

JESUS AND THE LAW

Freedom and Peace in Christ Jesus

We are continuing to look at why born-again people who love the Lord, are missing the grace message. Why do you think they are not experiencing the freedom and peace that is ours through Jesus.

I think there is a huge number of people who only make it to the starting plate of their Grace journey and then become beaten down by religion. I was certainly one of them. We find it easy to conclude that we fall into the category of “*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). We had acknowledged that within our humanity, we could contribute nothing towards our salvation; that we could not do enough good works to gain the acceptance of God. So we came to Jesus with nothing to offer Him and received His forgiveness and the adoption papers. We accept that it is all up to Jesus and we accept his free gift.

Having made it this far, the apostle Paul counsels the Colossians (2:6)

⁶ *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.*

At the time we received Jesus, we were falling short in our actions/works every day. (That's actions & works of thought and deed) We could see that it was all up to Jesus and the power of His blood to cleanse us from sin and impute righteousness to us. BUT, now, “as we walk in Him” we are dismayed that even though we have within us the Spirit which raised Jesus Christ from the dead, we still fail in our actions every day.

You are not alone, if you thought you were the only one who falls very short after having been born again. It simply means you are not dead yet. Contrary to popular opinion, there is NOT a bunch of super-Christians out there who have succeeded in perfecting every thought, work and deed. In fact there is NOT ONE. So if salvation was dependent upon Christians exhibiting perfect behaviour, we are all doomed and Jesus died for nothing. So as we ‘Walk in Jesus’ it is STILL all up to Jesus. Just as it was when we first came to Jesus, we still can't produce enough good behaviour or good works to maintain our salvation or keep us in the good books with God. Saying exactly the same thing in a different way, bad works or law breaking doesn't cause us to lose our salvation or get us struck from the Book of Life. So the message is – You were saved by Grace – and Grace continues to save. If we can get a hold of this message, it would set us free. We would experience the peace of God which passes all understanding.

That all sounds great. But if you were to look out into ‘Christendom’ right now, you would find a whole lot of messed up defeated Christians who are relating to God out of fear rather than love and peace. What do you think is the main reason that Christians feel they are not measuring up to God's expectations?

Many Christians believe they are saved by grace, but are not kept by grace. Of course we will be fearful if we think that every time we fall short, we put our salvation in grave danger. Our hearts are often in the right place, but, when we fail in our works and actions, we judge ourselves as unworthy. Our tendency to make such judgments comes from the Law which carries curses and condemnation. Our solution? Work harder! Pray harder! Do better next time. But, according to the apostle John, the solution to our sin is found in Jesus, even if it is after we have become the children of God.

1John 2:1 says

¹ *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

Our intention is definitely not to sin that grace may abound .. BUT .. if we stumble, we don't have to be our own advocate. Jesus is our advocate when things go wrong. We need to rest in the fact that Jesus as our eternal high priest is supremely more qualified to defend us in the law courts of heaven. It simply makes no sense at all that we should be approaching God in grief-stricken distress begging forgiveness. That's Jesus' job. When an accusation is made by the 'Accuser', the spilt blood of Jesus does all the talking. Now by faith, we can boldly approach the throne of grace. Hebrews 4:16

¹⁶ *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

Are we in need of mercy? Are we in need of help? We don't need to grovel up to God's Judgement throne begging for mercy. Our sins are already forgiven! For those who have placed their faith in Jesus, God's throne is ALWAYS a throne of grace, NOT a throne of judgment. Once again we are not sinning so that grace may abound. When we sin, we acknowledge our failures and boldly come into God's presence where we can praise and thank him for His glorious provision in Jesus.

Paul also speaks strongly against the notion that there is something that we can do to help God out when it comes to maintaining our salvation. In speaking to the Galatians (3:2-3)

² *Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?"*

The Message bible puts it this way

²⁻⁴ *Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up!*

This is exactly how a lot of us think. How do I know? Because I used to be one of them! We think that Jesus picked us up, cleaned us off and now we have a fresh start ... and through determined resolve we set out to live a Godly life the second time around! Problem is... we continue to make a mess of things! We respond by increasing our efforts to behave in a Godly manner. We may through strength of will do better than before but in the end we will fail again. Each time we fail, we give ourselves a good beating, punish ourselves with a good measure of condemnation, and promise God that we are going to do better next time. But gradually we slip into a spiral of self-condemnation when we realise that no matter how hard we try, our best efforts, which may even be getting better, are **never** going to measure up.

