

The Urgency of All-Encompassing Love

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 13:8-14

Preached on: Sunday, November 18, 2012

Will you join me this morning by taking your Bibles and turning to Romans chapter 13? We come now to verses eight through 14. And as we study this section of Paul's epistle we will focus on the concept of the urgency of all embracing love. This will actually be the first of a two part series that I would like to preach to you on this passage.

Let me read it to you beginning in verse eight of Romans 13.

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.

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. 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. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.¹

Once again we have the opportunity to behold the majesty and the holiness of God by humbling ourselves before his Word. And we do this, of course, with the purpose of learning and submitting to it allowing the Word to shape us more into the conformity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, frankly, how you respond to the preaching of the Word of God really exposes to you where you are with respect to the your walk with Christ. If, over the course of this exposition or any exposition you are not convicted over some area of sin in your life to the point where it moves you to repentance, to a place where you begin to change your life, then, frankly, you are being ruled by your flesh and not by the Spirit. And there is something terribly wrong with your spiritual life.

I hope that you will share the concept that the psalmist gives us in Psalm 119 beginning in verse 66. This is how we should think when we come to this time in our worship service. He said:

¹ Romans 13:8-14.

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Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Thy word. Thou art good and doest good; Teach me Thy statutes.²

So I hope that is your prayer this morning. It is certainly my prayer for you.

You may recall that Paul has been explaining in this great epistle the exhilarating transforming truths of the doctrine of justification. He has then moved to help us understand Israel's election, Israel's defection and Israel's salvation in Romans nine, 10 and 11. And then beginning in chapter 12 he addresses some very practical issues pertaining to the Christian life, how we are to approach God, how we are to have the proper attitudes towards other fellow Christians, all people and civil authorities. And now in the text before us, in verses eight through 14, he summarizes all of these great truths by drawing our attention to the second great commandment and that is that you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, beloved, this section of Scripture is both profound as well as provocative, because it is going to shine light in a very dark place in each of our hearts. And that is in the area of how we love one another. We are very often the opposite of God's definition of loving our neighbor as delineated, for example, in Paul's great treatise on love found in 1 Corinthians 13. Let me put it to you this way. If you are impatient, unkind, jealous, if you love to brag about yourself. If you are the hero of all your stories, if you are arrogant, rude, demanding, controlling, easily offended, if you keep a record of wrongs with respect to how other people treat you, if you try to justify unrighteousness in your life, if you tolerate error and untruths in your life, then you struggle with love. If you gossip and love to expose, ridicule, criticize and harm those that you don't like rather than trying to cover their sin and support and protect and restore them, then you know little of what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. If you are always suspicious of other people, especially those that are a little different than you are and you immediately want to believe the worst in them, if you have no reputation as one who seeks to restore other people to righteousness, especially those you don't like, if you quickly give up hope that God's grace will restore a person who is fallen, and if you give up on others easily instead of enduring with a steadfast faith in God's redeeming and restoring love, then, dear friends, your love for others bears little resemblance to Christ's love for you.

We all stand guiltily as charged, don't we? Now that our sin has been exposed, let's humble ourselves before the Word of God and pray that the Spirit will convict us, bring us to a place of repentance and then by his grace empower us to change.

I have chosen to outline this section under four categories and I pray that this will help you grasp what the inspired apostle is telling us. We are going to see the obligation of love, the function of love, the urgency of love and the identification of love. Actually this

² Psalm 119:66-68.

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morning we will only be able to get through the first three. So I will deal with the identification of love next week.

Now the overarching theme of this whole section is fulfilling our obligation to love one another in light of the end of the age. In fact, Paul's overall emphasis in this chapter is to live submissively as living sacrifices and all the more knowing that Christ could come at any time.

So, first, come with me as we examine this idea of the obligation of love beginning in verse eight. He says:

“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another.”³

Having just exhorted Christians to pay their taxes to civil authorities, he is now focusing on the same obligation to pay our debts in our private life, namely, the debt of love, a debt that can never be fully paid. Think about it. None of us will ever be able to say, “Well, I loved all I need to love. My obligation is fulfilled. Now I can focus on number one.” I hope you don't think that. None of us can ever say that.

