

Apostle Paul's Teaching on the Law

by Miles J. Stanford

Miles J. Stanford's sermon explores the relationship between the Law and the believer's new life in Christ, emphasizing freedom from legalism through grace and faith.

Scripture: Romans 6:14, Romans 7:12, Romans 8:2, Romans 8:4, Galatians 3:6

Topics: "The Law", "Spiritual Liberty"

Description

Miles J. Stanford preaches about the believer's deliverance through the Cross from the reign of the old man, the law, the world, and the Enemy. The sermon discusses the purpose of the Law, emphasizing God's covenant of promise with Abraham based on faith and Christ, and the Law's role in revealing sin and intensifying man's need for righteousness. It also explores the negative impact of the Law on the old nature, leading to struggles, failures, and a self-centered life, contrasting it with the positive results of walking in liberty through the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Transcript

The believer will remain in bondage as long as he does not know that through the Cross he has been delivered from the reign of the old man, the law, the world, and the Enemy. We have already discussed the Adam-life. In this chapter we will deal with the law, both as commandment and as a principle.

PURPOSE OF THE LAW - Strictly speaking, God's formal Law was given to the nation Israel and to none other. The following points will clarify its place and purpose.

(1) Four hundred and thirty years before God introduced the Law, He gave Abraham the covenant of promise. This covenant had to do with faith, and with Christ.

Faith -- "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.... So, then, they who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:6, 9). "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.... So, then, they who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:6, 9).

Christ -- "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). The Father's Old Testament expression of His one and only way of salvation was by grace through faith in the coming Messiah. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). The Father's Old Testament expression of His one and only way of salvation

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(2) Over four centuries after Abraham received the covenant of promise, God presented the Law to the Jews. "For the law was given by Moses" (John 1:17). The Law was not meant to replace the principles of promise, grace, and faith, but was brought in alongside. "The law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot annul, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, It is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal. 3:17, 19).

(3) God's "law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). But it has to do with sin and death, not righteousness and life. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). The law reveals man's condition and intensifies his need. "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good--that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful" (Rom. 7:13).

(4) The Law can have nothing to do with grace, or faith, or life. "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God The just shalt live by faith. And the law is not of faith But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster until [marg] Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:11, 12, 23, 24).

THE LAW AND THE OLD NATURE -- The Law has to do with sin, and therefore it applies to the Adam-life, the old man.

(1) The ministry of the Law is to judge and condemn all that came from Adam. "The law is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners." "For when we were in the flesh [Adam], the sinful impulses, which were [aroused] by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (I Tim. 1:9; Rom. 7:5).

(2) The fleshly Adamic nature will have nothing to do with God, nor can God have anything to do with it. He used His Law to judge and condemn it to death. "For the mind of the flesh is death ... because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be" (Rom. 8:6, 7, ASV).

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE OLD NATURE -- The old man, whether Jew or Gentile, is under law. For the former, it is external, via command; for the latter it is internal, via principle. "For when the Gentiles, who have not the [external] law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves" (Rom. 2:14). The old nature is law oriented; carnal, not spiritual.

The Christian who is mainly living by means of the old life, and thereby giving expression to the old nature, is carnal, fleshly. (The Latin word for carnal is *carnis*: flesh). Hence whether by command or by principle, the law is predominant in his life. He is under law as a rule of life; he is in Romans Seven.

Results of Law--Negative:

(1) The law says, Don't sin, so he struggles to keep from sinning. The law says, Do righteousness, so he struggles to be righteous. But the law does not give the Christian power over sin--it gives sin power over the Christian! "The strength of sin is the law" (I Cor. 15:56). "I find then a law [indwelling principle] that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:21, 19).

(2) The Christian who is walking after the flesh is walking under law, and therefore is doomed to failure. Law applies to the fleshly life, but there is no good thing in that nature; it is neither subject to the law, nor can it be (Rom. 7:18; 8:7). The carnal believer is depending upon fleshly means for deliverance from fleshly failure; he is looking for strength from the very source from which he is seeking deliverance.

(3) The Christian life becomes a burden, and a continuous up-and-down experience. There is little hunger for the Word of God. Prayer all but fades away. Sins are not honestly confessed, hence there is scarcely any true fellowship with the Lord. Instead of having a testimony and being a pattern, such a defeated believer becomes a detriment to others. What love he has is self-centered--there is none for the needy. Instead of manifesting the love of the new man in Christ, there is the opposite expression from the old man in Adam--unkindness, envy, unseemly behavior, and other works of the flesh.

(4) As to service, where there is any at all is mainly by means of self-effort--whether it be it preaching, teaching, or personal witness. Flashy gimmicks and neat little methods are employed, but the flesh can only spawn more of its own kind. The problem is compounded.

