

(Romans) Romans 12:9-13:10

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a spirit-filled life, characterized by love without hypocrisy, devotion to one another, diligence and fervor, hope and perseverance, prayer and generosity, and a positive attitude towards enemies, all of which contribute to unity and peace in the church.

Duration: 46:00

Scripture: Romans 12:9-13

Topics: "Christian Living", "Submission To Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of showing love and kindness to everyone we encounter, both strangers and those in our own homes. The analogy of a postman is used to illustrate the idea that we are indebted to God's love and should therefore share that love with others. The speaker also discusses the role of secular authorities and how we should submit to their laws and punishments. Additionally, the sermon highlights the need to overcome evil with good and warns against laziness, equating it to wickedness in God's eyes.

Transcript

Let's turn today to Romans chapter 12. We'll begin at verse 9 because a number of things mentioned in the rest of this chapter begin with that exhortation in verse 9 which says, let love be without hypocrisy. Now whenever we find an exhortation in scripture, you can be sure there's a very good reason for it.

And if we are humble, we will take that exhortation seriously and consider whether it has any application for our own life. We all profess to love others to some degree. The thing that we need to ask ourselves is whether our love is hypocritical or genuine.

Is it superficial or is it from within? Anything superficial in our life is a mark of phariseism, self-righteousness, being under the law, legalism and hypocrisy. Jesus placed the emphasis on cleaning the inside of the cup and he said it's no use if the outside looks clean. Christians may show love on the outside but here the emphasis is on it coming from within.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Let it come from deep within and for it to come from deep within us, God has to do a work within our hearts through the Holy Spirit, cleansing out wrong attitudes. For me to show love to somebody on the outside, I don't need to cleanse myself from wrong attitudes.

I just need to be diplomatic and pleasant on the outside. It doesn't change me at all. But God wants us to partake of his nature and his nature is love through and through.

There's no hypocrisy in it. And so this is a very important exhortation and it's very interesting that along with it we read in verse 9, abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. Now there's a lot of love which is sentimental.

Love can be superficial and also love can be sentimental where it's a wishy-washy type of love that does not care for truth, does not care for purity and like the love of a grandfather for his grandchild just permits him to do anything. That's not the love spoken of here because immediately after he speaks about love, he speaks about purity. The glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ full of grace and truth.

God is not only love, he is light in whom there is no darkness. And so it says that love be without hypocrisy but also at the same time hate what is evil and cling to what is good. That is the balance.

Clinging to what is good, hating what is evil, we are to love people. Speak the truth in love. And he continues to expand on that theme in verse 10.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. These are strong exhortations. He's speaking here not just of hugging a person or shaking his hand or saying praise the Lord but not even merely helping that person when he's in need.

To be devoted to one another in brotherly love. God's church is his family. And when we call a person a brother, a sister, we're talking about a relationship that supersedes our blood relationship in our earthly family.

Jesus once looked around at his disciples and said those were his real brothers. And his blood brothers were waiting on the fringe of the crowd wanting to see him and he said to the people who are my real brothers? These people standing here. He pointed to his disciples.

So in the family of God there's a relationship which supersedes our earthly blood relationship. And that is what is to be manifested in the church. That's why Jesus said all men will know you're my disciples when you love one another.

Now we would think that Jesus should have said all men will know you're my disciples when you love them. But that's not what he said. He's not talking about loving the world there.

He's talking about believers loving one another so committed so devoted to one another in brotherly love like it says here in verse 10 that the world will stand back in amazement and say like they did in the early centuries of Christianity behold how they love one another. But what do we see in Christendom today? It's quite the opposite. Behold how they hate one another very often is what we see.

Unfortunately there's a great need for repentance in this area among Christians of every shade and of every denomination and every doctrine. If we don't have our doctrine of love right everything else we hold is worthless. That's what 1 Corinthians 13 teaches very clearly.

All the gifts we have are useless. We considered the earlier part of chapter 12 and here it says be devoted to one another in brotherly love and one mark of that will be that you give preference to one another in matters relating to honor. That's what it says here in verse 10.

In other words don't ever seek to elevate yourself over another brother. Don't make another person feel small by in any way by your gifts or any other way. Don't let another person feel small.

Give preference to one another in honor. Don't seek for positions of honor in the church. Don't seek to be elevated with titles that elevate you above the other brothers in the church.

