

Romans
13:8-14



*Fulfilling the
Law of Love
until the
Dawning Day!*



Love does
no wrong to
a neighbor;
therefore
love is the
fulfilling of
the law.

Romans 13:10

Romans

13:8-14



Introduction

As you may recall from last Sunday, Paul ended vv.1-7 with the command to pay back everyone with the “things that are owed” (v.7). Paul uses the Greek verb “to owe” as a segue into his next thought as written in v.8: “Owe nothing to anyone except the [obligation] to love one another.” The topic of “love” is engaged in vv.8-10 that will form a frame with the heading of 12:9, “love [is] without hypocrisy.” You will also hear the noun “love” (ἀγάπη) twice in v.10 and twice later in 14:15 and 15:30. Thus, Paul will be concluding his description of “authentic love,” which has been his dominant theme from 12:9.

Romans

13:8-14



Introduction

Equally noteworthy, in vv.8-10, Paul will refer to the Law for the final time in Romans. As elsewhere in Romans, Paul will not use Law as an undefined “principle,” neither does the Law function broadly to encompass anything properly deserving the name “law.” Rather, as throughout Romans, Paul’s use of the Law is a clear reference to the Mosaic Torah (Law). Therefore, in this section of Romans, Paul will be using the themes of “love” and “Law” together. This may sound rather odd; however, Jesus also firmly establishes the same connection as we will discuss beginning in v.8.

Romans

13:8



*Love One
Another and
the Other*

Owe nothing to anyone except the [obligation] *to love one another*. For the one who loves the other has brought [the] Law to fulfillment.

The opening clause does not mean that you should never borrow (mortgage, auto loan, etc.), but that such debts should not be left outstanding. In other words, Paul is calling on Christians not to have unpaid obligations; and, especially, taxes (cf. vv.6-7). Then Paul follows this with a command, and imperative, “*to love one another*.” The Greek imperative “*owe*” (ὀφείλετε) and the infinitive “*to love*” (ἀγαπᾶν) strongly implies an ongoing and continual responsibility.

Romans

13:8



*Love One
Another and
the Other*

Owe nothing to anyone except the [obligation] *to love one another*. For the one who loves **the other has brought [the] Law to fulfillment**.

Paul shows how God's love has been poured into us (5:5); in v.8, he declares that this love ought then to flow through us to "the other." The reason the Christian is to love "the other" "has brought [the] Law to fulfillment." That is, the intent of the Law is brought to its divinely intended outcome. Thus, when combined with the "anyone" at the beginning of this verse, these two terms encompass those within and also outside the church as proper objects of love. This reinforces what Paul has already stated in regard to authentic love (12:9).

Romans

13:8



*Love One
Another and
the Other*

Owe nothing to anyone except the [obligation] *to love one another*. For the one who loves **the other has brought [the] Law to fulfillment**.

What exactly, though, does Paul mean by “[the] Law to fulfillment?”

This may seem to be impossible for the Christian. Remember that Romans 5–8 describes the life God gives. And from 12:1–15:13, Paul moves to the life the believers are to live in responses to God’s giving. Therefore, Paul’s meaning of “[the] Law to fulfillment” is that the one who actively loves, in fact, does the Law as God intends.

Romans

13:8



*Love One
Another and
the Other*

Owe nothing to anyone except the [obligation] *to love one another*. For the one who loves **the other has brought [the] Law to fulfillment**.

The Law can never be properly fulfilled when done out of fear or guilt; also improper are “works of the Law” done to earn righteousness or other merits. Instead, God desires (and He always has) for His Baptized children to follow the Law as a response to His love, and then out of love for others. In fact, it is only by loving, with authentic love, that one puts the Law into practice as God desires. This, then, is love without hypocrisy that Paul has been describing beginning from 12:9; such authentic love does, in fact, fulfills the Law’s intent in action!

Romans

13:8



*Love One
Another and
the Other*

Owe nothing to anyone except the [obligation] to love one another. For the one who loves the other has brought [the] Law to fulfillment.

