

Romans 13:8-10

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] Good morning. It's nice to be with you this morning. Please take your copy of God's word. I do hope you have a copy of God's word with you because we are a people of the word. And join me in Romans chapter 13.

Our text for today is Romans chapter 13 verses 8 through 10. As we continue our study of Paul's letter to the Roman believers this morning, I want you to be reminded that the first 11 chapters of this book are Paul's doctrinal magnum opus of the Christian faith.

And the last five chapters are his application. The summary of his teaching in the first 11 chapters and his application transition is found in Romans chapter 12 and verse 1, which says, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Paul says that in light of God's merciful work toward us, we are to give whole self devotion to him. And today's text falls under that heading.

We will develop the idea further this morning. But before we read and consider chapter 13 verses 8 through 10, hear carefully that we cannot be and are not saved by our works.

[1:34] You are incapable of adding anything to the equation of your salvation. But if we have placed genuine saving faith in the personal work of Jesus Christ, if we have been given new life and quickened by his spirit, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, then our faith is a faith that will be working.

Today's text shows us one of the ways that genuine faith works in the life of a Christian. So Romans 13, beginning in verse 8, before I read, Beloved, let me remind you that this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good.

So we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands. Oh, no one anything except to love each other.

For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 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 neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore, love is fulfilling, is the fulfilling of the law.

[2:59] Did you lose me, Calvin? Don't panic on the church floor. I'll keep pressing on. There is much to consider in these three verses.

A lifetime of thoughtful meditation and fervent application. Let's set our gaze upon its contents in a three-point outline as follows.

Number one, the requirement of love, which we'll see at the beginning of verse 8. Number two, the regulation of love, we'll see in verse 9.

And number three, the result of love, we see in the last half of verse 8 and in verse 10. You're welcome, good Baptists, for the alliteration. So the requirement, the regulation, and the result of love.

So number one, let's look at the requirement of love. Paul here says at the beginning of verse 8, No, owe no one anything except to love each other.

[4:02] In the preceding verse to today's text, Paul stated, this is Romans 13 and verse 7, Pay to all what is owed to them, taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

And then he says, owe no one anything. So he is continuing this thought in verse 8 by saying that if something is owed, then that something should be paid.

His point here is not an anti-debt teaching, and some faithful Christians have seen this text that way.

There is, of course, biblical ethic for both borrowing and lending, but that is beyond the scope of our time together today, and frankly, it's beyond the scope of this text.

You see, Paul is turning our attention in the beginning of verse 8 from submission to governing authorities to how we are to relate to one another. He presses on except to love each other.

[5 : 14] The implication found in his sentence structure is, do not let debts be outstanding, right? Pay to the person owed what is owed them, except the continuing debt of love to one another.

A debt that will never be repaid. We are to love one another. You owe love to each other. Who is this each other that Paul is referring to?

Remember, he is writing to a local church. So I take it to mean Christians, especially those whom you fellowship with, those who you've made a commitment to, those who you ought to be regularly gathering with.

This is not to say that we shouldn't love other Christians. This is not to say that we ought not love all people. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

So we are to love all people, but I think that Paul has in mind here particular objects of our love. Each other. Those people who have professed faith in Christ and have been welcomed into the fellowship of this local assembly of God's people.

[6 : 37] This, I believe, is who Paul is saying should be the object of our love in this text. Now, to love is the Greek word *agapeo*, which is a love that is not conditioned, which means that Paul is exhorting us to love each other regardless of the comfort or ease or lack thereof of that love.

Our love for one another should not be conditioned on our loveliness or lovableness. Yes. Beloved, if you are a member of this church and another person is a member of this church, you do not have to like them, but you are commanded to love them.

Don't people sometimes rub us the wrong way? We just don't get along the way we might hope we would. I don't have to like you all, but I am commanded to love you.

And I do. Love for each other is an act of the will. It's a decision that we make. Our culture has twisted the idea of love into a feeling, right?

Butterflies in the stomach, giddiness, a swollen tongue that can't get words out, etc. But this is not the picture of love we see in the Bible.

[8 : 04] Love in the Bible is not easy. It is not comfortable. It is not aimed at the lovely and lovable.

