

The Fruits of Union With Christ

by Catherine Booth

The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, who fills us with love and enables us to keep the Law.

Scripture: Matthew 22:37, Romans 8:4, Romans 10:3, James 1:22, James 5:16

Topics: "Union With Christ", "Fulfilling The Law"

Description

Catherine Booth preaches about the importance of fulfilling the righteousness of the Law in us by walking after the Spirit, emphasizing the distinction between the Moral and Ceremonial Law. She challenges the misconception that we have nothing to do with the Law, highlighting the need to love and delight in God's Law. Catherine stresses the significance of loving God above all else, which manifests in our affections, family relations, church interactions, and dealings with the world, ultimately leading to the fulfillment of the Law in all aspects of our lives.

Transcript

ROMANS, viii. 4.--"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

WE dealt, on Sunday week, with "What the Law could not do;" and last Sabbath afternoon we dealt with "What Jesus Christ could do," by uniting us with Himself and giving us power. I want, this afternoon, to direct your attention to the fruits of this union--THE LAW FULFILLED IN US. What does it mean?

First.--I want just to say two or three words about Law in the abstract. There seems to me to be an awful misconception of the Apostle's writings respecting the Law, caused by "wresting" and misapplying what he says on justification by faith. People should bear in mind that much of this Epistle, and some others, was written on purpose to meet the extreme legal notions of the Jews, who had no other idea of righteousness than that of their own efforts to keep the Law (Romans x. 3), and that, therefore, the Apostle was bound, as any other writer would be in such circumstances, to put the extreme view on the other side. Many, not considering this, separate these passages from their explanatory connections, and from all the rest of the Word of God, and preach, nowadays, that we have nothing to do with the Law. Hence, there has come to be a spirit of Antinomianism abroad in the land, compared with which the Antinomianism of bygone ages was harmless. God helping me, I shall never cease to lift up my voice against it.

Now please, first note that there is, in this writing, talking, and singing about the Law a great deal of mental fog and confusion. People should be very careful, when they come to such matters as these, to be clear in their own minds, as to what the Apostle is writing about; but I find frequently in such writings and songs a total misapprehension as to the meaning of the Apostle, and a total confounding of the Moral with the Ceremonial Law. Now, always mind, when you read anything about the Law, to examine and find out which Law is meant, whether it is the great Moral Law, which never has been, and never can be, abrogated, or the Ceremonial Law, which, in Christ, confessedly was done away. Mind which, because your salvation may depend upon that point. If you make a mistake there, you may be lost through it; therefore, be very careful. Now, I say that people confound these, and, consequently, there is a perfect hotch-potch of theology in this day, which I defy anybody to understand. People do not know what they are to believe, or what they are not to believe. As a gentleman said, not long ago, 'it is confusion confounded. I go to one meeting and hear this, and then I go to another meeting and hear that, and, very often, in the very same meeting, the speakers will get up and flatly contradict each other!' 'Exactly,' I said, 'but you have got the Bible. Why don't you study that for yourself? Why not use your own common sense--why not let your conscience speak?' 'But,' said he, 'why do not our ministers do it?' 'Because,' said I, 'many of them do not know it themselves. Let your conscience speak, and God will not let you go wrong.' It is an honest heart people want, and then they will get the light. People sing about the Law, talk about the Law, and glory in being free from the Law, in a lawless, Antinomian spirit, as far from anything Paul ever wrote or meant, as hell is from heaven! Oh, it is an awfully bad sign, when people are out of love with the Law of God! David made his boast in the Law of his God, he meditated on it by day and by night, and its precepts were his delight; he loved it with all his soul, and so did David's Son, and He is too much in love with His Father's Law and Him, to hold fellowship with anybody who does not love it. As He said to the Jews, "He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God;" and, again, of His disciples, "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me." So, mind, if you do not love the words, the expression of the will of God, you do not love God, and if you do not love the Father, neither do you love the Son. This is the very accusation which He brought against the Jews, that they had made void His Father's Law. Let us mind, then, the distinction always made between the great Moral and the Ceremonial Law.

