

# A Holy Debt

Romans 13:8



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**Focal Text – Read Together** Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

**Illustrate** I have never understood why a person would purposely run over a skunk. If I see a skunk, or a possum, or a raccoon, or even another human on the highway, I always feel it's best to avoid running them (or it) over. It's just *mean* to be driving your car and, seeing a skunk or another of God's creation, to try and run it over. You have an added incentive with a skunk, an additional reason to avoid squashing that little stinker. If you run over a skunk you may kill it – and foul your car with a smell that lingers long after your act of meanness. The spirit may depart. But Beloved, the smell lingers on!

We live in a mean spirited age. People have a tendency to be mean to one another. We find fault, and whine – yes, whine – for often little reason. We have it good – no, make that GREAT – in America, especially when you compare our country with other nations. In this country you have *relative* freedom of speech. You have relative freedom to do as you so desire (whether what you want to do is wise or not) as long as your actions do not physically harm others. For instance, running down people on the side of the road is frowned on in this country. You'll go to jail for that act of meanness – though you can *almost* get away with smashing an innocent skunk. Again, the smell lingers.

The meanness that hurts me the most is when people who profess to be Christians are less than kind. Some religious people act this way because they feel that they

are protecting the Lord or the integrity of His Word. May I say that God is able to protect Himself and His Word, thank you. You who fall into Phariseeism or Sadduceeism (translation: extreme “Liberals” or extreme “Conservatives”) should never resort to meanness with those whom you do not agree. Jesus said **“He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law”**. He didn't say **“He who perfectly follows the commandments, or who properly and perfectly interprets every jot and tittle of the Holy Scripture has fulfilled the Law”**. No, it is **“He that loveth another hath fulfilled (past tense – you have done it) the Law”**.

The world and the worldly will be kind while we agree with them, but will often resort to meanness when we do not agree. We are mocked, called foolish, called idiots for believing what we do. We who belong to God believe **“that salvation can be found in no other: no other Name but that of Jesus under Heaven is given to us whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)**. We who are His believe what Jesus told us when He said **“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: No man comes to the Father but by Me”**. We do not debate this. We understand that **“all have sinned – even us – and have come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)**. The Christian understands that he is a sinner, that Christ bore his sin debt, and that he or she is saved **“not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5)**.

In short, dear Christian, we who are saved by faith are recipients of great Love, grand Love, gracious Love,

certainly undeserved Love. What we have from God we have because of His Love, not because we deserve it.

God the Father loves His Son, and has always loved His Son. He has a river of love for His Son. Jesus said on the day that religious pretenders came to take His life:

**Matthew 26:53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?**

Jesus could have asked His Father for protection and all the mean spirited people in Israel and Rome – nay, in all the world – could not have touched Him. Twelve thousand angels – any one of which would have been invincible – would have come at slightest breath of His prayer. This world, made by Word of God's mouth, could have been unmade in a bloody moment. Yet it was not. Why?

Because the sea of God's Love for Christ met the ocean of God's love for mankind, and that ocean of love for us overwhelmed all else. If you are saved, you are saved because the Father loved you *more* that He loved His only Begotten Son.

**Isaiah 53:10** says **“it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief”**. No man took Christ's life, for He counted His own life as *less than yours*. Oh My Beloved, can not you see – He Who is precious, holy,

and undefiled bore your hell so that you can enjoy His Heaven. Love reached out and, as love can only do, gave Himself for you and for me!

This is why our text says “**Owe no man any thing, but to love one another**”. You who are His by faith **are under debt to God**. You owe it to God to love one another. That does not mean “love one another only when that other person agrees with me”. No, dear ones, no! We are to love one another – even when the other does not agree with us!

You have been given a great and generous gift in Christ if you are saved. Are people seeing Christ in you? Or are they seeing a mean caricature that *looks like* a Christian? Unless the world sees Christ in you they will never understand – nor accept – the Gospel of salvation.

Stand on the truth, on the clear teachings of the Word of God, but stand *lovingly*. Do not be negative, judgmental, and mean. Against the mean spirit of this age stand in the power of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scripture.

Love even the unlovable. In so doing **you have fulfilled the Law**. And one more thing.

If a skunk (either human or the small furry kind) crosses your path, love it and leave it alone. Those who waste their time squashing skunks usually end up smelling like what they attacked. Love, with all the power within you. Love whether you are loved or not. Love and do good to

others, even when they hate you and do bad to you. Who knows but what you might lead that person to accept the Lord Jesus as Savior. And He will change it into a glorious new creature somewhat like you!

