

Hopewell ARP Midweek Sermon  
Wednesday, April 17, 2024

## **Romans 13:8–10**

«Owe 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 love is the fulfillment of the law.

### **True Love**

**Main idea:** true love is unto God first, defined by God’s law, and determined by God’s providence.

**Introduction:** the necessity of understanding love in a culture that justifies perversion in the name of love, and a church culture that sets love and law in contrast to each other.

#### **1. The Debt of Love, v8a.**

1. Love-debt to brother (12:3–16), neighbor (12:17–18), enemy (12:19–21), magistrate (13:1–7).
2. The love-debt remains, when the duty-debt has been paid. The love-debt will remain forever.
3. Because the love-debt is ultimately unto God (11:36–12:2)

#### **2. The Definition of Love, v8b–9.**

1. Love is whatever God’s law says. Do what is “good” (12:17) and “do no harm” (13:10) are defined by the law generally (v8b, cf. 7:22) and the ten commandments specifically (v9, cf. 7:12). No love without the law; no true law-keeping without love.
2. Love is a holy life, because of Who God is and whom He has made us to be unto Himself (end of v9, cf. Lev 19:18 in context). The second great commandment, here, is secondary and subsidiary. If you aren’t keeping one great commandment, then you’re not keeping the other. Love of God [?] love of God’s law [?] love of neighbor (cf. Ps 119, 2Jn v5–6, 1Jn 5:3).
3. Love and law go together. What God has joined together, let no man separate. Law without love is legalism; it obeys but does not adore. “love” without law is antinomian; it harms.

#### **3. The Dynamic of Love, v10.**

1. Love, then, is an obligation unto God, and under God, to someone to whom God has given you a specific relation. This has two important implications:
2. Nearness of relation determines intensity of affection or effort to put forth in love.
3. Marital love belongs to marriage and is not something that is “fallen into” or “fallen out of.” Restraining it is a duty that continues until betrothal. Fostering it is a duty that begins at betrothal and continues so long as both live.

**Conclusion:** all things are from God, and through God, and to God. This means all of your love, in all of your relationships, as well! And He has ordered that all things would work together for your good. Love Him Who first loved you!

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Romans 13:8-10. 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. Amen, that sends this reading of God's inspired and And they went toward, This is very important to know what love is. And what love does? Not only because, We are to behold the sort of love with which God has loved us and or to love him who has first loved us.

And the whole of our duty can be summed up in, loving him, with all our hearts, all mind and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. But in God's Providence, in the particular Time and place where he has given. You to live. Uh, there are many who justify all sorts of wickedness in the name of what they call love.

And if you try to talk to them, About how they offend God and harm others. Uh, by what they are doing and the guilt that they bring upon themselves and the Wrath that they store up against the the day of Wrath. If you try to talk to them, you will often Get the response, who are you?

To tell someone whom they can love. Or how they can love. And so, in our culture, There is a very crooked and very wicked and very deceptive. Uh, way of talking about love. And sadly, this has come about in part. Because the church has been sloppy. And talking about love.

The church has imported, the idea. Of love basically as a sort of emotional inflammation. Uh, where you are? Warm and enlarged and inflamed. Taking part of. Of genuine. Love the affections that are to properly be set upon each one. According to the relation that God has given you to them most of all to God.

Who is the proper object of the great love of your very self your existence to offer yourself as a Living Sacrifice. And that one, little part of what love is. Has been made for the whole. Which is literally what a caricature does. You you take a part and you over exaggerate it until it really becomes the whole picture?

Instead of just a part of the picture. But in doing this, The church has set. Love over against God's law. There are many. In the churches. Who have said well before Jesus came, You had to obey the Commandments. Now, that Jesus has come We must love. As if those two things are in tensioned with one another or competition with one another As if what God had taught and done in all whom he had ever done a work of redeeming Grace.

