

"Stuff We Don't Think We Need"

Text: Romans 13:1-10

In the Name of our Triune God, who generously and wisely supplies all that we need.

Dear Fellow Christians:

I'm not sure there is an end to the different ways we can divide people into one of two categories. A few examples will let you know where this is going. There are risk-takers and there are those who always want to play it safe. There are those who feel the need to share personal information to any and all, and those who are very private, choosing to share little or nothing. There are those who exercise and eat healthy and those who actually enjoy life. Okay, so the last isn't really a thing, but you get the point. It's almost impossible to know if these "divisions" are hardwired into us (nature) or learned (nurture). Probably some of each. Children who are taught to respect authority when they are young most often respect authority when they are older. On the other hand, you probably all know families where children are raised the same way but develop very different personalities and take very different paths in life.

Which brings us to the division we examine this morning: savers and tossers (in derogatory parlance – hoarders and wasters). A quick look around the areas of the parsonage for which I am responsible will let you know in which camp your pastor resides. Before I will feel comfortable parting with just about anything, it has to be pretty obvious that I will *never, ever* find any possible use for it. To my way of thinking, you will never regret holding on to something that is potentially useful. The only potential for regret is throwing something away. Which is not to say your spouse will have no regrets – although mine has held onto me for over four decades in the hopes that I might someday prove useful.

Obviously the discussion turns serious when God's Word identifies things as necessary and valuable for his children, but which we nonetheless regard as *"stuff we don't think we need."*

The text that will guide our study this morning is found in the 13th Chapter of Paul's Letter to the Christians in Rome:

ESV **Romans 13:1-10** *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the*

authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. ⁸ ¶ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

This is the Word of God. We know the source and therefore we trust these words to speak always and only that which is not only true, but that which should forever be treasured, never be discarded.

"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and treasure it."

Desiring to learn and forever treasure God's Word and will, so we pray: ***"Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."***
Amen.

Before I give you a list, try to formulate your own. Is there anything that God promotes in his Word that you might, consciously or not, categorize as "stuff you don't think you need"?

It's not an easy exercise, for several reasons. First, because it requires true, humble honesty, which can be difficult to apply to self. There are all sorts of internal barriers that we erect to protect our own faults and deficiencies, and breaching those barriers can be difficult in the extreme. True, humble, honest introspection is also not a simple thing to do *well* and *accurately*. We're good at kidding ourselves. Finally, no one likes to admit either failure or deficiency. No one has a natural fondness for admitting either *"I was wrong"* or *"I need help."*

So here's a list to get us started – some things that also Christians can come to regard as optional, as *stuff we don't think we need*:

Somebody telling us what to do.
Rules that apply also to us.
Accountability to anyone else.
Worshipping, regularly and in-person, with other living, breathing Christians.
Holy Communion.
Regular Bible reading.
Prayer, for ourselves and others.
Restrictions of pretty much any kind.
Someone else to tell us when we are wrong.
Truly forgiving someone else for an obvious wrong.
Deep concern about somebody else's needs.
Paying what we owe if we can convince ourselves that we shouldn't have to.
Submission to authority of any and every sort.
Showing Christian love to someone who has hurt us.
Taking responsibility and accepting consequences for our actions.
Even work itself is now seen by an alarming number of our citizens as optional.

We live in a culture that celebrates independence. We dedicate one of our most popular holidays to that concept. We are told to *"be our own person," "make our own rules," "follow our own heart,"* and *"answer to no one but yourself."* Significant elements of our present society openly advocate rebellion to any and all established authority. We also live in a society that promotes the idea, for little on, that *"I am special. I am exceptional. I am above the rules and obligations that govern others."*

But our text in Romans 13 directly contradicts that attitude. Paul reminds us that there are things we think we don't need that God says we absolutely *do*. Our text begins with authority and obedience, moves through responsibility and justice, and ultimately lands at love. In other words, Christian maturity is not learning what we can get away with. Christian maturity is learning to accept what *God* says we ourselves need, and what he wants us to give to others – what we are to consider as that which we *owe* to others. We owe honor. We owe obedience. We owe taxes. We owe respect. We owe what we have promised. We owe love.