The apostle Paul is very adamant that we are kept by faith in the grace of God and not by any of our own works.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

So why are Christians resorting to works of the law instead of resting in the gift of God which Jesus died to give us?

I am convinced it is due to the Law-based messages which are being preached to the born-again flock. I believe that in most cases, these preachers are well-meaning good-hearted people who, in good faith, are teaching what they were taught. But they have not come to the understanding that the cross of Jesus changed **EVERYTHING**. They try to improve the behaviour of the flock by preaching Law-based messages like “whoever is angry with his brother without a cause will be in danger of judgment ... And if you call your brother a fool you will be in danger of hellfire”(Matthew 6:22-23) “*But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*”

Jesus Preaches the Law

WHAT!

But these are the words of Jesus. How could it possibly be wrong to preach Jesus' words to the church ?

Nothing wrong with preaching Jesus' commands to the church, provided it is pointed out to whom Jesus was speaking; on which side of the cross these words were spoken; and what Jesus did at the cross to fulfil those law based commands so that we would be free from the curse of the law. (More on this later). For those out there who would threaten and demand obedience to all of Jesus' words, then they must also demand that lustful eyes are plucked out and offending right hands are cut off! Jesus was deadly serious about those statements too. In the scriptures, Jesus is known for making some of the most harsh and rigid declarations of the law. Jesus, as an Israelite, who lived under the Old Covenant was not only obliged to obey the Law Himself, He was also obliged to teach others to obey the Law. Matthew records in chapter 23 (1-3)

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; ³ so do and observe whatever they tell you; but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice”.

At the Last Supper, Jesus prophesied a New Covenant in His blood. However, until that blood was shed, Jesus was fully obligated to preach complete obedience to the Law of Moses. Jesus was the most exacting, zealous law preacher who ever lived!

.... And Jesus Preaches Grace and Mercy !

A zealous law preacher!!! But we've always been taught that Jesus brought grace... In fact John says in John 1:17
“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” So If Jesus came to bring grace and truth, why would He be preaching the Law of Moses?

Jesus lived at the cross roads of 2 covenants and it took all His Divine wisdom to be the holy fulfilment of the Law while demonstrating God's true character of grace and mercy. He didn't once turn away a sick person who requested healing; He told plenty of grace parables such as the prodigal son and the Good Samaritan; He rescued the woman caught in adultery while skilfully avoiding breaking the Law of Moses and of course we all know John 3:16-17

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

So Jesus also ministered more grace and mercy than any other prophet before. Jesus had grace for the repentant sinner and Law for the self-righteous.

There are plenty of scriptures that indicate that the law had some bad consequences for us. 2 Corinthians Chapter 3 refers to the law as a 'ministry of condemnation' and a 'ministry of death'. Colossians 2:14 says the law was 'contrary to us'
If the law had such terrible consequences for us, why did Jesus teach so much law when he said He didn't come to condemn the world?

Purpose of the Law

1. Knowledge of Sin

To answer this, we need to first go back to the 2,000 years leading up to the time of Moses and define the purpose of the law.

Following the eating of the Tree of Knowledge, the OT folk had a knowledge of good and evil but this was becoming skewed. So, without a standard, we, as fallen mankind, have a tendency to compare ourselves amongst ourselves and lose our moral compass. We are easily deceived and our reckoning of good and evil without a God-based standard tends to shift depending on the time we live in. For an example really close to home.... In 1994, Tasmania was the last Australian State to de-criminalise homosexuality. Now the pendulum has swung to the opposite side. The behavior which was condemned only a few short years ago is now defended in our law courts and celebrated on our streets.

Basic human behavior left to itself was no different in the 2,000 years following the eating of the Tree of Knowledge to the time of Moses. We all know the stories of the great wickedness in the earth prior to Noah's Flood and later in Sodom and Gomorrah.

After sin had entered the world, fallen man was held captive by the 'god of this world' who is Satan. Because we were under the power of his deception, we had a very poor understanding of the menace of sin.

... Sin was killing us

During this 2,000 year period from Adam to Moses, the apostle Paul says in Romans that sin was not being charged to our account because there was no law to break.

BUT

sin was killing us. ...

