

Romans 13:8-14 "The best way to wake up Easter morning"
"The best way to wake up Easter morning"

Romans 13:8-10 NIV

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

The debt we owe all people is to love them. Our text tells us not to be in debt to certain folks. But our text also tells us that we should be in debt to other people.

Are you confused yet?

You don't always know how a story will end:

Florida residents Jacob, age 92, and Rebecca, age 89, were excited about their decision to get married. They went for a stroll to discuss the wedding. As they passed a pharmacy, Jacob suggested they go into the store.

"Are you the owner?" Jacob asked the man behind the counter.

The pharmacist answered, "Yes."

Jacob then said: "We're about to get



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married. Do you sell heart medication?"

Pharmacist: "Of course we do."

Jacob: "How about medicine for circulation?"

Pharmacist: "All kinds."

Jacob: "Medicine for rheumatism and scoliosis?"

Pharmacist: "Definitely."

Jacob: "How about Viagra?"

Pharmacist: "Yes sir!"

Jacob: "Medicine for memory and arthritis?"

Pharmacist: "Yes, a large variety. The works."

Jacob: "What about vitamins, sleeping pills, antidotes for Parkinson's disease?"

Pharmacist: "Absolutely."

Jacob: "You sell wheelchairs and walkers?"

Pharmacist: "All speeds and sizes."

Jacob: "Sounds as if you have everything. We'd like to use your store as our Bridal Registry."

I'd have one piece of advice for the pharmacist:

If Jacob wanted to buy Viagra, I don't think I'd sell it to him on credit.

Note part of our text one more time:

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.”

Why did Paul say not to be in debt, then hardly a breath later say: “Stay in debt”?

- **The word translated “owe” goes back a long time in secular Greek usage.**
- **Greeks probably first used the term to describe owing someone money.**
- **The word could apply to: “sum owed,” “loan owed,” and “rent owed,”**
Yes, they had slumlords and deadbeats 2500 years ago, too.
- **Loan sharks and cheating employees have also been around a long time.**

Jesus mentioned a crooked business manager in a Luke 16 parable.

When his boss discovered his dishonesty, he told the cheat:

“You’re fired! You’ve been stealing my money. I want an immediate accounting.”

"The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg . . .'"¹

“I’m too weak to fill potholes on a road construction crew, and it’s beneath my dignity to beg.”

He never thought a being a preacher, did he?

To be fair, some Jewish priests did strenuous work.

How many modern day preachers would it take to lift a sacrificial bull or an ox carcass onto a four foot tall altar?

Most preachers I know can capably sling bull, but hoisting a bull, ox, or even a sheep would break them.

In addition, many preachers are only a paycheck or two from bankruptcy.



When Norma and I first moved to LA in 1957, we shopped at a large chain grocery store.

The store manager befriended us and told Norma that most ministers he dealt with were financially irresponsible.

He cautioned us to protect our credit.

It was bad enough just to be a minister’s wife, but being the wife of a deadbeat minister would be intolerable, so Norma paid attention.

¹ Luke 16:3 NIV

The lazy Luke 16 accountant-business manager in had a white-collar, preacher-type job.



Just like many preachers, he knew he wouldn't survive in a blue collar world.

He developed calluses only on his bottom side.

He needed a friend fast and didn't know where to look.

He was probably the kind of guy who cheats just about everybody he met.

He needed friends really fast.

The business manager developed a plan.

"(4) 'I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' (5) So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

(6) "'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.'

(7) Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' (8) The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly."

While he could still sign contracts, he tried to make friends.

Suppose you farm and you owe the elevator for a thousand bushels of corn.

The elevator manager calls you and says to come in right away and I'll rewrite your contract reducing it from 1000 to 800 bushels.

"Pretty nice guy; I'd better take him to dinner real soon."

Jesus' parable informs us that lots of people bought things on credit then and knew what it meant to owe bills.

1. This story helps us understand our text:

"Let no debt remain outstanding."

Some people take this to mean that we should never charge anything.

Christians should be cash-only folks.

That's not workable now when businesses accept only electronic money or credit cards.

It's almost impossible to buy online unless you have a credit card.

We're wise to pay cash whenever we can.

Numerous Americans are severely in debt.

So is our government.

Many people calculate what they can purchase on the basis of how many monthly payments they can afford.



They seem not to figure out how much yearly interest they pay.

Over the past few decades, Norma and I paid for only one thing on a monthly basis —that was for the braces on my teeth.

