

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Romans 12:1-2 & 13:8-14

New International Version

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, August 28, 2016

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 28, 2016**, is from **Romans 12:1-2 & 13:8-14**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Romans 12:1-2 & 13:8-14

(Romans 12:1) Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Because of and in spite of their sins, Christians are predestined, called, justified, and glorified by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ (see Romans 8:30). So, how should they act? Not with arrogance or complacency. Rather, Christians should use their bodies in the service of God and do what God has commanded in the Bible, which will involve making daily decisions to will the will of God moment-by-moment. Christians should not put themselves first and try to make God serve them; rather, they should give of themselves and use their God-given gifts to fulfill God's purposes. True and proper Christian worship is living holy and pleasing to God seven days a week. Inspired by the love and sacrificial example of Jesus Christ, holy living for Christians includes loving God and others as Jesus commanded.

(Romans 12:2) Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The pattern of this world becomes more and more obvious from watching and listening to what the media has to offer over the Internet, movies, television (including news reports), and music. Many people aspire to live according to the pattern that the media in the world promotes in many ways. Paul wrote that the followers of Christ need to renew their minds in order to overcome the world's influences, which will include the prayerful resolve not to live according to the world's patterns. Worshiping the true God in proper ways, daily Bible study, prayerful obedience to God, and a commitment to live holy and pleasing to God in everyday situations will renew our minds. With renewed minds, when those of *this world* present their ideas and ways of thinking to believers, believers will be able to use their knowledge of God in Jesus Christ that they have learned from the Bible to test what they are hearing and sometimes seeing. The Bible reveals God's mind, and the Bible is the infallible objective standard by which believers can test what is true and false, right and wrong. The Bible can be used when testing for deadly spiritual and worldly diseases, which can sometimes lead to deadly physical diseases. As they prayerfully study the Bible and request the help of the Holy Spirit, the Christian can know and approve the will of God in every situation with the confidence that God's will is always good, pleasing, and perfect for God, others, and themselves.

(Romans 13:8) Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

A debt is something that is unpaid according to the terms of an agreement or contract; a debt can be a missed payment or the refusal to pay what is justly owed. Paul wrote that believers must fulfill their just promises to others; then Christians can be trusted to do what they have promised. Christians can never repay the debt they owe God for their salvation, because Jesus Christ died for them so God could justly and mercifully forgive them. Paul insisted that Christians should fulfill the law of love and always love others. The law of God is the law of love. The law of love should motivate Christians to pay their debts and let no debt remain outstanding.

(Romans 13:9) The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

The moral law, the law of God, is to love God and others. Jesus affirmed the validity of the law by teaching people to love their neighbors as themselves, and by doing so Himself. Should anyone need the law of love further defined, explained, or illustrated, they could study the Ten Commandments, some of which Paul listed in his Letter to the Romans. The Holy Spirit empowers and guides Christians to love others according to the will of God, and the Holy Spirit will never lead anyone to break the law of love, the

Ten Commandments rightly interpreted, or the commands and teachings of Jesus.

(Romans 13:10) Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Whenever a Christian thinks about what they can and cannot do, or should or should not do, in relation to others, they can ask themselves the question, “Will this harm anyone?” This question becomes more complex when a Christian needs to harm someone to stop them from continuing to harm someone else or themselves. The command to love and fulfill the law does not mean Christians should be lenient and not stop, or try to stop, the adulterer, the murderer, or the thief from harming others or themselves. This does not mean that the Christian should take the law into their own hands and disregard proper legal authorities. To report a crime is not vengeance, but sometimes a way of preventing more harm being done to others or yourself. Christians will face situations that point to their need to renew their minds through the study of the Scriptures and pray for the Holy Spirit to empower and guide them when faced with some of these difficult decisions on how to best love their neighbors.

(Romans 13:11) And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

Salvation, the fulfillment of the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ, comes nearer to the Christian everyday either by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ or by their physical death when their spirit goes to heaven. The hour has come for believers to live as those who have the gift of eternal life rather than continue to practice any sinful behaviors. The hour has come for believers to expect they can meet Jesus at any moment.

(Romans 13:12) The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

To live in darkness is to live according to the principles and powers of this world, to prefer doing deeds of darkness in the night where only God can see. But the night and this world with its pattern of evil practices is almost over – either by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ or for us by our own physical death. Therefore, the Christian needs to put on the armor of light (light often means truth) so they can defend themselves from temptations to do deeds of darkness. To put on the armor of light includes the resolve to say and do only what is true, the Lord being your Guide and Helper.

(Romans 13:13) Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in

dissension and jealousy.

People concerned about their reputation act differently in the daytime and do not practice their deeds of darkness for all to see. Those enslaved to sin and deeds of darkness have lost concern or do not care how many know and see what they do; they often delight in the opportunity to encourage others to see and practice their evil deeds too. Paul again listed some of the deeds of darkness that those living according to the pattern of this world approve and many parade in the streets in the daytime today. The Bible repeatedly reveals that these deeds and others similar to them are not decent, especially for those who believe in God and say they follow Jesus. Therefore, before a Christian falls into temptations they can ask themselves if their desires and temptations fall into any of the categories in this verse; if so, these need to be avoided – especially because the time is getting shorter and they will meet Jesus sooner than they anticipate.

(Romans 13:14) Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

The Christian faith and life is more than avoiding the gratification of the desires of the flesh. The Christian faith involves “clothing yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ.” After we put on clothes, others can see the clothing styles we prefer, and that sometimes reveals our moral character. After we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, others can see that we want to live according to the way Jesus lived and commanded, with total love and loyalty to God, His Father and our Father. After we put on Jesus Christ, others can see that we love them and are concerned about them even as Jesus is concerned about them. After we put on Jesus Christ, we can be good examples of the way God wants everyone to love and we can bless others by our example. The clothing we wear when we put on Jesus Christ should be in marked contrast to many of the clothing patterns and styles of this world with their corresponding promotion of deeds of darkness.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. From what Paul wrote in Romans 12:1-2, how can a Christian avoid conforming to the pattern of this world?
2. What objective and infallible standard has God given people and Christians use to test and approve what the will of God is?
3. What is a debt? According to Paul, what debt do all Christians owe?

4. How did Paul say Christians can fulfill the law of God?
5. What does it mean to you to clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.
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