

EXPLANATION OF 45TH BIBLEBOOK

ROMANS 13 (April A.D. 67)

INTRODUCTION

Romans 12 to 16 emphasises *practice* and deals with *practical holiness or sanctification*.

Romans 12 taught the Christian's duty with respect to his body and mind and with respect to all kinds of relationships. Romans 13 teaches the Christian's duty with respect to those who have authority, the government, the neighbour and the realms of darkness and light. Obedience to this part of God's will helps the Christian to be and live in accordance with what is good in God's eyes, well-pleasing to him and perfect for reaching his goals (12:2)!

OUTLINE

Theme. The behaviour of the believer towards those in authority, the neighbour and Christ

- (I) 13:1-7. The behaviour of the believer towards those in authority.
Sanctification (based on justification) consists of submission to all God's established authority relationships.
- The seven authority-submission institutions of God in the Bible (13:1-2).
 - The Jews and the government of Rome (13:3-7).
 - The limits of every civil government (13:3-5).
 - The Christian's duty with respect to taxes and revenues (13:6-7).
- (II) 13:8-10. The behaviour of the believer towards the neighbour.
Sanctification (based on justification) is above all characterised by love.
- The meaning of the word 'law' in Romans (13:8).
 - The Christian duty with respect to one's neighbour (13:8-10).
- (III) 13:11-14. The behaviour of the believer towards Christ.
Sanctification (based on justification) is urgent, because the end of human history is very close.
- Christians have the duty to know the time in which they live (12:11-12a).
 - Christians have the duty to put off everything that is connected with darkness and put on everything that is connected with the light (13:12b-14).

EXPLANATION

(I) 13:1-7. The behaviour of the believer towards those in authority.

13:1. Every person (soul) must *constantly* submit (be in subjection)(vmpp) to the bearers of authority¹, for there is (vipa) no authority except by (the agent, cause) God; and those (the bearers of authority) that exist (now in power) (vppa) are set up (+vipa) (ordained, arranged, assigned, appointed)(vprp+)² by God (the perfect tense emphasises the state or condition).

13:2. Consequently, he who *again and again* sets himself against (resists, opposes)³ (vppm) the authority, has taken his stand (as a rebel, to resist)⁴ (vira) against the ordinance⁵ of God, and those who have taken their stand against (vpra) (God's ordinance) will *certainly* bring (vifd) judgement (not necessarily damnation) on themselves.

13:3. For rulers⁶ *never* hold (vipa) terror to (i.e. never are to be feared for) good conduct (good works), but to bad conduct (works). Do you (note the singular) want (vipa) to be free from fear (vnppn) for (the bearer of) authority? (Then) you must always do (vmppa) what is right (good) and you will receive⁷ (vifa) praise (approval) from her (the bearer of authority).

13:4. For she is (vipa) God's servant to (do)⁸ you good. But if you *continue* to do (vsppa) wrong, you must *continually* fear (vmppn), for she (the authority or the person with authority) does not *continually* bear (vipa) the sword in vain (without a cause)⁹. For she *continually* is (vipa) God's servant, an avenger (punisher) bringing (God's) wrath upon the one who *keeps on* practising (vppa) evil.

13:5. Therefore, it is necessary to *continually* be in subjection (vnpp), not only for the sake of (avoiding God's) wrath, but also for the sake of (your own) conscience.

13:6. This is also why you (note the return to the plural) *again and again* pay (to fulfil)¹⁰ (vipa) taxes, for when they (the authorities) *faithfully* persevere (devote themselves, spend much time)¹¹ (vppa) to this end, they are (vipa) servants (ministers)¹² of God.

¹ G: exousiai huperechousai

² G: tassó

³ G: antitassó

⁴ G: anthistémi

⁵ G: diatagé

⁶ G: archontes

⁷ G: hexó is future tense of echó, to have

⁸ G: eis to

⁹ G: eiké

¹⁰ G: teleó

¹¹ G: proskartereó

¹² G: leitourgos

13:7. You must pay¹³ (vmaa) whatever you owe (them): to whom tax (is due) (pay) tax¹⁴; to whom custom (duty, toll) (is due) (pay) custom¹⁵; to whom respect (literally: fear) (is due) (pay) respect¹⁶; to whom honour (is due) (pay) honour¹⁷.

a. The seven authority-submission institutions of God in the Bible (13:1-2).

