

# The Debt of Love we Owe

Text: Romans 13:8-14

Date: October 29, 2017

**CIT:** Love for neighbor is a debt that can never be fully repaid because the lusts of the flesh never go away, and it is *impossible* to fulfill the lusts of the flesh without injuring others.

**FCF:** Our heart is never neutral: it either expends its energy on loving others or fulfilling lusts; one does nothing but good for everyone, and the other does no good for anyone.

**Purpose:** To challenge each Christian to wake up to the responsibility to loving his neighbor as himself.

---

## PRETEXT

Like a lot of people today, I use online bill pay for all my bills. I pay everything online, and have been doing so for a long time. I like the convenience, and like that it is free.

Recently, (like in the last 2 months), I finally changed the last of my bills over to electronic statements. If the company offers to send a statement by email or make it available online, I have discontinued paper billing. I am rethinking that decision.

This past week while I was in Florida, I received my car payment notice in my email. I was about half-asleep when I opened it, but I was wide-awake after reading it. Last month, which was the first month without a paper statement, I had failed to make a payment. So, I owed 2 monthly payments AND a late charge.

How many of you realize that is NOT a good thing? I don't know how it makes *you* feel when that happens, but it makes me feel awful. I literally cannot think of anything else ... *until I pay what I owe.*

How many of you can guess what I did? Right. I stopped what I was doing - shushing my wife once in the process (which is also not a good thing) - and paid the bill in full.

Transition

That is what we are supposed to do with our debts. It is what integrity, and Scripture, demand.

So, how would it make you feel if you incurred a debt that, no matter how much you paid on it, it would never be paid in full. You make all your payments, you make them on time, and you pay exactly what is expected of you and yet, the debt never goes away.

Well, we do owe such a debt - a debt that will never be paid in full. Yet, paying this debt doesn't bring bondage; it releases us from bondage. It doesn't place a burden upon our lives, but it brings tremendous blessings.

## INTRODUCTION

In the first seven verses of this chapter, Paul dealt with what we owe to the state - to our government. In them, Paul charges us with two basic responsibilities to governmental authorities: we are to be subject to them (verse 1), and we are to "pay" what is due them (verse 7). If they collect taxes and fees, we are to pay them. If they have the authority to punish us for wrong doing, we should fear them. Always, we are to honor them because, although they are just humans like us, the principle of authority they exercise is from God. Paul said we cannot dishonor a legitimate authority without dishonoring God.

That sounded just as radical in the First Century as it does in the Twenty-First Century, but that is what God expects from every Christian. Be subject to our authorities, and pay them what we owe them.

Transition

When we come to verse eight, Paul charges us with another debt: the debt of love towards our fellow man. *"Owe no man anything, but to love one another."*

- The first part of that statement tells us that **there are certain debts we own to some people that we do not owe to other people.**

When we flew to Florida, we parked our car at Blue Sky Parking. In my hurry to get our luggage on the shuttle so we could get to the airport, I forgot to lock my car. So I was trying to figure out what I should do. Should I get my wife checked in and through security, and then catch a shuttle back to lock it, or risk leaving it unlocked for 10 days in their lot? Finally, I told the shuttle driver what had happened and asked if he could lock it for me. He agreed, and he did it. We came back to a locked car. I owed that man a debt of gratitude for what he did that I don't owe to anyone else. We get that right?

- The second part of that statement tells us that there is one debt that we owe to all man: a debt to *love* them.

## I. Love is a debt we owe every man

A. This is a debt we owe, if for no other reason, because of God's commandment: we are commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves

1. This command originates in the Old Testament

**Leviticus 19:18** *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.*

2. This command is affirmed as a Christian principle over six times in the New Testament.

**James 2:8** *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt **love thy neighbour** as thyself, ye do well.*

THINK: If God expects us to obey *the higher powers*, how much more are we obligated to obey *the Highest Power* of all?

B. This is a debt that can never fully be repaid

1. To owe no man anything enjoins us to do everything in our power to repay every debt we owe.

If you incur a debt, pay it back. It doesn't matter what that debt is; don't be a deadbeat.

2. The exception clause, *but to love one another*, tells us that the debt of love is the one debt we are allowed to carry a balance on.
  - a) This doesn't mean that it's okay not to pay it.
  - b) It means that **we will never reach a point in our lives where there is no one else who will need us to love them.**
3. This is a debt that we owe to *every man*.

As radical as this sounds, we owe are to feel responsible for showing everyone we can the love of Christ.

- There are people whom we may *feel* as if we owe them a piece of our mind; but what we really owe them is the love of Christ.
- There are people whom we may feel as if we owe them nothing but grief for how they have treated us, but what we really owe them is the love of Christ
- We are receiving a special offering for homeless and orphaned children in Costa Rica, Mexico, India, Panama, and a couple of other nations. "Why should I give anything?" Because we owe all men the love of Christ.

Transition: Love is a debt we owe to every man.

## II. Where love rules, we need no other rules

- A. One purpose of God's commandments is to keep us from doing ill to our neighbors
  - Your neighbor's wife is not *your* wife; so keep your hands off of her. You are not to do ill to *your* spouse by violating your marriage vow through infidelity.

