

**Title: The Law of Love**

**Text: Romans 13:8-10**

## Introduction

How many of you, by a show of hands, LOVE it when you get pulled over by an officer of the LAW?

Shocking! None of you?

Well, law and love are two words that don't necessarily go together.

**Main Idea: God's Law is Rooted in His Love!**

Interrogative:

Transition:

### 1. Owe Only Love

*My grandson, Elliot, is making a killing! - \$5 per tooth! What? And that one tooth garnered \$5 from me, \$5 from his other grandparents. \$5 from his mom. \$5 from his dad. That's \$20 for one tooth!*

*The other day he asked me, when I am going to pay him for his tooth!*

*My grandson expects payment for the tooth that he lost! What a racket!*

*I guess I'd better pay him what I owe him!*

### **Romans 13:8 ESV**

*<sup>8</sup> Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*

*"Owe no one anything"* – Often, this verse is taken to mean that we are never to incur debt. And while there certainly is wisdom in this sentiment, having a mortgage or a car payment is not what Paul is writing about here in this verse.

In fact, if we back up and look at the verses before this we will get a better feel for the context and perhaps the overarching sense of the passage.

### **Romans 13:5–7 ESV**

*<sup>5</sup> Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> 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.*

This word owed and theme of not owing is pretty clear here.

Believers are to only owe others one thing - LOVE

ἀγαπᾶν - “agapan” to love , to care...

So, we are to care for one another in the church.

Why?

Paul says why...

*“for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”*

Christians are obligated by God to care for others.

*Roger Whipp - Love is one of the most powerful emotions we have.*

*Love can motivate, give pleasure, hurt even destroy. It can make us do bold...things. During the 17th century, Oliver Cromwell, sentenced a soldier to be shot for his crimes. The execution was to take place at the ringing of the evening curfew bell. However, the bell did not sound. The soldier's fiancé had climbed into the belfry and clung to the great clapper of the bell to prevent it from striking.*

*When she was summoned by Cromwell to account for her actions, she wept as she showed him her bruised and bleeding hands. Cromwell's heart was touched and he said, "Your lover shall live because of your sacrifice. Curfew shall not ring tonight!"*

*As Christians, portrayed in the bible as brides of Christ, who is the Bridegroom, we too have a lover who gives us life because of his sacrifice. We are told that one day the Bridegroom will return and we shall be reunited and honeymoon, so to speak, in heaven -*

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/83934/love-by-roger-whipp>

When the church is functioning in love, she is like a fire burning brightly for all the world to see. In fact, a big bonfire attracts attention. It draws people to its warmth. It brings comfort and security.

So it is when the church is functioning in the fuel of Love. The church will attract the hurting and lonely through her warmth of community. She will offer a place of safety, comfort, and security to those willing to submit themselves to her embrace.

It is the fissures of pride, arrogance and thinking of oneself more highly than one ought to, that will certainly erode away the unity and sweet fellowship of the Body of Christ.

When you look at another follower of Christ, remember you are indebted to them. You owe that person love.

This then begs the question, how can you love them...

Here are five practical ways to show biblical love:

**Acts of Kindness:** Engage in intentional acts of kindness towards others. This can include small gestures like offering a helping hand, showing appreciation, or providing support and

encouragement. Look for opportunities to serve others selflessly, demonstrating God's love through tangible actions.

**Active Listening:** Practice active listening when interacting with others. Show genuine interest in their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Give them your full attention, seeking to understand them without judgment or interruption. This demonstrates love by valuing and respecting the individual and fostering meaningful connections.

**Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** Extend forgiveness and seek reconciliation in relationships. Just as God has forgiven us, Christians are called to forgive others who have hurt or wronged them. Let go of resentment and bitterness, and actively work towards resolving conflicts and restoring broken relationships through genuine forgiveness and reconciliation.

**Compassionate Support:** Show compassion and empathy towards those who are suffering or in need. This can involve offering emotional support, providing practical assistance, or praying for them. Look for opportunities to extend a helping hand to those who are hurting, marginalized, or struggling, demonstrating love through compassion and solidarity.

**Sharing the Gospel:** Share the message of God's love and salvation through Jesus Christ with others. Engage in conversations about faith, share personal testimonies, and invite others to experience the transformative power of God's love. By sharing the gospel, Christians demonstrate love by seeking the eternal well-being of others and offering them the opportunity to enter into a loving relationship with God.

The point?

You may not be in debt financially – and that's amazing!

But you are deeply in debt to those around you, and you owe them your love.

**Review** - God's Law is Rooted in His Love

- Owe Only Love

But the next thing we are supposed to do is...

## **2. Reveal God's Love (vs. 9)**

When people think of the 10 Commandments, they often think of stringent and restrictive rules and regulations given by a divine curmudgeon with the intention of making their lives miserable. These commands are restricting and frankly bothersome.

This is not, however, true. These commands are given by a loving God and therefore actually reveal His loving heart of care and concern.

Check out verse 9...

**Romans 13:9 ESV**

*<sup>9</sup> 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.”*

First, you must understand that the first four of the 10 Commandments (found in [Ex 20](#)) are all about loving God.

