**Holiness and Love**

***8****Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law[[1]](#footnote-1).****9****For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”****10****Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

***11****Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.****12****The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.****13****Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.****14****But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:8-14, ESV)*

 As Christians, the best holiness is to walk in the path of love. Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters as we attempt to bring together two foundational principles of our faith today. As you are already aware, today is the first Sunday of Lent, and as such, we are going to be bringing up the basic teachings of our faith as they related to our lives as Christians in this season. God commands that His people live holy lives, and to fulfill the Law in love. Paul the Apostle sees a clear connection between the two (holiness and love), and it is that connection that we are going to talk about today. Again, the best “holy life” is the one that walks in love. Let’s take a look at how the Apostle makes that connection…

 Love fulfills God’s call to holiness. In the chapter previous to the above Scripture reading, the Apostle Paul talks about being a “living sacrifice.” He was saying that a believer should not conform themselves to the world, but to be transformed by the renewal of their mind. Each member was to serve in the church according to the gift that they had, and love was to be expressed by genuineness, goodness, joy, patience, and honoring each other. The believers were supposed to put into practice all aspects of expected morality of God. They were to overcome unholy things by being holy themselves.

In addition, since they were not to have debts to their rulers due to insubordination or lawlessness, the only debt that was acknowledged as acceptable was love. In other words, all other debts should be paid off, but love was always to be flowing out of them, since it was a never-ending, and even life-giving debt. Paying that debt of love was what fulfilled the Law. If the believers lived in love, then they would be fulfilling the Ten Commandments automatically. The “Law” of life in general was to be the law of love, which (automatically) did not harm people, did not steal from them, did not lie, did not lust or dishonor someone or their moral purity. If the church members wanted to have a renewed mind, they needed to be subject to the Law of Love, a love that functioned with the reality of Jesus’ loving self-sacrifice at the forefront of the mind and the center of the heart.

However, as church members remain in that love (based on Jesus’ sacrifice), they were called not to participate in the works of darkness. The night, which is a symbol in the text for this fallen world, is almost gone. The day, which is the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, is about to break forth. Therefore, one should not be careless or loose in their personal lives as it relates to holiness, but rather he or she should put out the fire of the fallen nature’s desires by putting on the Lord Jesus.

There was once a theologian who wrote that “"Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervors, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills."

Today, there are many that think that God has given humanity an impossible commandment with these expectations to love and to live in holiness. However, if we focus on the general principle (of love), we will see that the details of the life of holiness will begin to be fulfilled in the right way. Each life-situation demands a different kind of love. We are called to find that manner of loving through prayer and leaning on God’s Word, so that we can keep on the path of holiness. It is not necessary for love to express itself the same way every time – rather, it should be that an expression of love always blesses another and causes growth in the fellow believer. Sometimes, love is a rebuke, other times it is mercy, patience, or perhaps strictness, if the latter is the need. All of these, however, can be considered expressions of love when their purpose is not to knock down a person, but rather to lift him or her up, to cause them to be cleansed, or directed to live and grow in the light of God.

If you always move with God’s love as your principle, you will fulfill God’s requirements much more easily (than if you focus on the details of each interaction with others). Again, Love fulfills God’s call to holiness. As Christians, the best holiness is to walk in the path of love. God bless you all, Amen.

1. Due to the context, the “Law” is in very high probability the Law of Moses, but more in its moral dictates rather than its non-moral prohibitions (i.e., food laws). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)