

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

**# 23 -- Romans 13: 8 - 14. "Love for the day is near." -- with commentary**  
**The purpose of the Letter to the Romans is to develop a "Model for Living the Awakened/Transformed Life." Today's study is the 23rd of 27 lessons.**

**According to our Study Chart** we are studying the 4<sup>th</sup> section of "Become The Work of The Church." Our previous sessions cover Paul presentations on God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. This new section covers the Work of the Church. This is one of seven sessions under the rubric of "Ethics." This is the **fourth** session in this series. Remember, the focus of the Book of Romans is to provide us "The Model For Living The Awakened/Transformed Life."

**BACKGROUND:** Now, our work shifts to applying what we've learned in order to **become the work of The Church**. Observe, this is more than just doing the work of The Church. Paul wants us to embody The Church, to embrace it and morph ourselves in the shape of "little Christs;" you'll remember this is Luther's expression for Christians who live their lives fulfilling their intended purpose of being humane people and communities.

The way this work gets done becomes Christian Ethics; the way we treat others, and the way in which we view ourselves. It may be helpful to remember the short hand offered by Gut Trip Analysis. Christian Ethics always is WWJD.

**REMEMBER! THE CONTEXT IS CHRISTIAN ETHICS.**

**ABOUT THIS LESSON:** In this lesson we are reviewing the heart of Christian Ethics. In the Romans chart there are four lessons in the section, "The Rule of Love: Christian Ethics." Here Paul lays out the foundation for ethics is on Christian love.

**Read the assigned reading at one time.**

**I. Vs. 8 - 11, Explain the "continuing debt of love." Why is this a debt?**

**WS:** Paul admonishes us to have no debts "except the continuing debt of love" for one another. The IHOPers interpreted this to mean the debt we owe to Christ for the initial demonstration of complete surrender necessary to die to our illusions of victimization or of self-aggrandizement.

However, on second reflection, the debt Paul refers to is the debt of love we owe to each other as humane beings. It is so easy to lose Paul's context of Christian ethics. Paul is not referring to our relationship to God but to our neighbors. From the perspective of Christian Ethics, love is the experience of humane relationships.

Love is a debt we owe each other because this is the way in which we experience authentic humanness.

**A. Vs. 8B, How do we fulfill The Law?**

**WS:** The term "The Law" always is an expression of living the humane life. As we order and organize our lives to represent our surrender to Perfect At-One-ment, in effect we honor God and fulfill the first four of the 10 Commandments. Then, as we live humane lives in our relationships with our family and spouses, in effect we fulfill the last six of the 10 Commandments.

**B. Vs. 11B, What does Paul refer to in his statement, “our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed?” How is this so?**

**WS:** The IHOPers spent some time defining the word salvation. Since this is a transitive verb it is necessary to ask from what are we saved and to what are we saved? The answer is that we are saved from our illusions of victimization and self-aggrandizement; that is, as human beings we are not less than, nor more than, we authentically are created to be. The essence of being human is to be found in living the humane life.

**A. Vs. 12 – 13, Identify the following:**

**1. Deeds of darkness;**

**WS:** From the perspective of Christian ethics, deeds of darkness represent the absence of light or health or wholeness. Deeds of darkness are those activities that create the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

**2. Armor of light;**

**WS:** From the perspective of Christian ethics, the armor of light is the experience of living the humane life that results in At-One-Ment with our neighbors, self and the experience of Perfect At-One-Ment itself.

**3. What are the ethical implications of orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality and debauchery, dissension and jealousy and (vs. 14B) gratifying the desires of the sinful nature?**

**Begin by identifying “the sinful nature.” Why is it natural?**

**WS:** Paul is constructing the foundation on which his Christian Ethic is built.

Sin is experienced as being separated from living the humane life. Our sinful nature is the human tendency of living selfishly in order to protect our illusions of self-hood. Humans lose sight of the fact that in order to experience full and authentic humanness it is necessary to give our-selves away in surrender to other human beings in a humane way.

This is natural because this represents The Way Life Is (TWLI). We are by *nature* human beings. In this way we are only a higher class of animals. However, what makes us truly human is the consciousness that to be fully human it is necessary to live humanely in relationships to our neighbor.

The ethical implications of Paul's list in **vs. 13 and 14** is that they represent only the natural/human activities that are the antithesis of what humans are created to be and do.

**III. Vs. 14, If I was walking down the street and saw someone “clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ” what would this person be experiencing?**

**WS:** They will be experiencing the profound joy of abundant living that comes from being conscious of his or her living the humane life. In this way, this individual is fulfill the intended purpose for which all of us are created; we are to live as one with neighbor, self and finally with Perfect At-One-Ment itself.

**Alright folks, talk to me.**

**NOTE: There will be no Bible Study lessons on February 21 and 28.** February 14<sup>th</sup> is the concluding Lesson # 27 in Romans. I'll be on a Florida vacation, and working on the 1 Corinthians chart and lesson plans. This is the first break the IHOP Bible Study has taken in four and a half years. We'll be back to work on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006. You will receive materials, and a chart, on 1 Corinthians before this date.

Pastor Bill