Hello and welcome to the Girton Thought for the Week beginning Sunday 30th August, the twelfth Sunday after Trinity. My name is Dugald Wilson, one of the Readers at St Andrew’s here in Girton.

**Yet another of Paul’s “To do” lists**

**Reading: Romans 12.9-end**

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Commentary:**

In today’s reading Paul is really excelling himself. Frequently he gives us lists, but here we have two long lists of things he is urging us to do as a Christian. The first 5 verses concern our personal life, while the rest of the reading concerns our relationships with our neighbours. In that first section we have twelve rules for living, and in the second six. Let’s look at some in the first set.

- **Let love be genuine;** Love with an ulterior motive is not love, it’s just selfishness. We are called to cleansed of self in our love of others.

- **Hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;** It is one thing to hate what is evil, that is to reject evil, but it is another to consciously “hold fast” to what is good. Some versions say “to cling”. I like the word “cling” because it carries for me something of a rescue in our desperation and weakness. We *cling* to the cross in the hymn *The Old Rugged Cross*. 
• **Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit.** There is no room for lethargy in Christianity: we are in a constant battle against evil. As William Barclay says, “We must keep our spirit at boiling point.”

• **Persevere in prayer.** Pray at all times and God will give us strength to do what he asks of us.

While Paul gives us his lists, some people think they are exclusive: anything that is NOT on the list can be ignored. What we are shown here is that our Christian calling covers every aspect of our personal life, whether Paul lists it or not. And being such a long list, we can easily forget some of them. Jesus was once asked, “Which commandment is the greatest?” The motive behind the question was, “If I obey just that one, I’ll be OK.” But the questioner was surprised by Jesus’ answer. Quoting from Leviticus\(^1\) and Deuteronomy\(^2\), Jesus said… well, why don’t you look it up in the Bible yourself in Mark 12.28-31? All the Law is encapsulated in these.

These days, we like memorable snappy slogans. All this can be summarised in “Love God: love your neighbour”. And if we *truly* love God and if we *truly* love our neighbour, by putting God above all else in our life, and the welfare of our neighbour above our own, we should be doing all right. But, be warned! It's not at all easy. It's a lifetime's work getting there!

Let us pray…

**Prayer:**

Kindle, O Lord, in our hearts, we pray, the flame of that love which never ceases, that it may burn in us and give light to others. May we shine for ever in your temple, set on fire with that eternal light of yours which puts to flight the darkness of this world; in the name of Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord. **Amen**

*Source unknown*

*William Barclay – The Letter to the Romans; St Andrew Press, 978-0-7152-0897-7*

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\(^1\) Lev 19.18  
\(^2\) Deut 6.4-5
Below I have attached details of a weekly meeting on Zoom where we can gather to talk and share ideas about this Thought for the Week. You are welcome to join in. If it is a success, we can continue it beyond our trial period.

**Zoom meeting details**

**Topic:** Thoughts on Thought for the Week  
**Time:** August 31, 2020 02:00 PM London  
**Every week on Monday**

Dugald Wilson is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting  
[https://us04web.zoom.us/j/571729858?pwd=MjdZV29VaUhoalpzZkJYc0pnTGljdz09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/571729858?pwd=MjdZV29VaUhoalpzZkJYc0pnTGljdz09)

Meeting ID: 571 729 858  
Password: 793180