

The Christian's Relationship to His Neighbor

Romans 13:8-10

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Introduction: Romans 13 could be entitled, "How to live in these last days." Verses 1-7 speak of the law of the land while verses 8-14 speak of the law of the Lord (His command & His coming). This chapter therefore examines the relationship of the believer to government, his neighbor, & the Lord's return. We considered this morning part two of the Great Commandment. Tonight we will see the believer's relationship to his neighbor as we examine again the command, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" Verses 8-10 give us insight into love's debt (the obligation of our love), love's duty (the object of our love) & love's desire (the outcome of our love). As we work our way through this text, ask yourself, "Do I love my neighbor as myself?"

I. The **obligation** of our love (:8-9) > Love's **debt**

A. There is a **contrast** (:8)

1. Material (physical) realm – "*Owe no man any thing*"
 - a. Does this mean no debt at all? Compare Proverbs 22:7 [the interpretation & practice of J. Hudson Taylor & Charles Spurgeon].
 - b. Does this mean no debt that one is unable to pay? Compare Exodus 22:25-27, Nehemiah 5:1-11 & consider Matthew 25:27, Luke 19:23.
2. Spiritual realm – "*...but to love one another.*"
 - a. "This is a debt that must be always in the paying, & yet always owing" (Henry).
 - b. Whereas monetary debt should be repaid & over with as soon as possible, the debt of love must always remain (cf. Romans 1:14).

B. There is a **command** (:9) – "*...if there be any other commandment...*"

1. Leviticus 19:18 > Moses gives us the law of first mention.
2. Matthew 22:39 > Christ gives us the summary law (& cf. John 13:34, "*new commandment*").
3. Romans 13:9 & Galatians 5:14 > Paul gives us the law's fulfillment.
4. James 2:8 > James gives us "*the royal law.*"

II. The **object** of our love (:8-9) > Love's **duty**

A. "*Love thy neighbor*" (compare Luke 10:25-37)

1. The lawyer asks: "*And who is my neighbor?*" (Luke 10:29).
 - a. Christ rewords his question as if to ask: "To whom am I neighbor?" or "Whose neighbor am I?"
 - b. Christ implies, not "who qualifies to be my neighbor?" in order to leave all others out, but rather, "to whom can I demonstrate God's love by being a good neighbor?"
2. The Lord asks: "*Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him...?*" (:36).
 - a. Do I behave myself as a neighbor to those who have need of my love & help?
 - b. Who is my neighbor? Is it not anyone who has a need that I am able to meet?

Application: Consider again Paul's reasoning in Romans 1:14. It may mean the personal sacrifice of the 3 "T"s > time, travel, & T.V.

B. *“Love thy neighbor as thyself”*

1. Self-esteem or self-love?? The problem is not too little love for self, but too much love (cf. self-love).
2. Self-love is assumed by the Bible (& rightly so). See Ephesians 5:28-29. “He therefore who loves his neighbor with the same sincerity that he loves himself, & consequently treats him as he would wish to be treated by him” (Hodge).

III. The **outcome** of our love (:10) > Love’s **desire**

A. The **fulfilling** of our *love* – *“worketh no ill to his neighbor”* (works all good).

1. Love avoids harm to our neighbor > Proverbs 3:29.
“If we treat others with the same care that we have for ourselves, we will not violate any of God’s laws regarding interpersonal relationships” (MacArthur).
2. Love provides good for our neighbor > Proverbs 3:27-29).
“If we truly love our neighbor (anyone with whom we have contact, cf. Luke 10:25-37), we will only do what is in his best interest” (MacArthur).

Summary: “As love delights in the happiness of its object, it effectually prevents us from injuring those we love, & consequently, leads us to fulfill all the law requires, because the law requires nothing which is not conducive to the best interests of our fellow-men” (Hodge).

B. The **fulfilling** of the *law* – *“love is the fulfilling of the law.”*

1. This assures us that the other commandments will be obeyed if we truly love our neighbor.
“Love is the essence of the Christian ethic. It is so important, so fundamental, that it can take the place of all the other commandments in the law about our relationships with other human beings” (Moo).
2. This assures us that we will not commit adultery, kill, steal, bear false witness, or covet (cf. Galatians 5:14 & James 2:8).

Summary: “This (*love thy neighbor*) proves that love is the fulfilling of the law (answers all the end of it), for what else is that but to restrain us from evil doing, & to constrain us to well doing? Love is a living, active principle of obedience to the whole law. The whole law is written in the heart if the law of love be there” (Henry).

Conclusion: How do you answer the question, “Do I love my neighbor as myself?” Here in Romans 13:8-10 we see the obligation, the object, & the outcome of our love. Douglas Moo points out: “Our obligation to love one another is a debt that can never be repaid. It always remains outstanding. We can never love enough. God will always be bringing new people into our lives whom we are called to love, & there are those people we have known for a long time whom we are called to love in new ways as they go through the ups & downs of life.” Are you asking, “Who is my neighbor?” or are you asking, “To whom am I neighbor?” (“Whose neighbor am I?”).