

The Christian and God's Law

by Paris Reidhead

The law is not destroyed, but fulfilled in Christ, and it is through the miracle of regeneration that the law is fulfilled in a Christian.

Duration: 35:03

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:27, Matthew 5:3-12, Matthew 5:17-20, Romans 6:1, Romans 8:1-2

Topics: "Law Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the relationship between Jesus Christ and the law. The people are curious about whether Jesus will accept or reject the Mosaic teachings. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. He explains that as Christians, we are called to love and obey God's law, and our righteousness should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. The sermon is based on Matthew 5:17-20, where Jesus affirms the importance of the law and the consequences of breaking or obeying it.

Transcript

Will you turn please to Matthew chapter 5. We are concerned today about the law, the Lord Jesus Christ and his relationship to the law, the Christian and his relationship to the law, the gospel and the relationship of that to the law, all is set forth here in verses 17 to 20 of Matthew 5. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these 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. For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ has begun his ministry with great acclaim, seen at Jordan, received at Cana, honored in Galilee, with great preaching through all their villages, teaching and healing the sick.

Multitudes follow him and the people listen to him as he indicts the Pharisees and as he scorns everything that is shallow and cheap and meaningless in the religious life of the people. Naturally, they have a question. What is going to be his relationship to the law? Is he going to consent to the law? Will he accept it? Will he stand with it? Or is he going to repudiate all of the Mosaic teachings and establish a law of his

own? This was the question in the minds of the people.

The Beatitudes might have implied that he was setting up a new type of government away from that one which says do not or else. He has now established the principle blessed are you when you do. But he wants it to be perfectly clear that there is no contradiction or conflict between what Moses said and what he is saying.

And thus he uses the words here, think not that I am come to destroy the law of the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. Now there are those that say the Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill in the sense of adding to and completing the law of Moses.

That the Sermon on the Mount, so say these would-be scholars, represents a higher level of ethics than the Mosaic treatment and the Mosaic testimony. This is not what the word fulfill is intended to imply and I am quite convinced that this is totally wrong. That when our Lord Jesus said I am not come to destroy but to fulfill, he had reference not in the sense of adding to it because the Mosaic wasn't complete, but in perfecting in himself and through himself all that the Mosaic law prescribed.

In that sense he was going to do in his humanity exactly what Moses had asked. And he was going to become now the prototype of the obedience to the Mosaic law that had not been rendered here heretofore. He would fulfill it in this sense.

Now he said think not that I am come to destroy the law. Why? Well in the first place it was his law. Who is it that spoke from Sinai? Jehovah.

And who is Jehovah? Jesus. For the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New Testament. And the one whose voice thundered and who spoke to Moses was none other than the Lord Jesus.

Whose finger was it that inscribed on the tables of stone the Decalogue? His in his pre-incarnation power and glory. He is the one who did it. He gave it to Moses.

And who is the one of whom the prophet spoke? None other than the Lord Jesus. All the types and shadows and pictures of the Old Testament are brought into their perfect fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it is his law and these are his prophets speaking of him.

The second thing we see is that which I've already intimated and that is that the Lord Jesus is the only one who could and who did keep the law in the measure and manner in which it was intended. If you wish to see what Moses expected of a man, what God had given Moses to see as the norm, you see it in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you would see what God would have you to be, you see it in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He alone was the one who had up until that time and since of course it is equally true in degree, though not in kind, but in degree, he is the one who perfectly kept the law. Then the second, the third way in which this law is fulfilled is in the fact that the law demanded the death of the innocent for the guilty. You remember, do you not how the Old Testament man would bring a lamb to the door of the tabernacle, put his hands on the lamb's head and confess his sin over the innocent lamb and the lamb would die, thus signifying that it was the death of the innocent for the guilty by which sin was atoned.

And now our Lord Jesus becomes the fulfillment of all of the lambs, of all of the angels. And he is the one now that stands forth at the end of time and of whom John can say, behold the lamb. The lamb that was slain to make the coat of skin for Adam, the one that was slain by Abel, the one that was offered by Noah

and on down across the centuries, all were but fingers pointing toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he now is going to die the just one for the unjust that he might bring us to God. And he's going to fulfill the law's demands in this perfect sense. And then of course, the last sense, the fourth sense in which he fulfills the law is that which you'll find in Ezekiel, the 36th chapter, where you hear him say, I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes.

And so the Lord Jesus is keeping the law for you in order that he can keep the law through you. This is the genius of it. He is keeping the law for you in his walk, that he might die for you, being made sin for you, that he by his spirit may come into you and keep the law through you.