Was not making them to love him with all their hearts or mind and strength and to love their neighbor as themselves. And as if his law which has always Defined for us. Commanded us. Instructed us showed us the specifics of what love does. Uh, that his law had somehow lost its usefulness to do that.

And so we live in an age in which we want to know, what is true. Love. Even those who Have those unbiblical. Views of love often because of the harm that they cause themselves or others. Or the harm that others cause them. They long for what they call, true love.

Even those who Don't admit to such a thing as truth. But that's the nature of It makes you admit that there must be such a thing as truth that makes you admit that there must be such a thing as right and wrong or at least if you don't admit it it makes you function that way.

It is God's world. And so it operates on his truth? And according to his morality. So does our great privilege then tonight? That this is a passage about love. Oh no one anything except to love one another. He who loves another has fulfilled, the law. The Commandments. And Lists several of them.

Uh, it says 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. And so we have organized the teaching of these three verses. Under these headings, the debt of love. Or.

The fact that true love is unto God first. And therefore it is an obligation that answers the purpose of our existence, the purpose of our creation, the purpose of our Redemption, the debt of love. And then in the second place, the definition Of. And there that love is defined for us.

By God's law, what it does. And Uh, particularly what it doesn't. And then, the dynamic of Love does no harm. To a neighbor. And then we ask the question, who is my neighbor? And the Bible has lots of answers for us because we have different sorts of neighbors. Some nearer.

Than others that will come. To that, Lord helping us. So first, then the debt of love. Oh no one anything except to love. Another. Now there are many places in which scripture teaches us that being in financial debt or even in some other sort of debt that we incur by way of promise.

Uh, that being in financial debt is unwise and puts you in the power of another. But when we come here and we hear, oh no, one anything, it's in the context immediately flowing from verse

7 render therefore to all their Jew render. All Of your obligations. And so, Uh, everyone that there is you owe some sort of obligation.

This is why. When we come to our last point, the dynamic of love. We're going to have to admit that we're finite Um, we cannot do. Uh, for all of our neighbors in the Earth. As we do for ourselves. Uh and yet there are those whom God has given us particular relations to and coming out of verse 7.

He has just finished handling, one of those relations. The relationship of being under an authority and by implication, the relationship of being someone who is in Authority so that when we considered verses one through seven last week we thought not only about what we are to do with those who are over us.

But that if we are over another that this too has been given by Christ and is as his servant and is for the good of those particular ones, the specific ones who have been put under us and so we must. We all must discharge all of our obligations. Lord puts you to someone the greater the obligation.

In the We are to love the whole As the Lord, Jesus has loved us. And yet. Being finite, we cannot love every last member of the visible church every last professing believer on Earth to the same extent or with the same amount of intensity. Even let alone with the same effort.

And so there are those loves that belong to you in your particular congregation. Those with whom you have been arranged by God. Who First Corinthians 12 says Arranges the body as he pleases. And particular individuals, then that you are not allowed to say. I have no need of them.

Or I am not part of the body because I am not like that. Then And so, There is that nearness of those who are in your particular congregation. And the Lord has given you to live in a household and your household is a unit of the congregation. This is one of those places where Covenant theology is very important.

Because if you don't recognize God as the one who institutes the household and has selected for you, your particular household, then you will not know. To love your dad and your mom and your siblings in your home with a nearer more intense, higher effort than you do. Everyone else in the congregation Because God is the one.

Who made you finite? You are, you are you do not have unlimited, emotional, bandwidth, or mental bandwidth. To think about everyone, you do not have unlimited time, unlimited resources, unlimited strength, and limited energy. But Those whom the Lord has put in your life and near you. You owe as a debt.

The appropriate love. This is also true in the world generally speaking. Not only are Nations God's Own institution. So that there's nothing wrong with nationalism, as far as it goes. In fact, it is a sin. Not to seek the good of the place where God has put you. As he told his people, even when he made them to reside in another Nation for 70 years.

But the Lord in his Providence, has put you in your own particular Nation. And your own state and your own community, and you have a greater duty to your near neighbors, on the left, and on the right and those whom, he makes you to cross paths with You have greater Duty based upon his Providence.

