

**A Lifestyle of Loving My Neighbor as Myself**  
**October 17, 2010**  
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Permit me to teach you something this morning about the Word of God. Let me remind you as you look at your Bible in English, and of course this particular text was written in Greek. Let's remember that Paul wrote this letter to the church at Rome, and he wrote it in Greek. That is how it was originally communicated. Let's also remember that the chapter and verse divisions were not in it. If you have any headings in your Bible like mine has like "Be Subject to Higher Powers" or "Overcome Evil with Good" like mine has, those are added by the publisher. I want you to see where a natural break in the text occurs from Paul's perspective. In chapter 12 do you see the words "I beseech you?" Go back one verse and you see the word "Amen?" There is a natural pause. Paul inserted that. Verse number 1 of Chapter 12 becomes his second thesis statement. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* We are not to be conformed to this world. Don't jam me into a political party. Don't jam me into the world's system. I am not of this world. I am a citizen of a much larger Kingdom. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Why? Why should I allow the Word of God to transform my thinking? So that I may prove, or so that I may decide, or so that I may figure out what is good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Let love be without dissimulation.

**Romans 13:6-10**

*For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whome tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

This entire block of Scripture is all about how to love genuinely and how to love my neighbor as myself.

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Love

Alright, preachers, Sunday school teachers, let me tell you what I think is going on here. I believe from verse 9 in chapter 12 all the way down through 13:9, I think those verses tell us how we ought to love each other. I think all those verses from 12:9-13:9, that entire block of verses is all about how to love genuinely, how to love my neighbor as myself. So that is my whole premise on what I am going to teach. Everything we are going to learn this morning is how we can love our neighbor as ourselves.

In the interest of full disclosure, let me make sure that you understand what I am trying to do. I am trying to teach you how the gospel of Jesus Christ is applied to paying taxes and other things in a secular world. I want to be up front with you right off the bat. I am going to try to show you how paying taxes, bills, fines and all that kind of thing is living out the gospel. Now most of the time we think in terms of here is the gospel over here, and here is voting, paying taxes, paying bills, writing my mortgage, and then I go over here and I get into my gospel box and when I need to pay my bills I step out of the gospel box and I go over here into the bill paying box or the secular world box. I want to try to show you that for you as a Christian and me as a Christian there is only one box. We only live in one box. We live in the gospel box. Everything deals with the gospel for us. Paying our taxes, loving our neighbor as our self, writing out the mortgage check, and paying our library dues are all gospel things. That is my objective.

Verses number 6 and 7 deal with paying things. For this cause, pay your taxes. These people are God's ministers. The policemen, the firemen, the soldiers, the sailors: these are all God's ministers. They attend continually to God's business of people. So you pay your taxes. Verse 7 says *Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.* What did Jesus say? He probably had a coin about like that one right there. He picked up a coin and He looked them right in the face and He said render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. So I want to ask this question in just a moment. I want to set the condition. Owe no man anything. Never borrow money or pay what you do owe on time, those are two interpretations of that idea. Some Christians don't borrow any money and others say that is taking it a little bit too far. What that means is that if I borrow, say \$100, and we agree that I will pay over 5 months \$20 a payment; as long as I pay each payment on time then I don't owe you money because we have agreed to terms and as long as I am not late then I am fulfilling my obligations. That is one interpretation. The other is a little bit more conservative and it says to never borrow any money at all. The more important issue is what happens to the testimony of Christ when Christians don't pay their bills? What happens to the testimony of Christ? It hurts it. Do you know why this happens? It happens because I have a gospel box and I have bill paying box. And I don't see the connection between the two. That is why Christians default on loans at the same rate that non-Christians default on loans. They don't see a correlation between the gospel of Christ and paying their bills on time. That is why Christians divorce at the same rate that non-Christians do because they don't see the application of the gospel into their marriage. This is the gospel. I hear it at church. I leave and go home and I don't take it home to my marriage. Likewise, I don't take the gospel into paying my bills. I don't take the gospel into paying my taxes. I don't bring the gospel into that aspect. That is different, Preacher. Mind your own business. Paul doesn't. Verses 6 and 7 are all about paying taxes. This is what he says *Owe no many any thing, but to love one another.* This is my premise. What does he mean by this? What is his objective? I believe that if you have a division in your Bible that it hurts your understanding of this. It is all about making payments. It is all about owing things. I owe my taxes. I owe my bills. I owe my fine. Here is my contention: The difference between someone who is saved, born again, filled with the Holy Spirit, and living for Christ pays their bills or taxes and the way the unsaved person does it is they wrap it in love. They add love to it.

