



by Mercy

ROMANS 13:8-14

Devotional

Romans 13:8-14

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one 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 covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Day 1

ROMANS 13:8, 10b

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. . . ¹⁰ therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Paul has already established that believers, whose true citizenship is in heaven, are the best citizens here. When we understand earthly rulers derive their authority from God Himself, paying taxes and personal debts, submitting to laws, and respecting leaders is our obedience to Him. Now he reminds us of what God's law is really about. The law of God's kingdom is love, and the new life we have in Christ enables us to think of others before ourselves. But love needs direction. Jesus clearly taught His purpose was not to abolish the law, but to reveal and live its true meaning. We need instruction for what will bring good to others, but also what will harm them. So the law is not the source, but the course of righteousness.

In his greeting, Paul said the love he had received obligated him to all people. This is the debt we owe.

Read the Sermon on the Mount to see how love fulfills the law.
What convicts you or encourages you?

Where is God asking you to step over a wall of resentment or resistance to love someone?

Prayer

Loving Father, Our hearts are full when we think about how you have loved us and invited us to share your life. We are still so selfish. Help us this week to live in the freedom to love all the people you put in our path, so they may see you. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen

Day 2

ROMANS 13:8-10

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one 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 covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Irrespective of how we parse the relationship between the role of law in the life of a Christian, we can all agree that “love is the norm by which our behavior is measured.” Jesus says in John 13:34 “As I have loved you, so you *must* love one another.” Our King demands this of our actions. If someone asked me to sum up what it looks like to be a Jesus follower daily, after a long pause, I would likely answer with some version of “love my neighbor beyond my means and in spite of my own desire by trusting in the promises of God.” It’s a far cry from a gospel proclamation, but the idea is that love must be at the forefront of who we are as Christians. Theologian Karl Barth puts it this way; “[This section] does not say ‘owe no man anything except to love him’. It says ‘owe no man anything save to love one another’. Paul thus says that all that Christians owe the world can be summed up in the commandment to love one another.”

It’s easy to love those that are like us. Family members, spouses, people who share political, social or ideological beliefs. Yet the bible constantly is re-defining who our neighbor is, and usually it leaves us uncomfortable in areas. What “neighbors” are difficult to love? Pinpoint why they are difficult and pray that God would give you a heart of love for them irregardless of these issues. How might loving this neighbor look today?

Our love bubbles up out of the love we have received from Jesus (Rom 12:1-2). When this passage is taken seriously it challenges our notions of love. We move away from the culturally dominant narratives of sentiment and infatuation into the realm of mutuality, commitment, and community. “In Romans we see that love is a virtue (5:5; 12:9), a duty (12:10), and a debt (13:10). What does love debt look like? The idea of giving so much love that we have “maxed out our love credit cards” is overwhelming. What does it look like to rely on Jesus for this type of love? Where is the Holy Spirit challenging you in your understanding and belief of love?

Prayer

Good and Gracious Father. Our debt has been paid by Your love for us and through the life, death and resurrection of Your son Jesus Christ. It's this central truth that forms and powers our own love for neighbor. Our prayer is simple. Today Lord gives us renewed hearts to love our neighbors like we love ourselves. To give of our lives sacrificially and with no hesitation. So that our neighbors can say, "I feel loved." May our love act as signposts that point to Gospel love that exists for all in relationship with Jesus. Give us what we need to live out this love today Lord Jesus. We pray in your name, Amen.

Day 3

ROMANS 13:11-12

11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

A young woman named Erin used to sit in the back area of our sanctuary. She grew up at Christ Church and now lives in an adult foster care home. She really liked wrist watches and even more than that, time. Pretty much each week she would shout out “What time is it?” It especially felt like a poignant question when the service was going long: “What time is it?” (*nervous glances and chuckles*) “What time is it?” Our passage today says we know the answer!

A couple of songs the choir has sung over the past few years are coming to mind that might help us answer that question. When will we get to gather again as a choir? We don’t know, but it’s not time for that yet. So then, what time is it?

Seasons and Times

text, Isaac Watts; music, Alice Parker

Seasons and times obey His voice;
The evening and the morn rejoice
To see the earth made soft with showers,
Laden with fruit, and dressed in flowers.

He sends the sun his circuit round
To cheer the fruits, to warm the ground;
He bids the clouds with plenteous rain
Refresh the thirsty earth again.

Thy works pronounce Thy power divine;
O’er every field Thy glories shine;
Through every month Thy gifts appear;
Great God, Thy goodness crowns the year!