That's an odd thought, isn't it, that we *owe* love. And yet Paul says in verse 8: ***Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*** Remember that beginning in Romans 12 Paul moved from how and why we are justified and saved (which is by his undeserved love through faith alone in Jesus Christ) to Christian sanctification – or how God himself wants us to thank him for the salvation he has freely given us in Christ. One of the highest arts of the Christian faith is to keep these two things well-defined and accurately divided.

Justification is about what God alone did for us when we were still ***"dead in our trespasses and sins."*** Knowing that we could do nothing to earn our forgiveness, God the Father sent his son to earn forgiveness for us. Jesus did what we were supposed to (keeping every part of his Father's will perfectly) and then he offered his perfect life on the cross as payment for our sins. That's the Atonement. God the Father accepted his Son's sacrifice and declared our sin debt paid in full. That's justification, and we obviously had nothing to do with what took place when we were still spiritually dead.

But having brought us to faith, we are no longer dead. The Holy Spirit has created new life within us. Paul put it this way in his Letter to the Colossians: ***"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."***^{ESV} (Colossians 2:13-14)

Once we were dead. Now we are alive in Christ. When we were dead we had neither the will nor the ability to please our God, or to thank him for what he had done for us. Now we do, which is why God in his Word gives direction or guidance to that new man alive within us. That's part of what the Bible calls sanctification.

To put this in terms of our text, we don't earn God's love and forgiveness if we ***"subject (ourselves) to the governing authorities, pay our taxes, and show respect, honor, and love."*** We already have his love and forgiveness through faith alone in Jesus. What God the Holy Spirit is telling us in this text is that we must never regard these things as *"stuff we don't think we need."* It's enough to know that this is God's will, but there is even more to it.

God blesses us through obedience. Think of God in heaven and us on earth. God wants to bless his children. How he does that is most often through those he himself has placed in authority over us – parents, teachers, bosses at work, elders, police officers, government officials, etc. They represent the pipeline by which God delivers to us his blessings from heaven. You and I have the terrible power to cut those supply lines. Through rebellion, disobedience, and disrespect we can transform blessings into judgments. Our text gave us one example of how that can happen: ***Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.***

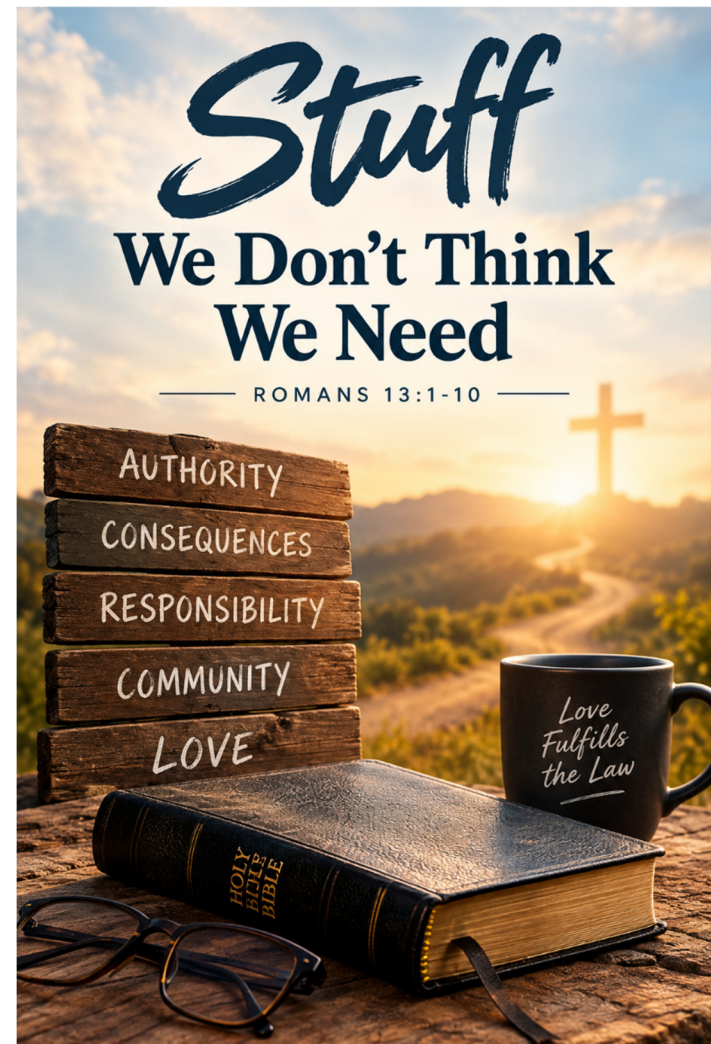
Your Heavenly Father wants to bless you. With that in mind, take another careful look at the list mentioned earlier – things that even Christians can come to regard as “*stuff we don't think we need.*” Recognize every single one of them as the means through which your Savior-God wants to bless you with gifts both spiritual and material. Gifts of peace, security, contentment, confidence, a closer relationship with him, and a conscience at rest. God doesn't need those things, but he knows that we absolutely do. Recognize thereby the pure, divine love in God's will for our lives.