In the second place: I want you to note, that when you have ascertained that the Apostle is speaking of the Moral Law--and he appears to speak disparagingly of it--he is always referring to its inability to justify a sinner, or to produce spiritual life. This, he says, it could not do; but he never speaks disparagingly of it as the guide and standard of spiritual life, after life is given. No! he goes back to it as the only standard, and so did Jesus Christ. They continually refer to the Law as the highest expression of the holiness and righteousness of God, and as the standard by which we are to set our souls and consciences. What other standard have we but the Law? How am I to judge of my thoughts, words, and actions but by the Law? Where has Jesus Christ given me any other gauge? And if people would but read on, and let the Apostle explain himself, they would understand him better, and not get into such tanglements and mazes! Paul is most careful to guard himself against the Antinomian conclusions which he saw might be drawn from isolated parts of his writings. He says, "Do we, then, make void the Law through faith? nay, we establish the Law." And, again, "Wherefore the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good;" and, again, when he says, that "To them that are without Law He became as without Law," he guards himself by a parenthesis, "Being not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ." That is under the great universal Law of love, which fulfills all other law; for "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." Love is the very spirit and essence of the Law. The Law is to me the highest expression of what I OUGHT to be, in my relations to my Creator and in my relations to my fellow-creatures. Now, can what ought to be ever be abrogated?

Does it stand to sense? Can the rightness of things ever be altered? Can God ever make two and two five, and can God make evil good and good evil? He can make an evil person good, by saving him from the evil and making him good; but God cannot make evil itself good, and good evil, and He never professes to do it.

Oh, this confounding of things! how it does ruin and befog poor souls; How can it ever be less the duty of the creature to love and serve the Creator, than it was when he first came pure and spotless from His hand? How can it ever be less my duty to love my neighbour as myself, than it was at the beginning, or how can I satisfy my conscience with less than loving all men with a pure, benevolent love such as God bears to them, in my measure and according to my capacity? The same standard remains, and the difference between God's scheme of salvation and the scheme of salvation so widely preached now, is that man's scheme proposes to get me into heaven without fulfilling this Law, while God's scheme proposes to give me power to FULFIL IT. Alas! I am afraid many will not find out which is the right one, man's or God's till they get to the Judgment Seat and find it out too late!

Now, I say, that there is not a word, rightly understood and interpreted by correlative Scriptures, in the whole New Testament that disparages or ignores or sets aside the Law of God--not a word! Do you think the Apostle was as unphilosophical as many now-a-days? Did he not know what he wrote? Is he not as clear as a bell? And now he comes to the climax of his argument, the great end and purpose towards which he has been advancing in his preceding reasonings: "THAT the righteousness of the Law might be FULFILLED in us." As though he had said, "This great and glorious end which was lost in Adam shall be re-found and restored." So the old serpent shall be circumvented at last, and God's people shall be able to fulfil this beautiful ideal of rectitude and righteousness which God has planned for man--Jesus Christ shall destroy the work of the devil, restore man, and enable him to walk in the light, even as He is in the light. What the Law tried to do by a restraining power from without, the Gospel does by an inspiring power from within. That is the difference. I could not keep it in the letter, but, united to my heavenly Bridegroom, I can keep it in the Spirit. He fills me with His love, and this enables me to keep the Law, for love is the fulfilling of the Law. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour" of any kind, and, again, the great Teacher said, "For all the Law is fulfilled in one word--Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." If you do that, will you injure your neighbour? See how the Spirit fulfills the Law! If you love your neighbour, will you misrepresent him, cheat him, envy him anything that he possesses or enjoys? `No,' you say, `of course not; it is a contradiction.' Very well, then, get this love in your soul and you will fulfil the Law. Love is the fulfilling of the Law, and he that loveth in this sense dwelleth in God and God in him. Love is the fulfilling of the Law, and the great glory of the Gospel of Christ is that it brings us back to love His Law, and, as the angels delight in it, and, as all holy intelligences delight in it, so we delight in it, and the righteousness of the Law--high, deep, and broad, and long as it is--shall be fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Then, I say, the Apostle evidently considered this fulfillment of the Law of Righteousness in us as the highest end of our existence and of redemption; for, he says, God sent His Son that the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in us, Mark, not that its claims shall be abated: Oh! not one jot or tittle shall ever be abated. They cannot. God could not abate them. Not that the righteousness of the Law shall cease to have a claim upon you. Oh! if He could have saved us like that, Christ need not have come at all. He could have saved us without a Mediator. No, no! but that the righteousness of the Law may be FULFILLED in us as it was in Him. That we should be brought to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus, that we should have this spirit of our heavenly Bridegroom, by which we fulfil the Law, and the servant, in his measure, shall be as his Lord.

