

### Matthew 5:17-20 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

<sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

<sup>19</sup> Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>20</sup> For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Last week we talked about what it meant that Christ **fulfilled** the law. We saw how richly Christ was **everything** that the law pointed to. We saw just how clearly this **schoolmaster of the law** led us to Christ.

There is something we did not touch on, but we should. One of the most **dramatic** ways, one of the most **useful** ways for **us** that Christ fulfilled the law is that he **fulfilled the laws righteous demands** for **perfection** and for **punishment for imperfection**.

The wages of sin is death. The righteous penalty for sin is death. The law demands that **the sinner must die**. And the law defines sin in such a way that an honest person can clearly see that he is **condemned** by the law. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Even if we get past the first 9 commands, everyone will fail on the 10<sup>th</sup>. It is an internal issue. Coveting. Fixating of having that which is not ours.

The beauty for us is that Christ was **qualified** to take upon Himself the penalty for our sin. He was righteous. He did not deserve to die. So He could take upon Himself **our** penalty. God could pour out the wrath that we deserved upon Christ. And because Christ was not guilty of the crime He could suffer in our place. One way that Christ fulfilled the law is that **He paid the demands of the law for us**. He not only lived up to the law's **righteous requirements**, but He also satisfied its **righteous punishment**. He received the full wrath for sin that the law demanded. He fulfilled the laws requirement for punishment for sin. And that is how everyone who is ever made right with God is made right with God.

**2 Corinthians 5:20-21 (NKJV)**

**<sup>20</sup> Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.**

**<sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

**Romans 5:6-11 (NKJV)**

**<sup>6</sup> For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.**

**<sup>7</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.**

**<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**<sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**

**<sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

**<sup>11</sup> And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**

We can see that we are saved by Christ's fulfillment of the law.

But what about this law? Isn't the law a bad thing? Doesn't it just condemn us?

Doesn't the New Testament tell us that we are no longer under the law? Does it not tell us that in **Galatians 3:10 (NKJV)**

**<sup>10</sup> For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.*"**

Doesn't it say **Galatians 3:13-14 (NKJV)**

**<sup>13</sup> Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*"),**

**<sup>14</sup> that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

Doesn't the law appear to be a bad thing? A condemning thing? Something to be avoided? Isn't it something that Christ **did a lot** to remove its effects on us. How should we **think** about this law? What is our **relationship** to it now? Is it a bad thing to be left in the dust of the past now that Christ has set us free from its condemnation?

Well it is easy to get that impression until we actually read everything the New Testament tells us about the law. There are two problems with the law. And it is similar to the same problems of an Xray machine. It tells us with great clarity what is **wrong**. And it is not capable of **fixing the problem**. The law is perfect at this. It communicates what it is that is **important to God**. It shows us the **truth**, the **standard of life**. And it, by default, must show the truth about **how far we fall short**. It does not **Make** us fall short, any more than an **Xray machine** puts the tumors in place that it reveals. The law is excellent at that. It shows us how far we fall short of perfection, And the law provides only a temporary way of covering those sins through sacrifices of sheep and goats and bulls. It always leaves us wanting more. It leaves us wanting a permanent solution. And it points to a permanent solution. But it cannot provide it.

When we actually read what scripture says about the law in the New Testament, we come away with an even **greater** regard for the law. It is **never** regarded as a bad thing. But it is regarded as something that reveals **good things about God** and **bad things about us**. It is something we desperately need to **drive us** to a solution, but it, in itself, was never intended to **be** the solution. We who believe in Christ are no longer under the law's **condemnation**. And condemnation is what the law is destined to do to imperfect humans. We are no longer under its **curse**. But by the law we read our lab test results and we run to the great physician. We are driven to where our souls can be healed. We are driven **by this schoolmaster** to Christ our savior.

The law is wonderful for what it was made for and horrible for what it was not made for. The law is a **wonderful guide** but a **terrible savior**.

The **problem with laws**, man made or God made, is that when **enforced by the authorities**, they can only change what a person **does**. They cannot change **who he is**. The highest use of the law is to make a person realize that they **need more than a new plan**. They need a **new heart**.

That is why the Christian's mission is primarily **spiritual**, not **political**.

Because humans need new **hearts** more than they need new **laws**.

