

A Love that Cleanses US

4.19.26

Message 50

Romans Series

Romans 13:8–14 (CSB)

LOVE, OUR PRIMARY DUTY

⁸Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, **Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet;** and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: **Love your neighbor as yourself.** ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.

PUT ON CHRIST

¹¹Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

What do taxes and love have in common?

A. They both never end.

1. The Apostle told us to leave no debt outstanding.
2. If we owe it, pay it.
3. But, my debt of love is never-ending, never complete, always in process.

B. Think about it:

1. My love for you is never complete: it's always in process.

2. My love for Jesus is never completely fulfilled: I will love Jesus for all my days on Earth and in Eternity.

3. My love for my spouse is something I owe her every day for as long as we both shall live.

C. The debt of love is never paid.

1. But it does fulfill the Law.

2. If you want to fulfill all 400-plus commandments of the Old Testament, Jesus' teachings on the Sermon on the Mount, and all of God's law, then

3. This sounds so simple, but it isn't easy.

Love, Law, and Flesh

A. All through Romans, we are told to crucify the flesh.

1. To give no thought to the flesh.

2. To crucify the flesh.

3. To submit our wants, desires, and everything sinful to be crucified and sacrificed.

4. But sometimes, **our flesh has zombie tendencies.**

5. No matter how hard I try to kill it, wash it, and get rid of it, my flesh keeps coming back.

B. My flesh wants to do the things the Law tells me not to do.

1. Adultery and lust, murder and hate, stealing and jealousy.

2. Love fulfills these requirements, but my flesh fights them.

3. If left to ourselves, we want everything the Law places off-limits.

a. We crave what we cannot have.

b. We pursue what feels out of reach.

c. When we know something is forbidden, it stirs something up inside of us.

d. Forbidden fruit tastes the best.

C. The Law exposes our weakness and sin.

1. Earlier, Paul had said that he wouldn't have known what coveting was if the Law had not told him.

2. **The Old Testament Law is a mirror.**

3. Mirrors can show us what is out of place, they can show us where we are dirty, they can reveal, but mirrors can't cleanse us.

4. *A mirror can reveal the dirt, but it cannot remove it.*

Picture this: A man gets ready for work and glances in the bathroom mirror. His hair is wild, his toothpaste is dried at the corner of his mouth, and dirt is smudged across his cheek. The mirror has done its job perfectly—it told the truth. But imagine if he grabbed the mirror off the wall and started rubbing it against his face, trying to clean himself. He would only make a bigger mess.

5. **The Law can show what is wrong, but it cannot cleanse what it reveals. It exposes sin, but only Christ can wash it away.**

D. Love is more than law.

1. Love is the embodiment of what law can only show.

2. Law can show us what is wrong, but it can't fix it.

3. Law exposes the gaps, but it can't fill them in.

E. This is why love is the heart of the Gospel.

1. What is Gospel? That while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

2. The Gospel is that God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only begotten Son.

3. The Gospel is the truth that what the Law could only reveal, Jesus has fixed.

F. A mirror shows the stain of sin, but it can't cleanse it.

1. The Gospel, working through the Spirit, is more than a mirror.

2. Originally, I wanted to make the illustration that the Gospel is a washing machine.

a. The Law reveals, and the Gospel cleanses.

b. That could work as far as illustrations go.

c. The Law can show the dirt, but only grace can wash the garment clean.

3. As I finalized my sermon, it doesn't seem to go far enough.
 - a. The Gospel is more than a machine that, if the clothes are placed in and turned on with the right amount of water and soap, we come out clean.
 - b. The Gospel is more like a loving parent, personally bathing us and ensuring that no spot that a mirror reveals goes untouched.

What Can Wash Away My Sins?

A. This is where verse 11 comes in: our salvation is nearer....

¹¹Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

1. Salvation is nearer than when we started.
2. Paul is going to challenge everyone who reads this to continue not only in love but in righteousness.
3. Love only finds its true expression when we live righteous and holy lives.

