

## Romans 13:8-end

In today's epistle, Paul picks up on the words of Jesus, which form part of our text for 2020 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (v9b) He expands this as:

*'Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.'* (v10)

In Jesus day, neighbour meant fellow-Jew, but, especially in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus opens this up to mean all people. If we truly love God, then our lives will be so changed that our attitudes to others will be transformed.

We all have different gifts and abilities, experience and energy that we offer to the Lord, to serve his Church and our communities, but the most important thing we bring is **Love**. The most important thing about the Christian life is not what we can **do**, but what we **are**. Paul wrote these words in a letter to Christians, as he teaches and encourages them in their life together. Love is what holds the Church together, but sadly can often be lacking. As Paul reminds us in that wonderful passage in *1 Corinthians 13*, if we have no love, all else we have or do is worth nothing....

And as John writes, *'God is love, and whoever lives in love, lives in union with God'*.

Whatever situation we are in, whatever decisions face us, we can ask ourselves, **'What is the loving thing to do?'**

Age is no barrier to love, no-one is either too young or too old to show love.

Every race and culture understands love. Each different personality can show love.

We are asked to love our neighbours **as ourselves**. This may seem selfish, but it is vital.

We all need a **right love** for ourselves. The temptation on the one hand is to think we don't matter, and neglect our own needs, but God loves us with an infinite love, and in Jesus gave himself up for us, so we do matter deeply to God. On the other hand, it is to think we matter more than anyone else, and to think *only* of our own needs. The reality is that love for ourselves and our neighbour go hand in hand.

We could say that love has both negative and positive applications of it:

When we are **tempted** to be irresponsible, blaming others for *our* actions, to ignore everyone else and just think of what we want, to retaliate against those who hurt us, **then** we are to resist these temptations and do the loving thing, the right thing.

**Positively** we show love by our actions, especially in giving of ourselves to another.

There are many ways we can do this. We may show our love by giving financially to an appeal or an organisation we support like Christian Aid/HARP/The Leprosy Mission.

We may show love by giving of our time and energy to help others, maybe through the church or in the community or with our neighbours or family.

Loving is not always easy, but we draw our strength from God with which to love our neighbour. Jesus is our example, and the Spirit helps us, otherwise we might give up in despair when faced with the immense needs of the world, or become impatient with those who are slow to learn, pessimistic about those whose problems seem insurmountable, and end up feeling a failure, or resentful towards them.

Think about the past week. How have you behaved towards those you live with, work with, your neighbours? Have you shown love?

Let us daily seek and learn to *'Love our neighbour as ourselves'*.