Now you must understand that this text is not a prohibition against borrowing. This is something that Jesus permitted. For example, in Matthew 5:42 he said:

“Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.”⁴

In fact, both lending and borrowing were permitted in the Mosaic law. You can read about it, for example, in Exodus 22:25. However, I would also hasten to add that nowhere does Scripture ever justify borrowing for the purpose of purchasing luxuries that you cannot afford nor do you need. But we can conclude from this statement that financial debts are to be paid promptly. They are to be paid in full. In this connection we read in Psalm 37 verse 21:

“The wicked borrows and does not pay back.”⁵

Said differently, the wicked runs up his credit card. He takes out loans for things he can't afford and he doesn't need and he gets to a place where he is drowning in debt. He doesn't pay his bills so he files for bankruptcy and forces other people to forgive his debt which drives up interest rates and prices on everybody else. That is why that type of behavior is what the psalmist calls wicked.

³ Romans 13:8.

⁴ Matthew 5:42.

⁵ Psalm 37:21.

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The false use of this imagery of debt extends far beyond the idea of personal finances. It speaks of the Christian's perpetual obligation to love, not only love God, but to love our neighbor.

You know, we are debtors to God's undeserved mercy and grace and all of the love that he has lavished upon us. The supreme commandment is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength and then to love our neighbor as ourselves. And because of God's grace, because of his transforming work in our heart, because the Holy Spirit has taken up residence within us, we have at our disposal everything that we need to do exactly what God has commanded to do with respect to love.

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:9:

“...you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.”⁶

And it should be no surprise that love is the first fruit of the Spirit that we read in Galatians 5:22.

Now think about it. The same Holy Spirit that prompted you and prompted me by his power to see our sin, to see our need for salvation, to repent and come to Christ in faith believing, also prompts us to be obedient. That same Holy Spirit prompts us in the realm of self sacrificing love.

Do you recall that time where you came to Christ when the Holy Spirit was working on your conscience, when he was bringing you to that place of conviction, when you had no rest in your Spirit? Well, my friends, this was the work of the Spirit of the Holy Spirit and his regenerating grace. And, likewise, you must understand when we are disobedient, when we fail to love God supremely, when we fail to love others as ourselves, it is that same Spirit within us that moves upon our conscience that we might do the will of God. We don't obey simply out of fear of divine chastening, even though that needs to be there as a very really thing, but we obey, because it is the deepest longing of a transformed heart. And if that is not true for you, then you need to ask if, indeed, you have been born again.

And what is more amazing is that the more we love, the more we want to love. What an amazing resource that we have in Christ. Paul has reminded us in Romans five verse five:

“...because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”⁷

⁶ 1 Thessalonians 4:9.

⁷ Romans 5:5.

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And therefore we must understand that when we submit to the Holy Spirit in our daily walk, we have at our disposal an unlimited reservoir, all of the resources that we need to love self sacrificially. Those who show a marked lack of love prove that they are not walking in the Spirit, but are walking in the flesh. And I would join the apostle Paul in praying for you as he did for the saints at Ephesus in Ephesians three verse 17:

...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge...⁸

This is a gift of God, of the Holy Spirit. And then he finally says:

“... that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.”⁹

So Paul commands us here to love one another. And this is an exhortation not only to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, but also to the unsaved. But I would add that our first obligation is to fellow Christians. In John 13 verse 34 we read:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.¹⁰

I hope that is true of you. Fellow believers are to be our first priority in love. They are to hold a special place in our hearts. Romans 12 verse 10 Paul says:

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.¹¹

This, by the way, is at the heart of our philosophy of missions here at Calvary Bible Church when it comes to meeting special physical and financial needs of other people. Our first priority is to believers, not to unbelievers. So there is a real need for discernment here. We have to be very careful. There is balance here. We are to have compassion upon all people. We have compassion upon the poor. We are to spend our time and resources helping the, but we have got to be very careful that we don't interfere with God's judgment upon the wicked. We must be careful not to circumvent divine judgment associated with the consequences of reaping and sowing which God uses to bring men to repentance.

⁸ Ephesians 3:17-19.

⁹ Ephesians 3:19.

¹⁰ John 13:34-35.

¹¹ Romans 12:10-13.

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Stop and think about it. Our government has spent literally trillions of dollars trying to help the poor, pouring money into the ghettos and what has happened? It has just made things worse. So our priority for benevolence is first to the saints. We read this, for example, in Galatians 6:10. Paul says:

“...while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”¹²

And Paul exhorts us to love fellow believers as well in his letter to Colosse. In Colossians three beginning with verse 12:

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.¹³

But, of course, our love is also to be extended to all men, even unbelievers, even those people we don't like. We are even called to love our enemies. Jesus made this very clear. You will recall in Matthew five verse 44 Jesus said:

You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.¹⁴

And Paul has reminded the saints earlier in chapter 12 verse 14:

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.”¹⁵

I routinely receive hate mail. There are two lines in my life, a very long one and a very short one. And the more I preach the long line gets longer. And my natural response to someone who is threatening my life, who is using language that I could not repeat to describe me and what I preach, my natural flesh has a desire to retaliate, to get even. You know, how you go through those types of things in you imagination. You can just see yourself dissecting that person. That is how the power of flesh works. And so what do I have to do? The same thing you have to do. I have to make a choice to love my enemy. I have to make a choice.

