

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Romans

Theme: The Righteousness of God – The Gospel of God

Outline:

- **Prologue:** 1:1-17
- **Doctrinal:** 1:18-8:39
God’s holiness – man’s sinfulness – 1:18-3:20
Justification by grace through faith – 3:21-5:21
Sanctification of the believer – 6:1-8:39
- **Dispensational:** 9:1-11:36 (The place of Israel and the church)
- **Practical: 12:1-15:33** (Duties and privileges of the believer)
- **Epilogue:** 16:1-27

A dominant theme in Romans is the Righteousness of God which is acquired by FAITH ALONE! The KEY verses of Romans are 1:16-17 and they emphasize the central importance of FAITH.

Slide # 2

Romans 1:16–17 (NKJV)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who **believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from **faith to faith**; as it is written, “The just shall live by **faith**.”

Here we see the critical importance of FAITH! We have life (eternal life) by believing in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and then, as believers, we live out our life by FAITH. And the KEY demonstration of true faith in the life is LOVE. FAITH demonstrates itself in LOVE.

Slide # 3

Galatians 5:6 (NKJV)

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but **faith working through love**.

The doctrinal part of the letter of Romans is found in Romans 1-11. This is foundational. Building on that is practical application as seen in Romans 12-16. The foundation is faith in Christ – the practice that follows is to be a life characterized by LOVE.

Slide # 4

Faith → Changed Lives

- Rom. 12:1-2 Love for God
- Rom. 12:3-16 Love for the body of Christ
- Rom. 12:17-21 Love for our enemies
- Rom. 13:1-7 Respect for the State
- Rom. 13:7-10 Love for Neighbor

Paul, in the context of our study in Romans 13, has just emphasized the believer's obligations to the state. In discussing the state, the emphasis is on the authority of the state to regulate human relations for the overall good of society. As good citizens, Christians are to submit to the governing authorities by paying taxes and giving respect to whom it is due. The state's governing role is strictly in relation to human relationships and not directly in relationship to God. The state regulates people's civil relationships in the sense of law and order for the good of society.

Paul's discussion of the believer's obligations to civil authorities leads him to now discuss the obligation of believers to people generally. And what Paul now emphasizes is that the essential obligation of Christians to people in the whole of society is the obligation of LOVE. We are obligated to love people!

Romans 13:8–10 (NKJV)

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Some have drilled down on the phrase "***Owe no one anything***," assuming this means it is wrong to ever have a debt or borrow money. Such a position would claim it is wrong to get a loan or use a credit card, etc.

The problem with that is that it just doesn't square with the whole counsel of God.

Now indeed, debts can be a HUGE problem. Those who study marriage and divorce tell us that financial problems are one of the leading causes of the breakdown in marriage. So, this can be a HUGE problem.

There are dangers in borrowing, especially if one is not wise in terms of not being in a position to pay it back or if one is very undisciplined.

Slide # 5

Proverbs 22:7 (NKJV)

7 The rich rules over the poor, And **the borrower is servant to the lender.**

A good rule of thumb is to stay out of debt as much as possible. However, sometimes it may be necessary to buy a house, a car, or big ticket items. But again, one should be soberminded of what is a NEED and what is a WANT. One should properly evaluate what they can reasonably do and what is responsible and then act accordingly. And one should always think in terms of what is good stewardship in light of eternity.

All of these things enter in, but to say one absolutely cannot have any debts at all is too far. Jesus did not forbid borrowing money and, in fact, affirmed the lender.

Slide # 6

Matthew 5:42 (NKJV)

42 Give to him who asks you, and **from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.**

If borrowing money was sinful we would expect Jesus to say, "Don't lend anyone any money because that will make you an accomplice of sin." He didn't say that.

What Paul is simply saying is, "***Pay your debts***" – "***Pay what you owe***". Christians can't say, "Well, we must pay our taxes, but other debts we can let slide." Paul says, "No, pay your debts" and in that sense "Owe no one anything". Don't be negligent or delinquent in paying what you owe.

Now, sometimes things happen that are completely beyond our control, and in spite of being very responsible, things go south. Well, then you deal with it the best you can.

But in general, Paul is saying to be responsible and pay your debts. Yes, pay your taxes, but then also pay all of your other obligations as well. That is the spirit of what Paul is saying.