Let me try to break it down for you. Let me make it real for you. Let's say for the sake of discussion that you are down and out and you are really having a rough time in your life and you have rented a small trailer to live in. It's just a tiny little 400 square foot trailer, and you really are just having a rough time. Maybe that will never happen to you, but then again maybe it could. But you are a born again Christian. Let's say that you are really having a hard time living in this trailer right now. You know that you have lived in nicer places in your life and you are struggling right now. If you pay your rent the same way that the unsaved person pays their rent, how would that be? That would be grumbling. I can't believe I have to live here and you are charging me \$200; it is really way too much and it is ridiculous and it is not worth \$200. You know what I am talking about. As you pass your rent payment to the owner, you add a little bit to it and you have a scowl on your face and you are bad mouthing it and you are murmuring. Are you with me? Here is my contention. You are paying your bills just like an unsaved person pays their bills. You are not any different. What you have done is said, here is the gospel box, but it is time for me to pay my bills, so let me get out of the gospel box and get over in this box so that I can murmur and complain and be miserable about it. And Paul says, Give him some love. I know we all can't grasp that idea, but my contention is if I pay my bills and you pay your bills and we pay taxes just like everyone else and we are bad mouthing this and bad mouthing that, can someone please tell me what makes us different as Christians? For he that loves another hath fulfilled the law. The law stands as a constant reminder of how much I need the gospel. The law stands as a reminder of how holy God is.

Go back to Matthew and let me see if I can build my case a little stronger because I know that some of you are sitting on the edge and saying, Preacher, you haven't convinced me of anything. So let me see if I can do a little

bit better of a job. Matthew 5. We have the law. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill. That is the law. Jesus comes along on the scene; let's see what Jesus does.

Matthew 5:27.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* Do you know what Jesus is doing right here? He is raising the bar right here. You think the bar is as long as I don't purchase it, I am good to go. I can look and window shop as much as I want and I am okay with that. And Jesus says, No window shopping is allowed. Oh, man, that is a high bar. Yes, that is a high bar. Why is the bar so high? It is so high to show me how far I fall short of that standard. Does He do it again? Let's look at 21. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:* There is the bar right up to the top again. Here is the parallel I want to draw. I think Paul is doing the same thing. You've heard pay your taxes. You have heard render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. That is good enough. I don't need to have a good attitude. I just do it. I think what Paul is saying you do it with love. You take this and you do it with love. You add some love to it. You encapsulate love with it. So I am going to slumlord tenant, lost Fayetteville, and you trailer to me and here tenants don't pay her  

Christians are supposed to pay their bills differently than unsaved pay their bills.
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 go back to paying my bills to the rich, as can be, but she owns property all over say, I really appreciating you renting this is your payment. See the difference? Her like that. She has to hear an ear full every time her tenants pay a bill because all she rents is slum kind of stuff; the air doesn't work, the plumbing doesn't work. You know those kinds of places. I love my neighbor as myself this way even in paying bills. See, we want to separate everything. We want to compartmentalize everything. We want to divide it up and put it into different boxes and say that God is okay with me griping nonstop about paying taxes.

How about this idea? Let's change the entire dynamics. Why don't we say, thank you Jesus, that I have a job. Let's change it. Let's be different than everyone around us. We are not supposed to be the same. We are supposed to be different. We are supposed to think differently. We are supposed to act differently. So let's take the gospel box and bill paying box and merge them together. Let me now recognize that paying taxes is a way that I love my neighbor as myself.