Be at their level. The first principle of effective ministry is the one that's written about Jesus Christ our Lord that he was made in all things like his brothers. Hebrews 2.17 and if we can follow him in that area then we would have fulfilled the law of Christ.

To be like our brothers give preference to the other in honor. In small matters like passing through a door we would always open the door and let the other person go through first. We're going to wash basin to wash our hands we'd step back and let the other person wash his hands first.

These are matters which don't cost us anything. The real test is when there is a position of honor, some gain, some praise of men. Can you pull back and let the other person get the honor? Can you do something secretly in the church for the church without anybody knowing about it? And perhaps people think somebody else did it.

Are you happy? Are you concerned that people didn't notice and recognize that you did it? These are areas where we can see how we probably haven't obeyed this exhortation. Further it says in verse 11 not lagging behind in diligence. When we love God and love one another there is no place for laziness.

In the entire history of the human race we will discover one day when we stand before God that God never used a single lazy man. He used many stupid people. He used many foolish people.

He even used many people who fell into deep sin. But he never ever used one lazy man. Remember that.

You may keep your life pure. You may be a good member of your local church. But if you are lazy God can have no use for you.

Jesus once told a parable of a man who was given one talent. You know what he did with that. He did nothing with it.

He wrapped it up in a handkerchief, buried it into the ground and when the master came he pulled out that one talent and gave it back to the master. And do you know what the master said to him? He said you wicked and lazy slave. Now if you read that you understand that laziness is equal to wickedness in God's eyes.

God didn't place us here on earth to be lazy. God told Adam by the sweat of your brow you're going to earn your bread. There are a lot of Christians who don't perspire in their service for God.

Full-time workers who do not perspire in their service for God. And no wonder their service for God is not effective. We have to labor to study the scriptures.

You cannot know the Bible if you don't work hard. Not lagging behind in diligence. Fervent in spirit or aglow with the spirit.

In other words fervent is related to the word fire. On fire. God wants us to be on fire.

He has no place for lukewarm people in the church. He has no place for cold people in the church. He has only those, he has only place for those who are on fire in their spirits.

Fervent in spirit serving the Lord. Always looking for an opportunity to do something for the Lord. And there are plenty of opportunities all around us.

If we are not doing it, it's either because we are lazy or because we have not allowed the Holy Spirit to set our spirits on fire. One of the things that John the Baptist said was that I can only baptize you in water but Jesus will baptize you in fire. The Holy Spirit when he fills a person he sets him aglow.

Like the burning bush in the wilderness that made Moses stop. Our lives must be such that people who look at us and watch us stop because they see something aglow in us, different from other bushes, from other people. Verse 12 rejoicing in hope.

There's no place for the true Christian to be gloomy. When we present ourselves to God, when we have responded to the gospel, here is the type of life that should come forth. Here is the type of life that comes through being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Rejoicing. Joy was not a very big thing in the Old Testament except once a week when they came together to praise the Lord and bang their cymbals and play their harps before God on Saturdays perhaps. But in the New Testament we are told to rejoice always.

That which was only once a week in the Old Testament is always now. Rejoicing in hope and particularly because we have a hope for the future. The hope that Christ is going to come again and going to take us to be with him forever to make us like him.

That is the hope we have and in that hope we rejoice. We praise the Lord even though we have trials and tribulation like it says in verse 12 persevering in tribulation. There's tribulation around but we endure in that because we have this hope.

If you don't have a hope you won't be able to persevere in tribulation. We can rejoice in tribulation because we have this hope and that's what we see here. And if we listen to these exhortations our life will be fruitful for God in his kingdom.

We turn now to Romans chapter 12 and verse 12. We were seeing these exhortations here in verse 9 onwards. For those who are seeking to live a spirit-filled life and we considered in our last study the first part of verse 12 where it says rejoicing in hope and persevering in tribulation.

A Christian is not called to have an easy life on this earth because a Christian is like a fish out of water. If you belong to this world Jesus said the world will not hate you but because you don't belong to this world that's why the world hates you. And so we face tribulation because the world is against Christ.

It was against Christ 20 centuries ago. It's against Christ today. But we persevere because we got a hope that Jesus Christ is Lord.

He runs this universe and he's going to establish his kingdom on earth. And therefore in tribulation we devote ourselves to prayer asking God to help us to give us grace to be overcomers. Prayer is one of those things which we can't explain with logic.