How? As I explained, last Sunday, first: We shall be delivered from the reigning, condemning power of the Law by virtue of an infinite, vicarious sacrifice punished in our stead, and then, married to Him, we shall serve in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

I want to be eminently and intensely practical, for the sake of the hungry and thirsting souls who are asking me in their letters, 'Tell me how? Help me?' Just let us look at this result (in fourth verse). People talk about glorifying Christ; but, it seems to me, this does glorify Him. It seems to me here is something to glory in, that He has circumvented the old serpent and snatched the prey from his teeth, and restored it, and enabled man, after all, to fulfil the righteousness of God. Not only in what Christ does for us; but what He does IN US, that God should look on you and say, 'I am well pleased. There is nothing there contrary to my will.' He will give you the testimony, as He did Enoch, that your ways please Him, that your thoughts please Him, that your motives, and purposes and desires, and actions please Him. That is what the Gospel proposes to do. We have seen how this spirit is produced. Now let us look at the fruits, and first: This fruit is brought forth in THE AFFECTIONS!

Those people who are thus united to Christ fulfil the Law in their affections. You know it is commonly said that if you get hold of the affections of a man or a woman you get hold of him or her. So you do. This is the touchstone, and there is nothing in which I have been so grieved and disappointed as in the manifest want of quickness, livingness in the affections of God's people for Him. Oh! how I have seen this come out. The coldness, the unsympathetic character of a great many people's religion, and yet people whom one would not like to unchristianise. I cannot explain it by any better term than want of quickness. I have often been struck with the difference when you touch individuals on some point that affects them personally, and on those which relate to the Kingdom of God, and have been tempted to say with the Apostle, "All men seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's." Alas! I fear it is very largely so. You talk with a lady about the salvation of her children's souls, the souls of her neighbours, and her servants, or about the cause of God in general, and she will talk "good" with you, so to speak, and you will feel, 'yes, it is all very well,' but it doesn't seem to come up from the depths. It seems to come from the throat, so to speak; a sort of superficial, surface kind of thing. But, if a child is dangerously ill, how quick the mother's sympathies, how ready to listen, how willing to do anything that you suggest to help the child. If the business is in danger, if a man has got into difficulties and you can suggest any plan by which he may get out of them, how quickly his attention is aroused. His interest doesn't flag, because the subject touches him to the quick. It is his concern, and just so in many other things. God forbid I should judge all Christians. No, no, no!--there are blessed exceptions. There are many like David--rivers of water do run down their eyes; but I am speaking of the mass of professors. I am afraid, that in their affections there is a great deal of this lukewarm superficiality. Why is it? Because such people do not abide in Christ, if ever they were in Him. They do not keep the freshness and the quickness of the Spirit of Jesus. They do not give themselves time to do it for one thing, or care about it for another. We want the constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit to quicken our spiritual perceptions and keep us awake. It is Satan's great desire to rock us to sleep, and there is no quality in which the disciples have been more conspicuous than in going to sleep since the time when the professed watchers went to sleep in the garden; but Jesus, in his mercy and love, is always wakening them. But, oh! this disposition to go to sleep, to lose our quickness of perception. Now, friends, what must you do? You must do as you did at first. Cry and believe till your soul is filled with the love of God.

