

## ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Christ Frees, Law Enslaves**

November 2023

Fall Quarter

**November 11, 2023**

## **Lesson #2 – Freedom to Love**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

### **ICE BREAKER** –

1. What does it mean to love our neighbors as ourselves?
2. In what sense should we put childish things behind us?

**Key Verse: “Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—Romans 13:9**

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

#### **B. Lesson Context: Romans**

Thus far in the quarter, we have studied two lessons from Romans (lessons 5 and 6). Those lessons come from a section of the book that is more doctrinal (what we are to believe) in nature. Today’s lesson moves us to a section that is more practical (what we are to do) in content as Paul shifts focus. Chapter 12 begins this section by challenging readers to offer themselves as “a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). What follows describes what that kind of life should look like in a Christian’s daily conduct.

In the seven verses in Romans 13 that precede our first segment of text for this lesson, Paul examined a topic that should be of special interest to Christians of any century: our attitude toward civic authorities. The key concept here is one of obligation, which Paul uses to make a transition from how we are to relate to those authorities to how we are to relate to one another.

#### **C. Lesson Context: 1 Corinthians**

First Corinthians 13, the second of two segments of today’s lesson, features Paul’s timeless and matchless explanation of Christian love. The larger context of this chapter is Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts in chapters 12–14. Possession and use of spiritual gifts had become a source of great contention within the Corinthian church. Paul was concerned that undue focus on these gifts could distract the Corinthian believers from more crucial concerns. Should that happen, the result would be a fracturing of the unity in Christ that is to characterize followers of Jesus.

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

Romans 13:8–14 ((null)): 13:8–14. Paul gave more general commands in this section, but his primary emphasis may still be how the Christian should act in the world. Owe nothing to anyone (v. 8) does not forbid taking or giving loans, for

both the law and Jesus permitted it (Lv 25:35–36; Mt 5:42; Lk 6:35). Paul's point is that the believer has the constant obligation to show love to all, and this obligation never stops. The verb love means "to demonstrate warmth and affection, usually to those with whom one is closely related or associated." It also has the nuance of joyfully and enthusiastically meeting the needs of others (cf. the comments on 1Co 13:1–3), even one's enemies (Mt 5:44). Love fulfills the law. In vv. 9–10, Paul describes what happens when believers love others, but he is not prescribing that they must keep the law (cf. Rm 7:1–4; 10:4). Though Abraham did not possess and consciously obey the law of Moses, nevertheless by having faith in God his life fulfilled the law's requirements (Gn 26:5; see the comments there), though he was not saved by fulfilling them (Gn 15:6). Paul's command to love is presented with urgency in light of the rapture of the Church (v. 11). Sleep refers to the spiritual stupor that a believer must avoid. Jesus will hold each Christian accountable for his spiritual condition. The night (v. 12) refers to this present spiritually darkened era. The day probably refers to the inbreaking of Jesus and the kingdom, perhaps to the "day of the Lord." Armor of light would provide both spiritual protection and illumination so that one's enemies can be observed and avoided. One of the enemies is the believer's own flesh (v. 14; for "the flesh," cf. the comments on Rm 7:5–6; 8:12–13). Carousing (v. 13) means "a rowdy gathering typified by drunkenness and illicit sex." Sensuality refers to a lifestyle without any moral restraints, usually involving sexual sins. Put on (v. 14) was often used for putting on clothes (Mk 5:15; Ac 12:21), and in much the same way, the believer is to take Christ with him wherever he goes, just as he does his own clothing.

