

# LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW

Romans 13:1-14

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Three weeks ago we looked at chpt. 8 – opening verses...What is relationship to secular law?

One of the most interesting news stories in recent years was the story of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is not the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus spoke about – no, this kingdom was located a few miles east of Salem, Oregon – the state capitol.

This kingdom was set up by a man who figured because he was a Christian, he was no longer covered by the laws of this society. So he created his own drivers license, plates, and decided that he was not liable for any property taxes. The courts of Marion County had another view – and eventually seized the land and sold it at auction – imagine that, the Kingdom of Heaven sold on eBay!

Anyway – this man fell into a common misconception among some Christians – or folks claiming to be Christian – that is, as members of God’s kingdom we don’t have to obey the laws of this world. As Christians, what should be our view toward our government and government officials? How should we conduct ourselves in relationship to them? As we mentioned last week, in light of recent events and rulings and laws, as Christians to what extent are we to follow the law and obey secular authority? And, how about our neighbor? What is our obligation to them?

So, we turn to chapter 13 in Paul’s letter to the Roman church, and he gives us answers to these questions, and shares some practical insight for the Christian’s walk in relationship to secular authorities, the world, and our neighbor. And as we have asked this summer, “what is the Christian’s relationship to the Law?” Paul says, LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW.

Today’s text reminds us and reveals to us that with joy we fulfill God’s law of love in two ways:

I. We obey God’s established government.      II. We honor our neighbors above ourselves.

## **I. WE OBEY GOD’S ESTABLISHED GOVERNMENT.**

**A.** Paul reminds the believers in Rome of their Christian life of obedience to the government.

1. Look at **vs. 1, 2a**. Three times it is mentioned: the government is established by God.
2. Looking beyond the earthly authorities these believers would see God in control, always.

**B. V. 2** reminds the believers that rebelling will bring judgment from those in authority.

1. Rebelling against the authorities would mean a life of fear, **v. 3a**.
2. There is a reason for fear coupled with rebellion and disobedience in **v. 4**.
3. The government stands as God's agent of wrath to bring punishment. This can be terrifying.

**C.** Living in fear is no way to live. These believers would and could obey because of faith, **v. 5**.

1. **Vs. 6, 7** list what is owed to the government and then to all. It is a debt of Christian love.
2. All this would be challenging for the believers. Their government was not friendly.
  - a. Nero would soon be in power.
  - b. Nero put Christians to death for entertainment.

**D.** Even today we may not always consider it a joy to pay taxes or revenue or honor or respect to our government. But in comparison we are truly, really blessed beyond all imagination. Our country has freedom for everyone. We are not ruled by an evil dictator. Ours is a democracy that provides peaceful blessings. We may not always agree with how our taxes are spent. We may not always agree with the philosophies of the politicians in power. But we do know that the governing authorities have been established by God. Our love in obeying the government is the fulfillment of God's law.

**E.** Some obey out of love and others obey out of fear. The government has been established by God to carry out his justice and judgment. Man's justice is not always carried out in a very divine way. But this justice is still the power given to ruling authorities by God himself. Notice the Lord is placed first and the government next. Both can bring sudden destruction upon those who disobey. Our government has been given God's mandate to carry justice as he declared: a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

**F.** How challenging to be a believer during this reign of Nero. How challenging to be obedient with a Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin in charge. Yet, the believer is to look beyond these power-hungry rulers and see that God is still, always in control. Today we live a relative life of ease concerning obeying our authorities established by God. Out of love

for God we obey those he has placed over us for our benefit. "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you"(HEBREWS 13:17). Love is the fulfillment of the law. We obey God's established government.

So to sum up:

- Recognize that government is God's servant – He is ultimately in charge
- Do your part to obey the civil authorities where you can
- Go above and beyond what's required to bring God's love to the world around you

## II. WE HONOR OUR NEIGHBORS ABOVE OURSELVES.

**A.** We want to always remember the perilous times of persecutions these early believers faced.

1. Nero, the government, would try to erase Christianity from the face of the earth. He would fail.

2. Some infiltrated the church to "rat out" those who were believers. Still love fulfilled the law.

**B.** The believer was to owe a continuing debt of love to his fellow man, v 8. Not easy with spies.

1. Love for ones' fellow man came from their hearts, it was not just a duty, v 9.

2. The summary of the commandments: Love God, love your neighbor – love.

**C.** V 10 is important enough to commit to memory and cherish as our personal hymn for this life.

1. **Love** does **no wrong** to a neighbor; therefore **love** is **fulfilling the law**.

2. These Christians personally knew, believed and confessed God's love and would now live it.

**D.** God's love is the key to understanding our text. God's love is the key to understanding our very purpose and being for this life. Without God's love in Christ our Savior, we have nothing and know nothing. This is the problem in our society today. The word love has almost been neutralized to have hardly any valuable meaning at all. The word love has been used as a marketing gimmick to sell soda, cars, and alcohol. Where is the love in all the abortions of our nation? Where is the love in all the senseless murders, rapes, and robberies in our country? Where is the love in the high number of

divorces that shatter so many marriages? Such things show that all too many do not grasp the true meaning of love. All too many really do not know the love of God. "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love"(1 Jn 4:7,8).

E. So, how can or how do you and I and believers then honor our neighbors above ourselves? One way to do this is just that – do it! We often say, "I was going to call," "I was going to visit," or "I was going to write / send a card / e-mail". But it seems we never get around to doing some of these easy, precious displays of our love for one another. A challenge this week for you is to send a card to someone you know. It doesn't have to be for a birthday or anniversary. Just send a card or a note of encouragement. Be assured that God will use it to arrive at just the right time for just the right person to be lifted up in a moment of great need. Paul says in Gal. 6:2, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." God reminds us not to just think about carrying other's burdens - but to carry.

F. "Love does no wrong to a neighbor!" Love does not gossip. Love does not think the worst first. Love does not stab a neighbor in the back with evil words of betrayal or lies. **LOVE** simply **does** and cannot harm its neighbor. All mankind is our neighbor.

**CONCLUSION:** There is joy in knowing God's law and doing what is right. Only the believer can and will live a life of love. It is only by faith that we know and experience the love of God in our hearts. It is only by faith that we want love others in fulfillment of the law of Christian love. Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, "The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith". **LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW.** Amen.