The orthodontist didn't charge interest so paying by the month cost us nothing.

We decided that if I didn't live long enough to pay them off, and the dentist repossessed them, Norma could have the mortician place me face down in the casket so the uneven teeth wouldn't show.

The Bible means: “Whether we use cash or credit, we should pay our bills.

If we owe debts, we should promptly pay them.

2. Point two regarding owing:

We cannot disconnect verse eight from the first seven verses in this chapter.

What do the first seven verses say?

We owe respect to the government, to government reps, and we need to pay our taxes.

“This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing” (Romans 13:6, 7 NIV).

We try to squirm away from the implications of this next verse, but it's hard hitting.

In case you wonder, the Roman government strongly enforced law and order.

In all the cities and provinces they controlled, the Romans never permitted anarchy and law-breaking by any group.

Referring to governmental authorities, meaning elected officials, law enforcement people, and military personnel, the Bible says:

“Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”

Curious about the shades of meaning here, I checked my Greek *New Testament* to see how it read in the original.

In this verse, Paul never used a word more than two syllables long.

Most are high-impact one syllable words.

Whether we agree with them or not we owe government agents respect.

Jesus taught this respect.

Peter and the Apostles emphasized it later.

As hard as it is to accept, govt. agents are there by God’s will, and we treat them respectfully and pay our taxes.

We owe these debts and should promptly pay them.



3. Here’s a third debt we “owe.”

We owe the debt of loving our fellow human beings and telling the truth about resurrection.

This past Friday morning, a New York newscaster wished everyone a happy Good Friday and then spoke of the joy associated with Easter Sunday as Resurrection Day.

Good news makes us feel better and we need to hear more happy reports.

Folks celebrate today as resurrection day because Jesus’ rose from the dead 2000 years ago.

But how does Jesus’ resurrection help if when we die, our “souls” immediately go to heaven?

Bear with me a few moments.

We all lose loved ones and witness their burial.

One of my sisters is buried in Kansas and one in Oregon next to my parents.

My brother Don is now gone.

Once we bury our loved ones, we know we won’t see them again in this life. We can wish, dream, and try to relive moments, but we never see them again.

Jesus’ loved ones saw him die on the cross and saw soldiers gash his side with a spear, They watched officials confirm his death, and saw his body wrapped tightly in spices and placed in a tomb with a huge boulder rolled against the entrance.

They never expected to see Jesus alive again.

On Sunday morning when Jesus first spoke to Mary, she thought he was the cemetery gardener.

Peter saw Jesus’ neatly folded grave clothes, but he didn’t immediately believe. Jesus spent a lot of time convincing Peter and the Apostles that he was alive.

He wasn’t a ghost or ethereal spirit; he was alive in flesh and bones.

If our souls go immediately to heaven, what’s the point of resurrection?

The truth is; Jesus never taught that souls go directly to heaven.

Preachers who say that happens rely on highly symbolic *Revelation* passages, on a parable Jesus taught about greed and selfishness,² and *Hebrews 12:23* that refers to the “church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.”³

After a year of remote learning, we all know that just because you are enrolled in school does

² Luke 16:19-31

³ V.23

not mean that you are present in a classroom.
Enrolled in heaven doesn't mean you're there yet.

Persian and Greek philosophers taught the soul's immortality; Jesus never did.

In plain speech, here's what Jesus said:

“A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.”⁴



Where will we be when we hear Jesus' voice?

Dead--somewhere in the grave.

We'll rise to account for what we're doing right now, today, while we live.

If we believe God's word now, love him, and obey him by loving others, we'll enjoy heaven forever.

Liars, hypocrites, the hateful, selfish, unbelieving, and ungrateful folks have reservations elsewhere.

“He (God) will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3, 4 NIV)

Jesus' resurrection means that he broke death's stranglehold on us: no more death, disease, or crying.

Jesus will take his followers to a place where pain and sad “good byes” don't happen

That's the Great News we celebrate every Sunday.

We gather at his table to remember his death, burial, and resurrection until he comes again to call us from our graves.

The *Book of Romans* emphasizes that we live by God's standards, not society's.

Christ manages our business, family, and recreation.

Jesus gave Resurrection that powerful meaning.

Some prefer products “Made in the USA.”

Jesus promised us bodies from heaven, not earth:

“Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” *Philippians 3:20, 21 NIV*

Want a Great Day? Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-57.

Happy resurrection Day!

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⁴ John 5:28, 29 NIV