



## [Romans 13:8-10](#)

(8) Do not be indebted to anyone for anything, unless *it is* to love one another. For the one who loves another has fulfilled *the law* (9) Because *it says*, "You shall not commit adultery. You shall not commit murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not lust." And if *there be* any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, even by this *standard*: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (10) Love does not do any wrong to *its* neighbor; therefore, love *is* the full expression of God's law.

*A Faithful Version*

Paul presents us with an interesting paradox. On the one hand, he says that we should owe no man anything that he can rightfully claim from us. But on the other hand, we must owe everyone more than we can [hope](#) to pay, that is, perfect love.

He extends and intensifies the concept of obligation. We must be more scrupulous within the limits of the common idea of indebtedness, and also infinitely widen the range within which it operates. Did not our failure to meet our obligations to [God](#) and man accrue for us an unpayable debt? Now that the debt has been paid, we are obliged not only to strive to avoid further indebtedness, but also to expand and perfect the giving of love.

This paradox is more apparent than real, because love is not an added duty but the inclusive framework within which all duties should be done. Love is the motivating power that frees and enables us to serve and sacrifice with largeness of heart and generosity of spirit.

If we view love as just the keeping of God's laws, we are stuck on a low-level, letter-of-the-law approach to righteousness. Do not misunderstand, keeping God's law is a necessary aspect of love, but love is far more complex. Commandment keeping is compulsory and can be done in an "only because" attitude, one that concludes, "I must love the person, but I don't have to like him." Drawing upon Christ's teaching, Paul gives an entirely new significance to the idea of obligation.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

**To learn more, see:**

**[Passover, Obligation, and Love](#)**

**Related Topics:**

[Debt](#)

[Law](#)

[Letter of the Law](#)

[Love](#)

[Obligation](#)

[Spirit of the Law](#)