

Romans 13:8-10

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Love fulfills the Law. If we love one another, we can live righteously and harmoniously with each other. Jesus said the same thing, that in loving God and one another we fulfill the Law. We have an obligation, we owe it to each other, to love one another.

Paul is telling his audience of believers in Rome what righteous, harmonious living through faith looks like. One of the essential aspects of harmonious living is to *owe nothing to anyone except to love one another* (v 8).

Even though Paul just told us to obey the rules of the government, there is a higher law that will always be appropriate, no matter the circumstance. In these verses, Paul is reiterating what Jesus said, that *he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law* (v 8).

In Matthew 22:34–40, a lawyer asks Jesus what is the greatest commandment. Jesus responds with the two greatest commandments, to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind—and to love others as you love yourself. Jesus goes on to state that these two commandments cover the entire Law.

Paul restates this by showing his audience that if you love your neighbor, you won't steal, covet, murder, or do any wrong to them. Because of this, Paul makes it clear that living a harmonious life through faith involves loving one another:

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Paul restates Jesus's lesson, saying *For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (v 9).

Therefore, as we go about obeying the laws of the government, we should be looking to fulfill an even higher law, and that is to love others. That means serving others. In the USA, part of serving others is to exercise good stewardship of our citizenship and see that the government and its laws are done in accordance with the law of man and of God. This can require a lot of sacrifice, but that is service to both God and man.

Paul tells his readers that the only thing we should *owe* one another is *love*. The whole letter of Romans has entailed a debate about faith vs. Law. Paul asserts that God cares for us to trust in Him and love others. Paul's opponents insist that God's desire is for us to follow religious rules.

Paul has demonstrated why it is faith that leads to righteous living, to living harmoniously with one another. Paul lists some of the most famous parts of the Old Testament Law: *You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet*. These familiar verses come from the Ten Commandments, given by God to Israel in Exodus 20:7-17.

Paul then rolls up all other commands of God, asserting *and if there is any other commandment it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (v 9)

Here Paul asserts Jewish thought, and also echoes Jesus's teaching (Matthew 22:37-39). If we love one another, we won't harm each other in all the various ways that humans hurt each other. We will be at peace with one another: *Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law* (v 10).

Paul tells the believers in Galatia the same thing in his letter to them, that the Law is fulfilled when we love each other (Galatians 5:14). He also asserted that we fulfill the Law when we walk in the Spirit (Romans 8:4). God gave the Law as a guide, not as a means by which we are to judge others and justify ourselves. That is why James refers to it as the "law of liberty" (James 2:12). To learn of God from the Law sets us free. To attempt to justify ourselves by the Law leads us to guilt and condemnation (Romans 3:19-20). But Jesus set us free from the Law, that we might fulfill the Law by walking in the power of the Spirit.

Biblical Text

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* Law. ⁹ For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* Law.