So what is the Christian's relationship to the law now? We are free to love it.

Think about it. The law reveals to us what God **loves** and what God **hates**. We read about our God in the Old Testament. There is so much we would not know about God if we did not have the Old Testament. David loved God's law. His was the **New Testament attitude** toward the Law. He loved it because He loved the **God** it revealed. He loved the **goodness** of what God prescribes. His heart endorsed that which God endorsed. David fell into step with God through the law.

We should never view the law as being something bad. It is something wonderful. But we should never expect it to do what it was not designed to do. Christ regarded the law as being something that he had no intentions of **belittling or undoing**. He would **establish** the law, he would **maintain** the law, and He would **fulfill** the law.

Now the Christian is no longer **under** the law. But what does that mean. Does that mean that a Christian is free to disregard the law? Well that is not how **Jesus** regarded the law. So we would be foolish to **disregard** His perfect example.

How are we **free** from the law? Our salvation is not dependent upon keeping the law. The law is just as good as it ever was. And if we love the Author of the law we will love what He wrote. But we are no longer under the bind of **living under its condemnation because we have failed to keep it**. We have passed the test of perfect law keeping through Christ, We put on the perfect righteousness of Christ. So while the law still tells the **truth about our behavior**, it no longer **declares our destiny**. It no longer has the power to condemn us. The condemnation price has been paid and we are free from that penalty.

Now does that release us from obeying the law that still applies to Christians today? The question is almost absurd. Why would we want to avoid **obeying** what **pleases** our Savior? Why in the world would we want to be **free** from doing what **our Father wants**? Who in their right mind would want to be free of that? That would be like loving your wife but wanting to be free of those pesky things that please her. The whole idea is absurd. If you love her you **WANT** to please her and you want to **KNOW** what pleases her.

OK, well how about law and grace. Aren't they enemies? Aren't they diametrically opposed?

They are only opposed if you view them as **methods of salvation**. The law's ministry was condemnation. Grace is provided for salvation. The law was never intended to save anyone. It can't. It never could. It can only reveal what is true. And since the fall of mankind, it will always reveal failure.

The law was given to show us that we cannot **earn** our salvation. We cannot **attain** our salvation. If we are to have a salvation, it will need to be **given** to us. It will need to be **received** by us. It cannot be **earned** by us.

It was mankind's preparation for Jesus Christ. It was to teach us how **poor in spirit** we really are. It was to cause us to **mourn**. It was to cause us to **seek a righteousness outside of our own**.

And as we look at the law and the sacrifices and the rituals, we see Christ at every turn. The law was wonderful. It was never against grace. But the law was going to shine a spotlight on the grace of God.

And then it is easy to think the following wrong ideas- that once we receive grace, the law is no longer necessary. Grace somehow makes the law **obsolete**. God is no longer specific on how we should live. He no longer cares about right and wrong. It no longer matters what I do because I am under grace. It is ok that I sin because God likes showing off **how willing He is to forgive**. I am sort of helping His cause by sinning because He gets to forgive me so much more.

That is what is called antinomianism. It is anti law. It is anti God's rule. And Paul doesn't have any problem discerning what to do about that. He says this.

**Romans 6:1-15 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?**

**<sup>2</sup> Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**

**<sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?**

**<sup>4</sup> Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

**<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection,**

**<sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of**

sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

<sup>7</sup> For he who has died has been freed from sin.

<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

<sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more.

Death no longer has dominion over Him.

<sup>10</sup> For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.

<sup>11</sup> Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

<sup>13</sup> And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

<sup>14</sup> For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

<sup>15</sup> What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Do you see what Paul is saying here? Grace gives you the power to live a godly life. Grace gives you the power to obey the commands. Just because you are no longer bound under the law's condemnation, you are no longer under the law's hopeless state, that doesn't mean the goodness of the law goes away. Once you are given a new heart the enemy of the law becomes your friend because it wants what you want now. You have been changed into congruence with the law.

Look what Christ said.

**John 15:9-11 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

<sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

<sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that your joy may be full.*

We cannot, in any way, get the idea that keeping God's law, as it applies to believers today is a bad thing. We cannot get the idea that it is an optional thing. No. It is a congruent thing.

If we have received grace, if we have really received grace, it will change us. It will give us the **power** to, and the **desire** to obey what God says. And of course our desire and our performance will not be perfect. But it will be real and substantial and demonstratable. There will be signs of life.

