

**SERMON NOTES**

Keeping the Law  
Romans 13:8–10

February 22, 2004

A. The Passage

1. to support his teaching that love commandment is the fulfilment (keeping) of the law Paul quotes from
2. this complete passage (of which Paul quotes part) is summed up by two love commandments (found in both old and new testaments)
  - a. you shall love \_\_\_\_\_ How?
  - b. you shall love \_\_\_\_\_ How?
3. You cannot do the first, and there is no credit in doing the second of these until what?

B. Getting Right with God

1. lesson one in Romans (5:12, 3:23) — man is ...
2. lesson two in Romans (8:3, 3:20) — man cannot ...
3. lesson three in Romans (3:24–26, 5:8) — God has ...
4. Man's responsibility if he is to realize salvation
  - a. admin
  - b. feel
  - c. pray
  - d. have

5. empowering the regenerated Christian to live in a manner pleasing to God is ...
  - a. through
  - b. through

C. Living the Law of Love

1. the believer's responsibility to live a life pleasing to God is
  - a. to deny or refuse
  - b. to live or be engaged in
2. the Holy Spirit's text book for instructing us in living is ...

D. Marks characterizing the Christian's love to others

1. love is C \_\_\_\_\_
2. love is S \_\_\_\_\_
3. love is G \_\_\_\_\_ or ...
4. love is T \_\_\_\_\_
5. love is G \_\_\_\_\_

Bible References

The Ten Words (Commandments): Deuteronomy 4:13, 5, Exodus 20; One summary of these commandments: Mark 12:29–31; Transforming love's source: Romans 5:5; Sinfulness of men: Romans 5:12, 3:23; The uselessness of works: Romans 8:3, 3:20; God only provides salvation: Romans 3:24–26, 5:8, 5:1, Acts 4:12; Justification by grace: Romans 3:24, ... by or out of faith: 3:28, 5:1, ... in His blood: 5:9; Holy Spirit work of rebirth: 2 Corinthians 5:17; The Christians' responsibilities: Titus 2:11–12, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 11:1; The role of the law: Galatians 3:24; God's nature of commitment: Jeremiah 31:3, Numbers 23:19; God's life-giving love: John 15:13, 1 John 4:10; Generosity of God: Matthew 5:45, John 3:16; Truthfulness of God: 1 Corinthians 13:6, John 14:6; God's graciousness in giving: James 1:17

A. Introduction

1. A young man is charged with embezzling funds from his place of employment. He is prosecuted. His story, which is taken up by the press, is that he did it for love; love for his mother who is in vital need of a very expensive operation. Public sympathy mounts, people step in and pay the debt, and the charges are dropped and he is freed.
2. An angry woman confronts her husband with the evidence of his infidelity. He defends himself by saying this other woman needs him and he loves her and that he is going to leave his wife and live with this other woman. He joins a growing list of the millions of divorced who justify their actions by their love.
3. A father, distressed by the chronic and wasting disease suffered by his daughter, kills her, is apprehended and charged. His statement, “I did it because I loved her; I could no longer stand seeing her suffer year after year.” He is convicted and put in prison for manslaughter. His friends and fellow citizens gather names on a petition for his release.
4. These and many other similar stories you have probably heard on the news, or seen on the media, in drama or in movies. They have a common theme that they seek to proclaim: “If it is done for love, then the action is justified.” What does our passage today have to say about this?

B. The Passage

Romans 13:8–10 (NKJV)

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 neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love *is* the fulfilment of the law.

1. now this passage builds off of the previous verse, which tells us that we are to pay all of our debts: taxes,

customs, fear and honour ... and now proceeds to talk about our debt of love

2. I am sure as we read these words

- a. you noticed that they form the part of what we refer to as “The Ten Commandments,” and specifically to most of the second tablet of what is called in the Hebrew, “The Ten Words,” as in Deuteronomy 4:13 (JPS): “And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even the ten words; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone.”
- b. that you recollected that the Ten Commandments, the Ten Words, can be summarized in two short commands found, for example in Mark 12:29–31 (NKJV): Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments *is*: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This *is* the first commandment. And the second, like *it*, *is* this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

3. in citing from the Ten Words, Paul has omitted some of them

- a. the preceding verse tells us to render “honour to whom honour { is owed} ,” but, if the command to honour our father and mother is omitted, in our discussion we can safely bypass any significance as its spirit is found here
- b. but we cannot bypass discussing the significance of the omission of the entire “first tablet” — man’s duty to God
  - (A) this was not omitted as being unimportant; certainly not: what is said here is only pertinent if that duty to God has already been fulfilled
  - (B) in other words, you cannot even be talking about the commands here as a way of pleasing God; until you are right with God, until “... the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Romans 5:5 (NAS) and then, and only then, are you able to love God in accordance with the first tablet of the Ten Words
  - (C) and all this must take place before we can every even begin to discuss loving our neighbour as ourselves
- c. because Paul is building on the foundation that he has already laid in Romans, chapters one to eight, namely, how man is justified; how he gets right with God.