And we've seen this a little bit. Haven't we these these different? Providential assignments. Because we haven't just come. Into this passage about La from verses. One through seven, in

which we heard about, loving the magistrate, loving the authority, who is over us. And by implication, if we are in Authority, loving those who are under us, we also saw in chapter 12, verses 3 through 16, the love debt that we owe to our brother.

And our sister in in the church and especially in the congregation, in fact, the language of debt really applies there. Because God had described for us. Hadn't. He our role as a gift. We have different gifts. But they're not from us, they're from the Lord, and they're not ultimately for us.

In each one in the congregation, the Lord Jesus has given particular gifts for the rest of the congregation. And so, none of us have the The alternative, the option. Of not fulfilling our role in the church or in our family, but there wasn't just the love debt to a brother, which took up the bulk of the chapter in verses 3 through 16.

But in chapter 12, we had in verses 17 and 18, the love debt that we owe for our owe to our neighbor or oh, to all men. Particularly those who can see us. You remember, he said have regard for good things in the sight of all men. All men on Earth can see you.

But the Lord has put you in the path of particular men. And you are one of the primary ways that God displays what it looks like. A man does. This will not necessarily please them. Uh, but we heard about that then. So there's love debt to her brother love, debt, to a neighbor even love debt to an enemy.

I love that to an enemy making room for The wrath of God. Loving him in a way that shows your hope and his danger. And that either, the Lord will use to keep burning coals upon his head. So that he feels the greatness of the Wrath. That is, that is piling up against him.

And, uh, in God's mercy is brought to Faith or Even heaping up burning coals that if he is not brought to Faith. That wrath of God that you left room for Would fall upon him but you have. We are to love our enemies. Well. Why does he put it this way then?

This is, if we are to love anyone, everyone. Why does he say? Oh no. What, why doesn't he just say, oh no one, anything. Why does he say? Oh no one anything except to love. One another. And the answer is because love has particular duties. And even after, then you have done your duty.

You've fulfilled that obligation that debt is off the books. You still have the debt of loving itself. And as Providence permits and Providence brings you through, you will have other duties and you must immediately pay them. But the duty to love the debt to love. Will always remain. Because our love debt has ultimately to God, That's how we got.

To Romans 12 3 through Romans 13 verse 7. It was, it was from out of Romans 11, 36 from him and through him and to him are all things, including you and your salvation. And the certainty of the end of that salvation, the fullness and Perfection of it to him.

Be the glory forever. And in view of by these mercies of God to you, that had filled the first 11 chapters of the book, we were told offer your bodies, present your bodies. As living sacrifices. And so, this immediately answers one of the difficulties that some people have or create, they come to this passage, they look at especially verse 9, they say Number six, number seven, number six, number eight, number nine, number ten, Uh, all right.

Those are the five. Um, Commandments that he talks about here. He must mean just the second table of the law. Except for that would include number four or sorry. That would include number five. And, He says this thing that should blow up any any nonsense about only the second table of the law or only the Second Great commandment.

He says, if there is any other commandment they're all summed up in this and saying namely you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Well, there's a reason. That the Second Great Commandment is. It's because it is second two and subsidiary of I'll explain that in a moment children. It is second to, in subsidiary of the first great, commandment.

We actually are not loving our neighbor at all. Unless we are loving God. Because it is God, who made all things? And as God from whom and through whom, and to whom are all things. And if we would just know our Bibles a little bit better, we would see that at the end of verse 9, Because it's quoted from Leviticus 19, which in God's great, Providence to us we have been through together, not too long ago.

And we remember that Leviticus 19 was a chapter about the Holiness of God's people because they belong to a holy God. And so you must treat all of your neighbors, as holy as someone who, as because they have been set apart to God as holy and you have been set apart to God as holy and that's the context that section.