We're not informing God in prayer about anything he doesn't know. We're not trying to convince God to bless someone he doesn't want to bless. But yet the Bible speaks a lot about being devoted to prayer and all spiritual people will obey that exhortation as much as any other exhortation.

As much as it's important to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Not just to have a weak type of love for others but to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. In the same way it says here equally we must be devoted to prayer.

Now you know there's a lot of difference between praying and being devoted to prayer. There's a vast difference between the two. And here it speaks about being devoted.

That means we're committed to do something for the accomplishment of God's purposes here on earth. Verse 13 speaks about being generous and large-hearted towards God's people. Contributing to the needs of the saints.

At all times in every century there have been the poor among God's people. And those poor need help. And God has given to some in his church an abundance.

What are they to do with that abundance? They are to help the ones in their family who are poor. It's like an earthly family where one brother is willing to spend his money to help his younger brother get an education perhaps. The reason why we don't think about this so much is because we have not come to that sense of belonging to a family in God's people.

In a local church God puts us together so that we can express his love through our concern for one another. Contributing to the needs of the saints. Practicing hospitality.

There are a lot of single people. There are a lot of people who need a meal once in a while among God's people. Practice hospitality.

There may be need for someone to stay a night with you. Practice hospitality. You don't need a big house for that.

You need a large heart, not a large home, to practice hospitality. These are all marks of being devoted to one another in brotherly love. And then he speaks also about our attitude towards those who harm us.

What should be our attitude to enemies, to those who work against us, those who seek to attack us and persecute us, whether other Christians or non-Christians? We can face persecution from both. The word of God is very clear. Jesus taught it.

Paul taught it. Peter taught it. John taught it.

Everyone teaches the same thing. Love your enemies. Bless those who persecute you.

Somebody persecutes you, bless them. Bless and curse not. Don't ever curse.

Cursing must never be found in the mouth of a believer. We're not talking just about curse words, but we're talking about wishing evil for someone. To curse a person is to wish evil for that person, saying that some calamity would hit him because he harmed you.

In the Old Testament it was like that. Somebody spoke against Moses, his sister Miriam. We read in Numbers 12 that she got leprosy and she couldn't be cured for seven days and God had mercy on her.

But in the New Testament, not only people spoke against Jesus, they spat on his face and slapped him. And the interesting thing is they didn't get leprosy. Because in the New Covenant, Jesus came to manifest the love of God that can conquer hatred.

He healed the ear of the soldier who came to catch him, whose ear Peter had cut off. That is the mark of a spiritual Christian. He can love his enemies, bless those who persecute him.

He's got no bitterness, no hatred in his heart against anyone, because his heart is filled with the love of God. Verse 15. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Because we're members of one body, if one part of our body is infected and injured and painful, the whole body feels it. When you have a severe headache, your whole body is lying in bed. It's only one part that's paining, but the whole body suffers along with that stomachache or the injury on the hand or leg or anything.

That's how it must be in the body of Christ. We weep with those who weep. And when someone gives you an honor, puts a garland around your neck or gives you a certificate of accomplishment in your hand or a medal, the hand may receive it, but the whole body rejoices.

And I'll tell you something, it's easier to weep with those who weep than it is to rejoice with those who rejoice. Because we consider ourselves spiritual, when we weep with somebody who weeps. But the test is, can you rejoice with somebody else who has been honored when you've not been honored? Can you rejoice with things going well with another brother? If another brother succeeded in building his home, perhaps, you haven't succeeded yet in building your house.

Can you rejoice with them? Well, praise the Lord, it's my brother who's got something. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and curse not.

Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Verse 16, be of the same mind towards one another.

Don't be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Or as the Living Bible says, enjoy the company of ordinary people. Don't be wise in your own estimation.

Don't think that you know everything. Don't try to act big. Work happily together.

Don't seek to impress important people in the church. Be of the same mind. God, here it speaks about unity, so important in the church.

And the hindrance to unity, haughtiness of mind. Do not be haughty in mind. Another hindrance to unity, when we seek fellowship with important people and not with lowly people.

Another hindrance to unity, verse 16, the last part, to think that we know everything. When it speaks about being of the same mind in verse 16, it gives us a number of hindrances thereafter that we need to get rid of. Don't be haughty in mind.

