

38. Learning How to Practice the Law of Love

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to relate properly to the various levels of government that are over them. We saw that this proper relationship included the paying of taxes. Christ gave us the example when He said, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” We saw that a proper relationship to governments makes it easier to share the Gospel with others. In our topic today, we see that we want to help our children learn to practice the law of love in their lives.

Romans 13:8-10 says, “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 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.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law.” The word that is translated “owe” in this verse means *to be in debt, to owe something to another person or to have a responsibility to another person*. The only debt that we are to continue to owe is the debt to love one another.

We also see why we have a continuing debt to love one another. It is a continuing debt, because that is what is required in order to fulfill the Old Testament. The Old Testament law was divided into two parts. The first four commandments spoke of man’s relationship to God. The second six spoke of man’s relationship to other people. Christ was asked, what is the great commandment? Christ answered in Matthew 22:37-40, “Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” The six that discuss man’s relationship to man are all covered in Romans 13:7-10. We saw in verse seven that we are to give honor to those who deserve honor. The first command of the six is to honor our parents.

The final five commands are all negative as we see them quoted in Romans 13:9. These five commandments all speak about different ways that we would harm another person. Adultery destroys marriages. Murder takes a life. Stealing takes the possessions of others. Bearing false witness lies about others and destroys their reputation. Coveting wants to take what others have. Such actions cannot be reversed because they are already done. That is why this section is also summarized in a positive way. Leviticus 19:18 says, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.” Here, we see that the positive way to avoid harming or destroying others is to love every other person as much as you love yourself.

One day a lawyer tested Christ and asked what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Christ asked the lawyer what the law said. The answer of the lawyer is given in Luke 10:27 where we read, “So he answered and said, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’” and “‘your neighbor as yourself.’”” Christ told the lawyer to do those things perfectly and he would live. The lawyer wanted to justify himself

and asked Christ who his neighbor was. Christ answered with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Christ asked the lawyer in Luke 10:37 which was a neighbor, “And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” The parable of the Good Samaritan makes it clear that our neighbor is every person. That is why each one of us has a debt to love every person just as Christ loved every person. Christ showed His love by dying for every person and each person must choose individually whether to accept or reject that love. Here, we see that love will never harm a neighbor but love will fulfill the law.

Once we help our children understand how to fulfill the law, then we want to help them understand when to fulfill the law. Romans 13:11-12 says, “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. 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.” Here, we are reminded that we live in a certain age or period of time. The word that is translated “high time” is normally translated “hour”. As a result, these verses point out the fact that we live in a very important age and this is the hour to wake up and begin practicing the law of love toward our neighbor. We show love to our neighbor by sharing the message of salvation so that he or she knows how to prepare for eternity.

We are also reminded that our salvation is nearer than the day that we believed. Romans 8:30 says, “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” This verse gives the whole process of salvation. When Romans 13:11 talks about the day of our salvation being nearer than when we believed, it is talking about the day when we will be glorified and will be with Christ. That is why it is important to show our children by our example that this is the hour to show love to our neighbor by sharing the Gospel with him or her because the day when we will be taken to heaven is coming soon.

Today, we are living in a world that is filled with the darkness of sin. 1 John 2:9 -11 says, “He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” Here, we see that every person without Christ is in spiritual darkness. In contrast, 1 John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” As Christians, we are walking in the light when we have fellowship with Christ. We realize that the darkness of this world will soon come to an end and those who are still in darkness will experience eternal judgment.

As a result, we are told to put off one thing and told to put on another. We are told to put off the works of darkness. These are those things that are sin and hinder our witness to the world. Instead, we are to put on the armor of light. 1 John 1:5 says, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” Since God is light, at all times when we are walking in fellowship with the Lord, we are walking in the light. That is why 1 John 1:6 warns us as Christians, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and

walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” At each moment we commit sin, we are not walking in the light. That is why 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” As soon as we realize that we have sinned, we need to confess that sin so that we can immediately walk in the light again.

Romans 13:13-14 tell us how to practice walking in the light instead of walking in darkness. Those verses say, “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.” Here, we see that we are to learn to walk properly as Christians. This will also provide an example for our physical and spiritual children to follow. To “walk properly” means *to be walking in fellowship with the Lord moment-by-moment*. Like taking a walk during the daytime, we have the light of God to help us see where to go and what to do.

Then, we have three sets of examples of what it means to walk in darkness. First, this verse mentions revelry and drunkenness. The word translated “revelry” speaks of wild partying or parading through the streets that lasts late into the night. Such parties or parading through the streets are often accompanied by drunkenness. As a result, we are to put off or avoid participating in such activities because to do them means we are walking in darkness. Second, this verse mentions lewdness and lust. These two words deal with sexual immorality. 1 Corinthians 6:18 warns us, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.” Here, we see that we are sinning against our own bodies when we get involved in any form of immorality. This reminds us that any form of sexual immorality involves walking in darkness.

Third, this verse mentions strife and envy. Strife is arguing and envy is another word for jealousy. 1 Corinthians 3:3 says, “For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” Here, we see that when Christians are practicing strife and envy they are acting like people that are not even Christians. As a result, they are walking in darkness.

Instead of practicing the sins listed above, we are to provide an example for our children by following the instructions of Romans 13:14 which says, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.” To “make no provision for the flesh” means *not to allow sinful desires to remain in our thoughts*. When we allow those desires to remain in our thoughts, we begin to have a desire to carry out those thoughts and they become actions. In order to avoid fulfilling the sinful lusts of the flesh, we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to put on Christ and walk in Him.