It is true that we must concede that during this earthly life such complete and consistent loving of others remains impossible, even for the Baptized believer. Yet, this does not dismiss the positive and active call to love, which means, per God's intent, to walk in accord with the Law (6:4; 8:4; 13:13), and Paul makes this explicit beginning with the next two verses.

Romans

13:9a



*Specific
Commandments*

⁹Indeed, the [commandments] “you will not commit adultery,” “you will not murder,” “you will not steal,” “you will not [improperly] desire...,”

Paul now offers a number of concrete examples of God’s intent that you walk in accord with the Law and your practice of authentic love. Paul’s specific content validates the bracketed insertion of [commandments.] Paul cites specific commands from the Decalogue in only two of his letters, Ephesians and Romans. In Ephesians, he cites the 7th (4:28) and he quotes the 4th in 6:2-3. In Romans 2:21-22, Paul references the 6th and 7th in reverse order. The order here differs from the OT as well; Paul cites in order the 6th, 5th, 7th, and 9th - 10th Commandments. This order matches James 2:11, which also quotes the 6th before the 5th.

Romans

13:9a



*Specific
Commandments*

⁹Indeed, the [commandments] “you will not commit adultery,” “you will not murder,” “you will not steal,” “you will not [improperly] desire...,”

Why does Paul only cite these four? Did you notice that he only cites commands from the Second Table of the Law!

Paul is focused on the “horizontal” or “social” relations within the Christian community and with people outside of the church. Remember, beginning with 12:1, Paul has been focusing on how believers live out the life they have been given through the mercies of God. So within this temporal life, Paul’s selection of commandments becomes more expected than surprising.

Romans

13:9b-c



Ten Words?

“...and if [there is] some other commandment, it is brought under a heading in this **word**, “you will love your neighbor as yourself.”

Paul immediately adds this phrase “and if [there is] some other commandment” which may imply that there are other commandments.

The remainder of this verse (9c) resolves this matter! Paul asserts that these various commands can be summed up or brought together under a single heading (ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται), properly, to head-up, summing up all the parts as a comprehensive (organized) whole. Note the use of “word,” which Paul also uses in Gal 5:14, since it is the proper biblical term for the Decalogue, “the Ten Words.”

Romans

13:9b-c



“...and if [there is] some other commandment, it is brought under a heading in this **word**, “you will love your neighbor as yourself.”

Yes, that’s actually what Scripture says!

In Ex 34:28, Moses writes, “So he [Moses] was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים (aseret haddebarim) – “ten words.”

In the LXX, the Greek translation of these two Hebrew words is: τοὺς δέκα λόγους or “Decalogue” in English!

Ten Words?

Romans

13:9b-c



Ten Words?

“...and if [there is] some other commandment, it is brought under a heading in this **word**, “you will love your neighbor as yourself.”

The “Ten Words” can then be “brought under a heading in this **word, ‘you will love your neighbor as yourself.’” Paul’s quote matches the LXX translation of Lev 19:18 exactly. And, by the way, Lev 19:18 is one of the Torah passages most frequently quoted in the NT! Jesus quotes this text in Mt 22:37-40; Mk 12:29-33. Even more astounding is that Jesus also cites Lev 19:18 partially in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:43) and an expert in the Law (a scribe) correctly uses this text in his dialogue with Jesus in Luke 10:25-28.**

Romans

13:10



*Love and the
Laws
Fulfillment*

Love does not work evil to the neighbor; therefore, love [is the] fulfillment of the Law

Love must be Divinely defined! Today, the mistake that most often occurs is that love is defined as one's self-absorbed, egoistical idea from the permissive society around them. It is totally misguided to follow your own inclinations of what you deem "love" to be without relying on God's defining guidance of what love actually entails! Augustine provides the following suggestion: "Love, and do as you please"¹ will all too readily lead fallen humanity astray. This is precisely why Paul has been providing an extensive definition of authentic love since 12:9 and why he continues to do so here by citing specific commandments.

