

Study in Romans

Application > Disposition of the Christian > Continuing Debt of Love Romans 13:8-10

Returning to the theme of love that he started in 12:9, Paul reminds us that the tie that binds all the behavior of being devoted to one another in brotherly love; of being zealous for serving God with spiritual fervor; of being joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, generous to those in need, and hospitable; of not seeking vengeance, but leaving that to God; of blessing those who persecute us; and of submitting to the civil authorities; the thread that binds them together is love. It is the foundation of this entire application section as we're going to also see in the next three chapters.

In this short passage, Paul gives us the reason that love is the soil from which all these behaviors of Christians spring. Loving our neighbors as we love ourselves is the fulfillment of the law. It is the motivation and driving force behind all the consideration, kindness and compassion that God wants us to exhibit to those around us. This passage follows on the heels of paying our "debts" of taxes and honor to civil authorities and does not forbid any and all debts, but that we should pay all debts (financial and otherwise) except the continuing debt to love both believers and unbelievers. That "debt" is never satisfied. God's standard for us is that it is never okay to stop loving somebody!

1. The principles of debt (v. 8)
 - a. All borrowing and lending is not prohibited, but is regulated (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-37; Luke 6:34)
 - b. Buyer beware: Borrower is servant to the lender (Prov. 22:7)
 - c. Debt of love: We are commanded to love
 - i. Believers (John 13:34-35; Col. 3:14; I Thess. 4:9-10; I Pet. 1:22 & 4:8; I John 3:23 & 4:7,21)
 - ii. Unbelievers (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27,35; Rom. 12:20; Gal. 6:10; I Thess. 5:15)
2. The law is fulfilled in the command to love (vv. 9-10; cf. Ex. 20:13-15,17; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Luke 10:25-37; James 2:8)
 - a. Holy Spirit brings God's love to our hearts (Rom. 5:5)
 - b. It is God's job to bring justice to our enemies (Rom. 12:14, 17-21; Phil. 1:28)