In that section of Leviticus. In which he says love. You shall love your neighbor. As yourself. And so in, in the context it is love for God with all the heart. Soul, mind and strength in the camp. Where God has come to dwell among a people that he has redeemed for himself and called holy to himself that especially with those particular neighbors, produced love for them.

Now, that doesn't mean that you can go full. Scribe. And Pharisee and say, well if that's the original context, then Samaritans wouldn't really be my neighbor, would they? You remember what the Lord Jesus did? When someone wanted to justify himself, And asking, and who is my neighbor? But the principle stands.

That. The Second Great Commandment is not just secondary two, but here it is. Subsidiary of the first great, commandment. Because not only, if you're not loving God, are you not loving your neighbor? It doesn't love your neighbor at all. To reinforce in him a godlessness, a denial of his creator in which he loses the Dignity of being one who's made in God's image and loses the purpose of bringing God, God, glory and loses the pleasure of delighting in God, and brings himself more and more under God's Wrath.

Making people feel better about their interaction with you as they go to hell is not necessarily loving. But it's also true that you're not loving God, if you don't love your neighbor. You cannot say, you love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. If he has filled his world with image bearers, that you don't prioritize over all of the other creatures.

And so, the definition of love is Whatever God's law. Says. Just like we thought about a little bit. In verse 17 of the previous chapter, and we said have regard for good things. In the sight of all men and he said, that doesn't mean whatever all men say is good.

It means before the eyes of whomever God has placed you before their eyes. Do what God says is good. Have regard for what God says, is good. Just as When we come to verse 10, he says, love does no harm to a neighbor. That doesn't mean love does. Not doesn't do what the neighbor considers to be hard.

That means love does not do what God says. Is harmful. To a neighbor. So there really cannot be love. Without the law love without the law is. A purposeless undefined amoeba. It's like trying to nail jelly to the wall. So, you cannot have love without the law and You can't have true law.

Keeping without love, can you? Because it proceeds from who God is, And who we are. And whom he made our neighbors to be. And so there is affection for and valuing of the Living God and of His Image bearers. That must be at the literal heart. Of all true obedience to God's law.

If we're just performing outwardly conforming actions to the statutes. Than we have missed. That God's law is given to us in terminology of love. So, there is no real love without law, keeping And there's no true law, keeping without love.

Love and law. Therefore go together. And what God has joined together. Let no man separate To put it another way in terms that get thrown around. Law without love is legalism. It obeys. But it does not adore, there are many other things that are legalism, that's not all That is legalistic.

But it is legalism. To have law without love. Love for God. First love for brother. First and a half or first again because our brother is United to Christ. Our God And that's higher even than in God's image. Love for God, first and love for neighbor. Second law without love is legalism, it obeys, but it does not a door love.

So called without the law is antinomian It does harm to the neighbor. Because it doesn't know what the definition of harm is. And therefore it's not loving at all. So, the debt of love, the first part of verse 8, the definition of love In the last, the second part of verse 8, and all of verse nine.

And now the dynamic of Love does no harm. To a neighbor. Therefore, love is the Fulfillment of the law. Love is an obligation unto God. Love is a right response to God as defined by God, it's unto God first. And so he is it's object but he's also its master.

He's also, it's definer. And therefore, since love An obligation to God. And and defined by God under God, Then we realize that it has this Dynamic. That it responds in the god-defined way. To specific people with whom God has given us specific relationships. Now, this has two important implications.

One of which We covered when we took a bunny trail to, if you're using an outline 3B even in the introduction that nearness of relation determines, intensity of affection or effort that we would put forth in our love which is to say the specific Providence of God in whom he has connected you with in different ways.

Specific Providence will determine the intensity of the affection that is required of you and that is appropriate. For you. God has not put you in proximity to everyone on the internet. There are lots of people. Who make digital connections. And end up at a relational distance. From their own wife or husband.

Their own children or their own parents. Their own siblings, their own congregation their own neighbors. We have never been. A more technologically, connected more relationally distant. People. Than we are now. Generally speaking. And so, nearness of relation determines. Intent, the intensity of affection that is required. The intensity of effort that we must put forth.

