

Romans – CHAPTER 13: 8 14

- Before we consider these verses – let's first remind ourselves of some points we have picked up on in the journey through this letter.
- The letter written in about AD 57 has been extensively commentated on for about 1800 years(!).
- The church in Rome consists of small house churches , founded after Pentecost. It seems not to have experienced signs and wonders to any great extent.
- Its clear it has a Jewish Gentile mix. Its also clear that Jews live with huge social tensions having been expelled from Rome in AD 19 and AD 50.
- Origen, an early commentator, picks up on the main theme as being how God's Gospel takes account of Jews and Gentiles and brings them into righteous relationship with himself – and each other

A small verse in Romans 1, which we can link in to Romans 13.

- Don't forget – the letter is amazingly comprehensive – it covers a huge tract of spiritual land. And there are lots of precious stones hidden in the verses.
- So, right in the beginning there is a verse – which I want to link in to Chap 13. Its Chapter 1 vs 8.
- In this verse Paul speaks about his thankfulness to God for the church in Rome. Here are a couple of translations of the verse in question :

“...because your faith is being reported all over the World.”

“...because people everywhere in the World are talking about your faith”

- The question is – **what** are people actually saying ? Is it a passing comment, like you and me saying to our neighbour “ I have heard there are a number of Christians in Rome.” “I have heard that too”, replies your neighbour”.
- Or “I hear there are people in Rome who are followers of Jesus” , or “I hear they believe that Jesus rose from the dead”
- Is that all he is really saying? End of conversation?

What is Paul saying in verse 8 ?

- The nature of the Gospel is that it is something which has an effect on people, both on those who believe - and those who don't – either way – its effects are **visible**. And it stands in contrast to society around it.
- Here is a clue. Paul in Ephesians 1:15 says the following : “ ..ever since I heard about your faith in Jesus Christ *and your love for all the saints,* I have not stopped giving thanks for you....”
- So the church in Rome had a visible LOVE impact – and it was the impact of love – which stood out in a “dog eats dog” society – its affected the church and the pagans around them.
- Do we have to **do** anything different?

NOW with that in mind – lets look at some verses in CHAPTER 13

- “8. Don’t owe anything to anyone except the debt of mutual of love...
- 11. This is all the more important because you know what time it is. The hour has come for you to wake up from sleep. ..
- 12. The night is nearly over, the day is almost here. So let’s put off the works of darkness , and put on the armour of light..
- 14. Instead put on the Lord Jesus , the Messiah , and don’t make any allowance for the flesh and its lusts.”

What shapes people's lifestyle and habits?

- The 24 x7 news ? Social media?
- Clearly people follow what National leaders and World organisations like WHO and IMF say and recommend?
- Do people act rationally in the light of those information sources?

Do Christians have an advantage here ?

Yes. We understand that the World is not just “rambling on”. That there is an end to all this. We understand the concepts of the KINGDOM – the RULE OF GOD and as we journey there, the “already and the not yet” – we live in an in-between period of time.

And who and what in addition to the news do we have to guide us?

“The night is nearly over and the day is almost here”

- Paul talks in the verses about “recognizing” the times we are living in.
- Owing only the debt of love – the reason the Church was so famous – and clearly that love affected not only the members –it affected the pagan world!
- Consciously avoiding darkness and moving in the light.
- So that we will live in peace even in difficult times(not the absence of strife!!) – and more people will be drawn to Christ.

Putting off and putting on? How do we do that?

- This is a common Pauline expression – but how does one “do it” .
- Paul makes it clear that you and I need to have consciously done this as preparation to love (ie interact and face people)

PRACTICAL SUGGESTION “A” – read a portion of the gospels where Jesus appears and read what he does and says. Pray, over it, asking God “clothe me in him today”.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTION “B” – consider your baptism. What does it mean. Your death and resurrection to a new life. That’s the life we “step outside with”