

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Love in Action

Romans 13:8-14

2000

Introduction

The greatest need of every man and every woman is love. Most of our behavior is driven by the need for love and acceptance. It's a need designed by God to be ultimately fulfilled only by God.

In fact, our number one problem in life, from a human perspective, is our inability to express or receive love.

I The Fruit of God's Mercy is Love

A. Let no **debt** remain outstanding [verse 8a]

In Romans 13:1-7, Paul emphasized that as believers we are to pay our debts promptly and in full. If you owe taxes then pay your taxes. If revenue, then revenue. We are not to be the type of people who defraud or rip off anyone – whether it is the IRS, employees under our authority, or creditors.

However, there is *one* exception!

1. Except the continuing debt of **love**

Origin, who was an early church father put it this way, “The debt of love remains with us permanently and never leaves us. This is a debt that we pay every day and forever owe.”

Illustration:

Over the course of my life I have had several occasions where I owed someone money. Whenever I saw that person, the first thing that often came to mind was my outstanding debt to that person.

Paul is saying that we should have the same response regarding our debt of love.

What does this love look like? How is it expressed?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

Application:

Imagine if the world was capable of this kind of love:

1. There would never be any conflict in our relationships
2. No one would ever again have to use the term “dysfunctional home” again
3. Divorce would be non-existent
4. Crime would be entirely eliminated and wars would cease

2. He who loves has **fulfilled** the Law [verse 8b]

All 613 OT laws are summed up in a singular word: Love!

Gal 5:14-15 “The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

In other words, the Christian who love with God’s loves others does not need to concern himself with a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” since all the commandments are summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

B. All the commandments are summed up in this: [verse 9-10]

1. Love **God**

The Shema: Deut 6:5-6 “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

2. Love your **neighbor** as yourself

After declaring that love is the fulfillment of the Law, Paul illustrates his point by quoting 5 specific OT laws. Four are found in the 10 Commandments and the fifth is found in Leviticus 19:18.

Adultery:

Godly love does not allow us to sleep with our neighbor’s wife because adultery is a blatant act of disregard for another person’s spouse and for the individual’s physical and spiritual purity. Adultery is the product of lust, not love.

Murder:

Godly love does not commit murder since taking someone else’s life that is made in the image of God is the ultimate violation against another person. Love will not permit you to murder your neighbor, or harm his family or poison his pets.

Stealing: = Klepto = “To steal”

Godly love does not steal since stealing is a personal violation of another person. Love will not permit us to even “borrow” things from someone without being prompt in returning what we borrowed – whether it is a CD, tool, cookbook or surfboard.

Coveting: Epithumeo = "To long for or desire"

Godly love won't be provoked to jealousy over your neighbor's new car, or their new furniture, or their recent trip to Europe. Instead, love rejoices with him over what God has blessed him with.

But as believers, we have a higher calling:

We are to put on love – Col 3:14

We are to love one another deeply, from the heart – 1 Peter 1:22

We are to stimulate one another to love and good deeds – Hebrews 10:24

a. Love does no harm to its neighbor

Matt 7:12a "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you"

b. Love is the fulfillment of the Law

Matt 7:12b "... for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

Our ability to love others is the fruit of God's love in us and the fruit of an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit:

1. We are divinely enabled to pay our great debt of love "because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." -

Romans 5:5

2. God Himself teaches us how to love one another - 1 Thess 4:9

3. The fruit of the Spirit is love - Gal 5:22

God's love is an inexhaustible well from which we can draw the supernatural love He commands us to live by. But in order for us to draw deeply from this well, we must submit to and depend on the Holy Spirit.

II The Fruit Of God's Mercy Is Expectancy

A. We need to **understand** the present time [verse 11a]

Two words in Greek for time:

Chronos = Chronological, calendar time"

It's time to go to school.

Kairos = "Emphasizes quality or kind of time"

It's time to make some changes around here.

Understanding, comprehending, grasping the fleeting nature of things should compel us, motivate us, and drive us to a growing love for others.

1 Peter 4:7-8 "The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

B. We need to **wake up** from our slumber [verse 11-12a]

Hora = "The appointed hour or time"

Wake up = Egeiro = “To rouse ourselves”

Slumber = Hupnos = “Spiritual grogginess, lethargy or stupor”

Illustration: Falling asleep at the wheel (hitting the warning bumps or guard rail)

This is not the time to be apathetic, complacent or indifferent. It is time to take action and live what we believe! As believers, we are to wake up from our spiritual lethargy and love our neighbors while we still have the opportunity to do so.

Ephesians 5:14 “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Paul was not speaking to the unsaved, but to those whose spiritual lethargy and laziness made them appear and act as if they had no spiritual life.

1. Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed

The salvation that Paul is talking about is our future and final redemption when will see Jesus face to face and be glorified.

Titus 2:11-13 “For the grace of God ... teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

a. The **night** is nearly over

b. The **day** is almost here

Almost here = Eggizo = “Close at hand”

In every generation there are skeptics who ask, "Where is this *coming* he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:4) How can we say that it is nearly over when almost 2,000 years have passed since the time Paul wrote these urgent words?