## C. Getting Right With God

### 1. the reasoning in the first part of Romans is this:

#### a. first we discover the sinfulness of man

- (A) he sins because of his fallen nature: Romans 5:12 (NAS): *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned*
- (B) he sins because of his own free choice: Romans 3:23 (NAS): *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

#### b. next, the uselessness of man's efforts to save himself

- (A) because of the enormity of sin ... Romans 1–3
- (B) because as we read in Romans 8:3a (NAS) *“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did:”* and which is why we read in Romans 3:20 (NAS): *because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*

#### c. hence, God has had to provide salvation in Christ Jesus

- (A) Romans 3:24-26 (NAS): *being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*
- (B) Romans 5:8 (NAS): *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*
- (C) in particular, there is God's work of justification
  - (1) this is the judicial declaration of the believer being righteous, of being right with God
  - (2) which God chooses to effect based upon the faith of the believer: Romans 5:1 (NAS): *Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
  - (3) Paul has already told us in Romans that we are justified by grace, ...by faith, ...by His blood
  - (4) so, if God's has declared us right with Him, at peace with Him, there is nothing that we can do to make us more right with Him — that would make Christ's work on the cross of none effect
- (D) from these and other Bible passages we can see that being justified — made right with God —

- (1) is a gift from God
- (2) is based on God's grace alone
- (3) is effected by the death of Christ which is
  - (a) vicarious or substitutionary — in our place
  - (b) expiatory — paying our debt for sin
  - (c) propitiatory — turning aside God's wrath
- (4) is fully complete for all true believers in Jesus

- 2. so, what then is man's responsibility if he is to realize the salvation that God has given, if it cannot be by his own works of righteousness, either before or after he comes to the Lord?
  - a. he must recognize his sinfulness and its consequence: death
  - b. he must be sorrowful, turning away from his sin
  - c. he must confess, casting himself upon the mercy of God
  - d. he must trust only in the finished work of Jesus Christ « »
  
- 3. accompanying such a decision for Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit
  - a. first of rebirth: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NAS): *Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*
  - b. then, as the indwelling Spirit, nurturing our spiritual life
    - (A) sustaining our fellowship with God
    - (B) through our time in prayer
    - (C) and through our time in God's word
  - c. and in this sanctifying work of the Spirit of God, each Christian shares the responsibility in various ways, one of which is before us today ...

#### D. Living the Law of Love

- 1. in the fact that *"...the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly { and note that living "godly" is accomplished by being conformed to the image of Christ} in the present age,"* (Titus 2:11-12, NAS) we, the words "instructing" along with "deny" and "live" shows that each Christians has a responsibility, if we

are to be pleasing children to Father God

a. evidence of our responsibility is found also in Romans 12:2 (NAS): *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

(A) this verse commands two things of us; namely, that

(1) we refuse to let the new creature that we now are to be shaped into the mould of this world, and,

(2) we be engaged in God's work of shaping us into the image of our Saviour, Jesus Christ

b. or, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 11:1 (NRSV): *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

2. now is the love claimed in each of our illustrations valid?

a. how can we be sure that we are followers — imitators — of Christ in this matter of love?

b. how can we refuse to be moulded by this world's thought patterns on the subject of love?

c. how can we validate that we are being led and living by the Holy Spirit and not by the spirit of this world?

