

Romans 13:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Analysis

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law—Hē agapē tō plēsion kakon ouk ergazetai. plērōma oun nomou hē agapē (ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται. πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη). Kakon ouk ergazetai (works no evil) uses the present tense—love continuously refuses to harm. Ergazomai (work/do) emphasizes active choice, not passive feeling. Love doesn't murder, steal, lie, commit adultery, or covet because these harm the neighbor.

Plērōma nomou hē agapē (πλήρωμα νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη, love is the fullness/fulfillment of the law). Plērōma (fullness) indicates completion, not abolition. The law is not discarded but fulfilled—its moral content realized through Spirit-produced love. This is the opposite of legalism (external conformity without heart-transformation) and antinomianism (rejecting moral standards). Love fulfills the law by exceeding it—not 'don't murder' but 'love your enemy'; not 'don't steal' but 'give generously.'

Historical Context

Paul's teaching on love fulfilling the law (Romans 13:8-10) parallels Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), which intensifies the law's demands while revealing its heart-intention: love. The early church fathers emphasized that Christian virtue surpasses external law-keeping through Spirit-transformed desires. Augustine summarized: 'Love God and do what you will'—not license but recognition that

sanctified love naturally chooses righteousness. Luther and Calvin emphasized law's 'third use'—guiding the regenerate in grateful obedience flowing from love.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does love 'fulfill' the law rather than replace or abolish it—what's the relationship between love and moral commandments?
2. In what situations might you technically obey a commandment (don't lie, don't steal) while violating the spirit of love behind it?
3. How does understanding love as 'plērōma nomou' (law's fulfillment) guard against both legalism and moral relativism?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	ἀγάπη	τῷ	πλησίον	κακὸν	οὐκ	ἐργάζεται·
G3588	Love	G3588	to his neighbour	ill	no	worketh
	G26		G4139	G2556	G3756	G2038
πλήρωμα	οὖν	νόμου	ἡ	ἀγάπη		
is the fulfilling	therefore	of the law	G3588	Love		
G4138	G3767	G3551		G26		

Additional Cross-References

Romans 13:8 (Love): Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.