

ROMANS 12-16: Putting Your Faith into Action

The Top Priority of Jesus, Peter, and Paul

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello. Men. Welcome to another episode of The Man in the Mirror Bible Study. I'm Pat Morley. Today, we're going to be looking at; *The Top Priority of Jesus, Peter, and Paul*. We're in a series, **Putting Your Faith Into Action**, from Romans chapters 12 through 16. Today, we're in Romans chapter 13, starting at verse eight, if you want to take a look at the verses with me. Let me ask you, are you the kind of person who doesn't suffer fools easily? Are you the kind of person who finds it difficult to be forgiving when other people are not meeting your expectations? Do you become impatient with others when you feel like you're the smartest person in the room or you're smarter than they are, or maybe think you're smarter than they are? Well, if you have any of those kinds of things going on, you already know what you ought to be doing. The question is, how do you turn it around? That's what we're going to be answering today.

GOD'S TOP PRIORITY FOR EVERY SITUATION

So the first circle that we are going to look at is God's top priority for every situation. We're going to read from Romans chapter 13, verse eight, Paul writes, "Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another. For whoever loves others has fulfilled the law." What law is that? Verse nine, the law of being referred to as this, "The commandments you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and whatever other command there may be are summed up in this one command, love your neighbor as yourself." So the law that Paul is talking about is the 10 Commandments. What does it mean to fulfill the law? It means to, I just looked up some of the thesaurus words for fulfill, it means satisfies. It means achieves, keeps, meets, observes. All of these are ideas of what happens to the 10 Commandments when we love one another. Pretty remarkable, isn't it?

So there's a principle here that we see, and that is really to owe no man anything but love. In fact, the new American Standard Version of the Bible says, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another." And where did this originate, this idea of love being the main thing? It originates in Jesus. Jesus said in John chapter 13, verses 34 and 35, "A new command I give you, that you love one another. All men will know you are my disciples if you," what, "love one another." Then Peter said in First Peter chapter five, verse eight, he says, "Above all," that's pretty high, "above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins." And then we see a parallel passage for Paul in Galatians, chapter five, verses 13 and 14, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law," there it is again, fulfilled, "the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command, love your neighbor as yourself."

In fact, the message, the paraphrase says, "For everything we know about God's word is summed up in a single sentence, love others as you'd love yourself." That's an act of true freedom. So there's something

here that's pretty obvious, something we learn uniquely from this text is that the 10 Commandments can be summed up in love. Love is a proxy for the 10 Commandments. I think it's the Living Bible says, "If you keep this one law, you will find that you are keeping all of the others." So we learn uniquely that keeping this law of love means that all of the 10 Commandments will be fulfilled. And what's obvious here is that if you are the kind of person who does not suffer fools readily, if you are the kind of person who finds it difficult to be forgiving when people are not meeting your expectations, if you do find that you're impatient when you're smarter than the other person that you're talking to, let's say you really are, you're smarter than the other person, that there's a rule that you can apply that will set things right.

It's the top priority of, we saw Jesus and then Peter, and then here in Paul, and that is the law of love. So here's the Big Idea for the day, the Big Idea, **Cultivate love as your first and best reaction to every situation.** So whatever situation you find yourself in, whether it's a temptation to pride, to anger, to disappointment, to feeling let down, if it's something that has to do with a temptation of the flesh, the pride of life, the worries of this life, whatever it is, that whatever situation you come upon, let your first reaction and your best reaction be love. The Big Idea, **Cultivate love as your first and best reaction to every situation.** First reaction, yes. And best reaction, why do I say best reaction as well? Because it's not going to be your only reaction. And why do I say cultivate? Because it's an idea that you are going to find continued resistance from the world, the flesh, and the devil to this idea.

But it is the first of the fruits of the spirit, which are love, joy, peace, and so on. And I don't think it's any accident that it's the first one, because this is the top priority of God for every situation.

