

# The Apostle Paul and the “Curse of the Law” – Part 2

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Recorded on December 6, 2025

Last time, we began a multiple-part sermon series addressing a number of the statements the Apostle Paul makes in his epistles that are unfortunately oftentimes misinterpreted and misunderstood. As we discussed last time, the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3 directly warns us about this particular problem. He tells us the Apostle Paul wrote some things that are difficult to understand and, unfortunately, are often twisted and misinterpreted. Peter even tells us that oftentimes when people do this, they also twist all of the scriptures. The way that that happens is because individuals will go and read these difficult statements the Apostle Paul made and come up with flawed misinterpretations about what Paul was talking about. And then they use that as the basis for interpreting the rest of the New Testament. What that results in is some very flawed theology and some very incorrect ideas.

So, what we're going to do today is to continue this series. As I mentioned when we concluded last time, today we will focus on the phrase “the curse of the law” that Paul uses. Because we're going to see he uses this particular phrase in Galatians 3, but this phrase is oftentimes very misinterpreted. So, we're going to spend some time today unpacking this subject to correctly understand what Paul meant by this phrase. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

## The Apostle Paul and the “Curse of the Law” - Part 2

So, if you turn over to Galatians 3, this is where Paul uses this particular phrase. We'll pick up here in verse 10.

**Gal 3:10** *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” 11) But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12) Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” 13) Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), 14) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (NKJV)*

Now, as I mentioned last time, oftentimes this particular phrase and these verses here are interpreted to mean that the law itself was just this horrible curse. It was a curse and an awful burden placed upon mankind, and Christ had to come and release everyone from this burden and take the law away. In fact, it's oftentimes said that Christ “nailed it to the cross”. That's from Colossians 2:14.

Now, we won't take the time to address that today. I went into that particular verse in detail last time. If you didn't hear that, I recommend you go back and listen to part 1. Because I addressed Colossians 2 in a lot of detail last time. But just to summarize what we discussed last time. In Colossians 2:14, when it talks about "nailing to the cross" and what Christ "nailed to the cross", what we saw there is that the way it's phrased in the New International Version of the Bible is a little more correct way to express it. It's the "charge of legal indebtedness". And as we saw last time, what this is referring to is the requirement of the death penalty that God's law requires. Because as we saw, Paul tells us in Romans 6 that the wages of sin is death. That is this "legal indebtedness". Because we've all sinned that now requires the death penalty. That's actually what Christ "nailed to the cross". It wasn't God's law itself. And what we're going to see today when we look at the "curse of the law" is it's basically getting at the same concept. It's the death penalty.

But before we go into that in detail, let's first build a foundation here. Because, as we noticed here in verse 13, it tells us that Christ is the one who has redeemed us from the "curse of the law". So, let's ask the question: Does Christ see the law as a curse? Did He see the law itself as a curse and something that He needed to release mankind from, and just do away with the law and the commandments so that mankind wouldn't have to keep them? Is that how Christ saw it? Well, to answer that question, let's turn over to Matthew 5. This is a verse we discussed last time, but I think it's good to kind of review this again, so we have the proper foundation for this. Because again, let's just look at it from the perspective of how did Christ view the subject? Because He's the one that as we just read, He has redeemed us from the "curse of the law". So, did Christ Himself see the law in general as a curse? Because we're going to see, there is a curse associated with the law, but did Christ see the law itself as a curse and something He needed to take away? We will pick up here in Matthew 5:17.

**Matt 5:17** *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18) For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 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."* (NKJV)

Notice, Christ Himself is telling us that keeping the commandments is relevant to the Kingdom of God. *That's a big clue all by itself.* But let's just notice here in verse 17, He said He did not come to "destroy" the Law or the Prophets. Now, you oftentimes see in the New Testament, the Old Testament in general referred to as "the Law and the Prophets", or "the Law and the Prophets and the Writings". That's generally a generic statement to refer to the Old Testament. And notice He says He DID NOT come to "destroy" it. And just to clarify the subject, let's look at what the Greek word means that's translated there as "destroy". It's transliterated into English as "katalou". It's Strong's # 2647, and the definition I'm going to give you is from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates.

