

The Logic of Law

by Warren Wiersbe

Warren Wiersbe explores the purpose and function of the law in relation to grace and spiritual maturity in the Christian life.

Duration: 38:57

Scripture: Matthew 5:21-22, Matthew 5:27-28, Matthew 5:33-37, Galatians 3:19, Galatians 3:28

Topics: "Law Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that as believers in Jesus Christ, we are all united through the Holy Spirit. He highlights the difference between living by threats and living by promises, explaining that while children understand punishment and reward, as we grow older, we can reason and make promises. The preacher also discusses the limitations of the law, stating that while it can reveal our sins and confine us, it cannot remove or change us. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of the law in convicting us of sin and leading us to the Savior, and criticizes a superficial form of evangelism that neglects the preaching of God's law and holiness.

Transcript

We open the word to Galatians chapter 3 and we're going to be considering verses 19 through 29. Paul has proved that salvation is by grace and not by the keeping of the law. He's proved it in two ways.

First of all, personally from his own life, chapters 1 and 2, and then doctrinally from the Old Testament scriptures, chapter 3 verses 1 through 18. And having proved that salvation is by grace and not by the keeping of the law, he has raised an important question. And he anticipates that question in verse 19.

Wherefore then serveth the law? If the law cannot save us, then why was the law given? If the law cannot sanctify us, why should we bother to honor the law? Jesus said, I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. And Paul himself writes in Romans chapter 7 that the law is holy and just and good. Now, Paul, if the law is good, what is it good for? This is a logical question.

Because when it comes to this matter of the law, people go to extremes. And if there's one thing you want to avoid in this matter of the law, it's an extreme. In fact, let me put it this way.

Your attitude toward the law helps to determine the quality of your spiritual life. If you and I have the wrong attitude toward the law, we're going to have the wrong kind of a spiritual life. If we have the right attitude

toward the law, we're going to have the right kind of spiritual life.

In fact, let me go just one step farther. Our attitude toward the law determines our attitude toward authority in general. Young people who have the wrong attitude toward God's law will have the wrong attitude toward the authority of their parents.

Policemen, teachers, deans, employees who have the wrong attitude toward the law will have the wrong attitude toward employers, foremen, superintendents. And this, my friends, is one of our big problems today. Now, in Galatians 3, 19 through 29, Paul explains that there are three possible attitudes you can have toward the law.

Two of them are wrong. Only one of them is right. Now, what are these three attitudes? The legalist says the law is my master.

Paul says that's wrong. The anarchist says the law is my enemy. Verse 21, is the law then against the promises of God? And the anarchist, the antinomian, anti, against, nomos, the law, the one who's against the law says, yes, the law is against the promises of God.

And so while the legalist is saying the law is my master, the anarchist is saying the law is my enemy. And that's wrong. But along comes the mature Christian.

Notice I said the mature Christian. He says the law is not my master, the law is not my enemy, the law is my servant. Wherefore then serveth the law? Let's consider now these three attitudes toward the law.

You examine your own heart and find out which one expresses your feeling. First, the legalist who says the law is my master. Now for Israel, this was true.

Under the dispensation of the law, the law was their master. Look at it. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions until the seed should come to whom the promise was made.

And the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one. Obviously a mediator stands between two.

But God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

But the scriptures hath concluded, and that Greek word concluded means confined in jail, but the scripture hath concluded all under sin. That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before this faith came, this faith in Jesus Christ, we Jews were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, our tutor, our guardian to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a school master. For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many as you as have been baptized into Christ, and there he's talking not about water baptism, water never put anybody into Christ, he's talking about the work of the Holy Spirit. As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek.

There is neither bond nor free. There is neither male nor female. For ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if ye be Christ, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. You see when Israel was under the law, the law performed three functions. Number one, it was a mirror to reveal sin.

Verse 19, it was added because of transgressions. Now sin existed before the law, obviously, but sin is not transgression until a law is given. A little child, for example, sins, doesn't realize it sins.

Then it reaches an age of accountability and understanding where it knows that when mother draws the line, that's as far as you can go. And going over that line is transgression. And so the law was given as a mirror to reveal sin.

Secondly, the law was given as a jailer to restrain sin. Paul is saying that the law was like a jailer who kept confining everybody until there was only one way out, faith. Thirdly, he tells us the law was a tutor, a guardian.

This word schoolmaster does not refer to one of our school teachers. It's the picture in the Greek world of a slave who guarded a minor child from home to school and back. Now the slave didn't make the child grow up.

The child grew up in spite of the slave. The slave's job was to protect the child so it might grow up, to keep the child from getting into danger and mischief, to discipline the child, to make sure the child came from home to school and back home again, a guardian. And the law did this.

The law took the nation of Israel and protected the nation and watched over the nation and disciplined the nation until it came to the maturity of times and Jesus came and fulfilled the law. So to the Old Testament Jew, the law was a master, a mirror to reveal sin, a jailer to confine, and a guardian to conduct and protect. But you see that's all the law could do.

If you make the law your master, the law can reveal sin but the law can never remove sin. I'm sure that today many of you at some point looked into the mirror. Some of us looked into the mirror to see if our faces were dirty.

Those of you who are so blessed looked into the mirror to comb your hair. Some of us don't need a whole mirror. You look into the mirror and the mirror says your face is dirty but you don't wash your face in the mirror.

The law says to you your face is dirty. You've done this, you've done that, you've done something else. The law can reveal but the law cannot remove.

And the law can restrain but the law can't redeem. The law can be a jailer to confine us but it cannot change us. Why we have more laws in America today than we've ever had and we have more lawlessness than we've ever had.

Did anybody ever have the idea that the passing of a law changed anything? It doesn't change anything. We have laws against reckless driving. Oh? We have laws against illegal parking.

What difference does it make? The law doesn't change anything. The law can confine, the law can restrain but the law cannot change. That's the frustration of legalism.

Here is this high standard and the person says I'm going to reach that standard and he can't do it. The law can protect but the law cannot perfect. The law can protect the child as it goes from home to school and

back.

But the law doesn't make that child grow up. The law simply protects the child until the child can grow up. He matures from within.

Paul is going to talk more about that in chapter 4 on how the law relates to spiritual maturity. And so the legalist says the law is my master and I say it's too bad. The law can reveal sin but not remove it.

The law can restrain but not redeem. The law can protect but not perfect. The law can chain you but not change you.

And furthermore, Mr. Legalist, I will say to you that the law is not our master today. When you read Romans and Galatians and Hebrews, you discover that the Christian is dead to the law. That the Christian is not under law, he is under grace.

I read here in verse 19 of Galatians chapter 3 that the law was not part of the original equipment. The law was added. Israel began with grace.

On eagle's wings, God picked them up and delivered them from Egypt. They started off with grace, not with law. The law was added.

Why? To let Israel know what was wrong. To warn them, to protect them, to restrain them, to guard them until Jesus should come. The law was given at the hands of a mediator but grace is not given through a mediator.

Apparently God gave the law to the angels and the angel gave the law to Moses and Moses gave the law to Israel. And so Israel was twice removed from God. This is not true in the gospel.

The gospel came to us in the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ. And therefore the person who goes by law and says law is my master is removing himself from God. The person who goes by promise is drawing himself closer to God.

The law was temporary. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions until. Until.

All the way through this passage he says now God did this temporarily until. Until the law was temporary. The law was never meant to be permanent.

In verse 21 he comes out very boldly and says the law cannot give life. Of course all the law can do is give death. The law says this do and thou shalt live.

And we say I can't do it. And then the law says the wages of sin is death. Now if the law cannot give life, then the law cannot sustain life.

If I could not receive life by the law, then I cannot develop life by the law. And so Mr. Legalist, you say to me the law is my master and I say I feel sorry for you because that's not why the law was given. Then along comes the anarchists.

We have a number of these today. They come along in verse 21 and they say is the law then against the promises of God? This makes me think of Book of Romans. Back in the Book of Romans Paul raises the

same question.

Well we're not under law. We're under grace. Therefore it's just sin.

Ever heard that? You watch out for that. There is a brand of antinomianism, anti-law in our evangelical churches today that says especially to young people, hey don't let anybody talk to you about rules and regulations. You're free.