¹Augustine, Homilies on 1 John, 7.8.

Romans

13:10



*Love and the
Laws
Fulfillment*

Love does not work evil to the neighbor; *therefore, love [is the] fulfillment of the Law.*

St. Paul then concludes this section on authentic love with the last half of v.10: “*therefore, love [is the] fulfillment of the Law.*” The citation of the commandments from the Law, as well as the positive reference to “*some other commandment*” (v.9), surely proves that Paul does not mean that the commandments of the Law have be replaced. Neither does “*fulfillment*” mean that the command to love expresses the full content, the sum of the Law. Therefore, God’s intent in giving the Law’s commandments reaches its fullness when enacted in *authentic love*! Paul’s statement, then, offers a most appropriate culmination to his description of genuine (authentic) love in 12:9 – 13:10.

Romans

13:11-14



SECTION II:

The Dawning

Day

Paul begins by drawing his thoughts together in v.11. The pronoun “*this*” (τοῦτο) refers to the obligation to love according to the Law as shown in 13:8-10. God’s children are called to do the Law’s commands in authentic love because they understand the fleeting times in which they live. The pronoun “*this*,” therefore, reaches back to Chapter 12 and includes everything that Paul has presented for Christians to live “*through the mercies of God*” (12:1). The parallel bookends, then, are 12:1-8, which opens Paul’s discussion, and 13:11-14, which wraps up Romans 12-13 as a whole.

Romans

13:11-12a



Knowing
the Time

¹¹And [do] this, knowing the *momentous time*, because already [it is the] hour for you to be raised from *sleep*. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed.

¹²The night has advanced far and the day has drawn near and is at hand.

Paul begins by reminding his readers of the “*momentous time*” (καίρός) ushered in by Christ Jesus: the NT era (cf. 3:26; 8:18; 11:5). Paul describes this *καίρός* with three temporal statements which occupy the rest of this verse and extend through v.12a. In regard to the first temporal statement, “*sleep*” (ὑπνος) in the OT can denote death, even everlasting damnation. This verse is the only NT passage that uses the Greek noun ὑπνος “*sleep*” in a metaphorical sense.

Romans

13:11-12a



Knowing
the Time

¹¹And [do] this, knowing the **momentous time**, because already [it is the] hour for you to be **raised** from **sleep**. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed.

¹²The night has advanced far and the day has drawn near and is at hand.

As in Romans 6:1-11, believers have already died to sin and have been raised to new life through Baptism in Jesus. Therefore, Christians are not to revert to a life of sin (6:1-2) or “sleep,” that is, spiritual apathy. Sadly, however, it aptly characterizes much of the church today as she has succumbed to cultural norms. In light of this, Paul uses an idiom and the passive voice to assert that it is the right time to be “raised” (ἐγερθῆναι) from spiritual slumber by the God who raised Jesus, our Lord, from the dead!

Romans

13:11-12a



Knowing
the Time

¹¹And [do] this, knowing the *momentous time*, because *already [it is the] hour* for you to be *raised* from *sleep*. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed.

¹²The night has advanced far and the day has drawn near and is at hand.

Notice that Paul says that the “hour” (ὥρα) is already. This noun expresses the notion of God’s appointed eschatological hour. Thus we have the same “now” and “not yet” tension addressed by Paul in Romans 6-8. “[A]lready [it is the] hour” since “the momentous time” has come in Christ Jesus (cf. 3:26). But that does not dismiss the realities of everyday life. Paul will go on to speak quite specifically of how to live in the hour-by-hour grind of this temporal life in verses 12b-14.

Romans

13:11b



Salvation is
Nearer

^{11b}For now *our salvation* is *nearer* than when we believed.
¹²The night has advanced far and the day has drawn near and is at hand.

But before we get to 12b-14, Paul provides a second description of this momentous life. Paul's thought of "nearer" is not salvation in a pietistic way as something that happens to you in your experience, but as a universal eschatological event. Therefore, the pronoun and noun "*our salvation*" (ἡμῶν ἡ σωτηρία) is attached to the adverb "*nearer*" (ἐγγύτερον) which conveys the correct truth.