Now there have been some that have said, since the Lord Jesus kept the law for me, it doesn't make any difference how I live. I can go on and do what I please. I'm under him.

He was holy and righteous. He shed his blood. I'm under the blood.

The father doesn't see me. He only sees the blood and therefore it doesn't make any difference how I live. And thus you have in what I've just stated to you, a heresy of the most horrendous nature called antinomianism and a heresy that in many places passes for orthodoxy in the 20th century, but it's heretical nonetheless.

And Paul described it there in the sixth chapter of Romans in the first verse when he said, what then shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? And the answer was an unqualified, no, never let it be said that Christ kept the law so that you could become a lawbreaker. No, this is the contrary. He kept the law and died under its dire sentence upon you so that having satisfied the law's demand upon you, he could come into you and keep the law through you and thus would have fulfilled the prophecy of Ezekiel.

I will put my spirit within them and cause them to walk in my statutes. And so we have this close relationship between Christ and the law. He gave it, he alone kept it, he satisfied it, and then he reproduces it in the lives of those who he redeems.

Now he also gives us the relationship between the gospel and the law. There are those who have done indescribable damage to the cause of Christ by suggesting that this is the age of grace and the law isn't to be used as though the law were something that passed away when grace came in. Well, no, quite to the contrary.

Grace and law have ever been joined, have ever been joined. There wasn't a time when they began to be joined. For instance, we read from John where he said, the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

But when? When did it come by Jesus Christ? Well, I believe it came from him right on Mount Sinai. Personally, I believe that law and grace were joined there. For it was there when Moses, when Christ spoke to Moses, that he gave him the law and he also gave him the law of the offerings and the sacrifices and the tabernacle.

For it was in the mountain that God revealed to Moses the tabernacle and the offerings. Now what does that suggest? That back there in the Old Testament, the purpose of the law was to reveal sin and produce a consciousness of guilt and a state of need and awareness of desperation in the human spirit so that one would be prepared to take, properly take, the offering to the temple. The law was in this case the

schoolmaster to check off the report of the Old Testament sinner and show him where he'd failed and where he needed atonement.

And then, having had the law reveal his need, grace revealed the answer. And he would take the firstling of the flock, the lamb without blemish and without spot, and he would go to the door of the tabernacle. He would put his hands on the lamb's head and confess his sin by word in describing it and naming it.

And when he had done this, the priest would take the lamb, slay it, catch the blood in the base and sprinkle the blood properly and put the body of the lamb on the fire. And the one standing outside the temple would see the smoke of the lamb, his lamb, ascending up over the wall of the tabernacle. And he would say, my sin is forgiven because the lamb has died.

Now, this is grace. This was grace. The only way that sin is dealt with in the Old Testament is the innocent dying for the guilty.

And there's nothing new then in the New Testament. It's just simply that the Old Testament saint, by means of the lamb, looked ahead to the one that was to come, and we look back to the one who did come. But it's the same lamb that saved sinners all through the ages.

There's only one sacrifice for sin, not many. They were never saved in the Old Testament by the blood of lambs and bulls and goats. They were saved by faith in the offering that God would make and in the grace that God would reveal.

They looked ahead. Moses chose to suffer the afflictions of Christ, looking ahead to the one that should come, pictured by the lamb in this object lesson of grace that was being acted out before them. And then, when our Lord died, he went and preached to those in prison.

Personally, I believe that these were the redeemed of all the Old Testament period that had looked ahead and were the children of Abraham, who was the father of the faithful. And it was called Abraham's bosom. And he went to them and said, now it's accomplished.

The lamb that you believed in has come, and has lived, and has died, and atonement has been made. And now your deliverance is complete, and Abraham's bosom is no more. And when a Christian dies, he doesn't go to Abraham's bosom.

For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Because they were waiting for that revelation and for that redemption which would come. They were looking forward to the one who was to come, and they trusted in him.

And all the sweetness and the wonder of realizing that the purpose of the law is the same now as it was then. No one is saved by keeping the law. No one was ever saved by keeping the law, and God never expected anyone to be saved by keeping the law.

The purpose of the law wasn't to save, but to slay. The law was the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. The law was given that the sin might be exceeding sinful.

By the law is the knowledge of sin. Remember what we read in Romans 3. Now what thing soever the law sayeth, it sayeth to them that are under the law. Why? That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

The purpose of the law wasn't saved. And so he said, till all be fulfilled. And the moral law will not have finished its work until the last member of the body of Christ is in.

