



Romans

Right With God

Pay Your Debts

Romans 13:8-14

Lesson Forty-Two

Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum

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Pay Your Debts

In the first part of the thirteenth chapter of Romans, Paul encouraged the folks at Rome to pay their taxes. If you think that taxes are bad now, you should have lived in Rome. There were taxes on your crops, taxes on your income, a poll tax if you were between 14 and 65 years old, import and export taxes, road and bridge taxes collected like a toll, taxes for owners of animals, taxes on your wagon or cart and then there were taxes for local governments. Paul said that Christians should be ready to participate in the support of the government, whether through taxes, or any other responsibilities of citizenship. To Paul, it was a debt to be paid.

In our lesson Scripture for today, we see Paul turning to personal debt God expects us to pay. He begins with "Owe no one anything..." Read Romans 13:8-10 Some suggest that this is about never having any kind of debt. Others see it as encouragement to pay all debts on time and never let debt accumulate until it is beyond your ability to pay.

But, then he speaks of a debt that we always owe, and always must pay. That is the debt of love to other humans.* Origin, an early Christian leader, said, "The debt of love remains with us permanently and never leaves us; this is a debt which we both discharge every day and forever owe."

We have talked a lot, during these studies in Romans, about the law...that great list of things to do and things not to do. Paul reminds us in these verses of some of the laws: don't kill, don't steal, don't covet, and other laws that affect our relationships with other humans. He then says that you can sum up all these relational laws in one statement. That statement is, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Of course that is not original. Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:37-40.

Paul speaks of the debt that is never really paid. We love, and we demonstrate that love by seeking only the best for the person(s) we love. If you love like that, you will not take someone's life. If you love like that, you will not want what is theirs...you will be happy for them as they enjoy it. If you love someone like that, you will never steal from them....love is always about giving, not getting. So, you see, paying the debt of love assures us that we will not be breaking any other laws. The love commandment sums it all up. As one commentator said, "Love cleanses the heart." Therefore, the desire for bad things is taken away by that cleansing and the desire to do good for others is opened up by the cleansing.

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Then Paul told the Romans that they needed to wake up. He told them that it was time to get on with God's will in their lives. Anyone who gives it much thought, realizes that time passes quickly and that cheap thrills, unproductive living and bad behavior waste time that should be spent doing things that are good for God's Kingdom and good for others.

He says, instead of living like that, put on Jesus, like a coat, and walk around your world looking like, living like, loving like, blessing like Jesus. John Wesley said that the thought of putting on Jesus is “a strong and beautiful expression for the most intimate union with Him, and being clothed with all the graces which were in Him.”

We should pay attention to Paul’s encouragement to the Romans to behave like it is daylight. There is no darkness to cover our bad behavior. Let’s live in Christian love, because its daylight, and everyone can see. And, remember loving our neighbors is a debt we owe.

Scripture Memory: “Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Romans 13:10

*Underlined statements in this Teacher’s Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher’s Guide.

For the Teacher:

Lesson Goal: To remind students that loving our neighbor is a debt.

1. There is a popular saying, "Love God and do what you like." If the love of God is yours; if your life is filled up with love for God; if you really do love your neighbor like you love yourself, you don't need a book of laws to guide your behavior.
2. Paul lists six sins as examples of wasted living: *orgies* - a kind of gang celebration that lowers the value of all those involved...it is a disturbance of peace and creates problems for people not involved in the celebration...something like a riot; *drunkenness* really needs no explanation; *sexual immorality* - a person who takes their pleasure, when or wherever they please, without regard for loyalty or the results of the action; *debauchery* - without shame, caring not who sees their sins. This was one of the ugliest words in the Greek language; *dissension* - putting yourself first and seeking to win, not caring who gets hurt...disrespectful competition; and *jealousy* - lack of satisfaction with what you have and desire for every good thing others have.
3. Everett Harrison said, “Paul has previously put in an urgent call for love (Romans 12:9, 10), he now returns to this theme, knowing that he cannot stress too much this essential ingredient of all Christian service.” The connection of this paragraph with the previous section is obvious. Christians owe submission and honor to governmental leaders, but they owe all humans much more.
4. Harrison: Speaking of the phrase “salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” verse eleven: “Salvation is already an achieved fact for the believer (Ephesians 2:8) and continuing fact as well (I Corinthians 15:2). But it has also its further and final phase, as Paul here intimates (see also, I Peter 1:9). With this third aspect in mind, he says elsewhere that we “await a Savior” (Philippians 3:20), for only then, at His return, will salvation be complete.”
5. This is a most practical lesson. Behaviors are suggested that are bad. However, the point of the lesson is not how bad humans can be, but how good we can be with Jesus as our example, and the One who empowers us.

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Student Worksheet

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=Paul speaks of a debt that we always _____, and always must _____. That is the debt of love to other _____.

=We love, and we demonstrate that _____ by seeking only the _____ for the person(s) we love. If you love like that, you will not take someone's _____. If you love like that, you will not want what is theirs...you will be _____ for them as they enjoy it. If you love someone like that, you will never _____ from them....love is always about _____, not getting.

=Anyone who gives it much thought, realizes that time _____ quickly and that _____ thrills, unproductive _____ and _____ behavior waste time that should be spent doing things that are _____ for God's _____ and good for _____.

=Let's live in Christian _____, because its daylight, and everyone can _____. And, remember loving our neighbors is a _____ we _____.

Scripture Memory: "Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." Romans 13:10

A Roman Road to Salvation:

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Everyone is a sinner and needs salvation.

Romans 6:23a "For the wages of sin is death." The law of God is unchangeable. If someone sins the penalty must be paid, the payment is death.

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us." God loves us so much, according to John 3:16, that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins.

Romans 6:23b "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The penalty for sin is spiritual death, but God, through the death of Jesus on the cross, took the penalty for the sins of all people, and now everyone can have eternal life. See also, II Corinthians 5:21

Romans 10:9, 10 "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." To personally receive the gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus, you trust God to be what He says He is. Believing that "God raised Him (Jesus) from the dead" is to accept all that the Bible says about God and His Son, Jesus. Then you speak (confess) the words, "Jesus is Lord," as a statement of faith. Believing "with your heart" means that you believe with your mind and with everything that you are.

Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." You have the promise of God Himself that if you do what Romans 10:9, 10 says, you will become God's child and have eternal life.

Romans 12:1, 2 "I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Becoming a Christian is a life-long act of faith and worship.