Love in the Bible is most clearly and most importantly expressed to us in the suffering life and suffering death of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Was He affectionate towards those He lived and died for? Of course. He was heartfelt for all those that belong to Him.

But did He experience butterflies in the stomach, giddiness as He suffered the wrath of God on their behalf? Of course not. It didn't feel good for Jesus to hang on that cross for us.

Nevertheless, He loved us. An act of the will for our highest good. He sought our highest good at His expense.

[9 : 11] It cost Him His very life. The Apostle John tells us in John 13 and verse 1, Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

He gave Himself for their sake and ours. Jesus sets for us the preeminent example of love and we are meant to imitate Him.

He teaches us in John chapter 13 and verse 35. There He says, By this all people will know that you are My disciples.

And I hope all of you can fill in the last half of that verse. Do you know how it concludes? By your demographic affinity?

You're all young marrieds with kids. All, most of you, young marrieds with kids? It doesn't say that. By your agreed crunchiness? It doesn't say that.

[10 : 26] Your political opinions? It doesn't say that. Your theological minutiae? I'm not saying we shouldn't agree on things theologically, but the minutiae?

It doesn't say that. Jesus says, By this all people will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another. Jesus places a central priority on love for one another as a marker of His

followers.

Show me a mature Christian man or woman and I will show you a person who has love for the church, who is humble enough to bear with other people's imperfections because they are aware of their imperfections, who forgives because they understand the gravity of the forgiveness that God has granted them.

The mature Christian serves others, prefers their preferences, does not seek their own advantage, readily speaks words of encouragement, promotes truth and holy living, thinks of their failings as worse than others' failings, seeks forgiveness and reconciliation, and is patient with God's sanctifying work in the life of the church.

Show me an immature Christian man or woman and I will show you a person who is self-seeking, self-important, obnoxiously opinionated, grumbling, petty, and holds grudges.

[12:12] And it saddens me to say that we have a mixture of both mature and immature Christians in our fellowship. The professing Christian who does not love is either A.

immature or B. not a Christian at all. You see, the person who does not love does not have a clear enough, a big enough understanding of God's love for them.

In 1 John 4, verse 19 and 20, John writes, we love because He first loved us.

God has expressed to us His love and the personal work of Jesus Christ and the salvation of our souls. He has shown us the unconditional love that can be found in Jesus.

Not loving us because we deserve it, but because He Himself is love. It emanates from His very being. And this is an attribute of God that we are meant to display in the world.

[13:31] John goes on in verse 20, if anyone says, I love God and hates His brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

And then verse 21, and this commandment we have from Him. Whoever loves God must also love his brother. There is no wiggling around this in the text.

Paul is clear here, it is clear elsewhere, that the people of God will be a people of love. Central characteristic of who we are.

In Romans chapter 13, verse 8, this verb love is in the Greek present form. So Paul does not have in mind a single action of love, but an ongoing affection and care for each other with no intent for its end.

It's a disposition that carries itself out continually. It's expressed as a disposition toward one another. Christians, those whose lives are united and devoted to Christ's person and His ways are to love and love and love each other.

[14:54] Now, before we move on to our next point, let's consider in brief what ought to characterize our love by looking at a passage meant for more than a reading at a wedding.

Join me, if you will, in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. I'm going to read just verse 4 through the first part of verse 8.

And I just want you to think, note as we read both the positive and negative commands implied in each characteristic of love. So for example, the beginning, love is patient.

Well, it's the opposite of patience. It's impatience. So if you're impatient with others, that's not loving. You could take the inverse of anything that's being said here.

One of the exercises we go through in marriage counseling is a list of these. And I ask those people who are in counseling to characterize their life.

[15:56] Are you loving toward your spouse? And we do well to do this with anybody that's in our fellowship. So just think carefully with me as I read this slowly.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things. I think he means by that gives the benefit of the doubt. Hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. So we are required. It is laid upon us as followers of Jesus Christ to be those who love each other.

[17:02] love. Secondly, we see in our text the regulation of love. We see this in verse 9. Paul says, 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 neighbor as yourself. In this verse, Paul shares four of the six commandments that were given to Moses on Mount Sinai that pertain to our obligations to one another.