And we didn't have a clue

Romans 5:12

¹² *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—*

(The one man was Adam through whom sin entered the world. The consequence of sin is death so death spread to the entire human race. Verse 13 ..

¹³ *For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*

Sin was not being charged to our account and no specific penalties were being dealt out because we hadn't broken any formalized laws... Verse 14

¹⁴ *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come*

It is well established that sin was a terrible offence to God. BUT sin also has deadly consequences, even in the natural and so death reigned up to the time of Moses. The wages or penalty of sin is death in every way. Sin had defeated us and we didn't have a clue.

... Know your Enemy !

There is a saying that the first rule of warfare is “Know your enemy!”

The enemy was sin. Sin was killing us. Before God could move on with His plan of salvation, sin needed to be identified and understood by the human race. This was the first purpose of the law – To give the knowledge of sin

Paul explains in Romans 7:7

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet”.

So the law was a true standard, a straight line in the sand. Sin needed to be precisely identified in its every shape and form. Sin was already present, but up to the time of Moses, sin was an unknown enemy. Romans 3:20 also confirms that the Law was to give a knowledge of sin

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.

So Romans 3:20 says that by the deeds of the law, no flesh could be justified in the sight of God. So, if the law was never going to justify anyone, what would be the benefit of having the knowledge of sin?

To summarise the purpose of the law so far... We needed to identify the enemy which was defeating and killing us. That enemy was sin and the Law was given to define sin in its every form. Now that the human race had a knowledge of sin, we had to be brought to the next stage. We needed to acknowledge our inability to keep the law and hence our guilt before God.

2. Acknowledging our inability to keep the law

The Old Covenant Law was a contractual agreement between God and the Israelites. The OC was ratified when the people had pronounced to Moses in Exodus 19:8

⁸*Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.*

... The Law Demands Perfection

But the contract demanded perfection and came with curses attached for any infractions. Deuteronomy 27:26

Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them. And all the people shall say, 'Amen'.

Paul repeats this in Galatians 3:10.

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written: Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.

Jesus' brother James also makes the same point in James 2:10

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

So to summarise this in a few short words... The law demanded absolute perfection.

... We Are Guilty Under the Law

We are all familiar with the scriptures that declare that

'We all like sheep have gone astray'

'There is none righteous! No, not one'

'All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'

The law demanded perfection; but the scriptures conclude that no-one (Jew or Gentile) could live up to the perfection of God.

While the law was given to Israel, its effect was that the whole world was found guilty.

We can see this in Romans 3:19

¹⁹ *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*

The Law shuts every mouth to any excuses we might have. Therefore all the world, (humanity in its entirety), has been declared guilty under God's Law. This places us all under the death curse of the law.

In the 7th Chapter of Romans, Paul explains how the Law revealed the hopelessness of our sin condition. Romans 7:12-13

¹² *So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.*

¹³ *Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.*

The Law was holy, righteous and good. It did not produce sin. It simply revealed the evil that was already entrenched within the core of our being. Waving the Law in the face of fallen man was like a red rag to a bull. The sin which dwelt in our naturally rebellious nature rose up in outraged defiance of the Law so that sin became utterly sinful.

Speaking of those who would seek justification through works of the Law, Paul explains further down in Romans chapter 7, that even though we may desire to obey the law of God, the sin that dwells within our flesh prevents us. We are forced to conclude that sin has defeated us and it is not within our human capacity to overcome it.

Paul keeps hammering home the point that in our human condition, we are totally incapable of keeping the law. Just a few verses later in the next chapter, Romans 8:3

³ *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.*

Theoretically, the holy righteous Law could have made us righteous; IF we could keep it, but the weakness of our flesh made that impossible.

So to summarise the purpose of the law again...

Firstly, we needed to have knowledge of sin, the enemy which was killing us

Secondly, we needed to recognize that we were totally incapable of fulfilling God's perfect law which made us guilty before God

Romans 7 says that sin used the holy, righteous law to bring about our death. Paul also says in Romans 4:15 that the law works wrath. In the Bible, there are many, many references to the curse of the law and the bondage of the law. Before Moses, sin was killing us! Now the law was killing us with added extras of wrathful punishments, curses and bondage! Things seem to be going from bad to worse!

The old saying "it always gets worse before it gets better" applies in this case. God had to set some foundations before He could get his grand masterplan underway. It was fundamental that we understood our utter sinfulness and inability to keep the Law. Paul reveals our wretched state under the law in Romans 7:14

¹⁴ *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

What a tragic situation! The Law was a spiritual system which held the promise of salvation but it was completely out of our reach due to the weakness of the human condition. Paul's listeners were very familiar with the slave trade and would have understood the point Paul was making about our dire state of being sold as slaves to sin.

So, contrary to popular opinion, the law was not given so that we could keep it. It was a spiritual system and impossible to keep through human ability. The Law was in fact given to condemn us and show us that we could not keep it. 2 Corinthians 3 refers to the Law as a ministry of condemnation and a ministry of death. The purpose of the Law was to show us that we were totally guilty and within the strength of our own humanness, there was no escape. There was only one unavoidable conclusion!

3. OMG!!! We Need a Saviour !

THIS was the Grand Masterplan of the Law!

It was to bring us to Romans 7:24

²⁴ *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

This was the Divine intention of the law. The summation of all the do's and don'ts! It was to beat the self-righteousness out of us and bring us to our knees in confession of our need for a Saviour! The fact that the purpose of the law was to drive us to Jesus is confirmed many times in the Bible. The question is asked in Galatians 3:19

¹⁹ *Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

The Seed spoken of here is Jesus. Paul is saying here that the law was put into place until the time Jesus could come. Three verses down, we see that the law was bondage, boxing us in, tighter and tighter, for the purpose of leading us to Jesus.

Galatians 3:22

²² *But the Scripture has confined all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe*

So the Law confined us by shutting every avenue of sin. "Law upon law, precept upon precept". Every time we tried to escape the confines of the law, a new fence was built so that we were bound so tightly that there was no room to move. The bondage of the law had us trapped and we were out of options. We were now ready for the promise by faith in Jesus Christ.

... Continuing on... Galatians 3:23-25

²³ *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*

²⁴ *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

²⁵ *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

Schoolmaster is more correctly translated a guardian or servant whose job was to accompany the master's children to and from school and enforce good behavior with a strict code of rules and regulations. Just as children need temporary protection and guidance with strict rules to grow into their fullness, so the wayward human race needed guidance to bring them through to the fullness of Jesus. Once Jesus had come we were no longer under the guardian of the law. The law could not save, but its ordinances pointed to a coming Saviour and delivered us right to the front Door of salvation who is Jesus, through whom, the only way to the Father is found.

So we've established that the purpose of the law was to drive us to the realization of our need for a Saviour. That's all very well for us under the New Covenant. How were the Old Covenant Saints saved? Was it by the blood of the sacrifices?

Old Testament Saints

Hebrews 10:4 declares, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. The OT saints were saved by the blood of Jesus just as we are.

... The Blood of Jesus Avalled for the OT Saints

Hebrews 9:15 declares it was by Jesus death that the saints of the first covenant were redeemed.

¹⁵ *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant*

The transgressions committed under the first covenant were the sins of those people who were under the Law of Moses. So these Old Covenant people were redeemed by the blood of Jesus because this is the ONLY blood that could take away sin.

The apostle Paul also makes reference to the blood of Jesus which covered the sins committed before Jesus' crucifixion. Romans 3:25 (Amplified Version)

²⁵ *whom God displayed publicly [before the eyes of the world] as a [life-giving] sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation (propitiation) by His blood [to be received] through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness [which demands punishment for sin], because in His forbearance [His deliberate restraint] He passed over the sins previously committed [before Jesus' crucifixion]*

... Ordinances of the Old Testament

The ordinances of the Law including holy days, Sabbaths, sacrifices etc. were prophetic pictures of the coming Messiah.... Colossians 2:16-17

¹⁶ *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

¹⁷ *Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*

These ordinances were prophetic shadows. The body which was casting these shadows was Jesus. The law derives its existence from Jesus. Without the body which is Jesus, the shadow does not exist. Remove Jesus and the shadow which is the Law has no purpose... no meaning... and would not stand. The law was a picture of Jesus and every ordinance and sacrifice shouted of the future Messiah who would redeem God's much loved creation to Himself.

So - If the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin, why did God tell them to do it?

