

“Jesus Paid It”

Scripture: Romans 13:8-14

Graphic: none

Key Verses: 8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Theme: Loving our neighbor is the act of paying the debt of love that we have with Christ, who died for everyone. Love does not gain salvation - Christ does that. Love is our response TO Christ for the price He paid FOR our impending salvation.

1) Introduction

- a) Any Dave Ramsey fans here? Dave Ramsey is a Christian, self-avowed weirdo who was a millionaire at age 26, lost everything, and now coaches millions of people is how to manage money, get out of debt, bless others, and have fun.
- b) Now, I'm not advertising for Dave Ramsey, I don't agree with everything he says, but here are some of his quotes to get us thinking about our text today and the Christian life.
 - i) "We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like." OR
 - ii) "Act your wage."
 - iii) "You must gain control over your money or the lack of it will forever control you." OR this one...
 - iv) "That stupid saying "What you don't know can't hurt you" is ridiculous. What you don't know can kill you. If you don't know that tractor trailer trucks hurt when hitting you, then you can play in the middle of the interstate with no fear - but that doesn't mean you won't get killed."
 - v) Last one...“Debt has been sold to us so aggressively, so loudly, and so often that to imagine living without debt requires myth-busting. Debt is so ingrained into our culture that most Americans can't even envision a car without a payment ... a house without a mortgage ... a student without a loan ... and credit without a card. We've been sold debt with such repetition and with such fervor that most folks can't conceive of what it would be like to have NO payments.”

- c) Debt is a serious thing. And when we OWE something to someone else – when we are indebted to them – then part of US is theirs.
- d) In the opening section of chapter 13 of Romans, Paul just got done talking about Christian behavior in Chapter 12 (remember that from last week – I’ve heard a couple testimonies so far...always looking for more), but in chapter 13, Paul starts in on government authorities and being subject to the civil authorities in your life...pay taxes...obey laws...do the right thing.
- e) Now, whether or not we agree with the fact that our government is God’s ordained agent of divine authority in our lives, we are subject to it, right? We’ve agreed to live in this society. In the same way, Paul writes in 13:7, “Pay to all what is due them - taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.”
- f) IF, as Dave Ramsey might say, IF, we owe someone something, it is to THAT person that we are tied until we can repay...no matter what it is.
- g) The Christian life is only lived fully for the Lord when there is nothing that we owe to anyone in this world, except, according to Paul, ONE THING. And that ONE THING is love – agape (in the Greek).
- h) Turn with me to Romans chapter 13, verse 8...how can we be motivated to love?
- i) Let’s pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 8-10

- i) Owe no one anything! The Greek word Paul uses for OWE means obligated. If you owe someone money...you are obligated to pay them back. If you owe someone respect...pay them respect. If you have a relationship that needs reconciliation, then get rid of the pride and go talk with that person. It might end badly, but you owe it to them.
- ii) Whenever there is something in our lives that has a negative balance, then we are incomplete. And what happens is that we use precious time, energy, and brain power thinking about that THING that we owe.

- iii) And this wouldn't necessarily be a problem except for the fact that the list of Christian behaviors that Paul JUST got done laying out are the things that take a lot of work. Living in harmony, blessing those who persecute you, serving the Lord, extending hospitality...those things take time and planning.
- iv) If you are always thinking about the things you OWE to someone else, that's THAT MUCH less time and energy you could be spending on KINGDOM stuff. Stuff like inviting other people to your house, using your spiritual gifts to serve with passion...
- v) Paul is saying, "Get RID of your debt, in WHATEVER FORM, so that you are free to do that which is what God wants: for us to love others."
- vi) What debts are holding you back in your life of loving today?
- vii) The only debt with which you should ever be satisfied is love...to love one another. That's the only debt that can never and should never be able to be repaid.
- viii) But just like we are compelled to pay back others for the financial and emotional debts we have – and until we pay them back are thinking about – we should be compelled to love each other. And because we can never repay, we are always compelled. Why?
- ix) Because, Paul writes in verse 8, the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. Remember, the Law was that which was designed by God so that Israel could have a relationship with God.
- x) Love is not the way to earn righteousness – right standing in our relationship – with God! We can't love our way into eternal life with God. It's only by the blood of Jesus and the price HE paid for our sin that we can receive the gift of salvation. Our RESPONSE is to love.
- xi) The purpose of the Torah, the Law, was that Israel might be God's light to the world; Israel was entrusted with God's oracles, but proved unfaithful.
- xii) Paul lists out a few parts of the law that explain what he's talking about. Things like adultery, murder, stealing. Loving another means that I will not commit adultery with his wife. So many times we hear the people commit adultery BECAUSE of love. That's not love...that's lust.

- We simply have to ask whether things like adultery, or stealing, routinely build up or break down the community. Last time I checked, murder isn't very loving.
- xiii) Every single commandment that has ever come from God can be accomplished IN TOTALITY – in FULL – when we love others as we love ourselves.
 - xiv) In verse 9, it says, "...[the commandments] are summed up in this word LOVE. The King James reads fabulously when it says, "[the commandment] are briefly comprehended by the phrase, "Love your neighbor as yourself."
 - xv) This is not hard stuff! Figuring out how to DO it might be. But KNOWING that we are to love is what our hearts get filled with when we receive the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us.
 - xvi) And let me say something, briefly, about LOVE. There are three main kinds of love: eros love (which is sexual in nature), philia love which is brotherly/sisterly love, and then there's agape love. Paul, here, uses the term AGAPE five (5) times in this section.
 - xvii) The love that Paul is talking about is not some erotic thing, or some shallow brotherly thing...it's unconditional...it's sacrificial. It's the kind of motivating love that forces us to not rest until we have paid our debts to others. It's the kind of love that is present as an action even when the FEELINGS of love aren't.
 - xviii) I also think that it's the kind of love that, when we force ourselves to practice it when we don't want to, the Holy Spirit shows up and, all of a sudden, we find ourselves sympathizing, empathizing, and having a profound affection for others. Agape love is what changes people's lives when they go to nations like Haiti and come back wanting to love others because of what they experienced.
 - xix) Agape love is what God expressed to humanity when Jesus agreed to die on the cross so that you could receive the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus.
 - xx) Paul then, goes on in verse 11 to give us three things that we must do in order to truly love...

