

Living on Daylight SAINT's Time (part 1). Romans 12:1-2, 13: 7-14

Portions adapted from: Light Living - Being A Person Of Light! by Ernie Arnold @ Sermon Central.Com

Did you know that the older we get the more we become morning people. At least, that's according to the latest evidence collected by a number of human behavioral specialists. It is what happens as we age. By the time most of us reach our 60's and 70's we will have transformed from being night owls to morning people.

Now, that may make some of you happy while others it may bring a little disappointment. You discover that you can't stay out all night and feel good the next day. You don't bounce back as well as you did a few years ago. Driving after dark becomes more difficult, and by 9 or 10p.m. most evenings you are ready for bed. A friend told me the other day that he had complained to his Dr. about waking up in the morning feeling stiff, sore, and tired The Dr. just looked at him and said, "*that's because you are getting old.*"

So the older we get the more we prefer the daylight hours, because we are more awake and it is easier to see what's going on. Which is exactly what Paul is telling us in our passage this morning. Paul wants to challenge us to be daylight people; to wake up and enjoy life as people armored in light, dressed in Christ, and radically indwelt with His Holy Spirit. People who live their lives in the light of Christ's day, versus those who remain asleep in darkness.

Now, is this passage condemning those among us who are night owls? Of course not. That is not Paul's intention. But at the same time, I believe his words give us some definitive warnings about the temptations that can happen when we choose the darkness of our former lives over the daylight living we have in Christ. There are things that happen at night that can be very detrimental to our walk in Christ. There are some temptations that become much more difficult to resist the later we stay out after dark.

To understand all that Paul is saying in this passage let's take some moments this morning to look at it in more detail.

First, Paul wants us to understand that the only debt we should owe anyone is the debt of Love (v. 8-11)

If you didn't know better you would think that Paul started off this passage wanting to give his readers some needed financial advice. A few verses earlier Paul had touched on the idea of honoring God by being good citizens, respecting and submitting to authorities, and paying our taxes. How much better would some of us have felt if Paul

had said that when the government is evil then we as followers of Jesus can simply refuse to pay our taxes. But Paul doesn't, does he? Instead, his words are clear –

Pay to all what is due them:
taxes to whom taxes are due,
revenue to whom revenue is due,
respect to whom respect is due,
honor to whom honor is due.
Romans 13:7

Even though we may not like taxes and revenues and the leaders that have authority over us we are to pray for them, do our best to honor and obey them as best we can, and to pay our taxes. That does not mean that we subsequently bow down to their lawlessness or their immorality. As citizens and ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven, we are to do all we can to be good citizens on this earth.

Owe no one anything,
except to love one another;
for the one who loves another
has fulfilled the law.
Romans 13:8

Paul then moves on from telling us to always pay what we owe, to next telling us that we should not be in debt to anyone. And it is good for us to become debt free – whether financially or in personal obligations to another. Why? Because **indebtedness in any form is another form of slavery. And indebtedness interferes with our ability to Love others.**

Once there was a man who was overextended and just couldn't pay all of his bills every month. When one of his creditors called him and demanded payment on a certain account. He said, "*Look, the way I pay my bills is to put them all in a hat and pull five of them out.* Now if you don't quit bugging me, next month I won't even put you in the hat!"

How does debt both enslave us and hinder our ability to love?

1. When we are in debt, our ATTENTION is focused upon paying our bills. Our TIME, ENERGY, and FINANCES are bound.
2. When we are in debt, our potential for GENEROSITY has been reduced.

3. When we are in debt, the STRESS changes our lifestyle and disposition, straining our marriages and other relationships. Proverbs 22:7, teaches that “*The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.*”

Now in our world, not all debt can be avoided; very few of us can purchase a house or a car without taking on a loan. But too much debt – maxed out credit cards, overdue bills – does affect our ability to love others by turning us inward to our own needs rather than outward toward theirs. **So the basic Christian principle is that the freer you are from debt, the more freedom you have to love others.** This is sound Christian financial advice.

Living out our love for others is our Christian goal in life. We live in community, we benefit from the government over that community, and the commercial world within it – and both government and commerce are not just institutions – they are people, people with families, people that may be our neighbors, people who may not yet know Christ – but certainly people who really matter to God.

The over-riding principle you need to take home from is this: **by world standards we really do have good government and we certainly enjoy material abundance and commercial prosperity. Our Christian ambassadorial response should be to live in such a way that we can share these blessings with others.**

How then should we live as debt free, loving Christians?

Firstly we must realize and live up to the expectation the world has of us – as a “Christian.”

- If you owe – pay up and quick.
- Make it a priority in your business to never be chased for money.
- Sell an honest product at an honest price.
- Make it a pleasure for people to do business with you.