... FAITH - Beginning to End

These sacrifices were an act of faith in God. Hebrews 11:6 says *But without faith it is impossible to please Him.....*

God has never changed his mind on the issue of righteousness.... Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23 all say that Abraham (a man who lived before the Law) believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.... Paul quotes the OT prophet Habakkuk when he writes in Romans 1:17

.....as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Hebrews 11, the Hall of faith is full of OT saints before and after the giving of the Law who were justified by faith.

Abraham didn't know where God was leading him, but, in faith, he believed God. So he got up and went. So it was with the saints under the Mosaic Covenant. Because the sacrifices were only fuzzy shadows of Jesus, the OT saints had an incomplete revelation of the shedding of innocent blood for the remission of sins. But, they did it in faith, believing that God knew what He was doing. Therefore, all the sacrificial blood shed prior to the cross of Jesus was a picture of Jesus' blood. But, these pictures, types and shadows had to be mixed with faith. When mixed with faith the saving power for the redemption of the OT Saints was the blood of the Jesus Lamb, not the woolly lamb they just sacrificed. The redemption of all mankind hinges on faith and the blood of Jesus.

We have now established that the Law defined sin which pointed to our need for a Saviour. The Saviour who was needed, was also found in the Law as pictures, shadows and ordinances So, if the Law had achieved its purpose, Israel would be primed and ready to receive her Saviour. 2,000 years after the Law of Moses was given, Jesus has arrived and very early in His ministry He is preaching a whole lot of Law

Religious Climate of Jesus' Day

So to confirm once again! The ultimate purpose of the Law was to acknowledge our need for a Saviour! You don't have to go very far in the Gospels to find Jesus going head-to-head with the hypocritical religious leaders of the day who had concluded that they were already righteous and most certainly NOT in need of any Saviour.

However, the religious leaders of Jesus day had completely missed the spirit of the Law. Jesus points this out in Matthew 23:23

²³ *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*

Jesus did not object to the action of trimming off a tenth of their pot plants. But He did object to their pious attitude behind the actions while totally neglecting the weightier matters of justice, mercy and faith in God. The scribes and Pharisees were relying on their outward faithless actions of the law for means of their justification. But it was, after all, the weightier matters such as faith that gave the actions of the Law meaning and purpose.

Even worse, the religious leaders had, over the centuries, designed an elaborate set of man-made laws which they regarded as equally important to God's original Laws and certainly more important than justice, mercy and faith. This is seen in Matthew 15:7-9

⁷ *Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:*

⁸ *'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*

⁹ *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*

The Scriptures had concluded that all were under sin. The religious leaders had realised that justification by the deeds of the law was impossible because the commandments of God were tough to obey. Their solution? Make some commandments of men that could be obeyed! The Legal minds of Jesus day had become so entangled in creating man-made rules as a means of justification that they believed it themselves. The Scriptures were declaring the impossibility of keeping the Law, so they placed their man-made rules above the Law to escape the obvious conclusion of their need for a Saviour.

Matthew 23 is a chapter of Jesus' denouncements of the Scribes and Pharisees. We will just look at a couple of verses. Matthew 23:27-28

²⁷ *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.* ²⁸ *Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

The self-righteous law teachers of the day had completely missed the Kingdom of God because of their reliance on outwardly righteous actions for means of justification but their heart was far from God and full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Worse still, they had misled the people. Matthew 23:13

¹³ *But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

Jesus had a LOT of re-educating to do. So what was the purpose of the Law? To show you are utterly sinful and point to the need of a Saviour. What a self-righteous person needs, is a good dose of sin revealing Law. Unless an unbeliever acknowledges that they have a problem, they see no need for a Saviour. As Jesus said to the Pharisees in Mark 2:17

¹⁷ *Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*

The Pharisees considered themselves righteous and in no need of a physician and their teaching was widely accepted by the rank and file.

... Jesus teaches His disciples

Early in Jesus' ministry, Jesus gives the well-known 'Sermon on the Mount' in Matthew Chapter 5. Contrary to the artistic impressions of the 'Sermon on the Mount', Jesus was not surrounded by crowds but alone with His disciples after having escaped the multitudes in verse 1. So Jesus takes this opportunity to teach His disciples. Following the beatitudes, Jesus addresses the Law. Matthew 5:20

²⁰ *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.*

As we have seen, the righteousness of the Pharisees was self-righteousness through outward faithless dead works. So Jesus now goes on to tear down this entrenched thinking. The self-righteous Pharisee would teach "I have not murdered anyone" therefore I am OK but Jesus says (Verses 21-22)

²¹ *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'* ²² *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

So ... You think that you are justified because you haven't physically murdered your brother. Not so! The Law goes deeper than that. The Law is a matter of justice, mercy, faith and Love. These are the weightier matters of the law. You have failed in these matters because, being angry with your brother is committing murder in your heart. If you are relying on your outward actions and not taking care of the matters of the heart, you are in danger of judgment and hellfire.

