

Put on Christ – Romans 13:8-14

I. INTRODUCTION – 1 Thess 5:1-11

A. LS w/RM

1. As we pick it back up at v. 8 this morning, we find the Apostle Paul continuing to describe what a Living Sacrifice with a Renewed Mind looks like.
2. Last week in vs. 1-7 he described how our life in Christ affects our relationship with the State.
3. V. 8 seems an abrupt change of direction; but it's really not.
4. He simply turns from speaking about the State to our everyday relationships with people.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 8-10

⁸ Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

1. This links us to what comes before – look at v. 7 we concluded with last week.

⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

2. The word due is the same word translated in v. 8 as owe.
 3. We're to make sure we're paying off our debts, whether they be taxes, loans, honor, appreciation.
 4. If there's a balance, we must be diligent to pay it off as quickly & prudently as possible.
 5. But there's one debt we will *always carry*, one balance that no matter how many payments we make, will always be there – *the debt of love*.
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6. Some well-meaning believers have misapplied what Paul says here & said that based on v. 8 Christians shouldn't take loans.
 - a. Yet in the parable of the talents, Jesus told the servant who'd buried his he ought to at the very least have put it in a bank where it could draw interest.
 - b. So, far from *condemning* banks, whose whole system is *built* on loans, Jesus *commends* them.
 7. Paul's not prohibiting a mortgage or car payment.
 8. He means *whatever* debts we have, even non-financial debts, we must be diligent to pay-off.
 9. But Paul's real point is that our obligation to love others will *never* be retired.

10. Then he says,

He who loves another has fulfilled the law.

11. He explains . . .

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

12. The rabbis & scribes of Jesus' day were preoccupied with a long-running debate - *Which commandment* is the greatest & most important.
 - a. They'd combed the Law of Moses to codify the smallest details,
 - b. And came up with 613 individual *mitzvot* = commandments.
 - c. But having identified so many rules, they *argued* over which 1 best summed up the rest.
13. One day a Pharisee-lawyer asked Jesus which commandment *He* thought was the greatest.¹

¹ Matthew 22:37-40

- a. Jesus answered with Deut. 6:5 –

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is *the* first and great commandment.

- b. Then, in His usual habit of giving people far more than they asked for, He added . . .

³⁹ And *the* second is like it: [then He quotes Lev. 19:18] ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ On these 2 commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

14 The 10 Commandments describe our duty to God in the first 4 commandments, which can be summed up by the single command to love God with all we’ve got.

15. Our duty to other *people* is found in the last 6 Commandments & are well summed under the call to love others as we do ourselves.

16. Even more, Jesus said *all 613 of the rules* the rabbis had parsed from the Scriptures were satisfied by love for God & others.

17. Paul takes it as a given that his readers love God.

18. But he wants them to make the *necessary connection* Jesus had made between a love for God & love for others.

19. It’s a connection *John* makes absolutely clear in 1 John 4 when he writes,

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

²⁰ If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

20. Twice here in Romans 13, Paul says love *fulfills* the law; in vs. 8 & 10

21. It’s crucial we understand the *difference* between law & love.

- a. Gal. 3:19 says

What purpose then *does* the law serve? It was added because of transgressions . . .

- b. There in Gal. 3, Paul reminds us the Law has no power to make us good.
 c. All it can do is diagnose our spiritual condition & put a temporary restraint on sin.
 d. That’s why here in v. 9 he lists the things we’re NOT to do . . .

You shall not commit adultery

You shall not murder

You shall not steal

You shall not bear false witness

You shall not covet

- e. The Law is *proscriptive* – it defines what’s forbidden; it doesn’t show how to *be* or *do* good.
 f. Love does. The Law is only for those who lack love.
 g. When love is the rule there’s no need for the *prohibitions* of the Law.
 h. Far from committing adultery, love is loyal to one’s vows & honors the vows of others.
 i. Far from committing murder, love protects & honors the sanctity of other’s lives.
 j. Love would never take that which belongs to another, whether property or dignity.

22. The person who walks in love lives above the Law.

23. A practical way to apply this is like this . . .

- a. If you owe a debt to someone, even a small one, the first thing you think of when you see that person is that you “owe” them, & it effects the way you treat them.
 - b. Well, we owe a debt of love to we meet.
24. Of course, doing what Paul says here can only be achieved by walking in the Spirit.
- a. The love we’re called to show isn’t something we work up within ourselves.
 - b. It’s the love God’s poured in us by His Spirit.