Sanctification (based on justification) consists of submission to all God's established authority relationships.

Paul says that every person (soul) must submit to the governing authorities on earth. The plural clearly refers not only to the civil government, but to *all the seven authority-submission relationships instituted by God on earth. No one, including the civil government, is exempt from this subjection. These seven authority-submission institutions are divine institutions and not human institutions! According to the Bible authority does not rest on the agreement or consent of people, but only on God!* According to the Bible there are no democratic elections in politics, in the Church or in the family to determine who has the democratic majority and consequently who has the power. Subjection to all God's governing authorities is required and resistance or rebellion is a violation of God's law and meets with God's judgement! However, submission to the governing authorities is subject to what is right and just in God's eyes (God's law, not to man's opinions) and limited to the areas of authority of each governing authority.

The seven authority-submission relationships are the following:

(1) God in Christ has unlimited authority over all people and everything¹⁸. God is our Creator, Sustainer and Goal¹⁹ and as such has absolute right and authority to determine how we should live and our destiny.

(2) Man has limited authority over God's creation: land, trees, plants and animals²⁰. God has given man the authority, responsibility as well as accountability to be a steward over the earth and all its resources²¹. Man may not destroy, pollute, misuse, abuse or waste the resources on earth. He may not be cruel towards animals²² or to man.

(3) The man has limited authority over the woman in family leadership²³ and in church leadership²⁴. God created male and female and God also instituted the marriage relationship²⁵. God has given both the husband and the wife authority, namely, to serve one another, that is, to submit to each other's God-given service²⁶. The husband must serve his wife and family with love, respect²⁷ and in exemplary leadership. For example, he may never beat his wife, but instead be willing to sacrifice his life for her. And the wife must serve her husband with love²⁸, respect and being his best helper²⁹. She must be submissive to her husband in the way the Bible teaches³⁰. For example, she gives her husband all kinds of suggestions and possible practical help. The man has limited authority over his wife and also over woman in the official meetings of the congregation. In the Church the elders are always men, but in secular life, leaders may also be women³¹.

(4) The parents have limited authority over their children that are still under age³². The children must do everything their parents say, as long as it is not against the Bible³³. When parents demand something that is wrong in God's eyes, the children must refuse with respect. Children stop to be 'children', when they become mature adults, especially when they leave their parent's home³⁴ (to study or work) or when they marry³⁵. It is especially the task of the

¹³ G: apodidómi

¹⁴ G: phoros

¹⁵ G: telos

¹⁶ G: phobos

¹⁷ G: timé

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18; James 4:7

¹⁹ Romans 11:36

²⁰ Genesis 1:28; 2:15-16; Psalm 8:4-8

²¹ Genesis 1:28

²² Proverbs 12:10

²³ Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-6

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:33-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 3:2-5

²⁵ Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:4-6

²⁶ Ephesians 5:21

²⁷ 1 Peter 3:7

²⁸ Titus 2:4-5

²⁹ Genesis 2:18

³⁰ 1 Peter 3:1-6

³¹ Judges 4:4, queen, prime minister, director, lawyer, doctor, police, etc.

³² Ephesians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:20-21; Proverbs 22:6; 23:22-25

³³ Luke 2:51

³⁴ Mark 3:31-35

³⁵ Matthew 19:5

father to bring up his children in the instruction and training of the Lord³⁶, to teach them truth, wisdom, understanding³⁷ and to exercise discipline³⁸. He may therefore never become ‘the absent father’! The Bible especially warns the father not to anger or discourage his children, for example by being authoritarian or bossy³⁹.

(5) The government of a country has limited authority over its citizens⁴⁰. The government has the duty and authority to do good to its subjects and to punish the evildoers. Of course, to determine what is ‘good’ and what is ‘evil’ is not the prerogative of the government leaders or the culture of a country, but of the God of the Bible! The subjects must honour the leaders when they deserve it and must pay all their taxes. In 1 Peter 2:13-17 we read that the Christians must do good in their country and thus silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Illegitimate authority, that is, authority which clearly violates God’s commandments in the Bible or authority which goes beyond its limits, must be resisted respectfully⁴¹.

(6) The employer has limited authority over his employees⁴². Employers must be fair, not show favouritism and not threaten their employees. On the other hand, employees must do what their employers say, unless it is displeasing to God. They must also respect their employers and do their work wholeheartedly.

