

Message #46

Romans 13:8-10

What exactly does God expect us to do in regard to this world? Since we have been the recipients of God's grace, what exactly is our responsibility to this world? What is it that we owe to this world since we have been saved by God's grace? What amazes me is that to this point we have not seen one word about evangelism. There is not one word about going door to door now that we know the theology of the gospel. So what is our responsibility to this world?

1) Do we owe this world an attempt to stamp out sin?

The evangelist Billy Sunday did that. He attempted to stamp out alcohol. His famous line was "Whiskey and Beer are all right in their place; but their place is in Hell." Of course there is no verse in the Bible that says that, but he made prohibition his life's ambition. Should we be doing that?

2) Do we owe this world pickets and protests?

Should we make up signs against things we think are wrong and go stand with those signs to picket and protest things as some movement?

3) Do we owe this world an isolation in which we form a Christian commune and live wearing strange clothing and odd rituals like Amish people?

Why didn't Jesus do that? Why didn't the Apostles do that? Why didn't those churches in Revelation do that? If that is what we are supposed to do, why didn't they do that?

Frankly, that is not what we are supposed to do. It is true that we are to expose that which is evil, but the way we expose it is by not participating in it ourselves (Eph. 5:11-12).

What Paul wanted the believers in Rome to understand was this:

SINCE WE HAVE EXPERIENCED THE SAVING GRACE OF GOD, WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS WORLD AND WE HAVE A DEBT TO THIS WORLD TO BE A DEMONSTRATION OF BIBLICAL LOVE.

Paul has been developing the theology of our responsibilities in view of God's grace:

- 1) We have a responsibility to God - Rom. 12:1-2 = living sacrifice.
- 2) We have a responsibility to our gift - Rom. 12:3-8 = find our gift and use our gift.
- 3) We have a responsibility to the church - Rom. 12:9-16 = fervently serve.
- 4) We have a responsibility to enemies - Rom. 12:17-21 = no vengeance.
- 5) We have a responsibility to government - Rom. 13:1-7 = submit to it.
- 6) **We have a responsibility to this world - 13:8-10 = owe it Biblical love.**

You and I have a continual debt to pay to this world. It is not to hide out from it. It is not to just condemn it. It is also to demonstrate a Biblical love to it.

This theme comes from verse 8 that reads “owe nothing to anyone.” The Greek text literally reads “no one, nothing, you owe except the one another love.”

So what we owe this world is a demonstration of agape love. Now it is interesting that the first pronoun “another” is another of the same kind, but the “for” of **verse 8** explains that we are also to have agape love for our neighbor, who is of a different kind.

So the manifestation of agape love is to be given by us to each other in the church and also to those outside the church.

Now in analyzing this there are six ways we demonstrate Biblical love to each other and to our neighbor. By the way, by virtue of the fact that Paul specifically lists these things, we know these things are possible to demonstrate or not demonstrate. We may implement them or we may not implement them:

LOVE DEMONSTRATION #1 – We display love when we do not owe anyone anything. **13:8**

If we don't pay what we owe, to a believer or an unbeliever, we are not demonstrating the kind of grace love God wants. **Our reputation should be those believers pay their bills.**

This verse is not teaching that it is wrong for a believer to borrow money. In fact, the idea of lending and borrowing is very Biblical. What was not Biblical was charging huge interest payments on the loan (Ex. 22:25).

What Paul is telling God's people here is that you demonstrate you love the world by paying what you owe to believers and non-believers. In other words, pay your bills. **Psalm 37:21 says “the wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives.”**
Godly people who demonstrate love are very passionate and concerned about paying their bills.

According to **Matthew 5:42**, lending is a demonstration of grace: “Give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.” If you have it and are in a position to lend it and someone asks for it, lend it.

Even Jesus borrowed a boy's lunch and He also borrowed a man's donkey. So the Bible is not some protest movement against capitalistic gain or financing.

The immediate context of this is one of hoarding taxes which were owed to the Roman government (13:7). The Jewish leaders were teaching the people that they should not give the secular government any support.

Word was spreading that Christians were only giving their money to God and not paying what they owed and were not paying back that which they borrowed.

So what Paul says is that **one of the ways you show fellow believers and the neighbors that you love them, is that you pay your bills.**

We are living in a country that many would call a Christian country. I don't necessarily think that but many do. What we may objectively observe is that this nation is so far in debt we cannot ever expect to get out of it. The federal debt is 32 trillion dollars. There are 331 million people in the United States.

To pay off the national debt each person in this country would need to pay \$97,000 right now to get out of debt. If we were to pay one billion dollars a day starting right now, it would take 87 years to pay off the national debt.

We cannot control what government does except by our prayers and our vote. But we as believers can control what we do. We live in a world that loves debt. It thrives on debt. People borrow to buy TV's, computers, stereos, appliances, ATV's, clothes, and dining. Pull out a charge card and charge it.

Our responsibility as believers is to show each other and the world love and we do that by paying our bills. "Owe nothing to anyone."

I want to interject here a word about waiters and waitresses if I may. If we go out to a restaurant, and that person waiting on us takes care of us, we owe them a good tip. They hardly make anything per hour and we help provide for them by our tips. Dr. John Walvoord used to say, "Be generous with God's people and God will be generous with you."

When we leave a restaurant, we don't want them saying they are misers, penny pinchers, cheapskates, skin flints or tight wads. When we leave that waiter or waitress should say those are generous people. One way we display grace and love is that we pay what we owe.