B. Vs. 11-14

¹¹ And do this, 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.

1. The phrase “and do this” looks *back* at vs. 8-10, not to what follows.
2. We’re to live a life of active love toward others **BECAUSE** time’s short, & Jesus could return at any moment.
3. As we’ll see in the next verses, Paul puts 2 lifestyles side by side here –
 - a. One dark, the other light.
 - b. One is an ugly *deathstyle* of gross selfishness, the other is gorgeous lifestyle of holy love.
4. He urges us to holiness & love because of the hour; time’s running out on this sin-sick, sorry world.
5. Some scoff at v. 11 because Paul believed in the *imminence* of Christ’s return, yet 2000 years have passed.
 - a. Such scoffing misunderstands the nature of the Return of Christ.
 - b. The NT & writings of the Early Church Fathers all make clear they believed Jesus could return at any moment.
 - c. They lived with an eager anticipation of His coming, because it’s what He commanded them to.
 - d. Over & over He said, “Be ready, for I come at a time when many will expect Me – don’t be one of them.”
 - e. So those early believers lived with a strong sense of *imminence*, that He was just about to come.
 - f. *Of course* they knew prophecies about the signs of the last days.
 - g. But they also understood that those things might be coming to fulfillment in a way they didn’t see.
 - h. So they lived in anticipation this might be the last moment they’d have to live & work of the Lord.
6. Look at what Paul says –

And do this,

- a. Love others

knowing the time,

- b. There are 2 words for *time* in Greek;
 - 1) *chronos* which means the passage of time.
 - 2) *kairos*; which refers to a specific moment.
 - 3) My watch measures *chronos*; but when it read 8 AM this morning, it told me it was the *kairos* to worship.
- c. Time here is *kairos*- the moment, & what it’s appointed by God for.
- d. We *ought to know* that this moment is ordained by God for something special -

that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation

- e. Meaning the Second Coming.

our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed.

- f. Every hour that passes brings us that much closer to the consummation of the ages.

7. A family had an ancient clock they kept on the mantle above their fireplace.

- a. It had been in the family for generations and was so old no one knew how to repair it.
- b. It kept time but rang erratically.

- c. One day, the family's 7 year old counted the gongs as the clock struck noon.
- d. 10 - 11 - 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 times it chimed.
- e. He ran to his mother & excitedly reported, "Mom, it's later than it's ever been!"
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- f. Indeed – it's never been this late before!
- g. Sure 2000 years have passed since Paul wrote this.
- 1) I don't see that as a reason to kick back & assume Jesus' return is way off in some hazy, uncertain future.
 - 2) It means His return must be really, really close.
8. In Matthew 25 Jesus told a parable to 10 young women who were waiting for a wedding to begin.
- a. When the groom's arrival was delayed, they all dozed off.
 - b. When he arrived & called, only 5 of the 10 had thought ahead & secured enough oil to light their lamps & meet him.
9. Our Groom's return has been delayed, but the voice of the Spirit calls to us in these words – "Wake up! He's on His way. Recognize the hour. Time is short."
- ¹²The 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.**
10. Paul isn't being merely poetic here. There's a spiritual weight & reality to these words that's quite literal.
- a. The long night of sin & death that commenced with the Fall, began to end with the resurrection of Christ.
 - b. The last 2 millennia have been a battle between spiritual darkness & light.
 - c. But the night can't keep the dawn from coming.
11. 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.
- a. Though the dawn of that great day is yet to come, we're *live* in its light, *now*.
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12. Many Sundays, I get here right at dawn.
- a. Looking to the east, though the sun hasn't broken the horizon, its rays still illuminate the sky & shine on my face –
 - b. Though my back is still in darkness.
13. 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.
14. There's a *war* between the darkness & the light. We have to choose which side we're going to fight on.
- ¹³Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.**
15. Paul uses words for sin that are nothing less than *shocking*!
- a. *Revelry & drunkenness* referred to a practice common throughout the Empire in large cities.
 - 1) One of the favorite gods the Romans worshipped was *Bacchus*, the god of wine & celebrations. He was the *party god*.
 - 2) People would gather at someone's house in the evening, drink a massive amount of wine, get totally sloshed, then roam the streets in a pack till late at night; all the while singing, carousing, & getting rowdy – often resorting to crude acts of vandalism.
 - b. *Lewdness* is the same word that used for 'bed' & referred to the act of sex.
 - 1) As used here it meant unbridled sexual immorality.
 - c. The word "*lust*" was a *disgusting word*; one that described sin that was so heinous most people could not understand how someone could perform it.

