

LAW AND LOVE
(SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2013)

Scripture Reading: Lev. 19:1-18; Rom. 13:8-10

INTRODUCTION

A. Love is probably the most common subject for sermons and discussions in churches.

1. Much of it is emotional drivel or recycled psychology.

2. Some of it is heretical.

a) acceptance of sin

b) tolerance

3. Abuse should not lead to neglect.

4. Love is a vital subject for the most sound and faithful of churches.

a) God's Word often speaks of the love of God. We don't want to neglect such an important subject.

b) God's Word speaks of your duty to love God.

c) God's Word also speaks of your duty to love others.

B. Why does Paul discuss love here?

1. There is a clear connection with verse 7.

a) Render therefore to all their due (what is owed)

b) Owe no one anything except to love...

2. Connection with Romans 12:9 and following.

a) Love without hypocrisy.

b) Romans 12:10

10 *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.

3. NT writers frequently speak of the duty of love because it is easy to talk about but much more difficult to fulfill.

a) For true love is not just an emotional feeling but the combination of proper feeling and action.

b) True love is following the example of Jesus Christ.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

C. The call of this text is very clear but not simple to fulfill.

1) **Owe no one anything except to love one another** (v. 8a).

D. I will be emphasizing two points about love and the law from these verses.

I. LOVE IS A NEVER-ENDING DEBT, V. 8A.

Rom. 13:8 ¶ Owe no one anything except to love one another,

A. Another reason for the instruction on love here is in preparation for the subject matter in chs. 14 and 15 regarding those who are strong and weak.

B. Think also of Paul’s ministry for about 25 years.

1. Paul knew first hand the joy and struggles of working with people.

2. Paul’s focus is not simply happy relationships but the kingdom.

3. What is at stake is not our own reputation but the honor and name of Jesus Christ.

4. We dare not dismiss or breeze over the difficult command given here.

C. Love is a never-ending debt.

1. The word **owe** can have a financial meaning.

Matt. 18:28 ¶ “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

2. Paul is not talking about a financial debt.

a) There is certainly need for instruction on financial matters, but that is not Paul's focus here.

3. The word **owe** here has the meaning of an obligation to meet certain social or moral expectations.¹

4. The only debt or obligation that we should have to each other is to love.

5. I think the reason Paul writes this way is to make a connection as we have noted earlier with verse 7.

6. Since what we owe is love rather than just a loan, **this is a debt that will never be fulfilled.**

7. Origen expressed verse 8 as:

“Let your only debt that is unpaid be that of love – a debt which you should always be attempting to discharge in full, but will never succeed in discharging.”²

8. Paul has a special focus on other believers, expressed by the phrase **one another**. Paul has written also about our duty to others as we see at the end of chapter 12, but here there is a focus on other believers, and even more on other church members.

Rom. 12:10 *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;*

Rom. 12:16 *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

9. Being part of the body of Christ, being part of a local church, means that you have a great responsibility – the duty to love.

10. Listen to how the apostle John spoke of this never-ending duty.

1John 3:16 *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17* *But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of*

¹ BDAG.

² Quoted by Moo, 813.

God abide in him? **18** My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

11. Look around at those who are gathered here. To each one here you are called to love through kindness, words, and actions.

12. “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” It is the name and honor of Jesus Christ that is at stake.

II. LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW, VV. 8B-10

8b 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.

A. It is possible that in these verses Paul is again making clear that he in no way advocates lawlessness because we are under the grace of God in Christ.

Rom. 3:8 And *why* not say, “Let us do evil that good may come”?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

Rom. 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

B. Sincere, Bible-believing Christians do not all hold, unfortunately, the same perspective on God’s Law in the OT.

1. Some advocate that we are just under the Law of Christ now today.

2. I think the writers of the WCF have given still one of the best expressions of how the Christian still relates to the law of God.

3. WCF – Chapter 19, Of the Law of God.

19.6. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in

that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. **So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law; and, not under grace.**

C. Paul makes a very important connection between love and God's Law.

1. He who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Matt. 5:17 ¶ “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

Gal. 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”

2. The goal of the law in terms of how we treat other people is that we love.

3. Does this mean that we no longer need the law? Not at all! The law still shows us what love looks like.

4. Look at verse 10. Paul states that **love does no harm to a neighbor**. Then he concludes saying, **therefore love is the fulfillment of the law**.

5. If you are seeking to obey God, you will love. And you will love in a way that respects the truth of God's Law as it is found all throughout Scripture.

6. In verse 9, Paul summarizes some of the commandments. What commandments does he mention?

a) 7th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th

- b) The NKJV following the TR includes the summary of the 9th commandment, which is not found in most Greek manuscripts.
- c) Paul is quoting from what is often called the second table of the law.
- d) The order he quotes might reflect an order that is found in at least one LXX manuscript. This might have been an order popular in what is called Diaspora Judaism.³
- e) We can see that Paul was not seeking to be exhaustive but representative. Look at what he states in verse 9 – **and if there is any other commandment.**

D. There are two dangers found in Christian churches.

1. There are those who claim to be obedient to God and yet they lack love.

a) Remember the word of warning given to the church at Ephesus.

Rev. 2:4 Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

b) Is this a love for God or for others? The text doesn't state. There is evidence to suggest that the church in Ephesus which as you know was faithful in many ways was threatened with judgment because they had lost this first love.

2. Other danger is those who claim to have love and yet it is a lawless love.

a) You see this with both people and churches.

b) They embrace either sin or heresy and it is covered by love, but a love that is in contradiction with God's Word.

3. Love is the fulfillment of the law and the true fulfillment of the law will always be demonstrated in love.

CONCLUSION

A. In Christ there is the perfect fulfillment of obedience to the law and love.

B. So we don't rest in our own obedience but we also then do not forsake a love that is encouraged by law through the power of the Spirit.

³ Moo, 815, footnote 31.

C. What is the duty of love to others here you might be neglecting?

D. Where are we lacking as a church in the never-ending duty of showing love to each other?

Prayer

Closing Hymn – 285

BENEDICTION – HEBREWS 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.