### **The Christian Is Under An Obligation To Love**

**FOCAL** Romans 13:8 **Owe<sup>1</sup> no man any thing, but to love one another ....**

The Christian is *under obligation to God to love other Christians*.

Jesus Christ Himself placed this obligation on us. This obligation is *first of all* placed on us *as a Command*. Our Lord said:

**John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (35) By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.**

This is *not an option*, nor are any qualifiers placed on it. Jesus did not say “love one another when they speak well

<sup>1</sup> Present Active Imperative of 3784 *opheilo* of-i'-lo, or (in certain tenses), its prolonged form *opheileo* of-i-leh'-o probably from the base of 3786 (through the idea of accruing); to owe (pecuniarily); figuratively, to be under obligation (ought, must, should); morally, to fail in duty:--behave, be bound, (be) debt(-or), (be) due(-ty), be guilty (indebted), (must) need(-s), ought, owe, should. See also 3785.

of you”. In fact, our Lord warned us in another place:

**Luke 6:26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.**

It's best to remember that *when everybody speaks well of you, it may be because you are a false prophet*. Though no one likes friction I praise God that not everyone always agrees with me. But so what? If you preach the truth you will have your detractors. People will not always agree with you or with me. As our world becomes *more post modern* and as the worldly begin to consider *truth to be more fluid and disingenuous* you can expect more and more people to disagree with you.

Love one another anyway.

This is a new commandment given by Christ to His people, people under obligation to Him. *The world is not commanded to love you – nor should you expect it to.* Love anyway.

**Love Others First And Fervently!**

This is what God did with you. Long before you ever love Him, He loved you fervently and passionately. The Bible says:

**1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved**

**us.**

If He first loved us, then we who are His are to first love others.

He loved me before I ever loved Him. **God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son (John 3:16).** He gave the Son for my sins while **I still cursed His holy Name, while I spoke badly of Him, while I was mean as a snake.** He loved me no matter what I said about Him. I am to do the same to others – especially to the household of faith! Jesus said:

**John 15:11-12 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and [that] your joy might be full. (12) This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.**

The joy of Christ will not remain in you if you do not love one another. Jesus said “These things I'm telling you in order that My joy might remain in you.” When you love like Christ commands, Christ Himself becomes more real in your life than anything else.

We live in a mean day where people say “me first”. The “me first” attitude will never increase the power and presence of Christ in your lives. Jesus Christ *was always*

*sacrificial in His love.* He always put the Father first, then us, then Himself last. This is the Master's Way – and our Way as well.

We who belong to Christ are but **earthen vessels in whom the seed of Love has been planted.** God is love, and God is in you. Love one another. It is in your nature to do so! Stay selfish, keep on loving yourself more than you love your brothers in Christ, and you will never feel the joyous presence of the Lord.

**Abide in Me, He said, Abide in My love, and feel joy as only God can give. Abide in selfishness and find yourself enslaved to a master that will never be satisfied.**

### **Can You Bear Them To Mock Your Jesus?**

**FOCAL Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another ....**

**Illustrate** The Prophet Moses was given an Israel filled with whiners. After saving the nation with a mighty hand, the Lord threatened to destroy this nation, telling Moses:

Numbers 14:12 **I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.**

What was Moses reply? He said to the Lord:

Numbers 14:15-16 **Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, (16) Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.**

Did you get that? Moses told the Lord **“Lord, please don't do this thing. The nations round about will see it and mock You – and I can't bear that! Let them live, Lord. I cannot stand my Savior being mocked!”**

Oh, that God would send us more **Moses Christians**, more believers who loved the Lord and wanted to protect His reputation. My failure to love my brother will **cause the world to mock Jesus.** And listen, Beloved: Jesus prayed that we who are His would be one *so that the world would know that He is the Savior!* We read in:

**John 17:20-21 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; (21) That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.**

Jesus said “I am praying for the unity of My Church and My people. If they are unified the world *may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*” The effectiveness of the Church in this lost and dying world is based on our Christian Unity and our Christian Love.

If we fight, and strive, or if *we do not fight but are apathetic in our love toward one another, or if we allow our love to be no more than lip service, then Jesus says that this gives the world ammunition in believing that He represents just another cult.* **Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer** wrote in his book “**The Great Evangelical Disaster**”:

“... **Jesus here gives us the final apologetic.** What is the final apologetic? “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; *that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*” This is the final apologetic. ... In John 13 the point was that if an individual Christian does not show love toward other true Christians, the world has a right to judge that he is not a Christian. Here Jesus is stating something else which is much more cutting, much more profound: we cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians. .... Jesus is not saying that Christians should judge each other (as their being Christian or not) on this basis. ... But Jesus did give the mark that will arrest the attention

of the world, even the attention of the modern man who says he is just a machine. ... What is that? The love that true Christians show for each other and not just for their own party..”<sup>2</sup>

If we who are His show lovelessness to one another in the Church, then the world will mock Christ Himself as “just a charlatan”. The love we have for one another is the engine that drives the Church.