A Roman nobleman died, leaving enormous debts that he had successfully concealed during his lifetime. When the estate was put up for auction, Caesar Augustus instructed his agent to buy the man's pillow. When some expressed surprise at the order, he explained, ***"That pillow must be particularly conducive to sleep, if its late owner, in spite of all his debts, could sleep on it."*** (*The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes*, ed. by Clifton Fadiman [Little, Brown and Company, p. 28])

Just as in the case of paying taxes because of conscience (Rom. 13:5) we should also pay off all other obligations because it is the right thing to do.

Paul says, ***"Owe no one anything except to love one another"***. Pay all your obligations, but there is one obligation you can never pay off – and that is your obligation to love others. The debt of love can never be paid off. The more you pay, the more you still owe.

If you have bills to pay, you work at it until they are finally paid off. What a wonderful feeling that is. In that case, you have fulfilled your obligation and responsibility. There is nothing more to pay. But when it comes to loving people, you can never say, ***"Well, I have loved enough, I owe them no more love."*** No, love is a debt we can never pay off and so we need to keep on paying and paying.

Normally, the NT uses ***"love one another"*** in the sense of loving fellow believers. But here, ***"love one another"*** is more literally ***"the other one,"*** and Paul goes on to clearly show he is speaking broadly about anyone called a neighbor, as seen in verse 9. So, Paul is speaking about people in general and not just about fellow Christians.

Every time we meet someone, we ought to say to ourselves, "I need to show him or her the love of Christ. I have a great and wonderful debt to pay." If you have ever had a personal debt, be it ever so small, you know that the first thing that enters your mind when you see that person is that you "owe" them. We need to truly see ourselves as spiritual debtors. – ***R. Kent Hughes***

Actually, there are several things Paul says the believer is indebted to do. First, by way of implication, Paul says in Romans 1 that the believer is indebted to share the gospel with the lost.

Slide # 7

Romans 1:14–15 (NKJV)

14 I am a **debtor** both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready **to preach the gospel** to you who are in Rome also.

Secondly, we are indebted to the Spirit to live a holy life.

Slide # 8**Romans 8:12–13 (NKJV)**

12 Therefore, brethren, **we are debtors—not to the flesh**, to live according to the flesh.

13 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.

And thirdly, we are indebted to love all people, as seen here in Romans 13:8.

The word “love” here is the Greek word “**agape**”. This is the intense word for love and the word that most often defines God’s kind of love. This is a love that comes from God. It is the chief fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This kind of love gives of itself sacrificially. It acts for the good of the other person. It moves as an act of the will and is not just a matter of emotions.

Unbelievers can’t love this way because it comes from the Spirit, and they don’t have the Spirit. Loving others for the Christian is not an option. It is our very calling.

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.” – **C.S. Lewis**

Loving is a “one another” thing. You can’t love in isolation. It involves interaction. Since we are dealing with people, you are going to be vulnerable. There is no getting around it. People often hurt one another. They misspeak, they are thoughtless and careless. But we are indebted to keep on loving anyway. Aren’t you glad God doesn’t just love us for our loveliness? If He did, He would not love us because, in and of ourselves, we are NOT lovely. We are called to love the unlovely with the love of God!

Remember, Christ “**died for the ungodly**” (Rom. 5:6); God’s love is demonstrated “**in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**” (Rom. 5:8).

Now as His people we are called to be His love agents. If you were to define our calling in one word, it would be the word LOVE.

Now the world talks a lot about “love” but it has nothing to do with biblical love – with God’s kind of love. The world’s love is very self-oriented. When the world says, “I love you” they often mean “I lust you” meaning I love myself and self-gratification. They love what makes them feel good.

God’s kind of LOVE is other-centered and not self-centered. It thinks of the other person’s highest good. And it seeks to love all people in this manner. Even the world loves its own (Jn. 15:18), but they hate their enemies. As Christians, we are called to agape love all people. The world lives by the motto: “*Love those who love you and hate those who hate you.*” But the motto for true believers is “*Love all people, even those who hate you.*”

It is impossible for an unconverted person to manifest this divine love. In fact, it is impossible even for a believer to demonstrate it in his own strength. It can only be exhibited by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. – **William MacDonald**

Love is the defining mark of true conversion. You can fake many things but true love is hard to fake over the long haul.

Slide # 9

1 John 4:7–8 (NKJV)

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Jonathan Edwards lived in the 1700s. He was a revivalist preacher and known as one of America’s greatest theologians. In trying to determine the reality of the many professions of faith that were made during the First Great Awakening, he put love at the top of the list for determining whether someone’s faith was genuine. He believed “***that evidences of love (or their absence) were the best test by which Christians may try their experience whether it be real Christian experience***” (George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* [Yale University Press], p. 190).