(7) The elders of a church/congregation have limited authority over the members⁴³. Christian leaders must lead by example, prayer, teaching the Bible, love, correction and discipline. And the Christians should follow by obedience and respect.

God has instituted all these seven authority-submission relationships and man may not change them. All authority-submission relationships, except the first, have specific, but limited duties and also limited authority. All authority must be exercised in the biblical way.

b. The Jews and the government of Rome (13:3-7).

In Romans 13:3-7 Paul is speaking about the government or the civil authorities of a country, because he mentions bearing the sword and paying taxes and revenues. Government officials occupy themselves with the behaviour of citizens. The authority of the government is limited to the areas of their responsibilities: the maintenance of law and order, the maintenance of justice and mercy, good functioning and honesty in the areas of agriculture, commerce, business, finance, defence, transport, communication, environment, etc. The government has no authority to regulate people’s relationship to God, except extremism, jihadism, occultism.

The government must realise that it must serve God and not their own interests (power, wealth, honour). Whoever receives authority from God remains responsible and accountable to God!

This teaching is very important, because all Christians in the world live under certain governments. In the letter to the Romans this was also important, because in the Christian church at Rome, a considerable portion of the members were Jewish Christians. Many Jews in Paul’s day were looking for an opportunity to shake off the yoke of subjection to Rome. They were eager to become politically independent once more. They wanted to have their own king and own governing authorities⁴⁴.

The New Testament revelation shows that the Jews questioned the rights of the Roman government under which they lived⁴⁵. The Jews tended to take pride in their independence⁴⁶. Among the Jews there were rebellious movements⁴⁷. The Romans associated the Christians with the Jews. Even secular history records the restlessness of the Jews under the Roman yoke. The Roman emperor, Claudius, actually expelled the Jews from Rome in about A.D. 49, “for rioting at the instigation of Chrestus”⁴⁸. Consequently, Christians got blamed for every rebellion amongst the Jews. So it was important for Christians to avoid every kind of revolutionary plans and acts. And it was important for Christians to obey the Roman authorities with respect in the execution of their responsibilities.

When this edict was no longer in force, many Jews returned to Rome. The apostle Paul therefore wrote in 67 A.D. that Christians must submit themselves to the governing authorities in Rome. The reason why Christians must submit to the governing authorities is that God himself has established all governing authorities.

³⁶ Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6; 23:22-25

³⁷ Proverbs 4:1-7

³⁸ Proverbs 3:11-12; 13:24; 19:18; 20:30; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15,17

³⁹ Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21

⁴⁰ Romans 13:3-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17

⁴¹ Acts 4:19-20; 5:29

⁴² Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-4:1; 1 Peter 2:18-23

⁴³ Acts 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7,17

⁴⁴ John 6:15; 8:33; Acts 1:6; 5:36-37

⁴⁵ Matthew 22:16-17; Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21-22

⁴⁶ John 8:33

⁴⁷ Acts 5:36-37

⁴⁸ Suetonius in ‘Claudius 25’; cf. Acts 18:2

Romans 13 also refutes wrong assumptions with regard to Christian freedom. Jesus Christ is LORD, but that does not mean that Christians are free from every other kind of authority in the world. On the contrary, in the Bible God delegates authority to different people and institutions. Christians are commanded to submit to all God's ordained or appointed authority institutions. Consequently, Christians also have certain responsibilities towards the government set over them⁴⁹.

Christians also suffer under the unjust actions of certain governments⁵⁰. That is why God also sets a limit to all human institutions of authority, including the civil government. When there is a conflict between what the civil government demands and what Jesus Christ demands, Christians must obey Christ and respectfully resist the civil government⁵¹!

c. The limits of every civil government (13:3-5).

The civil government is God's servant to do good to its citizens (13:3-4a). God may use the civil government to do good to Christians by for example creating circumstances in which the Church "may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness"⁵².

But it is not the prerogative of any government (civil or military) to deal with all kinds of sin in their country. The government may only deal with sin registered in the actions which violate the order that the government is appointed to maintain and to promote.

The civil government must not bear the sword for nothing (13:4b). Part of the duty and authority of the civil government is 'to bear the sword'. The 'sword' is not merely the sign of the government's authority, but also the sign of the government's right to wield the sword in the infliction of that which a sword does. In the Bible 'the sword' is so often associated with the instrument that executes death, for example in defence of unlawful attacks and invasions⁵³. This includes executing the death penalty⁵⁴!

