

The OT Law and the NT Christian - How Jesus fulfils the Law

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. "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. ... "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. - Mat 5:17-18, 20 NKJV

I think there are two mistakes we can make in applying this passage to our lives:

1. The first is we can ignore the Old Testament thinking it is old and out of date or doesn't apply to us. However, Paul told Timothy:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, - 2Ti 3:16 NKJV
We need to study the **whole Bible** because it is "profitable" or beneficial to us in four ways: for **doctrine**—that's what's right; for **reproof**—that's what's not right; for **correction**—that's how to get right; and for **instruction** in righteousness—that's how to stay right.

2. The other mistake is to start trying to keep the festivals, the dietary laws, the Sabbath and so on in the mistaken belief that it will make us more righteous or holy before God and men.

Paul writing to the Galatians quoted Deuteronomy 27:26 and said:

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do **everything** written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because "the righteous will live by faith." - Gal 3:10-11 NIV

Relying on the law is like hanging from a chain with 613 links. You need all 613 links to hold you. If one link breaks you fall. If you break one of the 613 laws of Moses you considered to be guilty of all of them in the eyes of God.

That phrase "The righteous shall live by faith" is quoted from Habakkuk 2:4 and it is the phrase that changed Martin Luther's life leading to the protestant reformation. This quote is found in Romans, Galatians and Hebrews. Romans describes who the just are, Galatians explains how they shall live and Hebrews describes what faith looks like.

In our passage Jesus said ""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."

The phrase "one jot or one tittle" is the equivalent to our saying "the dotting of an 'i' or the crossing of a 't'".

Heaven and Earth have not passed away yet and not all that the prophets wrote has been fulfilled yet so the Law is still in effect, doing what it was intended to do. It is important to notice that the many passages that confirm that we are not under the law are all written to, and about, believers. If you have not accepted Jesus' payment

for your sin then you are still bound by the law and have to pay the price for your sin which is eternal separation from God.

What is the purpose of the Law?

- “Through the law we become conscious of sin”. Rom 3:20.
- “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith”. Gal 3:24.

I like the way Derek Prince used to explain what ‘justified’ means. He would say it is ‘just-as-if-I’d never sinned’. Another way of explaining it is we are declared ‘not guilty’.

The purpose of the Law was to show us our need for God’s grace because we can’t live up to the requirements of the Law. With the exception of the 10th commandment, ‘Do not covet’, observance of the Law was measured in external behaviour. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus raised the bar from external behaviour to internal motivation which He said was the original intent of the Law. If we thought we had a chance of keeping the Old Testament Law Jesus raised the standard so high we have no option but to seek His mercy and grace.

GRACE

**God’s
Riches
At
Christ’s
Expense**

Grace is receiving forgiveness or having a debt paid for you when you don’t deserve it. You can’t earn grace otherwise it would no longer be grace. It has to be a free gift.

We are not to go back under the Law

From the time of the apostles onward there have been people trying to put us back under the Law in addition to God’s grace. Because of this tendency, large sections of the New Testament are written directly about this issue. In Acts 15 the council at Jerusalem discussed what the gentiles should do regarding the Law and their decision was summed up as follows:

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.” - Act 15:28-29 NKJV (see also Romans 5:10; 6:14; 7:1-14; 2 Cor. 3:6-18; and the entire book of Galatians).

These passages teach us not to be legalistic about the Law to try and gain favour with either God or others. We are told to live by the guidance and enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We are not to abuse our liberty

There are also sizable portions of the New Testament written against the misuse of the liberty we have been given.

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." - Gal 5:13-14 NIV (See also Mat 7:12, 22:4; Rom 6; Rom 8; Tit. 2:11-14).

It is clear that we are not to go back under the Law, but instead we should have a proper understanding of how we are to live as recipients of God's grace. The freedom we have as Christians is not to do as we please but rather to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." - Rom 12:2

How did Jesus fulfil the Law?