*“to loose. To loose or unloose what was before bound or fastened...To refresh oneself, to lodge or be a guest....It properly refers to travelers loosening their own burdens or those of their animals when they stayed at a house on a journey....To dissolve, demolish, destroy, or throw down....”*

See, Christ is directly telling us that He's not loosening something that was previously bound. And that's normally the concept that people are expressing when they say, “Christ nailed the law to the cross and you don't need to keep those commandments anymore”. They're basically directly contradicting Christ's own statements on the subject. And just to further clarify that, turn over to Matthew 19. This is another verse that we addressed last time, but again, I think it's just important to start off with a foundation of Christ's perspective on the subject. Because what we're going to see here is Christ directly says if you're a New Covenant Christian pursuing eternal life in the Kingdom of God, one of the requirements is keeping the commandments. He can't be any more clear about this. This is Matthew 19:16.

**Matt 19:16** *“Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” (NKJV)*

Now, pay attention to the question. He's not asking “What do I need to do to be an observant Jew under the Old Covenant?” That's not the question. The question is about eternal life. That's offered through the New Covenant. So, he's asking “What is required of me as a New Covenant Christian?” And let's just get Christ's answer to the question.

*“17) So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” 18) He said to Him, “Which ones?” Jesus said, ““You shall not murder,’ “You shall not commit adultery,’ “You shall not steal,’ “You shall not bear false witness,’ 19) “Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ” (NKJV)*

Notice He's just listing the commandments that you find verbatim right out of Exodus 20. It's very obvious He's quoting the Ten Commandments. And continue in verse 20.

*“20) The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” 21) Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” 22) But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” (NKJV)*

We won't continue to read the rest of this as I covered last time. But as you can see here if you continue reading, Christ goes on and talks about how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. And He's using this guy's example to illustrate this particular point. Because what this guy was doing was placing his riches up as an idol. That's breaking the second commandment. And he's basically putting it before God. That's breaking the first commandment. So, see, it doesn't make sense to make the argument that, “Well, He didn't specifically mention the other five commandments. So,

you can ignore those.” Obviously, that’s not what Christ was saying. He just listed half the commandments, making it real clear what commandments He was talking about. He’s making it very clear if you’re a New Covenant Christian and you’re wanting to pursue eternal life in the Kingdom of God, one of the expectations, the requirements that you have to do is to keep the Ten Commandments. Christ Himself taught this.

And what we’re going to see here is that the Apostles that Christ trained Himself, those that also wrote the rest of the New Testament later, they taught the exact same thing. Let’s turn over to 1 John 5. We’ll see here what the beloved Apostle, John, actually taught on this subject. Because oftentimes when people twist Paul’s writings to come up with the idea that he was just saying that the law was done away with -- the commandments don’t apply. You don’t have to keep the commandments. You don’t have to keep the Sabbath. You don’t have to keep the Holy Days. Basically, everything that the Bible teaches you can just toss aside. You just need to express faith in Jesus and just have love in your heart. You just need to have love and a personal relationship with God and with Jesus. So, just basically be “buddies” and just be a “nice person”. We’re going to see that John tells us that this is a direct contradiction. We’re going to see that he actually defines Godly love in terms of keeping God’s commandments. So, let’s notice here, 1 John 5:2.