3. well, in answer to this, the Holy Spirit has given us a text book by which He teaches us and leads us into all truth — these are the Holy Scriptures given for our instruction

a. this Bible is the touchstone by which we test all spirits

b. and, if we are to be conformed to the image of Christ, if we are to be imitators of Christ, then note that

c. Galatians 3:24 (NAS): *Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.*

(A) a tutor to show us our sinfulness

(B) a tutor to show us God's holiness

d. so then, the Ten Words reveal beauty of character of the moral perfection of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

(A) our love must be consistent with that character

(B) or else it is false, arising from a false spirit

e. thus, we may say categorically that Romans 13:8–10 invalidates the claim of love in our three illustrations

4. to put it more bluntly, if your love causes you to act contrary to those Ten Words, contrary to Christ's explanation of them in the sermon on the mount, then your love does not arise from "...the love of God {that} has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." Romans 5:5
5. now, this outpouring of God's love upon Christians completely changed the meaning of love: Listen to the way that Lucian of Samosata (living about 115–200 AD), a pagan satirist, portrays the Christian church in his satire "The Passing of Peregrinus," which deals with the career of a shyster by the name of Peregrinus. For a while in his career Peregrinus pretended to be a Christian, and in fact, became a teacher in a Christian community in Asia Minor (now modern Turkey). Finding himself in prison for his professed faith, Peregrinus was soon the centre of attention from members of the church. "First thing every morning," Lucian wrote, "you would see a crowd of old women, widows, and orphans waiting outside the prison" bringing him "all sorts of food." In fact, Lucian went on to say, Christians "are always incredibly quick off the mark, when one of them gets into trouble like this — in fact they ignore their own interests completely." And why do they do this? Well, Lucian explained to his pagan audience, the Christians' "law-giver," by whom he means Christ, "has convinced them that once they stop believing in Greek gods, and start worshipping that crucified sage of theirs, and living according to his laws, they are all each other's brothers and sisters." Coming from a pagan author not at all well-disposed towards Christianity this is a remarkable testimony to the way in which many early Christian communities were centres of love.  
<sub>{2}</sub>.

E. Now let's consider five character marks of Christian love

1. One: "not adultery:" recognizes and honours commitment
  - a. love is commitment
    - (A) this needs to be true in the Christian as in marriage
    - (B) this love is not saying one thing and doing another
    - (C) this love is not here today and gone tomorrow
    - (D) this love sticks by what it has said
  - b. God demonstrates this in many ways
    - (A) "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" — Jer 31:3
    - (B) "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and

will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" Numbers 23:19 (NAS)

- c. "Love suffers long and is kind" — 1 Corinthians 13:4a
  - d. "Love never fails" — 1 Corinthians 13:8a
2. Two: "not murder:" recognizes the value of life as God-given
- a. and Christ's sermon tells us hate is tantamount to murder
  - b. so, our life being given to us by God, we must account it to be God's in the way that we show love to others
  - c. God the Son, in His love, showed this sacrificial love:
    - (A) John 15:13 (NAS): Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
    - (B) 1 John 4:10 (NAS): In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
3. Three: "not steal:" recognizes the rights of others
- a. so our love is not to be a taking, grasping, controlling one
  - b. much love is really a person seeking their own satisfaction
  - c. but Christian love is giving love that reaches out to others
  - d. even as God's love is a generous, giving love
    - (A) Matthew 5:45 "... your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."
    - (B) John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, He gave ..."
  - e. "{ love} does not pursue selfish advantage" — 1 Corinthians 13:5b (Philips)
4. Four: "not bear false witness:" recognizes truth as essential foundation of love; love is truthful
- a. we try to make these antithetical: at odds with each other
    - (A) in God there is no conflict between them
    - (B) neither should there be in our love
    - (C) enlightened love is not upset by ugly realities
  - b. "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father except through me.'" John 14:6

- c. “{love} does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;” — 1 Corinthians 13:6 (NKJV)
- 5. Five: “not covet:” recognizes the power and wisdom of God to dispose of property amongst men as He sees fit
  - a. so then, love that is given with the thought of some sort of reward, of some benefit from one better off than ourselves, fails to meet this qualification; love is gracious
  - b. Christian love recognizes that “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is ...from the Father” James 1:17
  - c. “love does not envy“ — 1 Corinthians 13:4b (NKJV)

#### F. Conclusion

- 1. fulfilling the love command of Christ, John 13:34 (NAS): “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” — obeying Christ’s endorsement of the instruction, “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31) is every Christian’s responsibility
- 2. so is also, the ensuring that our love complies with that found in the Bible as we have discussed briefly this morning
- 3. but before you endeavour to put this instruction into effect in your life, make very sure that you have first received the grace of salvation from God and have “...the love of God {that} has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Romans 5:5

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com). Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick’s database are identified by “Holwick” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. “The Letter to Diognetus: an Early Christian Defence of The Truth In The Pluralistic Roman Empire“ by Dr Michael A. G. Haykin, Principal, The Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College