It's the work of the spirit of God to produce conviction. But he uses the word of God, the teaching of God, the Torah, the Shas, or the law, that revelation of the moral nature of God, to produce conviction. And so Christ relates the gospel to the law by indicating that till heaven and earth have passed away, not one jot or one tittle shall pass away.

It shall be preserved, and be used, and be instrumental in bringing men to a saving knowledge of Christ. Now, if you understand this, then you realize that Wesley was absolutely right when he wrote to the young preachers of his day saying, when you begin to preach, use 90% law, and you first contact the sinners in 10% grace. And as they respond to the slaying, breaking ministry of law, then increase it until finally it's 90% grace and 10% law.

But unfortunately, I say, 100 years ago, there was this wretched teaching which said that the law had no place, and just preach grace. Well, what we've done, you see, is to preach how to be saved to people who had no need for salvation, nor had no understanding of why it was necessary for Christ to die. In other words, we've gospel-hardened a generation of sinners.

I was reading just the other day Finney, and he said that if we are to see God get, and this was in the latter part of his ministry in 1870, he said, if we are to see God get the glory that he had 50 years ago, 30, 40 years ago in revival ministry, he said, we must come back to the proper repeaching of the law. Well, we understand exactly what he meant. Now, let's see something here, though.

It says, till all be fulfilled. What about the ceremonial law? Someone is going to ask, if you're thinking with me, well, what about ceremonial law? Are you saying that the ceremonial law has to be kept? No, I am saying that Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law, for every ceremony was but a picture or a foreshadowing of Christ. And when Christ came, the ceremonial law was fulfilled in him, for it was a foreshadowing of him.

Well, what about the civic law, the judicial law? Yes, the judicial law had its application to Israel, which was a nation that God chose to be an illustration of his character. Israel was passed away, passed over as a nation for this purpose, and the judicial law had its total application, thus, to Israel. And in that sense of the judicial social aspects would apply to the nation.

But the moral law, that which we have here is that imperishable, that imperishable law, that's just and holy and good. The Ten Commandments, if you please, but certainly don't restrict it there. Every teaching that reveals any aspect of the nature of God is properly part of the law, and this will never change, it'll never be altered.

For instance, someone might say, well, what about the Ten Commandments? Certainly they don't apply to a Christian. Wait, do you realize that every one of the Ten Commandments except the one having to do with the Sabbath is repeated in the New Testament at least 11 times? Everyone, 11 times, not once, but 11 times. That's the most, and some far more.

But every one of the New Testament, every one of the laws except the one having to do with the Sabbath is repeated at least 11 times by the Holy Ghost, and are now the laws of the Spirit. They have been given by him. The same desire, God's character hasn't changed, God can't be smiled anymore on lying or stealing or adultery or murder than he could back there.

God is the unchangeable God, and therefore this moral revelation of his nature can never be altered and can never change. Now Christ also relates the Christian to the law, for we find that the Beatitudes are a description of the new man, the new creation, the one that has partaken of the divine nature. What has happened? Well, first he's poor in spirit, he mourns over his past sins, he's mean.

Well, now how did he acquire this? By self-effort, by legalistic endeavor, by saying, I'm going to be poor in spirit, I've always been haughty, but I'm going to be poor. Is that how he got it? No, no, that's not how he got it. How did he get it? He got it by the same way that one received forgiveness in the Old Testament, by coming before God and testifying to what kind of a heart he had, to the haughtiness and the arrogance and the pride and the rebellion of it, and crying out and saying, oh God, this is my heart, I can't change it, but thou canst.

Can the leopard change his spots? The Ethiopian change his skin? Lord, thou must give repentance. And in his helplessness, God did, for he's been exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. And what we find in the Beatitudes is not a ladder to climb into heaven, but a description of the supernatural work that God does in the heart of the one whom he redeems.

And therefore, a Christian is one that has partaken of the divine nature and feels the same way about things that God feels. You see, Christ be in you, except you be reprobate, and wherever Christ is, he is as Christ. And when Christ comes into you to regenerate you, he comes in to feel the same way about sin that he felt back there.

Therefore, Christian is one that loves God's law. I delight to do thy will, oh God, is not only spoken of the Son, but it is spoken also of everyone that partakes of the life and the nature of the Son. And if you are born of God today, then you love the will of God and the way of God and the word of God and the law of God.

