

Fulfilling the Law of God

Rom 13:8-10⁸ Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he 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 bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Paul in a great sense here is simply expanding on instruction began in chapter 12 where we are commanded to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." We are to serve God in response to the great love presented to us in the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone which has been clearly drawn out in previous chapters 1 through 11.

We are not to be conformed to this present world, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds; a new mind that is manifested in a new life given us by God's mercy. We are to manifest a new life as in a people that have been justified, a people that have been made new creatures in Christ and as a people that are now the adopted family of God.

We have just finished chapter 12 which in verses 1 & 2 spoke of our relationship to God, we are to serve Him as a living sacrifice. Verses 3 - 13 spoke of our relationship one toward the other in the church family. Verses 14-21 spoke of our relationship to the ungodly. Here in chapter 13 verses 1-7 we are instructed in our relationship to civil government. We have been made aware that we live in two kingdoms; the kingdom of man, and the kingdom of God. Augustine spoke of it as the city of man and the city of God.

In the passage before us this morning we shall be instructed in love as the fulfilling of the Law of God. In my studies this week I came across a particular study that divided it thus; 1) Love is a debt we owe to one another; 2) Love is the requirement of the Law of God upon all men, 3) Love is what Christ did perfectly. I thought it was an excellent division of the study, and I am borrowing it for our outline and message this morning.

A. Love is a debt we owe to one another.- *Owe no one anything except to love one another*

1. Reminder, pay honor to whom honor is due, taxes to whom taxes, duty to whom duty.
2. Some have understood this to mean cannot borrow money
 - a. Not to borrow to finance a home, a car etc.
 - b. The Scripture permits lending and borrowing. (cf. Ex. 22nd25; Matt. 5:42; Ps 37:21)
 - c. Reproach upon our Lord if we as Christians borrow and do not pay our debt.
3. One debt we can never fully pay - owe nothing except to love one another.
4. Why Paul adds these words - One who loves others has "*fulfilled the law of God*".
 - a. Quotes from the 2nd table of the law
 - b. For therein we find a summation of our duty as men to men - "*You shall not commit adultery,*" "*You shall not murder,*" "*You shall not steal,*" "*You shall not bear false witness,*" "*You shall not covet,*" and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*"
5. What does the Law require of us? - Love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves
6. We need to distinguish here the 3 sets of the law given the Old Testament Scripture.
 - a. Civil law - national Israel that God established for the Jews in the Old Testament
 - b. Ceremonial law - directing them in worship, in their sacrifices and temple worship
 - c. Moral law - which provides for all the world God's will for humanity in their relationship to Himself and to one another
 - d. If we err on these distinctions we will go astray
7. What is the relationship of the Law of Moses to the New Testament Christian?
 - a. The Civil Law as to a Jewish nation no longer exists.
 - b. The Ceremonial Law has been fulfilled in Christ.
 - c. Moral law is still binding upon mankind.

B. Love is the requirement of the Law of God upon all men - *therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

1. This is not saying that we are saved by loving others, nor is it saying that "good people" go to heaven and "bad people" go to hell.
2. Because the question is how perfectly must we keep this law? The answer is 100%.
3. And we fail miserably.

C. Christ alone loves perfectly

1. One dare not read this passage outside the context of the whole of Book of Romans
2. First three chapters reveals that no one has kept the Law of God

*Rom 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore **by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight**, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

3. Paul is not telling us how to be saved, rather he is once again pointing out our need of a Redeemer.

Rom 3:21-22 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

4. The Law without the Gospel can only condemn.
 - a. Chapter 8 - There is therefore now no condemnation
 - b. Why - For what the law cannot do because of the weakness of the flesh, Christ has accomplished for us.

Rom 8:3-4 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5. We do not love others with a perfect love.
6. Christ Jesus loved us while we were yet enemies, yet sinners.
7. He loved us with a perfect love and gave Himself for us.
8. When God says that one who loves another has fulfilled the law, he is not providing a way of salvation; rather he is declaring our condemnation.
9. Christ alone has loved the Father with all his heart, mind and soul; Christ alone has loved His neighbor as Himself.

Calvin - Paul here speaks hypothetically of that which you will find nowhere accomplished. And when we say, that men are not justified by works, we deny not that the keeping of the law is true righteousness: but as no one performs it, and never has performed it, we say, that all are excluded from it, and that hence the only refuge is in the grace of Christ.

CONCLUSION: You see the gospel is not just for the unsaved and the law for the believer.

We need the law to guide us.

But if we only hear our duties or how we are to “fix our problems” we will either become hypocritical Pharisees or we will be given to despair.

Again we need the law to guide us.

But we need the gospel to enable us to love as we ought, to serve as we ought.

With the law we need the Gospel.

With the law we need to hear - Christ has kept the law in our behalf.

Close by reading from the Heidelberg Catechism question 114 and 115.

114. Can those who are converted to God keep these commandments perfectly?

No: but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of such obedience; yet so that with earnest purpose they begin to live not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God.

115. Why then does God so strictly enjoin upon us the ten commandments, since in this life no one can keep them?

First, that as long as we live we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ; second, that without ceasing we diligently ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may be renewed more and more after the image of God, until we gain the goal of perfection after this life.

Let us rejoice in this: It is No longer - Do this and live. Rather it is now - Because you live - - - do this.