B. Paul does this with an analogy we can all relate to.

¹¹Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

1. Paul is describing us waking up from sleep, putting off our night clothes, and dressing up for Jesus' return.
2. It's almost like a parent yelling upstairs to their teenage daughters, "You better be ready to go when I come back!"
3. Not just anything counts as being ready!
 - a. For young kids, there is a lot of flexibility on what constitutes dressed.
 - b. For teenagers, there are different levels of appropriateness.
 - c. Even for adults, the situation and location determines what is dressed or not.
4. But for believers, Paul gives us specifics.

How are we to be dressed?

A. We are to be clean.

1. Let's go back to the washing analogy.
2. Let me share 3 passages with you.

1 John 1:7–9 (CSB)

⁷If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Titus 3:4–7 (CSB)

⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, ⁵he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. ⁶He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.

Isaiah 1:18 (CSB)

¹⁸“Come, let's settle this,”

says the LORD.

“Though your sins are scarlet,

they will be as white as snow;

though they are crimson red,

they will be like wool.

3. We can't cleanse ourselves; only Jesus can wash us clean.

4. We can see our sin, but the mirror wasn't designed to wash us.

5. When we give our lives to Jesus, He doesn't put fresh clothes on a dirty person, He washes us clean.

B. Discard the dirty clothes.

1. Paul said, “Discard the deeds of darkness.”
 - a. If you’ve ever been in a city or a college town, the outfits you see on Friday and Saturday nights are different than what you see on Tuesday morning.
 - b. There are night clothes, and there are church clothes.
2. When we are living in sin, we are indecent.
 - a. We aren’t clothed, we are naked and ashamed.
 - b. When we are living in sin, it is always nighttime.
 - c. It is always time to strip down, get comfortable, to live in such a way that no one else should see.
3. But the NIGHT is nearly over.
 - a. That means that Jesus is coming back, soon.
 - b. When Jesus returns, the Bible says that night shall be no more.
4. It’s time to get dressed, but not just any kind of clothing.
 1. But put on Jesus, put on His righteousness.
 2. Exchange your filthy rags for the robes of righteousness.
 3. Put away the partying clothes, the cheating clothes, the drinking clothes, the jealousy clothes, the envy, and PUT on Jesus.

C. Jesus clothes us with armor. Vs 12

1. I’m not sure if that makes women as happy to hear as it does men.
2. But put on armor sounds manly and purposeful.
 - a. The Romans would have pictured the Roman armor of their day.
 - b. I picture the new modern armor of our military.
 - c. But truth be told, the armor is the Spiritual armor of Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:10–18 (CSB)

¹⁰ Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and

blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. ¹³For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. ¹⁴Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, ¹⁵and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God. ¹⁸Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

3. We aren't fully dressed until we are prepared for spiritual warfare.
 - a. We don't put armor on top of pajamas.
 - b. We don't put armor on top of prom dresses.
4. We too often expect the Christian life to be marked by the absence of conflict.
 - a. But the Christian life is a life of spiritual warfare.
 - b. The Christian life is loving even when it is hard.
 - c. Honoring when the person is not honorable.
 - d. Paying taxes when the taxes are unfair.

Love has a Hard Side

A. A lot of us think of love in soft terms.

Love is grandparents scooping up the grandkids.

Love is a puppy, snuggling us after a hard day at work.

Love is a cat who...never mind, cats are incapable of love.

B. Love has a strength to it.

1. Growing up with two sisters, there was a family ritual that happened almost every day when they were younger.

- a. My mom brushing my sisters' hair.
- b. Sounds sweet.... but it was actually warfare.
- c. Long hair, messy tangles, a determined mother, and it was a wild time.

- d. Sometimes love is brushing the hair of ungrateful girls.
2. Love is a Dad who protects his family.
3. Love is a coach making us run laps when we don't fulfill our potential.
4. Love is a dog, protecting the people inside his house.
5. Love is a cat who....never mind.

C. Does it seem weird to you what Paul says next:

¹¹ Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

1. Wake up!
2. Get dressed!
3. Walk in decency!
4. Put away the deeds of darkness.
5. Put on armor!

D. For some, this doesn't sound like love.

1. But you know what it sounds like to me?
2. It sounds like a loving warning.
3. It's the sound of a firefighter running into a burning house to rescue a sleeping family.
4. The sound of a police officer running to the sound of gunfire in a crowded mall.
5. The sound of a dad getting chewed out by his teenager for telling her she can't date that boy.
6. The sound of a mom locking down the iPad to prevent them from harm.
7. The sound of a pastor saying, "The end is drawing near, and I want you to be ready."