- You are not to do ill to your neighbor by taking his life, or stealing his possessions
- “Doing right” by your neighbor means that you do not bear a false witness against him - whether through lying to him, or speaking slander about him.

B. Love won't allow you to do ill to your neighbor - *he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*

- Can you love a man, and commit adultery with his wife?
- Can you love your neighbor, and break into his home and steal his possessions?

THE POINT: If love governs your actions, you don't need any other rules to govern your actions. **Love won't allow you to do ill to your neighbor.**

C. Love won't allow you to neglect the good you can do for your neighbor

1. Note the words: “briefly comprehended”

a) The law is black and white: “Don't commit adultery.” “Don't lie.” and so forth

b) The command to “love” goes *far beyond* the black and white demands of the Law.

(1) The prohibition against adultery demands marital fidelity - and that's it. The command to love your wife demands *so much more* than that from us.

(2) “Do not steal” demands that you keep your hands off what does not belong to you, and no more. But *loving your neighbor as yourself* may demand that you *give* what you have, or help your neighbor obtain what he needs.

2. Love not only forbids doing ill to our neighbor, but it moves us to do good to him as well.

Transition: Love is a debt we owe to every person, and where love rules, we need no other rules.

### III. Loving others is a responsibility to be taken seriously (v. 11-13)

Verse 11 communicates a sense of urgency. Don't be derelict in your duty. Wake up to your responsibility. Don't act as if this is no big deal.

**Get serious about showing the love of Christ to everyone you can.**

A. Because Jesus is coming for us - *our salvation is nearer than when we believed.*

Jesus not only came to save us from our sins. He is coming again to save us from this sinful world. And if Paul could say *in his day* that our salvation is nearer than when we believed, how much more can we say that *in our day*.

- Some day the trumpet is going to sound
- Some day, the dead in Christ will rise and every living Christian will be caught up out of this world to meet his/her Savior in the air.
- When that day comes, there will still be multitudes of people who will need to see and feel the love of Christ, and we will no longer be here to show it to them.
- **Get serious about showing the love of Christ to everyone you can as long as you can, because Jesus may be coming soon!**

B. Because this sinful world needs to see an *honest* demonstration of love

Paul gives us three couplets that emphasize the deception in what this world often considers "love" of neighbor.

1. **Love is not found in rioting and drunkenness** - the party scene where booze flows freely and good sense is abandoned

2. **Love is not found in chambering and wantonness** - going from one bed chamber to another, “hooking up,” “sleeping around,” engaging in lewd and filthy behavior.
3. Love is not found in **strife** and **envy** - engaging in **hateful** and **abusive** behavior, driven by distorted passions such as envy and jealousy.

NOTE: These words are aimed right at the heart of so much that is wrong in our nation today. In the name of love, we murder babies, we endorse lewdness, we fill the air with hateful speeches and threats of violence.

What do all these things have in common (rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife and envy)? They are not expressions of a love that loves others as oneself, but a love for oneself at the exclusion of all others. It isn't love at all; it's lust - *the selfish, twisted, sinful desires of our fallen nature.*

**Transition:** *The only way this world will see something better is if we love them with the love of Jesus.* That's why verse 14 is so important to our understanding.

#### IV. It is impossible to love as we should without Jesus (v. 14)

- A. This isn't a love we work up; it's a love we work out because we have Jesus in our lives.

QUESTION; Do you have Jesus in your life? Have you received Jesus as your Savior from sin?

- **Sin is the problem** we all share in common. We were born into this world with a fallen nature. That's why we *all sin*, and we *all come short* of what God created us to be.
- **Judgment is the consequence.**

In verse 11, Paul wrote of *our salvation*. Everyone needs to be saved from the wrath and judgment of God, and everyone can

be - through Jesus Christ. Jesus died for our sins so we could be saved from Judgment.

- Jesus is the answer. He is *the Savior*. No one is saved by being moral or religious. We are saved when we receive Jesus as our personal Savior.

When we have Jesus in our lives, we can demonstrate that relationship through Christlike acts of love.

- B. Our heart is never neutral: it either guided by love or driven by lusts
1. Love does nothing but good for everyone it touches
  2. Lust does no good for anyone it touches

That is why love is a debt that we will always owe to others.

Love for neighbor is a debt that can never be fully repaid because the lusts of the flesh never go away.

The only alternative for lust ... is love; the love of Christ.

## Conclusion

We are all very good at looking out for ourselves and serving our own interests - our own desires - our own *lusts*. The command to love others is a command to look out for others and take their needs to our hearts. It is to show the love of Christ in every way that we can in every relationship that we have.

You might as well start at home, with your husband, your wife, your children, your mom and dad, your brothers and sisters.

Then you should certainly come to church with the love of Christ in your heart - a readiness to look out for others and to minister to their needs.

And you must take it with you to the market, and to your workplace, and every where else you go - with the deep down conviction that everyone you meet needs the love of Christ, *and you owe it to them to show it to them* ... because Jesus said so.