

**ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH**  
**LOVING GOD AND LIVING GODLY – Chapters 12-14**

**LESSON 47 – LIVING IN LIGHT OF JESUS’ RETURN – Romans 13:8-14**

There’s a lot of talk these days in Christian circles about avoiding crippling levels of financial debt...and rightfully so. But we really don’t see very much being made about the one debt Scripture says we should carry...and in the maximum amount...the debt of love. Love fulfills God’s law as we await the return of His Son. Paul says love is the only thing we are to owe to each other. In this lesson we see that while we wait for the return of Jesus, love is the one thing that should identify the church until He comes.

**Obeying the Commandment of the Lord**

The greatest moral force in the world is not the law...it is love. Love for God empowers people to do things they never could do while trying to keep the law.

**Love’s Debt** – There are many ways in which our debt of love can be paid. Paul’s point in saying, “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another” is not to forbid Christians from getting loans. It does warn against building up debt beyond our ability to repay. Some preachers and teachers use this passage to teach that Christians should never borrow money or have any debt. Now I’m sure we’d all agree that debt-free living is an ideal to strive for, a contractual agreement to buy a house with a loan you can pay on time is not sin. This passage is not ultimately about our finances.

In Romans 1, Paul said he was obligated or indebted both to Greeks and non-Greeks. He had a debt to those who didn’t know the Lord. Paul also talked about having a spiritual living debt. Romans 8:12, “Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.” As Christians, we are indebted not to the flesh but to the Spirit.

When Jesus told Peter he was to forgive seventy times seven...He meant that we’ve been forgiven so much by God that we should forgive others the same way. We are in debt to God for all we have been forgiven, and we repay that debt by forgiving others. Now understand that love is a debt that can never be fully paid. We can make payments, but never pay enough. When could we ever say that we’ve loved enough?

**Love’s Duty** – In verse nine, Paul summarizes what it means to love. It simply means to keep the commandment to love your neighbor. This verse is similar to the answer Jesus gave the Pharisees when they asked which was the greatest commandment. He gave them the greatest...love God...and the next greatest...love your neighbor. All the commandments Paul mentions here relate to loving others and if we properly understand the debt of love, it will help keep us from sinning against others.

**Love’s Desire** – Love from God and for God must translate into love for others. It must become a 1 Corinthians 13 type of experience where we demonstrate in practical ways that we love others. Unfortunately, Christians don’t always show the kind of love they should. If anything should characterize us as Christians, it should be our love for each other.

John 13:35, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

## Observing the Coming of the Lord

The first three words of verse 11 are what really tie the love of God to the Second Coming of Jesus...“and do this.” “Do this” is an action statement because love is an action not a feeling. You can’t command your feelings but you can command your actions. You can demonstrate love to another person regardless of how you feel about them. What happens is once you act obediently and with love toward another person, feelings of love will follow.

Paul says the motivation for our love is the fact that Jesus is coming back. While we anticipate His return, we should be manifesting His love to each other. If the church were really focused on the soon return of Jesus, we would be united in our anticipation of His return. The commandments of Jesus and the return of Jesus are often related in Scripture. The hope of His return should be a purifying force in our lives. There are four things we are to do as we wait for His return...

**Watch Vigilantly** – How can we see His arrival if we are not awake? We can only see the signs of the times if we are awake and alert. Paul says that “our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.” The salvation he’s talking about here is the future tense of the word found in Scripture. We were saved in the past, we are currently being saved in the present and will ultimately be saved in the future when Jesus returns.

**War Valiantly** – Paul’s reference to armor in verse 12 is an indication that spiritual warfare will happen while we wait for His return. The putting aside the deeds of darkness is an act of rejection. These deeds of darkness are acts of sin and should be left behind in the life of a Christian. While rejecting works of darkness, we rely on the “armor of light.” The armor of light are those acts of righteousness found in our lives (mercy, humility, meekness, longsuffering, etc.).

**Wait Victoriously** – Finally, Paul says we are to “not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.” Not only are we not to indulge in sins of the flesh, we are not to even think about making them a possibility. All of us understand lying, temptation, disobedience and sin. We also understand making provision for the flesh. Paul says we should not make these provisions.

Love is to be the predominant characteristic of Christians who are living sacrifices to God while they wait for the return of Jesus.