Now, what happens? How is this law going to be fulfilled? How is it going to be accomplished? Do you remember the text I read from Romans? It says what things were spoke again, saying that we are no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus who walked not after the flesh, but after the spirit, for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. I love the image that Dr. Moyer gave in Bible school 25 years ago. He said, it's like a fork put into a huge joint of beef that's being boiled.

And the fork is strong enough. And you put the 10 time fork into the beef, but the beef won't hold it. And so the fork pulls right through it.

And he says, the law was weak through the flesh. There wasn't anything the matter with the law. It was the flesh that was weak.

And so the law has simply revealed the nature of the flesh. It's revealed what the heart of a man is. It's enmity toward God and toward his law.

Now Jesus Christ is made to be what we were. And then he comes into us to make us what he is and gives us his life and this miracle of regeneration. And now what happens? Well, the righteousness of the law is to be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

How? By Christ living his life in us. And thus the, the miracle of this is that the Lord Jesus is saying by the Beatitudes, this is what the regenerate heart is. And now he says, I haven't come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it in men who will let me perform in them the kind of miracle I've just described.

The law is going to be fulfilled in them. And it won't be the day by their own natural energy, which is not a wit changed. We'll do it, but I will do it.

I will live in them and I will dwell in them and walk in them. For it is God who would work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Now this doesn't mean that a Christian can't sin, nor that he will not sin, but it does mean that his desire will be not to sin.

He isn't going to want to sin and he doesn't have to sin. And a Christian will not practice sin. Now you come to me and say, well, I know somebody.

All right. I know this, that the foundation of God stand assured and have this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and let everyone that name it the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

And if someone that claims to be a Christian is living in sin, he makes his claim without scriptural validity and validation, because there is absolutely no grounds for assurance while in sin, just as clear as it can be. Now, I submit to you that when God gives a person a new nature, he does what he described in first John three, eight, where it says, whosoever is born of God does not keep on practicing sin for God's seed remain within him. And he cannot continue to practice sin because he is born of God.

And this is manifest the children of God and the children of the devil. If you've been born of God, the greatest grief in your life is then when you, when you disobey him, when you break his law, when you sin against the spirit, when you break the word of God, the greatest grief that you experience is not what someone does to you, but what you do toward God, not because you're afraid of what he's going to do toward you, but because somehow in the miracle of his grace, he's given you a new heart to love his law and love his word and love his will. You want to please him.

Now we have the next thing. Christ relates the hypocrite to the law. I'd like to read.

And I can't Matthew 23, but in this, he exposes the, the Pharisees here with these people that were the epitome of religiosity hypocrites, nonetheless, although unconsciously, I don't think they deliberately set out to be hypocrites. What you discover is this, that the Pharisees were more concerned with the outward than they were with the inward. You see, he said, how can God bless you? God knows your heart for he knows that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

This the Pharisees had done. They had put their attention on things that God hated and they despised things that God loved. And so concerned with the outward instead of the inward, he said, you are quite at sepulchers.

You put paint on the outside and left the inside full of dead men's bones. You clean the outside of the platter, but left the inside smeared and greasy. This was this description of the Pharisees.

And then of course, every one of us have the problem of finding out what we are. Everything we hear has its reference indirectly. I suppose you can't hear anything.

We are self-conscious beings and everything we hear is related. Someone's come to me after services. You know, you were talking to me today.

Well, perhaps I was in a general sense of saying what I believe is true, but there is a sense also in which the Holy Spirit makes it personal, but it isn't me. I'm not thinking of anyone whenever I preach at any time,

but I know this, that in reading the scripture, the Holy ghost applies it and he applies it to me. And I trust he applies it to you.

Now, what kind of a person are you? I suppose that the best way to find out what, what kind of a person you are is to find out what you do with your solitude, what you do when you're alone. This is the place where we really become what we are. Your thoughts, when you're alone, indicate the kind of a person you are.

Your motives, when you're alone, indicate the kind of a person you are. Your desires and your imaginations indicate the kind of a person you are. And there may be someone here that's, that's seen and known and recognized, but when you get home alone, there's something entirely different.

You are what you think you are, what you want, you are what you imagine. And this is the way we discover. Some, it was Martin Lloyd Jones who well says, it's what you say to yourself that really matters, not what you say to others.

And so they were people that were more concerned about the outward than the inward. And then the second thing you find about the Pharisees, they were more concerned with the ceremonial than they were with the moral. They were concerned that everything be done decently in order.

They were concerned about washings. They were concerned about observing all the Talmudic ordinances, went far beyond the law of God. But this was the only thing that mattered to them, that the ceremonial be kept straight.