Keeping in mind, that here in Matthew Chapter 5, Jesus is re-educating his disciples who have been sitting under the teaching of the self-righteous Pharisees who would say that you are saved by outward obedience of God's Laws and man-made traditions. Similarly, the Pharisee would teach I have not committed adultery with a woman, therefore I am righteous. But Jesus says (Verses 27-30)

²⁷ *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'*

²⁸ *But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

²⁹ *If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*

³⁰ *And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*

Oh self-righteous one who relies on your actions! You think that you are justified by your outward obedience to the Law?? You need more Law to bring you to the end of yourself. The law is a spiritual system, reaching into the secret thoughts and intents of the heart. All the Law hangs on the principle of: Love God with all your might and strength and your neighbour as yourself. If you lust after your neighbour's wife – You have failed to love your neighbour in the proper, Lawful sense. You have just failed in your law keeping! BUT, if you truly think that outward actions of law keeping (i.e... I have not physically slept with my neighbour's wife) is what it takes to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, then you need to take this law keeping to its logical conclusion. If you really think that outward actions save you, then you need to go all the way. Consistent with this flawed thinking, you would be better off to pluck out your eye and throw it away, if it causes you to sin.

Similarly, does Jesus really want us to cut off our right hand if it offends? Of course not! The outward actions of law-keeping are not going to save you anyway! But, if you are hell-bent on going down this road of law keeping for your justification, you are being inconsistent if you don't go all the way.

Finally, for the self-righteous tough nut, who is still standing firm in the notion that justification is obtained through the works of the Law, Jesus nails the lid on their coffin.
...Verse 48

⁴⁸ *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Why would Jesus give us a commandment, that He knows we are completely incapable of keeping?

Is Jesus really serious when He says we need to be perfect? Yes!

Can we do it? No!

Will doing our best, and diligently striving towards perfection be good enough? No!

Hmm.... Looks like we might need a Saviour!

Luke tells the story of a lawyer trying to trap Jesus

Luke 10:25-28

²⁵ *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

What shall I DO. ('Do' being the operative word). Jesus, who is living under the Law and obeying the Law responds with the Law

²⁶ *He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"*

²⁷ So he answered and said, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

²⁸ And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”

“Do this and you will live!” Was Jesus telling the Truth? If the lawyer did perfectly love God and neighbour, would he inherit eternal life? The answer is YES! But could the lawyer do this? ‘NO!

The Law is unyielding. In its perfection, perfection is demanded. The lawyer knows he can’t live up to such a perfect standard and realises he has been boxed in with the Law. The schemer had become ensnared in his own scheme. The response that the Law is really trying to extract from this self-righteous lawyer goes something like this “Within my own righteousness, I am totally guilty before the perfect Law of God. There is nothing within myself that I can offer which will stay the death sentence of the Law which is upon me... Oh merciful God! I need a Saviour!”

But, this self-righteous lawyer in his deception, believed that the Law in its fullness, did not really apply to such a good fellow as himself. So he did what any good lawyer does when he has been cornered. He skillfully diverts attention from the heart of the issue and runs off at a very legitimate angle. So he responds in Verse 29:

²⁹ But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus the fulfilment of the Law

So Jesus preached the Law to point to a need for a Saviour.

Romans 10:4 says that “ *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.* ” How was Jesus going to bring about the end of the Law?