A government must hold terror for those citizens who continue to do wrong! The government is a servant of God, whether it acknowledges the God of the Bible or not. The government must function as an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. "When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong"⁵⁵! When the authorities are permissive or tolerant, crime multiplies and citizens are abused and get hurt! If a government for example does not act against senseless violence and injustice, God will direct his wrath, not only against the wicked people and wicked governments⁵⁶, but also against the passive and unjust governments!

Submission to the civil government is not without qualification. Paul is not making a theoretical statement, but is dealing with the governing authorities in actual existence in Rome. On the one hand, the New Testament teaches the duties of Christians towards the governing authorities. 1 Timothy 2:1 teaches that Christians should pray for all people in authority. Titus 3:1 teaches that Christians should submit to rulers and authorities by being obedient and by doing good in a peaceable manner and without slander. On the other hand, the governing authorities often persecute Christians because they proclaim the gospel and help the poor, helpless and oppressed.

Therefore the Bible has to draw a clear line between when to obey the governing authorities and when to disobey them. A Christian's loyalty to Jesus Christ demands obedience in one situation and disobedience to the government in another situation. Obedience is outlined in Romans 13:1-7! Disobedience is outlined in Acts 4:19-20 and 5:29. As a general rule, all Christians should obey the governing authorities in everything that is not against the teachings of the Bible. However, *when the governing authorities overstep their authority and demand that Christians do things that are forbidden by God, or forbid Christians to do things that are commanded by God, Christians should gently refuse to obey the governing authorities!* Whenever there is conflict between the requirements of men and the commands of God, then the word of the apostle Peter in Acts 5:29 must take effect, "We must obey God rather than man."

People should submit to the governing authorities because of fear and a good conscience (13:5). Christians should submit to the governing authorities not only because they fear punishment, but also because they want to maintain a good conscience towards God⁵⁷. Christians are to subject themselves to the governing authorities out of a sense of obligation to God! This is God's expressed will⁵⁸. Therefore, submission to the governing authorities is a part of sanctification.

⁴⁹ Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-3; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17

⁵⁰ cf. Revelation 13

⁵¹ Acts 4:19-20; 5:29

⁵² 1 Timothy 2:2

⁵³ Matthew 26:52-53; Luke 21:24; Acts 12:2; 16:27; Hebrews 11:34,37; Revelation 13:10

⁵⁴ cf. Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:12; Numbers 35:16-18,30-33; Deuteronomy 19:11-13; 2 Kings 14:5-6; Matthew 26:52; Luke 21:24; Acts 12:2; 16:27; Hebrews 11:34,37; Revelation 13:10

⁵⁵ Ecclesiastes 8:11

⁵⁶ Daniel 2:21a,44; 4:25; Revelation 18:4-10,20

⁵⁷ Acts 23:1; 24:16; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 4:2; 5:11; 1 Timothy 1:5; 3:9; 2 Timothy 1:3

⁵⁸ 1 Peter 2:13

d. The Christian's duty with respect to taxes and revenues (13:6-7).

Christians must pay taxes to the government (13:6-7a). Because the governing authorities give their full time to their task, they need to be supported financially. Also the governing authorities must eat and live. Because the governing authorities do good to the people in society by developing education of children and adults, by maintaining justice and good order through the courts of law and by developing towns and cities with streets and parks, they need money to do all this good. Because the governing authorities must fight crime and corruption, punish the evildoers in society and keep law and order in the society, they need to be supported by Christians. That is why God commands all people, including Christians, to pay their taxes and customs to the governing authorities. 'Taxes' are levied on persons or on property gained or possessed⁵⁹ and 'customs' are levied on imported and exported goods, that is, on business transactions. The payment of taxes and customs is not a tyrannical imposition of the government, but the necessary and proper participation on the part of the subjects in the support of government.

Christians must show respect and give honour to the government (13:7b). While verse 3 speaks of 'fear' with regard to punishment, verse 7 speaks of 'fear' in the sense of respect (veneration).

Christians have the duty, not only to pay the governing authorities taxes and customs, but also respect and honour. Christians should show respect to all people, but especially to those in authority. Christians should honour the governing authorities when they perform their duties in a good way.

Not only citizens have the duty to support, respect and honour the governing authorities, but also the governing authorities have the duty to perform their task in accordance to God's laws and standards. The governing authorities do not have absolute power or absolute rights. They do not own power and authority, but their responsibilities together with its accompanying power and authority have been entrusted to them in order to execute on behalf of God. Therefore *the governing authorities are also accountable to God for how they perform these tasks*. On the final judgement day, also the governing authorities will have to give an account to God of how they have executed their duties.