From time to time there may be a bit of reviving in the life by means of dedication, but this usually results in deeper frustration and depression. There is no growth or fruitfulness for the believer in the legal realm. To such Paul says, "Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as [natural] men?" (I Cor. 3:3).

Results of Law--Positive:

Through all this legalistic and fleshly failure, the Father is working out His eternal purposes. He is using the principle of law to bring the believer to the end of Romans Seven: "Oh, wretched man I that I am!" Thus the Christian is prepared for the wonderful exchange of faith--that of turning from the old law-bound nature to his new life of grace in the Lord Jesus. By the Spirit he will be brought from the realm of the [old] law of sin and death into that of the [new] law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2).

By various maxims, forms, and rules,

That pass for wisdom in the schools,

I sought my passions to restrain;

But all my efforts proved in vain.

But since my Saviour I have known

My rules are all reduced to One,

To keep my Lord by faith in view,

This strength supplies and motive too.

-- John Newton

OUT -- LAW

If a Christian is under the law as a "rule of life," he is laboring in a doleful, grey, alien land of self-righteousness--he struggles to produce. The believer who learns to walk in the Spirit of life in Christ

Jesus has the joy of the Lord for his strength--he rests to receive.

Instead of our Father demanding from us according to the law, by grace He ministers to us from the One who is our life in glory. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8).

THE LAW AND THE NEW NATURE -- Our new nature is that of the risen life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Law being to reveal sin and condemn the sinner, it has nothing to say to the new man in Christ Jesus. "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

(1) As each of us was separated from the Adam-life by means of the Cross and the Tomb, we were delivered from the realm of law. We rose from the Tomb into newness of life--out of the grip of law into the freedom of His resurrection. "Now we are discharged from the Law and have terminated all intercourse with it, having died to what once restrained and held us captive. So now we serve not under [obedience to] the old code of written regulations, but [under obedience to the prompting] of the Spirit in newness [of life]" (Rom. 7:6, Amp.).

(2) Law has to do with works--the works of the flesh. The new creation has to do with life--the life of the Son. Abiding in Him, our nature will grow and manifest the fruit of the Spirit. "You have undergone death as to the Law through the [crucified] body of Christ, so that now you may belong to Another, to Him Who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God" (Rom. 7:4, Amp.).

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE NEW NATURE -- Our Lord Jesus Christ, seated at the Father's right hand in glory, is not under law of any kind. His life is subject neither to commands nor to the principle of law. It is holy by nature. We, having been born into Him, now share His life. "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

(1) The wages of sin being death, the law by the execution of the death penalty exhausted its rights over the man in Adam. Having died unto the law in Christ, the law no longer has any claim on the believer. He is now free from its reign. "When the commandment came, sin lived again, and I died--was sentenced by the Law to death." "For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God" (Rom. 7:9, Amp; Gal. 2:19, ASV).

(2) Being in Christ Jesus, the believer no longer has need for the law as a governing principle--he can now live by nature, effortlessly and naturally. "We are debtors, but not to the flesh--we are not obligated to our carnal nature--to live [a life ruled by the standards set up by the dictates] of the flesh" (Rom. 8:12, Amp.).

(3) When the believer sees his deliverance from the old, he can begin to walk in the freedom of the new. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (11 Cor. 3:17, Gal. 5:13).

WALKING IN LIBERTY -- Some of the positive results are the following:

(1) Even when there is failure, the abiding believer learns from it and gains thereby. He knows that his Father is working all things together for his good, to conform him to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28, 29). His reliance is neither upon the law nor the flesh, but upon the Holy Spirit, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

(2) Instead of struggle to keep from sinning, and self-effort to progress spiritually, he rests in Christ--the ground of growth. The Word of God is his daily sustenance; he feeds on it in reliance upon its Author, the Spirit of Truth.

(3) Prayer is his cherished fellowship with the Father; he depends upon the Spirit for this most vital aspect of his life. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26, 27).

(4) Having learned to hate the old life, he willingly judges himself. He confesses his sins fully and without fear because he loves and trusts his Advocate and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(5) In his growth he is more and more free from the influence of indwelling sin and the old life, the law, and the surrounding world. He is at rest concerning himself, but burdened for others. His service is from the heart and in the Spirit--sharing of life. He does not have to resort to human methods and fleshly means to win others and help them grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. He allows the Holy Spirit control and work through him by means of life--the life of the Lord Jesus.

(6) Underlying whatever service the Spirit may lead him into, his most important and effective ministry is simply to be--for to him to live is Christ. He becomes an "example [pattern] of the believers [and the lost], in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12). His attitude is that of Paul, "Stand fast, therefore in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage [law]" (Gal. 5:1).

My liberty from the old is infinite in the Lord Jesus--limited only to the glory of my Father and to the good of others.

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