

Hallmarks of the transformed life

Living the life of love

(Rom. 13:8-14)

Intro: If you could put into one word what it means to live the life of a Christian what word would you choose? Faith? Obedience? Those would be good choices; but in Romans 13 Paul chooses another word to summarize the transformed life. It summarizes all that is believed and all that is obeyed. That word is “love”.

The transformed disciple lives his life with love for everyone! He...

Loves with a sense of obligation

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another (Romans 13:8)

Owe no man...

Paul had been discussing what we owe others in the government. Those things Paul says we need to pay. Now Paul turns to other debts. He says we need to pay our debts to others.

Owe no man does not mean, "Don't borrow money". Jesus allowed that in Mt. 5. If it were sinful to borrow, then it would be wrong to lend!

Owe no man means, "Honor your debts". Pay your bills on time. If you're having trouble for reasons beyond your control make an effort to communicate and do your best.

There is however one debt we should always owe!

But to love one another...

Love is a debt we can never repay!

Keep out of debt altogether, except the perpetual debt of love which we owe to one another (JB Phillip's Paraphrase).

We owe it others to love them. We are indebted by God's love for us to show that love for others.

Loves with insight into God's purpose

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)

He who loves fulfills the law

Paul illustrates his point from the OT as the finest expression of codified law. In it he shows, as did Jesus, that the command to love our neighbor as ourselves would summarize all other laws relating to our treatment of our fellowman.

This, it seems, is what Paul was saying in Rom. 8:2. Christ died in order that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in

us! Through His sacrificial death and through the help of the Holy Spirit, God's love is poured out within us (Rom. 5:5) and as we respond in love to God we do what is right out of love for Him and others! This is what God wanted from the beginning and from those to whom the Law was given; but it is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, i.e. the spiritually minded!

Love does no wrong to a neighbor

Love causes you to seek only the good of another and never their wrong.

Loves with a sense of urgency

And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. (Romans 3:11)

It is time to get up and go to work!

The imagery of this section is that of a man who has been sleeping through the night. Now day is breaking (the alarm clock is going off). It is time to get up and go to work!

The picture is one of readiness and urgency.

Salvation is nearer than when we believed.

What Paul says should be obvious but it rarely strikes us with the impact that it ought. From the time we first obey the gospel, our available time to accomplish something for the Lord is running out and the longer we live the less time we have!

Loves with a heart of purity!

The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. (Romans 13:12-13)

Now the imagery changes emphasis. It is time to get up and go to work.

But what are we going to wear? Shall we go out in our bed clothes? Shall we put on clothes for the light or clothes for darkness?

Let lay aside the "deeds of darkness!"

Carousing and Drunkenness

Sexual promiscuity and sensuality

The first word is literally the word for "bed"; a euphemistic expression for fornication like sleeping around

Lasciviousness--(aselgeia) meaning unbridled acts, something like lewdness, conveys turning loose the restraints on passion or lust (This might refer to any number of things that fit in that category, our dress, our speech, our actions)

Strife and jealousy

Loves with an eye on Jesus

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Romans 13:14)

Wiersbe describes the Christian life this way—“put off the grave clothes and put on the grace clothes!”

Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts

People often confuse love with lust! Paul has already shown us that love is not the gratification of lust—whether for pleasure or for power! This part of us cannot be mortified if we keep on feeding it!

Put on Christ (to be like Him is to put on love!)

Who started the lie that love makes people weak? Love is tough and demanding. It cost a lot, you see. It cost God his Son. It cost Christ His blood. It cost the Holy Spirit his divine colleague. It cost the early church members their lives. Love is computed in deeds done, tears shed, lonely nights endured, loved ones sacrificed, pain endured, property confiscated, in isolation, false reports, and one and on! Love checks no pedigree or social record before acting. It is absolutely class and color blind. It doesn't check the breath for liquor or the skin for puncture marks. It doesn't find the long-haired boy obnoxious or the gaudy clothes intolerable. It has no degree as a CPA in connection with personal slights. It finds the triumph of truth a source of real joy and it smiles a warm and genuine smile of pleasure when it hears of someone's success. It listens with its eyes as well as its ears. Its bone of made of loyalty, its heart is solid sympathy, its lips are made of courage, its mind is alert, open and full of conviction. Love at its best is spelled J-E-S-U-S!!

Conclusion: I have studiously avoided today the syrupy characterization of love that gives us a warm fuzzy feeling. In fact, I have discovered in life that loving others may be at times one of the hardest things God ever asks us to do. But we should do it; because we are sons of God and because He has loved us even more than we will ever be asked to love others.

This week we saw on the news the horrifying train derailment in CA that killed several people. Many others were injured: In desperation before his rescue, one trapped man apparently used his own blood to write a note on a seat bottom. Using the heart symbol, he wrote, "I love my kids" and "I love Leslie." Fortunately the man, whose identity is not known, was removed from the train alive.

God wrote His love for us in blood—the blood of His Son.