1 Corinthians 13:8–13 Here Paul taught the permanence of love compared to spiritual gifts. For a discussion of prophecy and tongues (v. 8), see the comments on 14:1–3. Knowledge is the "word of knowledge" (12:8). Will be done away means "to be brought to an end," "to cease," "to be abolished," and is found in vv. 10 and 11 as well. In part (v. 9) indicates the incompleteness of the content or the comprehension of the gifts. The perfect (v. 10) could be the believer's death, the completion of the canon, or conditions following the second coming. A preferable view is "a relative state of maturity" for the Church. The perfect (to teleion) is used neither for death nor perfection following the second coming, and the Corinthians would not have understood it as a reference to the canon. Paul often used the word for relative maturity in contexts where it is contrasted with childishness or immaturity (1Co 2:6 with 3:1; 13:10 [perhaps]; 14:20; see especially Eph 4:13–14 in a context of spiritual gifts and the Church's maturity; cf. Heb 5:13–14) (Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 123–32; F. David Farnell, "When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?" *BibSac* 150 (April–June 1993): 191–95). When the Church reached a point of relative maturity, tongues, prophecy, and knowledge ceased. Paul did not say precisely when this would happen, but Chrysostom (d. AD 407) and Augustine (d. AD 430) said the miraculous spiritual gifts had ceased, and around their time several important councils settled some critical issues for the Church. This may be the arrival of "relative maturity" for the Church, but this is purely conjectural. In v. 11 Paul compared the Church's maturation with his own. His childhood parallels the time when the partial exists

(i.e., when tongues, prophecy and knowledge are present in the Church). I did away with is the same verb as in both vv. 8 and 10. For (v. 12) explains why the “childhood” things (the three gifts) are done away with. Dimly probably means “indistinctly, unclearly,” and is synonymous with the partial (see v. 10). After the Church reaches its relative state of maturity, Paul anticipated that the understanding of the content of these gifts would be clearer. A mirror was made of highly polished brass and at best provided an imperfect reflection. Face to face is almost universally interpreted as “seeing God face to face” (Gn 32:30; Ex 33:11; Dt 5:4; 24:10; Jdg 6:22; Ezk 20:35). But God is not mentioned in v. 12, and Paul is continuing the metaphor of v. 12a into v. 12b, c, d. When one looks into a mirror he sees himself, not God, and in Paul’s day one’s reflection was blurred. Paul is saying that someday the image will be as clear as if one were actually looking at himself without a bad mirror. Just as I also have been fully known refers to knowing how one looks with the same accuracy that others know him, i.e., without a flawed reflection from an imperfect mirror, but it does not speak of God’s knowledge of the believer. Exodus 33:11, a “face-to-face with God” passage, also speaks of friends speaking “face-to-face,” and that is the sense of v. 12c, d. Some accuse this position of trivializing v. 12, but this is question-begging. It only trivializes it if one assumes that v. 12 is about “perfection,” seeing God face-to-face, and the state following the parousia.

13:13. But introduces a contrast between the permanence of faith, hope, and love in v. 13, and the temporary nature of tongues, prophecy, and knowledge in v. 8. But now (nuni de) usually carries a temporal sense in Paul’s letters (see the phrase in Rm 3:21; 6:22; 7:6, 17; 15:23, 25; 1Co 15:20; 2Co 8:22; Eph 2:13; Col 1:22; 3:8; Phm 9; 11; though 1Co 12:18 and 15:20 may be exceptions), now signifying the current Church Age (for a similar use of now, cf. Rm 11:30–31). Faith, hope, and love abide (they “remain,” “stay”) throughout the entire age in contrast to tongues, prophecy, and knowledge, which cease at some time during the Church Age. See the chart at the top of the following page for a graphic depiction of 13:10–13. Love is the greatest of the three virtues both from the standpoint that it is the most important for driving the use of gifts and from the standpoint that love for one another and for God lasts into eternity, while faith and hope are realized and will not.

**LESSON NUGGET** – Love for God and for your neighbor is the highest motive for obedience. Love does what is right and just and seeks the best for others. By nature, we do not have this kind of love (Titus 3:3); the Lord gives it to us (Romans 5:5). Love puts eternity into life. Love lasts, and what love does will last. Love is the greatest and does the greatest because “God is Love” (1 John 4:8).

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*