LOVE DEMONSTRATION #2 – We do not commit adultery. 13:9a

There is no way that any believer should ever be fooling around with another person's mate, sexually speaking. It is adultery and that is exactly what Paul has in mind here.

Paul says the way we love each other and the way we love the world is by not getting sexually involved with someone else's mate.

Quite honestly, Biblically speaking, there is no such thing as a "love affair" with someone else's mate. What it is, Biblically speaking, is an "anti-love affair," an "adulterous affair" and an "immoral affair."

We owe each other and we owe this world a demonstration of grace that loves enough to keep away from adultery.

Now one would think this would be no threat to believers, but apparently it was. In I Thessalonians 4:1-9, apparently this was a problem and Paul warned that God is an “avenger” of those involved in this.

Now it is possible that we have some secret adulterer in this sanctuary or watching livestream. But I doubt it for the majority of believers here and for those that would even listen to a ministry like this that is so focused on God’s word. I suspect that the major adultery issue for believers is the one Jesus spoke of in Matthew 5:27-28, which is a mental adultery. Mental adultery is looking on someone else’s mate and lusting after them.

There can be creepy people who look at someone else’s mate in a creepy way. That is wrong and it is not a demonstration of God’s grace.

We have a debt we owe to each other and a debt to this world and it is not to commit adultery with our body or our mind. When you do that you are demonstrating the kind of love God wants us to demonstrate.

LOVE DEMONSTRATION #3 – We display love when we do not murder. **13:9b**

We demonstrate Biblical love to others when we don’t murder them or kill them. This may be done two ways. **One may murder someone physically or one may murder someone verbally.** When we love the way God wants us to love, we don’t do either.

This does not mean we don’t protect ourselves or our family if need be with lethal force. This does not mean we refuse to serve in the military because of some religious pacifism. What this was talking about is “do not murder or commit homicide.”

Murder is the most anti-God act of pride that one may commit. Because to murder someone means you exalt yourself to the level of God in your own mind and you determine this is the moment someone’s life should end.

Back in Paul’s day it was easier to get away with murder, because they did not have all the forensic things we have today. But the point is whether in Paul’s day or our day, murder is evil.

In **James 4:1-2, 11** we learn that we can commit murder with our speech:

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have so you commit murder ... Do not speak against one another brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it...”

Dr. McGee used to say it is much easier to kill someone with speech rather than with a gun.

The more we obey God, the more we will control our speech and we will not murder others with it. We owe each other and we owe this world a demonstration of love that says we will not ever kill you physically, morally or verbally.

LOVE DEMONSTRATION #4 – We display love when we do not steal. **13:9c**

The point here is when we love each other right and when we love this world right we will not steal. We will not take something from others. We will not be a thief who takes what others have.

Paul was not just speaking here about robbing a bank. He was setting forth a key principle of love. When we love right we don't take what other people have. We don't steal. We will not steal their money, their possessions, and their time.

It is estimated that 1 in 10 churches have money embezzled through stealing. I am sure that the majority of these thieves would tell the people at the church they love them. It is deranged. If you love the people, you don't steal from the people.

It is estimated that in United States businesses, 50 billion dollars is stolen by internal theft every year. We are living in a day in which there is so much stealing that stores just consider it part of doing business. In some cases, they won't even stop the shoplifters.

I talked with one retailer not long ago and said if you see a shoplifter, why don't you stop them and hold them until the police get there. He said no, we are afraid that they might get upset and hurt someone, so we let them go.

What kind of insanity is that? Well at least we as Christians can show the love of God by not stealing and by paying for what we purchase.

LOVE DEMONSTRATION #5 – We display love when we do not lie. **13:9d**

The bearing "false witness" does not show up in the NASV or NIV because in the older manuscripts it is not listed. It does show up in some later manuscripts and certainly in view of the end of this verse that says, "if there is any other commandment," it is appropriate.

When Paul restated some of these things to the Ephesians, he added "not bearing false witness" or "lying" to the list and said speak the truth to one another (Eph. 4:25-29).

Certainly if you love someone properly, you won't lie to them; you will tell them the truth. If you love someone either in the family of God or outside of the family of God, you are not going to make up lies about them. Your yes will mean yes and your no will mean no.

Remember this Biblical love is always in the context of truth (II John 4-6; III John 4-6).

LOVE DEMONSTRATION #6 – We display the love of God when we do not covet. 13:9d

That word “covet” means to have a passionate longing or desire for something we do not have. In fact, it is coveting that leads to charging and borrowing and not paying back things on time.

We demonstrate we love people right when we don’t covet what they have. It may be their job, their income, their house, their lifestyle, their cars, their possessions, their mate or their looks.

The thing that coveting will do is cause you to not think about them right and it will prevent you from ministering to them right. If you covet you will become insensitive to them and you will be jealous and envious and never be effective for Jesus Christ.

We owe this world and each other a Biblical demonstration of Biblical love.

In the book “The History of Christianity,” Michael Smith discussed the age of asceticism and the monks who practiced it. He said, “None of the earliest Christians appears to have lived as a hermit or in an ascetic community. Individuals were noted for their rigor of life and devotion to God” (*History of Christianity*, p. 204).

That is the way to live life. Live it with vigor and live it for the glory of God. Demonstrate that we have a relationship with the God of grace by showing this kind of love to this world.