You live under grace and grace means you can do what you want to do. And if you should do wrong, God will forgive you. Ever heard that? That's not scriptural.

You see the legalist does away with grace and the anarchist, the antinomian, does away with law. And God never wants us to do that. The antinomian, the one who says live any way you please, you're under grace, you're free, the antinomian has plagued the church from the Paul's problems in Corinth.

In Corinth a group of people got saved and they say hey we're under grace. We'll live any way we please. He had to write to them and say oh no, liberty does not mean you live the way you please.

Liberty means we live to please God. The worst bondage in the world is living to please yourself. I can't think of a more terrible bondage in the world, a more egotistical experience in all the world than getting up in the morning and say I'm going to live today to please myself and I'm going to do it my way.

That's not freedom. That's the worst kind of bondage. That's where the prodigal son got his start.

Father give me. It was not until later on when he said father make me that things began to change. Freedom doesn't mean give me.

Freedom means make me. Over in the little book of Jude, right before the book of Revelation, Jude has a bit of a warning for us on this whole thing. Jude was going to sit down and write a letter, a book about salvation.

Verse three. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in.

Now certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness, taking the grace of God and saying oh you live under grace therefore you can satisfy all the appetites of your life. They never seem to have heard of what Paul wrote to Titus. One of the great passages, Titus chapter 2 verse 11, for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men teaching us.

Grace doesn't just save us, grace teaches us, grace disciplines us. Disciplining us, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age. Now the antinomian, the anarchist comes to me and says just a minute, is there not in the bible a contrast between law and grace? Yes, several times in the word of God you find these contrasts.

Hebrews chapter 12, we have not come to a mountain burning with fire, we haven't come to a fearful place where the voice of God made everyone shake. No, we have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem. There's a contrast there between fear and love, between God shaking and God graciously reaching out.

Yes, there's a contrast. Second Corinthians chapter 3, there's a contrast, the whole chapter. The old testament law was written on stones, the new covenant is written in our hearts.

The old covenant written by the finger of God, the new covenant written by the spirit of God in our hearts. The old covenant glory was fading away, the new covenant glory gets brighter and brighter. The old covenant glory meant condemnation, the new covenant glory means salvation.

The old covenant, the ministry of death. The new covenant, the ministry of life. The old covenant, bondage.

But says chapter 3 of second Corinthians, under the new covenant where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. There's contrast. But let me underscore this tonight, even though there is contrast in the Bible between law and grace, contrast does not mean conflict.

Contrast means cooperation. There's contrast between husband and wife. This does not mean competition, it means cooperation.

Law prepared the way for grace. Grace is seen in law and law is fulfilled in grace. And there are some of these ultra-dispensational teachers who give us the impression that now that we're under grace you can forget about law.

And it almost leads to antinomianism. May I remind you that both law and grace came from God. They can't compete with each other.

That both law and grace glorify God. God was glorified in the giving of the law. God is glorified in the grace of Calvary.

Both law and grace center in Jesus Christ. He was made under the law. He said, I've not come to destroy the law, I've come to fulfill it.

He lived under the law. He didn't keep the traditions, he kept the law. And the Lord Jesus Christ makes it very clear that we as his followers have a standard to follow.

I've been interested to note that nine of the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament letters for Christians. The one that is not repeated is remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. You don't find that.

But he says, be ye holy for I am holy. God's standard of righteousness still stands. It's still wrong to lie.

Anyone who holds on to grace as an excuse for lying doesn't understand either law or grace. It's still wrong to steal. It's still wrong to commit adultery.

Still wrong to bear false witness. It's still wrong to dishonor your parents. Still wrong to covet.

The antinomian says the law is my enemy. And my Bible says the moral law of God still stands. Now actually among us Christians, the moral law goes deeper.

You know this. Jesus said it has been said thou shalt not kill, but I say don't get angry with each other because anger is murder. It's been said you shall not commit adultery.

I'm not going to change that. I'm going to go deeper. Don't lust in your heart.

It's been said you should not bear false witness. I'm going to go a little deeper than that. Be careful with everything you say.