**Illustrate** Years ago my wife and I visited Yellowstone National Park and really enjoyed watching “Old Faithful” spew forth. This geyser has been spraying upward for years like clockwork. Why? Because ground water slowly builds up until it falls through a crack which leads to a fiery heat breaking through the shell of the earth. When water hits that hot rock it explodes into steam, giving us the wonderful display we call “Old Faithful”.

The world watches the Church. Not knowing Christ, it watches that which Christ has claimed to be His Redeemed.

If the steam the world sees erupting from the Church is **love toward one another** the world will come – and examine – the claims of Christ. If the steam the world sees erupting from the Church is **apathy, lip service, or even worse – fighting** – then the world will never come to examine Christ's claims.

We, like the skunk, become repugnant, and make our Savior appear repugnant as well. Oh, the shame of it all if we shame Him!

### **Love Always Wins!**

**FOCAL** Romans 13:8 **Owe no man any thing, but to love one another ....**

There is yet one more reason that we are obligated to love one another besides His command and His commendation. We should **love one another because Love always wins**. Why? The Scripture says:

**1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.**

**Love is of God.** When you love, you are most like God, for **love is of God**. When you love others *whether they love you or not* then you **invoke a power that cannot be defeated.**

Look at the rulers of the past. **Pharaoh** ruled the empire of Egypt through hatred and slavery. **Babylon** ruled the world while promoting idolatry. **Rome** and **Medo Persia** ruled the world through imperial armies, crushing their enemies under their hob nailed feet. **Germany** built an empire through Hitler that murdered nine million souls. Where are these nations today? They are but broken reeds, mockeries, third world countries, suffering because

of their past. **Jesus Christ alone has built an empire that has stood – and continually added more citizens daily for the past two thousand years.** This is the power of love.

**Love is of God.** Love always wins. The Bible says that the distinct *characteristics of the Holy Spirit* are:

**Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

**Love is of God, it is the first fruit of God.** You will find no where in this list that *rigid judgmentalism or negativism or nitpicky-ism* is of God. No, Beloved – **love is of God.** We are under obligation to love one another.

### **True Love Must Adhere To Biblical Standards**

**Focal** Romans 13:8 **Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.**

The post-modern world has redefined “love” as “accept me and agree with me, no matter what I do”. This, dear friends, is not love but *lust*. Though both words begin with an “I”, they certainly do not have the same meaning. **God is love (1 John 4:16)**, but it is also equally true that **God is light (1 John 1:5), and in Him is no darkness at**

all.

True love does not compromise with darkness.

In fact, our context tells us:

**Romans 13:12** The night is far spent, the day is at hand: **let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the amour of light.**

We who are Christians are under obligation to love, but our love must *be as God loves*. The love of God is not blended with darkness and sin. When we sin we are not loving. Here is a case in point: in our world today the **homosexual and the heterosexual adulterer** say that “I’m born to this lifestyle”, and promote the wrong idea that the person saved by faith in Christ can *remain in sexual sin*. This is not consistent with the Scripture – and certainly not consistent with our context. In our immediate context we read:

**Romans 13:9-10** For this, **Thou shalt not commit adultery**, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if [there be] any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (10) **Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love [is] the fulfilling of the law.**

Please note that – as the Lord lays out the Ten Commandments and compares them to love – **He does not list the fourth commandment “Honor thy Father and Mother” at all**. In fact, the first commandment listed is the *seventh commandment* which is **thou shalt not commit adultery**. Why is that? **Because sexual sin – adultery in all forms – is inconsistent with Divine Love.**

When we gratify ourselves through sexual sin we are not loving as God has called us to love. **Love worketh no ill to its neighbor** – and the Bible views adultery as inherently selfish and damaging to your neighbor. Sexual sin destroys. Sin destroys!

**Illustrate** The post-modern believes that to lovingly confront someone concerning sin, that this in itself means that *I am loveless*. But Beloved, this makes no sense! If you were to see a rattlesnake, or a cobra, or a cottonmouth and believe it to be only a harmless *garden snake*, you would be endangered if you reached out to touch it. If I saw you reach out to pick up a cottonmouth then I would not be loving you if I stood back and allowed you to do it. If you saw a wolverine or a bobcat and believed it to be a harmless kitten, and moved to interact based on that assumption, I would be under obligation to warn you of the dangers involved. **The works of darkness must be cast off, else we are not loving.** Love demands loving correction.

