

**The Significance of Love in the Last Days
Romans 13:11-12**

SERIES: “Characterized by Grace”

READ: Romans 13:11-12

DIFFICULT DAYS:

ECONOMICS. Since October, 2008: Housing crash, Stock market Crash, unemployment, fear, declining dollar, bankruptcies, GM, Bear/Sterns, Lehman Bros.

POLITICS. Longest presidential election in history, political turmoil.

CULTURE. Moral confusion, gay marriage, religious intolerance.

“How should Christians live in these last days?”

“Should the Church focus on cultural change?”

“Should we prepare for coming persecution? How?”

PAUL addresses these questions for the ROMANS in the context of these chapters on EXPRESSING CHRISTIAN GRACE to ONE ANOTHER.

- I. The BEST RESPONSE to Difficult Times is LOVE.
 - A. “And do this...” (13:11)
 1. Connected to 13:8, 10
 2. “This” = LOVE
 3. The entire context of Romans 13-15 is tied to the LAST DAYS
 - B. “Understanding”
 1. Greek word *oida*
 - a. To know by observation
 - b. No less certain than *ginosko*
 - c. OBSERVE the times. Look around, then WAKE UP!
 2. Perfect tense. “The Greek perfect tense describes an action that was brought to completion and whose effects are felt in the present” (Mounce, “Basics of Biblical Greek,” 219). *Observing the times should cause us to WAKE UP and come to our senses!*
- II. IN Order to LOVE, we must first WAKE UP. (“*The hour has come for you wake up from your slumber...*”
 - A. Meaning of “Sleep” in NT

1. “Slumber” can mean “**death**”. 1 Thess 4:13, 5:10
2. Slumber can mean **disinterest in spiritual things**. 1 Thess 5:6
3. HERE it means “wake up from your disinterest in spiritual things.”
 - a. A life that is focused on entertainment
 - b. A life that is focused on your social statue
 - c. A life that is focused on accumulating wealth
 - d. **THREE PASSAGES**
 - (1) (James 5:9) *"Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!"*
 - (2) (Mark 13:27-29) *"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, **when you see these things happening**, you know that it is near, right at the door."*
 - (3) **Luke 12:16-21**

B. **WAKE UP** because the time for giving an account is soon here!
 Salvation = deliverance. Jesus is coming!
"Nearer than when we first believed"
TWO WAYS that our DELIVERANCE is closer than when we first believed...

1. **PERSONAL** deliverance. *We are all one day closer to death!*
2. **PROPHETIC** deliverance. *The Lord's return is near!*
 - a. But it's been over 2000 years!
 - b. The answer is given **2 Peter 3:3-8**
3. Don't Forget:
 - a. Scholars laughed at the prophesy of a restored Israel
 - b. Scholars laughed at those who believe in Creation
 - c. Critics have tried to discredit the Bible. All have failed.

III. The **TIME** to Love is Right now. *There is no time left! This is the LAST OPPORTUNITY.*

- A. *"The night is nearly over"*
1. *Illus - DELIVERING BREAD*
 - a. Started at 4 AM
 - b. Streets empty. Easy to park
 - c. 6 AM - the city starts to wake up....
 2. In 1 Thess 5, “night” = the beginning of the Day of the LORD
 3. HERE, NIGHT= **our time here on earth...**
 4. DAY = **eternity with the LORD. 2 Corinthians 5:1-9**

- a. (2 Peter 1:19) *"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to **pay attention to it**, as to **a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.**"*
- b. (1 Thessalonians 5:5) *"You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness."*

B. *"Put off the deeds of darkness"*

- 1. This is in connection to LOVING one another!
- 2. (1 Peter 4:3-5) *"For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."*

THESE are difficult days.
How should we respond?

THREE COMMITMENTS related to LOVE

- 1. In these last days, we need a commitment to WORSHIP. Heb 10:25
attend the corporate worship services of the church.
Many attempted substitutes.
God has no replacement for the local church.
- 2. In these last days, we need a commitment to DISCIPLESHIP. (One another)
part of a small group
someone you are TEACHING
someone TEACHING you
- 3. In these last days, we need a commitment to SERVICE
at least one area of SERVICE