I shall never forget reading, when only fourteen years of age, a sentiment of a precious and valiant soldier of the Lord Jesus, who is now in glory. Speaking of putting a test, he said that people might easily find out

whether they loved God or themselves best: 'Suppose you were in business in a little village, and were doing pretty well, and everything was going smoothly with you; but there was nothing for you to do there for the Kingdom of God, no particular way in which you could serve or glorify God; and, suppose there was another little village hard by, where there was nothing whatever doing for the Kingdom, and you felt it laid upon your soul to go there in order that you might preach to unconverted people and raise a church, and do something for souls. Ah! but you have got a nice business and you don't know whether you would prosper or not in the other village. Now you may know whether you are serving God or yourself first, by this test. If you are seeking God, you will be ready to go to that strange village and trust Him with the consequences; but, if you are serving yourself, you will stop where you are. The Lord has helped me to apply that many a time to many things besides business, and to keep the Kingdom of God as I made up my mind it should be first always--not in time merely, but in degree--all the way through. If I love Him best, I shall feel for Him deepest, and shall act for Him first. If I love Him best, I shall feel for Him more deeply than for my husband or children, near and precious as they are and dearer than my own life a thousand times; but He will be dearer still and His interests; and if, as Jesus Christ says, His interests require me to sacrifice these precious and beloved ones of my soul, then I shall sacrifice them; for the philosophical reason that I love Him better than I love them, and, therefore, I shall lay them on His altar, to promote His glory. If I understand it, this is the fruit of the Spirit in the affections--God first. I am afraid, in a great many instances, it is husband first, wife first, children first, and, I am afraid, in some cases, business first, and then God may take what there is left and be thankful for that! Now, if you are in this condition you need not expect joy, peace, power. You will never get it if you do. God will have to make you over again before you can get it, and to alter the conditions of His salvation. Oh! but if you will lay it all on His altar, that is quite another thing.'

As I said to a lady, a little time ago, 'The Lord can take your husband, if you refuse to give him to Him;' and I am afraid God's people often compel Him to take their darlings, because they make them idols; whereas, if they had laid them on His altar, they might have had them back, as Abraham received back Isaac. I said to a gentleman, 'Mind that God does not burn down your barns, wreck your ships, and take away your riches. God loves your soul enough to do it, if you let these things prevent that whole-hearted consecration which He requires.' We are in His hands. "Whom He loveth He chasteneth," and if you want to keep the precious things you have, oh! put them at His feet, and hold them in subordination to Him. First, in your affections! He is a jealous God, and jealousy in God is very much like jealousy in us. It is the same characteristic of mind, only purified from selfishness. He is a jealous God, and if you will love these things better than Him, and if you will not give Him your affections, then He will chastise you, or--what is worse still--He will take His Holy Spirit from you.

Fruit in your affections. Oh, if Christ had your affections, how it would operate in everything! The wife would not be always grumbling because the husband had to go out three or four evenings a week on the Lord's errands--only let them be the Lord's errands. The husband would not grudge to give his wife up to go to help to win souls, because it deprived him of her society or a few comforts that she might provide for him if she were near. The parents would not grudge to restrain their children as Eli did. He did not restrain them from that which they liked, and you know the fruit it brought. Parents who love God best will not allow their children to learn anything which could not be pressed into the service of God. They will not allow them to run with the giddy multitude, to dance or do anything the devil might inspire them to desire. "No!" they will say, "my children belong to God, and I am going to train them for God and God only." Bless the Lord, He helped me to make up my mind to do that before I became a mother; and He has helped me to keep that promise (though I have not been as faithful to it as I ought), casting aside resolutely every

temptation to the contrary. And now He is giving me the fruit of my self-denial in the souls and labours of my precious children. One after another, as they grow up, they take their natural place in the temple of the Lord, and I believe they shall go out no more for ever. Oh, that parents would do it! Parents might save their children. I know what a mother's feelings are. I know the temptation there is to see them shine in competition with others, and to excel others. I know it all; but I said, `No; "Get thee behind me, Satan." I will keep them for God;' and He has enabled me to keep them for Him. Bless His holy name!

I loved Him better than I loved them, and, much as I loved them (and those who know me know I do love them), I would see them all in a row laid in their coffins before I would sacrifice His interests and lose their souls. Do you love Him best? Test Yourself. Do you love Him more than all else? Are you holding everything in subordination to Him?