And on the final judgement day, all people will also have to give an account to God of how they have paid or not paid their taxes and how they have shown respect or not shown respect to the governing authorities.

(II) 13:8-10. The behaviour of the believer towards the neighbour.

13:8. You must never owe (vmpa) anyone anything, except to continually love (vnpa) one another. For he who continually loves (vppa) his fellowman has absolutely fulfilled (vira) the law (the Ten Commandments).

13:9. For this: "Do not commit adultery (vmaa/vifa)", "Do not murder" (vmaa/vifa), "Do not steal" (vmaa/vifa), "Do not covet" (vmaa/vifa), and whatever other commandment (there may be), is summed up⁶⁰ (vipp) in this one word: "You must continually love (vmpa/vifa) your neighbour (fellowman)⁶¹ as yourself.

13:10. Love never does⁶² (vipn) wrong to its neighbour. Therefore the fulfilment of the law (is) love.

Sanctification (based on justification) is above all characterised by love.

a. The meaning of the word 'law' in Romans (13:8).

Paul has taught much about the law. It is noteworthy that Paul uses the word *law* with several different meanings.

The division of the law in the Old Testament period. In general, God's law may be divided into three parts.

- **The moral law in the Old Testament.** *God's requirements for living as a believer* are expressed in God's moral commandments. They consist of the Ten Commandments and all other moral laws in the Bible⁶³. The moral laws in the Old Testament period are still valid in the New Testament period.
- **The ceremonial law in the Old Testament.** *God's requirements for approaching him and worshipping him* were expressed in God's ceremonial (ritual) laws. They consisted of laws with respect to holy people (priests and Levites); holy places (tabernacle and temple); holy times (Sabbath days and religious festivals); and holy actions (sacrifices, circumcision, clean foods, ablutions, first-born, first fruits, tithes, etc). The ceremonial laws have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ at his first coming⁶⁴ and have been cancelled⁶⁵ and abrogated⁶⁶. They may not be re-introduced into the Church.
- **The civil law in the Old Testament.** *God's requirements for the theocratic nation of Israel during the Old Testament period* were expressed in social (civil) laws. These consisted of laws concerning the kings, the judges, wars, property, marriage, punishments, etc. Because the theocratic nation of Israel was continued and enlarged to comprise the Kingdom of God consisting of believers from all the nations in the world, the civil laws of the nation

⁵⁹ Luke 20:22-25

⁶⁰ G: anakephalaioó

⁶¹ G: ho plésion

⁶² G: ergazomai

⁶³ Matthew 22: 37-40; Mark 12:30-31

⁶⁴ Matthew 5:17

⁶⁵ Colossians 2:14

⁶⁶ Ephesians 2:15

of Israel have been replaced by the principles of the Kingdom of God as taught in Matthew 5 to 7 and in all the parables of Jesus Christ about the Kingdom of God.

The different meanings of the law in the New Testament period.

- The law is God's absolute condition for salvation and condemnation. The law is God's absolute requirement and condition for salvation (justification and sanctification) and judgement (condemnation). Because God is 100% righteous and 100% holy, he demands that all people live 100% righteous and holy lives and he demands that all transgressions be 100% judged and punished.

God's law has been revealed to all people in the world, in their hearts and consciences (2:14-15) and they know that violating these laws means death (1:32). All people will be judged by their deeds/works in the light of what they know concerning God's law (2:12)⁶⁷. Every human being lives in the sphere in which God's law operates and has relevance (3:19-20). Because all people have sinned, they fall short of God's requirement (3:21).

The law condemns all people as guilty, silences all their arguments and holds them accountable to God. Therefore the law cannot justify or save anyone⁶⁸.