b) Read verses 11-14/Application

- i) In order to truly practice AGAPE love, the first thing we have to do is **WAKE UP AND KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS!**
- ii) Paul's reference to time here is not like just rolling over in the morning and looking at the clock before you slam the snooze button (some of you really struggle with that...I know). That's CHRONOS time...time that passes by like the ticking of the clock.
- iii) TIME, here, is not chronos, but is KAIROS time. This is a special event...a special TIME or season. When Paul says, "you know what time it is," he doesn't want us to look at our watches, but look at the big picture.
- iv) Jesus, the Son of God, has died and has been raised from the dead in some miraculous and loving act by the Father. Someday, that same Jesus, will come back, **IN THE FLESH** (because he told us he would), and the completion of God's plan for the restoration of humanity will be complete.
- v) Salvation is fully experienced only after the return of Jesus, when God will renew all things in Christ, we will be given resurrection bodies, and we will have a full sense of rescue from disaster.
- vi) Any hunter **KNOWS** that there is a period of time after the darkness, when you can see without a flashlight, and yet before the time the sun comes up. For 30 minutes, we experience dawn...light with the sun.
- vii) If the resurrection of Jesus is the dawning of God's plan of salvation and the return of Jesus is the sunrise...friends, you **KNOW** what time it is.
- viii) We are currently living in the time between the dawn and the sunrise.
- ix) This is the most critical time in the history of the world...and we don't know how much longer we have until the sunrise. We get so caught up in our daily passing of time, without much change, that we forget that the great future God has promised is coming steadily closer!
- x) If we miss the weight of this period in history, we will not be prepared. The only way to be prepared is to be living **NOW** like we are expecting

- Jesus to return RIGHT NOW! The knowledge and understanding of what Paul is saying should be motivating to us to be living that radical life of a Christian.
- xi) Wake from sleep...
 - xii) #2 - shed the darkness of night... Reject the works of darkness
 - xiii) Instead, welcome the light of day in your life.
 - xiv) How? Be living in a way that Paul listed for us in Romans 12...12:1 "let LOVE be genuine, hate what is evil, cling to what is good."
 - xv) In order for us to practice this genuine, AGAPE love, we, together, must be willing to give up those things in our lives which are sinful.
 - xvi) We don't want to...our flesh nature wants to reject the good and cling to the sin. So many times, we say to ourselves, "I'll lean up my act later...I'll get around to breaking that bad habit or changing my cruddy attitude next week." The dawn has already come, the sunrise is next...don't wait to begin shedding the debts in your life and living fully for the one debt that God is calling us to repay...love.
 - xvii) Any other thing that you are slave to, in your life, is pulling you away from that...live honorably, as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness...debauchery and licentiousness. We don't even know what those things really are, but they were distracting the Roman Christians from loving others. Don't quarrel...don't be jealous!
 - xviii) You know, the church has a fairly good handle on the first four of those...the reveling, drunkenness (which is foolishness) and the debauchery and licentiousness (which are sexual in nature)...
 - xix) How are we doing with the quarreling and jealousy?
 - xx) Don't live in darkness...but live as if the sunrise is coming...
 - xxi) Finally, #3 – Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - xxii) Literally it means, clothe yourselves with Jesus. Actually, because Paul specifically placed the titles for Jesus in the order he did in the Greek, it means, humble yourselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, be like Jesus, because HE is the Messiah. The primary title is LORD.

xxiii) Putting on Jesus is submitting to the way of Jesus Christ, which, by his death and resurrection, is the way of love.

xxiv) John Wesley, in his notes, writes, “Paul doesn’t say, ‘Put on purity and sobriety, or put on peacefulness and benevolence, but he says all this and a thousand times more at once when he says, ‘Put on Christ.’”

3) Conclusion

- a) We have no greater knowledge and practice of the agape love of God than through remembering and celebrating Holy Communion.
- b) No other intersection in the life of the church and the believer holds the living presence of Christ out to us for reconciliation, gratitude, forgiveness, grace, and mercy. It’s ours for the claiming, if we walk with the Lord toward eternal salvation.
- c) This morning, Dave Ramsey can say all he wants about how we are to make money, spend money, reduce our debt, and live financially free...
- d) It’s not worth a penny in God’s economy, and has no ultimate bearing on God’s plan for eternity.
- e) THIS...the table of the Lord Jesus Christ...is the reason we owe this debt of love. On that cross was the transaction that put us in debt, never to be satisfied as long as there is time before the sunrise, when he returns.
- f) If you are sitting here today and have not committed your life to the One who holds time in His hands...if you have not received from Him the forgiveness that is yours because of Jesus...or have not fully submitted your life to Christ (every part)...then I invite you to come to this table and ask Him to save you...and guide you.
- g) For all of us, when you come to this table, ask Him what He wants you to do because of the debt of love you owe Him and each other...
- h) To GOD be the glory because of the great things he has done...for the gift and the power of love for which Jesus paid for you and me.
- i) Let’s pray...