Awake O Sleeper

words & music by M.D. Ridge; arr. Oliver Douberty

Awake, O sleeper, and look to the dawn:
the Son has conquered the night!
Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light!

The watchmen up on the city’s height
together shout for joy
to see the saving power of the Lord.

No more shall darkness conceal our path;
the dawn of justice shines
and we shall live as children of the light!

The Spirit calls us to follow Christ,
to love, to serve, to pray;
to turn from sin and to rise up in his name!

Prayer

Great God, what time is it? We're tired; we're sleepy. What time is it? We need you to wake us; we need you to conquer our night. We need you to grow love within us. We long for your justice to shine, starting first and foremost within our own hearts. May we turn from sin and rise up in the name of Christ. The seasons and times obey your voice: may we obey as well. We have received your grace over and over again. Paul says we know the time. Is it time to love? Give us your light, so that we can respond to your grace--in these times--by loving you and those around us. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 4

ROMANS 13:12b-14b

^{12b} So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ . . . make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Look at the list that Paul gives: orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, sensuality, quarreling, and jealousy. Notice Paul says that these flow from the “desires of the flesh (our sinful nature)”. If we want to understand sin we have to look for its motivations, or the desires that drive it. Take some time to identify the “root” sins behind these “fruit” sins. (pride, control, anger, escape, etc. . .) Talk with God about the roots of sin you see in your own life.

Paul says to “cast off” these sins. This is common language throughout the NT (cf. Rm 6:12, Col 3:5, Heb. 12:1). Older writers called this the process of mortifying (putting to death) sin. What does that look like for you? What would it look like to mortify jealousy? Sexual immorality? Over reliance on alcohol?

Earlier in Romans Paul spoke of the Christian’s privilege and responsibility in response to the freedom from sin. In Romans 6:12–14 he says, “*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.* For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” Do you believe that sin truly has no dominion over you? Would you be willing to daily entrust yourself to God, believing that sin will not have dominion over you?

Prayer

Father when we stop long enough to take a serious look at our lives we realize that we are in an ongoing battle with sin. We see some of its fruits: lust, jealousy, broken relationships, etc... We are sorry for these things and the pain that they cause you and the pain they cause others in our circles. Spirit help us not only to see these fruits but also to recognize the desires of the flesh, the roots of these sins that lie more deeply in our hearts. Illuminate pride, avoidance, anger, unbelief, and whatever else might be lurking in the dark places of our heart. Help us to hate sin as you do and to actively cast it off. Jesus, thank you for becoming this sin, for nailing it to the cross and for making a definitive end to it. May we today put on YOU as light and truth.

Day 5

ROMANS 13:12-14

^{12b} So then let us . . . put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, . . . ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, . . .

When Paul talks about us putting on armor, whether here in Romans or in Ephesians 6:10-20, he is making a reference back to Isaiah 59. In Isaiah 59 the prophet lays out a colorful description of Israel's sins and comes to the conclusion that justice and righteousness cannot be found in Israel and as a result there is no one to save them. What do they need to be saved from? Although Israel suffered because of the other nations or because of natural causes, it was their own sin that was the true problem.

Isaiah 59:11-13

We hope for justice, but there is none;
for salvation, but it is far from us.
For our transgressions are multiplied before you,
and our sins testify against us;
for our transgressions are with us,
and we know our iniquities:
transgressing, and denying the Lord,
and turning back from following our God,
speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.

Therefore God has to put forth his own right hand to bring about salvation for them, and to accomplish this he puts on his armor.

The LORD saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.
He saw that there was no man,
and wondered that there was no one to intercede;
then his own arm brought him salvation,
and his righteousness upheld him.
He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
and a helmet of salvation on his head;
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.

Ultimately it is Jesus Christ who is God's right hand, who was armored in righteousness. He achieved a victory over sin through his death.

But what does it mean for us to put on the "armor of light?" This is the armor that Christ has achieved for us and which we cling to so that we can stand up in the daylight and resist the darkness. Interestingly Paul repeats the phrase to "put on" but this time we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Our breastplate of righteousness, our armor of light is literally the righteousness of Jesus and through that we should be strengthened and encouraged as we stand against the darkness.

Prayer

Lord of my salvation, I recognize my sinfulness and the struggle against the darkness. Thank you for bringing about salvation for us through your son, Jesus Christ. Help me to be strengthened in my struggle with sin by the righteousness achieved for us. Let me have hope in the armor that you have provided, an armor of light which resists the dark and an armor of righteousness through which we have victory over sin. Amen