

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 6- How then shall we live?

Sermon Title: Week 1: Law, Love, and our one true debt

Date: 05-05-19

- **When we started Romans 12- How then shall we live? Scripture addressing behavior, ethics, perspectives..**
- **Throughout all of Bible, and virtually every system of human religion, the question HOW LIVE comes down to two relationships: GOD, and with EACH OTHER.**
- **AND, throughout the OT, and every other system of human religion... these two relationships are governed by the concept of LAW. Religious law, moral law, ethical law...**
- **Moral law... statements such as ‘you shall’, and ‘you shall not’. This is what we see in 10 commandments, which are the heart of what we call ‘mosaic law’, or ‘law of moses’**
 - **YOU SHALL have no other gods before me**
 - **YOU SHALL NOT worship idols**
- **Naturally associated with LAW is promise or blessings or consequences, based on how well law is kept. Another OT classic example... Deut 5**

³² So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.

³³ Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

- **THIS IS THE MODEL of OT (and almost all other world religions) MORAL LAW: Here is how you shall and shall not relate to God, primarily expressed in how you shall and shall not relate to other people, and based on your performance you will receive blessings or consequences.**
- **HERE’S THE KEY THING- for MUCH of Christianity today, this is STILL the way we think about God in terms of HOW WE LIVE. But absolutely essential to NEW COVENANT reality that Christ ushered in by his DBR, is the truth that there is NEW SYSTEM that guides and governs HOW WE LIVE. We are no longer under system of law, now, Romans 13...**
- **HERE WE FIND THE high point of Paul’s ethical teaching... one of the clearest (but far from only) statements in NT about this new way to living... NEW WAY OF BEING HUMAN... we are guided and governed by the motivation of LOVE.**

Romans 13:8-10 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

- **Huge. Lets look at first statement**

✠ Paying a debt

Romans 13:8a Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another

- **Debt is not prohibited in scripture, but it is highly discouraged. Emphasis on PAYING QUICKLY- no debt ‘remain outstanding’.. LAW says “YOU SHALL not STAY in debt”.**
- **BUT, there is one debt where law doesn’t apply- debt to love one another. Why use this analogy?**
- **Our debt of love is to GOD. But we pay it to OTHERS. Debt was a big issue in 1st century, as now- people understood it. An unpayable debt would define you, be controlling factor in your life. Paul’s simple point is that we never stop loving. Our continuous love is a defining reality of who we are.**

- **THEN Paul gets to the point- a revolutionary though in his time, essential characteristic of being disciple of Jesus, and concept that is baffling to legalists...**

† Our debt of love is never paid, but LOVE fulfills the LAW

Romans 13:8b *for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.*

- **WHOEVER- all of us. Not just ‘special’ Christians**
- **What is the LAW? First, mosaic law. Multiple NT scriptures make it clear that Christians are no longer under OT Mosaic Law. BUT, there is no “THE”.. literally, “FULFILLED LAW”. In general.**
- **For our actions, thoughts, to be motivated by LOVE is to fulfill, complete, the purpose of law in the first place.**
- **KEY THOUGHT- ‘To love’ isn’t just the most important law, it is different altogether. As Christians, we don’t LOVE because the law tells us to! To LOVE is to be FREE. We LOVE because it is the result of a life filled by CHRIST. RO 5:5 “Gods love poured into our hearts by H.S.”**

† **What Paul isn’t saying!**

- **Paul isn’t saying that because we love, we abandon God’s ethical teaching. “Well, I know God says don’t commit adultery, but I would LOVE TO, so it must be okay”. No debt, but I would LOVE that car... NO. Love is NOT excuse for rationalization, for LICENSE**

Jude 4 *For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

- **This concept of LOVE as fulfillment of LAW is central to reality of God’s GRACE. But living in the good of God’s grace will NEVER lead us to set aside God’s NATURE. To do so would put ourselves back into the role of God in our lives- denying Christ’s role as our Lord. GOD’S LOVE IN US WON’T DO THIS.**

