

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Romans 13

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this amazing letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to believers in Rome and to us today – about the Gospel of Grace Paul teaches us biblical truths - that our justification, sanctification and glorification are all work that God does.

He does the work –

We simply receive it by faith, we embrace it, we live it.

And God continues to show demonstrate His grace as He transforms us from the inside out

That is our response to His amazing grace

As we continuing to abide in Jesus, as we live a Spirit filled life – we begin to be conformed into the image of Jesus -

And one of the ways that this is manifested – is in our response to His grace

How we live our lives

DO we walk according to God's will or our own will

We grasp who God is and who we are in Christ

We grasp how every single believer plays a critical role in the spiritual development of other believers – God has given us all of us spiritual giftings – He has wired us a certain way – There is no such things as a believer with no spiritual gifting.

And we use these giftings to serve one another – for the equipping of the saints

We begin to love the way Jesus loves – without hypocrisy / sacrificial love / expecting nothing in return

We forgive those who have wronged us – we take the initiative

We love our enemies / we submit to government authority until that biblical line is crossed when government tells us to do something that is against the Word of God or the will of God.

So how are we suppose to do this?

Why are we supposed to do this?

What is the motivation to do this?

Answer = love

Because the most important lesson in the school of faith is to love one another.

And so Paul in our text this morning – he is going to exhort to not only love one another – but to love one another now – because there will soon come a time when we will not be able to love some of those that God has called us to love.

Let's pray...

Read Text –

[Rom 13:8-14 NKJV] 8 **Owe no one anything** except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

There are people who misinterpret this as – the believer is not supposed to go into debt.

That any type of debt is sin -

They will say something like - believers are supposed to pay for cars with cash / or a house with cash

This is not what the text is saying –

The Bible teaches that lending is okay, but not to take advantage of the poor through it:

One can read the book of Leviticus where God tells the Israelites that they were not to prosper when they give a hand out to the poor – they were not allowed to charge interest

Even Jesus – in the parable of the talents – Matt 25.

Two of the servants doubled the talents that were given to them – one of them buried it.

His lord rebukes him when he finds out because – the least he could have done was deposit in the bank and collect interest.

Church, we have to look at scripture in context

Remember the last verse we looked at last week –

The believer is to pay their taxes – we don't owe the rulers

We're to make sure we're paying off our debts, whether they be taxes, loans, honor, appreciation, government fines, parking tickets – you name it.

If there's any outstanding balance, we must be diligent to pay it off as quickly & prudently as possible.

We are never to borrow money if we know we are not going to repay the money

It is dishonest

It is the same as stealing

And perhaps nothing ruins a believer's testimony more than chronic indebtedness.

But here is the point that Paul is making – and is most often overlooked.

He is making the contrast between things that can be paid off – outstanding financial debt

And the one thing that the believer will never be able to pay off...

And that one thing is love

The debt of love remains with us permanently and never leaves us.

This is a debt which we pay every day and forever owe.

We can never go to our love file and write “paid in full” – because we have a continual obligation to love

When we wake up in the morning – we have this debt

When we take our lunch – we have this debt

When we go to sleep at night we have this debt

We owe it to everyone to love them.

In Matthew 22 –

The Pharisees – the religious rulers – they ask Jesus a question – regarding

[Mat 22:37-39 NKJV] 37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is [the]

first and great commandment. 39 "And [the] second [is] like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Love your neighbor – Jesus isn't saying we are supposed to just love the person who lives next door – but rather – the people that God brings into our lives so that we can help them.

Again – this is not a mushy kind of love – or a warm fuzzy feeling of affection – this is an agape love – a sacrificial love – a selfless love –

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."

When we love our neighbors – we don't covet what they have

When we love our wife – we don't commit adultery

When we love our neighbor – we don't commit murder – physical murder or murder in our hearts.

When we love our neighbor, we don't slander them – we don't bear false witness against them

When we love one another, we don't take things that don't belong to us. We don't steal.

The believer loves –

It is a duty / it is our obligation to love / it is a debt / it is our motivation

The bible links love and behavior and belief into one single unit

People who do not love – they really do not believe

The loveless person who says – I believe in God, I believe in Jesus – that person is being dishonest.

Because they are connected

Love is divine mark that says we are born again –

[1Jo 4:16 NKJV] 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

The loveless person doesn't abide in God or God in them

Because when we experience the love of God – it is impossible to not walk in love, be in love and express love.

This is the point that Paul is making here in these verses –

If we don't have a vertical relationship of love towards God – then the commandments that deal how we are to treat one another – they become impossible to keep.

10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love [is] the fulfillment of the law.

The believer who abides in Jesus, who leans on the Holy Spirit – as God continues to conform them into the image of Jesus – they will find that his or her actions will parallel what is commanded in the Law.

You see, the believer understand that we are no longer under the law

We understand that law reveals our sinfulness -

We, as believers, understands that law compels us to go to Jesus – that we will never fulfill the law.

We as believers are to grasp that the law has never, never , never given anybody the capacity to love.

The law also doesn't have the ability to save

But love does –

So now we understand why Jesus says the following in the Sermon on the Mount -

[Mat 5:17 NKJV] 17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets.

I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

Paul says - love [is] the fulfillment of the law.

Jesus says He did not come to destroy but fulfill

Jesus fulfills it because He is the source of love.

He is the Giver of love

So we love people – those who love us and those who don't love us

And the only way that we are able to do this is with God's help

Not for the next four verses –

Paul is going to make a few contrasts for us to better understand the exhortation that he is giving us.

