

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

Part Sixteen

“What the Law Can and Cannot Do”

VIDEO: MOSES RECEIVES THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

Review:

- Welcome to our verse-by-verse study of the Sermon on the Mount
- We have now come to a major section of the Sermon, where Jesus will teach us how we, as His disciples, are to relate to the Old Testament, especially God’s law and His commandments
- He begins this 32 verse section of the Sermon with these words...

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

Matthew 5:17 NASB

- Jesus did not do away with the Law; He gave it full obedience! He did not abolish the Old Testament, He came to fulfill all the 300 plus prophecies about Himself.
- The Law of God is the Law of God! The 10 commandments still stand!

God gave us the 10 commandments, not the 10 suggestions!

- God’s laws, once spoken, never change! But God’s laws can be misunderstood and even misused!

“We know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully.”

1 Timothy 1:8

- Jesus didn’t do away with the Law; it’s still good...if we use it lawfully. In other words, the law can be misused! So now we must need to understand how we, as believers, relate to God’s law!

God expects us to know His law and keep His commandments. But we have to use His law lawfully; we have to know what it can do and what it cannot do!

I. Three Things the Law Cannot Do

- **The Law cannot save us**
- **The Law cannot keep us saved**
- **The Law cannot condemn us**

A. The Law Cannot Save Us!

1. This is THE most important thing a Christian needs to know!

“The law is good, but there is something it cannot do. It cannot save me.”

Francis Schaeffer

2. The greatest enemy of the Gospel is *legalism*; the idea that we can be saved if we will just obey God’s laws and keep His commandments!

3. This was the great error of the scribes and Pharisees, repeated by legalistic Christian teachers throughout the history of the church; those who preach a righteousness that we can earn by good works!

- a. The Apostle Paul speaks of these legalists in Romans 10...

For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes.

Romans 10:3-4

a. Does v. 4 contradict Jesus saying He did not come to put an end to the Law? No! It says that Christ is the end of the Law “*FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” to everyone who believes!

4. If you get nothing else today, get this! You cannot be justified before God by keeping the Commandments!

Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 2:16 NIV

a. Testimony: When I cried out to God to save me in 1971, I’m so glad He never told me I’d have to keep the Commandments first!

b. The theme of Paul’s epistle to the Romans is “justification by faith”...

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight...

Romans 3:20

c. Jesus hated the preaching of the Scribes and Pharisees...that righteousness with God depended on keeping the commandments! He came to reveal a kind of righteousness that “exceeded” the righteousness of the legalists...

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe.

Romans 3:21-22

5. The great error of dispensationalist theology is to make the law the enemy of grace!

a. God's laws are still in effect; they are "holy, just, and good" (Romans 7:12); but the law cannot save us!

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Galatians 3:21-22 NKJV

6. The classic comparison of the 2 kinds of righteousness is Jesus parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector:

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. 11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. 12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

Luke 18:10-12 NASB

13 "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Luke 18:13-14 NASB

Which one are you? Rich in spirit or poor in spirit?

Trusting in your works or in the mercy of God?

The parable proves the Law cannot save us!

And not only that...

B. The Law Cannot Keep Us Saved!

1. The first mistake is to think the Law can save you; the second mistake is that one you are right with God that you have to keep all the commandments to stay saved!

2. This is what happened in the churches in Galatia; they had been saved by faith through the ministry of the Apostle Paul; but then came the “Judaizers”, teaching that now that these Gentiles were saved they had to keep the Law, that they had to be circumcised!

I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 1:6-7 NKJV

3. The legalists in the Church had convinced the Galatians that they had to keep the law to stay saved; to them Paul says...

Galatians 1:1

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?

Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

Galatians 3:3 NIV

4. Never let anyone, at any time, ever teach you that you must add anything to simple faith in the finished work of Christ for your salvation!

“Christianity is Christ...plus nothing!”

Leonard Ravenhill

5. There is nothing you or I must do to add to the finished work of Christ on the Cross!

- Water baptism (We should be baptized in water; but that doesn't save us. Remember Jesus promised Paradise to the thief on the Cross)
- Church membership (We should be a part of a local church, but that won't save us)
- Paying tithes
- Jesus tells us that keeping the commandments is good! But He never told us we could be saved by it. (Remember the rich young ruler had kept the commandments, but Jesus told him, "One thing thou is missing")
- The Law cannot save us! The Law cannot keep us saved! And finally...

3 Things The Law Cannot Do

1. The Law cannot save us

2. The Law cannot keep us saved

3. The Law cannot condemn us!

C. The Law Cannot Condemn Us!

1. In the Book of Romans, after writing 7 chapters of Christian theology, the Apostle Paul makes one of the most astounding statements in the New Testament:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

a. The Greek word for "condemnation" literally means "adverse judgment" or "damnation".

Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud.

Romans 8:1 The Message Bible

b. This means that those who are "in Christ Jesus", those who are truly born again, will never suffer condemnation or damnation in the final judgement.

2. How is this possible?

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2 KJV

3. To be a Christian means to be saved from the law of sin and death. So what is the “law of sin and death?”

The soul that sins shall die.

Ezekiel 18:4

a. We make light of sin; we don’t like to preach about it or heard about it; but sin is serious to God!

b. The first thing that God told man was that if he sinned, he would die.

c. When it comes to the Law, God requires perfect obedience!

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.

James 2:10 NASB

4. The Bible clearly tells us that we can never be right with God by keeping the Law because no child of Adam has ever done it!

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 3:20

5. There is only one way to be free from the law of sin and death...

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2 KJV

III. Conclusion

A. The Law of the Spirit of Life

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes.

Romans 10:4

1. Christ puts an end to the law as a way of salvation!
2. He did what we could not do; live a sinless life; a life of perfect obedience to the Law of God.
3. This qualified Him to fulfill another Law; that God would accept the sacrifice of the innocent in place of the guilty!

B. The Passover Lamb

1. The Old Testament Law required a sacrifice of innocent blood to atone for the sins of the people.
2. The blood of the lamb, applied by faith to the door posts of the houses of Israel, saved them from the Destroyer.
3. Jesus fulfilled every detail of the type, the Lamb of God who would save Israel from their sins.
 - a. The Passover lamb pointed to Christ, the Lamb of God.

For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

1 Corinthians 5:7 NKJV

4. The Law cannot condemn us because the penalty for breaking it has been poured out on the One who died for us!

5. The Law cannot condemn us because the penalty for breaking it was poured out upon the One who died in our place!

And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us *and* which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Colossians 2:13-14 NASB

C. Summary:

1. Jesus did not abolish the Law, He fulfilled it.
2. The Law is good, if we use it lawfully.
3. We must know what the Law can and cannot do.

THE LAW CANNOT SAVE US; KEEP US SAVED; OR CONDEMN US...

BUT NEXT TIME WE WILL SHOW YOU THE MANY GOOD THINGS THE
LAW CAN DO!

D. Altar Call/Communion