Why? So that you don’t jeopardize your witness. Being slow to pay or by being caught up in shady financial deals, whether in your personal finances, in your employment, or with your taxation responsibilities, can only harm our Lord’s reputation.

I know people, and maybe you do too, who have been put off Christianity because of a “Christian” they knew who has shafted them! If a salesman, noting my Christian markings, makes a point of telling me that they too are Christian Then I watch them doubly close; for they have claimed to live under a higher standard and I am going to hold them to, and judge them by, that standard.

Don't break your relationship with God due to sinful attitudes and practices in your financial dealings. Sin is sin and it will separate you from God and you will struggle through life. Bills must be paid, no unnecessary debts owed: how we carry those responsibilities reveals much about our heart and what we really believe about God and his work in the world.

As much as it is within your power, owe no one anything: that is how you honor God with your finances.

However, just as with his earlier instructions on obeying laws and paying taxes, Paul really isn't talking so much about financial debt here, as much as he is referring to our mutual indebtedness in living out our **agape** love for each other. Five times in these few verses, Paul uses this particular word for that kind of "love" which is not an emotion but rather an act or our will; that kind of love that we choose to give and then work at giving to others. When it comes to giving and receiving **agape** love we are all indebted to the LORD, and we pay that debt forward by loving one another. For as people of light we are also by definition people of love.

[all] other commandments, are summed up in

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

Love does no wrong to a neighbor;
therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:9-10

As people of love we think, we act, we speak and we share love. Not the fake twisted version that the world now promotes as "love." What do we see in the entertainment media? A couple meet on a first date and end the evening sleeping together, or another will leave their wife or their husband for a new relationship and suddenly what years ago would have been called "adultery" or "fornication" is portrayed as real love – that which is to be desired. That is not love - that is lust.

Instead Paul wants us to focus on that type of love which is sincere, genuine, that comes out of a heart, that has been transformed by the LORD. He wants us to focus on that love which enables us to live a life above those sins that are against our neighbor; such as adultery, murder, theft, coveting, anger and jealousy.

He wants us to understand that real love is **agape** love: love that fulfills the law of Christ, love that seeks to do no harm to another human being or a part of God's creation.

- If you love someone you will not allow yourself to commit adultery to them or with them therefore debasing them and the marriage covenant in which you or they have already committed yourselves to another person. If you love someone, you will honor the marriage covenant and your relationship with God by having a "hands off" "lust off" attitude and lifestyle. In your own marriage or anyone else's.
- If you love someone you will certainly not murder them; whether actually or with your words or in your mind.
- If you love someone you will not steal from them. You will not take away something that belongs to them and claim it as your own. This not only refers to property, but also work time, one's taxes, and one's unpaid debts.
- If you love someone you will not covet what they have. You will rejoice with them on the things that God has allowed them to possess. It means you will not allow envy to take root in your heart; towards someone for their good looks, their talents, their financial holdings, or for their position in life. For we know that our lives are not made up of things that will eventually turn to dust and rust. Instead, we are seek first the Kingdom of God knowing that Our Lord will meet all our needs.

This kind of **agape** love does not just happen; it has to be nurtured. We have to decide and then work at living according to God's will. Certainly this is an ability that will grow in us as we grow in Christ.

You see, laws and regulations only tell us what we shouldn't do, but the ultimate law of God tells us what we should do – love. If we all followed the law of love, there would be no need for the laws against murder or stealing or coveting. Why is this important? Because of two things – at what time of life we are living and where we are going.

you know what time it is,
now the moment for you to wake from sleep.

**For salvation is nearer to us now
than when we became believers;**

the night is far gone, the day is near:
Let us lay aside the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light;
Romans 13:11-13

Yes, it has been 2,000 years since Jesus Christ left for Heaven with the promise to return. Because he has not yet done so implies that “the full amount of Gentiles” have not yet come into God’s kingdom (Romans 11:25). So what Paul is teaching us is to understand our present time – each day that passes brings us closer to the day either when Jesus will return or we go to meet him. And when He comes back what will He find us doing?

Sometimes I wonder if we – who call ourselves “Christian” – think that we are playing some kind of game, or are in a theater – just acting the part of “the Christian.” Paul is telling us to wake up – this is serious business – lives are at stake – and we need to rise to a higher standard than just feigned obedience to societal laws – we need to embrace the higher calling of love, and the higher responsibility of turning our lives over the Jesus for His use. Paul says: Put aside the deeds of darkness, and put on the armor of light.

Which brings up this question. How do you physically start your day? What do you do? You get up feeling grungy and your mouth tastes awful with morning breath, so you hop in the shower and wash off all the sweat and dirt and oil, brush your teeth, and comb your hair. Now that you are all fresh and clean, you put on fresh clothes and begin your day — physically. But what about spiritually?

