

Introduction

This week I was saddened to hear that one of my friend's son was murdered. His son was in his pickup truck and was mowed down with an AK-47 by a neighbor. I called to comfort my friend, and I did a lot of listening as he tried to talk about what had happened. His story was a mixture of weeping and anger over what had happened. My friend used to be an elder at John McArthur's church, and is a mature man of God. He is asking God to bring comfort to his wife and him, so that they can comfort someone else in the future that loses a loved one.

In our text today, Paul cites four of the ten commandments that God had given to Moses. One of the four examples that Paul uses is that we are not to murder. All four commandments are about doing wrong to a neighbor. Paul sums up by saying, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." Fox News reported a few weeks ago that the murder rate in the United States shot up in 2021, and is the highest it has been in twenty-five years. America needs this message about God's love more now than ever.

In Romans 12, Paul exhorted us to present our lives to God as living and holy sacrifices, and not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can prove the will of God in our lives. Beginning in Romans 12, Paul began to address what a transformed life looks like. In Romans 12:3-21, we looked at how we are to serve with humility, grace, and love. In Romans 13:1-7, we looked at how we are to be submitted to governing authorities. In our text today, Romans 13:8-10, Paul writes about love. Love is the key mark of a transformed life. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Love is the chief trait or characteristic that Christians are to possess. Love is the earmark of the church. It is by our love for one another that all men will know that we are Christ's disciples.

(John 13:34-35) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. {35} By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

There is nothing more important than talking about love. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Paul said if we speak with tongues but do not have love, we have become a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. If we have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If we give all our possessions to feed the poor, and surrender our bodies to be burned, but do not have love, it profits us nothing. Without love, we are nothing.

(1 Cor 13:1-3) "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. {2} If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. {3} And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

Our passage is about fulfilling the Law. Paul answers three specific questions about the law. The first question is, "How do we fulfill the law?" The second question is, "What is the overall message or summation of the law?" The third question he addresses is, "why is love the fulfillment of the law?" Let's read our passage.

Fulfilling the Law

1. How do we fulfill the law? By (Rom 13:8)
2. What is the summation of the law? (Rom 13:9)
3. Why is love the fulfillment of the law? (Rom 13:10)

(Rom 13:8-10) “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.”

1. How do we fulfill the law? (Rom 13:8)

Paul begins by telling us to owe nothing to anyone except to love one another. I have heard this verse used more in terms of financial principles than love, but the context is love. If we are going to owe someone something, it is love. Paul’s first question is how do we fulfill the law? How do we know when we have completed this task? Paul’s answer is very simple; when we love our neighbor, we have fulfilled this law. The answer may be simple, but it leaves a lot of room for questions, like, “What is love?”, or “Who is my neighbor?”

(Rom 13:8) “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law.”

As a task-oriented person, I am always interested in knowing what I have to do to fulfill all the requirements. Our family has always been a keen advocate for checklists. My mother and father both used checklists, and I have followed in their footsteps. I have found that using a checklist helps me to make sure that all tasks are completed. When I have failed to use a checklist, I have often skipped or left out something, so checklists are great tools to fulfill all the requirements. Checklists are great tools, but to use them properly, you have to understand each item on the list. I was testing a student on the simulator a few years ago, and she had her checklist memorized. Unfortunately, she did not understand many of the things on her checklist, so she knew the task needed to be done, but she had no idea what the task was all about. If we are going to fulfill the Law by loving our neighbor, we need to understand what loving our neighbor is.

In Luke 10:25-37, a lawyer asked Jesus, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus asked him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” The lawyer responded, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus said to him, “You have answered correctly.” Then, the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asked, “And who is my neighbor?” That is a great question. If loving our neighbor is the fulfillment of the law, we need to know who our neighbor is. Jesus then gave the parable of the good Samaritan.

(Luke 10:25-29) “And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" {26} And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" {27} And he answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with you’re your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ {28} And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE." {29} But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?”

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, who stripped and beat him, leaving him almost dead. A priest was going down the road, and when he saw the man, he passed by the other side. Then, a Levite went by and when he saw the man, he also passed on the other side of the road. The priests and Levites were the religious leaders, and they should have reached out to the suffering man. They didn't see him as their neighbor. Then, a Samaritan came by and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day, he gave money to the innkeeper and instructed him to take care of him, and that he would repay him for whatever he spends.

