

Introduction

1. Paul began the practical application section of Romans with a call to present our bodies (e.g. lives) as a living sacrifice by refusing to be conformed to the world and instead be transformed by a renewing of our minds
2. He then began giving us some practical examples of what this looks:
 - a. He encouraged us to not think too highly of ourselves but to recognize that every member of the body of Christ has a role to play
 - b. He spoke to us about what it means to love one another without hypocrisy, and to bless—rather than curse—those who mistreat and persecute us
 - c. Last week he reminded us to submit to governing authorities because all authority comes from God and is there for our protection
3. Regarding that week, you might say that he helped us understand our duty to government
4. This week, you might say that he is going to address our duty to one another (other believers)

A. The only debt we should own to others is the debt of love (8a-10)

1. Paul begins by using a double negative: lit. **“Owe nothing to no one except to love one another”** (8a)
 - a. The word for **“owe”** here means to be indebted to someone
 - 1) In this context, Paul has in mind an obligation or debt due as the result of sin or mistreatment against another person
 - 2) This is supported by v. 9 where Paul mentions a list of interpersonal sins from the Ten Commandments
 - 3) When we sin against one another it creates a debt so-to-speak—this is why forgiveness is necessary (which literally means to remove the guilt resulting from wrongdoing).
 - 4) Interesting that when we speak of bankruptcy, we often refer to forgiving financial debt
 - 5) So, the only thing we are to be indebted to one another in is love
 - b. What does agape (sincere appreciation or high regard for others) look like:
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a: **“4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails;”**
 - 2) It’s sacrificial:
 - a) John 3:16: **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”**
 - b) Ephesians 5:25-27: **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”**

- 3) This is the kind of love we owe one another:
 - a) Jesus commanded it (John 13:34): "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**"
 - b) John wrote that we are to love one another because God loves us and repeats the command to love one another multiple times in his letter (1 John 4:7-11): "**7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**"
 - c) Paul wrote that love is what binds us in unity (Colossians 3:14): "**Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.**"

2. Loving one another is important because it fulfills the Law (8b-10): "**for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.**"
 - a. Every sin is either a direct offense to God or a direct offense to another person:
 - 1) The first four commands in the Ten Commandments deal with direct offenses against God:
 - a) You shall have no other gods before Me
 - b) You shall not make idols
 - c) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
 - d) Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
 - 2) The remaining six commands deal with direct offenses against other people:
 - a) Honor your father and mother
 - b) You shall not murder
 - c) You shall not commit adultery
 - d) You shall not steal
 - e) You shall not bear false witness
 - f) You shall not covet

 - b. In v. 9 Paul specifically mentions four of these interpersonal commands in our passage today (adultery, murder, stealing and coveting) and says that these can all be avoided if we love our neighbors as ourselves: 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.**"
 - 1) Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:8 that we are to "**keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.**"
 - 2) Paul tells us the reason why in v. 10 of our passage today: "**Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**"
 - a) Love does right rather than wrong
 - b) Love does good rather than evil
 - c) Love builds up rather than tears down
 - d) Love encourages rather than discourages

- e) Love heals rather than hurts
- c. In some respects, God made it easy to obey his commands:
 - 1) There are 613 commandments or laws in the Old Testament
 - 2) God could have simply left the Israelites with a check list and said, "Here! Good luck!"
 - 3) But instead, immediately after He gave them the Law, He told them keeping it would not be **"too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach"** (Deuteronomy 30:11) if they would only **"love the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him..."** (Deuteronomy 30:20)
 - 4) He was saying what Jesus said, that loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself were the two greatest commandments because they fulfilled the entire law (Matthew 22:36-40)
- d. So, if we want to please God and fulfill all that He commands us to do in regard to one another, we can do that by genuinely loving one another

B. Paul encourages us to love one another with a sense of urgency in light of the second coming of Jesus Christ (13:11-14)

1. English translations are split fairly evenly over how to translate the Greek kai touto ("**and this**") at the beginning of v. 11
 - a) Some translate it as **"besides this"** (ESV and Holman) implying that Paul is moving on to something in addition to love (e.g. "in addition to love...do this next thing")
 - b) Others translate it as **"Do this "** (NASB) or **"and do this"** (NET, NIV, NKJV)
 - c) The later seems most appropriate, and indicates that Paul is still discussing loving one another but now encourages them to "do this" (love one another) with a sense of urgency
2. The catalyst for this urgency is understanding that we are getting closer to the return of our savior, Jesus Christ (11): **"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. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 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 (instead) put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."**
 - a) Paul encourages us to love one another **"because you know the time"**
 - b) Paul describes this time as a time to **"awaken from sleep"** and a time when our **"salvation is nearer to us than when we believed"**
 - c) Some scholars believe that Paul is referring to the completion or finishing our salvation, e.g. our glorification
 - d) However, this passage is packed with language that is used elsewhere to refer to Christ's return:
 - 1) See 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10 where Paul uses the same three metaphors of sleep/wake, day/night and light/darkness
 - 2) The imagery of being or saying awake is used to refer to remaining alert and being ready for the return of Jesus (Matthew 24:42; Revelation 3:2-3; 16:15)
 - 3) Paul's charge to behave properly and avoid sin also fits the context of Christ' return better than it does the concept of glorification

- e) So, when Paul says that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed, he is likely referring to the salvation that Christ brings at His return to all who are found in Him—just as the author of Hebrews wrote (Hebrews 9:18): **“so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”**
- 3. So, knowing that each day brings us closer to the return of Christ, we should be motivated to live in according with all that Jesus commanded, and in light of this passage today especially His command to love one another—see 2 Peter 3:3-12, esp. 11-12

Conclusion

- 1. Paul began our passage today with the call to owe one another nothing except to love each other
- 2. And the love to which he calls us is the same love that God displays toward us:
 - a. It’s the love of the Gospel where God gave up His only Son to die for us so that we might live
 - b. It’s a love that does no wrong to others because it it’s kind, is not jealous, braggadocios, arrogant, unbecoming, self-seeking, provoked or vengeful
 - c. It’s a love that forgets when wronged and bears all things
- 3. He encourages us to love in this way because it fulfills all of God’s command
- 4. And finally, he encourages us to do this with a sense of urgency, knowing that each day brings us closer to seeing our savior, Jesus Christ
- 5. One last note...remember how Paul started all of this—we are to be a people that lives our lives as sacrifices to the Lord, rejecting conformity with the world and instead living transformed lives
- 6. Loving one another is part of living that transformed life, and being a living sacrifice