One thing we do know, the Second Coming of Christ is 2,000 years closer than it was at the time of Paul’s writing. Everyday that we live, we come one day closer to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the final events in God’s redemptive plan – either through the rapture of the church or through our physical death.

Since it’s later now than it has ever been before, let’s love one another. If not now, when?

III The Fruit Of God’s Mercy Is Holiness

In this next section, Paul tells us that we must take two equally important steps if we are to experience a life of love:

A. We are to **put aside** the deeds of darkness [verse 12b-13]

Put aside = Apotithemi = “To take off or cast off”

Since the night is nearly over, and our number one priority is to love God and others, then we will put aside or cast off certain things that are incompatible with love – namely the deeds of darkness.

1. Get rid of them - James 1:21
2. Put them aside Rom 13:12
3. Throw them off - Heb 12:1
4. Put them to death - Col 3:5-7

Ephesians 4:22-24 “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

1. Orgies

Orgies = Komos = “Carousing, reveling, or rioting”

A term often used of a victory celebration (either a military or athletic victory). That turns into wild partying, sexual orgies, brawls and drunken rioting.

Galatians 5:19-21 “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

2. Drunkenness

Drunkenness = Methe = “Intoxication”

1 Peter 4:3 “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.”

3. Sexual immorality

Sexual immorality = Koite = “A bed or couch; by extension to go to bed with someone other than your spouse.

Hebrews 13:4 “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”

You can't love people and participate in sex outside of marriage -- whether it is premarital sex, adultery, or homosexuality and remain true to the command to love others.

4. Debauchery

Debauchery = Aseigeia = “Sexual lewdness”

This is a graphic word to describe a person who is not only given to immorality, but feels no shame or remorse for his or her sexual perversions.

1 Peter 4:2-5 “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.”

5. Dissension

Dissension = Eris = “To be quarrelsome or contentious”

Refers to a person who is marked by persistent contention, bickering, and petty disagreement.

There will always be those people to seem to be a magnet for dissension or conflict. Everywhere they go, they seem to have problems getting along with others. They can't seem to enjoy themselves unless they get people fighting, upset and angry with each other.

Application:

What effect does your life have on others? Do you bring peace and harmony to a conversation or do you leave people upset and angry? Do you gather them together or do strife and division immediately break out because you are there?”

Matthew 12:30 “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.”

6. Jealousy

Jealousy = Zelos = “Envy”

This describes a person who cannot stand being surpassed and is driven to jealously when others succeed.

James 3:14-16 “But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts ... there you find disorder and every evil practice.”

B. We are to **put on** the armor of light [verse 12b]

Put on = Enduo = “To clothe”

Armor of light = Hoplon = “Protective equipment for spiritual battle”

Eph 6:12-13 “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of

God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

1. Behave decently as in the daytime

It means to live an outward life that is consistent with our new inner nature of Christ.

1 Thess 5:4-8 “But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

C. We are to **clothe** ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ [verse 14a]

Clothe = Enduo = “Put on”

There are two aspects of how we are to be clothed:

1. We were clothed (past event)

Galatians 3:27 “for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

2. We are to continue to be clothed (present process)

Romans 13:14 “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

1. Do not **think** about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature [verse 14b]

Do not think about = Pronoia = “To give forethought or make provision”

More often than not, the sins that we commit have been cultivated inwardly long before they find outward expression.

James 1:14-15 “... each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

To be tempted to sin is not sin. But at no time does the believer have to yield to sin.

Galatians 5:16 “... live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Closing Story:

In the fourth century there was a young man named Augustine who was lived a wild, carousing life, running around with a bad crowd, exposing himself to whatever he thought would bring him pleasure. Unfortunately, as anyone else who has lived that kind of life eventually discovers, he wrestled with the emptiness of his own life and came to hate himself for the sins he had committed. One day he was with his friend in a garden, and he walked up and down, bemoaning his inability to change. "O, how

can I free myself from these terrible urges within me that drive me to the things that hurt me!" And in his despair, as he was walking in the garden, he heard a child singing in a neighboring house, "Tolle, lege! Tolle, lege! (Take up and read! Take up and read!). So he went back into his friend's house and on the table was a copy of Paul's letter to the Romans. He opened it pages and read these words:

Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies, and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,... {Rom 13:13-14a NIV}

Augustine said that at that moment he opened his life to Christ. He had known about God, but had never surrendered to him. But that moment he did, and he felt the healing touch from Christ cleansing his life. He was never the same man again. And as you know, Augustine went on to become one of the most influential Christians of all time.

Conclusion

In light of the fact that Jesus is coming again and coming soon, what should we do?

1. We need to wake up - (verse 11)
2. We need to dress up - (verse 12)
We need to put on the armor of God, the armor of light.
3. We need to clean up - (verse 13)
We need to put away drunkenness, envy and everything else that pollutes and defiles.
4. We need to grow up - (verse 14)
We need to make no provision for the flesh

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