Further, this fruit will come out in our members--our bodies; and oh! there is a deep spiritual meaning which, I trust, many of you know, in those words of the Apostle, "The body is dead because of sin;" but "He shall quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit, that dwelleth in you." It is killed to the Devil, as well as to sin, and all the uses of Satan; but it is quickened by the Spirit for the use of God, so that you can render not only the halves of your lips, but your hands, and eyes, and brain, and heart, and feet, and the whole of your body to Him--your members instruments of righteousness unto God. Hence, such a person will not feel his eyes are his own, to rove at random wherever he lists. Such a person will not feel his tongue is his own, to speak as he pleases. He will "bridle it," as James says, when tempted to speak unadvisedly. Such a person will not feel that his hands are his own, to waste the time, in which he ought to be doing something for God. Such a person will not feel his feet his own, to carry him where he likes, but where his Master would have him go--his whole body consecrated, and, especially, his tongue--consecrated to God, to testify for Him. He will feel that he must feed his body, as my husband often says, on the same principle that a man feeds his horse to keep it in the best working condition for God--never eating anything that will bring the devils of dyspepsia dancing round his soul. And not only so, with eating and drinking, but all his surroundings and deportment must be in keeping. It is the Lord's body; and, if you love Him best, you will keep it for Him: as the bride and the bridegroom keep themselves for each other, so you will keep it for Him.

This fruit will also appear in our family relations. We shall fulfil the Law to our neighbours. You see, God wants only what we have to give Him. He is not a hard master reaping where He has not sown, and the Great Teacher said, "This is the first and great commandment," embracing all the rest, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength," and the second is like unto it, "And thy neighbour as thyself;" and the man who does these is a perfect man, and fulfills the law; and when you have the fullness of love that enables you to love God best and your neighbour as yourself--enables you to do for the souls and bodies of your fellows what you would like that they should do for you, if you changed places, then the Law is fulfilled in you. Such people cannot sit 365 days in the year at the table with unconverted people, and never try to get them saved. Such people cannot abide in the same house with unbelievers, and not make them miserable. Oh, no. The unconverted say, `It's too wretched to live here. I must get out of this crying and praying for me all day long.' As a servant once said, she couldn't stand it. She had had praying enough at home, without coming there to have it. She did stand it for six weeks, and broke down at the family altar and GOT SAVED, and became a preacher afterwards. This spirit of love will make every unconverted sinner within your reach so miserable that they will have to be converted or run away. How would you do if they were DYING? YOU would run about in every direction to get a minister. What a pity you did not feel like this twelve years ago. You might have got the sinner converted then, and

he have been serving the Lord all the time? But, now he is dying, what a stir you make. What a purely selfish religion that is. You want him saved, so that he may get into HEAVEN, not that he might serve, honour, and glorify God. You don't care at all about that. He might live on in disobedience. Oh, be as much concerned for the honour of God as you are for your friend's salvation at the last, and then God will know how to save them.

This fruit will also appear in your church relations. It will bring forth fruit. As the Apostle says, "Exhorting one another daily," not suffering sin in your neighbour; reproving each other, and "confessing your faults one to the other." Where is any of it done? I should like very much to attend such a meeting, if you invite me, where Christians really and honestly confess their faults one to the other, and pray for one another, beseeching the Lord to heal them in those particular points where they have failed, telling one another of the deep things of God and talking lovingly and freely to one another as they used to do. It is part of the communion of saints--"exhort one another daily." The devil is at work daily. The world is plying for us daily. The flesh is pleading daily. Everything evil goes on daily. Why should not this exhorting one another, confessing your faults to one another, and praying for one another go on daily too?

Is it a fact that we are each other's keeper? Is it a fact that God will require for our influence over other souls? I believe it.

Then in our relations to the world--. But I forestalled this in my address on "Aggressive Effort." And now let us go down on our knees before God and ask Him to work this love in us, and give us this spirit, that we may thus FULFIL THIS LAW in all its relations.

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