



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

## Law Keepers and Love Givers

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Romans 13:8-10

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*<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

*(Pastor prays)*

When the love of many has grown cold and suspicion of others is the order of the day, when people in the church are defined more by a political party than a Christian identity, when race divides where love should unite, then God gives us a word.

We believe not only in the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture, breathed out by God and without error; we believe in the *sufficiency* and *efficiency* of scripture, that the Bible is sufficient to answer all our questions about life and godliness, and it has the power and efficiency to change hearts and bridge gaps and heal wounds.

And it's so kind of the Lord to have us at this passage during this time in our nation's life. Because, as Christians, we believe that our sovereign God is in control and is calling us to personal holiness, to publicly honor the Lord and to perpetually love people. Because ours is a religion based on grace, we never wander far from the cross of Jesus. And we must never forget why we are so insistent on this. Why do we keep bringing the cross to the front?

This whole book of Romans, it's a theology of the cross. It teaches us the Gospel, that God is holy and man is sinful, which causes a chasm between God and man. The remedy for that is

Christ dying sacrificially on the cross for our sins. And all we have to do is have faith and repent. Then we need to live a life of love.

Look, the meanness, hardness, crassness, and rudeness you sometimes see in so-called Christians is an anti-God, Gospel-less charade of Christianity and not the Christianity of the Bible. Without real love, Christian living is defective and disfigured, and Paul is calling the church, living in enemy lands, to love radically and extravagantly as a signal that this Gospel is real and Jesus really does save. Because we believe that...

### **To Live in Christ is to Walk in Love**

And you don't have one without doing the other. Let's jump right into this text and see what Paul is doing here. There are several things to see about love, Christian love.

### **Christian love is an irrational and radical act**

Let's read the three verses again to get the general sense of it. Watch how many times you see the word "love." <sup>8</sup> *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.* <sup>9</sup> *For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* <sup>10</sup> *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Notice the number of times love is mentioned in three verses: four times it is as a verb and two times it's a noun. Remember underneath this word "love" is the Greek word "agape." You need to write that down somewhere. That word for love is different from *philos* which is brotherly love or *eros* which is romantic love. It's not found in everyday Greek. It is a distinctly Christian word that can't be understood or given outside of being in Christ.

Furthermore, this kind of love is displayed by God for His own people. Romans 5:5 tells us, <sup>5</sup> *and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

And in Romans 8:35 Paul asks a rhetorical question. <sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* And then he answers the question in versus 38 through 39. <sup>38</sup> *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor*

*height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* That love given to us by God in Christ is the source and model of how we are to actually love other people.

Now I said that Christian love is an irrational and radical act because of the very word “agape.” And it's experienced in the lengths to which a Christian will go to display love because agape love is centered on the one doing the loving and not the object being loved. Most of the time, when we love a person, place or thing, there are reasons. There is something in that person place or thing that has made you love him or her or it. That is not agape love.

Let me see if I can illustrate from my own life. I love a 1965 Pontiac GTO. I don't like the 64 as much. In 1964 the GTO Tempest was an option where the headlights were side by side. But in 1965 they turned them over and put a crease down the hood. It's a beautiful car that came with a motor that is a 389 cubic inch motor, with three 2-barrel carburetors. Inside was the black interior with a four-speed in the floor, and a Cueball shifter. It's beautiful. The 66 and 67 GTO's, they get bigger, still beautiful cars but not like the 1965. There's so many things about that car that make me love it so much. That is not agape love.

Unfortunately, we apply this kind of casual love to people and relationships and even marriage. Agape love does not respond to the value perceived in another but the grace given at the cross. All real love is crucified and your ability to love like this finds its beginning in the love of God for us at the cross. That's how we love our enemies. That's how we are patient, kind and longsuffering. We are tolerant and bend over double to help! Are you loving like that? Christian love is an irrational and radical act.