**1 John 5:2** *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”* (NKJV)

Now, compare that statement with the idea that the law itself is a curse. We’re going to see as we go through this sermon that there is a curse associated with the law, and we’re going to dig into what that means. But if we try to interpret that to say that the law itself is a curse, you can’t reconcile this with John’s statement. The commandments are not burdensome. They’re not this horrible plague upon mankind that had to be done away with. In fact, he defines godly love in terms of keeping the commandments. So, he’s basically saying there’s no such thing as saying, “I have love in my heart. I have Godly love and a relationship with God, but I don’t have to keep those commandments.” That’s a contradiction in terms, because God’s love is defined in terms of keeping His commandments. That’s what demonstrates that we have the love of God is keeping the commandments. And notice, John says this again in his second epistle. Turn over to 2 John, and we’ll pick up here in verse 4.

**2 John 4** *“I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. 5) And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. 6) This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.”* (NKJV)

Because again, this totally contradicts this idea that, “Well, you just need love in your heart. You don’t need to keep those commandments because they’re a curse. They’re a

burden, and they've been done away with. Now you just need love." What that's saying is you just need human emotion. Because see, if you divorce love from God's law, now love has whatever definition you want to give it. You just define it with whatever is going to work for you, and it is not going to tell you that you're wrong about anything or that you need to change anything. Now the definition of Godly love just becomes a human emotion.

Well, the Bible clearly tells us repeatedly that the heart of man is deceitful. We lie to ourselves, and our human nature can justify anything. So, see, once you basically divorce the concept of love from God's law, now you can just make up whatever you want. You can define love however you want to. What that is, is trying to mold God in our image rather than trying to be molded into His image.

Because, as I mentioned, oftentimes what you'll hear today from people who insist that they're a Christian, but God's law has been done away with. What you'll hear them talk a lot about is "love" and just having a "relationship with God". They'll say, "Well, I just have a personal relationship with Jesus. Or I have a relationship with God the Father." And basically, if you hear them talk about it, it's kind of like, "Well, we're just buddies. We're just kind of equals, and we're just buddies." And it's not a matter of I have to obey Him.

Well, what we're going to see here is John directly tells us that if we claim to know God, we claim to have a personal relationship with Him, and we're not keeping the commandments, we're lying to ourselves. It's a false concept to even believe that that's a possibility. We're just lying to ourselves and deceiving ourselves. And to see that, just turn over to 1 John 2. We're going to see that the Apostle John here just directly states this to us. This is in 1 John 2:3.

**1 John 2:3** *"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4) He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (NKJV)*

That's kind of a wake-up call for this idea that the law and the commandments are done away with, and now it's just about a personal relationship with God. "My relationship with Jesus." He's saying, if you're not keeping the commandments, you can't legitimately claim to have a relationship with Him. That is one of the evidences of having a relationship with Him. And if we claim otherwise, we're just deceiving ourselves. See, and it's not just John that taught this, the Apostle James teaches this as well. Turn over to James 1:21.

**James 1:21** *"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22) But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (NKJV)*

In other words, if we're not doing His word. We're not putting it into action. If we're claiming that all we need is an intellectual belief and just a professing that we've accepted Christ as our savior and we have a personal relationship with Him. And that's all there is to it. We're just deceiving ourselves. Just continue reading in verse 23.

*"23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24) for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25) But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."* (NKJV)

And notice here, it's specifically referring to "doing the word". In other words, our actions. But notice it refers to God's law as the "law of liberty". The law of freedom. It doesn't refer to it as this oppressive curse. This burden upon mankind that Christ had to come and just do away with, so that you wouldn't have to keep those horrible commandments that are an awful curse upon mankind. That's not how the Bible presents it at all.

That's oftentimes what you'll hear promoted in popular Christianity today. Particularly among Protestant theology. Again, they oftentimes base their whole view of the New Testament on the statements the Apostle Paul made and then they try to interpret the rest of the Bible to match it. As I explained last time, in part 1, that's really reverse Biblical interpretation because you always want to start off with a more simple, straightforward, easy to understand scriptures. You should use those as the basis when you deal with the more difficult scriptures, like the statements of the Apostle Paul.

