

Romans 13:8-14
“Living on the Edge”

- I. **Intro**
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I. Intro

We come now to the 2nd and 3rd parts of this chapter as Paul has been giving us a *civics lesson* on **how to be godly citizens** to the “*powers that be*”. I’m amazed at how the one phrase in verse 8 can answer how we are to respond to the state and our fellow citizens who may not like us all that much. Paul simply writes in “*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.*” Just like the original readers of this letter, **we Christians today need to learn how to display love amid all the pressures we face each day.** Do you think LOVE makes a difference? Let’s put it to the test: We Christians, just like everybody else, have things we love; sports, food, hobbies etc.

- Name who won the championship 10 years ago in your favorite sport?
- Name what you ate three weeks ago on a Thursday night?
- Name what you made or did with regards to your hobby a year ago?

How come if we love those things we can’t seem to remember that much about them? Now recall the time when someone loved you, reached out to you, remember the situation, the details, the people. ***You have just learned a great and powerful lesson: It is not what we love that has a lasting impact, it is who has loved us and who we have loved.*** Love makes ALL the difference!!!!

II. Vs. 8-10 Payback time

Vs. 8-10 There is something about trying to follow a bunch of rules and regulations that we humans just find difficult. If the speed limit says don't go over 70 then we have to go at least 75. I'm convinced it's part of the fall, my granddaughter when she was younger learned to ask for a piece of candy by starting to count 2, 3, 4. She then realized that she could just skip the counting and started saying a lots and finished by saying "lot's a, lot's a, lot's a"! I believe God knows that about us, so he had Paul write not on what not to do but on what to do by saying, "***This is easy, my children all you have to do is love!***" Have you ever had a person that just brings your blood to boil, and you are struggling on what to do? Well Paul says, "***Love them and you won't be able hurt them!***" I had a fellow a few years back that before he left the church decided to call people in the church directory to see if they would join him. When we heard of it I took some leadership, and I bought him lunch and asked him if we had offended him personally in any way as we were unaware of anything. He told us no, then we lovingly asked him why he felt obligated to call folks and encourage them to leave fellowship with us. He denied doing so and left angry! We then had the opportunity to bless him with a substantial amount of business! I don't know how it made him feel but it made me feel great! I can't honestly say that love made a difference to that person, but I can tell you that loving him made a difference in me! ***My biggest problem is a lack of love but it's not a lack of love FROM others it is a lack of love TO others!*** ***You see, loving people and harming people are mutually exclusive, you can do one or the other, but you can't do both at the same time!*** Paul gives us ***three specific things about our obligation to love:***

- A. **Debt**: Paul say's that this is ***not a suggestion, but neither is it a command***; it is something even more binding, ***we owe a debt!*** The word "owe" is the verb to the noun in "due" in verse 7. The connection is when you pay all your dues you still have an

ongoing obligation to love one another. When you owe somebody something, it's on your mind continually until you make a payment. So the moment you and I came into contact this morning I owed you something and you owed me something, LOVE! I needed to make a payment directly to you, to give you kindness, courtesy, patience and understanding. Whatever the situation or circumstance maybe I need to pay my debt to you and you to me. Our first response should be, *"I need to pay this fellow what I owe him right away, even though he hasn't paid me what he owes me!"* If we did that right up front it may jog their memory about what they owe us! In Philemon 1:18-19 Paul was writing to a church leader about his runaway slave named Onesimus saying, *"If he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay--not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides."*

- B. **Everyone**: The second thing we learn about our debt of love is that doesn't have a limitation upon who we need to pay. Paul said we were to owe **NO ONE** anything except to love. Read down a few verses to verse 10 where he describes "**NO ONE**" as **our neighbor**! You may be thinking that's only two or three families, I can do this. But you will need to start thinking about more than just geography. A neighbor is the one who lives next to you; they are the ones at this very moment that are seated next to where you are. That would mean that at any given moment my neighbor is the person you are closest too: at the store, as I'm driving, on the phone, at work. I need to give kindness, courtesy, patience and understanding to whoever is closest to me this very moment.

