

5. Put on Jesus – vs. 14

If you have not done so, mark Romans 13:14 in your Bible for it forms the fitting conclusion to the section that began in 12:1. The call to offer your body as a living sacrifice is met with the counsel to clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you want a solution to the question, “How do I live for God?” The answer is to daily clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ. What you wear is your identity – the impression you give to people. If you put on Christ like a royal robe he will be the defining impression of your life.

Application

A. The great theologian Augustine came to faith through this verse by Divine revelation. He was tormented by his sins. He despised himself as he saw others rise up and soar on wings of faith. In disgust he put down the Bible and walked in his friend’s garden. In his own words:

“I tore my hair and hammered my forehead with my fists; I locked my fingers and hugged my knees . . . I flung myself down beneath a fig-tree and gave way to the tears which now streamed from my eyes . . .”

In this condition Augustine heard some children in a near-by house chanting these Latin words, “Tolle, lege! Tolle, lege!” “Take up and read! Take up and read.” He hurried back to where he had left his Bible and the first thing his eyes fell on was Romans 13:12-14. Augustine says that at that moment he opened his life to Christ. He had known of him, but now he surrendered to him. His life was never the same.

B. That old hymn asks the question, “Would you be free from the burden of sin? Would you o’er evil a victory win? Would you be free from your passion and pride? Would you live daily his praises to sing? There wonderful power in the blood – the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ?”

Let God’s freedom formula work in you – Clothe yourself with Christ. Daily let him cover you with his cleansing, powerful, life giving blood. Surrender to him, will you do it now?

Where do you need new freedom?

What step could you take to allow God to work in you?

“Are You in Debt? 2/14/10
Romans 13:8-14

RMBC
Pastor Dennis

Introduction

A. When I was 16 I got a summer job for a farmer with a nice, new John Deere tractor. I had already driven tractor for four summers using old, junkie equipment so this was going to be fun. This tractor had a radio (wow!), a buggy-top umbrella, and the cultivator that I would pull most of the summer had markers to show me where to put the front wheel. I was in “tractor heaven.”

The first day my boss, Henry, showed me the field, gave me some driving tips, and his last words were, “Whatever you do, don’t get too close to that old granary. You’ll tear the markers off the cultivator.” Guess what? By 10:00 I had gotten too close to the old granary and tore the marker off the cultivator. I had two more hours of driving until noon. Boy did I dread seeing Henry’s truck drive up.

B. How many of you have experienced life like that? You failed someone or owe someone and you dread the next time you have to face them. It happens at school and it happens in families. It happens in business and it happens in all kinds of relationships. Sometimes it is an accident, but sometimes we make really poor choices. Paul’s advice is full of wisdom, “Owe no man anything except the debt of love.” If only that was all we owed anyone. Let’s read Romans 13:8-14.

Our God of Freedom

A. There is nothing quite as sweet as being free – from debt, from guilt, from fear, from punishment, from feeling obligated to someone. Freedom puts a spring in your step and a gleam in your eye. Some of you long for the feeling of freedom. Some of you are carrying a ton of stuff that weighs you down like a load of bricks. Back in the 50’s there was a folk song titled *Sixteen Tons* that told of a coal miner who could never get ahead in life:

Sixteen tons, and what do you get?

Another day older and deeper in debt.

Saint Peter don’t you call me cause I can’t go.

I owe my soul to the company store.

B. The poor guy didn’t even want Saint Peter to call him to heaven he was so deeply in debt. He owed everybody. Well guess what! God is the God of freedom. To the Israelites out in the dessert he said, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt; out of the land of slavery.” (Ex. 20:2) That is “Hebrew” for, “I am the God of freedom. I know how to set people free! Want to be free? Follow me.” Romans 13:8-14 shows us God’s freedom formula. You want to be free?

God's Freedom Formula

1. Stay out of debt – vs. 8a

It is next to impossible to be in debt and be truly free. I don't mean a mortgage for real property where the value of the home or the land is greater than the debt. Some education debt can help you gain something of real value. There is a proper time to take out a loan. But how often do we “buy things we don't need with money we don't have, to impress people we don't know?” That's a formula for failure. If you are in that kind of debt you are not free – cut up your credit cards and start getting out of debt.

The women who went to the Dominican Republic last week saw first hand the value of poverty. The people they worked with are actually quite happy because their poverty provides a simplicity that brings freedom. See, if you don't have a lot of stuff than nothing breaks and nothing needs to be repaired. If you don't have it no one can steal it and you don't have to worry about it. Debt is a great enemy of freedom. You want to be free? Be debt free.