And again, as I pointed out last time, if you just read 2 Peter 3, the Apostle Peter himself directly tells us that Paul's writings are the difficult ones. So, that tells you how to approach Biblical interpretation. You use the Gospels, the General Epistles, and all the other writings of the New Testament. Those are more the foundation. You use those as a guide when you're looking at what Paul addressed. Because you work off of the basic Biblical principle that the Bible doesn't contradict itself. So, whatever those difficult scriptures you are saying, one thing you know for sure, they're not going to directly contradict the simple straightforward scriptures.

For example, they're not going to directly contradict Christ's own statements. Because, as we saw earlier when we read through Galatians 3, it tells us that Christ redeemed us from the "curse of the law". Well, we saw from Christ's own statements that Christ did not consider the law to be a curse. Obviously, there's something about this that's a curse, because Paul directly states that. But we saw from Christ's own words, He didn't consider it to be this awful curse, and He directly told us He was not doing away with the law itself.

So, now, we need to look at what exactly is the "curse of the law"? Let's turn back over to Galatians 3, and we'll dig into this section of the scripture here in more detail to

understand exactly what Paul was getting at here and make sure we're not misinterpreting this. Now, the key here is in Galatians 3:13.

**Gal 3:13** *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),"* (NKJV)

Now, one of the keys to understanding what he's referring to here -- what exactly is the "curse" that Christ redeemed us from -- is noticing the latter part there in verse 13 where it says, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree". That's a direct quote from the Old Testament. That's a quote from Deuteronomy 21. If you turn over to Deuteronomy 21 and we'll see what this is. Keep your finger here in Galatians 3. We're going to come right back. But turn over to Deuteronomy 21, and we'll read here the verse that this is quoting from. So, Deuteronomy 21, and we'll pick up in verse 22.

**Deu 21:22** *"If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23) his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God."* (NKJV)

Now, what this is addressing is the death penalty. That is what it's talking about here. Now, there's a difference here in terms of how this was applied in Old Testament Israel under the Old Covenant law and how this concept applies spiritually under the New Covenant. Because if you read through this chapter, what it's getting at here is the more severe sins. The sins that were considered more heinous came with the death penalty. If a person committed them, they were just killed. And that was the end of the story for them. Now, there were numerous other infractions a person could do that were considered sin, but the punishment wasn't quite so severe. You didn't have to actually die for it. However, if you look at this from a spiritual perspective, spiritually sin by definition requires the death penalty. And that's the key to understanding the subject. If you turn over to Romans 6, we'll see here where Paul says this. This is Romans 6:23.

**Rom 6:23** *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (NKJV)

See, as we discussed last time when we address Colossians 2:14, I mentioned there that what that verse is referring to -- because in the New King James it talks about the "handwriting of requirements". And as I explained last time, if you look at it in the NIV translation, the New International Version, it's a little clearer in how it expresses it. It talks about the "charge of legal indebtedness". And as I explained last time, that's really getting at the concept addressed in this scripture here in Romans 6:23. Because he's talking about the fact that sin, by definition, requires the death penalty.

Well, this is the charge of legal indebtedness that comes with sin. Because, as I mentioned, under Old Covenant law not every sin required someone to be killed or stoned and put to death. Whereas, spiritually, when you look at the concept of sin, sin

by definition requires the death penalty. And this is something that applies to all of us because everyone has sinned. Regardless of how diligently we try to obey God in our physical life, all of us have sinned, and all of us fall short. And if you'll turn over to Romans 3, we'll just see this in Romans 3:23.

**Rom 3:23** *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (NKJV)*

So, see, all of us deserve the death penalty as a result of having sinned. Because even those that are converted Christians today who have God's Holy Spirit and are actively striving to obey His law, we all have times when we fall down, and we fall short and we sin. Those that strive to obey God, they're going to have plenty of sins that they had before they received God's Spirit, before they fully repented. And then striving to go forward in their life, we all make mistakes. We all have times when we fall down, and we fall short and we sin.