Associate with the lowly. Don't seek for the graces of important people. Get into their good graces, rather.

And don't be wise in your own estimation. Again, coming back to the subject of people who harm us, it says never pay back evil for evil to anyone, verse 17. Never.

Has somebody done evil to you? Leave his judgment in God's hands. Never pay back evil. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

Or as the Living Bible paraphrases, do things in such a way that everyone can see you're honest through and through. Our life must be transparent. People must not think there's something crooked or shady going on behind.

Of course, there'll always be people who criticize us and find fault with us. They criticize the godliest man who ever walked on this earth, Jesus Christ himself. They criticize Paul, Peter, everyone.

They hounded them from city to city and told all types of false tales about them. We don't have to worry about that. But we must live in such a way that people can see we're honest.

We don't deceive. We don't cheat. We don't violate laws.

We respect what is right in the sight of all men. And then it speaks about this matter of peace. Don't quarrel with anyone.

Be at peace with everyone as far as it depends on you. See, in other words, we must make every effort for peace, not just with believers, but with all men. Seek peace with all men as far as it depends on you.

Now, the other person may not want to be at peace. Well, then it's none of my business. But as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all men.

That's what the Word of God says. Blessed are the peacemakers, Jesus said, for they shall be called the sons of God. And so are you.

Do you have a quarrel with someone? Or someone have a quarrel with you? Do all that you can to restore peace in that situation. And if you never take your own revenge on anyone, leave revenge in God's hands. If somebody harmed you, God will deal with him.

Vengeance is mine, I will reap it, says the Lord. Then how should you treat your enemy? If he's hungry, give him a meal. If he's thirsty, give him something to drink.

And when you do that, you'll be heaping, burning coals of love upon his head. You'll make him feel ashamed. That's how we can overcome evil with good.

So we're not to allow evil to overcome us. Good is more powerful than evil. And we are to overcome evil with good.

That's our calling. Overcome evil with good. And how do we do that? By feeding our enemy, giving him drink, never taking vengeance, blessing him, praying for him, not seeking any revenge ourselves, but leaving it to God to decide, and never wishing any evil for him either.

No cursing, no desiring any evil, but committing our cause like Jesus did when He was in the court, into God's hands, who deals righteously with all people. Let's turn now to Romans chapter 13 and verse 1. In the previous chapter, chapter 12, that we considered in a few sessions, we were considering the attitude

of the spirit-filled Christian who has surrendered his body to the Lord and allowed God to transform his mind through the Holy Spirit towards his fellow believers and towards enemies of the gospel. And now in chapter 13, we see what the attitude of the spirit-filled Christian should be towards secular authorities.

We live in the world, and this is a very, very important question, because almost all the secular authorities we have to submit to are non-Christians, very often ungodly, many of them corrupt, and sometimes the laws they pass are unrighteous. What should be our attitude towards secular authorities? And it is very interesting to bear in mind that when Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Rome, the top secular authority in Rome was that wicked emperor Nero. They did not have a godly man there as the emperor.

They had a man who hated Christians, who was an ungodly, licentious man. And what does the Holy Spirit say to Christians living in Rome? Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. That's a very, very interesting verse.

When a person submits to authority, he does so not because that authority is righteous, not because that authority is free from corruption, not because that authority deserves to be submitted to, not at all. The only reason we submit to authority is because God has commanded us to do so, and thereby we acknowledge that it is God who has established that authority. Now, if you think the devil made somebody the president of a country or the king of a nation, you'd have to say, well, then some part of authority on earth is in the hands of the devil.

But that's not what the Bible teaches. Jesus said before He ascended up into heaven, all authority, Matthew 28, verse 18, all authority, not only in heaven, but on earth, has been given to Me. It's a wonderful truth in these days when there are problems of persecution of Christians, and we think that by battling secular authorities we are going to establish our rights.

That's not the way the early Christians did it. They prayed to God. They acknowledged that Jesus Christ had all authority in heaven and earth.

We need Christians today who have that conviction and that faith, who have a sense of dignity, recognizing that Jesus Christ has got all authority in heaven and on earth. And because Jesus Christ has got all authority on earth, He appoints people, He allows people, we can say, to be rulers in different countries. Notice this statement, there is no authority except from God.

And it repeats it another way, those authorities which exist have been established by God. So when you rebel, he who resists authority, verse 2, is opposing the ordinance of God. He says, if you fight with that heathen ruler of your country, you're actually fighting against God who appointed him.

