

The Rule of the Christian Life (3:25 to 5:24)

by C.I. Scofield

C.I. Scofield's sermon emphasizes the believer's freedom from the law through grace and the significance of sonship in Christ.

Scripture: Romans 3:19, Romans 7:18, Romans 8:3, Galatians 2:21, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 3:26, Galatians 4:6-7, 1 Timothy 1:7

Topics: "Law And Grace", "Christian Freedom"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches about the believer's relationship with the law and the freedom found in grace through faith in Christ Jesus. He emphasizes that true obedience to God's will comes from a renewed heart that longs to do His will, even though the flesh may struggle to obey. The believer is no longer under the law but is a son of God, born into sonship through faith in Christ, and empowered by the Spirit to live a holy life. The contrast between law and grace is highlighted, showing that they are incompatible principles that cannot be mixed.

Transcript

Before we look at this, suffer a prefatory word. There is such a thing as mere fleshly exultation in what seems to be liberty not to obey God. That is antinomianism, lawlessness, mere spiritual and moral anarchy. The renewed heart longs unspeakably to do the whole will of God. The inner man delights in the law of God. His agony (Rom. 7:18-24) is that though he delights in the law, he cannot do the law:

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And, conversely, the true ground of exultation in deliverance from law is that what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3) grace perfectly does through the Spirit.

One repels with indignation the imputation of antinomianism--a condition abhorrent alike to God and to the renewed heart. The true antinomians are those who by keeping the believer under the law effectually prevent him from real obedience.

Let us now take these things up in due order. As if anticipating the timorous gloss of modern theology, the Apostle opens this part of the epistle by denying that the believer is under law in any sense: "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a pedagogue" (3:25). No evasion is possible here. The pedagogue is the law (3:24); faith justifies; but the faith which justifies also ends the rule of the pedagogue. Modern theology says that after justification we are under the pedagogue. Here is a clear issue, an absolute contradiction between the Word of God and theology. Which do you side with?

Having laid down the principle that the saint is no more under the law as a rule of life than the sinner was under the law as a means of life, the next step is taken--the believer is a son, not a servant; an adult, not a child (3:26 to 4:7). The words are perfectly plain, and exposition seems almost an impertinence. The thought is that the Jew was under the law because, though a child, he was not a son.

Sonship in the New Testament is not so much a word of relationship as of position. It is a word, also, of dispensational import. In other words, the Jew under the law was from birth to death a child. He never came to his majority.

In Roman parlance, he never wore the toga virilis of an adult. That is the force of chapter 4, verses 1 through 3. Therefore, being a child, not an adult, he was kept under the tutorship and governorship of the law, and differed nothing from a servant. That is precisely the place where modern theology would keep the believer of this dispensation.

But in contrast with the Jew under law, the believer of this dispensation is born into sonship: "As many as received Him, to them gave He authority (power) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born ... of God" (John 1:12, 13). This is the truth of Galatians 3:26: "For ye are all the sons (R. V.) of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

But this could not be without redemption (4:4, 5). In Galatians redemption is two-fold: from the curse of the law (3:13); and from under the law (4:5).

The Old Testament saint had not the Spirit of sonship, because he was a child, not a son; but, because we are sons, we have received the Spirit of sonship, crying in our hearts, "Abba, Father" (4:6). Adoption, again, is a word of position, not of relationship. The word means literally "placing as a son." We are born sons, but the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer gives him the realization, the consciousness of his sonship. The Apostle's conclusion is, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son" (4:7).

It should be needless to add that all this has in view only the question of the authority of the pedagogue. It is the believer in relation to the law which is the question, not the believer in relation to God. As regards the law, the believer is a son and not under it; as regards the Father, the believer begins new life as a babe (1 Pet. 2:2); and is ever the Father's dear child (Eph. 5:1), and little child (1 John 2:1, etc.); and this is, of course, realized in experience. But positionally he is an adult son, and not under the law. So far the Spirit is mentioned only in relation to sonship, but later we shall find the Apostle showing us that in this mighty fact of an indwelling Spirit in every believer lies the potentiality of an obedient and holy life.

Meantime, he reminds the Galatians that, in putting themselves under law, they have lost, not their salvation, indeed, but their blessing: "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me" (4:15). Under grace they were so blessed that they would gladly have given the Apostle their eyes. Where is that blessing now?

The truth is, friends, that an apathetic, dull, inexperienced Christian may get on after a sort under law as a rule of life. Not apprehending that the law is anything more than an ideal, they feel a kind of pious complacency in "consenting unto the law that it is good," and more or less languidly hoping that in the future they may succeed better in keeping it than in the past.

So treated the law is wholly robbed of its terror. Like a sword carefully fastened in its scabbard, the law no longer cuts into the conscience. It is forgotten that the law offers absolutely but two alternatives--exact obedience, always, in all things, or a curse. There is no third voice. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.... For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10).

The law has but one voice: "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). The law, in other words, never says: "Try to do better next time." The law, friends, either approves or curses--a fact of which the antinomian legalist seems entirely unaware. Professing to be under the law, his conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron. He stands before the thunders of Sinai unmoved.

But the Apostle would fain bring the whole legal discussion to an end that he may turn to the power which is able to govern the life and produce holiness of character (4:21-31). His final word concerning the law, then, is the revelation of the true spiritual meaning of the domestic history of Abraham:

Hagar is the law. And, it may be remarked in passing, herein is the complete refutation of another gloss of theology--the notion that in all this tremendous discussion Paul is talking only of the ceremonial law. It would suffice in answer to this to ask if the redemption of Christ had reference only to the ceremonial law? For the Apostle speaks but of "the law." But the revelation of the allegory settles forever that evasion: "For these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar" (4:24). Hagar, then, is the whole covenant from Sinai. And the conclusion is perfectly explicit: "So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman" (4:31); and therefore "the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (4:30).

In other words, law and grace are diverse, contrasting principles, and can no more be mingled than oil and water. Grace is invariably by faith (Gal. 2:21; 3:11, 12; Rom. 3:24; 4:4-16; 5:2; 11:6).

The law, let it be repeated, was given for a great, a necessary work preparatory to grace. That is its true place of deathless honor, of holy (if terrible) impressiveness; but it was given neither to make us righteous (Gal. 2:21), nor to rule us, when grace through faith has made us righteous.

We may close for the present with Paul's solemn admonition to legalists, the real antinomians:

"Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for

murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:7-10).

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