- 1) His obedience to the Law – not breaking it Himself.
To see what fulfilling the Law looks like we look at the life of Jesus who was a perfect example to us.
- 2) By His death: He became the sin offering required by the Law for us.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Rom 6:23 NIV (see also Prov 10:16)

God is Holy and we are sinful so the law specifies that we should be eternally separated from God in spiritual death. Jesus never sinned so He did not need to die for His own sins; there weren't any. This enabled Him to be the perfect sacrifice under the law to pay for our sins once and for all.

- 3) By sending the Holy Spirit: He enables us to live right.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. - Rom 8:1-4 NIV

In Galatians 3 and 4 Paul uses six different arguments as to why we are no longer under the law. Let's read the first few of those arguments in Galatians 3:

Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the Law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it?

I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ. In the same way, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." ...

But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under [a] curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law." So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing... - Gal 3:1-6, 10-11,13 NLT

Central theme of the Bible

- God created a perfect world and made man with a free will to live in relationship with Him.
- Man broke the rules and faced a punishment of eternal separation from God, a spiritual death.
- God the creator became a man and lived a perfect life among us.
- He died to buy us back by paying the price for our sin as a perfect sacrifice.
- If we accept His payment for our sin He forgives us of all our wrong doing.
- It is our privilege then to know Him and spend eternity in relationship with Him.

That's a quick summary of what the Bible is all about.

Redemption: an example of how Jesus fulfils the Law

Redemption is the buying back of that which was lost to the original owner (Lk 21:28; Rom 8:23; Gal 3:13; Eph 1:14; Dan 8:26; Dan 12:4, 9).

The pattern of redemption

The book of Ruth gives us an example of how redemption works. In this beautiful story we have Boaz who is the Kinsman-Redeemer. He redeems or buys back Naomi's land using the Law of Redemption.

The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. - Lev 25:23-25

The Kinsman-Redeemer had to:

- Be a kinsman, a blood relative,
- Be willing and able,
- And had to pay the full price on behalf of their relative.

That is the pattern specified by the law and demonstrated in the book of Ruth.

Redemption of all creation - The Seven-Sealed Scroll: Revelation 5

Using this understanding of how the law of redemption works we can look at how Jesus uses this to redeem not just believers but the creation also.

The Seven-sealed Scroll

“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.” - Rev 5:1

A sealed scroll, with conditions on the exterior suggests a title deed to property.

“Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to lose its seven seals.” And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain...” - Rev 5:2-6

In this drama unfolding in Heaven the angels are looking for a **man**, a *kinsman* of Adam, who would meet the conditions written on the outside of the scroll and be able to redeem the property described within. They searched the entire universe for a sinless man and came up empty-handed until Jesus stepped forward. I believe that this drama in Revelation 5 is what is referred to in Romans 8:

For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the **redemption** of our body. - Rom 8:22-23 NKJV

Galatians 4

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to **redeem** those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. - Gal 4:4-7 NIV

Summary

To summarise what we have looked at today.

We have received the Holy Spirit as a gift by God's grace through faith in Jesus work on the cross.

We are not to try and add to the perfect work Jesus did by putting ourselves back under the Law.

It is equally clear that we are not to abuse the liberty we have in Jesus by wilfully continuing in sin.

We fulfil Christ's Law by loving God and loving our neighbour as Christ loves us.

We have looked at how Jesus has fulfilled the law and in particular how He has applied the law of redemption to pay the penalty for our sin on our behalf.

Our righteousness is to exceed the Pharisees

"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." - Mat 5:20 NKJV

The Scribes and Pharisees were professional law keepers. It was the primary focus of their lives so how do we exceed their efforts? We exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We focus on getting our heart attitudes right and keeping them right because our behaviour flows from our heart attitudes as we are told in Proverbs:

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." - Pro 4:23

How do we guard our hearts?

Monitor your thought life.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things. - Phl 4:8 NKJV

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. - Phl 4:23 NKJV