Would you pass the test? Or, more importantly, would your family or those you live with say, “Yes, he (or she) is a loving person”? Granted, it’s a lifelong growth process and we all often fail to love as we ought. But love should be your diligent focus and over time there should be progress. – **Steven Cole**

And then Paul says, “**for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.**” Someone says, but didn’t Paul say earlier in the letter “you are not under law but under grace”? Yes, he did in Romans 6:14. So then what is this here about love fulfilling the law?

It is true that we are not under the law of Moses, but we are under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). And the law of Christ is the law of love. James 2:8 calls the law of love “the royal law”.

The Law of Moses at core consisted of the 10 commandments. But then there were many other commandments that embellished that core, consisting of a total of 613 laws. The Jews broke it down into 248 positive commands “Thou shalt do”; and 365 negative commands “Thou shalt not do”. But Christ broke it down into two essential commands – two LOVE commands.

Slide # 10

Matthew 22:37–40 (NKJV)

37 Jesus said to him, “ **You shall love the LORD your God** with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like it: **You shall love your neighbor** as yourself.’

40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus saw all the do’s and don’ts of the law in terms of loving God and loving other people.

The Mosaic Law as a covenant code was given only to the Jews. And it was a UNIT of one (cf. Ja. 2:10).

Slide # 11

James 2:10 (NKJV)

10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble **in one point**, he is guilty of all.

The law was a unit, and to break even one single commandment was to break the whole law. The law is an all-or-nothing proposition. It is like a windowpane – either it is broken or it is not. You can't say, "Oh, that window is just broken in one corner, but the rest of it is fine. No, it is a unit of one – and so it was with the law.

The Law of Moses was never a means of salvation. Salvation has always been by faith. Even in the OT the emphasis was "***the just shall live by faith***". That is an OT reference as found in Habakkuk 2:4. The way the people in the OT demonstrated their faith was in seeking to keep the law. Obedience is always the fruit of true faith. That was true in the OT and it is true in the NT (cf. 1 Jn. 2:3-4). However, no one today on this side of the cross is under the rule of the Mosaic Law.

But there is within the law what the Bible terms as "the glory of God" standard. It is what Jesus showed to be God's LOVE standard.

People in all times are accountable to the glory of God as a holy standard.

Slide # 12

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

23 for all have sinned and **fall short of the glory of God,**

The glory of God is His character and nature (cf. Ex. 33:18-19, 34:5-7). The glory of the Lord in Exodus is shown to be synonymous with the NAME of the Lord and hence His very nature and character.

God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). This defines the very nature and Person of God. This is the very glory of God. God's NATURE never changes (cf. Mal. 3:6). His glory standard never changes! And it is this standard to which all people are accountable.

As I pointed out the whole of the Law is summed up by Jesus in loving God and loving your neighbor. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

Note that LOVE transcends the Law because it defines God Himself, but this standard of love is also reflected in the Law. This is a very important point!

People today are not under the Law as a code, but they are responsible to the glory of God standard represented in the Law. The issue is always THE GLORY OF GOD. The issue therefore is not accountability to the Law as a system of rule but accountability to the glory of God which is represented in the Law. That is a major distinction.

People of all times are accountable to this glory of God standard.

This standard is always in view, pre-law, under law, and post law. In other words, the standard of God Himself is always the issue. What the Law did is REVEAL this standard in a pronounced way that enhanced what was previously known in the conscience of man. In His conscience man knows that it is wrong to lie and steal, but the Law magnifies this reality.

As a code the Law was given only to the Jews but it illustrates universal truth – namely that all come short of the glory of God. No one measures up to the glory of God standard as revealed in the Law. This is Paul's very point as seen in Romans 3:19-20.

Slide # 13

Romans 3:19–20 (NKJV)

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that **every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty** before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for **by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

This continues to be a proper use of the Law – namely to hold up the standard of God's glory and thereby show people their sinfulness.

Slide # 14

1 Timothy 1:8–11 (NKJV)

8 But we know that the **law is good if one uses it lawfully,**

9 knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is **any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,**

11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

Revelation was PROGRESSIVE. God revealed Himself in various ways and in the order that He did for a specific reason.

The Law was given to reveal God's holy character and thereby exposed man's sin with even greater clarity. Then under Christ comes grace in sweet relief.

Romans 10:4 (NKJV)

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

We are not saved by law keeping, but rather by faith. That puts in the position of being right with God and that never changes. The issue now as believers is our PRACTICE.

