

The Dawning Light of the Future

Thomas Robinson, *Life Renewing 4*, October 8, 2017

Romans 13:8-14

⁸ **Owe** no one anything, except **to love one other, for the one who loves the other has fulfilled law.** ⁹ For "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," [Exod 20:13-17] and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." [Lev 19:18] ¹⁰ **Love does no evil to the neighbor; therefore love is law's fullness.**

¹¹ And this is especially important since **you know the time**, that it's already the hour for you to be **raised up from sleep.** For our **salvation is nearer** to us now than when we first came to faith. ¹² The night has advanced, but **the day has drawn near.**

So then let's cast off the works of the darkness and get dressed in the **armor of the light.** ¹³ Let's walk as is fitting for the daytime, not in carousings and bouts of drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in strife and jealousy.

¹⁴ But **clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Messiah**, and as for the flesh don't make provision for its desires.

Romans 12:2

² Don't let yourselves be shaped by this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, in order that you may discern what is God's intention – which is for what is good and pleasing and mature.

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷ And Jesus said... "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Romans 6:4

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 8:3-4

³ For God has done what was impossible for the law on its own to do, because it was weakened by the flesh. By sending his own Son in flesh so like our sin-enslaved flesh and to deal with sin, God condemned sin itself in that very flesh. ⁴ God's purpose was that his faithful righteousness promised by giving the law might come to its full reality in us, who walk a path not determined by the flesh but empowered by the Spirit.

Galatians 3:27-29

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 5:16-18

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

John 1:1-2, 4-5

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God.... ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light for humans. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Philippians 3:10-15

¹⁰ My aim is to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming shaped by his death, ¹¹ that by whatever path I may arrive at the resurrection from the dead. ¹² It's certainly not that I've already obtained this or have already been brought to perfection, but I press on to make it my own, because Messiah Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have made it my own. One thing rather: forgetting the things behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way.

Unfolding the Renewed Life

This is the final section of Paul's foundational call to a life transformed by renewing the mind, before he begins applying it to problems in the community in Rome. He began by calling them to give themselves – “bodies as a living sacrifice” – not formed by this age but thinking soberly and with faith. Each person is different – parts of one body in Christ. Each has distinct gifts of grace to be used diligently: prophecy, encouraging, mercy... He unfolds the character of a community shaped by Jesus' teaching: a peaceable kingdom. Genuine love, honoring others, celebrating in hope, persevering in suffering, serving. Blessing even persecutors. Focusing on the event of Jesus, his humility, self-giving love. Never taking revenge. Living with beauty, excellence, peace. Conquering evil with good. They live under overarching authorities, seeing them as servants responsible to God. Expect them to do their job. Act for the good of others. Deal honestly with imposed obligations.

The Aim of the Ancient Story Comes to its Goal

The one essential, all-encompassing obligation in this renewed life is that which flows from Jesus himself and marks every aspect of the life – agape, self-giving love, the heart of God. It stands in contrast to “the flesh” – self-aggrandizing, self-serving, self-deluding, taking ‘love.’ Paul looks back over the great story of God's promises to Israel in covenant law. The Law itself points to its own realization (fullness) in love. In renewed life, that love from God, embodied in Jesus, focused in God's Grace, flows out horizontally in active love for our neighbor. Israel's covenant story points to a widening covenant, accomplished in Jesus, that includes all families of the earth and brings God's promises to fullness in a renewed lives.

Living Now – Illuminated by the Future

The final element of this vision is the future. The Hebrew scriptures ended with open-ended expectation, a story awaiting an ending. Jesus came announcing the in-breaking kingdom, which came to realization in his death and resurrection. Jesus brought not only fulfillment of Israel's Torah and Messianic hopes, his resurrection reached all the way to God's ultimate intentions for his creation and brought resurrection life into our historical life. The human story is not just muddling in twilight toward ultimate nothingness. In Jesus, God's light has broken into the human situation. Paul is not at all saying that he knows when this ultimate realization is coming. But since it is an endpoint, the nature of our life is that we're always moving closer. It could be the next moment or any time-scale God chooses. It is also nearer in the sense of already coming to realization as we build for that kingdom. Paul sees rich metaphors for this life: We are raised from sleep (newness of life). The dawn is breaking, the darkness receding for the believer. We get dressed for the tasks of the day – the armor of the light, clothed in Jesus Messiah. We avoid all that destroys our life and abuses others – the flesh. We live the renewed life of Jesus' self-giving love and grace.