See, we think that it's only the elders in a church that we got to submit to. We think they're appointed by God. But here it's an amazing verse, that the sovereignty of God is so great, His authority is so absolute that He is the one who establishes kings, who pushes down one and raises up another.

Who raised up Nebuchadnezzar? God. Who put him down? God. Who raised up Cyrus after Nebuchadnezzar? God.

Who put him down? God. Who raised up Alexander the Great and the Grecian Empire? God. It's all prophesied in the book of Daniel.

And then after the Grecian Empire, the Roman Empire. Who raised that up and destroyed the Grecian Empire? God. And to these Roman Christians, Paul is now writing, saying the authorities are all established by God.

You've just got to read the book of Daniel to understand that. God is in control. He doesn't agree with all that these authorities do, but He's in control.

And the devil's authority was taken away from Him on the cross. Completely. He had very little even before, but it was totally taken away on the cross.

He has no authority over God's people. God allows certain people to rule in certain lands. God allows people to persecute Christians.

Without His permission, it can never happen. Remember what Jesus said to Pilate in John chapter 19? He said, You can have no authority over me except what you got from above, from my father. If my father did not allow you to sit there, you'd have no authority over me.

Just think of the dignity with which Jesus stood in a court. And that's the dignity with which we can stand as Christians when we are persecuted, because we recognize that every authority is from God. And that's why we've got to respect authority.

That's why we must not go against authority or rebel. And it says here, Those who oppose authority, verse 2, will receive condemnation upon themselves. For the rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil.

Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you'll have praise for the same. So rulers are appointed by God so that there's some order in society. So he says, If you don't want to be afraid, keep the laws, and you'll get along well.

You see, that authority there is sent by God, he says in verse 4. It's an amazing verse, verse 4. You know, we think of preachers as servants of God. Have you ever thought of recognizing that heathen ruler in your country as a servant of God? Have you ever seen that in scripture? It says here in verse 4, That man, that authority is a servant of God. Servant means what? It means he's just fulfilling God's purposes.

God's sovereignty is so great. We consider that in chapter 9 of Romans, where God could use even a pharaoh to fulfill his purposes, just like he could use a Moses to fulfill his purposes. Way back in those days in Egypt.

In the same way, today he can use a servant of God, a true disciple of Jesus, to fulfill his purposes, and he can even use a heathen king or ruler to fulfill his purposes. Everyone is a pawn in God's hand. God can just do what he likes.

Proverbs 21 in verse 1 says, The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. He can turn it wherever he wishes. The ruler's heart is in God's hands.

The heart of your boss at work. Perhaps he's an evil man, but his heart is in God's hands. The heart of the judge who is going to dictate the verdict for a case you're involved in is in God's hands.

Be righteous, be upright, be humble, be honest, and God will always support you and fulfill his purposes through secular authorities, no matter who they are. This is the God we believe in. This is why we have no

fear.

We could never live in this insecure world if you didn't have a father like this who had authority over everything. I wouldn't dream of preaching the gospel if I didn't believe that Jesus Christ had all authority in heaven and earth, over every nook and corner of this earth, over every single human being of all the six billion people on this planet. Whether the man is big or great or small, it doesn't make a difference.

Jesus Christ got all authority. Those rulers are pawns in God's hands. It's the meaning of verse 4. And if we do what is evil, if we violate secular laws, we may have to suffer the consequences.

We have to be afraid then, because they punish. And again he says a second time in verse 4 that he's a servant of God twice in that verse. These secular authorities are called servants of God.

He's an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. So punishment given by secular authorities is something that God permits. The death penalty for murder and other punishments is to deter people from doing evil.

And so we must submit to this. We have to support them. We don't agree perhaps with their religion or their faith or their corruption, but for the sake of order in society, we submit to authorities.

And we are to be exemplary as Christians in this area. And so it says, if you don't want to be subject for conscience sake, at least be subject because you're scared of punishment. You know, it says here exactly like that.

Being subject should not only be because of wrath, first to keep from being punished, and second, because you know that's the right thing to do. Further, verse 6, he says this is the reason why also we must pay our taxes. For a third time it says rulers are servants of God.

It's an amazing passage, this verse 1 to 6, where it says secular authorities are appointed by God. Verse 1. They are servants of God. Three times it mentions in verse 4 and verse 6. The man who collects your taxes is a servant of God.