(Luke 10:30-35) "Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. {31} "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. {32} "Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. {33} "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, {34} and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. {35} "On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'"

After telling the parable, Jesus asked the lawyer, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" The lawyer replied, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same." Jesus made it clear that our neighbor was not just the person living next door; it included people that we pass and see in our everyday lives. To fulfill the law by loving our neighbors, we have to love the people around us. It is a very encompassing group of people. It is a simple answer, but a not-so-simple thing to carry out in our lives. We need to reach out with compassion to those around us. I mentioned that I heard that my neighbor had lost his son. So, the application was to reach out to my friend and try to comfort him in the loss of his son. There are suffering people all around us. There are people that are half-dead physically, emotionally, and spiritually all around us that need to be bandaged up and loved upon. We all have lots of neighbors to love to fulfill the law. It is not a simple checklist for any of us; it is a daily commitment to reach out in love to the people in our paths.

(Luke 10:36-37) "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?" {37} And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

2. What is the summation of the law? (Rom 13:9)

The second question that Paul answers is, what is the summation of the law? Paul gives four of the ten commandments and then sums it up, saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The summation of the law is loving our neighbor as ourselves.

(Rom 13:9) "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."

In the parallel account in Matthew, Jesus was asked by a lawyer about the greatest commandment? Jesus told him, “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” The first commandment is that we must love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind. The second commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. All ten of the Commandments relate to either our love of God or our love of our neighbor.

(Matt 22:36-40) “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” {37} 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.' {38} "This is the great and foremost commandment. {39} "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' {40} "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

In 1995 the Holy Spirit gave a prophetic word to me that the coming year would be the last page of that chapter of my life, which was playing professional golf. Then, over the course of the next year, the Lord made it very clear to me that I was to plant a church. In those days I had a daily exercise and running program. I loved my daily runs. I was not a marathon runner and certainly did not set any records. I normally ran four miles, and it would take me 28-30 minutes. What I love most about the runs was that the Holy Spirit ran with me. The Holy Spirit would speak to me while I was running. On one of those runs, the Holy Spirit was giving me the vision of the church. He said we were to be a church that loved God and loved people. People need help in learning to love God, and they need help in learning to love their neighbor. So, this passage has been very dear to my heart, and in every church that I pastor, these verses are a central part of the vision of who we are.

At the Connection Church, I worded it a little differently. We are a community of believers who are connected to God and to one another. Our mission is very similar; we help people connect with God and with one another. We want people to experience God and grow in their relationship with God. We want people to have fellowship and grow in their relational skills. I believe that what we do for the Lord should flow out of our love of the Lord, so our first priority should always be to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength.

In our text, Paul is only dealing with the commandments that pertain to the second commandment, loving our neighbor. The four laws are about not adultery, murder, theft, and coveting. I had often wondered how Jesus got from these laws to his statement about how these relate to loving our neighbor. Paul’s answer to the next question will help answer this.

3. **Why is love the fulfillment of the law?** (Rom 13:10)

The third question that Paul answers is, “Why is love the fulfillment of the law?” The answer is that love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love does not seek its own. Love is always doing what is best for the other person. Love does no wrong to a neighbor.

(Rom 13:10) “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law.”

(1 Cor 13:5) “(love) does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered,*”

Love does not violate another man's wife or woman's husband. Love does not murder another person. Love does not steal from others. Love does not covet another person's possessions. Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore, a person who does not wrong his neighbor is fulfilling the law.

(Rom 13:9) "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."

Paul could have easily added another commandment. The commandment before "You shall not murder," is honor your father and mother. When we honor our parents, we are fulfilling the Law. When we dishonor our parents through our words or actions, we are not fulfilling the Law. Another commandment that Paul could have added is that we are not to bear false witness against our neighbor. If we bear false witness against our neighbor, we are doing wrong to him, and that is not love, for love does no wrong to a neighbor.

(Ex 20:12-17) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. {13} You shall not murder. {14} You shall not commit adultery. {15} You shall not steal. {16} You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. {17} You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Conclusion and Applications

The key verse that unlocked this passage for me is verse ten, which says that love does no wrong to a neighbor. This also explains why Jesus said the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves.

When I think of these four commandments, I do not think of love. These commands are things that we are not to do. I often think more in terms of positive actions when I think of love. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. I think in terms of an act of kindness or love. When I am patient with someone or encourage them, those are acts of love. When I open the door for my wife, or serve her hot tea in the morning, those are acts of love. I don't think in terms of things that we don't do. Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Murdering, stealing, committing adultery, or coveting are all wrongful deeds that we can do to a neighbor, and if we do those things, we are not loving our neighbor. When we do what is right to a neighbor, we are loving them. This is how we fulfill the law. This is the reason that the summation of the law is love. This is the reason that when we have loved others we have fulfilled the law.

(1 Cor 13:4-7) "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, {5} does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, {6} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

The Connection Church of Rome is about connecting with God and connecting with others. What is the perfect connector? Paul wrote in Colossians 3:14 that love is the perfect bond of unity. As a church, love needs to be the earmark of our church. We need to love the Lord with all

of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and we need to love our neighbor as ourselves. A church that is full of the love of God will be well connected to God and to one another. People want to be around loving people. On the other hand, an unloving church that wrongs one another will not be an attractive place. We must be a church that loves God and loves one another.

(Col 3:14) “Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

Many years ago I planted a church, and our vision was to be a church that loves God and one another. When I turned it over to the next pastor, he changed the vision of the church. I told the pastor that he should not change the vision of the church, and that loving God should always be the highest priority, and loving people is the second greatest commandment. Our deeds and the things that we do should all flow out of that love for God and people. Not long after I left, I received a phone call from a man that had been a faithful member of that church for many years. He said that the atmosphere changed and it was no longer a friendly, loving church. Therefore, he and his wife left the church. Not long after that, I was visiting the landlord across the street from our office, and she told me where she and her husband lived. Since it was near that church that I had planted, I asked her if she had ever visited it. She made a face, and then she told me that she had visited the church and it was not very friendly. Therefore, she and her husband never went back. I was saddened to hear that the church that I had planted had changed, and was not perceived as being loving or friendly. Loving God and loving people have to be who you are; it has to be part of your identity.

Prayer

Father God, as a church, we want to tell You how much we love You. We want to love You in word and with deed. Father, we also want to be a church that fulfills the Law by loving our neighbor. Father, I ask You to impress that in our hearts and minds. May we never depart from the greatest two commands, to love You and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Fill us with Your love, and help us to increase and abound in our love. Lord, we earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy, but we do not want to be a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. I pray this for myself, and for all of us that are part of the Connection Church of Rome. Amen.

(1 Thess 3:12) “and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you;”

(1 Cor 13:1-3) “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. {2} If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. {3} And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”

Q & A

- How can you tell if a church is full of love? What are the characteristics of a church that is fulfilling the Law? What are the characteristics of a church that is loving its neighbor? How is that manifested among the members? How is it manifested to the community?
- In James 2:1-13, how were they violating the royal law? (showing favoritism)
- In 1 John 3:16, what is the one way that John tells us one way that we will know love?

- In 1 John 3:17, what is another way that John tells us that we can abide in love?

(1 John 3:16-17) “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. {17} But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

- Have you ever invited someone to church, only to have them tell you that they love God, but do not care to be around church people? Do they really love God? In 1 John 4:20-21, God tells us that we cannot separate the command to love God and to love one another. We cannot say that we love God when we hate our brother.

(1 John 4:20-21) “If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. {21} And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

Introduction (John 13:34-35, 1 Cor 13:1-3, Rom 13:8-10)

1. **How do we fulfill the law?** (Rom 13:8, Luke 10:25-37)
2. **What is the summation of the law?** (Rom 13:9, Matt 22:36-40)
3. **Why is love the fulfillment of the law?** (Rom 13:10, 1 Cor 13:5, Rom 13:9, Ex 20:12-17)

Conclusion and Applications (1 Cor 13:4-7, Col 3:14, 1 Thess 3:12, 1 Cor 13:1-3, James 2:1-13, 1 John 3:16-17, 4:20-21)