And as we read them, I want us to see the connection that he is making.

He is going to talk about being awake and being asleep

He is going to talk about night and day

About casting off and putting on

And it is all going to revolve around a phrase in the next verse -

11 And [do] this (BTW – this is in reference to everything that Paul has spoken about in ch 12 and 13 – about serving each other, about loving our enemies, about being subject to government and loving our neighbors 8-10,), **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.

Paul is exhorting the believers in Rome and us this morning –

That we are to live a life of active agape love toward others because we know the time.

And when it speaks of time here – Paul is referring to knowing the time that we are currently living in.

Do we understand what is happening in our world and our culture today – from the perspective of the bible.

Why things are the way they are.

Do we understand how close we are to the return of Jesus and probably a more important question is – are we ready for Jesus' return?

Discern the season – that's exactly what Paul is saying here.

We are living in the season of the Second Coming of Christ

Turn to Matthew 24

[Mat 24:30-34 NKJV] 30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together

His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer [is] near. 33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors! 34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Jesus says – to discern the season (when the branch becomes tender and puts on leaves – it's time)

So Paul exhorts us to be ready – time to wake up from our sleep.

To stop being inactive and unresponsive to God's grace.

Jesus wants us to be vigilant / He wants us to be active – not asleep.

[Mar 13:35-37 NKJV] 35 "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming--in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning-- 36 "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

Jesus starts off verse 35 with watch and He ends verse 37 with watch

Jesus wants us to be engaged because the time is short

We have to know the hour in which we live -

This should drive us to share the gospel with those who don't know the Lord

We have a mandate from Jesus to share the Good News, to penetrate the world like salt and light and make a difference.

We are living in the last hour – time is running out!!!!

For what?

Time is running out to love our neighbor, to love our family, to love our enemy

Time is running out to preach the gospel

Time is running out to preach to the lost

Paul is encouraging us to godly living as we wait for the imminent return of Jesus Christ – to do what we have been called to do

I also had you make a note of the last phrase on the verse –

for now our salvation [is] nearer than when we [first] believed.

When a person accepts Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior – when they believe, they are saved at that moment.

They are saved from God's judgement, they are reconciled to God and that relationship with God begins at that point.

But the fulness of our salvation is not realized until He takes us to our eternal home to be in His presence.

And so this morning – because we are one day closer to His return – the fulfillment of what we believed that day - is nearer.

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.

We see Paul use metaphors to make his point.

When Paul speaks of the night here – he is referring to the long night of sin and death that began at the Garden of Eden –

It is the night of human darkness

It is the night of rebellion and wickedness

It is a night that began to wind down at the resurrection -

But the night can't keep the dawn from coming.

When Paul says “the day is at hand” he means when Christ returns, ends the long night of sin & death, & brings the restoration of all things.

And so – Paul is saying that as the followers of Christ, we're to live with our faces toward the dawn of His return, not facing the darkness that used to characterize us before we came to faith

We don't go back to the old ways

We cast off the work of darkness

We are children of the light now – so we are to put on the armor of light.

Write this verse down....

[1Pe 2:9 NKJV] 9 But you [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

So we are to have a new spiritual wardrobe.

What are the work of darkness – the things we like to do in the dark when no one is looking.

The things that we desire to keep secret.

The things that we do not want anyone else to find out

The things that we know are unacceptable to Jesus

These are the things that cause harm

These are the thigs that cause shame

These are the things that tear us down

[Jhn 3:19 NKJV] 19 “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

We are to peel off the life that we lived and live a new life.

So –

Paul is exhorting us to wake up

Cast off

Put On

And then he adds a new one | verse 13

13 Let us **walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.**

As believers – we are to walk right

This is referring to our walk in Christ

Our walk is supposed to line up with who we are in Christ.

We don't walk the same way we did when we lived in darkness – before we came to Christ.

By the way – the word that Paul uses for walk – we get our word, periscope from that word.

To look

Paul is inviting each and every one of us – to understand something.

That the life that we live – the life other people see – and the conclusions that they draw about Jesus Christ and about the gospel – are in large part drawn from our own walk.

Let's say – we go to dinner.

Server is having a bad day – gets the order wrong, we make a huge scene – the waiter leaves and then we put our Christian face and say, "Alright everybody - let's hold hands and pray"

There is a disconnect between who we are in Christ and our walk

And we forget that the waiter is watching, the waiter's coworkers are watching, those at the other tables were watching.

Paul says that the way we live – matters.

So we live our lives with everyone watching – and so we ask ourselves, "are we living above reproach?"

14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to [fulfill its] lusts.

Notice – Paul doesn't say

Put on the church

Put on the rules and regulations

Put on religion

He says – put on Jesus

We are to clothes ourselves in Jesus

The believer takes Jesus wherever he or she may go and they don't let themselves think of ways to indulge their evil desires – that is what Paul is telling us.

Because the battle to resist or give into temptation – in won or lost in the mind.

Because we first think about it and then we decide to act upon it.

So Paul says – don't even think about it.

[2Co 10:4-5 NKJV] 4 For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

If we don't take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ – we are going to give into temptation every time.

We don't coddle the flesh

We don't entertain the flesh

We don't negotiate with the flesh

Turn with me to Titus 2

[Tit 2:11-13 NKJV] 11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that (what is teaching us? the grace of God), denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

This basically summarizes everything we just learned in our text today

The grace of God teaches us to say “no”

So we live upright lives as we wait for His return.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

We don't need rules & regulations because love has set us free – Free TO love.

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

