**Our Debt of Love**

*Romans 13:8-10*

**Introduction**

1. Paul gave attention to a Christian’s duty to government in **Romans 13:1-7** – the last 2 verses concluded with our responsibility to pay our taxes, i.e. what we owe the government.
2. Having said this, Paul returned to the attitudes and actions we are to have toward one another.
3. **Romans 13:8-10** – As Christians, we should pay our debts, what we owe, **but there is a great thing we all owe each other that is a debt in perpetuity – love.**
4. We are to submit to the laws God has given to us, and many of them have to do with our relationships with each other on earth.
   1. All these horizontal commands are summed up in love for neighbor.
   2. Every requirement God has given to us in our relationships will be met if we but love each other.
   3. **God says we are indebted to each other in this way.**
5. The Reason for Our Debt
6. God’s Love for Us
   1. **John 3:16** – What God did for the world in sending His Son.
      1. This was in spite of the fact that we were unlovable.
      2. **Romans 5:6-8** – while we were still sinners – ***“WHEN WE WERE ENEMIES” (v. 10)***.
   2. **1 John 4:9-11** – This love of God expressed toward all men demands that we see that value in each other.
      1. God looked on us in our depraved state, and was moved with compassion.
      2. He did the greatest thing He could do in sending His Son for us.
      3. We must strive to see the value in each other that God saw in us – IF GOD VIEWED US THIS WAY, THEN SHOULDN’T WE VIEW EACH OTHER SIMILARLY.
7. Our Undeniable Link
   1. **As Mankind:**
      1. **Acts 17:24, 26-28** – we all are the offspring of God.
         1. We must understand, and view each other as a creation of God.
         2. **(v. 26)** – one blood – there is no superior race, people, nation, culture, etc.
      2. **1 Timothy 6:7** – We enter the world, and leave the world the same way.
      3. **Hebrews 9:27** – We are all subject to the same end.
         1. Speaking of death – “No man is an island, entire of itself…any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” (John Donne)
         2. Because of our undeniable share in human life, and death, we are naturally indebted to each other in this life.
   2. As Christians:
      1. In Christ, the links of mankind are understood and appreciated, and the greater link of the FAMILY OF GOD IS EMPHASIZED.
      2. The book of Ephesians does a wonderful job of emphasizing the unification in Christ, and the implications such brings:
         1. **Ephesians 1:9-10** – It was God’s plan to gather all things together in Christ. (SALVATION IS ONLY FOUND IN HIM – SALVATION IS OFFERED TO ALL)
         2. **Ephesians 1:18-19** – All gathered in Christ have the same hope, are equally valuable to God, and have access to the same power in Christ.
         3. **Ephesians 2:14-18; 3:6** – Christ has broken down barrier walls between Jew and Gentile – all heirs in Christ.
         4. **Ephesians 3:14-15** – This spiritual family wears the same name of the same Father.
         5. **Ephesians 4:1-6** – This oneness in Christ demands a walk among each other of humility, gentleness, patience, aiding, unity and peace – all could be summed up in LOVE, our debt to one another 🡪
8. Our Debt – Love
9. What is Love
   1. **Romans 13:8** – we owe a debt of love to one another, but what does that mean.
   2. **Love** – agapē; love, i.e. affection or benevolence. (Strong)
      1. Love is affectionate, but it is more than simple affection.
      2. It is also more than charity, as the KJV translates it.
      3. **IT IS THE EXPRESSION OF GOODWILL BRED FROM AN UNFEIGNED SENSE OF VALUE PERCEIVED IN ITS OBJECT.**
   3. This is further understood by our connection with God:
      1. ***“God is love” (1 John 4:8)*** – so EVERYTHING God does or says IS AN ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF LOVE, FOR IT IS HE THAT IS ACTING, THUS LOVE IS ACTING.
      2. **John 15:13; Romans 5:10** – Jesus said there is not greater expression of love than to give one’s own life for a friend, yet, He still topped that by giving Himself for His enemies.
      3. Such an action showed that Jesus valued our lives above His own.
      4. LOVE IS SACRIFICIAL IN NATURE. IT DOES NOT LOOK TO SELF, BUT TO OTHERS, AND DOES FOR THEM WHAT IS MOST NECESSARY FOR THEIR WELL-BEING – **Philippians 2:3-8** – Jesus did not die for His interest, but ours.
      5. **2 Corinthians 8:9** – He became poor that we might be rich.
10. Love – The Pinnacle of Christianity
    1. Unlike other debts we incur, our debt of love is actually something we should rejoice in the acknowledgment of, and in the payment of.
    2. The reason we come to Christ is to be reconciled to God, and have fellowship with Him. To have fellowship with God is to share in God’s nature through imitation of Him – **1 John 1:5-7**
    3. **Ephesians 4:13** – This is why Christians edify one another – to help each other grow up into Christ.
    4. **2 Peter 1:2-8** – Our goal is to partake in the Divine Nature (God), and we do this through the participant knowledge of Christ, the manifestation of God in the flesh.
       1. NOTE: The top virtue – love – God is love.
       2. We are constantly pressing upward toward God as we ***“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).***
    5. The only way we can imitate Christ, and love as we are indebted to do, is to keep His commandments – **1 John 2:3-6; 2 John 4-6**
    6. **John 13:34-35 – Our love for one another shows we are disciples of Jesus.**
    7. Love and obedience are inseparable:
       1. We cannot do something acceptably in the name of love if it is not according to God’s commandments.
       2. We cannot do something acceptably in the name of obedience if it is without love.
    8. **Let us love each other as we are indebted to do 🡪**
11. Love One Another – In Practice
12. Evangelism
    1. The greatest act of love we can give to the world.
    2. **Romans 1:14-17** – Paul saw himself as indebted to all men to preach the message that would save their souls.
    3. **Acts 8:4** – It was obvious that the persecuted Christians thought they were indebted to men.
       1. They went and spread a message to everyone they came into contact with.
       2. This was the same message that was the cause of their persecution!
       3. What love!
    4. Penn Jillette, an avowed atheist, is quoted as saying – “I’ve always said that I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize. I don’t respect that at all. If you believe that there’s a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward…how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?”
13. Exhortation and Edification
    1. **1 Corinthians 14:26** – all we do to each other should be for building each other up in Christ. (We should be constantly aiding each other in growth in the gospel.)
    2. **Hebrews 3:12-14** – We should constantly encourage one another about the goal ahead, and warn of the deceit of sin.
    3. **Hebrews 10:24-25** – A prime place God has designed for this exhortation and edification is the assembly.
       1. When we forsake the assembly WE DON’T CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER.
       2. WE FAIL TO LOVE.
14. Turning the Sinner
    1. **1 Peter 4:7-8** – Love toward each other covers sin. In what way?
    2. **James 5:19-20** – Love covers sin when one turns another away from it by rebuke and correction.
       1. This is sacrificial by nature.
       2. This looks away from self comfort to the dire needs of a brother in Christ.
15. There are many other things we could speak about, but let us simply do what God says, and love one another.

**Conclusion**

1. We must be constantly aware of the debt of love that we have toward one another.
2. Let us understand that this debt can never really be paid in full – we will always be paying.
3. Let us imitate God, who is love.