

Lesson 29 – Romans 13:8-14

In the previous verses Paul directed his attention to clearly instructing the Galatians to be submissive and supportive of the Roman government. That wouldn't always be easy, yet was ordered by the Lord. Now he moves on to two other important obligations.

Our obligation to love as God's people

Paul starts out with a clear directive against being in debt to anyone for anything except in love for each other. The reason? Because the one who loves has fulfilled the Law. He summarizes the law in the few excerpted from the Decalogue. His choice to highlight these few is probably telling.

“You shall not commit adultery” – If you love your neighbor, why would you offend him/her to the extent that you would take their spouse to be your own?

“You shall not murder” – If you love your neighbor, why would you seek to take their life?

“You shall not steal” – If you love your neighbor, why would you take from them without their knowledge or consent to possess those things which God has given them?

“You shall not covet” – If you love your neighbor, why would you desire to have his/her possession at his/her expense?

Really, you can lump all of God's commands together and they can be kept by simply loving one another. Paul put's it a different way with a negative spin, “Love does no wrong to a neighbor.” Those who know the love chapter in I Corinthians know that there is much to learn on this topic, but if we can work toward keeping love as a goal in all relationships, we will do well.

Our obligation to live as God's people

Paul continues with a challenge, “to wake from sleep.” What does he mean by this? The remaining verses of the chapter are most certainly Paul's explanation. But before we dive into that subject material, Paul gave one sobering reason: “For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.” The sobering reality of our ultimate salvation rests on the fact that the Lord is coming back to complete the work of salvation through rapture or resurrection. With every day that passes we get another day closer to that reality.

Now, let's get back to the rationale behind Paul's instruction to wake from sleep. In the words of the Duke from his film *The Cowboys*, “We're burning daylight.” The night is over, and day is well upon us, spiritually. Our commitment is to live in the light of day (the result of our salvation), and not in the darkness of night (our condition before we were saved). How would we do it?

1. Not in orgies and drunkenness. The picture is of a party where the desires of the flesh are granted every indulgence. (IE Mardi Gras, Brazilian Carnival)
2. Not in sexual immorality and sensuality. This encapsulates the strong desires and urges of the flesh in relation to our sexuality. While these are of God, they are designed for use in obedience and purity, not perversion.
3. Not in quarreling and jealousy. These words depict a person whose selfishness is to the extent that he would fight for preeminence.

Instead of these sinful practices, we must “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”