I know people can't even believe I am going there. But when you pay taxes and social security and you do every single month, you are allowing someone else to have a home. They are not homeless because they get a social security check. When you pay into that Medicare, you are allowing someone else to get a prescription that they perhaps could not get otherwise. I am here to tell you we could change our entire dynamic on the way that we think if we would recognize that this tax payment is a way of loving my neighbor as myself.

Coveting: I know we are struggling with this one. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. Thou shalt not covet your neighbor's wife, nor manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor anything that is his neighbor. Do you know why we have such a great issue with paying taxes and why it gripes us and why we grind at it? It is because we covet. We want nicer things. We want more things. There isn't a person in this room that is not guilty of this very thing. Sinner #1 is right here. I am constantly looking at a Toyota Tacoma, and they are all over the parking lot. They are on the school side. They are on the church side. If you are driving one of these cars you are making me sin. We all covet. How do I know if I have a problem with it? How do I know if there is an issue with it? If I am resenting tithing or if I am resenting paying taxes so that I can have more, more, aren't I kind of upside down? Isn't it more about me now? So I'm cheating on my income taxes so I can put more into my retirement fund. I don't want to pay my fair share. Why not? I have a problem with coveting. Thou shalt not covet his house, his pool, his garage, his car, his wife. Can we stop right here and camp out for just a moment? Let me tell you why we have so much divorce in the body of Christ. The reason it happens in

the body of Christ is because we are too busy coveting someone else's spouse. We look at that guy or we look at her and we say she always looks that way. You know why she always looks that way? She looks that way because you never see her when she is having a bad hair day. She doesn't come out of the house. That is why she always looks that way. Or you look at him and say he is so sharp, and he is such a hard worker, and he seems to be so spiritual. You don't know that. He could be putting on the biggest front in the world. We are so busy looking at that spouse or that spouse; the preacher always runs off with the secretary or the organ player. Why? Because we are looking, looking—it's coveting. God gave you your spouse. Be thrilled with your spouse. God gave you your husband. Be thrilled with your husband. Stop looking at every other husband and saying, oh, he'd be a better spiritual leader for my children, he'd be a better provider for my children. What you would like to do is get a little bit of him and a little bit of him, and put them all together in this master husband. Be thankful with who God gave you. Stop coveting. It is not an accident that he followed up with house with wife. He knew exactly what our problem would be that he went this direction. This was divinely inspired Scripture. He knew what the problem would be. You are looking at someone and say, they have so much; and you don't know what they are sacrificing in order to have what they have. You don't know how much they have worked in order to have what they have. You don't know how in debt they are to have what they have. You don't know. You are assuming.

How do I know if I have a problem with coveting? You allow what you are coveting to interfere with your relationship. It's one you can't even talk exasperated with So you look at your have this instead of

You know you have a coveting problem when it interferes with your friendship.

thing to joke about it, but it's another when to that person because you are so what they have and what you do not have. neighbor and they have a BMW, and they recognizing that Christ died for them on a

cross. All you do is envy what they have and you are not bringing the gospel into your relationship. You are too busy envying what they have. You know you have a coveting problem when it interferes with building a friendship. That is a legitimate coveting problem. Coveting is idolatry according to Ephesians 5:5. The covetous man is an idolater. Coveting is the exact opposite of thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. It is loving yourself more than your neighbor. My personal commentary here is that perhaps there isn't anything easier to understand and harder to do than love your neighbor as yourself. I don't think there is a harder commandment that He gave us in the Bible than to love our neighbor as our self. I have no clue where the balance is. I have no clue. Don't ask me where the balance it. I don't understand where the balance is. I wrestle with the balance every day. I have no answers for you.

Turn to 2 Thessalonians 3:10. *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* There it is. There is the commandment. So what are you struggling with, Preacher? I am struggling when I see a 22 year old man who looks like he has 2 arms, 2 legs, physically fit and he has a little cardboard sign that says that he wants money. I struggle. I don't have any answers for you in that area. I know I am to know that God has day. I know that I know that guy is saying to you. We

Paying taxes to help those that need help is a way of loving our neighbor as our self.

love my neighbor as myself. I got that. I blessed me well. I know that I eat 3 meals a am taken care of quite well. But I also supposed to work. So, here is what I am pay our taxes to help those who need help.