He omits the fifth commandment, honor your father and mother, and the ninth commandment, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, but this is not some mystery for us to unravel and understand, because he also says, and any other commandment.

I would suggest to you that Paul at times rambles things off under inspiration as examples to us. So he says, these four things, 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 the word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I think this idea of any other commandment, I take it to mean that it includes the fifth, the ninth, and all the other commandments that are summed up in those last six of the ten commandments.

[18:32] That it's structured in that way in the Old Testament. Paul is saying that God has given us instruction as to how we are to live in relation to one another in the Old Testament law, in the Mosaic law.

He goes on to cite Leviticus 19, 18, and the Lord Jesus to make his very point. So in Mark chapter 12 verse 28 through 31 we read, And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another.

There's a debate going on amongst the Pharisees and Sadducees about the resurrection. And seeing that he, Jesus, answered them well, asked him, Which commandment is the most important of all?

You're likely familiar with Jesus' response. He answers, citing Deuteronomy 6, 4, and 5. The most important is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. And this is understood to be the summary of the first four of the Ten Commandments.

[19:41] And then he says, The second is this, referencing Leviticus 19, verse 18. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And this summarizes, as Paul here states, the last six of the Ten Commandments. And then Jesus says, There is no other commandment greater than these.

So, we are given the clear example of Jesus' life and death, and the clear instruction of both the Old and New Testaments. We do well to note the regulations of the Bible, and to recognize that the natural compulsion of the one made new in Christ will be to love in a biblical manner.

Beloved, we ought to be very thoughtful as we approach the Bible and we see these commands.

We ought to give the application in our own living. Is what's being taught here being lived in my life, in the place that God has put me?

I can say to you with great surety, this will not always be easy. It is difficult at times to love people, but God, by His Spirit, empowers us to live according to His Word.

[21:02] So know what those regulations are, how it is we are meant to live with one another, and get to work doing that very thing. This is the activity of God's people, devotion to Him, love for one another.

love. And then we see, lastly, in our outline, the result of love. We pick up the last half of verse 8 and then verse 10.

Paul writes in verse 8, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. And then, love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Now, we must be very careful at this point. As I just noted previously to you, in Jesus' summary of the greatest commandments, we're missing half of what He had to say there in that text.

This says nothing of devotion to God. So, what is Paul doing here? We must be very careful. I state in the introduction to our text that we cannot be and are not saved by our works.

[22:12] you are incapable of adding anything to the equation of your salvation. But if we have placed genuine saving faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, if we have been given new life and quickened by His Spirit, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, then our faith is a faith that will be working.

You see, if we were able to perfectly keep the law on our own, we would have no need of Christ. But no one is capable of this work.

Every single one of us have broken God's law. We needed the perfect righteousness of Christ. That's why God had to become a man and come to earth to fulfill the righteousness required. It's one half of the equation of our justification and to die the death that our sin purchased for us. Both things, life and death of Christ.

What's called the active and passive obedience of Christ by the theologians of old. Both things matter. So we can't fulfill the law. We're not going to fulfill the law in that sense.

[23 : 26] That is not what Paul is saying. He's not suggesting in our text that if you can only love well enough, then you will have kept the law. That you're to be thinking about, well, have I?

Have I done enough? I think I'm a loving person. Perhaps God will accept me based on this. Not at all. Remember, the entire thesis for his letter is found in the opening chapter.

Chapter 1, verse 16 and 17. He says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, the good news, for it, the gospel, is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it, in the gospel, this good news, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

And he then spends the next 11 chapters expounding on this, opening up what that means, what does it mean for the righteous to live by faith.

[24 : 31] And we see Paul explain that the law serves two purposes. Firstly, the law exposes our sinfulness and therefore our need of a savior.

The law is what brings to us the bad news that necessitates good news, shows us whether in writing or written on our hearts that we need to be redeemed.

Paul writes in Romans 3 in verse 20, for by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight. The word justified means to be made right, to be declared righteous.

By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight since through the law comes knowledge of sin. The sin exists, we know about it because of the law, it exposes it to us.

