

Does “Love” REPLACE God’s Law?

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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 law summarized by 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 [**what sin was**—*NIV*] except **through** the law. For I would not have known covetousness [he wouldn’t have known that it was sinful to covet] unless the **law** [the Ten Commandments] had said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7: 7).

Paul wrote those 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—a guide as to *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 seven 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.” (verses 37-40). So, there, 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! How did Christ reply when asked, “what good thing shall I do that I may **have** eternal life?” He said, “if you want to **enter** into life, **keep** the commandments”! (Matt. 19: 16-17). And He then proceeded to show that 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! (Matt. 5: 21-22). 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) Yes, 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). John also said this: “This **is** **love**, that we walk according to His **commandments**” (II John 6).

John wrote those two scriptures about 60 years *after* the Holy Spirit—and agape love—had already become *available* to the Church!

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