- The law is the Old Testament Scriptures. The law is the Old Testament Scriptures, because it contains God's special revelation, his words and actions, and his will and requirements. Already the law as the Old Testament Scriptures revealed that God's righteousness is attained, not by works, but by faith (3:21-22; 4:3-8). Previously the Old Testament Scriptures were available only to the Jews (2:12), but since the first coming of Christ the Old and New Testaments Scriptures are available in very many languages to Jews and Gentiles alike.
- The law is God's absolute condition for sanctification. The word *law* is also used of the moral law or the Ten Commandments and as such has several functions.
 - The moral law *reveals what sin is* (7:7) – symbol: a mirror.
 - The moral law *activates sin in the sinful nature of man* (7:8-9) – symbol: an 'on' switch. Apart from the moral law, sin living in the sinful nature of man is dead or inactive. However, when people consciously consider the moral law or Ten Commandments, which reveals what is right and what is wrong in God's eyes, sin dwelling in their sinful natures springs alive and becomes active. This generally happens just before, during and after a person is converted.
 - The whole written Law of Moses, the whole organised system of the Old Testament (including the historical books) was added (in about 1407 B.C.), to cause man *to realise the extent and ugliness of sin, sin's consequences (death) and man's need for salvation* (5:20)⁶⁹ – symbol: a magnifying glass. The more knowledge man has of the law, the greater is his responsibility (4:15). The more the law works in the heart and mind of man, the more man's aversion against God is aroused and causes him to transgress God's righteous commandments (7:8,11,13). Thus, the only influence of the law in the time between Adam and Christ was to *multiply transgressions and sins*. It definitely did not function as the means of gaining righteousness!
 - The moral law *silences every argument of man against God and holds the whole world accountable to God* (3:19) – symbol: a judge.
 - The moral law or the Ten Commandments teach Christians *how to live a life that pleases God, that is, how to live a life of love* (13:8-10) – symbol: a roadmap. Because the time of the end of human history and the complete salvation of Christians is nearing fast, sanctification is an urgent matter!

b. The Christian duty with respect to one's neighbour (13:8-10).

The emphasis in this passage is not on financial or material debts, but on *the obligation of every Christian to love his neighbour*. This passage teaches that to love one's neighbour is also a part of sanctification.

The four forms of love.

(1) The 'love' of which is spoken here is self-sacrificial love, called 'agapé' in Greek. It is the kind of love which only the God of the Bible possesses as his nature⁷⁰. It is the kind of love which can only come from the God of the Bible⁷¹. It is the love demanded by God⁷². It is the love that is poured out into human hearts when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the heart and life of a believer (5:5). It is the kind of love that is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. It is the love that is distinguished from the three other forms of love that are given to natural man at his creation.

(2) The love between a husband and a wife, called 'sexual love' (G: erós)

(3) The love between parents and children, called 'affection' (G: storgé).

(4) The love between friends, called 'friendship' (G: philia).

⁶⁷ Luke 12:47-48

⁶⁸ Galatians 2:16; 3:10-11; 5:4; James 2:10

⁶⁹ Galatians 3:24

⁷⁰ 1 John 4:8

⁷¹ 1 John 4:7

⁷² Mark 12:30-31

The three forms of love in natural man are severely limited due to the fact that *natural man has a sinful nature*. Affection can degenerate into not wanting to let go of each other and can develop into an unhealthy dependence on each other. Friendship can degenerate into excluding others, partiality and discrimination. Erotic love can degenerate into every form of sexual immorality: polygamy/polyandry, sex before marriage, adultery, prostitution, rape, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, paedophilia, etc. These three forms of love in natural man can only be transformed and developed positively when natural man is born-again.

To love one's neighbour is a continuing obligation for Christians. *Love* is not regarded as a debt that Christians have not yet paid. Love is also not regarded as an inexhaustible debt, a debt that can never be fully paid. Paul is simply reminding the Christians that love is *a continual obligation*.

To love one's neighbour is the fulfilment of the law. In this passage, Paul uses the word 'law' in the sense of the moral law of God, which is summarised in the Ten Commandments, of which Paul quotes four. This means that *the Ten Commandments have permanent and abiding relevance for Christians. They express examples of what love really is.* They are the norms in accordance with which love operates. They teach Christians how to live a life that pleases God, that is, how to live a life of love⁷³. Paul deals with love towards people. He has inter-personal relationships in view.

'Love is the fulfilment of the law' means that *no law can be fulfilled apart from love*⁷⁴! The Ten Commandments cannot be fulfilled without 'love'! It is only through love that Christians can fulfil the demands which God revealed in all his commandments. *The motive of loving God, of loving your neighbour and of loving yourself is indispensable for anything to be called 'good works'. That is why 'the good works' of the humanists are not counted as fulfilling God's law, because those good works are not done out of love for God (whom they deny)!*

To love one's neighbour means not to sin against one's neighbour. Most of the Ten Commandments are stated in the negative form, "Do not!" But the law of love is stated in the positive form, "Take the initiative to love!" Thus, to love has both negative and positive aspects. You love when you do not do certain things and you love when you do certain things. While the Old Testament emphasised the things believers should not do, the New Testament emphasises the things believers should do!

