

Love Others as the Fulfillment of the Law
Romans 13:8-10
September 7, 2022

Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

12:1-15:13 The gospel and the transformation of life

Key verses: 12:1-2

Love is so important that the apostle returns to it before starting the next subsection which will be on the use of Christian liberty. In the teaching on Christian liberty, the applications Paul will make concern matters of the Mosaic law. Paul now prepares for that section by teaching the primacy of love, which is the fulfillment of the law.

The debt of love (8)

8a “Owe no one anything, except to love each other,”

1. Connects to verse 7
2. Instructs us to pay our debts
3. Does not forbid borrowing money
 - **Ex. 22:25** “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him.”
 - **Psa. 37:25–26** “I have been young, and now am old,
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or his children begging for bread.
He is ever **lending generously**,
and his children become a blessing.”
 - **Matt. 5:42** “Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”
4. The point is we have a never-ending debt of love that we owe to one another
 - In contrast, there is a set amount of taxes we owe (verse 7)
5. We can never say we have done all the loving we need to do toward another person

At this point in the paragraph, the apostle has in mind loving our brethren, but he will quickly expand this to loving our neighbor, whoever he may be.

Question: In Scripture, what defines love?

The apostle is instructing us to love others without limit, and is putting a primacy on love.

8b for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

1. Observe “has fulfilled,” not “fulfills”
2. The idea is that love is *not just part* of what God requires of us toward others, but that it *exhausts* what God requires of us toward them

The summing up of God’s commandments in love (9)

Quotes from **Lev. 19:18** “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.”

The commandment to love our neighbor as ourself encompasses all God’s commandments regarding how we are to treat others.

Jesus made clear that our “neighbor” is anyone with whom we have contact.

Question: How did Jesus make this clear?

The commandment to love our neighbor as ourself does not mean some people need to love themselves more.

- **Eph. 5:29** “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it...”

It is a commandment to love others as we would like to be loved, and to be just as concerned about others as we are about ourself.

The apostle gives four examples from the 10 Commandments

1. “You shall not commit adultery”
 - Love will not take for oneself another person’s spouse
 - Love will not defile another person
2. “You shall not murder”
 - Love will not harm another
3. “You shall not steal”
 - Love will not take what belongs to another
4. “You shall not covet”
 - Love even encompasses what we do in our heart!
 - We are to love one another, and our neighbor, in our hearts!

When we are exercising biblical love toward others from the heart outward, then we are obeying all God's horizontal commandments. The Christian who loves his neighbor as himself will not do toward him the ills God prohibits and will, on the contrary, do the positive counterparts.¹

The Christian whose life is ruled by God's love is protected from sinning against another, and is inclined to righteousness.²

Jesus taught the same thing

- **Matt. 22:35–40** “And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. **On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.**”

To grow in treating others in a Christ-like way, we must focus on growing in love.

Question: What are some examples in the Bible of OT and NT saints loving their neighbor?

The fulfillment of the law in love (10)

The OT law, from which the apostle has quoted, mostly contains prohibitions, as is the case with the quotations from the 10 Commandments. Hence, Paul says what he does here.

Love is the very opposite of wronging a neighbor.

“the fulfilling of the law”

- NASB “fulfillment”

Conclusion

We have a never-ending debt of love that we owe to one another.

Our Lord has given us the new commandment with the words, “just as I have loved you.”

His love toward us is unending and steadfast (8:38-39)!

Our responsibility is to exercise His love, by the power of His Spirit.

¹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:162-63.

² John MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, 252.