Love Tells Us Get Ready

A. We weren't guaranteed today.

1. But here it is, and that means we have all been given a new chance.
2. No matter what happened last week, last night, or even this morning, the warning stands:
3. WAKE UP.
 - a. Our time is dark...but day is coming.
 - b. Our world is troubled...but salvation is coming.
 - c. And our calling is to live a life ready to meet Jesus and help others meet Jesus too.

B. That's why I can't live for my flesh.

1. My flesh wants to hate my neighbor.
2. My flesh wants to hold grudges.
3. My flesh wants to dishonor the elite, the rich, those who oppress us from positions of authority and governance
4. My flesh wants me to sin against my brother by sleeping with his wife.
5. My flesh wants me to sin and dishonor another by stealing from the blessings God has provided for them.
6. My flesh wants to live in covetousness and envy and jealousy, accusing God of being unfair with how He has distributed gifts, blessings, and opportunities.

C. My FLESH wants lots of things.

1. But I don't work for my flesh. I don't work to satisfy its desires.

2. We may pay our taxes and quit. We may give respect and honor where they are due and have no further obligation. But we can never say, “I have done all the loving I need do.” Love is a permanent obligation, a debt impossible to discharge.¹

When I walk in love, I walk in decency.

A. Remember the phrase, “all dressed up and no place to go!”?

1. The believer isn’t supposed to be dressed and prepped and hiding in the basement.
2. Instead, we are to walk in decency and to share the love of Jesus with the world.

B. Notice the “in”...relationship.

¹³Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy.

1. This word “in” is “a marker of close personal association-‘in, one with, in union with, joined closely to.’”

2. Paul tells us not to walk “in”...

- a. carousing and drunkenness.
- b. sexual impurity and promiscuity.
- c. quarreling and jealousy.

3. Don’t be in close personal association with these things.

- a. What does that look like in real life?
- b. I think we all must prayerfully discern what this looks like.
- c. But at the very least:

1. There will be places that you do not go because they provide for carousing, drunkenness, sexual impurity and promiscuity, and quarreling and jealousy.

¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 467–468.

2. There will be movies that you do not watch because they arouse these things in you.

3. There will be songs that you do not listen to or sing because they encourage the very things that we are to discard and throw away.

4. There will be people we do not associate with, because they tempt me to be the opposite of what Jesus wants me to be.

C. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.

1. Don't even pack those things in your bags, your carry-on, or anywhere you might be able to access.

2. NO PROVISION.

a. When I think of provision, I think of food.

b. Don't pack with you the food that will feed the flesh.

What do I do with this?

A. I must remember that Law doesn't change me, Love does.

1. If all you remember from today is a list of dos and don'ts, then we've missed it.

2. The only reason why I CAN leave behind impurity, sin, and the desires of my old life is that Jesus loves me.

3. People motivated by love go further than those motivated by fear.

4. There are places I don't go, shows I don't watch, and things I don't do because Jesus loves me.

a. Jesus has washed me clean; therefore, I don't want to get dirty.

b. The Law could only show me my true reflection.

c. Jesus came to wash us white as snow.

B. I must live like I'm on borrowed time.

1. Paul's warning to the Romans was that time is short and that salvation is near.

2. God tells time differently than us, but it's still true.

3. We aren't guaranteed tomorrow.

4. Jesus could come before dinner.
5. This time next week, we could have already hosted your funeral.
6. So don't live like repentance can wait till tomorrow.
 - a. Our tomorrow might begin in eternity and never end.
 - b. Live with urgency.

C. **Lastly, it's not too late to be made clean.**

1. Every Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' resurrection.
2. Every week, we are reminded that Jesus died, was buried, and arose from the grave so that we might live.
3. This morning, if your life doesn't reflect Jesus, if it is full of hate instead of love, marked by sin and despair, I have good news.
4. Jesus is willing and able to make you clean today, if you will ask and believe.

Prayer