See, this is what Christ redeemed us from. It's the death penalty. This is the "curse of the law". Because if you noticed when we read there in Galatians 3, it says that Christ "became a curse" for us. Well, He didn't become something awful for mankind. This plague upon mankind that had to be removed. No, He took the death penalty upon Himself and paid that penalty for us. The "charge of legal indebtedness". That's what He "nailed to the cross". And that's how He has redeemed us. It's through His death and allowing the forgiveness of sins. And if you'll turn over to Ephesians 1, we'll see this. This is Ephesians 1, and we'll read verse 7.

**Eph 1:7** *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (NKJV)*

What we'll see here as we go through this -- it refers to "through His blood." The shedding of His blood really is a reference to His death. Because it's not just the issue of bleeding. It's the fact that He faced the death penalty for us. If you'll turn over to Colossians 1, we'll see this emphasized again. This is Colossians 1:13.

**Col 1:13** *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14) in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (NKJV)*

And notice again, this is how He redeemed us. Because we read in Galatians 3, He redeemed us from the "curse of the law". Well, this is through the forgiveness of sin. This is removing that "charge of legal indebtedness" from us. Requiring us to die as a result of all of us having sinned. Because regardless of how hard we strive to obey God's law, we all have sins. And if there's not forgiveness of that sin, then we're all required to face the death penalty.

But as I mentioned briefly before, when it refers to the fact that this is "through His blood", through the shedding of His blood, it's important to also realize there that it's not just an issue of Him bleeding. If you just look back at the sacrificial system, the Bible



tells us that the sacrificial system basically taught us about Christ. The book of Hebrews explains this. The animal sacrifices in the temple in ancient Israel were really a symbolic system to teach us about the sacrifice of Christ. Not only the need for Christ's sacrifice, but all the things that it accomplishes for us.

But if you study how the sacrifices were done, when an animal was about to be sacrificed and used as a symbolic atonement for sin, they would typically place their hands on the head of the animal. What this was about was a symbolic transfer of the sins of humans onto the animal. And then that animal was sacrificed. It was killed. They didn't just cut the animal and have it bleed. Then take that blood and put it on the altar, and then patch the animal back up, and he continued to live. No, the animal had to die. He had to actually give his life. Because what this was about was symbolically facing the death penalty that comes with sin. That was the point.

Well, see, when Christ became a "curse" for us, what it's referring to is He took on that death penalty. He died for us. And that allowed for the forgiveness of sin. That's how He redeemed us from the "curse of the law". Because again, the "curse of the law" is that requirement of the death penalty. Because see, the key issue to understand here in Galatians 3 is the issue of justification. And to see that, turn back over to Galatians 3. We'll pick up again here in verse 10.

**Gal 3:10** *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' 11) But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.' 12) Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.' (NKJV)*

And notice how verse 11 specifically talks about how we're justified. Because the issue here is justification. As I mentioned before, Christ's death enabled there to be forgiveness of sin. As we've already seen here, we're required to continue to obey God. There's scripture after scripture -- even Christ Himself said He didn't come to do away with the law. He said if you want to make it into eternal life, you've got to keep the commandments. You can't ignore the commandments and call yourself a Christian and think you're going to make it into the Kingdom of God and receive eternal life. That's just not how it works.

But see, the issue is, if there wasn't forgiveness of sin, well, there's no way that a carnal human being, regardless of how much they strive to obey God, is ever going to do it perfectly. And see, that's the real issue that we're getting at here. And we can understand that if we look at the Old Testament quotes that are included in these verses. Because, as Paul wrote this, as he's explaining this, he refers to several scriptures in the Old Testament. If we then look back there and read the context, we're going to see this concept and make it clear what he's trying to say here. So, if we look again here in verse 10, I'm just going to read through this again, because we're going to break this down verse by verse, and then look up the Old Testament quotes involved here.