FIVE REASONS TO REACT WITH LOVE

So the second thing then we want to talk about today, five reasons to react with love. I'm going to give you five reasons to react with love. Let's go ahead and continue to read in our text. Verse nine said that everything's summed up this one command, love your neighbor as yourself. It goes on, love does no harm to a neighbor. Well, who is your neighbor? Well, a neighbor comes from the word near. So basically, a neighbor is somebody who is near you. It can be anyone. A neighbor is really anyone in the Bible, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Basically, your neighbor is anybody whose need you see whose need you are in a position to meet.

And what does it mean to do them no harm? It means no harm in thought, word, or deed. So just don't withhold anything from anybody when it's in your power to act, because God's top priority is love, and love doesn't do any harm. Proverbs 3:27 puts it this way, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to act." I remember one illustration of Jim Seibert, the former administrator of our Bible Study for 17 years. He approached me one day. We used to go to a movie and have lunch every week on Fridays. One day, he approached me and he was almost trembling, and then he said to me, he said, "I need to talk to you about something. Is that okay?" And I said, "Well, of course." He said, "When you speak, you will take your shirt sleeve and wipe your nose." Well, I had no idea I was doing that. I have a runny nose all the time. I've always had a runny nose all the time.

That's why I carry a Kleenex with me at all times, because I never know what my nose is going to run. But I was doing that in the middle of a talk, multiple talks. And so he had thought about this for months about whether or not he would have the courage to tell me. That an act of love. He was wanting to make sure that I did a better job. So it was an honest, it was a difficult, and a frank conversation. So if you want to do no harm to people, not only is it what you leave them alone to do, but it's also that willingness to have those difficult frank and honest conversations with them. Not having them maybe harming that person. If Jim hadn't told me that, who knows how many hundreds of men I went to run off with that bad habit.

So the next thing then we see here is in verse 11 it deals with the brevity of life. Paul goes on to write, "And do this," meaning make love your first reaction and best reaction in every situation, "and do this

understanding the present time. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer than when you first believed. The night is nearly over. The day is almost here. So it's to understand that life is an inch, life is an inch, and so when we don't suffer fools easily and when we are impatient and when we are not easy to forgive, we're not acting in light of eternity and we're not acting in light of the brevity of life. So the first reason to react with love is because we don't want to be doing any harm. The second reason is because of the brevity of life.

Paul goes on in verse 12, "So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension, and jealousy. Well, the third reason we see, of course, the first reason is we don't want to do any harm, the second reason, to react in love is because of the brevity of life, the third reason is that we want to remember that we have all been there too. These words, "Let us behave decently, not carousing, drunkenness, sexual immorality, debauchery, dissension, jealousy, a lot of things that frankly Christians are involved in, and a lot of people, especially the generation in their 20s and 30s, there's a lot of de-churching that's been going on because of Christians living this way.

The devil in the flesh here, they don't mind if you become a Christian as long as you keep living like you're not. So make a change here. Remember what you were like. I remember myself that I perhaps knew the things that I were doing, the sins that I were doing were not exactly right, but I just didn't think they were really that big of a deal. And frankly, a lot of the things I do, I thought were cool. I remember being in a fraternity and I remember going to a fraternity party and getting drunk, getting drunk regularly, frankly, and I remember one night we had hired a band and I got drunk and I stood up and I sang with the band. I mean, I belted it out. Well, that was the debauchery, that was drunkenness, that was carousing, but I thought it was cool. Well, one reason to react with love is that people who are not in Christ don't feel the same way about their sins as you do now, and that's why it's important to remember, so we have these reasons to react in love.

And the fourth one is to remember that love is the most powerful force in the world. Verse 14, "Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." Love is the most powerful force in the world. I have a lot of darlings. My calling is to take God's message of love to a broken generation. That's my calling from God. So I have a lot of darlings that I was eager to just flood this talk with those sentences and those ideas. I wanted to give you a fresh talk, and so I'm not doing that, but I did have to come to this idea of reminding all of us that love is the most powerful force in the world, and we get that by clothing ourselves, with the Lord Jesus Christ. That's how we don't think about the desires of the flesh.