They were more concerned also about tradition than they were God's word. The tradition of the elders weighed more heavily with them than the word of God did. They were more concerned about the opinions of people than they were about the attitude of God toward them.

They were more concerned about details than they were about principles. They were more concerned about outward actions than they were about inward motives. They were more concerned about doing than they were about being.

And all of these things were what the Lord Jesus saw when he said, accept your righteousness, exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. You shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. What is he saying? He is saying that mere religion, for what did you have to do to become a Pharisee? You had to be Orthodox.

You had to be baptized if you were proselyte. You had to be circumcised. You had to learn the law.

You had to attend to all of the Talmudic ordinances of dishes, of cooking. You had to observe all of the feasts, all of the holy days, all of the periods of fasting. You had to pray five times a day.

You had to tithe everything you possessed. Oh, to be a Pharisee involved you greatly in religious activity. But the one thing they lacked was life, the supernatural life that is imparted by a gift of God's grace and the miracle is love.

And what the Lord Jesus Christ is saying that this outward subservience of the law isn't what he's after. But what he's after is to do exactly what Ezekiel said would happen when I will sprinkle clean water upon you and cleanse you from all of your filthiness. And what he said to Jeremiah, I will write my law upon your

hearts and put my law within you.

And then he's again through Ezekiel, he said, I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. Oh, dear heart today, the question that comes for this is indeed an evangelistic message. The question that comes today is, has this happened to you? Has it happened to you? We come to the Lord's table in just a moment and you are testifying as you take the bread, as you take the cup, that you have had a miracle trying to take place in you.

Not simply that you change your attitudes, not simply that you change your beliefs, not simply that you change the direction of your actions, but that God imparted something in a supernatural act. God gave himself to you. God brought you out of death into life.

A miracle has taken place. This is what you testify to when we come to the table, this miracle that has made this tremendous change. Oh, I ask you, you can test it here again by saying, what is your attitude toward the word of God, toward the will of God, toward the law of God, toward all that he is, you know, you can know the spirit of God can make it absolutely clear.

I submit to you today that our Lord Jesus has in these words told us that the only one, the only one that has any part in that which he came to bring and to do is the one upon whom he has worked this glorious miracle of transforming life. Has this taken place in your heart, in your life? Christ's relationship to the law as the fulfillment of it. Christ establishing that the law was the tool by which we were prepared for grace.

Christ revealing that the Christian is one into whose heart Christ himself has come to fulfill the law, and then giving us this solemn warning that there are those who unknowingly and not deliberately have become hypocrites because they have taken the outward and not the inward and have accepted a substitute for reality. Now, as we come to the table of the Lord, may it be that we come with joy rejoicing in what the Lord has done. May it be that some come with grief and heartache and some come with hope and expectation, but you come having had the word of God do something to you today.

Let us bow in prayer. Father, here sit a company of people that have never been gathered this way before. Some have come from out of town, from distant places.

Some have come, Lord, out of habit and some have come out of hunger. Some have come out of interest and some have come just to be courteous. Various reasons why we've gathered.

No two of us in the same state, but here we are, Lord. A company of people that have given for a few minutes thought to the word of the Lord Jesus Christ when he said, think not that I am come to destroy the law. I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

And we've sought to point out these wonderful ways in which the Lord Jesus has accomplished this work of fulfilling it. But we know, Lord, that the end of this was that the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Oh, may we search our hearts now and ask ourselves, is this real in my life? Do I have this love for God's word? Is the Beatitudes the description of what he's done in my heart? Lord, we pray that the Holy Spirit will press the word deep, deep, deep into us till none of us can escape.

Should it be that the oldest member of this church of most years here were in this moment to say, I see that nothing real has been in my life. This is not to cause despair, but simply to cause them to come to thee and take reality in the Lord Jesus. Lord, don't let us, don't let us deceive our own hearts by being

content with a profession put into everyone that demand for reality, whatever it costs and whatever it means.

For those that are here today that may have a name to live but be void of life, do not let them hide it or cover it, but oh that they might come to the Lord Jesus and take all that he died to bring. For those, Lord, that may have become careless and have taught to disobey thy precepts and taught others to do so. Lord, let there come that great smiting of the spirit of God that will bring confession and return.

Meet us today, Lord. We come to the table. Thou has said that we are to judge ourselves, that we be not judged.

For if we're judged, we're chastened of thee, we shouldn't be condemned with the world. We've heard thy law. Help us to put it against our consciences, against our hearts, and for the darkest heart with the most unconfessed sin here, the promise still prevails.

If we confess our sin is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all

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