing (see also 1Co 13, where, though Paul doesn't mention Torah, the matchless exposition of love and its abiding permanence reminds us of Jewish eulogies of Torah or wisdom; see Si 24).

Rm 13.8-10 consists of an opening statement and explanation (13.8), followed by an extended explanation of the explanation (13.9), leading to a summary that repeats and reinforces the original explanation (13.10).

Although the idea of 'debt' in 13.8, immediately after instructions using the same word (*opheilias*, 13.7; 'what is due them,' NRSV; 'what you owe them,' NIV), is most naturally taken literally, Paul has twice already in Romans used it as a metaphor, once for his own obligation to bring the gospel to the whole world (1.14) and again to indicate the Christian's obligation to live by the Spirit and not the flesh (8.12). For the sense of obligation we may compare 4.4; 15.1,27; the root regularly carries both literal and metaphorical meanings in early Christian writings.

The explanation, in the second half of the verse, should not be misunderstood. Paul does not, of course, mean 'Love fulfills the Torah; therefore love is the way to earn righteousness with God.' He does not suppose that this was ever the purpose of Torah. Rather, the purpose of Torah was that Israel might be God's light to the world; Israel was 'entrusted with God's oracles,' but proved unfaithful. Those who are justified by faith 'apart from the works of the Torah' (3.28) are now, perfectly logically, instructed to live as the people through whom what the Torah by itself could not do is accomplished (8.3-8; 10.1-11). People who love their neighbors thus 'fulfill Torah,' both in the immediate sense that they will not do what the Torah forbids as regards justice, in the further sense that love brings about the community aims which the dietary laws etc were meant to hedge in, and in the

broad sense that through them God's way of life will be seen to advantage.

In 13.9-10, Paul explains (*gar*) what he means by saying that love fulfills Torah. First he simply states that all the commandments are in fact summed up in the command to love (13.9); then he sums this up to the effect that love does no evil, and draws the conclusion that love is indeed Torah's fulfillment (13.10). Loving one's neighbor is itself, of course, a command in Torah (Lv 19.18, quoted here), though not part of the Ten Commandments. Paul was not the first to see it as a summary of the whole law; this is one of several passages in Romans 12-13 where we are right to detect echoes of the teaching of Jesus himself (Mt 22.37-39 and par.; see also Jm 2.8, where this commandment is described as the 'royal law,' presumably meaning 'the command given by the king,' i.e., Jesus; cf. 2Mc 3.13). The specific commands he lists here consist of four of the last five of the ten (omitting the bearing of false witness, a deficiency that one good ms. and a few lesser ones tried to rectify), following the LXX order of Dt 5.17-21 (adultery, murder, theft, coveting) rather than that of Ex 20.13-17 (theft, then murder).⁸ The idea of being able to sum up Torah in a single phrase has a long history in Judaism of which Paul was no doubt well aware.⁹

Though 13.10 opens without a verbal connection to what precedes, it is clearly a summary of 13.9. It should not be supposed that the full achievement of 'love' consists simply in doing no evil; as Dr. Johnson said, to do no harm is the praise of a stone, not a man. Rather, love, on its way to higher and more positive goals, takes in this negative effect in a single stride. If love seeks the neighbor's highest good, it will certainly do no wrong to them. We should notice that Paul leaves no room for the slippery argument whereby sexual malpractice has been routinely justified in the modern world; 'love,' as the summary of the law, includes the command not to commit adultery, and could never be confused with the 'love' that is frequently held to excuse it.

The 'fulfillment of Torah' does not mean performing 'good works' to put God in one's debt; rather, it is the discharge of one's own debt to both neighbor and to God.

⁸ The MT, in both Exodus and Deuteronomy, has murder, adultery, theft. It is unlikely that we should read into Paul's order any sense that it is Deuteronomy that is fulfilled, rather than Exodus, or that there is particular significance in the omission of bearing false witness.

⁹ See *T. Iss.* 6; *b. Shabb.* 31a, which ascribes to Hillel the saying, 'That which you hate, do not do to your fellows; this is the whole law, the rest is commentary; go and learn it!'

a' Renewed life in the messianic age: Living in the light 13.11-14

Paul ends the section where he began it, setting the morality that 'make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires' (8.14) in the context of what time it is: daybreak (13.11). This is a familiar image in early Christian writing, quite possibly going back to Jesus himself (Mt 24.42-44; 26.45; Mk 13.33-37; Lk 12.35-46; 21.36); Paul has developed it elsewhere (1Th 5.1-11; Ep 5.8-16); and the idea of staying awake to be about one's Christian tasks is also evident in Ep 6.18. With the resurrection, God's promised new Age had dawned, but the full day was yet to come (see esp 1Co 15.20-28). Christians therefore live in the 'already / not yet' interval between the deep dawn and sunrise itself, and their behavior must be appropriate for the day, not the night. We need to put on 'weapons of light' (13.12, cf 1Th 5.8; Ep 6.10-17) and even put on the Lord Jesus Messiah himself (cf Ga 3.27; Ep 4.24). When St Augustine read this after hearing children chanting 'pick up and read, pick up and read'; it was the final push he needed to make a clean break with his past and devote himself entirely to God.¹⁰

13.11. Paul assumes that his readers will know what 'time' it is. The word for 'time' here is *kairos*, 'special moment' or 'opportunity', rather than chronological time; as in 12.2, he expects them to be familiar with the idea of the present age, which is passing away, and the oncoming age, which is dawning. He expects them to be up before day breaks fully; this theme, with its echoes of the Easter morning stories, resonates through the early Christian sense of new creation, new life bursting through the wintry crust of the old world. It's time to wake up.

