

**Not Ashamed
(Week 32)
Romans 13:8-14
“The Royal Law”**

Introduction

And one of them, an expert in The Law, asked a question to test Him: ‘Teacher, which command in The Law is the greatest?’ He said to him, ‘Love The LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.’
Matthew 22:35-40

I had someone ask me just the other day, why do I preach about love more than I do about sin? The answer is simple. All sin is rooted in a love problem. Please allow me to explain. Every time we sin against God, or our fellow man, it shows that we love ourselves more than we love them. All sin is rooted in self love. When a child of God gets his love in the right proportion, he will get his sin under control.

In the book of *Romans*, Paul tells us that we are to become a “living sacrifice”. This means that rather than operate according to our own senses (sensuality), we should respond to everything according to the Spirit of God (spirituality). In short, we sacrifice our own personal agendas for the sake of serving Christ and His Church. This is what it means to be a living sacrifice.

In the latter portion of *Romans* (**Chapters 12-16**), Paul describes in great detail exactly how this concept plays out in real life. A living sacrifice has a transformed mind (**Romans 12:2**); puts the needs of others ahead of his own; serves faithfully within in the body (**Romans 12:3-8**); loves sinners; and yet, hates sin (**12:9**); loves his neighbors, as well as, his enemies (**12:10-21**); loves and honors those who rule over him; and pays what he owes (**13:1-7**).

Paul continues this line of reasoning by letting those in the church know that they have an obligation to love perpetually. It is a debt of love that can never be fully repaid.

Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled The Law. **Romans 13:8**

This is exactly what Jesus meant, when He summed up the commandments by saying, **“Love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”** James calls this concept “The Royal Law” (**James 2:8**), and it is the very essence of Christianity; not just “obeying the rules”, but obeying the rules with the proper motivation. We obey, because we LOVE. We love God, and we love one another. For you see, it is very possible to obey the letter of the law, without obeying the spirit of the law. Paul admonishes the church at Rome to be obedient in love. He reminds them to be Devoted to the LORD’S Commands and to be Dressed for The LORD’S Coming. Let us study God’s Word together, so that we may truly conduct ourselves as “Living Sacrifices.”

Devotion for The LORD’S Commands (vs. 8-10)

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. **Romans 13:8-10**

Many have taken this first verse out of context and used it to say that Christians should never go into debt. This is not what Paul is saying here. Remember, this was a letter to the Church at Rome. It wasn't broken down in sections as it is in your Bible! He is simply continuing his thought of paying what we owe in the previous verses. If we owe taxes, we should pay them (**vs. 6-7**). If we owe respect and honor, we should pay it accordingly (**vs.7**). And continuing along that line, he tells us that in fact we should pay everything that we owe. Is it a sin to go into debt? No. *The Bible* has many passages concerning the lending of money. If it were sinful to borrow, then God would not have instructed His people how to lend! However, it is most definitely a sin to borrow and not repay:

The wicked person borrows and does not repay, but the righteous one is gracious and giving. ***Psalm 37:21***

If you call yourself a Christian, then you should pay your bills. We are to represent The LORD Jesus Christ in all our dealings. If He is truly our LORD, then we will be careful to be fair and honest. If you owe it, then pay it back, just as you agreed at the beginning.

Paul tells us that the only debt that we can never pay off is our indebtedness to love one another. We will owe this debt for as long as we live. We will never get to a place where we have fully satisfied our debt to love. And it is because of this debt, that we obey the commands of God. For you see, it all begins with God who loved us first.

But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ***Romans 5:8***

So, there you have it. God loved us first. Before we had done anything deserving, He just loved. And therefore, He commands us to do the same. We obey His commandments, because of love! Do you remember what I said earlier about obeying the letter of the law without obeying the spirit of the law? Allow me to explain.

If I don't steal from you because I am afraid of going to jail, then I am obeying the letter of the law. But my heart still isn't right before God. In fact, the reason I am not stealing, is still a selfish reason. I love myself too much to see me in jail! This is exactly the mindset of many "religious" people. They try to obey the commands, because they don't want to be punished. But Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 13** that we can do wonderful things, but if they are not motivated by love, then they are all just worthless. If we don't obey God's commands from a place of love, then we are not following the spirit of the law.

You see, when I become a living sacrifice, it's not about me anymore. It is about Christ, and everyone else around me! The reason that I no longer steal... is that I love my neighbor too much to steal from him. The reason that I do not commit adultery... is that I love my wife too much to hurt her. The reason that I do not covet... is that I am so happy to see my neighbor being blessed with what he has, and so on.

Think about this concept for a moment. When you get your love right, your sin will take care of itself! Every time we sin, it is because we have decided to love ourselves above God and those around us. Getting your love right will eradicate the sins of your flesh. This is what it means to be a living sacrifice. We obey Christ out of devotion, rather than, a fear of punishment. We are devoted to God's commands, because we love the God Who gave them.