But what if the person addressed does not respond to that

loving correction? Love them anyway. Lovingly confront, but do not be hateful in the process. Too many conservative believers have went down the road of correction and have gone far beyond that which God has ordained in Christ. Correction should always be loving, restorative, and kind. May I say this? **As a Christian I have often attended Church services where I have been a stranger to those who were there. Though a Christian these so called brothers and sisters have practiced the fine art of shunning, ignoring me while going around me to welcome others.** As a Christian I have the right to feel loved where ever I assemble with other Christians. Yet if I as a Christian *cannot feel love in the congregation of the Godly*, what attractiveness do you think there is for the *ungodly or the unbelieving*. If the lost and dying of this world do not see our love – visible and evident – then they will never come to Christ. Love must confront when necessary, but *always be gentle and kind*.

### **True Love Is Always Honest**

Look again to the context:

**Romans 13:13** **Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting<sup>3</sup> and drunkenness<sup>4</sup>, not in**

3 G2970, κῶμος, kōmos, ko'-mos, From G2749; a *carousal* (as if a *letting loose*): - revelling, rioting.

4 G3178, μέθη, methē, meth'-ay, Apparently a primary word; an *intoxicant*, that is, (by implication) *intoxication*: - drunkenness.

**chambering<sup>5</sup> and wantonness<sup>6</sup>, not in strife<sup>7</sup> and envying<sup>8</sup>.**

The word rendered **honestly** also means **decently**. **Let us walk decently and honestly**. The Christian should be a paragon of pure love.

**We are not to carouse, to be involved in drunken parties, to play “musical beds” (which is what *chambering* is), to be wanton or loose with our sexuality, to be nitpicking or contentious – always looking for fault in others, or to be jealous of others.** In short, this passage addresses the *two extremes* we see in the world today. There is the extreme left, which says “do whatever you want to do, just make sure you maintain unity”. Then there is the extreme right, which says “unless you agree with my rigid dogma I won't even smile at you”. Beloved, the way of Christ is *somewhere in between these two insane positions*.

5 G2845, κοιτη, koitē, koy'-tay, From G2749; a *couch*; by extension *cohabitation*; by implication the male *sperm*: - bed, chambering, X conceive.

6 G766, ἀσέλγεια, aselgeia, as-elg'-i-a, From a compound of G1 (as a negative particle) and a presumed σελγής selgēs (of uncertain derivation, but apparently meaning *continent*); *licentiousness* (sometimes including other vices): - filthy, lasciviousness, wantonness.

7 G2054, ἔρις, eris, er'-is, Of uncertain affinity; a *quarrel*, that is, (by implication) *wrangling*: - contention, debate, strife, variance.

8 G2205, ζήλος, zēlos, dzay'-los, From G2204; properly *heat*, that is, (figuratively) “zeal” (in a favorable sense, *ardor*; in an unfavorable one, *jealousy*, as of a husband [figuratively of God], or an enemy, *malice*): - emulation, envy (-ing), fervent mind, indignation, jealousy, zeal.

We are all sinners. But **love worketh no ill to its neighbor**. It is spiritually dishonest to walk in a way that does not love the Way that Jesus Christ taught us how to love. Love defined:

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient; love is kind. Love does not envy; is not boastful; is not conceited; (5) does not act improperly; is not selfish; is not provoked; does not keep a record of wrongs; (6) finds no joy in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth; (7) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

Love unifies, and binds the Body of Christ together – but never at the expense of truth. Love remains in the light, but not in opinion. Love strains to **work no ill toward its neighbor**, love builds up its object, love corrects in a kind way, love remembers the One Who first loved us.

Until our love matches that of Christ, until people can look at us and see Christ in us, then we have not arrived. We owe it to our Lord to strive in love, to grow to be more like Him on a daily basis. Our love must be honest, God honoring, unified. We must never allow the darkness to come into our love. **Love worketh no ill to its neighbors**. Love has its standards, and those standards are clearly outlined in the Scripture. If a brother or a sister steps away from the standard of love

we must gently confront them with God's Word.

**The holiness of God must be exhibited while we are loving, else we are dishonest in our faith.**

The world – though it may not agree with us – always appreciates honesty and forthrightness. Our visible love must be consistent with Biblical truth.

May God touch your hearts with this Word.