

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Nathan Johnson, Senior Pastor

“Owe no man anything, but to love one another...”

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 13: 8

“Pay all your debts, except the debt of love for others. You can never finish paying that! If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill all the requirements of God's law.” (New Living Translation)

“Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” (King James Version)

GOAL: To understand the depth of Christ’s love and our obligation to demonstrate that same love towards each other.

OBJECTIVE:

Explore the significance of “owe no man any thing” and how it affects the ability of the Body of Christ to fulfill God’s purpose.

ESSENTIAL INSIGHT/QUESTIONS:

- What are the characteristics of a love that reflects Christ’s love for us?
- How does loving others bring us into a deeper relationship with God?

LESSON INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

In verses 1-12, Paul’s letter to the Romans shows the duty, reverence, and obedience, which all Christians owe governing authorities, magistrates and those over us. To the authorities, subjection, reverence, obedience, and tribute are owed. We are not to continue in anyone’s debt while we are able to pay it. While money is included in this passage, love is a debt that can never be paid in full because of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice for us. Paul broadens the circle of love to include our neighbors as well. To them, we owe nothing but mutual love (verse 8). Therefore, the Apostle Paul says, "Owe no man". He said, you owe mutual love.¹ Love is all the law demands. *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Galatians 5:14)

¹ Adams Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft)

LESSON CONTENT

“If a man loves me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23)

Two commandments summarize God’s laws: love God and love others. These commands represent the summation of Old Testament laws, and Christ’s death on Calvary is the perfect fulfillment of that law (*Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18*). Similarly, we fulfill the law when we love God and each other completely. This means not only other Christians but also nonbelievers. To owe no one anything, means primarily to show them respect and honor. This love ought to govern our thoughts, decisions, and actions. When you are uncertain about what to do, ask yourself, “Does my life demonstrate love for God and willingness to love others?”

Jesus provides the standard of love. He taught that our obedience demonstrates our love for Him and our desire to be in relationship with Him. (John 14:15) Additionally, it is obedience that opens the door for a deeper relationship with God that is expressed by His abiding in us. (John 15:4, 10) Similarly, we are to abide or remain in Him. (John 15:4) As we continue in obedience, God allows us to progress from just “knowing” Him to sharing His love with others. (John 15:12-17) Christians should never be in debt when it comes to loving others.

Physical Debt

Jesus came to remove barriers to experiencing the kind of relationship God desires to have with us. During the writing of this letter to the Romans, high taxes and duties throughout the Roman Empire caused extraordinary suffering. In Romans chapter 13:1-7, Paul reveals the Christian duty and responsibilities to governing authorities. When Paul speaks in Romans 13:8 “Owe no man anything” he is referring to a physical debt. Paul’s point is that all our financial obligations must be paid when they are due. While our civil debts must be paid, our financial obligation to our fellowman must also be settled.

“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it” (Proverbs 3:27).

Today we live in a society where being in debt is a way of life. It seems to be the norm for people to have several credit cards charged to the maximum. The world has mastered ways to satisfy our lust for things to entrap us. We have mortgages, lease payments, special clothing we like wearing, cell phones, cars, computers, high definition TV, and the list goes on. How does this interfere with our relationship with GOD? A significant number of Christians are preoccupied with outstanding debt, bills and loans. This is a form of bondage that can prevent us from receiving the peace and joy that CHRIST has reserved for those who belong to Him. Our relationship with God frees us from worldly entrapments.

“Don’t run up debts, except for the huge debt of love you owe each other. When you love others, you complete what the law has been after all along.” (Romans 13:8, The Message)

How can worldly blessings be a curse? Satan gives us a false sense of blessings through debt and our inability to repay. As interest rates increase the burden gets heavier. His goals are to make sure we never grow spiritually and that we remain tied to and distracted by worldly things. This lifestyle can stunt our spiritual growth. Satan seeks to make sure that we put our blessings before God. Then we become fixed on the blessing instead of the “One who blesses”. This is a subtle way people are led into idolatry. Satan has masterfully created ways to augment debt and limit our spiritual duties. Being in debt has a direct impact on our giving and our tithing obligation to the church (Malachi 3:8-10). Christ DOES NOT WANT us to be in bondage, he died to set us free (Galatians 4:3-7).

And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. (Matthew 4:8-10)

Satan tried to tempt Jesus by offering Him the *kingdom of the world and the glory of them*. But Jesus demonstrated the power of God’s love and the freedom that lies in obedience to His Word. Let us not return to slavery via greed and coveting. Christ paid the ultimate price on Calvary. This is the one debt we can never repay.

Actively seeking God and His righteousness disables Satan’s ability to tempt us to lust after things. It helps us keep possessions in perspective. God becomes the center of our lives. We trust Him to provide all that we need. Trust in God is what keeps us individually and corporately as the Body of Christ. What might happen if the church, God’s chosen people trusted Him completely? When we study and apply God’s Word, our faith is built up so that we can trust Him completely.

To Be Continued.....