¹² Galatians 6:10.

¹³ Colossians 3:12-14.

¹⁴ Matthew 5:43-44.

¹⁵ Romans 12:14.

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You see, folks, love is not an emotion. It is a choice. It is a choice that honors God. I have to make a choice to do what is pleasing to God, because I am not the issue. He is. So I pray for them and I seek to do them good. That is why in verses 20 and 21 of Romans he says:

"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.¹⁶

So this is the obligation of love. Now Paul moves from this to the concept of what I would call the function of love. Notice at the end of verse eight he says:

"...for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law."¹⁷

Obviously, by using the term neighbor this reinforces the idea that our love is to be all embracing. It is to be extended to all people. But here we see also that this all embracing love has a function. And what is that function? It fulfills the law. You see, we cannot be obedient to God's law unless we love as he has commanded us to do. Now Paul is merely repeating what Jesus has said about the law being summed up in the commandments of love. You recall that Jesus said in Matthew 22 verse 37:

"YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."¹⁸

Now, bear in mind, lest you be confused, that no man is saved by keeping the law. Surely you understand that. Paul has said in Romans three and verse 20:

"...by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."¹⁹

So Paul is not saying here that if we love our neighbor we can fulfill the law and be saved, because, first of all, no one could possibly love the Lord and love others perfectly. And, secondly, we know that salvation is always by grace through faith. In Romans 3 verse 21 Paul said:

¹⁶ Romans 12:20-21.

¹⁷ Romans 13:8.

¹⁸ Matthew 22:37-40.

¹⁹ Romans 3:20.

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But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.²⁰

Therefore, chapter eight, verse one:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.²¹

So the question is: How does love fulfill the law? What is he saying here? Well, the key is really found in Romans chapter eight beginning in verse three. There we read that God condemns sin in the flesh in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Well, how does that happen? We can't pull this off. Well, he goes on and he says these most important words.

“...who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”²²

Oh, child of God, this is so exciting. Don't let this escape you. As a Christian, we no longer have a concern to somehow keep the requirements of the law as if we ever could. That has been taken care of in our justification. We have been declared righteous. We are now hid in Christ. He no longer sees our sin, but the righteousness of his beloved Son. But with he is saying is that the requirement of the law is now being fulfilled in us as the Holy Spirit who dwells within us works within us and causes us to walk in obedience. Salvation is all of grace from beginning to end.

Now bear in mind that God's law reflects his holy character. And of this reason his law is still perfectly valid. But now as we walk according to the Spirit, as Paul says, God himself fulfills the requirements of his law in and through us by his Holy Spirit and by our love for God and others we put his holiness, we put his glory on display.

Beloved, this is the function of love, to fulfill the law by the power of the Holy Spirit who causes us to manifest the love of God in our lives to the praise of his glory. In fact, what is amazing is when we demonstrate our love for God we not only show the world our love for him, but also we demonstrate his glory and as we love other people we are, in

²⁰ Romans 3:21-24.

²¹ Romans 8:1-2.

²² Romans 8:4.

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fact, showing our love for God. It is an amazing thing. When this is not happening in our lives, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

But, folks, there is more. I want you to understand this. This is so important. As we love God and our neighbor, we see biblically that God does something. God reciprocates in away that is just inconceivably precious to me and I hope it will be to you. Do you know what he does? When we love as we are supposed to love then the triune God discloses himself to us. Let me explain that. Jesus put it this way in John 14 verse 21:

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."²³

In other words, I will manifest myself more fully and intimately to you. I will make myself more fully known. I will reveal more of myself to you. And then he says this in verse 23.

"...and We [the triune godhead] will come to him, and make Our abode with him."²⁴

We are going to come. We are going to settle down permanently. What a magnificent promise. And friends, what a motivation to love. I mean, think how foolish, how arrogant, how selfish, how rebellious to run around like a {?} rooster with our nose stuck up in the air looking for the next person to criticize, the next person to hate. And not only do we grieve the Spirit when this happens, but we become the object of divine chastening. But then beyond that when this is our attitude, we forfeit the unsurpassed joy of intimate fellowship with the lover of our souls.