Have you ever looked at him like that? Come to collect your taxes. So we must pay taxes, give to the secular authorities, to the government, the taxes due from us. Jesus said, render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and render to God what is God's.

Don't cheat on your taxes and give that money in the offering box. God won't accept it. You've got to first render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and then render to God what is God's.

God doesn't want Caesar's money or any other government's money. Pay your taxes, give custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. A true servant of God respects authority.

He doesn't jump the queue. He doesn't violate laws. He gives honor where honor is due, fear to whom fear is due.

He doesn't seek crooked methods to get his work done. He's upright and honest, even if other people around him are crooked. What a need there is for you and I as Christians to demonstrate this type of Christianity to our land.

Let's turn now to Romans chapter 13 and verse 7. This is a very important verse. It's speaking about giving people what is due to them. Just like we give to God the glory and the worship that's due unto Him as God, thanksgiving and praise, we also have an obligation to the people around us to give to them what God has commanded.

And He takes these different examples. First of all, paying our taxes, whether it's income tax or sales tax or professional tax or any other type of tax. There is no virtue in a Christian cheating on these things.

A Christian who cheats on this and who does not have a bad conscience about it needs to go before God and ask whether he's really filled with the Holy Spirit or not. It says here, and remember as I said in our last study, this was written to Christians who were living in Rome when Nero, that wicked man, was the emperor. The Romans collected taxes.

And here Paul says, pay those taxes. And we don't have to decide whether that percentage is appropriate or not. That's not our business.

We have to obey authorities. Remember once when somebody came to Jesus, to Peter and asked him, does your master pay tax? And Peter went up to Jesus and asked him. And Jesus said, we don't want to cause any offense.

And he said, go to the sea and pick up a fish and you'll find money in the mouth of the fish. And he said, you can pay that tax not only for me, he can pay it for you too. I learned something from that about paying taxes.

That Jesus helped Peter to pay his tax and he helped him supernaturally. And if you're short of money to pay your taxes, God's willing to even help you supernaturally. You know, God's got no shortage of money, but he's got a tremendous shortage of honest people, even in his church.

God wants you to be upright and honest and not to add to the shortage of honest people by being dishonest yourself. Pay tax to whom taxes due, custom to whom custom. If somebody deserves respect, a secular ruler, we're supposed to respect him.

We're supposed to stand up. When he comes, we must give respect to all secular authorities, police authorities, military authorities, government authorities. This is the mark of a Christian.

A Christian is humble enough to give respect to all people, honor to honor. Peter says in 1 Peter 2.17, give honor to all men. But that solves our problem.

We're to honor everybody. The beggar on the street, we're to honor him. Because he's a human being created in God's image.

Maybe he's poor. Maybe he's not as smart and clever as some of your other friends. But 1 Peter 2.17 says we got to honor even him.

Fear to whom fear, etc. And in this connection, he goes on to say verse 8, owe nothing to anyone. In other words, don't be in debt, not just in terms of money, but in terms of tax and honor and respect.

If there's somebody you're supposed to respect and you don't respect him, you're in debt to him. But this also applies to money. God's will is that we should not owe anybody anything.

Now, we don't want to put people in bondage here. But this is a verse that we need to understand very clearly. It is not God's will that his children should remain in debt.

There may be emergencies where we need to borrow money. But we must not remain in debt. It says owe nothing to anyone.

The point is, if you do happen to borrow, return it as soon as possible. And don't ever borrow for luxury or for unnecessary expenses. Very many Christians ignore many of these exhortations found in chapter 13.

Many, many things. They cheat on their taxes. They don't give honor to authorities, which they should be giving.

They get into debt. It's almost as though this chapter didn't exist in their Bible. But the one who fears God obeys his commandments.

Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. It's a mark of unbelief when we don't obey God's commandments or when we say that's impossible to obey it in my situation. There's no situation anywhere in the world in any century that any man can ever face where it's impossible for him to obey God's commands.

In every situation, in every country, in every century, it's possible to obey the teachings of God's word. We may suffer for it. We may have a number of inconveniences.

But it is possible. It is possible to live a life on this earth where we owe nobody anything. That when we die, we're completely free from debt.