A human being taught to repeat a prayer will not accomplish this kind of thing in a person's life. But receiving the resurrection power of salvation **will** accomplish this sort of thing. And anything short of that is very suspect.

Anyone who can live in **habitual sin** and be **content** with that shows nothing of true salvation.

If you have truly received grace, you will find in you a desire to please God, a desire to obey God. That will not be the **only** desire. You are promised to have **competing** desires. But it will be a powerful desire that will have great sway in your life.

I like our brother Jones's quote here.

**if your so-called grace (which you say you have received) does not make you keep the law, you have not received grace. You may have received a psychological experience, but you have never received the grace of God. and a little more**

**We must never separate these two things. (law and grace) Grace is not sentimental; holiness is not an experience. We must have this new mind and disposition which leads us to love the law and to desire to keep it; and by His power He enables us to fulfil the law. That is why our Lord goes on to say in verse 19, 'Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.' That was not spoken only to the disciples for the three short years they were to be with Christ until He died; it is permanent and everlasting. He enforces it again in Matthew 7, where He says, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.'**

I was looking at the law this week. Read the book of Exodus. It tells us how we should **relate to God**. It tells us how we should **relate to each other**. It is amazing to me how much of our our own civil laws were based on the law of God. Even the degrees of homicide find their base in scripture. If a man has a

bull that has never been mean, and if that bull kills someone, that is one degree of manslaughter. But if he has a bull that he knows is dangerous and does nothing to protect people, that is another degree of manslaughter. There is nothing bad about that law. It is good. It reflects God's goodness and righteousness at every turn. It informs us how we should live, how we should think.

Now again, like we mentioned last week, we must discern **how the law fits** the world we live in. Some of it is what I would call **universal**. The scholars call this God's moral law. But that might not be the best way to describe it. All of God's law was moral. But some of it applies to all men everywhere. Some of it applies to how to live in the kingdom of Israel as a **genetic Israelite**. This would include all of the laws regarding life in the land and rule of Israel. And some of it applied to the ceremonies that were only required by those who were Jewish.

This became a major problem when Gentiles entered the fold. Then people like Paul and the apostles had to sort out where the lines are drawn. Even today some of those lines are difficult to draw. And we should have love toward those who draw those lines at a different place than we draw them. Maybe we are wrong. We should never be too critical of brothers and sisters who are seeking to do what God says. It is a **good thing** when a person wants to obey the law of God. That should be all of our desires. It is an evidence that we love Christ.

Many of the New Testament epistles address how to apply the law to Gentiles. Clearly the precedent is that some still applies and some does not. We have Biblical help in navigating those waters. Acts had some of that drama included in it as well. It would have been very difficult to accept the idea that some of the law applied to the followers of God and some of it did not. But that is exactly what had to be concluded.

What do you think of the law? I would encourage you to read it this week and look for the beauty in it. Look for the insight in it. And look for the ways that the law would be the worse news in the world if it were not for Jesus who provided us His perfect righteousness.

The law defines failure and success. It defines what righteousness is and what sin is, what missing the mark is. It helps us by teaching us what righteous living looks like.



Do we love God's law? Do we see in it the **wonder**? Do we see how **perfect** it is at sorting out the conflict that sin creates between God and men and between men and men?

Here is what a man after God's own heart had to say about it.

**Psalm 119:1-18 (NKJV)**

- 1 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD!**
- 2 Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!**
- 3 They also do no iniquity; They walk in His ways.**
- 4 You have commanded *us* To keep Your precepts diligently.**
- 5 Oh, that my ways were directed To keep Your statutes!**
- 6 Then I would not be ashamed, When I look into all Your commandments.**
- 7 I will praise You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgments.**
- 8 I will keep Your statutes; Oh, do not forsake me utterly!**
- 9 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.**
- 10 With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!**
- 11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!**
- 12 Blessed *are* You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes!**
- 13 With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth.**
- 14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As *much as* in all riches.**
- 15 I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways.**
- 16 I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.**
- 17 Deal bountifully with Your servant, *That* I may live and keep Your word.**
- 18 Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.**

This is to be our attitude to the law of God as well. Lord open our eyes that I may see wondrous things from your law.