Beloved, this is the motivation for love. This is why Paul said:

I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.²⁵

Folks, I hope you join me in saying, "I want this more than anything else in life."

²³ John 14:21.

²⁴ John 14:23.

²⁵ Philippians 3:8-10.

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Now Paul illustrates what love looks like in verse nine. It is interesting here. He cites five specific Old Testament laws, the first four taken directly from the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20, Deuteronomy five. And then the fifth law is cited from Leviticus 19:18. Here is what he says, verse nine.

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."²⁶

One theologian put it this way, Hendrickson. He explains Paul's emphasis, in a very helpful way. Here is what he said, quote, "You shall love and therefore not commit adultery, but preserve the sacredness of the marriage bond. You shall love and therefore not murder, but help your neighbor keep alive and well. You shall live and, accordingly, not steal anything that belongs to your neighbor, but rather protect his possessions. You shall love and, as a result, not covet, but belong to your neighbor, but rejoice in the fact that it is his," end quote. Isn't that great?

That is love. And by loving in such a way, we love our neighbor, as Paul says, as yourself. We love ourselves a whole bunch, don't we? We look out for number one. Think about it. We love ourselves warts and all. In fact, we don't even see our faults. That is how we should love other people. That is the point. You know, we can see a speck in our brother's eye from 100 yards in the dark. But we can't see a log of sin protruding from our own eye. We simply do not see nor mind our faults. So this is how we have to love our neighbor.

You know, sin manifests itself in a myriad of ways. And we see it manifesting itself primarily in the context of relationships, our relationship with God, our relationship with other people. And because we are so often committed to self love, our personalities get warped. Self love creates a myriad of ways within us that manifests itself through manipulation and basically creates for us an interpersonal style of relating that is many times very selfish, very destructive. I mean, we all experience folks that we might describe as obnoxious. They are strange. They are controlling. They are bossy, critical, angry, arrogant, goofy, rude, flamboyant, you name it. I mean, we experience other people's interpersonal style of relating. But seldom do we recognize our own, how we impact others. It is real easy to see how they impact us, but it is hard for us to see how we impact others. But regardless of how a person impacts you, beloved, we are to choose to love them.

Now let's be honest. We all don't like each other. I will be honest with you. I don't like all of you. I love all of you, but I wouldn't want to go on vacation with some of you. All right? The litmus typically in our family is would you feel comfortable going on a

²⁶ Romans 13:9.

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camping trip with that person? No, I don't think so. And you would probably feel that some of you that way with me. But do you know what? Liking and loving are two different things. I don't care how much I don't enjoy being around you, because I love you, I will serve you and I will give myself for you. That this the idea.

Paul adds this summary statement then in verse 10. He says:

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor...”²⁷

Unless the guy is a jerk. Oh, no, it doesn't say that, does it.

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.”²⁸

Of course love is not going to do anything wrong to a neighbor. It is going to seek the neighbor's highest good, because agape love is self sacrificial love, the love of choice. It is the opposite of self love which is the essence of sin. Bear this in mind the next time you attack or ignore your neighbor or you deliberately seek to injure somebody perhaps in the church that you just don't like. You are not fulfilling the law. You are violating it. You are bringing reproach upon Christ and judgment upon yourself.

So we have seen the obligation of love, the function of love. Then, thirdly, now we come to the urgency of love beginning in verse 11 through the first part of verse 12. Now, folks, here we are going to see that Paul is elevating all that he has been saying to a place of highest priority. There should be a sense of urgency here now. What he is about to say is solemn. It is serious. It is weighty. Notice verse 11.

“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.”²⁹

This is a very sobering statement. Let me break it down for you. The first phrase, “And this do.” In other words, in light of all of the preceding admonitions, we don't want to ignore these things. We don't want to be just a hearer of the Word. We want to be a doer of the Word.

“And this do, knowing the time.”³⁰

Time is a term that refers to a season, to an age, an epic, an era, an age, the age in which we live. What is that? It is the last days. These are the days of apostasy that will

²⁷ Romans 13:10.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Romans 13:11.

³⁰ Ibid.