Romans

13:11b



*Salvation is
Nearer*

^{11b}For **now our salvation** is *nearer* than when we believed.

¹²The night has advanced far and the day has drawn near and is at hand.

Your salvation (or the salvation that is nearer to you) means the general resurrection on the Great Last Day; for it is then that you (we) shall enjoy true salvation. This, again, conveys the impending “not yet.” Here an eschatological emphasis stands out, yet Paul’s strategic placement of “now” at the beginning of the clause enables him to stress the present as well!

Romans

13:12a



*The Dawning
Day*

The night has advanced far and the day has drawn near and is at hand.

Paul's third and final description of the "*momentous time*" introduces language implied in being "*raised from sleep*" (v.11), namely, moving from night to day. The temporal reference describes the moment of dawn before the actual sunrise when it seems to be, for a brief time, both night and day. It may surprise you to know that the illustration does not appear widely in Holy Scripture.

Romans

13:12a



¹²The **night** *has advanced far* and the day has drawn near and is at hand.

“Night” (νύξ) refers to the present age of darkness, sin, and death, which Paul asserts *“has advanced far”* and nears its end. At the same time, Paul implies that the *“night,”* while retreating, still remains at present. This provides evidence for the, again, *“not yet”* which paradoxically counters the *“now”* of v.11.

*The Dawning
Day*

Romans

13:12a



*The Dawning
Day*

The night has advanced far and *the day* has drawn near and is at hand.

In the midst of the darkness, however, the early light of morning shines forth by virtue of our Lord's first Advent, which announces and inaugurates His kingdom. Theodoret of Cyrus concludes that "*the day refers to the time after the Lord's coming.*"² Paul's description clearly exhibits his idea of the overlapping ages.

Within it, he emphasizes that the age of night, though far along, remains a present reality.

Yet the age to come is, in spatial terms, right at the doorstep and, in that sense, here! As with the light of the dawning day, it became visible in Jesus, the light of the world (St. John 8:12), and can be experienced already by faith (cf. 2 Cor 5:7)!

² Theodoret of Cyrus, *Romans* (Bray, *Romans*, ACCS NT 6:334).

Romans

13:12b



*What to
Wear as We
Wait and
Walk*

Therefore, let us take off from ourselves the works of the darkness, and let us clothe ourselves with the instruments of the light.

What are you to do, in practical ways, since you have been “*raised from sleep?*” First, Paul makes a subtle shift from the picture of night and day to darkness and light. Paul’s move mirrors 1 Thess 5:4-5 and this basic contrast between darkness and light is common throughout Scriptures, which is extended in an eschatological way with darkness characterizing the present evil age and light the new era of salvation in Christ Jesus!

Romans

13:12b



*What to
Wear as We
Wait and
Walk*

Therefore, let us take off from ourselves the works of the darkness, and let us clothe ourselves with the instruments of the light.

Secondly, this verse introduces yet another image, that of clothing. This illustration provides but one example of numerous expressions which Paul shares with James and Peter, specifically. It seems very likely then that such expressions, along with those articulated by Jesus, for example, in the praxis of the early church, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism included the preparatory removal of one's old clothing and the subsequent donning of a new, clean, white robe.

Romans

13:12b-13



*What to
Wear as We
Wait and
Walk*

Therefore, let us take off from ourselves the works of the darkness, and let us clothe ourselves with the instruments of the light.

Paul applies this image to Baptism when he says in Gal 3:27, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ, you clothed yourselves with Christ.” Before changing into clean clothes one might naturally wash, which reflects another Baptismal theme! The Baptismal motif (e.g., Rom 6:1-4; Col 2:12-13) with the clothing imagery of the bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:53-54; 2 Cor 5:4; Rev 3:5) clearly reflects the new life of the Christian in Christ Jesus, our Lord!