Uh, in love and we covered some of those But the nearest neighbor, the nearest brother, or the nearest sister we did. Not yet mention. And that is one's husband or one's wife. Where the two are? And indeed, the two are one flesh and they have a joined life. Now, this is important because as we have been defining love in a more biblical way, one of the things that we have begun to exclude is the way that romantic love is thought of not just in the world but sadly in much of the church.

As that sort of inflammation or to use other language, something that you can fall into. Or fall out of. Now. That is in God's Providence. Somewhat helpful language. Because fall is a really good word for that. I have heard people justify. Sinning against the one to whom they are married.

And even Destroying the marriage. That was. Defined by God and that they covenanted before his face. Because they quote unquote. Have fallen out of love. With their own spouse or have fallen into love. Well, they are completely wrong. About the word love but they got the word Fallen correct.

They certainly have fallen. Now, one of the applications here is that marital love is something that belongs only. To your wife, if you are a man, Or to your husband. If you are a woman romantic love is not. To be given to anyone. But your husband, Or your wife.

And that has significant implications for how we go about finding a husband or wife. It means that whatever you're going to call the process. I care about words. It's not that I don't care about words. But there's an issue that's bigger than the words. Whether it's dating or courtship, whether you're going to use the word engagement or betrothal

And that is that you must restrain all romantic affection. Until you have committed to get married. Now, like the word betrothal because Uh, well for many reasons, but one of the reasons is, we use the word engagement to mean, two people who have set a date. We don't mean to people who have so covenanted before God that they are going to be married on that date, that it would take a divorce to break it.

Now, until you're betrothed, you have an obligation to keep your romantic affections, only for your spouse. But on the day that you are betrothed, You have a duty to start fostering those romantic affections. You must not act upon the marriage until there is a marriage. But being what we are.

And functioning how God created us. You cannot go from no romantic affections. Uh, the morning of your wedding. Stirring up romantic love. That is appropriate to the relationship of husband and wife on the night of your wedding. And so God, even in the picture of Christ, having betrothed, his bride to himself, and this preparation time in which he already, he already loves us perfectly.

But one of the things he's growing us in and perfecting us in is he's he's increasing our love for him, even in that picture. He has given us a model for a time of betrothal. In which there is preparation of the heart. So as we think about what is true love, and the difference between the true love of Romans 13 verses 8 through 10 from that, which is called love in the world and which is called love in much of the church.

This is one of the places where the rubber really meets the road. Uh, in application. That we are not only then to have these rules. Don't listen to it or hear it that way. Which I have these right responses to the particular relations that God has given us to particular, people out of love for him who has given those things.

But then, for those of us who are married, Every day that we are married. Do we not have a duty? Not only to stir up our brother love. Our neighbor love. For our spouse. But that romantic love that is Right, for a husband and his wife, that's your duty everyday, when you get married.

So that a Christian who is walking by God's definition will not just do the restraining beforehand and the preparation in the, uh, in the time between, uh, betrothal and the wedding.



But every day we ought to be stirring up our love to our spouse. And what then would it be like Depending upon God's grace because he defined that love that way and drawing it from him.

If a husband and wife for 10, 20, 50, 60 years, Are loving. As a debt as an obligation. That participates in. Their love for God. And says, because you are my wife or because you are my husband, I stir up for you all of these affections and especially this one.

That is not for any other human on earth. Just for you. So, praise God. All things. Not just marriage. But your household, your parents, or your children, or your siblings, Your congregation is from him and through him and to him your neighborhood, the broader. Which are of course above by their Union with Christ, the whole rest of the world, even your nearest uh, Earthly neighbor.

Uh, unbelieving Earthly neighbor, all things are from him and through him and to him. Oh, love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. But in all of your loving of others in all of your relationships, love him. He has ordered that old things. Work together for your good.

Love him who first? Loved you. Amen.