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culminate in our Lord's return. So here the apostle is appealing to eschatology, to the immanent return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep.”³¹

υπνος (hoop'-nos) in the original language. We get our word hypnotism from that. I find it interesting. Many times I see Christians living as if they have been hypnotized by the world. It is the idea of just being asleep. Even many Christians are spiritually asleep. That was Paul's concern for the saints even in that day. It is the idea of waking up here. Because you are oblivious to what is happening around you. You are therefore unresponsive to the will of God as it is being revealed in his Word. That is Paul's point. You have no sense of urgency concerning your spiritual life. There is nothing imperative in your life, the idea of presenting your body as a living and a holy sacrifice acceptable to the Lord is just simply not a priority. That is what he is saying with this. Loving the Lord and your neighbor for the sake of the gospel is foreign to this kind of believer. And, sadly, many believers, perhaps some of you, are living your life as if the Lord is never going to come again. Is that what you believe?

It is so easy to become comfortable with this world to a place where we have no interest in his redemptive purposes or sometimes, because of ignorance, or even having been taught errant teaching about Bible prophecy many people have no interest in the prophetic Scriptures despite the fact that at the very beginning of our Lord's prophetic revelation he inspired John to write this in Revelation chapter one verse three.

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”³²

It is the same word as Paul has used in verse 11, the season, the age of Christ's return. The next great epic of redemptive history is immanent. Beloved, I would ask you. Is there anything pertaining to your spiritual life that you perceive to be urgent? Is there anything in your spiritual life that is pressing, that is an absolute priority, that is burning within your soul, that causes everything else in life to be secondary or tertiary? Is there anything?

Paul's point is: This should be the priority.

I can tell you priorities in life. I can see what is urgent for you by looking at how you spend your time and how you spend your money. We need to wake up, because our salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. Jesus said something so profound in Matthew 24 beginning in verse 36.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Revelation 1:3.

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But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,³³

They had indifference to Noah's warnings of impending judgment. Business as usual, unconcerned, preoccupied with the things of their life, no thought of God. And the goes on to say:

"...and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be."³⁴

I hope you don't fall into that category. I know unbelievers do. We expect that from them. But, folks, this should not be the attitude of the redeemed. Some of you are living your life as a person who smells smoke coming from the neighbor's house and you know they are in there but you are not going to get up and warn them because you are right in the middle of your favorite show. Obviously this was a serious issue even with the early saints. So he writes in verse 11:

"And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep."³⁵

In other words, awaken to a life of greater obedience and service. Beloved, this present age is rapidly coming to an end. The pre kingdom judgments are about to begin. Surely you can discern the times. Surely you can understand the Word of God and look around and see that the world is being prepared for the antichrist, for the final climax of the pre kingdom judgments before the Lord returns. And surely this will cause you to shudder with excitement and exhilaration to see that the stage is being set for the return of our Lord. Beloved, if you have any discernment at all, you can hear the drum roll. The curtains are about to come back upon the stage of the final judgments upon the world. The days of Christ's humiliation are about to be eclipsed by the dawning of his glorification.

Paul reminded us of this in chapter eight verse 19. He said:

"For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."³⁶

³³ Matthew 24:36-38.

³⁴ Matthew 24:39.

³⁵ Romans 13:11.

³⁶ Romans 8:19.

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Preached on: Sunday, November 18, 2012

And in verse 23 he said:

“And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”³⁷

I hope this describes you. The immanent return of Christ in all of his glory was such a powerful motivation in Paul’s life, as it should be in ours. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:34:

“Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”³⁸

And for this reason he even spoke to the lethargic saints in Ephesus in Ephesians five verse 14. He said:

"Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."³⁹

Dear Christian, there is no place for indolence and apathy in the Christian life. We are at war. Satan seeks to destroy you, to make you useless, to make you discouraged, to squeeze you into the mold of this world. So turn off your TVs. Put away your little gadgets. The king is coming. Get off your couch. Serve Christ.

Later Paul went on to say in verse 16 of Ephesians five:

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.⁴⁰

Friends, think about this the next time you post some frivolous information about your self on Facebook, which has become the online temple of self love where our culture goes to worship the idol of self. Now, I know. There are some noble qualities to Facebook. I am not saying get rid of it. I understand that. But for the most part it is a place of idolatry where unbelievers who are spiritual dead and believers who are spiritual asleep desperately compete for attention and affirmation.

I have read some of this. Somebody showed me some of your posts, I think you call them. I read some of them last week and, frankly, I had to quit reading. I was losing brain

³⁷ Romans 8:23.

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:32.

³⁹ Ephesians 5:14.

⁴⁰ Ephesians 5:15-17.

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cells. I could feel them exploding in my head. It was like reading the private diaries of the self absorbed.

While some use it wisely, for most it is just a colossal waste of time and it has become for many people a blasphemous place of self worship.

