

Parson to Person

ROMANS 13 PART 9

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

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 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. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:8–14 NKJV).

If the “life lived by love” model calls us to “cast off the works of darkness” (vs. 12) and becomes the marker of a maturing believer, and if fleshly motivations toward obedience provide either arrogance for accomplishment or guilt and shame when failing, one must come to know that the “life lived by love” model must be the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the regenerated. The unregenerated cannot fulfill the law either by the works of the flesh, the best of intentions, or even when driven by “love” for “*all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6), and thus our ability to genuinely love is deficient unless it is indeed the love of God at work in our hearts—made possible by regeneration in the Holy Ghost. (See Romans 5:5–6 and Titus 3:3–8). Our good works—even our tears of repentance—have to be washed in the blood of Jesus in order to be acceptable to God.

According to Paul, believers have been given power to overcome sin and thus can “stop it” when empowered by the Lord. Excuses for sinning is just that—excuses. Paul said, sin shall not have dominion over us and therefore we are called upon to stop sinning (Romans 6–8). This does not suggest that a believer will not sin or that “sinless perfection” in this life is even possible. (“Sinless Perfection” is taught in some circles.) However, Paul recognized that sin is present with him, that is, in his flesh (see Romans 7:15–25), and thus we know that Paul’s call to “stop it” and “put off the old man and his deeds” is the call of the believer. The more we grow in love, the greater our victory. This alone suggests that grace is not a license to sin but is indeed power to overcome.

As we finish our list of 6 points today (having taken much time on this), I trust we will engage in greater love by the Holy Spirit, continuing our growth into maturity as believers.

Points for review and consideration (Reprinted from last week):

- 1) The need to return to the Biblical definition of “love.”
- 2) The use of Biblical love as a filter for Christian behavior.
- 3) The danger of “rules” when applied from without.
- 4) The power of God and change from within.
- 5) The glory of the “Life Lived by Love” model.
- 6) The testimony of the believer.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul