

# Romans 13:8-14

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Date: 21 March 2017

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[0:01] So my theme for this, I think the theme of this section of the book of Romans is, you see in the end of verse 9, you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Now remember we're in a section in the epistle of the Romans where he's spelling out what does it mean to live as a Christian. What does it mean to live out that righteousness, that right relationship with God which we have through faith alone in Christ alone.

So in chapter 12 in verse 1 he says, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. And he doesn't just mean our physical bodies, he means everything that we are.

Everything that we do. And it's a multiple practical implication for the whole of ourselves. The whole of our lives, everything that we are and do, we are to present that to God as a living sacrifice.

And what the Apostle Paul has done is he's shown what does that look like in different areas of life. And so in this chapter, remember last week he said, this is what it looks like to be a Christian citizen.

[1:09] This is what it means to live under a government, maybe it's a worldly government. How you are to live for God, even under the Roman Empire. How you are to live for God in a state that is not Christian.

How are we to serve the state? How are we to honour the king? How are we to obey the state?

Well, wherever we can. We're simply not just to jump into criticism of those who are over us.

Even our employers. As best as we can in our consciences, we are going to do all we can for the state, for the place that God has put us in.

So in verse 7, he says about the authorities, he says, doesn't he? Pay to all what is owed to them. Taxes to whom taxes are owed.

Revenue to whom revenue is owed. Pay to all what is owed. Owe nobody anything.

[2:10] Pay them all. God takes unpaid debts seriously. He expects his people to deal with them. And even if they are small debts, we are still to take them seriously.

We are to deal with them. And he almost takes that thought over into this next section. Look what he says at the beginning of verse 8. He links the two sections together. Owe no one anything. Owe no one anything. Not a penny. Not an hour of work. Not a spoonful of sugar. Not a long lunch hour. Owe no one anything.

And we as Christians, we should imagine that this involves for us not just money. Of course it does include money. But we owe all sorts of things to all sorts of people.

All that people have given to us. All that people have invested in us. All that people have lent to us. We are meant to do to them at least the same things.

[3:10] The same type of things they have done to us. People help us. And we are to help them. People give to us. And we are to give to them.

Pay to all what is owed to them. Owe no one anything. And as we live out this. As we live this out. We will be changed.

And we will be enriched. And perhaps it would be a good idea this afternoon or tonight. Or sometimes this week. This week. To take a bit of time and think to yourself. To think about. Do I owe people things?

Are there people. And they've done things for me. And I've never done anything for them. What do I owe you? How can I pay that?

How can I do that? Because it pleases God. And so think. What do I owe my parents? What did my parents do for me?

[4:08] What have my friends done for me? What do I owe them? How should I live towards them? And as we do so. Our lives will be changed.

Here's the interesting thing. I think. As we live this out. Many people will be impressed by the gospel. And the impact that it makes. When they see it. They see who we are. And what we are. And how we're living. And God may use that for much good. Owe no one anything. What's the next word in verse 8? The word accept. Accept. There's an excuse. There's a get out clause. We can get off the hook. Owe no one anything. Except. To love each other. What does Paul mean by that? Is he saying never love anyone? Don't do that. Never do that. Owe no one anything. Except love. No. He's saying. That our love is to be open ended.

[ 5 : 06 ] Our love is to be infinite. Our love is to be unceasing. Our love is to be endless. We are never to say about anybody. I've loved them enough. I will never love them anymore. I've served my debt of love to them.

No more love for that person. God says you can never say that. You never stop. And it's not just a challenge for us. To obey. It is something that will benefit us.

As we seek to serve God. This is a wonderful statement of Paul. That the one who loves. Each other. The one who loves one another. Has fulfilled the law.

Isn't that an amazing blessing? You look at the law. You look at all the commandments. And how strict they are. And how severe they are. And you think. Good grief. How could I do that? And Paul says.

The one who loves. Can you see that? The one who loves another. Has fulfilled the law. It's amazing. And we should devote ourselves. Our redeemed lives.

[ 6 : 04 ] To loving other people. And we should do it all the time. And we should never stop. And never end. We've never done enough. We can never pull out of it.

We can never say. That job is finished. I've retired from loving others. Oh no one anything. Except. To love each other. And that is how we live out. The Christian life.

So think of the two great commandments. Jesus said. To love the Lord your God. With all your heart. And mind. And self. And strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. It's the great simplifying principle.

So I want to see. Two reasons. In verses 8 to 10. First of all. Love is the fulfilment of the law. Love is the fulfilment.

Of the law. I think that's a really interesting phrase. Because I think that. There are many people today. In churches. In fact. I would even argue that. Most evangelical churches.

[ 7 : 01 ] Most conservative evangelical churches. Think that love and law. Are two completely different things. In fact. They would say love and law.

Are the opposite. Things. They oppose one another. They are treated as enemies. So you hear that in churches. Don't you? People say. Look at all those legalists. Always keeping the law.

Keeping the word of God. Keeping the commandments. But they don't have love. That's the important thing. It's not the commandments. It's love. And so we see that sometimes. Don't we?

We see it in people's faces. And we see it in people's hearts. And we hear it sometimes. In our speech. That we keep the commandments. But there's no love. And there's people on the other side.

Aren't there? They're equally as easy to spot. Very happy. Very joyful. But actually careless. And they don't keep the commandments. And they're not seeking to obey God's law.

[ 8 : 02 ] They're not serious in their Christian lives. They're not trying. To obey God. And in both cases. Those ideas are mistaken. They are not understanding. What God is saying and wishing.

And Paul disagrees. With the contest. And he shows how important loving is. So the key idea is. In Leviticus chapter 19. In verse 18. You should love your neighbours yourself.

And Paul takes that idea. And you get it three times. So look at verse 8. Oh no one anything except to love each other. For the one who loves another. Has fulfilled the law. And then you see it in verse 9.

For the commandments. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not covet. And any other commandment. Are summed up in this word. You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Love is about God. Love is about the commandments.

Verse 10. Love does no wrong to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Do you see the way that he corrects. This very foolish division. That people bring.

[ 9 : 04 ] It's love. Not law. That's a nonsense. That's a foreign to the New Testament. They are not opposed to each other. They are not against each other. They are together.

They belong together. And so whenever you look in the Bible. You see. That love is an unpaid debt. And we are to pay these debts. Romans 1 verse 14.

We are to do something. And it's to share. We are under a debt. Under an obligation. To share the gospel with the word. It's the same word. I'm under an obligation. Or owing both to the Greeks and barbarians.

Both to the wise and the foolish. He is to tell them the gospel. That's what he owes them. And then in Romans chapter 18 verse 12. What we owe the Holy Spirit.

Is to live a holy life. We are debtors. If by the Spirit. You put to death. The misdeeds of the body. So here love. Here is the debt.

[ 9 : 59 ] Which is never fulfilled. We are never going to be able to say. I am not enough. We are never going to be able to say. There is no more love. That I could ever give. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

Paul says. The one who loves one another. Has fulfilled the law. He is not against law. He doesn't laugh at the law. Or despise the law. It's fulfilling the law.

The two of them belong together. In the life of the Christian. And very often. We hear the law attacked. So we are past the law.

People say. And we are now in the era of love. But that is not what the Bible teaches. The one who loves another. Has fulfilled the law.

And so. As we love people. We are fulfilling the law. And the two of them belong together. The law. Needs love. And love. Needs the law. God says.

[ 10 : 58 ] Don't hate that person. How am I going to obey that law. When that person has hurt me. And damaged me. And I want to hate. I feel like hating them. How will I obey the law.

Well it's the love of God. It's the love of God. That will help me. To obey the law of God. Don't steal. Don't tell lies. When you feel like doing it.

How will you not do it. Love. Will help you. Love will keep you. I can't do that. Because I know that is not love.

Husbands and wives. What will enable you to be faithful to each other. Well because you love them. And it's love that will keep you. The law needs love.

To inspire us. And enable us. If it's just fear. Fear will not help us keep the law. God said.

[ 11 : 54 ] If you break this law. You'll go to hell. Full stop. That is a powerful argument. But it won't enable you. To keep the law. But he says.

To keep the law. Is to love. To delight in my love. And to show my love. And similarly. On the other hand. I've said that the law needs love. But love needs the law.

God says. Love people. Love people. How do we respond? We say. What do you mean? How do I love them? What is love?

When you look at the commandments. Immediately you understand. How you are to love them. And care for them. And bless them. And improve their lives. Love does no harm. To the neighbour.

Look at the simple commandments. He quotes here. In this summary. He says. You shall not commit. Adultery. That's what love looks like. You shall not murder. You shall not steal.

[ 12 : 54 ] You shall not covet. Don't hurt anybody. Don't hate anybody. Don't injure anybody. Love them. That is what those commandments are saying.

Love them. That's the summary of those commandments. And he says it. Of any other commandments. Summed up in this word. You shall love your neighbour. As yourself. As he puts it in verse 10.

Love does no harm to its neighbour. Love does no wrong. It's thrilling isn't it? It's wonderful. What does the law do? To the non-Christian.

The law shows us our sin. Doesn't it? It shows us how we've fallen short. It shows us that we've not loved God. With all our heart and mind. And soul and strength. It shows us that we've not loved our neighbour.

As ourselves. Love shows us the character of God. You shall not commit adultery. Why? Because God is a faithful God. God is the one who keeps his promises. You shall not lie. Why? Because God is the God of truth.

[13:53] So the law. It shows us where we've fallen short. It shows us. God and his character. And the law shows us the Lord Jesus Christ. Because he is the embodiment of the law.

He is the one who kept the law perfectly. But having come to Christ. Don't we say. Oh no. We're completely done with the law. No. The law. What does it do? It shows us in yes.

It shows us the character of God. It shows us the pathway to godliness. It's not if we keep the law. Then we'll get to God. But no. Actually. Oh how I love your law.

The psalmist says. Oh how I delight in your law. Because it shows me the way to godliness. Love makes law.

Enjoyable. Love makes fulfilling the law possible. One writer says. If we truly love our neighbour.

[14:54] We will seek their good. Not their harm. And we will thereby fulfill the law. Even though we know. Don't we. We will never completely discharge our debt. It's not just our Christian neighbours.

Though it is mostly our Christian neighbours. It's all our neighbours seeking their good. That's why we're in the world. A sign of a believer who is careless about God's law.

Shows that there's something very very wrong. For somebody to claim to love God. But have no interest in his law. Actually is loveless.

The thing that you say you're doing. The thing that you say that you're concentrating on. Is the thing that you. You. You are not showing. Because to not keep God's law.

And to not love your fellow neighbour. Shows you're not loving God. So somebody who stupidly says. I'm not interested in loving people.

[15:54] I'm interested in keeping the law. If such a person exists. I would say to them. Your big fault is you're breaking the law. Because the law says love. And that's what God requires of you.

Love is the fulfilment of the law. Now why should we love others. And how should we love others. That brings us secondly to. Love is not only the fulfilment of the law. But the preparation for heaven. Verses 11 to 14. The preparation for heaven. Love is not only a fulfilment of what God requires. It's not only the behaviour that's appropriate. For the time we live in.

Love prepares you for heaven. This is what this life really is. Our whole lives prepare us for the new creation.

It's why we're on earth. It's why we're saved by Christ. That he may prepare by his spirit. Us for the new creation. Besides this Paul says verse 11.

[16:49] And he goes on to tell us. About the time that we're living in. There's three statements. Verse 11. Besides you know the time. This is the time we're in. But the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now.

Than when we first believed. The night is far gone. The day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness. And put on the arm of light. The hour has come for you to wake up from your sleep.

He means that real life hasn't really come yet. Real life is new creation. And it is coming. And it's coming soon. But living on this earth.

We haven't lived in a complete life. In a holy life. Most people are sleeping. They don't know what is happening. They don't know about the change that is about to take place.

They're not preparing for it. They're not rejoicing for it. They're not saying every day is a day nearer to heaven. A day nearer to the great life. As they get older.

[17:47] They don't get happier and happier. Because they're getting nearer and nearer heaven. And they're getting nearer and nearer God. And so all they've just seen is a great, great sadness.

And Paul is showing us as believers. That the full awareness of truth and glory. That now is the time in our lives to wake up. Now is the time to learn about heaven. Now is the time to think about it. Not forget about it. Not just to think about it when you're ill. But let it be very, very real to you. Here is transient.

There is solid. Now is short. Then is forever and forever and forever. And it will be perfect.

And it will fill us with joy that we cannot imagine. And we are going to love each other as we've never done on earth. And we're going to be together with our friends. And with our loved ones in Christ.

[18:47] And with all the Christians of the world. And the hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber. Secondly, he says salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. And he means future salvation.

We are saved, aren't we? We're saved from the penalty of sin. We are being saved. God is making us more like Christ. We will be saved when Christ comes again. When there will be complete and perfect salvation.

The final doctrine of God's children. When the redemption of our bodies will come. And it's all coming closer and closer. And we will be more and more filled with excitement and joy. And thirdly, he says the night is far gone and the day is at hand.

There is nothing now on Christ's calendar before his return. That's the next big event. The final event. This wonderful time.

And then in verses 12 to 14. He tells us what we're to avoid and what we're to concentrate on. So how are we to prepare for the new creation? How are we to show our love? And again, there's three simple statements.

[ 19 : 52 ] All basically making the same point. Verse 12 in the second half. Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. That's how we're to live. To put off sin in all its shape and form day by day, year by year.

More and more. We're to be fulfilled with his Holy Spirit and to put on the armour of light. Secondly, verse 13. Walk properly as in the daytime. Walk in the daytime.

Behave like you're going to heaven. Live like you're preparing for the new creation. Live every day in the light of heaven. Then he says in verse 14. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just again, look what he says there. He doesn't just say put on the characteristics of Christ. Put on the qualities of Christ. Now of course we could do that. We could put on Christ's goodness and holiness and love.

And Christ's courage. And we could try and put them all on. But he doesn't say that. He says put on Jesus Christ. You go into his body. If I can put it like that.

[ 20 : 53 ] He clothes you in preparation for heaven. Preparation for heaven and the fulfilment of the Lord. The life we live on earth.

The present life. This earthy life is uncertain. None of us know how long we will live. Or when we are going to die. It is fragile. There are lots of things in this life that are sore and sad and disappointed.

And it is short. When you are 15 years of age. You think don't you. That 70. Is an absolutely enormous age. When you are older.

70 doesn't seem all that long does it. That's life. How best can you use your life. How best can you use your life.

You might not be very successful. You might not feel you have got many responsibilities. What is God saying to you? He says the way that you use your life. And you spend your life. Is you love each other. You banish your resistance.

[ 21 : 55 ] You banish your resentment. And you express your love. You think about the nonsense people waste their time on. Think about what a lot of us Christians. Spend our time on. How long will those things last?

What does it mean in the light of eternity? Supposing one of us here. We are to die tonight. We would say wouldn't we. I wish I had said such and such to them.

I wish we had spent that time together. We are to behave in the light of these things. And to commit ourselves to love. And as Paul says in verse 14. To put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's very interesting what he says.

Make no provision for the flesh. Don't give in an ounce. Don't give in an ounce. An inch. An inch. It's a wonderful perspective here.

It's a wonderful change to our normal thinking. We normally think when it comes to old age. Of light fading into darkness. Don't we? You get up in the morning.

[ 23 : 00 ] And you live throughout the day. And then you come to the end of the day. And the end of the day is darkness. And you say goodbye to the light. You put your head on the pillow. And it's finished. It's all over. We've lived the light. And now we go into the darkness.

The Bible says life is the exact opposite. For the Christian. Verse 12. The night is far gone. The day is at hand. The day comes after.

Can you see that? There's no ending to that day. There's no sorrow in that day. And there is a sense. Our life on this earth is darkness. It's not complete darkness for the Christian.

No. But there's a lot of darkness in life. There's a lot of darkness. And Paul is saying. That darkness is nearly over. And that is what each of us should think.

As we come to the end of our lives. Darkness is fading away. And you will be in the light forever and ever. And you will live more and more.

[ 23 : 58 ] In the glorious light. And so Paul says live in the light and prepare for it. The hour has come for you to wake from your sleep. Salvation is nearer to you.

Nearer to you than when you first believed. The night is far gone. The day is at hand. So let's cast off the works of darkness. And put on the armour of light.

Let's pray.