Love never overlooks the reality of sin! A Christian cannot deliberately go on sinning and still love. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says that true Christian love "avoids every kind of evil." Romans 13:10 says, that true love "never does wrong to its neighbour." True love will not involve one's neighbour in any kind of sexual immorality. True love will not destroy any aspect of one's neighbour's life. True love will not steal any possession from one's neighbour. And true love will not desire anything that belongs to one's neighbour. Thus, the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and the characteristics of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 are expressed in negative terms, because they never overlook the reality of sin!

To love one's neighbour means to take positive action towards one's neighbour. "Love your neighbour as yourself" is a command and is stated in the positive form. Love not only avoids the negative things like sin, but also turns the command actively in the opposite direction in order to fulfil the positive! For example, love actively protects one's neighbour from every kind of sexual immorality. Love actively promotes the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual welfare of one's neighbour's life. Love actively respects and protects one's neighbour's property. And love actively appreciates and is happy with what one's neighbour possesses, does and accomplishes. Love not only does no wrong to one's neighbour, but also actively does all kind of good to his neighbour.

To love yourself is also a positive commandment. You cannot love another person if you do not love yourself. People, who are dissatisfied with how they look or how God made them, cannot appreciate how God made other people. Christians who do not care for their own bodies and spiritual development, will also not care for other people's bodies or spiritual development. To love yourself is to care for your own body and own soul! If you look well after your own interests, you will also look well after your neighbour's interests⁷⁵. If you feed and care for your own body, you will also feed and care for the body of your wife⁷⁶.

In summary, Romans 13:10 says that agape-love is the fulfilment of the law. Only with agape-love can the commandments of God be fulfilled. Without agape-love for God, agape-love for yourself and agape-love for your neighbour, God's commandments can never be fulfilled. Without agape-love for God, self and the neighbour all the laws of other religions and all the so-called good works of the humanists are not good enough in God's eyes. They are not counted as fulfilling God's law and they can never save anyone.

(III) 13:11-14. The behaviour of the believer towards Christ.

13:11. And (do) this, because you know (by reflexion)⁷⁷ (vrra) how critical the time ⁷⁸(the decisive moment, the moment of destiny, the time of Christ's second coming) (is). The hour (has come) already for you to *once for all* wake

⁷³ Ephesians 5:2

⁷⁴ G: agape. Self-sacrificial love

⁷⁵ Philippians 2:4

⁷⁶ Ephesians 5:28-29

⁷⁷ G: oida

⁷⁸ G: kairos

up⁷⁹ (vnap) from (your) slumber; for our salvation (is) now nearer than when we *first* believed (*began to believe*) (ingressive aorist tense)(viaa).

13:12. The night is far advanced⁸⁰ (viaa); the day has drawn near⁸¹ (vira). So let us *once for all* put off⁸² (vsam) the deeds of darkness and *once for all* put on⁸³ (vsam) the armour of light.

13:13. Let us walk (behave)(vsaa) decently⁸⁴, as in the daytime, not in orgies (parties with excessive indulgence in food, drink and wild dancing, nocturnal, riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome people who paraded through the streets with torches and music in honour of Bacchus or some other deity)⁸⁵ and drunkenness⁸⁶, not in sexual excesses⁸⁷ and debauchery (addicted to sensual indulgence, moral perversion, seduction of women)⁸⁸, not in dissension (strife)⁸⁹ and jealousy⁹⁰.

13:14. Rather, you must *once for all* clothe yourselves (vmam) with the Lord Jesus Christ, and *never* make (vmpm) provision (forethought)⁹¹ for (the gratifying of) the desires of the flesh (the sinful nature).

a. Christians have the duty to know the time in which they live (12:11-12a).

What is the Christian duty with respect to the realms of darkness and light? The word ‘time’ here refers to the present time in the light of the end-time events. It is to look at the present time, knowing that it is speeding towards the second coming of Christ, the final judgement and the renewal of all things on earth. ‘The night’ is a symbol for this present evil age. ‘The day’ refers to the day of judgement⁹². ‘The day’ makes manifest, because the whole panorama of history will be placed in the pure light of God’s judgement (14:10)⁹³. The New Testament teaches that ‘the day of the Lord’ is at hand⁹⁴. The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night and should not take Christians by surprise⁹⁵. But this must not be interpreted in the sense of imminence in our sense of the word.