Let your words be marked by simplicity and sincerity. Just say yes or no. Anything more than that is of the evil one.

And so we Christians are not released from obeying the moral law of God, ceremonial law fulfilled in Christ, the Jewish law of calendars and feasts and fasts all fulfilled in Christ, the moral law fulfilled in Christ and now fulfilled in us who walk by the grace of God. This is what Paul talked about over in Romans chapter 6. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? And he answers and says God forbid. And so we're not going to listen to the antinomian, to the anarchist who says law is our enemy.

We're not going to listen to the legalist who says that law is our master. We're going to listen to Paul who says law is our servant. Now friend, if you're unsaved, law is your master.

If you are an unsaved person, the law of God is over your head and God is going to judge you by his law. But those of us who have trusted Christ as our savior are no longer under law. We can't be condemned by law.

We have already been saved by grace and having been saved by grace and received a new nature. Law is not our enemy and law is not our master. Law is our servant.

I do not work to please the law. The law works for me. Let's look at this now.

Galatians chapter 3. Paul tells us that we Christians have a mature standing before God. In verse 26, for ye are all the sons. Now our authorized version is children, but it's not that word for born ones.

It's the word for mature ones. For ye all are the sons of God by faith in Christ. When you were born into God's family, instantly you were adopted to be a mature adult son.

God does not deal with us as with little babies. As far as time is concerned, someone here may be only three days old in the Lord. And he may be prone to say, well, I'm just a little baby.

You can't expect a whole lot from a baby. But the Lord comes back and says, wait a minute, when you got saved, I adopted you and gave you the position and the privileges of an adult son. That means you know how to talk.

That means you can start walking. Babies can't do this. This means you can start signing checks and drawing upon your spiritual inheritance.

God deals with us as adult sons. And none of us can say, well, I'm too immature. Oh, no.

All of the resources and all of the responsibilities and all of the riches are available to every saint no matter how young or old he may be. He says in verse 27, that we were baptized by the Spirit into Christ and we put on Christ. May I share an interesting truth with you? In the Roman Empire, when a child reached the age of maturity, he changed clothes.

You could always tell how old somebody was because if they were wearing a certain kind of a garment, they were immature. They were underage. But when that boy reached that age of maturity, that age when he was accepted, he took off a child's garment and he put on an adult garment.

That happened to you when you were saved. The Holy Spirit of God baptized you into the body of Christ and He took off the old childish garment and He gave you the garment of righteousness with an adult standing before God. You see, laws are necessary for immature babies.

When my children were all small, we had to run our home on law. Don't you go near those stairs. Do not put a fork in that socket.

Don't go near the highway. I'm sure that our children, when they were just growing up, thought, boy, this is a terrible place to live. It's a jail.

Don't do this and don't do that. Remember the mother who took her little son out visiting and the boy looked around and this lady had a lot of antiques and things and he said, oh my, look at all the pretty no-nos. But you know what? If you don't start children off with law, they'll never live long enough to experience grace.

They'll either burn themselves or kill themselves or run out in front of a car or do some dumb thing. You know, our Christian schools, and I have preached in many, many Christian schools, our Christian schools should not have to have rules. Every student on that campus should be so mature that out of love and the grace of God, he does what's right.

But in every student body, you have a few babies. Same thing is true of a church. You have to have certain regulations or you have chaos.

And Paul is saying to us here, God deals with us as adult sons. We're baptized into the body of Christ. We're all one in Christ.

Now the law separated Jew from Gentile. Grace doesn't do that. The law separated men from women.

The law separated slaves from free people. The law even separated rich from poor. There's special laws for the poor.

Grace doesn't do that. Grace says don't drag that stuff into here. We're all one in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit of God.

And he says in verse 29, we're living by promise. We're not living by threat. Now little children live by threats.

You can't explain to a little two-year-old what a 10-ton truck is. I mean that highway seems such a beautiful place to play. Jump over the yellow line back and forth.

Yeah. Try to explain this. All a child understands is punishment and reward.

Punishment and reward. That's all a child understands. Then it gets older and starts to learn a few things.