Then he goes on, verse 24 of chapter 3, we are justified or made righteous by grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

[25 : 53] So we can be declared righteous because Christ dies in our place, taking on the debt that needs to be paid by us, the infinite debt that sin has purchased for us.

Christ dies in our place, propitiation, a replacement sacrifice for us. I've said to you the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ is penal substitutionary atonement.

We needed Jesus to die in our stead at the penalty for our sins. would be paid. Romans 6 and verse 23, Paul there says, for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So the law exposes our sinfulness and therefore our need of a savior. So he can't possibly be saying we can fulfill the law on our own for the salvation of our souls.

Secondly, the law teaches us the ethic of a life devoted to God. What should the person who has been made new, who is empowered by the spirit, whose old self has died, has a new self, who is able to now live in a way that is pleasing to God, how should their life look?

[27 : 20] And the law teaches us this ethic. Again, Romans 12 and verse 1, Paul there says, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

So he says, because God has been merciful to you, right? First 11 chapters of Romans, because this is true of you, devote your entirety to him.

What is that to look like? Well, he goes on to expound on that in the rest of his letter. And of course, we find much other instruction in the text as well. So the law teaches us the ethic of a life devoted to God.

And it is to this second purpose that Paul is referring to in the last part of verse 8 and in verse 10. John says the same in 1 John chapter 5 verse 1 through 5, a book written for the examination of the of our faith.

And central to that examination, John places love for the brothers. He writes this, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

[28 : 35] And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. If you place your faith in Christ, you've been born of God. And if you've been born of God, you will love everyone

else who's been born and we obey his commandments.

These ways that love has been regulated in the Bible. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.

Who is it that overcomes the world? Except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. So we have an empowered faith. God does not leave us to our own to prove that he has saved us, but he has given to us the helper, the paraclete, who comes along and helps us to live the way that he asks us to live.

He characterizes us in this way. So we see in these three verses the requirement of love, the regulation of it, and the result.

Love it. Now I want to issue in some closing statements two encouragements of application. First, if you find in yourself any conviction this morning for your lack of love, ask yourself, am I a Christian? [30 : 11] I never want to give any reason to doubt for those who are truly saved. But if you are not saved, I want to fill you with doubt.

I want you to really reckon with the state of your soul. Turn from your wickedness. Place your faith in Jesus Christ, and he will save your soul.

If you have settled that you are a Christian and still find yourself less loving than you ought to be, do three things. First, pray that God would work love for his people in your heart by the power of his spirit.

I have no doubt he will answer this prayer in the affirmative. Secondly, read the Bible with a mind towards God's love for you and the commands to love.

Allow the spirit, by the word, to warm your heart. because when our reckoning, the magnitude of God's love for us is present in us, in our minds, it outflows into love for others.

[31 : 27] John Durant, this is the quotation on the back of your bulletin this morning, said, As nothing in believers was so good as to cause him to love them, so nothing is so bad as can cause him to withdraw his love from them.

A reality that needs to be meditated on. constantly. And then thirdly, connect with someone in the church for prayer, study, and accountability on the matter.

These are the normal means of grace that God uses to grow us in our devotion to him. It should be done by those who profess faith in Christ. Second, second encouragement, I want you to know, church, that I am generally so encouraged by the manifold ways that you love one another.

Outside of our fellowship, we'll have people visit, we'll have pastors that hear things about our church, and they will express, we hear that your church loves each other well.

That's so encouraging to me. And I will tell you, the primary reason that it's encouraging to me is often people will ask, how was that accomplished? And they want me to give them three steps to how I taught you all to love each other.

[32 : 47] And I simply say, for my part in it, I open up the word and I preach. It's God who works in the lives of his people. It's such a picture of the spirit working in you.

It gives me such gospel hope to see the way that you all love one another. I think many people have reason to look at our congregation and say, those people are disciples of Jesus Christ.

Look how they love each other. So keep it up. Be encouraged. Don't stop. Press on. This life is short, and the reward that awaits you is great.

I know that you all are tired pouring out an immense amount of care within your homes and outside of your homes. Just keep pressing on.

At the end of your life, you will never regret loving too much. Galatians chapter 6, verse 9 and 10, Paul says, and let us not grow weary of doing good.

[33 : 51] For in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Let's pray together.