And then based on the grace ushered in by Christ comes the Spirit and His empowerment of the believer.

This reality of the glory of God standard of LOVE as revealed in the Law is consistently brought out in the N.T. It continues to be the measuring stick by which we are to live, but is only made possible by the Holy Spirit's empowerment.

Slide # 15

Romans 8:4 (NKJV)

4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 13:8 (NKJV)

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:10 (NKJV)

10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Slide # 16

Galatians 5:13–14 (NKJV)

13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Paul consistently applies this love principle to human relationships, which is the glory of God standard as revealed in the law. The reason he does this is because it is this transcendent love standard to which all are accountable.

So while, none are under the law in any way as a code or rule of life, there is a transcendent glory of God standard reflected in the Law.

The Law is no longer binding, but the glory of God is! Love is the common denominator between the law and the glory of God standard. The problem with the law is that no one could live up to this standard. But now under grace we have been given the Holy Spirit and as we walk in the Spirit we fulfill the LOVE standard of the law. But it is only true to the degree that we walk in the Spirit!

In recent years some who have tried to combine worldly wisdom with God's wisdom saying that in order to love others you first need to learn to love yourself. However, Jesus never said there were three commands. 1) Love God, 2) Love yourself, 3) Love others. No, Jesus said there are only TWO commands on which the whole law hangs – namely to love God and then to love others (Matt. 22:37-40). The Bible everywhere assumes that people already have an innate love of self. Eph. 5:29 says, “no one ever hated his own flesh”. We naturally take care of self first. It's the most natural thing in the world.

Agape love is a “self-less” kind of love versus being self-centered. In fact, the Bible teaches that one of the defining sins of the last days will be the prevalence of “self-love” in the context of apostate Christendom.

Slide # 17

2 Timothy 3:1–2 (NKJV)

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

2 For men will be **lovers of themselves**, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Note that the very FIRST thing mentioned in describing last days apostasy is that people will be “lovers of themselves”. It's all about them! This is the very opposite of true agape love.

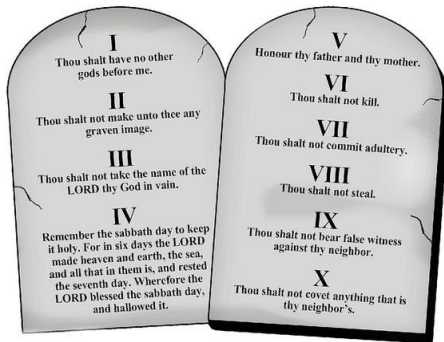
We are to affirm all of our ourselves which stems from the creation, while denying all of ourselves which stems from the fall. – **John Stott**

Paul now further explains exactly what he means by love fulfills the law.

The law at core was the 10 commandments and there were what is called the two tables of the law. The first table summarizes duty Godward, the second table summarizes duty manward.

The command to obey parents is linked with the Godward commandments because parents represent their children's divine authority. – **John Phillips**

Slide # 18



Paul has been talking about human relationships governed by the civil authorities, and from there he segues into talking about human relationships governed by love which results in the fulfillment of God's law regulating human relations. Paul here in verse 9 quotes 4 of the commandments from the second table. The command to not bear false witness as quoted here in Romans 13:9 is not in the older manuscripts and most believe it was inserted later. However, it certainly would be included in the sense that Paul goes on to say, "and if there is any other commandment".

He is citing some typical requirements of the law simply to show that love fulfills all that they lay down. – **Leon Morris**

Paul's point here is that if one truly loves, then these commandments will be fulfilled. We don't do the commandments to be loving; rather, because of love, we keep these commandments. Love is the driving reality. And where love is found, it acts in this way.

9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Paul actually quotes from the 7th, 6th, 8th, and 10th commandments in that order. The ten commandments are listed in Exodus 20 and Deut. 5.

The command Paul mentions is “You shall not commit adultery.”

Adultery is a very selfish thing – it is anything but love. It shows neither love to God, to the other person involved in the adultery, nor to the marriage partner being violated. If you truly love your neighbor, you won’t commit adultery with his wife. Again, love is other-centered. Love doesn’t exploit other people for sexual gratification – sinful immorality does.

As many of you probably heard this week, another high-profile Christian leader has fallen into sin with a woman who is not his wife and had to be removed from the ministry. This is a man who was a leader of leaders in very sound conservative Christian circles. For many years, his reputation was that of being a man of outstanding character, and then suddenly, we heard that he had fallen. There is an old saying that says bankruptcy happens gradually and then suddenly. Often that is how it is with sexual sin. It happens gradually and then suddenly! In this case, it came later in life, toward the end of a very full and wide-reaching ministry. It was shocking and very disheartening! We probably can’t say this too often.