You can reason with it and you can make promises. And you no longer say, now if you go near the highway, I'll spank you. You say, you want to live, don't you? I'll make a promise to you.

If you don't go near that highway, I promise you trucks won't hit you. Now what do you live by? Do you have joy at night because you got away with something? You go to bed at night and say, boy, I really conned them today. That's not very mature.

Children do this. Children go to bed at night and they'd laugh and chuckle under the covers and say, boy, we really fooled dad today, didn't we? Some of God's children act like that. But you can't fool him.

The mature Christian says the law is my servant. Now, how does the law serve me? How does the law serve me today? Oh, the same way it served me before I got saved. You know how the law helped me get saved? How did the law help me get saved? Number one, it revealed my sin.

The Holy Spirit of God took the word of God and held it before my face. I said, hey, I'm dirty. Well, I'll start to do better.

I'll be confirmed. I'll do this. I'll do that.

And the more I tried to save myself, the more the jailer came along and said, no, no, that won't save you. That won't save you. The law revealed my sin to me and the law restrained me and convicted me.

And then the law led me to Christ. That happened to a fellow in the Gospels, a fellow we call the rich young ruler. He came running up to Jesus.

How did he get there? The law brought him there. He said, all these things I've done from my youth. Then why aren't you happy? Because I'm not satisfied.

The law doesn't satisfy me. The trouble is, he didn't receive Christ either. And so the law served me by helping me get saved.

How? It revealed my sin. It crowded me to Christ, as Dr. Maxwell writes in his book. It led me to the Savior.

Then the Holy Spirit showed me grace. Unless you're convicted by law, you're not going to be converted by grace. And you don't hear much of that kind of preaching today.

Much of the evangelistic preaching you hear today has nothing to say about the law of God or the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, the judgment of God. It's a cream puff kind of evangelism with, oh, God will help you get over your headaches. God will help you get a better job.

Come and give your heart to Jesus because all the football players have done it. That's right. And the Lord Jesus didn't preach like that.

And John the Baptist didn't preach like that. And Paul didn't preach like that. How does the law serve me now that I am saved? Same way.

It shows me my sin. The word of God is still a mirror that shows me my sin. We won't go into it now, but read Romans 7. In Romans chapter 7, Paul has that experience.

The law showed him his covetousness. The law showed him how wicked his being really was, his flesh. And the law drove him to being wretched and saying, what's the deliverance? How can I be delivered? And the answer came through the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know what Christians do? Christians try to put themselves back under law. I'm going to tithe. I'm going to pass out so many tracts a week.

I won't do this. I will do that. And it goes along pretty good for about three days.

Then it all falls apart and they discover that they're pretty sinful and of themselves. They can't do it. That's what Romans 8 is all about.

Romans 8 says the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. That's a beautiful thing. As you walk in the spirit, the spirit of God uses the word of God to produce the righteousness of God.

I can't make myself righteous. The law can't make me righteous, but the Holy Spirit can use the law to help me grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. So the mature Christian says the law is my servant.

He says with the Lord Jesus, I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart. That's what Jesus said. Do you delight to do God's will? When you read the rules of the road, you say, well, I don't need these rules.

I delight to do God's will. Do you find from your heart as you read the word of God, the spirit of God enlightens you and then enables you That's what Paul's talking about here. He's saying let's be grown up.

Little children need a master, but mature people can be trusted with a servant and the law is our servant to help us on this way of life. That we have in Christ. Let's pray together.

Oh, Father, we're so prone to extremes. We either deny grace by our legalism or we deny law. By our anarchy.

Grant to us that beautiful balance where law is fulfilled in grace. Oh, how beautiful it is that the grace of God through the spirit of God produces the righteousness of the law in us as we walk in the spirit. I pray that you'll deliver us from being immature, from enjoying breaking your law, just because we want to help us, Lord, not to walk on that dark edge of lawlessness.

Rather, help us to walk so close to you that we don't even need to be worrying about law. We are so wrapped up in love. As Jesus said, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments.

Thank you that law has become our servant. Oh, Father, may we lawfully use the law. In our lives through your spirit.

I pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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