**Certainly! Here are the Ten Commandments as found in the Bible:**

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol or worship any other gods.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

**The last six are all about loving others.**

5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (You shall not lie).
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

It is interesting that Jesus says what he says about God’s law in...

**Matthew 22:37–40 ESV**

*<sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

What a beautiful support of the metanarrative and connectivity to the 66 books of our Bible.

And these commands listed by Paul in [Romans 13:9](#) demonstrate the loving heart of God for His people.

How so?

Think about it.

**You shall not commit adultery** - This is a command that prohibits individuals in a married relationship to have sex with others outside the marriage. This sin destroys families. This sin relegates human relationships to the base desire of sexual fulfillment. This sin causes

generational pain and disciples the next generation to be open to the same kind of destructive behavior.

When we stay within the safe confines of a married, monogamous relationship, we are safe from familial strife and breaking the hearts of the people we love. And even safe from sexually transmitted diseases.

**You shall not murder** - This is a command that prohibits taking the life of another. This command shows love for the potential murderer as well as the potentially murdered. Every life is a precious gift of God. When that life is snuffed out by a murderer, the potential of that life has been snuffed out as well. What an evil act to perpetuate against another, especially when it is premeditated and calculated.

This commandment not only protects life, but it protects the would-be murderer as well from a punishment worse than death. For the unrepentant murderer...

**Revelation 21:8 ESV**

*<sup>8</sup> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*

**You shall not steal** - This is a command that prohibits any individual or group to take something that does not belong to them. (Ahab, Jezebel, and Naboth [1 Kings 19](#))

Stealing is loving yourself more than loving your neighbor. You believe that you are more important than they are. The thief always elevates himself above the one he is stealing from.

Instead, how is the believer to function?

**Ephesians 4:28 ESV**

*<sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*

**You shall not covet** - This is a command that prohibits desiring the property, goods, and relationships of another. This is a lack of love for the other person in that you think you are more deserving of the things your neighbor has.

This again elevates yourself over them and it starts to develop a heart of discontentment which leads to bitterness. God loves His people enough to show them that this kind of thinking will destroy them.

Okay, so how are these and the other commandments, for that matter, tools for love? Because they protect us and keep us alive!

**James 1:14–16 (ESV)**

*<sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. <sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.*

The point? A loving God gives these commands because He loves His children and wants what is best for them. He doesn't want them to die!

### ***Kenzie and the grill.***

God's commands for us are motivated by His love because He knows what's best for us! It's like a loving parent who sets rules to keep their child safe and happy. God's commands are like a roadmap for life—they show us how to live in a way that brings us closer to Him and helps us thrive.

When we follow these commandments, we're showing our love for our neighbors in practical ways. It's about treating them with respect, not causing harm, being faithful, respecting their belongings, speaking the truth, and being content. These actions create a loving and harmonious community where everyone can thrive and feel valued.

It's interesting to me that while not giving an exhaustive list, Paul still gets specific.

So, I ask you, what specific sin are you wrestling with today?

Are you living in adulterous sexual sin?

### ***Matthew 5:28 ESV***

*<sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

You may not have murdered anyone but are you murdering anyone in your heart?

### ***Matthew 5:21–22 ESV***

*<sup>21</sup> "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.*

Are you a thief?

- Taxes/money under the table?
- Time from you boss?
- [Luke 19:8](#): In the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who had engaged in dishonest practices, Jesus' presence and interaction led to Zacchaeus repenting and committing to repay those he had cheated. This narrative highlights the transformative power of encountering Jesus and the call to make restitution for wrongs committed.

What or who are you coveting?

- When you want the things your friend has...
- When you engage in pornography, you are not only committing sexual sin, but you are actually coveting as well!

- Coveting is the sin of discontentment...

What should you do if you are engaging in any of these or breaking other commands of God? Repent! Change your mind about your sin and start to see your sin the way God does. And, by the grace of God, walk away!

**Review** - God's Law is Rooted in His Love

- Owe Only Love
- Reveal God's Love

### **3. Fulfill Through Love (vs. 10)**

What does this passage all boil down to? Biblical love is all about doing good to one's neighbor, and this is the grid in which we are to evaluate how we are living for God.

**Romans 13:10 ESV**

*<sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Two very important concepts in this verse

**First**, the action of love, which we are to be known for, is doing right for people and not wronging them.

In other words, we, as followers of Christ, must seek the welfare and that which is good for our neighbor.

Who is my neighbor?

My spouse is my neighbor. My kids are my neighbors. My neighbors are my neighbors. My fellow churchgoers are my neighbor. Everyone is my neighbor. Even my enemy is my neighbor!

So, I need to do my best, empowered by the Holy Spirit to do no harm to those around me.

Just a word about true love for a friend/neighbor. Sometimes love is saying difficult things to spare our neighbors from harm.

A good neighbor speaks the truth...

**Ephesians 4:15 ESV**

*<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

A good neighbor speaks the truth even when it hurts our neighbor...