I can't imagine Noah being distracted from his calling to post some personal trivia about his life. I hit my thumb again with the hammer today, third time this week. Going to market with Mrs. Noah later today. Anyone care to join us?

Can you imagine the apostle Paul. Yeah, making another tent today. Poked myself with a needle. Ouch. Still struggling with diarrhea. Not sure what the answer is. Heard tea is not working. Any suggestions?

I mean we laugh, but, beloved, what proceeds out of our mouth exposes the priorities of our heart.

We must guard ourselves against misplaced priorities. While it may be important and urgent for you to post the details of your thought life and trivia of your day to day life and for some of you—and this is beyond me—it is important for you to actually read that stuff. None of this has any eternal impact. It has about as much effect for the kingdom as spitting in an ocean. It is eternally insignificant.

Can I give you a suggestion, those of you who use Facebook? And I am just using this as one illustration. There are many ways where we can waste our time and betray our lack of sense of urgency about the things that should be our priority, but the next time you post something ask yourself this. Am I posting this to draw attention to myself or point others to Christ? Am I doing this out of self love or because I love my neighbor and out of a sense of urgency knowing that the Lord will soon return? I want them to understand the truth of the gospel of Christ. I don't care about myself.

Use Facebook as a tool for evangelism. Better yet—and I know this might be foreign to some of you—but how about meeting somebody and talking to them face to face, eyeball to eyeball so they can see your eyes and feel your touch and hear your voice? What has happened to us?

In his first letter Peter admonished believers, 1 Peter 4:17:

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”⁴¹

And, similarly, James wrote:

⁴¹ 1 Peter 4:17.

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“You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”⁴²

And the writer of Hebrews offered such great encouragement and consolation to the beleaguered saints of his day. They were weary of persecution and suffering and he said in Hebrews 10:35:

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.⁴³

Beloved, every day we see man’s wickedness expanding. And we see the world deteriorating and we see the enemy trying to seduce us, shape us into the ways of the world so that we will join the ranks of the unredeemed and walk down the broad road that leads to destruction. You simply must guard yourself from this and have a sense of urgency about that which is important.

Verse 11 again.

“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.”⁴⁴

In fact, folks, it is 2000 years nearer than when they believed. Do you realize that? And when he speaks of salvation here he is speaking of our glorification, the ultimate end, the ultimate goal, the ultimate conclusion of our salvation.

Beloved, here is the urgency of love. It is the pressing need for our own personal sanctification. That needs to be priority number one so that we will be effective in our witness for Christ.

This was the driving force behind Paul’s undeterred commitment to serve Christ come what may, caused him to say in Romans eight verse 18:

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”⁴⁵

And then finally he says, the first part of verse 12.

⁴² James 5:8.

⁴³ Hebrews 10:35-37.

⁴⁴ Romans 13:11.

⁴⁵ Romans 8:18.

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“The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand.”⁴⁶

Night speaks of the darkness of Satan’s kingdom. We know that some men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. This is the age of spiritual blindness, the age of unbelief and rebellion against the most high God. And he is saying it is almost gone. The idea in the original is it is almost over. It is ready to draw to a close. And then he says:

“...and the day is at hand.”⁴⁷

Day is a New Testament term used to describe the dawning, as it were, of Christ’s glorious appearing. It is almost here. And if Paul would warn that 2000 years ago how much more today? Obviously the day is used here as a stark contrast to the night of man’s rebellion and man’s allegiance to Satan.

So Paul exhorts us all to be motivated to love and obedience out of this sense of urgency.

“The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand.”⁴⁸

Beloved, this day of judgment upon the wicked and a day of reward for God’s servants is almost here. It will be a time, according to 1 Corinthians 4:5 when he:

“...will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.”⁴⁹

What a powerful incentive to get serious about our spiritual life. Paul reminded Titus of this very thing. He said in Titus 2:11:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us.⁵⁰

Are you looking for the blessed hope? Are you longing for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior? I pray that you are. But your priorities in life will reveal whether you are or you are not.

⁴⁶ Romans 13:12.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 4:5.

⁵⁰ Titus 2:11-14.

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So, beloved, I pray that you will examine yourselves in light of these great truths. Examine your priorities. Examine the way you love the Lord and the way you love others. And wake up, because the Lord is coming.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Cause them to bear much fruit in our lives. And for those that do not know you as Savior, oh, Lord, how I pray that you will consume them with the reality of their guilt and their sin that they might cry out to you for forgiveness and experience the miracle of new birth this very day. I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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