

## The Fulfillment of the Law is Love

Romans, Part LXI

Romans 13:8-14

Stuart W. Bryan

### I. Tolle lege! (cf. Ezek 33:1-11)

#### Romans 13:8–14

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law.

<sup>11</sup>And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. <sup>12</sup>The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup>Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. <sup>14</sup>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

### II. Love, True Love

#### A. Treating others lawfully (13:8-10 cf. 12:9)

Love without hypocrisy *abhors what is* \_\_\_\_\_ and *clings to what is good* (12:9). In other words, it joyfully embraces God’s eternal and unchanging moral law – for the fulfillment of the law is \_\_\_\_\_. As Jesus taught:

<sup>29</sup>... “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>30</sup>And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. <sup>31</sup>And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mk 12:29-31)

The command to love does not \_\_\_\_\_ God’s commands but *summarizes* them; it does not make God’s law obsolete but *fulfills* it. True love says with David, “*I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart*” (Ps 40:8 cf. 119:97; Jn 4:34; 14:15).

#### B. From the heart (cf. 12:10-13)

True love is not characterized by mere external conformity to a set of rules; it is an inward disposition of heart that desires to glorify God and to bless others because God in Christ has saved us.

<sup>3</sup>For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom 8:3-4)

The foundation for our obedience is God’s \_\_\_\_\_. He has saved us, is saving us, and will save us. With each passing day the completion of *our salvation is nearer*. *The night* – this period of our fallen existence when we, though renewed, still wrestle with our flesh – *is far spent*, *the day – the day* of our final glorification when our renewal will be complete – *is at hand* (12a cf. 8:29-30). So even now we are to \_\_\_\_\_ *the works of darkness* and to \_\_\_\_\_ *the armor of light*.

#### An Outline of Romans

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
- II. Credenda: “The Righteous by Faith” Shall Live (1:18-11:36)
- III. Agenda: The Righteous “Shall Live by Faith” (12-15:13)
  - A. A Living Sacrifice, Transformed not Conformed (12:1-2)
  - B. Transformed Communities (12:3-15:13)
    - 1. Think soberly about yourselves (12:3-8)
    - 2. Love without hypocrisy (12:9-13:14)
    - 3. Bear with one another in love (14:1-15:13)
- IV. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

### III. Loving People

A. The purpose of God's moral law is to create a loving people (1 Tim 1:5ff)

The purpose of God's \_\_\_\_\_ for those who have been justified by faith in Christ is to form us into a loving and virtuous people. Paul writes to Timothy, "*Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith...*" (1 Tim 1:5). James K. A. Smith explains:

*Virtues, quite simply, are good moral habits. (Bad moral habits, as you might guess, are called "vices.") Good moral habits are like internal dispositions to the good--they are character traits that become woven into who you are so that you are the kind of person who is inclined to be compassionate, forgiving, and so forth. Virtues thus are different from moral laws or rules, which are external stipulations of the good. In fact, as Thomas Aquinas points out, there is an inversely proportionate relationship between virtue and the law: the more virtuous someone is--that is, the more they have an internal disposition to the good that bubbles up from their very character--the less they need the external force of the law to compel them to do the good [cp. 1 Tim 1:8-11]. Conversely, the more "vicious" a person or group of people is, the more they need the "stick" of the law to compel them to do what they ought. Anyone who has raised children is intimately familiar with these dynamics. Early on, we need to constantly tell (and compel) our children to do the right thing. We are training their moral sense. But the goal and hope is that, in the process, they are internalizing a sense of the good and will become the kind of people who do this without the "stick" of rules compelling them to do so. In a sense, then, to become virtuous is to internalize the law (and the good to which the law points) so that you follow it more or less automatically. (Smith, 16-17)*

B. The way the moral law forms us into loving people

By the power of the Spirit, the moral law teaches us to \_\_\_\_\_ certain behaviors and attitudes and actions and to \_\_\_\_\_ others. Note Paul's words in 3:12-14 -

*<sup>12</sup>...Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup>Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. <sup>14</sup>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

1. Negative Duty – Cast off! (13:8-10, 12-13 cf. Eph 4:20-32)

- *Revelry and drunkenness –*
- *Lewdness and lust –*
- *Strife and envy –*

2. Positive Duty – Put on!

God's law teaches us not only to cast off the works of darkness but also *to put on the armor of light* (12) and *to walk properly* (13). God's law doesn't only forbid; underneath each of its prohibitions is a positive duty – and we see these positive duties exemplified in the life of Christ. Hence, to put on these virtues is *to put on the Lord Jesus Christ* (14). William Hendriksen explains:

*[Paul's remark that the fulfillment of the law is love] proves that every negative command ("You shall not") is at bottom a positive command. The meaning, therefore is: "You shall love, and therefore not commit adultery but preserve the sacredness of the marriage-bond. You shall love, and therefore not murder but help your neighbor keep alive and well. You shall love, and accordingly not steal anything that belongs to your neighbor but rather protect his possessions. You shall love, and as a result not covet what belongs to your neighbor but rejoice in the fact that it is his." (439)*

### IV. Conclusion