

Romans
Message 38
Establishing the Law
Rom 3:23-31

- 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.
- 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.
- 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.
- 29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:
- 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.
- 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. KJV

Introduction:

Paul has been laying a huge foundation:

- All alike (Jews and Gentiles) have sinned and come short of the Glory of God.
- They have, then, ALL lost any hope of being made right with God (Justified) through the works of the Law by their failure to perfectly keep it.
 - Whether we are talking about the Law given through Moses, or,
 - the Law of God written in the consciences of the Gentiles.
- All who are made right (Justified) before God are Justified freely through His Enablement (Grace).
- And, this is done through the Work of Jesus Christ - His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, called here 'propitiation' because that Work, among other things, settled the debt of our sins before God.
 - 'Propitiation' is short-hand- a part standing for the whole.
- This Work, then, vindicated God's Justice in pardoning the guilty.
- Since this Work is all of God through Grace and by Mercy, there is no room for boasting.
 - In the process (vs. 27,28) he drew into contrast two theories of Justification: The Law of Works and the Law of Faith.

We looked last week at those two principles or systems of becoming right with God, the system of Law being impossible.

Since, then, Paul eliminated the Law of Works as a valid system of Justification he was, no doubt, hearing feedback from Jews claiming that he was discounting the Law altogether as an important thing.

Actually, there were two great errors that Christianity was going to face over these two ideas:

- Those who would give too much importance to the Law as given to the Jews, and,
- Those who would minimize it too much.

In those who give too much emphasis we generally find those who want to bring things that we exclusively Jewish into Christianity: diet - holy days - festivals - and even those who, like the false teachers at Galatia, want to re-institute Circumcision as a required religious act.

- Some (shall we say 'most'?) get very legalistic about the Sabbath. Certain groups have decided that we must keep Saturday as a Special Day of worship and service to God. Others want to make up rules for Sunday and insist that others keep them.
- Generally these folks hold that their view (whatever it is) is the only correct one and that there is something wrong with those who do not agree with them.
- Many actually think there is a problem with the conversion of those who think differently.

There are many different versions of this line of thought but they all have one thing in common - they handle the issue of the Jewish Law differently than Paul did, putting more emphasis either on the whole thing or on certain elements of it.

I should remind you here of some things Paul said about the 10 Commandments.

2 Cor 3

- 1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?
- 2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:
- 3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.
- 4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:
- 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;
- 6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.
- 7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:
- 8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?
- 9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.
- 10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.
- 11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.
- 12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:
- 13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could

- not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:
- 14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.
 - 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.
 - 16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.
 - 17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
 - 18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. KJV

In v.6 Paul contrasted the New Covenant with the Old, which was represented by the 10 Words. He also contrasted Letter and Spirit, affirming the the Letter (Law) kills while the Spirit gives life.

- What he was referring to here is that violations of the 10 Commandments were punishable by death and every person has broken as least one, thus is subject to that death.

- He talked about his own experience with it at one point.

Rom 7:9-11

- 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.
- 10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.
- 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. KJV

In v.7 he called the Law, “the Ministry of Death” and made sure that we understood that what he was talking about was that which was engraved and written on the stones, the 10 Commandments.

In v.8 he affirmed that the Ministry of the Spirit (the New Covenant) was more glorious.

In v.9 he called the Law “the Ministry of Condemnation.”

V.10 - the Glory of the New Covenant so far outshines the Old that by comparison it has no glory at all.

And, in v.11, he called the 10 Commandments and the Old Covenant, “that which is done away.”

It is no wonder that the Jews saw him as turning completely away from the Law and abolishing it.

It is also difficult to read this passage honestly and see how people get some of the things they affirm about the Law and its’ place in Christian life.

How could one look at all of these negative statements and still think that the Law has any part of our right standing with God?

Then, there are those who go the opposite direction and would say that there is no need to pay any attention to the Law at all, that we are all on our own to follow our own sense of moral direction.

Some call this “Living by the Law of Love” but in reality they are simply living by codes of conduct they have invented for themselves.

Among these we find the modern so-called ‘Christians’ who accept immorality, homosexuality, female preachers and all of the other ungodliness which passes for the ‘Christian Church’ of our day.

There have been groups like this all through the history of Christianity but never have they been in the majority as they are today. Orthodox Christianity as historically known them by the name ‘Anti-Nomians’ which technically means “against law.”

Both of the groups we just discussed are in error. Reality is that we are not Justified - made right with God - by keeping the Jewish Law or any Law. There is no Law that exists which can eradicate the debt and guilt of past violations of the Laws of God.

Gal 3:21

21 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. KJV

Another reality: God has laws which are important for every believer to keep. Consistent violations of them reveal that one is an imposter, not a true believer.

- Some of these laws are identical to the ones that came through Moses, but they are given through and by the authority of Jesus Christ and in the context of a completely different covenant.