**Gal 3:10** *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written,...”* (NKJV)

And now if you notice, I think most Bible translations here are going to have in quotations the rest of the verse, because it's quoting from the Old Testament. But just to read it here, it says:

*“...“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”* (NKJV)

Now, this is a quote that comes directly from Deuteronomy 27. If you keep your finger here, because we're going to come back to Galatians 3 here in just a second, but turn over to Deuteronomy 27, and we'll read the context here of what Paul is quoting from. Deuteronomy 27, I'm going to read verse 26.

**Deu 27:26** *“Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law.”*  
*“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’ ”* (NKJV)

Well, as you can see if you take the time to read through this chapter, it's referring to curses that come from disobeying God and various infractions that can result in curses. Then, it sums it up that cursed is everyone who doesn't continue obeying all of this. Well, if you look at this again from a spiritual context and through the eyes that any sin requires the death penalty, you can see the problem that no physical human being is going to live their life regardless of how hard they strive to obey God and always get it right and never commit a sin that's going to automatically bring the death penalty on them. So, turn back over to Galatians 3. Let's pick up in verse 11.

**Gal 3:11** *“But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.””* (NKJV)

Now, we're going to come back here in a minute and revisit this concept of living by faith. But just continue on in verse 12.

*“(12) Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”* (NKJV)

Now, the second half of verse 12 there is again another quote directly taken from the Old Testament. And that's found in Leviticus 18. So, if you turn over to Leviticus 18. Again, Leviticus 18, and we'll pick up here in verse 4.

**Lev 18:4** *“You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. 5) You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”* (NKJV)

See, he's referring to God's instructions in the Old Testament of living according to His law. But the point that Paul's getting at here is that, as New Covenant Christians, we're

required to live by this as well. But again, we're offered eternal life. And if there's not forgiveness of sin, well, there's no way that we're going to live throughout our entire life and not have the death penalty upon us. Because we've all sinned. We all fall short. Even after we've repented and we've committed ourselves to God, we've received His Holy Spirit, and we're striving to live a life of righteousness every day, we still mess up. We still have all the times that we fall short. We have times we fall into bad attitudes, and we have to catch ourselves and repent and get back on track. That happens, and if there's not forgiveness of sin, well then, we're all toast. We have no chance at eternal life. We have no chance at salvation.

See, this is the concept that Paul is getting at. Because oftentimes when he explains that no one is justified by the law, people think, "Ok, well now it's all just faith, and now we can just do away with the law. Now, the law is irrelevant." However, as we're going to see here as we go through this sermon, no, both are requirements. We have to have faith in Christ and in His sacrifice and realize that we can't earn salvation; we have to have His sacrifice to justify us before God. And without that, we have no chance at salvation. None of us, regardless of how diligently we try to live our Christian life, can ever stand before God and say, "Well, give me my crown because I was so righteous, I deserved it. So, give me what I deserve." What we deserve is the death penalty. And that's something that we all have to realize.

This is the core of what justification is about. It's not an issue of now you just live by faith, and you can ignore the law, and you don't have to obey the commandments. That's still a requirement. It's the realization that we have to have Christ's sacrifice. Regardless of how hard we strive to obey, we'll never measure up on our own. And if we don't have grace and forgiveness to cover all of our shortcomings, we have no chance. And see, that's what justification by faith is about. It's trusting in that, having the humility to realize that we can't earn salvation. We have to appreciate and honor Christ's sacrifice and realize that we have no chance at salvation without it, and trust in Him. But we're still required to obey. To strive every day to do the best we can to obey God. And to see the issue of justification, turn over here to Acts 13:38.

**Acts 13:38** *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;"* (NKJV)

Now, you'll notice if you look in your Bible, I know I'm reading from New King James here. I'm sure every Bible translation capitalizes "Man" in this verse, because it's referring to Christ. And in verse 39.

