

Sermon Growth Guide

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THE RULE OF LOVE | Romans 13:8-14

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Key Verse: 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."

Big Idea: The chief ethic of the Christian life is a sacrificial love that puts God and the neighbor first.

Foundations

As we continue our study of Romans, we have been considering what Paul means when he writes that we are "to present our bodies as a living sacrifice." So, beyond that command in Romans 12:1, Paul begins to tell us the ways in which we tangibly "present our bodies" in view of the love that has been showered upon us unconditionally. And Paul, always fond of lists, overflows with the lists of attitudes and actions that mark the Christian and the Christian community. To the unbelieving world, many of these virtues seem silly, some seem dangerous. A life that includes love for one's enemies, that values humility over arrogant pride is deemed weak.

Romans 13:8-14 is divided into two sections: (1) Living with love for one another and (2) living as children of light rather than darkness. Verses 8-10 are relational and verses 11-13 are moral. Acts of love for the neighbor are fulfilling the Law. Love does no wrong to the neighbor, but Paul raises the trajectory of love. Love does not only refrain from doing evil to the neighbor. Love goes beyond and seeks the good of the neighbor. This is how one fulfills the Law. Love is not some squishy emotion that knocks on the door of your heart. It is real time action that contributes to your neighbor's flourishing. And Paul senses an urgency to fulfill the Rule of Love and urges us to wake up and live like citizens of the Kingdom right now.

Understanding God's Word

Pastor Tim, in his sermon, is careful to make a distinction between the world's understanding of love and Christ's example of love. We have to be careful, he says, to not assume that the loving thing to do is letting others do what may feel good to them but which is, in fact, harmful. Deeds of darkness do regularly masquerade as deeds of light.

What do you think are the effects or results of this distinction between the deeds of darkness and the armor of light?

Applying God's Word

Our son was wearing his Citadel uniform when someone said to him, "I like the costume you're wearing." His response: you wear a costume when you're pretending. When you wear a uniform you act according to what the uniform stands for and you become what you wear." What specific things or practices do you think are involved in "Putting on the armor of light?"

Witnessing God's Word

Are there areas in your neighborhood or at work where you regularly encounter "deeds of darkness?" How might you shine as you wear the armor of light?

**Portions of this guide also appear in a blog posted by Pastor McGarrah at: thepastorsworkshop.com*