### **Christian love is an unpaid debt**

Go with me again to verse 8 and read that first phrase. *Owe no one anything except to love each other.* That word “owe” is important because it connects verse 7 to verse 8. It's like a bridge. Let's read those two together. <sup>7</sup>*Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.* <sup>8</sup>*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.* Paul here is likening our love for others as a debt. Verse 7 tells us we owe

taxes to Caesar and revenue to the government, and verse 8 tells us in the same way we are in debt to love people.

**We are in a debt of grace to live for Christ.** These are the same words Paul uses in Romans 8:12-13. <sup>12</sup> *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.* <sup>13</sup> *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* But Paul also tells the church at Rome,

**We are in debt to a lost world.** That's the very first thing he says in Romans 1:14-16. <sup>14</sup> *I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.* <sup>15</sup> *So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.* <sup>16</sup> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

It's why we turn our attention outward not to be culture warriors but to present a savior. The defining mark of Christian love for the world is the quest to make disciples, not to argue politics or to prove our worldview is true; it's to make disciples. It's to display agape love so we can verbally share Gospel love. Christian love is an irrational and radical act. Christian love is an unpaid debt.

### **Christian love is the fulfillment of God's law**

Paul says this in verse 8, reiterates it in verse 9 and then nails it shut in verse 10. Let's read the verses again. <sup>8</sup> *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.* <sup>9</sup> *For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* <sup>10</sup> *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* There are three different kinds of law in the Old Testament. Ceremonial law – Christ fulfilled all of that. Civil law was given for Israel in that day and time. They have been fulfilled in Jesus. And then the moral law, that we would understand as the Ten Commandments, is how God has told us how to live. These moral laws are still on the books . It's been said they were written by the finger of God on tablets of stone in letters of fire. The Ten commandments, two tablets. The first tablet tells us about worshipping God and the second tablet tells us how to treat other people.

And there in verse 9, Paul gives us four out of the five commandments on that tablet. Adultery robs people of their home. Instead, we as Christian men love our wives as Christ loves the church and, as Christian women, submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ. Murder robs people of their life. Instead, we as Christians give life-giving encouragement. Theft robs people of their property. Instead as Christians we give generously. Lying robs people of their good name. Instead we tell the truth in love. Coveting robs people of their dignity. Instead we pray for others to flourish.

And then at the end of verse 9, Paul says, and any other commandments are summed up with this word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. You realize this is the teaching of the New Testament. It was clearly taught by Jesus in Matthew 22:35-40. <sup>35</sup> *And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."* It was highlighted by James in James 2:8-9. *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.* And Paul calls this teaching the summary of the law in a single command in Galatians 5:14-15. <sup>14</sup> *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* <sup>15</sup> *But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*

The question then becomes, who? Who am I supposed to show this kind of cross-centered love to? Paul says in verse 8 that the church should owe no one anything except to love each other. Here you have one of those famous "one another" passages in the Bible. Here is the answer to division, personal racism, structural racism, cliques, arguments and hurt feelings. Showing real Christ-centered, cross-focused love to other brothers and sisters in Christ, this is the church! Isn't that what Jesus meant in John 13:34 when he said, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

But then in Romans that circle expands in the verses 9-10 to include your neighbors. <sup>9</sup> *For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love*

*your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

That's people who are outside this fellowship and, according to the parable of the Good Samaritan, outside of Christ. The heartbeat of our calling is to love people to Christ. Remember, that we were once outsiders too. Because as John says, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another. All of this emanates from a heart changed by grace and filled with love. Surely that's what John meant in 1 John 3:16 when he said, *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*

I know what a sinner I am and I know the ocean of grace it took to save me. And I'll never love anyone more than Christ loved me. To love in Christ is to walk in love. It is irrational and radical. But by the power of the spirit we can love our spouse, neighbor, church member and enemy all for Christ's sake.

We have an unpaid debt. We are never done loving. Our debt is never paid off so we can never quit. Love keeps God's law. We don't reject the Ten commandments. If you are going to love other people, the track to get there are the Ten commandments and living like Christ. So that by God's grace, we are law keepers and love givers and we do it all in the name of Jesus! Live this week loving people in the name of Jesus for the glory of God.

*(Pastor prays)*