Love is the glue that holds us together and the oil that keeps us from rubbing each other the wrong way, and of all the forces that can be resisted, the most difficult for us to resist is love, because love is, in fact, the most powerful force in the world and we get it by being clothed with Jesus Christ. And then the fifth idea. So we've talked about doing no harm. We've talked about the brevity of life. We've talked about remembering. We've talked about love being the most powerful force. The fifth reason to react with more love is because there is an endless supply of love when you have the Holy Spirit. Every time you give away love, he gives you more love in return. When we brought our second child, John, home from the hospital, our first child, Jen, our daughter, was three years old. When we brought John home, both sets of grandparents were at the house and maybe some other family members too. And everybody was just oohing and awing and cooing over little John, because he was so cute.

And Jen was there. And after an hour or two of everybody making over John, and frankly, because of the circumstances, not paying much attention to Jen, Jen with a very innocent, the big smile that she had, but very innocently came in and asked me matter of fact, she says, "Daddy, now that we have John, does that mean that you don't love me anymore?" And God you did give me the exact right words to say to her. I took her in my arms and, of course, everything in the entire room, everything stopped in its

tracks when Jen asked that question, because everybody had heard it. And I picked up Jen and I held her and I looked her deeply in the eyes and I said, "Oh no, honey." I said, "In our family, because of Jesus, we have lots and lots of love. We have lots of love for John. And we have lots of love for Grandma and Grandpa Cole. And we have lots of love for Grandma and Grandpa Morley. And we have lots and lots of love for mommy and lots of love for daddy.

"And then we have lots and lots of love for you too. And then, guess what? After we've given all that love away, we have lots of love leftover to give away to other people too." She said, "Oh, okay." And then she was satisfied and she wanted to be let down, and she went about her business. The fifth reason to react with love is because there is an endless supply of love. You don't have to hoard it. The more you give away, the more you get back in return. Isn't that beautiful? The Big Idea today is, **cultivate love as your first and best reaction to every situation.**

IDEAS TO CULTIVATE LOVE AS YOUR FIRST AND BEST REACTION

Finally, a few ideas to cultivate love as your first and best reaction. You've heard that, you've probably tried it out, the idea of counting to 10 before you react in anger. But I think I'd like to suggest that you count to 10 and then ask yourself, what voice is it that is speaking to me right now?

This is from the Four Voices Series, and now the Four Voices book that's coming out. Is this the world, the flesh, the devil, or the Holy Spirit? Figure out which voice is speaking, and then take control of the conversation. Be intentional. Let your reaction be formed by how you answered that question. Is this the world, the flesh, the devil, or the Holy Spirit? On a real practical level, when you are getting ready to send an email and you're talking about somebody that you're having a problem with in that email, don't physically do this, but picture yourself putting that person that you're talking about on the copy list, that they're going to receive a copy of that email. You could say tough things, but don't say anything about that person you wouldn't be willing to say to their face. That's putting love into action as your reaction, your first and your best reaction.

Or when you are talking about somebody, two of you getting together, it's so easy to form triangles against the third person. But if you're looking for a way to react in love, it's okay to talk about a problem that you're having with whomever, a spouse, a child, a coworker, whomever, but just picture that, that person is sitting in an empty chair next to you. Just remind yourself of all the good that love does in the world. And when you do, and when you understand that from scripture that God's top priority is to love in every situation and that love fulfills all of God's law then it's easy to understand why the Big Idea today is that we should cultivate love. You should **cultivate love as your first and best reaction to every situation.**

Let's pray together. Our dearest father, thank you for, again, just the tremendous freedom that we get from your word, how Jesus, how Peter, how Paul had love as their top priority and telling us that we should have it as our top priority too. Lord, help us to cultivate that idea of loving as our first and our best reaction in every situation. We ask this in your name, Jesus. Amen. Thank you. Amen.