2. Major on love – vs. 8b-10

This one phrase “Love is the fulfillment of the law,” could transform your life. Judaism had the same 10 commandments we have in Exodus 20. Paul mentions the second half of those commandments – the ones dealing with our relationship to other people (the first five point to our relationship with God).

But the rabbis came up with the Torah (an oral tradition of what the scriptures mean) and in the Torah there are 613 commandments. A faithful Jew was obligated to learn all 613, and then study the commentaries on the commandments, know their meanings, and later read the commentaries on the commentaries (It was almost as complex some church by-laws).

Thankfully Paul had the insight from God to teach us that life need not be nearly that complex. We can actually have a singular focus in which we don't need to keep trying to keep the 10 commandments. Does that sound like heresy? Not if we truly make love our aim, because when we major on loving one another we actually end up keeping the 10 commandments.

Jesus modeled this way of living for us. The Gospels never portray Jesus in a hurry trying to catch up with a crowd, catch a ride, or catch anything. He was so full of the Father's love that when a woman caught in adultery was brought to him he had time to minister to her. Others were planning a funeral, but he had time to raise the young girl to life. The disciples were off to town, but Jesus had time to talk to a woman at the well. That's how love works.

I cannot over emphasize the meaning and power of this section of scripture. We can only imagine the changes if people lived by the law of love. If we would seek to love every person we meet, I believe we could change our whole community. Think about that for awhile – we could start a revolution.

3. Watch the clock – vs. 11-12a

Now this is not a contradiction to slowing down and loving people. What Paul is teaching us here is that those who are captured by God and his love have a special urgency about them. They are not frantic, but they are not lazy either.

I believe Paul has the return of Jesus in mind when he refers to the night being almost over and the day approaching. Jesus once said, “I must work the works for my Father while it is day. The night is coming when no man can work.” It is day whenever Jesus is here and it's night whenever he is not present. We are lights in the darkness of the night in which we live, but we know that the light, the Morning Star, Jesus our Lord, could appear at any time. Are we ready?

Back in May 1984 *National Geographic* featured the terrible destruction brought on by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 70. Pompeii and Herculeneum were wiped out as people were trapped in the middle of their daily routines – the rich in their luxury baths, the slaves at their toil, even pets dying in the volcanic ash and super-heated gases.

The saddest part is that these people didn't have to die. The volcano sent up a plume of smoke and the earth experienced a series of shakes and rumbles days before the whole mountain erupted. If only they had been able to “understand the present time.” None of us is guaranteed tomorrow. Know that your salvation is nearer now than ever before. Live ready -- expect the Return of Christ.

4. Put on the light – vs. 12b-13

Paul uses language in the last several verses that picture someone getting up in the morning. What do you do? Put on your clothes. The original words here are used of taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes which Paul calls the “armor of light.” He uses the word “decently” which was a word for noble people and how they dressed in public.

Every day, when you get up, you get to choose to dress for Christ or dress for the devil; dress for the day or dress for night; dress for light or dress for darkness. Then Paul uses six words to describe three areas of life:

Orgies and drunkenness: Anything that dulls your senses and keeps you from thinking clearly goes against what God desires. Last week the city of New Orleans held a celebration for the victorious football team – Mob mentality is like an orgy and joining in that kind of mindset leads you away from God.

Sexual immorality and debauchery: These terms point to things that have become obsessions in our world. Debauchery is when you don't even care what people think or how you look. It's gross.

Dissension and jealousy: Any of us can slip into conversations and attitudes that lead to broken relationships. Phil. 4:8 calls us to think on things true, noble, right, pure, lovely, excellent, admirable

Introduction

Recall a time when you dreaded facing someone:

Was it due to an accident?

Was it due to a poor choice you made?

Paul’s advice: “Owe no man anything except the debt of _____

Our God of Freedom

Nothing is quite as sweet as being truly _____
Exodus 20:2 ““I am the Lord your God who brought you out of
Egypt; out of the land of slavery.”

God is the _____ on freedom.

God’s Freedom Formula

1. Stay out of _____ vs. 8a
2. Major on _____ vs. 8b-10
3. Watch the _____ vs. 11-12a
4. Put on the _____ vs. 12b-13
5. Put on _____ vs. 14

Application

Would you be free from _____?
(Where would you ask God to give you freedom?)
(What step could you take to allow God to work in your life?)