

Does “Love” REPLACE God’s Law?

Many people today believe that “love” has somehow replaced God’s spiritual law. They base this idea on a misunderstanding of Paul’s words in Romans chapter 13. Paul said, “he who *loves* another *has* fulfilled the law” (verse 8)---and that “love *is* the fulfillment of the law” (verse 10).

Yet, people misinterpret what Paul was saying here, and they fail to realize that Paul wrote *many* plain scriptures in **support** of obedience to God’s spiritual law!

In the scriptures above, Paul was merely saying that the spiritual law of God is *synonymous* with love! God’s spiritual law---the Ten Commandments---is a law *of* love. It tells us the basics of what true love is. The first four of the Ten Commandments instructs us in the basics of *how* to love God, and the last six instruct us in the basics of how to love fellowman.

So, if a person engages in some activity that’s *contrary* to God’s spiritual law---*contrary* to the Ten Commandments---then such activity is *not* an expression of true, Godly love. If the person says, “I *love* my neighbor’s wife,” then that is *not* Godly love!

Rather, Godly love---the love imparted to a Christian *by* the Holy Spirit---is expressed *within* the bounds of God’s law. Godly *love* flows down the channel (or riverbed) *of* the Ten Commandments!

Years *after* everything “that was nailed to the cross” *was* nailed to the cross, Paul stated that “**by** the law *is* the *knowledge* of sin” (Rom. 3:20). He said, “I would not have *known* sin [i.e., he wouldn’t have known what sin was] except *through* the law. For I would not have known covetousness [he wouldn’t have known it was sinful to covet] unless the **law** [the Ten Commandments] had said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7:7).

Paul wrote these two scriptures *despite* the fact that he had God’s Holy Spirit---he had God’s **love**---powerfully *guiding* him. Yet, even with God’s Spirit in him and guiding him, Paul *still* needed the letter of the law as a general *guide*! A guide as to *how* to avoid sin---*how* to express true Godly love.

Yes, a Christian needs the guidance of **BOTH** the Holy Spirit *and* God’s written word! Christ Himself said that we are to live “**BY** every word of God” Luke 4:4).

The Holy Spirit---and the agape love provided to a Christian *by* the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5)---*first became available* to members of the Church on the day of Pentecost that occurred about 7 weeks after Christ’s resurrection. Now, if it is true that *since* that time, we *no longer need* the **letter** of the law---that we need **only** the agape love supplied by the Holy Spirit---then why is it that the New Testament writers *continued* to repeatedly endorse the keeping of God’s **law** *after* that time?! Why didn’t they, from that point on, *cease* all positive mention of God’s law, and speak *only* of “love”?!

Plainly, Paul was *not* saying that love *replaces* the law. In fact, Paul said that the law is “holy,” “just,” and “good” (Rom. 7:12, 14).

No, Paul was not saying that love does away with the law. We can see one proof of that by comparing what *Paul* said about “love and law” to what *Christ* said about “love and law”---and we’ll see that they said the same thing!

What did Christ say? He was asked, “which *is* the **great** commandment in the *law*?” (Matt. 22:36). Christ replied, “You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and *great* commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself.’ On *these* two commandments hang **all** the Law and the Prophets.” So, here, Christ

said the *same* thing Paul said---that God's **law**, the Ten Commandments, can be summarized as "love to God" and "love to fellowman."

Was Christ saying that love *replaces* the law? No! When asked, "what good thing shall I do that I may *have* eternal life?" how did Christ reply? He said, "if you want to *enter* into life, **keep** the commandments" (Matt. 19:16-17). And He then proceeded to show He was speaking of the Ten Commandments, by quoting some of them (verses 18-19).

So, *even though* Christ explained in Matt. 22 that the Ten Commandments are expressions of **love**, He *continued* to plainly state the vital necessity of our keeping the *specific* Commandments!

Furthermore, in Matthew chapter 5, Christ said---*magnifying* the law in its spirit and intent (Isa. 42:21, KJV)---that if you *even hate* your brother, then you are a murderer! Does that sound like Christ was doing away with the law? No! Rather than being done away with, we find the influence of the law *extended*---to also include our intent, thoughts and attitudes!

Yes, love is expressed through keeping the Ten Commandments, not only in the letter, but *also* according to the spirit and intent.

Again, many people think that love does away with the Ten Commandments---that love does away with God's law. The Apostle John would certainly *know* whether that was true, as John wrote a great deal *about* love, and is even sometimes referred to as "the Apostle of love." For instance, John wrote, "He who does not *love* does not **know** God, for God *is* love" (I John 4:8) So, John obviously placed a great deal of importance on love!

Yet, John did *not* say (nor does any other writer of the scriptures say) that love replaces, supersedes, or does away with God's law! In fact, this apostle who talked so much *about* love, said this: "For this **is** the *love* of God, *that we keep His commandments*"! (I John 5:3). He also said this: "This **is** *love*, that we walk according to His *commandments*" (II John 6).

John wrote these two scriptures about 60 years *after* the Holy Spirit---and agape love---had already become *available* to the Church.

Yes, John---like Christ and Paul, and all the other writers of the New Testament---upheld the *keeping* of God's spiritual law!