Jesus speaks against imminence: first the gospel will be preached to all people groups and then the end will come⁹⁶. *Paul warns against the supposition of imminence:* the day of the Lord will not come, until the rebellion or fall away⁹⁷ occurs and the man of lawlessness or the final antichrist in history has been revealed⁹⁸! Although in his first letter Peter said, “The end of all things is at hand”⁹⁹, in his second letter he had to deal with the objections proceeding from the lapse of time¹⁰⁰! The ‘nearness’ in these Bible passages is the ‘nearness’ of the prophetic perspective and not the nearness of our chronological calculations!

Paul speaks of what has passed as “the ages and the generations”¹⁰¹. ‘This age’ is the whole New Testament period of this world’s history prior to the second coming of Christ. Relatively ‘this age’ is evil¹⁰². Paul identifies the present period of time as “the ends of the ages”¹⁰³. Thus, Christians live in ‘the end of the ages’ (or in ‘the last days’): which began at the first coming of Christ¹⁰⁴ and will end at the second coming of Christ¹⁰⁵. History is hastening to its end!

b. Christians have the duty to put off everything that is connected with darkness and put on everything that is connected with the light (13:12b-14).

⁷⁹ G: egeiró

⁸⁰ G: prokoptó

⁸¹ G: eggizó

⁸² G: apothémi

⁸³ G: enduó

⁸⁴ G: euschémonós

⁸⁵ G: kómos

⁸⁶ G: methé

⁸⁷ G: koité

⁸⁸ G: aselgeia

⁸⁹ G: eris

⁹⁰ G: zélos

⁹¹ G: pronoia

⁹² Matthew 10:15; 12:36; Luke 17:24,30; John 6:39; 14:48; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:15-16; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6,10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:7,10; 1 John 4:17

⁹³ 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10

⁹⁴ Philippians 4:5; James 5:8; 1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 22:10-12,20

⁹⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:2,4

⁹⁶ Matthew 24:14

⁹⁷ G: apostasis

⁹⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

⁹⁹ 1 Peter 4:7

¹⁰⁰ 2 Peter 3:8

¹⁰¹ Colossians 1:26

¹⁰² Luke 16:8; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 1:20; 2:6-8; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4)(cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-5

¹⁰³ 1 Corinthians 10:11

¹⁰⁴ Hebrews 1:2; 9:26

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 13:39; 24:3; Ephesians 1:10

Because Christians must view the present evil age in the light of the coming age, they must live holy lives! The belief in the second coming of Jesus Christ is the reason why Christians want to live holy lives and grow in sanctification. Sanctification (based on justification) is urgent, because the end of human history is very close.

Other Bible passages refer to the same thing in other words: put on the new man¹⁰⁶; put on the armour of God¹⁰⁷; put on the weapons of light¹⁰⁸; and put on the breastplate of righteousness, of faith, and of compassion¹⁰⁹. Romans 13:14 supersedes the above expressions! It says, “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ!” Through faith people are being united to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (6:1-14). This is equal to putting on the Lord Jesus Christ for the first time. Through continued spiritual union with the crucified and resurrected Christ, Christians continue to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:12-13 is parallel to Romans 13:11-14 and says, “Say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, namely, the appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” Also 2 Peter 3:10-14 is parallel to Romans 13:11-14 and says that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly like a thief.

The universe with its uncountable stars will disappear with a roar and the elements on earth will disintegrate, be broken up in its component parts, burn and melt. Thus Christians who look forward to these end-time events make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with God.

Christians live in the end-time, after which there will be no more opportunity to repent and be saved. The present age before Christ’s second coming is speeding towards the coming age after Christ’s second coming. At Christ’s second coming the salvation process of Christians will be completed and perfected. Each calendar day brings Christians nearer to the day of their final salvation – the resurrection of their mortal bodies. Living in the present age in the body is decisive for what is going to happen in the coming age. Physical death only shortens the period of the present age prior to Christ’s second coming!

¹⁰⁶ Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10

¹⁰⁷ Ephesians 6:11

¹⁰⁸ Ephesians 6:12

¹⁰⁹ Ephesians 6:14; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:8