- d. Lewdness coupled with lust spoke of people who were morally so far gone, they'd lost all ability to blush;
- 1) *Shame* meant nothing to them.
 - 2) They'd pursued sin so long & so far, they'd lost all moral capacity.
 - 3) Regular sins didn't give them the high, thrill & pleasure they once did so they kept turning it up till they were doing things other sinners consider totally out of bounds.
- e. *Strife & envy* seem mild by comparison to the previous sins –
- 1) But they're no less damning for the very reason that people who appear *good in other ways* can be totally consumed by envy.
 - 2) Or they may be at odds with others due to strife.
 - 3) If they are, then the love they're called to in vs. 8-10 does not mark their relationships.
16. And I think that's why Paul *pairs* strife & envy with grotesque sins.
17. He aims to shake believers out of a spiritual apathy that would permit them to *excuse* a lack of love for others when time is short & the opportunity to repent will soon be past.
- ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**
18. Paul loved this metaphor for the Christian life, that it was like taking off old, dirty clothes & putting on a brand new glorious garment. He used it at several places.
19. Here's the way he means it here –
- a. When we get up in the morning & put on our clothes, most of us intend to wear them all day.
 - b. They become a part of us; they go where we go & do what we do.
 - c. In covering us, they're what others see, & so often judge us by.
 - d. In the same way, when we get up in the morning, we ought to put on Christ.
 - e. Wear Him all day.
 - f. Make Him a part of yourself so that your *going* is at His direction, your *doing* His energy.
 - g. When others see & hear you, let it be *Jesus* they see & hear.
 - h. Put Him on – Live IN Him.
20. Paul adds that we're to make no provision for the flesh or its desires.
- a. '*Provision*' means *forethought*, to plan ahead.
 - b. We're to rein in the flesh so that it can't drag us off to some place we know we ought not go.
 - c. Some years ago I spent nearly a week on my uncle's farm in Canada.
 - 1) They had an old horse named Rex that was my horse that week & I rode him often.
 - 2) Now, Rex was a good ole' horse who was content to let me take him out for rides around the fields close to the stable.
 - 3) But if we rode out farther, he got fidgety & tried to head back.
 - 4) My uncle told me to keep the reins tight & give him no slack, because as soon as I did, Rex'd turn his head toward home & then there was just no way to get him turned back around.
 - 5) The trick was to keep control of the reins & keep his head pointed where I wanted him to go.
 - 6) Every time, when I lost focus & let the reins go, his head came around & then he'd start a trot back to the stable where there was food, water & his blanket.
21. Our flesh wants its food, drinks & blankie & is never, ever going to make life in the Spirit easy.
- a. As Galatians says, the flesh wars against the spirit & the spirit against the flesh.
 - b. The best way to keep the flesh down is to give it no slack, no opening or opportunity.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Kathryn Lawes

1. As we end this morning I want to tell you about Kathryn Lawes. She was married to Louis Lawes when he became warden of the infamous Sing-Sing prison in NY in 1920.

2. The conditions of the prisoners were deplorable & Lawes instituted many important reforms at the urging of his wife.
3. Though other women could not understand & criticized her fiercely, Kathryn spent a good deal of time at the prison, helping out in whatever ways she could.
4. She often brought her 3 children with her to sit and talk with the men as they played baseball & basketball.
 - a. Mind you, many of these were hardened criminals; gangsters, murderers & racketeers.
 - b. But she saw them as men & determined to show them genuine love & respect.
5. In 1937 Kathryn Lawes was killed in a car accident.
 - a. The next day here body lay in a casket in a house a quarter mile from the prison.
 - b. When the new warden found hundreds of prisoners crowded round the main entrance, he knew what they wanted, and gave the order to open the gate.
 - c. All he said was, “Men, I’m going to trust you. You can go to the house.”
 - d. That night no count was taken and no guards were posted. Yet not one man was missing.
 - e. Love for one who had loved them made them dependable.

B. Love, Not Law

1. It’s God’s love, not law that makes us dependable to Him.
2. We don’t need rules & regulations because love has set us free – Free TO love.