

Sent: 4/12/2018 10:56:03 AM Eastern Standard Time
Subject: Tuesday Nite's MOB Study on Romans 13:8-14

"Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law!" (Romans 13:8)

In Tuesday nite's lesson on Romans 13:8-14, the apostle Paul returns to the topic of "Christian love"--which was the subject of Romans 12:9-21--after having taken a "detour" (in last week's lesson in Romans 13:1-8) to discuss the Christian's relationship to civil authorities and responsibility for "paying taxes" (and appropriately so as the April 15th tax deadline is upon us)! Now, according to Paul, there is a more important debt that's due! The debt of love!

Douglas Moo wrote, "Our obligation to love one another is a debt that can never be repaid! It always remains outstanding! We can never love enough! God will always be bringing new people into our lives whom we are called to love, and there are those people we have known for a long time whom we are called to love in new ways as they go through the ups and downs of life!"

Interestingly, the summing up of the commands in Romans 13:9 as "loving your neighbor as yourself" is a direct quote from Leviticus 19:18 and, according to John MacArthur, is the most quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament--appearing eight times!

In response to a question from a Jewish lawyer (a Pharisee) about what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. (But) the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself!" In addition, He added, "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets!" (Matthew 22:34-40)

He quoted the same two "love commands" in response to another lawyer's question about "what he could do to inherit eternal life" (recorded in Luke 1:25-37)! In addition, in a follow-up question about "who my neighbor is," Jesus responded with the legendary "parable of the Good Samaritan"! Which answers for all time the definition of a "neighbor" in the eyes of every follower of Christ! Anyone who crosses our path!

However, Jesus went even further in His "Sermon on the Mount"--by saying: "You have heard it said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy!" But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven..." (Luke 10:43-45)

In addition, later, just prior to going to the cross, Jesus announced that He was giving His disciples a new commandment--"...that you love one another, even as I have loved you..." and that "by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another!" (John 12:34-35) New in the sense that it was to be modeled after the kind of love that Jesus displayed, including by sacrificing Himself on the cross! In addition, new, according to MacArthur, in that it was to be produced, under the new covenant, by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit who would be given to believers!

Therefore, it is in this context that Paul wrote about how believers would acquire the potential capacity to fulfill that portion of the Mosaic Law that had to do with human interrelationships!

Moo asserts that love is "so important, so fundamental, that it can take the place of all the other commandments in the law that deal with our relationships with other human beings!"

Dr. Constable notes that while the Mosaic Law required the same thing, it "provided no internal power to love, but that in Christ we now have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who produces the "fruit" of love within us! (Galatians 5:22-23)

Romans 5:5 says: "...the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us!" In addition, John 7:38 says, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water!" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified!"

As believers, we are now able to draw on the capacity God has given us! It begins with a debt that can never be paid! In addition, it grows as we focus on His Word and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives! And how better to learn all about how to have a great "love life" than by going to I Corinthians 13!

The apostle Peter wrote in I Peter 1:22: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God!"

In addition, Psalm 119 depicts the hunger of a redeemed heart that desires to obey the law of God (which, again is defined by love)! Verse 10-11, for example, says, "With my whole heart I sought Thee! O let me not wander from Thy commandments! Your word have I treasured in my heart that I may not sin against Thee!"

The "beloved disciple" John wrote in I John 4:7--"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God!"

Well, the closing paragraph in Romans 13 (vs. 11-14) is also a great reminder that how we live--and love!--in this life as a believer is vitally connected with our understanding of, and the "blessed hope" we have for, the imminent return of Christ and the life beyond! In addition, that would be for all eternity!

The words to the song we sang together as men at our Tuesday nite MOB session captures well the spirit and "bottom line" of our study of Romans 13! In addition, if you know the melody, you may want to sing along!

"Let it be said of us, that the Lord was our passion; that with gladness we bore every cross we were given! That we fought the good fight, that we finished the course; knowing within us the power of the risen Lord!" In addition, the chorus: "Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song; by mercy made holy, by the Spirit made strong! Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song, til the likeness of Jesus be through us made known! Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song!"

Second verse: "Let it be said of us, we were marked by forgiveness; we were known by our love and delighted in meekness; we were ruled by His peace heeding unity's call; joined in one body, that Christ would be seen in us!" Followed by the chorus, one more time!

Therefore, men, let us love one another and so fulfill the law of Christ! A debt is due!
Lowell