God grant each of us the ability to recognize that we are not special or exceptional. Rules don't just apply to others; they apply to us. We need others, they need us. This is the absolutely reasonable service of those who have been forgiven, who have been adopted as God's own children, and who want to now thank and serve him during their time of grace on this earth. Amen.

ESV **Ezekiel 33:7-9** "So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸ If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹ But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

ESV **Matthew 18:1-9** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³ and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ ¶ "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ ¶ "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! ⁸ And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

ESV **Romans 13:1-10** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. ⁸ ¶ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.



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The 15th Sunday after Pentecost – September 6, 2026

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 200

"God Has Spoken by His Prophets"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 31ff.

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The Old Testament Lesson: (Ezekiel 33:7-9) After reading our Old Testament lesson for this morning, many pastors have rightly come to the conclusion that the greatest example of God's grace is that any pastor can be saved. Spiritual shepherds are charged by God with counseling those who have fallen into sin or who are straying from the truth. This is not just the pastor's calling. God's Word tells us it is the responsibility of all Christians. While this is a vital function and an important part of the Great Commission, it is becoming increasingly difficult. Our society lacks the humility to be disciplined, even by those charged by God to do so.

Psalm 30 (Hymnal page 67) (Read responsively)

The New Testament Lesson: (Matthew 18:1-9) No one lives in a vacuum. What we do (or, at times, fail to do) affects others. This is not something we can change. It is a fact of life we must accept – which leaves us with only two options: with our words and actions we can build others up or tear them down. We can encourage or discourage. Obviously children are the most susceptible to our influence, and Jesus here warns of the danger of bringing harm, of any sort, to children.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed *(Hymnal page 34)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 556

"I Lay My Sins on Jesus"

The Sermon – Text: Romans 13:1-10 *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

"Stuff We Think We Don't Need"

The Offertory – (Projected on Screens)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 403

"This Is He"

The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 554

"My Faith Looks Up to Thee"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (39) Average (35)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Mr. Nick Naumann is considering the call to St. Luke's of Lemmon, SD. Gift of God of Mapleton has called Pastor Matthew Hanel. Holy Cross of Phoenix, AZ has called Pastor Chad Seybt. Living Hope of Appleton, WI has called Pastor Thomas Schuetze. St. Paul's of Austin has called Pastor Aaron Ude.

September Schedule – Next week we return to our regular (non-summer) Sunday schedule, with Sunday school and Bible Class resuming at 9:00 a.m. and Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. Since Pastor Roehl is scheduled to be out of town for the West Central Pastoral Conference (September 15-17) and CLC Board meetings (September 21-23), midweek classes will not resume until September 30th.

Church Council and Women's Fellowship Meetings – Also looking ahead, both the Church Council and the Women's Fellowship are scheduled to meet on Sunday, September 27 during the fellowship hour.

September Newsletter – The St Paul Newsletter for September has been distributed via email. Please see Allison Loeb if you would like your name added to the mailing list.

ILC Tour Choir – Please consult the sign-up sheet on the mailbox table for hosting members of the ILC Tour Choir on March 22nd. We need to know what other arrangements to make if members cannot host all of the choir members in their homes.