The reason he gives (*gar*) is that 'our salvation' is nearer now than when first we believed. Paul does not say, as many of his interpreters have supposed he said, that the final end of which he speaks in Rm 8, 1Co 15, 1Th 4-5 and elsewhere, will certainly come within a generation; but he knows that it might well do so, and insists that it is urgent for Christians to behave already as will then be appropriate. Though 'salvation' can refer to saving events during the present course of history (e.g., Ph 1.19), and Paul can insist in one passage that 'the day of salvation' is already present (2Co 6.2), here the word has its normal meaning, referring to the final day when God will renew all things in Christ and give all the justified their glorious, risen bodies, and investing that event with its sense of 'rescue from disaster' (see 5.9-10; 8.24, 29-30; Ph 3.20-21). The idea of the eschatological moment coming 'near', which Paul repeats in the next verse, car-

¹⁰ *Confessions* 8.29.

ries echoes of Jesus' original proclamation, as in Mk 1.15 and parallels: God's kingdom 'is near', 'is at hand', or perhaps even 'has arrived'.¹¹ And now, he says, it is nearer than it was at the time we became believers; this is in one sense obvious, but in another needs saying as a reminder that though to us the passage of time seems to move on without much change we should not forget that the great future moment is steadily coming closer.

By way of explaining what he means by saying it is time to wake up, he declares in 13.12 that the night is nearly over and the day is breaking, and draws the conclusion in a mixed metaphor: it is time to stop nocturnal activities and put on the 'weapons' proper for daylight. (The metaphor is more obviously, and gloriously, mixed in 1 Thessalonians 5, where those who are asleep will go into labor pains, because a thief is breaking into the house, while those who are awake should not get drunk, but should put on their armor.) The verb anticipates 13.14, where it is 'the Lord Jesus Christ' who is 'put on.' The weapons here are 'of light,' contrasting with the 'works of darkness.' *Hoplā* properly denotes military equipment, not primarily clothing; however, the verb here and in Eph 6.11 is ordinarily used of putting on clothes.

In 13.13-14. Paul has in mind, clearly, what in Galatians he calls 'the works of the flesh': '13.13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; carousing and drunkenness, not in sleeping around and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy'. These are the things that characterize humanity in rebellion against its creator (1.29, 2.8, Gal 5.19). His main target here is the abuse of the body, one's own and often that of others as well: wild parties, drinking-bouts, sexual immorality and licentiousness. These are behaviors that normally happen after dark, and in Paul's metaphorical sense that they belong with the old age rather than with the new day that is dawning in Christ (see 12.2). We should not forget that 'quarreling and jealousy' are put on exactly the same level as immorality; there are many churches where the first four sins are unheard of but the last two run riot.

Instead, Paul commands his readers to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh' (NIV goes into a long and questionable paraphrase). Paul has returned to the basic commands of 6.12-13 (where, as here in 13.12, he speaks of 'weapons'; there it is the parts of the body that are to become 'weapons of righteousness') and of 8.12-13. And though his particular expressions shift from passage to passage, his underlying ter-

minology is completely consistent. The 'body,' which will die but be raised, must already in the present be given to God in service and worship (12.2); the 'flesh' will die, and its efforts to drag the Christian down with it must be resisted. There must be no loophole, no secret areas where license is permitted, where the 'desires' of the 'flesh' are tolerated, let alone encouraged (see 7.4-6).

The ultimate safeguard against the seduction of the 'flesh' in this full sense is Jesus himself— the Lord, the Messiah. In Ga 3.27 it is 'the Messiah' who is to be 'put on'; in Ep 5.24 and Col 3.10 it is 'the new human being'; but the imagery of putting on a new suit of clothes, carrying as it may well do overtones of baptism, is used in several different senses and cannot easily be systematized. (In 1Co 15.53-4 and 2Co 5.3 it refers to the resurrection body; in Col 3.12 to the key Christian virtues; see also the passage about baptism and behavior in Romans 6.)

Frequently when Paul uses more than one name or title for Jesus the one he wishes to emphasize is placed first; here, by saying, 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ,' he seems to be drawing attention to the sovereignty of Jesus, not simply over the believer (who is bound to obey the one whose servant he or she is), but perhaps more particularly over the forces of evil that are ranged against the gospel and those who embrace it. The Lord Jesus Christ himself becomes the 'weapons of light' in 13.12: putting him on like a suit of armor is the best protection against the powers of the present darkness (see Eph 6.12). Paul is addressing those who have already 'put on Christ' in baptism (Ga 3.27). The assumption must be that he is urging them, as a regular spiritual discipline, to invoke the presence and power of Jesus as Lord of all things to be their defense against all evil, not least the evil toward which they might be lured by their own 'flesh.'

¹¹ ἔγγικεν (*engiken*), as in 13.12; the word in this verse is ἔγγύτερον (*engyteron*). On the meaning of Jesus' proclamation of the 'nearness' of the kingdom, see N.T. Wright, *JVG* 471-72.