That is a way of loving our neighbor as our self. But I also want you to see, look at verse 11, *For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.* They are on Facebook, playing video games, surfing the Internet, watching ESPN on flat screen televisions. Do you see it right there? All I did was take that old word busybodies and work it into 21<sup>st</sup> century. I know for sure that I am to pay taxes to love my neighbor as myself. I got that piece. But I also know that 99 weeks of unemployment is out of control. Can you argue with me about that? If you don't work, you don't eat according to the Word of God. Listen, I don't have any answers. I am not coming to you with any political party. I don't have any answers. You have to figure that out for yourself.

This is what I do know for sure. If I gripe about paying taxes like an unsaved person gripes about paying taxes what difference is there between me and the lost person? I have to figure that out. I don't think that our money should be wasted. I don't think we should be feeding people who refuse to work. I don't think that people should be able to sit at home for 99 weeks and play video games until their unemployment fully runs and then go look for a job. I don't think that we should be doing any of that stuff. Paul makes it very clear: work. But at the same time I am to love my neighbor as myself and I am to help others. I am to work toward that. And you ask where the balance is in that? I don't know where the balance is. I know I am not supposed to bear a grudge toward those people. I know that there are no other greater commandments that my Lord gave me than to love God and to love my neighbor as myself. I know that all Paul is going to do is show me ways that I love my neighbor.

How about this one: distributing to the necessity of the saints? Do you know what that is? That is tithing to the local church which takes care of church people. That is loving my neighbor as myself. Here is another one: given to hospitality. That is loving my neighbor as myself. How about this one: driving 25 miles an hour in a neighborhood? You say, Preacher, how in the world is that loving my neighbor as myself? How in the world could you try to draw a parallel between obeying the speed limit to loving my neighbor? Let's talk about it. Let's just say that your children are younger. You remember the days when your children were on tricycles and they play on the road and in the driveway and sometimes they would get on the edge. Didn't you just cringe, when people were flying by at 35 miles per hour? Weren't you scared? You know what I'm talking about if you have small children. It frightens you when you see someone flying through your neighborhood. You want them to slow down. When you drive into someone else's neighborhood and you drive the speed limit you are now loving others as yourself because you know in your neighborhood you don't want anyone speeding. You want everyone obeying the law. I am showing you that when he says in 13:1 obey the governing authorities, that obeying is a way of loving my neighbor as myself. When I love my neighbor as myself in essence what am I doing? I am loving God with my heart, mind and soul. So this horizontal love in fact is received as vertical love to God.

I am going to take it a step further. Consider this. I am going to suggest that the difference between the way a Christian and a lost person pays their taxes determines whether they are worshiping God or not. Here is my contention; and I know I am going way out here, but I am going to contend to you that you can pay your taxes as an act of worship as long as your attitude is right. It can be an act of worship as long as you see this as a way of loving your neighbor as yourself. As long as you see this as, God, You have put the governing authorities in place; they are in charge. I trust you to provide for my needs. I am going to pay these taxes.

Listen, Folks, I am not asking you about your attitude toward welfare, fraud, waste. I think we ought to fight those things. Listen, on November 2, you are going to cast your ballot as you see fit. And November 3, God is going to be Sovereign, and He is going to appoint the governing authorities across the nation. And whatever they decide is now the law that you and I have to submit to. It doesn't matter whether we voted this way or whether we voted this way. What matters now is God put these people in charge. This is the tax rate that they put in effect on January 1, and I will not find myself murmuring and complaining and griping like every lost person on the planet. I am a Christian. You promised to provide for all my needs. If this is the current tax rate, then I will deal with that current tax rate. It is not Christ honoring and God glorifying for you to find every single loop hole you can possibly find to make sure that you don't pay any taxes. That is not loving your neighbor as yourself. Just imagine, for the sake of discussion, that this portion of the congregation right over here decided that they weren't going to tithe any more. No more giving from this portion of the church. They are done giving. You could not say on this side that you now love these people as your neighbor because you are putting a greater burden on them to provide for the needs of the congregation. Likewise, when a Christian businessman finds every single loophole that he can find so that he doesn't pay any taxes what he is saying is someone else pay the bill. I am not talking about legitimate tax deductions that the government gives us. Don't