Rom 13:8-10

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. KJV

It is serious Law and habitual violators of it are revealed to be fraudulent, not children of God at all.

1 John 3:7-10

7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous,

- even as he is righteous.
- 8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.
- 9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.
- 10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. KJV

Now, some may say, “that is confusing... I don’t understand,” and they would be in a very large group, but I am going to try to help.

But understand this, if you are not willing to think carefully and accept what the scriptures teach as Truth, you will forever remain confused.

Further understand, neither your opinion nor the opinions of others have any weight here. We are relying completely on the Word of God.

Let us go back and refresh ourselves concerning what Paul has just written above this text at which we are looking.

Rom 3:10-19

- 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
- 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
- 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:
- 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:
- 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:
- 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:
- 17 And the way of peace have they not known:
- 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.
- 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. KJV

We are all sinners, habitual violators of God’s Law to mankind in general.

Through Moses the Jews were given Law

Through the conscience the Gentiles have been given Law.

Rom 2:14-16

- 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:
- 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one

- another;)
- 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. KJV

Therefore, any hope of being Justified before God by keeping His Law is totally ruined. Our record of Guilt, if we try such a thing, will remain and our debt that we have incurred thus far will be yet unpaid, even if we were to begin now and flawlessly keep His Law until our death.

But we have already seen (Gal 3:21) in our study of the subject that the Law was not given for the purpose of giving life, it was given to shut every mouth and establish the Whole World as guilty before Him. Immediately after that passage Paul wrote this.

Gal 3:22-25

- 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.
- 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. KJV

How is the Law our schoolmaster and what does it teach us?

It teaches us that we are hopeless sinners and under eternal Judgment - totally helpless and in need of Someone to save us.

How does it lead us to Christ?

It prepares all of the groundwork for our salvation and strips us bare of all excuses. We are sinners without hope and in need of a Savior.

And, Jesus Christ is the only reasonable and viable option as our Savior.

1 Tim 2:5-6

- 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;
- 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. KJV

But, how is it that we ‘establish the law’ by adopting this position?

You will remember the question that Paul asked and answered.

- 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

“Do we make void - invalidate, abolish, destroy - the Law through (by the means of) The Faith? May it never be so! Yea, we establish the Law.”

As we pointed out last week, this term ‘The Faith’ does not mean our faith but the whole message of the Gospel, which is often called ‘The Faith.’ It means all of this information we have about God, about ourselves and our sins, and about the Great Work of His Son, Jesus Christ, and all that He accomplished through it.

As we have already said, there is no doubt that the Jews who heard Paul say what he wrote in 2 Cor 3 would have thought he was discarding it.

To ‘establish’ something in this usage is to set it in its right place and use it properly.

A Toyota Camry is a perfectly good vehicle. It will carry a person many thousands of mile in comfort and safety... but one should not use it to tow a 30' camper. That will destroy it, not ‘establish’ it.

The Law is good when used for its’ purpose, to shut every mouth and affirm the whole world guilty before God, but it is not designed to Justify us before Him. It is not sufficient for that, it has no power to do that. It is not ‘established’ when used for the wrong end.

Some of the old Puritan Divines were quite adamant that the sinner must have the Law preached to him to prepare him to come to Christ.

They may have gone a little too far but it is for certain that most today do not go far enough.

“The Faith,” that old Gospel that we preach, plainly declare not only the guilt but the helplessness of the sin AND his total inability to save himself by ANYTHING that he does.

This means that Justification, Salvation, Redemption and the Pardon for Guilt MUST COME through the actions of God and not the sinner.

Paul also wrote,

Eph 2:8-9

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. KJV

It is not merely **guilt** which drives the sinner to Christ, it is **guilt** together with an understood **helplessness**.

There is a verse to the hymn Rock of Ages which does not appear in our hymnal but the writer demonstrated that he understood exactly what I am saying.

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
simply to Thy Cross I cling.
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for Grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly,

Wash me, Savior, or I die.”

There is nowhere to go except to Christ, you have no other options than Him.

So, let us say it a different way. If you are outside of Christ you are under a law system which demands Perfection from you and will have no mercy on you. It contains the oath of God, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Ezek 18:4,20

That death is a physical death here and an everlasting dying once you reach eternity... and there is no escape.

But, there is a remedy. God sent His Son to bear your sins in His Own Body on the Cross so that you not only would be forgiven of all of your sins and spared the penalty and Judgment for them but would be granted the Righteousness of Jesus Christ, the record of His Perfect Obedience, credited to your account before God.

His instructions to you are to Repent of your sins and Trust Him as your Only Hope.

This is the way the Law is established in The Faith. It is put in its proper place and used for the purpose for which it was given and intended.

Do we make void the Law? May it never be so! We establish the Law!