

Parson to Person

ROMANS 13 PART 5

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he 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 bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:8–14 NKJV).

Inescapably, Paul connects *“Owe no one anything”* with the previous mention of *“taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor”* (vs. 7). I cannot help but think that were it not for the addition of chapters and verses to the Biblical text, we would make that connection much more easily. However, as has been often mentioned, many Christian commentators suggest that *“Owe no one anything...”* forbids borrowing. Sadly, this leap has caused many Christians to feel guilt and shame when financing a home or other item of great expense—a car for example. The Bible does not teach that borrowing (or lending) is wrong, but does forbid defaulting on one’s debts. I would suggest believers avoid incidental purchases by the use of credit cards unless they pay off the balance each month. Interest-accruing debt is poor stewardship and should be avoided when at all possible. The primary focus we can glean herein is that if and when a believer borrows—he or she should repay the debt, pay it on time, and pay it in full. Leave no outstanding balance. For, *“The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives”* (Psalm 37:21 NKJV). Therefore, *“Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts; if you have nothing with which to pay...”* (Proverbs 22:26–27a NKJV).

Certain debts can be fully paid. However, as Paul points out, no one can pay in full the debt of love. Thus, *“owe no one anything but to love one another”* has emphasized meaning—especially in the context of the whole of chapter 13.

Believers may be tempted to show contempt for authorities, hold grudges against tax collectors, express frustration when required to pay customs, etc., but should resist that temptation. Moreover, we should never complain or find ourselves falling short when it comes to showing love toward others. Paul may have just as plainly said, *“continue in love, it is a debt you cannot fully pay”* or *“Keep on paying and never give up!”* Paul urged us to constantly reflect upon this in an effort to stir us up to good works and in order that we avoid the temptation toward self-interest/self-love.

Love should be the high water mark of our testimony as believers and is the filter through which all believers must measure their conduct. Jesus said, *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35 NKJV), and Paul added *“love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law”* (vs. 10).

This fact begs for a revisit on the glory and definition of Biblical love. If love does no harm to a neighbor, then the manifestation of that love (my love) must be beneficial to the one I am calling neighbor. My actions and decisions must be for improvement and support. I will not steal from my neighbor. I will not covet what my neighbor has—but will rejoice over my neighbor’s blessing. I will not envy, boast against, or lie to my neighbor. I will not lure my neighbor into sin or participate in any sinful act with the man or woman I claim to love.

Today, lust is called love. Sinful acts of adultery and fornication (heterosexual or homosexual) are called love. Stealing from one person in order to give to another is called love. But no! This is not the love proclaimed in the Bible. We must consider all the attributes of the law if one is to properly understand that *“love is the fulfillment of the law.”*

Today our points will be the development of the 613 commands in the law...or, LOL, we can just learn to walk in love.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul