

Romans 13:8–10
Law Fulfilled and Love Defined

Monday, April 15, 2024 • Read Romans 13:8–10

Questions from the Scripture text: Whom mustn't we owe anything (v8)? Except what? What has the one who loved done? What commandments are listed in v9 (except in the critical text—ESV, NASB, etc.)? How does v9 cover all other commandments? What saying sums them all up? What doesn't love do (v10)? Therefore, what does (is) love?

What debt may a Christian conscientiously leave outstanding? Romans 13:8–10 prepares us for the sermon in the midweek prayer meeting. In these three verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the only debt that we should leave outstanding is the debt of love.**

The debt of love, v8a. You owe God everything (cf. 11:36). Since Christians are to be living sacrifices (cf. 12:1), this is doubly true for them. We remember that this was part of the point of the language of “gift” in v6–13: the Giver (Christ) has designated the recipient (His body) of the gift that is in you. Service unto the local church in the roles in which He has placed us is not optional; it is an obligation, a debt. You owe your brothers, your gifts. You owe your neighbor to do what is good before him and be at peace with him (cf. 12:18–21). You owe your ruler to do what is good under him, treating him as one instituted by Christ for good (cf. 13:1–7). We must fulfill of these obligations (v8).

But even after you have paid all of these debts, still the debt of Love remains and will never run out. There is nothing that is more in the image of God than adoration of God and devotion to God. God is love—even from all eternity, even within Himself. And just as He is infinite and eternal, so also the adoration and devotion due to Him is inexhaustible and undiminishable. Whatever he loves for us to love, for His own sake, we must love to love for His sake.

Love and the law, v8b–10. As we consider v9, we might notice that it lists only the last five commandments and the second great commandment. But we must not think that this is because the Christian may safely ignore or even deemphasize the first table of the law or the first great commandment. As we have seen by considering the context from 12:1ff, all of the horizontal loves of the second great commandment are subordinate to the first great commandment. Rather than being in competition with the first great commandment, the second Great commandment is actually subsidiary of it and sustained by it.

And notice how highly this speaks of God's commandments! It is sad that many professing Christians come away from this passage thinking that somehow love has *replaced* the law. Even if the verses sounded like they said this, we must never understand Christ to be saying by one Scripture the opposite of what He has said by another Scripture (cf. Mt 5:18).

Love and law-keeping are not in tension with one another. Reading closely, this passage teaches that neither can be understood properly without the other. Love without the law is purposeless—an undefined nonsense of theoretical or emotional abstraction. And law without love is powerless; without love, the law cannot begin to be obeyed. Indeed, neither actually exists without the other.

One reason that we tend to set love and law over against each other is that our own lovelessness does not embrace the goodness of the law. Another reason is that we had to be vigilant against law-keeping in our justification. After learning this lesson, we may be silly and ignorant enough to export our vigilance against commandment-keeping from justification into sanctification and how we now live. If we think that living by love is in tension with commandment keeping, we end up putting asunder law and love—two things that God Himself has inseparably joined together.

Fulfilling the law. Love of God produces love of God's law (cf. 7:22, 7:12, Ps 119, 2Jn v5–6, 1Jn 5:3), which produces love of neighbor. Each love fills up the previous one. There is no such thing as love of God without love of God's law. And there is no such thing as love of God's law without love of neighbor.

To think that one has true love for God's law, without true love of God, is legalism; it obeys, but it does not adore. And to think that one has true love for one's neighbor, without true love for God's law, is antinomianism. It isn't loving but actually harming, and therefore hating, all along. Love does no harm to a neighbor (v10), and God's commandments define harm to us (v9).

We love by keeping the law. This is very obvious in some places like the 5th and 6th and 8th commandments, but we really need to learn this lesson in connection with the 7th and the 9th commandments. In order to answer the perverse logic of the world, we must be clear that breaking the 7th commandment is never “love” and never “harmless.” In order to avoid the broken parenting and relationship-philosophy of the world, we must be clear that breaking the 9th commandment is never “love” and never “harmless.”

Defining love. In addition to the relationship between love and God's law, the debt-language in v8 helps us correct wrong definitions of love. Since love is owed to all, all the time, it cannot be dependent on a feeling that we fall into or fall out of. Surely, without the feeling of love, there is not actual love. But loving feeling is just a part of what is owed—along with loving attitude, loving intention, and loving action.

Coming out of verse 7, it is obvious that this love is different to each person, depending on that person's particular relation to us in the Providence of God. Different things are owed to different people. Ch12 has given us different sets of obligations for brethren, neighbors, and enemies. 13:1–6 gave us still another set of obligations to rulers. And v7 teaches that different things are owed to different people.

This has implication for nearness of relation within the home, within the congregation, within the broader church. We are finite and cannot love everyone with the same intensity or effort. So our first love is for the church over the world, but with more intensity and effort for those brethren the Lord has joined our lives to. Even within the congregation, we cannot love all equally, so responding well to God Himself and His providence to us, love to the congregation from within our household takes priority. Outside the church, and at a lower priority than love for believers, community involvement and nationalism are important because they are appropriate responses to God's providence.

This also speaks to a drastically different approach to romantic love than that taken by the world and indeed by much of the church. It means that until there is a betrothal, there is a duty to restrain romantic love; and after a betrothal, a duty to foster it as preparation for the marriage, and after the wedding, a duty to foster it continually for the rest of the life. Love is not something that we fall into or out of, but a right response of the whole man, under God, to the type and nearness of the connections that He has given us with others. It begins with adoration of Him and devotion to Him and proceeds to those thoughts, affections, intentions, and actions that are due to any other, out of this love for Him.

How has this passage improved your definition of love? How would you answer someone who says that people should be free to “love” whom they want and how they want? Whom has the Lord put in your family? In your congregation? How does His providence to you, concerning them, place you under obligation to love them? How is your love for them reflecting the level of your obligation to them?

Sample prayer: God, we thank You that You are love and that You have demonstrated Your love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Grant unto us to love You by keeping Your commandments. And grant that loving You with all our hearts would produce love for our neighbor, made in Your image, and especially love for our brother, renewed into Your image in Christ. Thank You for Your perfect providence in our lives. Grant that the varying levels of intensity and effort in our love for others would appropriately reflect how near to us Your good providence has placed them—all of which we ask in the Name of the Son of Your love, even Jesus, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP2 “Why Do Gentile Nations Rage?” or TPH424 “All Authority and Power”

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Romans 13 verses 8-10. These are God's words. Oh no one. Anything except to love one another. For he who loves another has fulfilled, the law. 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. Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, Is the Fulfillment. Of the law.

So far the reading of gods inspired and And they're interred. We owe God everything. We must love him who first loved us. In chapter 11, we heard all things are from him and through him and to him to him, be the glory forever. And in chapter five, we heard that.

God demonstrates his love in this. While we were still sinners Christ died for us. And in all of chapters 1 through 11. The Apostle has opened up for us. The greatness of the love of God to Sinners. That for those who are under the wrath of God. Against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.

Sophia.

And in all of chapters 1 through 11. We have seen the greatness of the love of God. In that for Sinners who are under his wrath, Against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. God has given himself in his son. Our Lord Jesus. Not only To be our righteousness, which is required of us, but we couldn't produce But also our sacrifice.

The one who suffers the Wrath due to our sin in our place.

Making the atonement that we could never pay. And so there is this great love and great grace. These great mercies of God. That have been opened. Chapters 1 through 11 and then chapter 12. Begin. By the mercies of God, offer your bodies as living sacrifices. And so we love him.

Who loved us? We love him from whom and through whom. And therefore to whom and for whose glory. Are all things. We love him. By his mercies. And in response to those mercies and dependence upon those mercies. We love him by offering ourselves as Living Sacrifices, we owe God.

Everything. And it is, especially God, then it has given us our brothers And so chapter 12 went on to talk about how God in making a body for the Lord, Jesus Christ and making us members of him and of one another Has assigned to different body parts, different functions.

And so each body part has its own function. Its own reason and purpose and benefit to the rest of the body. And so, in whatever place, he has put us in the body, we have and are gifts to the rest of the body. And so since we owe God everything we owe our brothers and sisters in the church in the body of Christ.

We owe them. The exercise of our gifts. Participating in the life of the church. And for the benefit of the rest of the church is not optional and it is not to be done. Lazily, or Heartlessly or thoughtlessly. It is mandatory. And it is to be done with Zeal.

And it is to be done thoughtfully. And it is to be done affectionately. We owe our brothers, our gifts, and then he moved on and chapter 12, to talk about how we owe our neighbors. To do what is good before our neighbor's eyes. Because where can our neighbor? See?

What is good. He cannot see God. Although he can see some things about God in the creation. God has. Written on his heart, what is good? But his conscience is messed up. He not only accuses himself, but excuses himself by that, which is on his conscience. And so one great benefit to our neighbor is to see these saved people.

These Justified people who have been United to Jesus Christ and now love the law of God and their inner being and consider the Commandment to be holy and righteous and good. And who by the law of the spirit of life have been set free from the law of sin and death and walk according to the righteous requirements of God's law.

So, the neighbor of a Christian has this great benefit in that the Christian both does him good. As far as it depends upon him, he seeks to live peaceably with him and the Christian is a living example a living lesson to him of what is good. Because the Christian is more and more conformed to Christ and more and more conformed to God's law.

So we owe our neighbor. To do what God says is good before him and to be at peace with him. And this extends even to our neighbors, who are our enemies. And it also extends to our neighbors who are our authorities. Our rulers, we owe to the ruler to do.

What is good. That the ruler would see that he has one set of citizens. Who honor him and treat him with respect, not out of servile Terror to him. So that he ramps up his authority more and more and can make them cower in fear to do whatever he wants.

But the ruler should have this segment of the population who are believers. Who have such reverence for Christ and consider the ruler to be under Christ. But to consider Christ to be doing good to them. Through the ruler, that they are glad they submit to the ruler with more cheerfulness and diligence Than anyone else.

So long. As whatever the ruler commands is good is according to God's law. In fact, they do good without fear, even if the ruler happens to be evil. And he doesn't seem to be able to intimidate them into doing what is evil. Because they do, what is good and they are never afraid.

Because the ruler's wrath is not participating in the wrath of Christ against them, it's participating in the love of Christ towards them. And if the ruler is blessing them, While they receive that from, not just the ruler but especially from Christ towards them. And so we owe our ruler.

We learned in verses 1 through 7 of this chapter. We owe our ruler to do. What is good under him just as we owed to our neighbor to do? What is good before him. We owe our ruler to do. What is good under him? Someone he being someone who is instituted by Christ for our good.

So we have all of these debts and we are to continually discharge them so that we do not leave undone towards our brother or towards our neighbor, or towards our Enemy or towards our ruler, that we don't leave anything. Undone that the law of God, says must be done.

But even then there is still something we continue to owe. And that is love. Oh no one anything. Except to love one another. And so after we have paid all of these debts after we have fulfilled, all of these obligations, still the debt of Love Remains. We will never stop owing.

Love to brother to neighbor. Eventually there will no be no enemy but so long as our enemies. We'll never stop owing love to our enemy. And so long as there are other rulers under Christ above us. Lesser magistrates as we say, Uh, we will never stop owing them love, and to them are due various things that we heard about in verse 7, taxes, and reverence and honor.

And these things that are due to him, have reminded us that we have this love obligation that always continues. And so long as we keep this this duty to love in sight, then whenever something that love requires something that God's law requires and those are the same thing as we hear about in the rest of the passage.

Whenever there is something that duty to God's law requires if we are keeping in view this obligation, this debt to love. God and for God's sake. Then immediately we will do whatever God's law says, love is the key to keeping the law. Love is the key to fulfilling the law.

Not just that Jesus has loved in our place and kept God's law in our place. Praise God. He has done that. And it is counted for us in our justification. But we must also be made like Jesus in our sanctification, which means we must be made those who are always loving.

We must be made those who instantly automatically keep God's law gladly with Zeal and diligence and affection. And so our Our duty to love is inexhaustible. It is always there. It is, never finished. We never say, all right, I was supposed to love and I did, I'm done with that.

No, there are other duties that we complete, but the duty to love is never finished because it is infinite and inexhaustible. It is infinite and eternal just as God is God is love within himself. God is Triune his father, Son. And Holy. And so, his goodness and his Holiness, his adoration and devotion within himself is infinite and eternal.

So also, although we are finite the Adoration and devotion that is due to our infinite. God is infinite and we have an infinite Duty. Of adoration and devotion to him, that is inexhaustible. And indiminishable. We never. Um, finish or even reduce the amount of love that is remaining in debt to God.

We are in this wonderful infinite continual debt and we rejoice in it. It's the only sort of debt that you can Rejoice to still have on your books, is the infinite debt of And since it is love to him, That produces these other loves. Um, we will always have Love to others.

That is owed. So rather than being So rather than being in competition with the first great commandment which is love the Lord, your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The second great commandment, love your neighbor as yourself is subsidiary to. The first is a participation of the first.

It's part of the first, If we are not loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we may be sure that we are not loving God with all our hearts all mind. And strength for God has given us our neighbor If we are not loving our brother, as Christ has loved us, then we are not loving the Lord.

Our God, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength for Christ. Our God is the one who has made us part of his body and members, then even of one another And similarly, If we are not loving God first and foremost as God and therefore with all our hearts, all mind and strength, then we are not actually loving brother or loving neighbor or even rightly loving and submitting to The ruler, the Civil magistrate.

And so there are some who come to this passage and they focus, especially on the second table of the law and they forget That in the context of Romans as a whole and especially coming out of Romans 12 verse 1 and the further, exposition of what it looks like to be a Living Sacrifice who has brothers and neighbors, and enemies and rulers.

That this is all still under the first great commandment that they are both here. Uh we are just in that second, great commandment that is underneath a necessary, although secondary a necessary component of loving the Lord, Our God, with all our heart soul, mind and strength, And so the Apostle says, oh no one anything except to love one another.

And then he talks about the law of God. Why does he go immediately to talking about the law of God when he's talking about love? Well, the answer is that. The law of God is the

Well, the answer is that the law of God, is the expression of God's, good pleasing and perfect will Uh, that That will is expressed in Commandments that we have come to know and agree with by our new nature, the new bad in Christ. The Commandments that we. Call, holy and righteous, and good and Delight in in our inner being Love for God means loving God's law.

There's perhaps no better place in the Bible to see that than Psalm 119. Where the psalmist Delights in God himself, and therefore Delights in God's law, which is an expression from God himself of the mind and will of God himself. Two, his servant his creature. The one whom he has redeemed his beloved and the psalmist, who knows, himself to be beloved by God out of love for God.

Learns how to love God by the law of God. Love of God's law. Um, is always produced. By love of God. Love of God always produces love for God's law. The one who does not love the law of God. Either, entirely misunderstands. What the law of God is Or.

Does not love the God. Of the law. So love of God produces love of his law and love of his law produces love of our neighbor. Isn't it amazing that the Living God who redeems Israel for himself reveals himself to Israel? And he, in Deuteronomy 4 talks about how he made himself known to them and he made himself known to them not with pictures, and symbols, and sculptures.

He made himself known to them with his voice. He made himself known to them, especially by his law. And then Deuteronomy chapter 5, he gives the Commandments of that law. And then Deuteronomy chapter 6, he teaches us how to live by those Commandments, loving him, with all our heart soul, mind and strength, having his Commandments on our lips, and on our hearts, sorry in our hearts and on our lips.

And speaking of them, especially with our family, uh, when we lay down and when we rise up, and when we go out, and when we come in, and having his law control, everything we see or how we see everything as frontlets between our life, our eyes, and having his law control.

How we do everything is bound to our hands, Name that which defines our household is written on our Gates, you come to the gates of a city or a house and You want to know? What the identity of this place is you see? Love, Yahweh. Your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Or you shall have no other gods before me. And so forth. And so you have the revelation of who God is to Israel in Deuteronomy 4 and you have how that shapes the whole life in Deuteronomy 6 and what's in the middle. The the defining point, the hinge that holds those two together, the particular Commandments in Deuteronomy, Chapter 5.

And so it's not surprising at all. If we know how love of God produces love of God's law, produces love of neighbor, From places like Psalm 119 or Deuteronomy 4-6. And we could do this almost anywhere. Uh, if we know that it's not surprising at all. Uh, that The Apostle here ties, love and law together who loves another has fulfilled.

The law he says, at the end of verse eight and verse 9, he gives several Commandments Quoting from Deuteronomy chapter 5 and Uh, the second great commandment. Which here is quoted from.

Uh, Leviticus 19 verse 18, a implication now of loving the Lord, Our God with all our hearts Almighty and strength and the Holy One. Not just being governed in the vertical relationship but the vertical relationship between you and God, governing, all of your horizontal relationships, you remember, in the Holiness of Israel as a community because they had God in their midst in the Tabernacle because they were being drawn near to God.

Through the offerings and the sacrifices. They had to love one another as themselves. Cannot love, God, without loving one. Another Without loving your neighbor as yourself. And without loving, especially your brother, the holy ones. And so he says, Who loves one, another has fulfilled, the law and to verse eight.

The Commandments are summed up. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And then he says, verse 10. Love does no harm to a neighbor and harm. Of course, is not defined by what the neighbor says, or what we say. But by what God says, in his Commandments, therefore love is the full fulfillment of the law.

So, he ties these two things together. Now, this is surprising some because of what's wrong with us. But we can see that love without the law is purposeless. If we think that we have love, but we don't think that it is defined by God's Commandments. Then what we are calling.

Love is actually an undefined nonsense of theoretical abstraction or emotional abstraction. If we think that we have the law, without love. What we actually have. Is not God's law. Otherwise we would see that without love, we are powerless to keep it. And that the first great thing in his law is that we must love and so that we cannot even begin to obey any of the Commandments.

Until? Uh we are loving. So indeed, true love and the law of God truly understood neither actually exists without the other. But the greatness of the lovelessness or the smallness of the love in. Um, makes it difficult for us. We do not embrace the law and the good that it does.

Both. Uh, as image bearers ourselves and wanting to keep his law out of love for him. And when we keep his law, the good that we end up doing to others and refusing to harm. What another love does no harm to a neighbor. And so we must learn to embrace the law, both for its own inherent goodness, as image bearers of God and for Um beneficial utilitarian goodness to others.

In that if we are, keeping God's Commandments. Uh, then we do not harm. Others. Another reason that think that the law, keeping commandment keeping and love are somehow in conflict or intention with one another. Is because they learned to. Um,

Be vigilant against law, keeping as a method of justification. But just to say, we are tempted to think that we can do something to make ourselves right with God. Uh, and so the unregenerate person. The only way that that he can think of to make to be right with God.

Is to do rightly or even to love well enough or even to believe correctly enough. Whether it's thinking or affections, or, or willing and doing, Um, the unregenerate person. Tries to commend himself to God. And so there are unregenerate people who believe in the doctrine justification by grace alone, through faith alone.

But they believe in that Doctrine, while their hearts are resting how upon how correct their Doctrine is. So, one of the things that every Christian must learn in order to become a Christian in order to be a true Christian. Is to be vigilant against the tendency of our heart.

To rest upon. Keeping God's law. And therefore, as we are, Uh, coming to saving. We realize we must not use the law of God for our justification, only. What Jesus has done. Can justify us. But then, There are some who learn this lesson but are silly and ignorant and they export their vigilance against the law from the context of justification into the context of sanctification into the context of living before God.

And they say, we must watch against trying to keep God's law in how we live. Which is exactly the opposite of what God's word teaches us. So they'll say that and they'll say instead of trying to keep his Commandments, we should just love. But, Like we said, that turns love into gobbledygook.

It turns love. In. A nonsense of theoretical. Or emotional. Abstraction. And so we must not put love and law against each other. Uh we must not put a sunder. These two things that God himself has inseparably joined together. Love of God produces love of God's law which produces love of neighbor.

Each of these fills up the previous one so there is no such thing. As love of God without love of God's law. And there is no such thing. As love of God's law without love of neighbor. If we think we have love for God's law, but we are not full of love of for God.

What we actually have is legalism. Such a person will obey without adoring. And it's not true obedience without adoration. He does not actually love God's law, unless he loves the god of the law. And then there are some who think that they have true love for one's neighbor, but they do not have love for God's Commandments, they do not have love for God's law.

This is antinomianism. They think and feel. That they love. In fact, they feel certain that they are loving and they may even tell themselves that they are more greatly loving because they do not think about and Uh, and are not focused on God's Commandments. But, Because the law defines what is harmful?

Those who think that they truly love their neighbor without truly. Loving God's law are actually harming their neighbor. And therefore actually hating their neighbor. Two, great examples of that in our culture. Uh, Those who justify all sorts of sexual perversion violation of the seventh commandment by saying, well, So long as they love each other.

It must be good or who are you to tell someone whom they can love or how they can love? And the answer is. I am nothing. But God is God. I cannot tell myself. Whom to love in a particular way or how to love. God must tell me. That's how I find out, what is good rather than harmful.

What is good before God and good for my neighbor? Another place that we can that we really need to see this. Is in the ninth commandment where it has become customary. Um, either to Uh, tell others falsehoods about themselves to make them feel better about themselves as if this is good for them.

When often you should feel badly about yourself. Especially about what you think, or what you feel or what you do when it is wrong. And so there are many just as there are many who believe that we may love one another quote unquote by breaking the seventh commandment. So also there are those who believe that we may love one another quote unquote by breaking the ninth commandment.

But this is utter nonsense. And we can see, That it is, utter nonsense with respect to Um, the other Commandments. Or some of the other Commandments, especially Uh, Fifth commandment and the eighth commandment? Cannot say. I love them so I will disrespect them. I love them. So I will dishonor them.

I love my parents. I don't respect them. I don't honor them, but I love them. I suppose there are some who say, I don't respect them but I love them. Just shows how great our corruption is. And you can't say, I love this person, so, I steal from him or even, even though I am continually stealing from him.

I truly love him. That's utter nonsense, isn't it? We ought to be able to say that with the sixth commandment too. I, you can't say. I am killing this person. I murder this person. I despise this person in my heart. I have set myself against this person in my affections, but I love them.

That's nonsense. Although, Sadly in our culture and even in the church culture, there are those who say that it is loving to help certain people murder themselves? Or even loving to a baby to murder the baby. Because of how hard it might be for the baby. In the world.

As if the world is anything but hard for anyone apart from Christ. But you can, Here. I hope the truth of the end of Verse 9 and verse 10. You shall love your neighbor as

yourself. Love does no harm to a neighbor therefore love. Is the Fulfillment. Of the law.

Now. Since love is defined by God's law. And since love is an obligation that we owe to everyone, and that will never run out, there is not any person or any moment. Uh, where love is not owed. This helps us redefine love. Um, or rather come back. Uh to God's definition of law of reform.

Our definition of love over against what people in the culture and even in the churches think that love is Love cannot be dependent upon feeling love, cannot be something that we fall into. Or fall out of. Because it is constantly owed to all. And it is constantly owed to all specifically.

And it is constantly owed to all specifically, as shaped and defined by the relationship that God has given us with the other person. So if someone has been made your brother in Christ by God, you have that specific kind of love and if someone is your neighbor in God's Providence, you have a specific uh sort of love That is owed to him specific obligations of Love, according to God's Commandments that are owed to him.

Or if someone is even in God's Providence and by their sin, not by gods. God does not have sin even in God's Providence, your enemy There are duties that are owed to your enemy out of love for God, and love for your enemy. And if in God's Providence, someone is your Superior is in authority over you.

You have certain obligations out of love for God and love for the one who is your Superior and if someone is your inferior, someone whom God has entrusted into the care of your lesser Authority. You have duties out of love as defined by God's Commandments. To Those whom God has placed under you.

Uh, and so

Love, first of all, is not dependent on feeling and second of all it is dependent upon and shaped by the particular relation to us that any individual has In God's Providence. Now, this has implications for nearness of relation. You are finite You are not able to love all 8 billion people on Earth to the same extent.

You are not able to love each of the tens of millions or hundreds of millions of Believers on Earth. To the same extent. In fact, we are so finite. We are not even able to love all the Believers in our country to the same extent or all of the Believers in our Synod or all of the Believers in our presbytery.

We are so finite. We are so limited in our time and our energy and our mental capacity and our emotional capacity. That we cannot even love everyone in the congregation. To the same extent. And so God and his wisdom and goodness to us has given us households And in his great goodness, he's even defined.

Uh, for us and given to us marriage. So that there is a love for one person. In the whole world. Uh, that can only be within marriage. Uh, but this love especially is like the love that is between you and Jesus. So that the husband loves the wife and gives himself up for her.

As Christ has loved the There's only one person in the world. That a husband can love that much. With that singular devotion. That is his wife. And the wife, loving her husband, and submitting him herself to her husband out of love to him. Uh, having her whole identity and all of her activity.

Shaped by the, the love that she has, This one person. Uh, it can only be with this one person. And the Romantic love then. Must only be. With that one person, the stirring up of the affections. That that feeling that Our culture has come to call falling into love and falling out of love.

Must only. Exist, within Marriage. So until you are betrothed until you have covenanted to marry on your wedding day. That's what a betrothal is. It's a it's a covenanting Contracting commitment, uh, to get married. Um, it can't be broken except by divorce until you are betrothed. You have a duty to restrain and refrain from any romantic feelings.

Even when you are considering whether someone would make a good husband, or if you are a young man, Or an older man in God's Providence. Um, Even as you're considering, whether they would make a good wife, you are to refrain from and restrain those Rome. Romantic affections. That our culture and many even in the churches, call love.

You do not Stir It Up. You restrain it. You refrain from it. Because you have you are created by God as finite and he has defined for you that one only person in Uh, the whole world. Um, the spouse. Now, it also means that once you are betrothed, once you are covenanted to be married, the obligation moves in the opposite direction.

You are obligated as soon as you are betrothed. To stir up romantic affection. So that when you come to May to that day, when you make that covenanting as husband and wife, And the two become one. You are not in a position where you are cold and distant and reserved and restrained.

But you have rightly spent the time from the betrothal to the wedding day. Stirring up that affection. Because that affection is required. By your being married. Then it means that once you are married, you are required for the rest of your life. The rest of the two of yours life together.

As long as you both shall live, as is said in the wedding ceremony, you are required to keep stirring up that Luff For one another. And so that which is often given as a reason for divorce. Is actually a confession of sin. I have fallen out of love with her or I have fallen out of love with him.

Well, the first three words of that are absolutely true. You have certainly fallen Because you are required. Not just to be devoted in your time and energy and actions and to prioritize them above All other humans on Earth and to have your identity humanly speaking in the world, be joined inseparably and consumed.

Uh, with your joint identity with your spouse, you are required to include the affectional component. By God's Providence to you. And so, once you are married, I hope that each of you will consider it. Your duty to stir up for the rest of your life, together with your spouse, your romantic affection for one another And you can just imagine how the cupettists or the Disneyists or the 18, 19th century novel readingists.

Uh, romantic love. Cannot hold a candle. To that which is produced out of love for God. Uh, and grounded upon God's definition of marriage. Uh, and taking into account, how finite we are. And the goodness of God and how he has defined these things. And from that, you build, not only between betrothal and the wedding, but every single day after the wedding for the rest of your life, Uh, how sweet and good that romantic love is designed to be and by God's grace we hope for each of us for each of you.

Will be more and more. Well, that's a lot of time on that specific one. But the next Level out is your household, your Christian household. This is one of the reasons why it's such a blessing. Uh that God in his design for us to be covenantal. Makes the household the unit of the congregation.

So that we will. Not have so much tension between the nearness of Our love for the congregation and The Nearness of our love for our household, but Those whom you spend the most of your thoughts and affections and actions, uh, loving upon In the congregation should be those of your own house.

Uh, and then You should have a special love for those within the particular congregation of the body of Christ where God has placed you. That is even more intense and more, active and more constant. Uh, then the love that you have for all of the other. Brothers and sisters for Christ and the rest of the world and we should love them, of

course, greater than we love.

The next nearest worldling, the next nearest unbeliever non-member of A true. But, Uh, as First Corinthians 12 says, God has arranged the members of the body as he Wills And so the particular people that he has put in our congregation come to us in the Providence of God. And we should have a very high esteem of them.

The way that we think about them, we should have a very high affection towards them and commitment how we serve them. Out of love for one another. And then love for our congregation and then For those Christians with whom we are joined by special Covenant. Agreeing with one another before the Lord.

Um, and that would be Ideally, our Presbytery and our Senate. All those things are fairly complex and we pray that Reformation and Revival will bring the church to a more General like-mindedness. And then after that, love of neighbor and enemy in the world, Uh and again you cannot love.

Your neighbor. Um, The middle of the Amazonian jungle, or Uh, Um,

Himalayan Mountains or the Pacific or Mainline China? With the, you can't love all eight million people, the same with the same intensity. And so, we do take The community in which God has put us the county in which God has put us the state in which God has put us the nation in which God has put us as kind of these concentric Circles of level of obligation and Duty, esteem and affection.

Um, And so, Nationalism in a Christian is, Not wrong. As long as it is under God. Uh, and due to his Providence. Uh, and The intensity or level. Of our love for neighbor is defined by those things. So, Uh, it is important to see. That by defining love the way he does by implication and by denotation.

In these three verses. God teaches us. A very different idea about love than as commonly accepted. In the culture and in the church. And so you need to have That very much. Uh, in Um, so may the Lord give us to consider. Our love a continual debt. And may the Lord give us to Define loving.

According to his Commandments. Uh, and therefore Um, May the Lord give us. This definition of love in, which Uh, it is first and foremost to him. And therefore, under his Providence. Um,

Shaped by, and Uh, especially intensified by Uh, type of relation and nearness. Of relation. As he has given us in his Providence. Hey man. Let's pray. Our gracious Godner heavenly father. We thank you. For this lesson. In your Uh, Uh, the relationship of loving others, to loving you, and the relationship.

Of loving others to loving your law. And we pray that you would give us not just to understand these things. But that your spirit would. So, apply Christ to That these would be realities. Our thoughts and in our affections and in our Wills, For, we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.