† **What Paul IS saying!**

- **Totality of God’s moral law- his nature- law itself- is summed up in being led, directed, by God’s Love. It means our motivation is NO LONGER LAW, fear of consequence or desire for rewards. This is what Jesus said in Matthew 22, and Paul describes here...**

Romans 13:9-10 *The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

Galatians 5:13-14 *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

- **Why don’t we steal? Because law says don’t steal? NO. We don’t need the law to tell us this, because we love people, and stealing hurts people.**
- **FEW THINGS HERE.**
- **“Love your neighbor as yourself”. Super significant- Paul quoting Leviticus, but also JESUS. Who is your neighbor? ANYONE YOU ARE IN CONTACT WITH.**
- **How do you ‘love yourself’? Easy to miss... We ‘love’ ourselves, we ‘care for’ ourselves, because we are PRESENT to ourselves. The love and care we show (or don’t show) ourselves**

is intensely practical and real. SAME IS TRUE WITH HOW WE LOVE THOSE AROUND US. We can't say, I LOVE the orphaned children in Africa, and harbor bitterness toward our spouse. Toward our neighbor.

- **POINT IS THAT THIS IS INTENSELY PRACTICAL.** God's call of us to LOVE is to LOVE those we interact with. This isn't a vague sentiment, it is a call to action.
- **One more thought here. WHY? Why has God chosen to make LOVE so important. Why move away from system of moral law in OC/OT.**
- **Because apart from love, we will never keep the law. When we are motivated by LAW, we are always looking for a loophole. We pick and choose. We elevate one law above others (chronic issue in cultural Christianity). This is reality that Paul powerfully shows in Romans 7- I saw the law, and I failed.**
- **LOVE is not only the FULFILLMENT of law, it is the only way the God's nature, what is behind the law, will be fulfilled in our lives. ONLY HOPE OF NOT LYING is truly LOVING the people you would be tempted to lie to. Not more volume of 'do not lie'.**
- **SUM UP... comes down to this**

† **Reality: The emphasis of the New Covenant is not the requirement of LAW, but the FRUIT of the SPIRIT.**

Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

- **How do we love like this? BY FIRST LOVING GOD. RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. SURRENDERED TO GOD. God's love is KIND. GOOD. FAITHFUL...**

– **THIS IS RADICAL. PRACTICAL EXAMPLE.**

† **In Christ, when we are living out of love, we will not harbor ANGER or RESENTMENT. We will choose to be UNOFFENDABLE.**

- **From book by Brant Hansen... 'Unoffendable'.**
- **Continue in Galatians 5..**

Galatians 5:24-26 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

- **Let us not FOCUS ON OURSELVES, provoking- being provoked by- being angry with, envying each other.**
- **MUCH TO SAY HERE, but just a glimpse...**
- **WE LOVE taking offense. It's a national past time. In our flesh, we love being offended, getting miffed, harboring it toward someone, because we just believe we are RIGHT. There's good OT word for a person who always believes they are right, and aren't able to see or consider others perspectives...a fool.**
- **Being offended- harboring anger- places our focus on ourselves, it makes us miserable, damages relationships, and drives people away from us. The 'spirit of offense' is ANTI relational.**
- **But we say, as christians, aren't we SUPPOSED to be angry at sin? We may cite Ephesians 4...**

Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32 *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.*

- ***“My anger is righteous! Righteous indignation. Is it? Or is it just indignation? Paul gives us bottom line a few verses later.***

³¹ *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

- ***1 Peter 4: Love covers over offenses.***
- ***LOVE LETS GO OF ANGER. Do we get offended, angry? Of course. We are human. But God, by his nature in us, calls us to take a breath, and LET IT GO. QUICKLY. This isn't compromising values, it is letting God set us free from spirit of being offended that damages our ability to have make a difference in this world.***
- ***NO LAW can make us unoffendable. ONLY LOVE***