Do you know the number of Christians who die with debts passed on to their family members? Because they've been careless, because their leaders have not taught them the importance of living free from debt. If you are in debt, my friend, I want to urge you to do all you can to get out of that debt as soon as possible. Sell the gold you have in your house.

Sell the gold hanging around your neck and clear your debt. It's more important to obey God's word than to be acceptable to people around us. Owe no man anything.

But there is one thing, he says, you must owe people, and that is love. Nothing else. If there is one debt we must have to all human beings, it is the debt of love.

What that means is every time you meet another human being, whoever it is, you must remember you owe him a debt of love. If you recognize this, I'll tell you something, your behavior will be cordial and gracious morning till night. Not only to strangers, but also to everybody in your home.

If you recognize that God has filled your heart with love and you've got to show that love to everybody you meet. It's something like a postman. You know the postman in our country leaves the post office early in the morning with a bag full of money orders and probably fifty thousand rupees in that bag.

But not one rupee is his. He's in debt. He's in debt probably to two hundred people to whom he has to give those money orders before he clears his debt.

Now if he pockets all that money and goes home with it, what would you call him? A thief. He has to clear all his debts. And I sometimes think that we believers are like those postmen.

God has filled our heart with love, like those money orders. We've got to give it to everybody we meet. And if you don't give it, what shall we call you? A thief? Someone who's been given something by God to give to other people and you never gave it.

What would you call the postman who was given a money order to give to somebody else and he never gave it? He kept it for himself. What would you call the Christian to whom God gave love in his heart so that he can show it to other people and he didn't show it. He just kept it to himself.

It's just the same. Owe nothing to anyone. To that postman who's got money orders, I would say owe nothing to anyone.

And to you if you're a believer and God's filled your heart with his love, I'd say the same thing. Owe nothing. Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another.

That is a debt we always have. And he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. That's all that God requires.

There's a debt of love that we will never finish repaying. Never. In our entire life, if we are humble enough to acknowledge this, we'll realize we have a debt of love even to our enemies.

We have a debt of love to people who have harmed us. They may not know God, but if you know God, one mark of your life will be not only that you're devoted in brotherly love to your fellow believers, but also that you discharge and clear your debt of love to people around. And he goes on to say about fulfilling the law.

You know in Romans chapter 8 and verse 3 and 4, we saw how Jesus came like us and the purpose of his giving us the Holy Spirit, if we walk in the Spirit, is so that the righteous requirement of the law might now be fulfilled inside us. And what is this righteous requirement of the law? It is to love your neighbor as yourself. That's what he says in the latter part of verse 8. If you love your neighbor, you have fulfilled the law.

Because every commandment, verse 9, could be summed up in this. You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, verse 9, you shall not steal, you shall not covet. These are all those commandments.

Commandments number 7, 8, 9, 10. Any other commandment is all summed up in this one statement. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

So if you love your neighbor, you don't need these other commandments. That's how we are free from the law. You know a lot of Christians read those verses in the New Testament that we are free from the law.

How do we get free from the law? How do we get free from the Ten Commandments? We get free because those are fulfilled inside us. We love people. If you don't love people, you can't be free from the law.

Then you got to keep the law. You got to live under the law. It's only the man who is allowed the Holy Spirit to fill his heart with love who does not need the law because he keeps it in any case.

You see, otherwise we can be legalists who just keep the letter of the Ten Commandments and probably hurt people in ways which are not mentioned in the Ten Commandments. That's not New Testament Christianity. New Testament Christianity, it says here, love, verse 10, never hurts his neighbor in any way.

Love does not do any wrong to his neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law. It satisfies all of God's requirements.

It's the only law you'll ever need in your life. And we could apply this to the different situations that we face in our lives. Sometimes we come to some situation in a relationship with another human being.

It could be with a brother. It could be with your wife. It could be with your mother-in-law.

It could be with relatives. It could be with anybody. And you don't seem to find a clear answer in the Word of God as to what exactly you should do in a particular situation.

What exactly you should do when you encounter a certain problem in that relationship? Here is the answer. Go by the principle of love. Let love guide you in that area.

And see if I love this person exactly like I love myself, what would I do in this situation? And you have the answer immediately. You may not want to do it. That's another thing.

Then you have to ask God to give you grace to be willing to do. But the Spirit of God will show you. So love is the answer.

It's the fulfillment of the law. Let's ask God to give us grace to walk in that way all our days.

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