misunderstand what I am saying. I am talking about cheating. I am talking about misrepresenting income. I am talking about going under the table intentionally so that you don't have to pay taxes. That is not loving your neighbor as yourself. I am talking about hiring someone and paying cash so that they don't have to pay taxes and you don't have to pay taxes. That is unethical, folks.

Let me wrap it up with this simple illustration right here. As Pam as my witness, I am notorious with this. Let me tell you about when I return library books. When I get the automated voice message on the home machine that says, Hey, Knucklehead, your books are three weeks past due and you owe us money. Then she tells me that and then only by her grace and constant prodding do we eventually get the books back to the library. That is kind of how it works. Sometimes I have had to pay a couple of dollars. Sometimes I have had to use a 5 spot in order to cover my bill. Listen, how do you pay that tribute? You walk in, you know they owe them, that is legitimate, that is the fine, they established it; you understood that when you checked the books out, how do you do it? Do you do it with an attitude? Do you walk in there griping about it? Do you throw the money down on the counter? Do you whip it out at them? Or do you wrap it with some love? How would you wrap it with some love? How about a smile? How are you doing today? I appreciate your service in the library. I know you could be working other places, making more money. I am sorry that I was late. No attitude at all about the fact that you are paying money. You know why? You don't have to think about it, this is just me. I think of it as loving my neighbor as myself. Because they buy more books with the money I give them. I could cop an attitude about it and lose my Christian testimony, or I can wrap my tribute or my revenue with some love.

My contention to you is that we love God to love us unconditionally with lots of grace, but we don't want it to go the other way. I don't want to pay my fair share. I don't want to pay someone else's share. I only want to pay what is mine. I don't want to pay someone else's share. Stay with me on that. What if Jesus would have said that? What if Jesus had said, I don't want to pay their share. What if Jesus had said, I only want to pay what is My share. You can't believe that I am drawing that parallel. You are not going to go there are you? Why shouldn't I go there? Why shouldn't I go to the idea that I received from God grace? And yet I resent the fact that I have to pay taxes? I resent the fact that I have to pay a late bill. I resent that I have to pay a library fine. I resent that I get pulled over speeding. So now I go to the court house and it's time to pay my \$125 fine. This did not happen. This is a hypothetical situation. How do you pay that fine? Do you do it with love? Do you cop an attitude with the officer? Do you gripe the whole time? Is there a certain way you hand them a check? Or do you do it with the gospel wrapped around it recognizing that your sins have been forgiven and you have received more than your fair share. Do you see the parallel that I am trying to draw for you?

We have got to realize that there wasn't any area that Paul did not apply the gospel to. Paul applied the gospel to marriage. Paul applied the gospel to paying your bills. Paul applied the gospel to every single area. He didn't say there was any area that was off limits: the way that he conducted a small business, the way he soldiered, any aspect, anything. We have got to stop making compartments. This is the way I run my finances. This is the way I vote. This is when I need the gospel to get saved. I put the gospel back. I'll get the gospel back out when I need some assurance of salvation. Right now I am all set. Right now I am going to go have my marriage over here. Let me go over here and raise some children. They need the gospel because they need to get saved. I will saved. Put the gospel. The gospel applies to my elections go. Because God is still in charge whether I'm watching and I like it, or it doesn't go my way. It doesn't matter. The gospel is still true. That is what is going to make us a completely different church. That is what is going to send us into the community because we are radically different. When we go into the library we pay our bill with love. When we pay our rent we pay it with love. We are kind. We are a great neighbor.

There wasn't any area of life that Paul did not apply the gospel to.

pull it down from the shelf. Johnny got gospel back on the shelf. That is not the applies to paying my taxes. The gospel attitude on November 3 - no matter how the