Romans

13:13



*What to
Wear as We
Wait and
Walk*

Let us walk decently, as in [the] day, not in excessive eating and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and self-indulgence, not in strife and envy,

Paul then, thirdly, elaborates on the clothing metaphor by identifying six specific “works of darkness” that are to be put off by saying, “Let us walk decently, as in [the] day.” Another way of saying this is that the Christian is to live in the “day” as in the sense of already being there! This is the truth that the Gospel reveals to you. This also coincides with living according to God’s perspective, a sense Paul urges most directly in Romans 6:2-8! So Christians eagerly await the Day (the Day of Resurrection) even as they (you, we) experience, by faith, the power and blessings of that Great Day in its present phase!

Romans

13:13



*What to
Wear as We
Wait and
Walk*

Let us walk **decently**, as in [the] day, not in excessive eating and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and self-indulgence, not in strife and envy,

Paul uses a single adverb to provide a positive depiction of how you ought to walk: “decently” (εὐσχημόνως) – literally, “having good form” – properly; “decorously” i.e., what is respectable, honorable (modest, noble). Paul does not hesitate in calling on all Christians to observe the conventional respectability of his day, which still applies to your life today!

Romans

13:13



What to
Wear as We
Wait and
Walk

¹³...*not in excessive eating and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and self-indulgence, not in strife and envy,*

The last section of v.13 provides six specific negative examples of vices to avoid. Basically, Paul's list consists of three sets of paired nouns (cf. 8:38-39). While each pair contains terms related to each other, they do not merge into one composite idea. The three are:

1. *"not in excessive eating and drunkenness"* – In the ancient world, and today, as a matter of fact, festive parties and banquets often descended into gluttonous overeating and intoxication;
2. *"not in sexual promiscuity and self-indulgence"* – These two, in reality, are self-explanatory. And by them being paired together such activity is impure and narcissistic; and,
3. *"not in strife and envy"* – Again, these two terms are easily understood, though the noun *"envy"* is used in its negative context: *"boiling anger with the desire to do harm."*

Romans

13:14



*The
Imperative!*

...but clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not make for yourselves provision for the flesh, for [its] desires.

Finally, Paul summarizes proper Christian living with a single positive and a single negative expression: “*...but clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,*” [Positive]; “*...and do not make for yourselves provision for the flesh, for [its] desires.*” [Negative]

What Paul states explicitly about Baptism in Gal 3:27 utilizes remarkably similar terminology: “*As many of you as were baptized into Christ, you clothed yourselves with Christ.*”

Romans

13:14



The

Imperative!

...but clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not make for yourselves provision for the flesh, for [its] desires.

Romans 6, also, provides a further parallel which corroborates the Baptismal connection. Note Paul's use of the verb "to walk" (in v.13). The subjunctive form of that verb in 6:4, "we might walk," conveys what has "now" become possible by virtue of being joined to Christ's death and burial in Baptism. However, Paul holds off on our (your) resurrection until our (your) own (the "not yet").


Romans

13:11-14



The reality depicted in 13:11-14 remains the same as in Romans 6-8. The believer's life in Christ Jesus, as well as the life a believer lives in Romans 12-13, is not simply an either/or situation, but an ongoing both/and situation! Therefore, as v.14 illustrated, along with the exhortation "*clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ*" comes the ongoing necessity to make no provision for fleshly desires. This reinforces the continuing applicability of the struggle outlined in 7:14-15 to all believers. While those verses provide Paul's personal perspective on his own battle against the flesh, God's resolution resounds triumphantly in 7:25 and, especially, in 8:1-4.

Conclusion

A hand is shown placing a dark, smooth stone on top of a stack of other stones. The stack consists of several stones of various sizes and colors (grey, blue, white) balanced on a large, flat, grey stone. The background is dark and moody.

let us aim for
harmony in the
church and try to

*build each
other up*

A cross is visible in the distance, standing in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. The scene is softly lit, suggesting a sunrise or sunset.

NEXT
SUNDAY

Romans 14:1-13a

PEACE
IN CHRIST
JESUS