Slide # 19

1 Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV)

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

We are all vulnerable. We are not safe until we are home. You can’t guard yourself and your marriage too carefully. But be very sure of this – wherever there is adultery, it is NEVER true love – no matter what the people involved may say. True love does not commit adultery!

Love does not commit murder. 1 John 3:15 says that hatred is murder. It is the spirit of murder. The seed of murder is hatred. Hatred is the spirit of wanting people killed. The very opposite of hatred is love. Saying, “I am gonna kill you” is the spirit of murder. According to Jesus the devil is a murderer from the beginning (Jn. 8:44).

Love does not steal another person’s property. Theft has no regard for the person being violated. It takes what is theirs. Love is giving, while stealing is sinfully taking from others.

Covetousness is a sin in the heart that no one might see except for God (Rom. 7:7-8). It is the sin of envy – of sinfully wanting what belongs to someone else. Covetousness does not rejoice in the good fortune of others but rather wants for self what they have. The opposite of covetousness is contentment (cf. 1 Tim. 6:6).

People addicted to pornography and sinfully lusting after people who are not their spouse are guilty of covetousness. They sinfully want what is not theirs to have. In the context of discussing the sexual sins of fornication, uncleanness, passion, and evil desire, in that very context in Col. 3:5 Paul says, “**and covetousness, which is idolatry**”.

Covetousness sinfully desires what God has not given you, and therefore, it puts whatever is coveted above God. This is a form of idolatry. Love does not wrongfully desire what belongs to another person. That is covetousness.

The sinfulness of SELF and SELFISHNESS is at the root of adultery, murder, stealing, and covetousness. In contrast is love which is the continual debt we owe everyone. Sin is self-oriented, while true love is other-oriented.

And then Paul says, “**and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’**”

The commandments Paul quotes are representative of any and all commandments summarized in the commandment, “**You shall love your neighbor as yourself**” which Christ called the second greatest commandment (Matt. 22:37-40).

To truly love your neighbor means you won’t violate his wife, you won’t kill him, you won’t steal from him, and you won’t sinfully want what belongs to him. And you won’t violate him in any other way as brought out in the commandments regulating human relationships.

Thus, properly applied, the keeping of the commandments toward your neighbor is a demonstration of true love.

The quote here is from Leviticus 19:18.

Slide # 20

Leviticus 19:18 (NKJV)

18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself**: I am the LORD.

The idea of a neighbor is anyone who is near to you. Jesus, in the story of the good Samaritan, illustrated that your neighbor is anyone needy that is thrown across your path in life (cf. Lk. 10:25-37). If we truly love our neighbor we will seek to do what is best for them.

A man with a prominent job heard a Bible teacher emphasize that love is a choice to think about the other person. He was always busy when he came home instead of talking, walking, helping out – he vegged, etc.

Under conviction he decided that on the upcoming 2 week vacation that he had with his wife he would only think of his wife and the kids. Sure enough the first day out she wanted to go to a museum or some such place and he immediately responded “N.....Sure and off they went. This routine continued until the last day of their vacation. At that point his wife said to him. “***Honey, please tell me the truth – you know the results from the doctor at my annual check up – am I dying?***” He said what? She said, the way you have been treating me – I must be dying. He said, Oh no honey - you are not dying – I am just starting to live. Alive in Christ – Agape Love.

True love seeks the other person’s highest good or from another angle as Paul says...

10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

In keeping the commandments, no harm is done to a neighbor. Instead of harm, love seeks their highest good. Instead of harming them, love seeks to help them.

Again, Paul says that love is the fulfillment of the law. He states this twice in three verses to emphasize the point.

Slide # 21

Rom. 13:8 – “he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

Rom. 13:10 – “love is the fulfillment of the law.”

Again, we are not under the law as a legalistic code to live under. Rather we are now under the law of love. We are not under Mose's law – but we are under the law of Christ which is the law of love.

And here is the deal: when we walk in Christ's love, we actually fulfill the requirements of the law. We don't keep the law to love; rather, in loving, we fulfill the law. Love is the driving thing, not the law. Christ personifies love and He via His Spirit now lives in us, and therefore when we submit to the Spirit His love is the driving reality in our lives.