C. **Positive:** The final thing I learn about my debt of love is that it goes beyond what I don't do to them to harm them. That's the difference between the "LAW" and "LOVE". The law's concern focuses only on not doing negative things to those closest to you. Do what you want with your property, but you can't do what you want with your neighbor's property, wife, stuff, name, or life! There are folks that think, *"Well that's enough; not doing those things to those closest to me is loving them!"* But love says, *"Don't just not do harmful things to those closest to you do good things to your neighbor."* Love them, reach out to them, help them, and find ways that you can bless those closest to you. **The law stops at the line but love crosses over that line and goes the extra mile, brings a coat not just a scarf, not just a glass of water and a piece of bread but a 5-gallon container full of water and a 5-course meal!**

III. Vs. 11-14 What time is it?

Vs. 11-14 After saying that we Christian's owe everyone a debt of love Paul now moves on to give a motivating factor, THE TIMES we are living in. **He says that understanding the times will motivate us four ways to love our neighbors:**

1. Vs. 11-12a **Wake up:** The first thing Paul says is that the "times" ought to cause us to get going, not to "*political mobilization*" but to "*evangelical globalization*"! Right now the night is all around us but that only signals that the day is about to dawn. If we have been waiting for the opportune time to pay back the debt of love to someone then there is no better time to start then today because you may not be given tomorrow. The alarm has gone off folks it's time to recognize all the opportunities to love those closest to us. The church needs to awake out of its spiritual slumber and start reaching folks with the

glorious, good news that Jesus is coming. It's a lot easier for us to send our dollars to some foreign mission field so that someone we barely know can love someone we don't know at all, rather than us reaching out to someone ourselves. That leads us to the 2nd thing we are called to do.

2. Vs. 12b-13 **Clean up:** Paul says in light of that we need to “*cast off*” the works of darkness. Time for us as to clean up a bit and do what the author of Hebrews in 12:1 says to “*lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*”. We all need to do some spiritual house cleaning and get rid of some junk that has been cluttering up our lives. Paying back the debts of love is going to require us let go of three things that are keeping us from loving others:

A. Parties: Paul says if you are going to be involved in paying back your debt of love you if you are all about the good times and getting wasted. Not only do you get “*wasted*” you end up “*wasting*” time that you could be spending on having a real good time blessings someone else. Each of us only has so many moments to spend to demonstrate God's powerful love and if we are spending it getting wasted then all we will end up is wasted.

B. Immorality: Paul describes it as lewdness and lust and says you can't love people and live for sexual conquests at the same time. In using these two terms Paul covers the whole range of immorality here from, adultery, homosexuality, immorality, and pornography. If we indulge in these things Paul says we will be wasting time that will destroy us and others.

C. Contentions: Finally Paul says that if we are going to pay back our debt of love then we are going to have to clean out strife and envy. There are some that just live for

gossip and the spread of negativity. They aren't happy unless they are unhappy and spreading that unhappiness around to others. Folks, you can't be paying back that debt of love if you are all about trying to cause division and strife. In Matthew 12:30 Jesus said, "*He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.*" What effect do you have on people, are you gathering them or scattering them. This is how we can tell if we are with Jesus or against Jesus.

Proverbs 27:15 says that "*A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman (person) are alike*".

3. Vs. 14a **Dress up**: To walk properly requires us to wear the right outfit and it won't include the following attire "*revelry and drunkenness, lewdness, lust, strife and envy*". But dressing right isn't just about what you aren't wearing it is about what you are wearing and in this case we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we get up in the morning we put on clothes that make us presentable to others and friend there is no outfit in your closet that makes you more presentable to others than the Lord Jesus Christ! Make wearing Him today your life, wherever you go and whoever you meet folks will be complementing you on how nice you look. They say that what you wear makes the person and I couldn't agree more when what you wear is Jesus. There is a fashion today that seems to be a mix-match of several outfits and I'm afraid that this is what the Christian looks like sometimes, a little of the world's clothing and a little of Jesus.
4. Vs. 14b **Grow up**: Finally we are told that we will need to grow up and growing is going to require us to make no provisions for the flesh, not to give it any inroads into our lives. That may mean that we are going to have to let go of things. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 13:11 that "*When I was a child, I spoke as a child; I understood as a child, I thought as a*

child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” J.B. Phillips translated this verse “Let us be Christ’s men from head to foot and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling.”