*"39) and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."* (NKJV)

And again, this is not saying that the law that God delivered to mankind and to the Israelites through Moses, that's irrelevant, and you don't have to keep that anymore. It's saying, no, those are the rules that we have to live by, but that doesn't justify you. That doesn't cover your infractions. Our sins that bring upon us the death penalty, that

doesn't cover that issue. Again, we still have to obey God's law, but if there's not forgiveness and Christ's sacrifice, we all deserve the death penalty. But just turn over to Galatians 2. We'll see here where Paul himself addresses this same concept. We'll start in verse 15.

**Gal 2:15** *"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16) knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."* (NKJV)

And that's absolutely true. Again, regardless of how much we strive to obey God and to do right, that doesn't take away the sins and all the times that we did it wrong. It's not a situation where it's a scale and if we do enough good and we do enough righteousness, well, that wipes out our infractions and all the areas where we fell short. That's not how justification works. We have to have the sacrifice of Christ for that. But notice that if we keep reading, Paul makes it clear that when you've repented and accept Christ's sacrifice, you can't go back to living in sin. Remember, sin is the violation of God's law. That's 1 John 3:4. That's the very definition of what sin is. It's breaking God's law. We have to live a life of obedience. Continue reading in verse 17.

*"17) 'But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! 18) For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.'" (NKJV)*

So, it talks about building again what you destroyed. Because before you receive the Holy Spirit, you have to repent. In other words, that's rejecting the life of sin and committing yourself to a life of obedience. You see, even though you have Christ's sacrifice and it covers your sin, you can't go back and keep sinning. Now, you have to obey and go forward and realize that, yes, Christ's sacrifice can cover the areas where we fall short, but we have to stay fully committed to following God.

To clarify this issue of faith, turn over to James 2. Because as I mentioned, oftentimes people get tripped up when they read the comments where Paul talks about justification is through faith and not by works and the law. And that's true, that is how justification comes. Again, justification is forgiveness of sin. That is what it accomplishes. And again, it also speaks to the fact that we cannot earn salvation. It is a gift. It's just like we read in Romans 6:23, "The gift of God is eternal life." No one earns eternal life. It's a gift given to us. And again, faith is a requirement for that.

But let's notice how the Bible defines faith. Because people oftentimes look at faith and obedience as polar opposites of one another. That if I have faith, well, that means I don't have to obey. That means I can reject God's law, and if I try to obey God's law, well, that means I don't have faith. People oftentimes get tripped up with that. Let's notice here how the Apostle James directly addresses this issue, and how he defines what faith is for us and how we illustrate faith. Because he's going to directly tell us that if

we're not showing works of our own efforts to strive to obey -- that's how we demonstrate faith is by our works. Notice this is in James 2:14.

**James 2:14** *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15) If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16) and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17) Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18) But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19) You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (NKJV)*

Now, that's a verse to pay attention to. Because oftentimes people think today, and again it's a popular concept in popular Christianity today, that all you need to do is just have faith and mouth the words that you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and He died for our sins, and you've accepted Him as your Savior. And as long as you do that and you show love -- love just defined by human emotion -- well, that's all there is. Notice here, he says, "even the demons believe and tremble". Read through the Gospel accounts where Christ interacts with demons. They refer to Him as the Son of God. They know exactly who He is. And they clearly state it. They don't live a life of obedience, but they acknowledge who He is. So, just acknowledging He's the Son of God and He died as the savior of mankind, that doesn't mean anything if we're not also living a life of obedience. Pick up in verse 20.

*"20) But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22) Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23) And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24) You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25) Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? 26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (NKJV)*

Now, just to clarify one thing, when it talks about Abraham was justified by works, it's not saying that Abraham earned his salvation because he was just so righteous that he's going to be in the Kingdom because the good that he did outweighed the bad in terms of a scale and he was justified by that. No, it's clarifying the fact that he's justified through faith, but he was required to have works of obedience. And it's like James is explaining here, the evidence that we have faith is our actions. It is our works. It is our efforts to strive to obey because just mouthing the words, "I have faith", as he said, that's dead. I mean, that's meaningless. As John even put it, if you're claiming to be a Christian and you're not actively striving to follow the commandments, you're just a liar. You're just lying and deceiving yourself. You're locked in self-deception.