**Proverbs 27:6 ESV**

*<sup>6</sup> Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.*

So, we as followers of Christ are to seek the welfare of those around us regardless of if they are a close friend or a mere acquaintance.

**Second**, the action of love is a fulfillment of God's law.

In other words, when you live out love, the law of God is fulfilled.

Love and God's Law walk hand in hand.

**John 14:15 ESV**

<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

When we keep God's moral law, we show that we love Jesus...

*Imagine a neighborhood filled with diverse people - there's Mr. Thompson, an elderly man who lives alone; there's the Davis family, a young couple with three lively children; and then there's Maria, a single working woman.*

*One day, a snowstorm hits the town. The roads are blocked, houses are covered in a thick blanket of snow. Mr. Thompson, due to his old age, finds it nearly impossible to shovel his driveway. The Davis family, with their young children, struggle to manage the situation while keeping the kids safe and warm. Maria, living alone, does her best to clear her space, but it's an uphill task.*

*Then, something wonderful happens. Jake, a young man from another part of the neighborhood, steps up. He remembers [Romans 13:10](#). With a sense of love and responsibility, he picks up his shovel and starts with Mr. Thompson's driveway. His actions inspire others in the neighborhood, including the Johnsons and the Fernandez family, and soon, everyone joins in, each helping clear their neighbor's space.*

*The children from the Davis family serve hot chocolate to everyone, Maria lends her extra shovels, and before everyone realizes it, the task doesn't seem as overwhelming as it first appeared.*

*Through this act of love - an act that did no harm to a neighbor but rather helped them - they fulfilled the essence of the law: the law of love. They didn't need any regulations or rules to motivate their actions; it was their love for their neighbors that led the way.*

*In this way, [Romans 13:10](#) is lived out. The love they demonstrated brought no harm, only aid and comfort, showing that when love is the motivation, it is the ultimate fulfillment of the law.*

Folks, in case you missed this, do you realize that this verse, [Romans 13:10](#), is the gospel?

How so?

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, who existed in eternity past, agreed with the Father to leave His home in heaven to come and help His neighbors - humanity.

How did he help? By becoming one of us and doing the things we could never do for ourselves.

What things?

- Be sinless and live a sinless life.

- Earn for us eternal life by His good works.
- To provide for us the opportunity to have a right relationship with God.

How did he serve us? By loving us as much as himself!

- He left heaven for you!
- He went to the cross for you...He loved us with the cross.

***He Loved Me With a Cross***

*He left a throne in Heaven  
To come to Bethlehem  
And I will not forget the way  
He loved me even then  
And everywhere He traveled  
He spoke with words of love  
That said He'd go to any distance  
To show what I was worthy of  
And when at last the dusty road  
Had turned to Calvary  
He picked up a rugged burden  
So that one day I would see*

*He loved me with a cross  
He loved me with a cross  
In answer to the call of love  
He loved me with a cross*

- Not only did He die a criminal's death on the cross in your place, but He was also raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. And it is His resurrection that gives you eternal life...

***John 11:25–26 ESV***

*<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

Listen, talk about loving your neighbor! Jesus loved us in exactly the way we needed to be loved.

He gave of Himself to rescue us from a real and eternal Hell. He allowed God the Father to pour His wrath on Him so that that same wrath would not need to be poured on you.

***2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV***

*<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Isaiah 53:10 ESV**

*<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;*

Quite literally, Jesus was and is the fulfillment of the Law because we could never accomplish this on our own.

**Matthew 5:17 ESV**

*<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

Jesus fulfilled the Law and the prophets through the gospel – His death, burial, and resurrection. He loved you with the cross!

How can you apply this? There is one step that, if you apply it will change your world.

I learned this step while working at Love In The Name of Christ.

Are you ready?

Treat everyone with dignity and respect because they are made in the image of God.

Treat everyone with respect and dignity, regardless of their background or beliefs. Value the contributions and perspectives of others. Express gratitude and appreciation for the people in your life, acknowledging their worth and the positive impact they have on you. By doing this you will open many doors for evangelism and discipleship.

People possess value because they are created in God's image.

You must treat them with dignity and respect even if you don't think they deserve it.

Why?

Because that is how Christ treats you!

*"While we were YET sinners, Christ died for us!"*

And, when we do, we gain far more opportunities to share Christ with those who need Him most!

**Conclusion**

*"Helping one person might not change the whole world, but it could change the world for one person." – Unknown*

So, you can see there is far more connection between law and love than most ever realize.

We do not look to God's love to save us, but when we walk in God's MORAL law, it is then that we best picture Jesus.

Remember the words of Christ...

**John 14:15 ESV**

<sup>15</sup> *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

Based on these words of Jesus, do you really love him?

**Connection Group Reflection Questions**

1. Discuss ways believers can pay their debt of love to their neighbors.
2. How does God's law, as listed by Paul in verse 9, show the love of God? How does this impact you personally and your evangelism and discipleship?
3. Discuss how Christ is the best neighbor we could hope for.
4. How can we be Christ to our neighbors?