

Galatians 5:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Analysis

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Paul summarizes law's intent. "For all the law is fulfilled" (ho gar pas nomos en heni logō peplērōtai, ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται)—the entire law is summed up, completed, fulfilled in one statement. Perfect tense indicates permanent state. "Even in this" (en tō)—in this word/statement. He quotes Leviticus 19:18: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (agapēseis ton plēsion sou hōs seauton, ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν).

Jesus taught the same (Matthew 22:39-40, Mark 12:31). Love for neighbor fulfills law's second table (commands regarding human relationships). The Spirit produces this love; law commands but can't create it. Believers fulfill law not by legal obedience but by Spirit-produced love. This isn't replacing law with love but recognizing love as law's goal and essence. Walking in the Spirit naturally fulfills what law intended but couldn't accomplish. Love is law's fulfillment, not its replacement.

Historical Context

Jewish teaching often sought to summarize Torah's essence. Hillel's negative version: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor." Jesus and Paul phrase it positively: actively love neighbor as yourself. This isn't general benevolence but costly, sacrificial love modeled on Christ's love for us (John 13:34-35, Ephesians 5:2). Paul's argument: since law's purpose is love, and the Spirit produces love,

Spirit-led believers fulfill law's intent without being under law as means of righteousness. This resolves apparent antithesis between freedom from law and moral living.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does love for neighbor fulfill all the law's ethical demands regarding human relationships?
2. What's the difference between trying to keep the law externally and allowing Spirit-produced love to fulfill law naturally?
3. Who is your 'neighbor' that you're called to love as yourself, and what does that love look like practically?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	γὰρ	πᾶς	νόμος	ἐν	ἐνὶ	λόγῳ	πληροῦται,	ἐν
G3588	For	all	the law	even in	one	word	is fulfilled	even in
	G1063	G3956	G3551	G1722	G1520	G3056	G4137	G1722
τῷ·	Ἀγαπήσεις	τὸν	πλησίον	σου	ὥς	εαυτόν		
G3588	this Thou shalt love	G3588	neighbour	thy	as	thyself		
	G25		G4139	G4675	G5613	G1438		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 7:12 (Word): Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Leviticus 19:18 (Love): Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Galatians 6:2 (Word): Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Mark 12:31 (Love): And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

John 13:34 (Love): A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

1 Timothy 1:5 (Love): Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

Leviticus 19:34 (Love): But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Mark 12:33 (Love): And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.