What if we started each day by with a prayer: taking a spiritual shower, and asking the Lord to clothe us with Christ today – to help us put on his armor of light. We could pray:

Lord, forgive me for what I have done yesterday that was not in concert with Your character; cleanse me from all that I saw or heard or experienced that drew me towards the world instead of towards You.

Father, fill me with your Spirit today, make me strong and able to withstand the temptations I will face today. Fill me with wisdom to know what You want me to say and do, place angels in my path and Your Word in my mouth to do battle against the enemy and persuade others to make You their Lord.

Now, spiritually as well as physically clean and dressed for the day, we should be living all of that day in the light of Christ’s life; which means avoiding the darkness wherever we are.

Paul loved to share the message of Christ; the message of God coming down to rescue, redeem and restore us into being people who reflect His holiness. It was this passion

for sharing this message that caused Paul to walk thousands of miles proclaiming Jesus as Messiah, Savior and King. In traveling all of those miles Paul came to a deep understanding of the fallen – darkened – world at large. The Jewish communities that he grew up in were generally God honoring, moral places; the Bible Belt of his day. But in walking along the streets of Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Athens, and Rome, the Apostle witnessed much more of the dark side of humanity. And over a period of time he began to see certain patterns that are still in place today.

As he traveled from town to town, Paul noticed that the majority of sinful behavior happened in and around the time of darkness; the immorality increased after sun set. As the evenings grew darker, the wild parties, immoral behavior, drunkenness, acts of jealousy and anger grew more and more. It's almost as if as the light of the world decreased, the darkness of evil and sin increased.

What was true back in Paul's day is still true today. Worldwide, night time is prime time for most violent crimes, immoral behavior, and domestic fighting. The later at night it gets, the more people let down their guard and find themselves in dangerous situations be it dealing with anger issues, drinking issues, violence issues, sexual issues.

So Paul would give us some sound practical advice. One of the ways to avoid those situations is to be a person of the day instead of a person of the night. For example if we get up early around 5 - 6 AM then there is a great chance that by 9 or 10 o'clock that evening we are either getting ready for bed or are already fast asleep.

But you say that is only a life for "old fogies." You got to get out there and get with it. You have got to swing. While you are young you got to let go and who cares if you sow a few oats. However, we all know that sowing a few so called "oats" has a way of reaping all kinds of problems. Paul is not putting out a command to never stay out late or to not enjoy the midnight hours. What he is saying is when we find ourselves out late at night we have to be on high alert. For when we find ourselves in the dark, when we find ourselves tired and exhausted and when we find ourselves with the wrong type of people in the wrong settings we can find ourselves being overwhelmed with the pleasures of the eye and the temptations of the flesh.

Paul was not a prude, but he was not about to place himself in harm's way either. He was not someone who wanted to take away a person's liberties, but he was smart enough to do all he could to help people not become enslaved to things of the world; those things that come out more at night than they do in the day time.

All you have to do is again watch TV and you will see that the later the hour the more violent, the more sensual, and the more crass and debased the shows become. Or go around to a tavern to observe that the later it gets the more drunk people get and

make poor choices concerning morality and purity. The darker the night gets the more evil things try to have their sway.

Now, of course that doesn't mean that evil is unable to exist during the day time. We all know that you can be just as mean as the devil during the day light hours as you can be at night. People do get assaulted during the day, they get robbed, they have affairs and they do all kinds of evil. But the truth still remains that most bad things happen after the sun goes down.

So how do we avoid all the bad?

How do we make sure even if we have to be out in the darkness, or work at night, or are a night owl, that we don't mess up?

How can we make sure even in the day time we don't mess up?

Paul tells us that People of Light are those who have put on God's Armor of Light. They are people who literally wear Christ for protection over their heart the same way that Police wear a bullet proof vest under their uniform.

And that is where we are headed next Sunday. But our debt of love and to live as Daylight saints is enough for today. So let's close by asking ourselves some questions.

1. Are we living as People of Light in this darkened world?
How might anyone be able to tell that we are?
2. To what and to whom do we feel indebted?
What do we need to do to more freely be able to share from our abundance with others.
3. Are we known by our acts of "agape" love? Do we give of ourselves to others or are we more inclined to see what we can get - what we can receive?
4. Are we known for our dedication and our commitment to the LORD? Are we careful to be people of Light rather than people nudging around the corners of darkness? Are we careful in making sure that we stay in the center of God's Will and not on the edges?
5. Do we look and smell as clean spiritually as we do physically?

Let us pray about this.

Lord, forgive me for what I have done yesterday that was not in concert with Your character; cleanse me from all that I saw or heard or experienced that drew me towards the world instead of towards You.

Father, fill me with your Spirit today, make me strong and able to withstand the temptations I will face today. Fill me with wisdom to know what You want me to say and do, place angels in my path and Your Word in my mouth to do battle against the enemy and persuade others to make You their Lord.