

### Believers Are Exhorted to Walk in Love and Light

#### Romans 13:8-14

Romans 13:8-13 - *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> 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” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”*

#### Background Notes

The first part of Paul's letter to the Romans answers the question, “How does someone become a Christian?” The letter to the Romans clearly teaches that salvation is only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sins. Romans 3:23, *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* And Romans 6:23, *“The wages [or penalty] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

The last part of Romans answers the question, “How does someone **live** as a Christian?” In Romans 13:12-16, we see that a Christian lives and functions and has responsibilities in several spheres of life. There is the personal sphere -- our responsibility to present our bodies as living sacrifices in service to the Lord. Then there is the sphere of the church -- our responsibility to use our spiritual gifts and relate properly to fellow believers. And there is the sphere of the community -- our responsibility to relate properly to unbelievers. These spheres are all seen in Romans 12.

Here in Romans 13 we've looked at the sphere of society, particularly our responsibility to submit to the governing authorities. We are to do more than obey -- we are to recognize that God has ordained these authorities for maintaining law and order.

Do you ever thank the Lord for the government? You should – it's ordained by God. Can you imagine what life would be like if there were no government -- and this applies to federal and local governments, regardless of who's in power. As Daniel 4:17 says, *“...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.”* Think of that! God has ways of dealing with these “lowest of men” and those authority figures who step out of line, but our responsibility, as we've seen, is to submit to the government authorities.

The last half of Romans 13 seems to be a summary of how we should behave in all the spheres of life in which we live. We should always **walk in love** and we should always **walk in the light**.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Love, and not debt, should characterize the Christian.

Verse 8: *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”* The main idea here is that **we can never pay off the debt of love**. We can pay our other debts, like taxes and bills and our mortgage or rent, and we should scrupulously do so! *“Owe no one anything.”* But we will always be in debt to everyone, when it comes to love.

It goes without saying that we can never pay the debt of love that we owe to the **Lord** for what He’s done for us, but the point here is that we are to love people, particularly our “neighbors” -- all the people we come in contact with. And we can’t stop loving them because the debt is always there. So money debt, no -- but love debt, yes! We will always be in debt – the debt of love.

The word that is used for “love” here is *agape* – that’s the kind of love that voluntarily denies self in the interest of others. *Agape* love is an act of the will, more than of the emotions and feelings. If you practice *agape* love you will automatically keep the commandments. That’s the idea in *“...love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law”(v8)*.

*“Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (v10)*. All the commandments of the law are summed up in love, as we see in verse 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.”* In other words, if you really love your wife with *agape* love, you will not commit adultery. If you really love your neighbor with *agape* love, you will not steal from him or covet his Porsche or his house or whatever. Love, not debt, should characterize the Christian.

### 2. Light and not darkness should characterize the Christian.

Verses 12-13: *“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. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.”* Light and darkness are contrasted here in a **moral** sense. *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.”* This verse means that this present age, which is characterized by sin, will come to an end on the day the Lord returns. Then righteousness will characterize this world. What a wonderful time that will be -- and we’ll be part of that glorious kingdom!

In the meantime, we must cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. To “put on the armor of light” refers to the protection of a holy life. Satan can’t trip you up if you have on the armor of light. Read the great armor passage in Ephesians 6:14-18. Another way to say “put on the armor of light” is to say “walk in the light.” We could also say, “*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ...*” (v14). That is, be more like Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:7 says that we should walk in the light as He, the Lord Jesus, is in the light.

Now you might say, “Well, Dave...I’ve tried to live a holy life and I failed. What more can I do?” Here’s your answer. **Obey** the last half of verse 14: “...*make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*” In other words, don’t put yourself in situations where the strong desires of the flesh will overcome your desire to follow Jesus. Don’t watch movies or TV shows that will trigger lustful, impure thoughts. Don’t read books or magazines that fill your mind with trash and ungodly material. (Hey, it’s easy to put the garbage in, but did you ever try to get the garbage out? It’s very hard -- if not impossible -- to get the garbage out.) So “make no provision for the flesh” – don’t allow yourself to do anything that gives the flesh an opportunity to mess you up! Don’t go to places and don’t do things where you know you’re vulnerable. And this verse refers to more than lust, by the way -- look at verse 13: “*Let us walk properly...not in strife and envy.*” Don’t allow any opportunity for any of the negative deeds of the sinful flesh!

Romans 13:13-14 are the verses that God used to bring St. Augustine to Himself. Do you remember St. Augustine, an early Christian? He wrote in his “Confessions” that he was distressed over his failure to live a good life. One day he heard some children playing a game in which they were singing the words “Take and read!” He hurried to find a Bible, and he opened it to these very words: “*Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.*”<sup>14</sup> *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*” God used these verses to change St. Augustine’s life. May He use them in our lives as well. Light, not darkness, should characterize the Christian.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Let's stay out of financial debt.

Beware of financial debt! Verse 8 says, “*Owe no one anything....*” Now verse 8 doesn’t mean you can never borrow money, or buy something on a payment plan, or use a credit card, or take out a mortgage. The Bible certainly indicates that there are legitimate cases for lending and borrowing money. What verse 8 means is “Don’t get yourself into the kind of debt in which you can’t pay your bills and your loans!” That’s **big** trouble!

Live within your means! Go without the extras! I have even told my students at Emmaus Bible College that if you are going to have to go into major debt to stay at school, it would be better to take a semester off and get a job. Earn some money and save up for schooling rather than going into big debt. Let’s stay out of financial debt.

## 2. Are you ready for the Lord's return?

Those of you who watch Monday night football have heard that well-known song – “Are you ready for some football?” Well, there’s a much better and more important question: “**Are you ready for the Lord’s return?**” Verse 11 says, “*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.*”

Maybe the Lord will return this year. Every year that goes by brings us one year closer to the return of the Lord. Now you’re probably thinking, “Well, great thought, Dave! That statement is pretty obvious!” Well, that’s the point of verse 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.*”

The word “salvation,” as it is used here, refers to the “full package” of our salvation, which includes our deliverance from this earth when the Lord returns. We don’t know when the Lord will return, and we’re not to be involved in trying to figure it out, but the important question is, **are we ready?**

Our little granddaughter, Callie, trusted Jesus as her Savior this past summer. Callie loves to think of herself as a princess. Margie sewed her a princess gown and cape for Christmas, and she wears it all the time -- even when she’s playing outdoors! She told us, “I want to have this princess gown on when the Lord Jesus comes back! I want to go to heaven with my princess outfit on!”

Are we ready for the Lord’s return, or are we asleep? You can sleep during this Talk, but don’t sleep during your Christian walk! Again, verse 11, “*...now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.*” Are you ready for the Lord's return?