And just to further support this, turn over to Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11 is oftentimes referred to as the faith chapter. And it's also kind of the spiritual hall of fame. It lists out for us the heroes of the Bible and what they accomplished through faith. Notice as we read through a lot of this how it connects the evidence of their faith is their actions and the things that they did to obey God. Even striving to the point of giving their own lives and getting killed. How it connects them together. It doesn't list them as the heroes of faith because they just professed a belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and I accepted Him as my Savior, and I have warm fuzzy love in my heart. It doesn't paint that picture at all. It shows us the evidence of their faith is their actions. And let's pick up here in Hebrews 11:6.

**Heb 11:6** *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. 7) By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (NKJV)*

Notice the evidence of his faith was building an ark for decades and decades. And facing all the harassment of the people around him who thought he was crazy. It was his efforts of obedience that is the demonstration of his faith. Continue in verse 8.

*“8) By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9) By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10) for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11) By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12) Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. 13) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14) For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15) And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16) But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. 17) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18) of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” 19) concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. 20) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21) By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. 22) By faith Joseph,*

*when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.” (NKJV)*

Now, just jump down now to verse 30 here. Because notice, when we read James 2, it referred to both Abraham and Rahab. And we will notice if we keep reading here, it's going to mention Rahab as well. And once again, it's tying the evidence of her faith to her actions. Because Rahab put her life on the line. If things had not worked out well with the conquering of Jericho, Rahab could have been killed as a collaborator with the enemy. Pick up in verse 30.

*“30) By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. 31) By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. 32) And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33) who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34) quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35) Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36) Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— 38) of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39) And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40) God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” (NKJV)*

So, you can see the Bible clearly defines faith in terms of our actions. In other words, our actions of obedience, our striving to obey God, is the evidence of our faith. We can't just mouth the words and say, “I believe in God. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and He died for the sins of mankind, and I've accepted Him as my Savior.” Just mouthing those words. I mean, it's good for a person to believe that and accept that, but to just say that doesn't really mean anything. As James told us in James 2, the demons believe that. They believe that Christ is the Son of God and He died for the sins of mankind. Now, they don't try to obey Him. They don't try to obey the Father and live a life of obedience. They rebel in every way possible. But if you ask them, is Christ the Son of God? Yes. If you read the Gospel accounts where Christ is casting out demons from individuals that are demon-possessed during His ministry, they directly refer to Him as the Son of God. They acknowledge that. That, in and of itself, doesn't mean a whole lot if we're not living a life of obedience.

As we can see, the Bible is very clear. We're required to obey the commandments. We're required to obey God's law. Because as we've seen today, the “curse of the law” that Christ redeemed us from and He nailed to the cross, that was the death penalty.

That was to enable forgiveness of sin and justification. Because again, we cannot earn salvation. Yes, we're required to live a life of obedience. If we don't, we won't be in the Kingdom of God. As Christ said, "If you want to make it in the Kingdom of God, you have to obey the commandments." Those are requirements. Again, that doesn't mean that we earn salvation. It does mean that it's a requirement. It's a stipulation that we have to do to show that we're serious and we're going to obey God to receive it.

Well, brethren, that's where we're going to end this time. And next time in part 3, we're going to look into the phrase "under the law". As you're probably aware, that is a very misunderstood phrase as well. Because the Apostle Paul refers to those "under the law" and "not under the law". And that's oftentimes very misinterpreted as well to come to this conclusion that God's commandments have been done away with, and we don't have to keep them. So, that's where we'll pick up next time. We'll end here at this point and I'll just say tune in next time for part 3.