

Love, for the Day is Near (*Part 1*)

Romans 13:8-14

Thought for the Day: In light of the Lord's soon return, let us commit ourselves to glorifying God by loving one another and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Worship is the contemplation, celebration and proclamation of the glorious character and wondrous works of our great God. Romans chapters 12-16 teach us that the most important and impactful way that we can proclaim the character and works of God is by loving one another. We are actually worshipping God as we love and serve one another (cp. Romans 12:1). In chapters 12-16, Paul explains in very practical terms what it means to offer our bodies, our entire lives, as living sacrifices to God. These chapters are summarized by what Jesus called the Second Greatest Commandment: Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

8 Let no debt remain outstanding...

- Christians should have a reputation as people who pay their debts.
- Financial irresponsibility on the part of a Christian discredits the name of Christ and brings dishonor to the reputation of the Lord.
- Interest is bondage. Proverbs 22:7 – “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”

... except the continuing debt to love one another...

- “Why is love for others called a debt? We are permanently in debt to Christ for the love he has lavished on us. The only way we can even begin to repay this debt is by loving others. Because Christ's love will always be infinitely greater than ours, we will always have the obligation to love our neighbors.” (*Life Application Commentary Series*)
- One way that we demonstrate our love for the Lord and our gratitude for His love for us, is by loving our neighbor.
- “‘Love one another’ is the basic principle of the Christian life. It is the ‘new commandment’ that Christ gave to us (John 13:34). When we practice love, there is no need for any other laws, because love covers it all. If we love others, we will not sin against them.” (*Warren Wiersbe, Be Right, p. 156*)

...for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

- Love fulfills the purpose of the law. (Cp. Matthew 22:36-40)
- All of the Law “hangs on” or is “based on” love (*NLT*) and all of the Law is fulfilled by love. (Galatians 5:14; Colossians 3:12-14)
 - Remember: The children are to reflect the character of their Father and the people are to reflect the character of their God.
 - Just as the outstanding characteristic of God's character is love, so the outstanding characteristic of His children is to be love. (John 13:34-35)
 - Genuine love manifests itself in several ways but one of the most important—and perhaps the most difficult—is forgiveness. Love forgives!
 - The measure of forgiveness is the Lord's forgiveness toward us.
 - Love is a choice—not a feeling. Don't wait for the feeling—step out in obedience.

9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

- The first four of the Ten Commandments address our relationship with God. The final six speak to our relationship with Man (our "fellowman", our "neighbor").
- The *Sermon-in-a-Sentence* for these six commands is very simple: Love your neighbor as yourself.
 - Our neighbor is literally, "the other." So, in any situation in which we are dealing with another person, that person is our neighbor.
 - "The command to 'love one another' goes beyond merely loving fellow believers. The Greek term translated 'neighbor' is *heteros*, 'One of a different kind.' The first ("love one another") is another like you; the other ("love your neighbor") is someone very different from you. Different in beliefs and theology. Different in personality. Different in politics. Different in mannerisms. Different in tastes and race and values and history. In other words, with love, difference should make no difference. This is a perpetual debt that can never be zeroed out." (*Charles Swindoll, Insights on Romans, p. 278*)
 - "Everybody has somebody that it's okay to hate!" With the Lord's help, we need to search our hearts carefully and see if there's someone that we think is the exception to the Lord's rule.
- The Golden Rule: Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:27-36; vs.31)
 - My real heart attitude and priorities toward other people are revealed when it comes to "my stuff" and especially when I feel that someone has mistreated "my stuff."
 - What is our "stuff"? Jesus identifies: 1) Our dignity, self-esteem or our personal "rights"; 2) Our physical well-being; 3) Our clothing; 4) All of our possessions.

10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

- Do no harm!
- If we do harm to our neighbor in some way, we need to make it right.
 - We do harm to others when we give unnecessary offense, gossip, slander, damage their reputation.

It's pretty easy to love your neighbor when your neighbor is "another." But it's not quite so easy when your neighbor is "the other."

One of the great blessings of the cross-cultural missionary experience is that it exposes you to "the other" and in that experience, you get to see yourself in a completely new light. If you will open yourself to that experience, it will change you for the good for both time and eternity.