God's Love is a transcendent reality. It is always the issue. It was represented in the law of Moses but we couldn't keep it. This transcendent reality of love is still the issue but now by the power of the Spirit we can keep it – not perfectly, but when we walk in the Spirit we keep the law in terms of what God has ordained regarding human relationships.

Slide # 22

Galatians 5:14–16 (NKJV)

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”**

15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

16 I say then: **Walk in the Spirit**, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

There is the “moral law of God's love” which is universal. Under the Mosaic Law no one could keep this law. But now under Christ by the power of the Spirit it is possible to live this way as a way of life. In and of ourselves we can't keep the law of God's love. The key is found in the power of the Spirit and walking in the Spirit as brought by Paul in Romans 8:2-4 and Gal. 5:22-23. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

Paul by way of the law is illustrating what happens when believers love others. He is not prescribing the law as a code to live under, but rather emphasizing that LOVE is to govern our lives, and when it does, we will automatically be living out the love standard demanded by the law (cf. Rom. 7:1-4; 10:4). Love, not law, is to govern our lives and if love governs we will actually fulfill the spirit of the law.

And here is Paul's mind-blowing point: We are to love all people in this way. Agape love is not just to be showered on fellow believers but in relation to all people – whoever is our neighbor. That is, those we constantly walk among and interact with day in and day out.

Last week in the section that emphasizes submission to the governing authorities I emphasized that the Church is not about promoting lawlessness but rather the Church (via the Holy Spirit) is actually a restraining influence in the world (cf. 2 Thess. 2:7-8). Once the Holy Spirit working through the Church is removed, lawlessness will abound, and the Antichrist will have his way in the world.

The same is true in regard to love. God's love is what makes the world tolerable and it is the Christians who provide this balm to society. Christ said in reference to the tribulation period, "lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." (Mt. 24:12)

In Greek, there are four main words to denote love.

Slide # 23

- 1) Philia (Friendship love)
- 2) Eros (Romantic love)
- 3) Storge (Family love)
- 4) **Agape** (God's kind of love)

The world knows something of friendship love, of romantic love, of family love, but only God's people are the facilitators of God's love. Whether they realize it or not what the world needs is true love – God's love.

I have heard a beautiful analogy from the field of music that helps understand the greatness and completeness of love. The musical scale has only seven basic notes, which many children can learn in an hour or less. Yet great composers, such as Handel and Beethoven, could not exhaust those notes and their variations in an entire lifetime. Godly love is like that. It uses the basic, and sometimes seemingly insignificant, things in life to produce the greatest. Love controls temper and guides reason. It seeks to overcome the worst qualities and develop the best. Under the guidance and in the power of the Holy Spirit, it transforms redeemed men and women more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

– ***John MacArthur***

Madalyn Murray O'Hair (1919 – 1995)^[1] was an American activist supporting atheism and militant feminism. In 1963, she founded the group "American Athiests". She created the first issues of *American Atheist Magazine*. She brought a lawsuit against mandated prayer in

public schools. It was heard by the United States Supreme Court, which ruled that officially sanctioned mandatory Bible-reading in American public schools was unconstitutional.

In 1995, O'Hair, her son Garth, and her granddaughter Robin disappeared from Austin, Texas. Initial speculation suggested the trio had absconded with hundreds of thousands of dollars from American Atheists coffers; in fact, the trio had been murdered by their former associates, and the bodies were not found until 2001.

But here is the rest of the story. After her death, they went through her personal handwritten diaries. There were 2000 pages of hand written notes detailing her loneliness, money problems, and political ambitions. One entry read, *"I want money and power, and I am going to get it..."* In another entry, she wrote: *"I think atheism is done for this time. I have failed in marriage, motherhood, as a politician."* And then there were seeming cries of despair where at least six times in boxes set apart from the rest of the text she wrote: **"Somebody, some where love me"**.

Everybody needs love and they need truth. Our calling is to share God's truth in love. We as God's people are to be the conduit of God's truth and love. What people do with it is between them and God, but our calling remains – share God's truth and share God's love with everyone.

God's love shared is the most POWERFUL thing in the world, and it counts for all eternity!

1 Corinthians 13:8 says, **"Love never fails"**. Most things in life will fail. Health will eventually fail, business may fail, friends may fail you, governments fail, etc. But God's love never fails.

An act of love done in Christ's name will count for all eternity! This is our calling as believers. We are called to LOVE.

Owe no one anything **EXCEPT** to love others. We are under the constant obligation to love! Ever be paying your never-ending debt of love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV)

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.