

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation
TITLE: Putting the Gospel on Display
SCRIPTURE: Romans 13:8-14
DATE: September 30, 2018
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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

God has made us to live in loving relationships with each other. And that means, we have a mutual responsibility to genuinely love each other as if love is a debt that we owe to each other. We owe it to our children to love them so they feel loved. We owe it to our spouses to love them so they feel loved. But it doesn't stop there. The Bible says we have a debt of love that we owe to everyone God puts in our lives.

Read Romans 13:8-10 ...

In Romans 12-15, the apostle Paul writes to tell us what it looks like to put the Gospel on display in the church and in the world. In Romans 1-11 we see God's love *for* us. And, in Romans 12-15, we see God's love *through* us. Love for others is the natural outworking of the theology of the first 11 chapters. The main idea being—We put the Gospel on display in our world today when we put Jesus-style love on display.

Contrary to popular belief, v.8—*Owe no one anything but love*—is not a reference to personal or business financial debt or borrowing money. The idea is this: Let no debt remain outstanding. Don't carry debt that you can't pay off when the note comes due. But the focus is really on love—Pay off your debts as they come due, except the one debt that can never fully be paid and that is to love one another.

First point—Pay your debt of love forward (13:8-10). ...especially to people who are different from you. ... The flipside of this idea of a "debt of love" might be something like: "Don't live with an antagonistic spirit toward anyone." ...The absence of biblical love nullifies everything else I say or do. ...God is more concerned that we treat people we disagree with in a spirit of love that he is in us proving who's right and who's wrong. ...We are to pay our debt of love forward because this one command, *Love your neighbor as yourself*, fulfills the Law. Paul sums up all of the negative, "You shall not" commands in the one idea *Love does not wrong to a neighbor*. The flipside of that is—love seeks what's best for a neighbor. And that idea comes from "Love your neighbor *as yourself*." So the first way we put the Gospel on display is by paying the debt of love forward to everyone God puts in our lives.

Read Romans 13:11-14 ...

Second Point—Put on Christ (13:11-14) --*meaning*--Dress yourself in Jesus' style. ...The command to love does not just mean to be a good, moral, nice person. It means to put a Jesus-kind-of-love on display. In these verses Paul is saying—If you are going to love others—if you're going to let love mark your life, now is the time to do it. Paul is saying—Knowing that our time here in this life is short, pay your debt of love forward to whoever God has put in your life by dressing yourself in Jesus-style love. And that will mean, you have to put off everything that's incompatible with love. That's the point of vv.11-14.

How do we put the Gospel on display in our world today? Let's turn the answer around. Simple answer: We put on Christ. We dress ourselves in Jesus' style love and we pay our debt of love forward to everyone God puts in our lives.

And because the focus all through chapters 12-15 is on loving people who are different from us—people we may passionately disagree with—another way to say this is—(and this looks forward to chps 14-15—but put another way you could say—Putting the Gospel of display means loving people who believe and live different from you while holding to beliefs and values that different from them. ...Who in your world—work, school, church, neighborhood—who in your world do you have serious disagreements with? God says above all, you owe them love. What would it look like to put on a Jesus' style love as you interact with them this week?

For Discussion —

Have someone read Romans 13:8-14.

1. Why is love the theme of chapters 12-15? ...Walk through these four chapters picking out all the reference to loving others and all the specific commands that help us flesh out loving others.
2. Looking at Romans 13:8-14—How is this entire passage tied together by the theme of love?
3. What is the meaning of "Owe no one anything but love" in verse 8? ...What does it mean to not owe anyone anything except love?
4. How does the command "love your neighbor as yourself" fulfill the OT Law?
5. Why do you think Paul summed up "love your neighbor as yourself" in the idea "Love does no wrong to a neighbor?"
6. Where does the flipside idea, "Do what's best for your neighbor" come from in v.9?
7. What does it mean to love your neighbor *as yourself*?
8. How does Galatians 3:27—*for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ* (past tense)—square with Romans 13:4— *to Put on Christ?* (present tense)
9. What do the things Paul tells us to cast off have to do with putting on Jesus-style love?

OR try this approach...

Have someone read Romans 13:8-14 and, then ask: From what you heard in Charlie's message or what we just read right here--*What are some of the "AHAs" you took away from what you learned?* ...When someone volunteers an "AHA"...ask follow up questions to dig deeper and to keep the discussion going. Ask the group, *"Anyone else have this same "AHA"--what do you think about this insight?"* After you've exhausted topic. ...Throw the original question back out to the group--*"Who else had an "AHA?"* Repeat the pattern above. Follow up questions then get input from the group. ...If someone says, *"I didn't really have an "AHA," it's more that I don't understand"* Then go that direction. ...Ask follow up questions to help them clearly articulate the issue then ask the group for input. *"Anybody else think about that/struggle with that?"* ... *"So, how would you answer that question?"* Whoever answers--ask follow up questions, ask for input from the group on that answer (*What do you think about that?*), etc. It's been my (Charlie) experience that you can have a great discussion around this approach to community group conversations.