Jesus, having pointed to the need for a Saviour had to then become that Saviour. At the Last Supper, Jesus prophesied a New Covenant in His blood. However, until that blood was shed, Jesus had to first fulfil the Old Covenant Contract that Israel had signed off on in Exodus 19:8

⁸ And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

Just as any contract in our legal system remains in force until it is fulfilled, so the Law remained in force until someone could complete it and satisfy its every specification. Because mankind had been given authority over the earth in Genesis 1, only a Son of Man was legally qualified to complete the contract of the Law on our behalf. The scriptures make it abundantly clear that ALL had sinned and No-body could keep the Law. So God had to become a man and fulfil this Old Covenant Law Contract on our

behalf. Therefore Jesus had to obey the law to the letter, down to the last Jot and Tittle. To do this he had to be born under the law, live the law, teach the law, and most importantly die under the law.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:17-18

¹⁷ *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.*

¹⁸ *For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle will pass from the Law until all is fulfilled. "*

Jesus was the fulfilment of the law in every aspect. He fulfilled the contract which demanded obedience and He became the reality of all the sacrificial ordinances, Sabbaths, and Holy days of the Law of Moses. In his mission to fulfil the Law perfectly, Jesus was obliged to preach obedience to the law... Verse 19

¹⁹ *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.*

So if Jesus did not teach the commandments of the law – he would not have fulfilled the law perfectly and He would have failed in his mission. That would certainly explain why there were so many elaborate plans devised to cause Jesus to break the law

As we noted earlier, the law was a ministration of death. It was Satan who held the power of sin and death. He would continue to hold this power while the law remained unfulfilled. So this was a BIG deal. Satan must have realized that he was home free, if Jesus could be trapped into breaking any part of the Law. So Satan preyed on the jealousy of the religious leaders, and the greatest minds in Israel were employed to entrap Jesus. Fortunately for us, they all failed. Having fulfilled the law in its entirety, Jesus submitted to the cross. This heralded the end of the law with its representative sacrifices. Here, at last, was the real sacrifice. The spilt blood of the New Covenant brought about the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes on Jesus.

In summarizing,

Under the OC, the purpose of the law was to reveal our sin and show us that we were powerless to beat sin and therefore needed a Saviour. The self-righteous Law Teachers of Jesus' day had added to the Law and designed their own traditions. They figured that they had a chance of keeping these traditions and therefore could gain justification by pious religious rule-keeping. But Jesus went to the weightier matters of the law and preached the law so strongly, that the only conclusion a humble person could reach was that they needed a Saviour. So in preaching the law, Jesus was fulfilling the purpose of

the law which was to point us to the need for a Saviour who could rescue us from the curse of the law and bring us back into relationship with Him.

So today... Do we minister the lawful words of Jesus? Yes, in love, to the unbeliever, to those who need to come to the realization of their need for Jesus – Jesus being the only way to the Father!

Once they become born again believers??..... Do we demand obedience to the lawful words of Jesus for the purpose of remaining justified??..... NO! The born-again believer has already acknowledged their need for a Saviour and gained justification through the blood of Jesus. The purpose of the Law was to drive us to Jesus. It is irrational to keep on driving people to Jesus if they have already been driven to Jesus.

Therefore Jesus ministered both law and grace. Jesus' declarations of the law were aimed at tearing down any thought that we could be justified by the works of the law. For those humble enough to acknowledge that they were sinners and in need of a Saviour, Jesus ministered "Grace". The law was no longer applicable to them!

The fact that we are justified by faith and not by works or deeds of the law is a frequently quoted New Covenant principle from Romans 4.28. But this stands for all time. When the law was given, it was not designed to gain justification in the sight of God. It never was. It still isn't! The works of the law under the OC had to be mixed with faith in God. It was the faith in God that saved. It still is faith in God that saves. The difference is, that, as born-again adopted sons and daughters we have a fuller revelation of the reality in Jesus that the OC folk could only see shadows of.

If we keep returning to the point before we were born again by the Spirit of Christ and wallow around in the Law condemning ourselves for sin that Jesus has already forgiven us for, we are never going to live out the purpose God has for us! We are the victorious Sons of God saved by the blood of Jesus! We are not Law-defeated, dirty, rotten sinners anymore!

Addressing the old criticism that people living under grace think that they can sin that grace may abound... I will ask this question. Do we really think that the OC saints thought "I can go and commit this sin because I am sacrificing a cow tomorrow"? You can't commit sin and do it in faith; and secondly, in the absence of faith in God, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin.(Heb 10:4) It is the same principle under the NC. We still can't commit sin in faith – but the difference is, that when we do mess up, we don't have to sacrifice a cow in faith. We place our faith in the supremely more powerful redeeming blood of Jesus which was a perfect sacrifice which avails for all time.

We will conclude in Romans 8:1-2

¹ *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

² *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*