If you love Me, you will keep My commands. ***John 14:15***

Go back to **Exodus 20** and reread those famous Ten Commandments again. You will see that God's intent was always for us to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourself. The children of Israel tried to obey these commands, because they were afraid of God's judgment, but the spirit of The Law was obedience **in love**. This is only possible, when we are made new in Christ and our minds are transformed. We no longer try to obey for selfish reasons, but rather, because of selfless ones. Get your love right, and you'll get your flesh under control. Stop being sensual

and start being spiritual. Allow God to love through you! This is what it means to be a living sacrifice. Don't obey out of fear, but out of love instead.

And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. In this, love is made complete with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgement: because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love: instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love. **1 John 4:16-18**

Dressed for The LORD'S Coming (vs. 11-14)

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

When I was a kid, I'm pretty sure that I heard these words from my mom every morning of my young life, "Get up and get dressed!" That was my daily "wake up call". Paul is doing for us pretty much the same thing in this passage. He is reminding us that the time is drawing near for the LORD'S return, and that we should be ready when He comes.

Just think, if this was an urgent matter in Paul's day, how much more so here are now. We are some two thousand years closer to the LORD'S coming than Paul was. Time is short, and we must be dressed and ready for The LORD, when he comes for us. I cannot help but look around these days and see the signs of the times being fulfilled all around us. I, for one, do not want to be ashamed when He returns. I want to be conducting myself as a living sacrifice, anxiously awaiting the return of our LORD and Savior. How about you?

Paul admonishes the Church to put on the armor of God and be clothed in Christ. If there was ever any question that the Armor of God is simply another way of saying "clothed in the righteousness of Christ", then Paul settles that argument for us here. To put on the armor of God is to be clothed with Christ. What does this mean exactly? The answer actually comes in two parts.

Part one: When you are born again, you are justified in Christ Jesus. You now stand before God accepted by the fact that you are in Christ, and therefore, you are no longer judged according to your own righteousness, but by His. This is called Justification. It happens the moment that you are saved.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. **Romans 8:1**
(I never get tired of hearing that verse!)

Part two: As you submit your bodies as a living sacrifice, you are transformed into the image of Christ. Old things (sensuality) are passed away, and all things become new (spirituality). This process is called "sanctification". Think of it as putting on a little more of Christ each day, just like adding articles of clothing. As we yield ourselves over, more and more, to The Spirit of God, we are transformed into the image of Christ little by little. While our justification is instantaneous, our sanctification is a process.

Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. **Romans 12:2**

Sadly, many Christians today are still quite carnal (fleshly) by nature. Rather than submitting themselves fully to Christ and allowing themselves to be transformed by His Spirit, they are still quite often controlled by their fleshly desires. It is time for the Church to “wake up” (spiritually speaking) and get dressed and ready for The LORD’S return. To step out the darkness and into the light (**vs. 12**).

Just imagine how you would feel, if Christ came back today. Are there some things that you are doing that you might want to stop doing? And would there be some things that you should start doing? Submit your bodies as living sacrifices! Stop living as if you have all the time in the world. There is much less time than you think.

Jesus told a parable about ten young maidens, who were part of a wedding celebration, but half of them were not ready for the bridegroom to return (**Matthew 25:1-13**). The situation turned out to be rather embarrassing for those young women. Moral of the story: be prepared. Our Bridegroom could come at any minute.

The bottom line, when you get your love in proper order, everything else will fall into place. Love The LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself, and you will not be ashamed when Christ returns. It’s really a question then, of who do you love more: Yourself, or Christ and your neighbor? Those who live by the Royal Law will never be ashamed when The King returns.

This is why you are also to be ready, because The Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Master has put in charge of His household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom the Master finds doing his job when He comes.

Matthew 24:44-46

Paul sums up his thoughts in this chapter by saying, ***“But put on the LORD Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.” (vs. 14)***. The word he uses for “provision” simply means *to plan for ahead of time*. When a commanding officer makes “provision” for his army, he is in fact seeing to it that they have everything that they need to survive; food, water, clothing, ammunition, and so on. As Believers, we are to make no attempt to provide what our flesh (sensuality) needs in order to survive. Rather, we are compelled by the LORD to crucify our flesh and its desires. In short, we don’t feed it... we KILL it! This is the very essence of becoming a living sacrifice. And it needs to be done daily. For as long as we live in these fleshly bodies, we will constantly struggle between loving ourselves first and loving God first. If you are not fighting your flesh, then you are surrendering to it, my friend. And you won’t be properly dressed and ready when Christ returns.

So there you have it. What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? It means to obey the command of God because you love God. It means to be ready when Christ returns, so that he finds you faithful. We are the children of The Living God. When He returns, will He find us *Devoted to His Commands and Dressed for His Coming?*

The time is short. We must be ready. Even so, come LORD Jesus.

And let the Living Sacrifices say... TRUTH!!!