

The Apostle Paul and the “Curse of the Law” – Part 3

James Smyda

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Last month we began a multiple-part sermon series addressing a number of the statements made by the Apostle Paul in his epistles that are often times misinterpreted. They're often interpreted to mean that God's law has now been done away with. That when Christ came, one of the things He accomplished in His ministry was to abolish God's law, and Christians are no longer required to obey it. They don't have to obey the commandments. They don't have to keep God's Sabbath. They don't have to keep the Holy Days. Basically, everything that's commanded in the Bible is no longer required of Christians.

They just have to believe in Christ. Just profess an intellectual belief that He is their Savior. And then just be a “nice person”, and that's all that's required of Christians. This is a popular belief that's taught today. And typically, when people are defending this belief, they turn to these statements made by the Apostle Paul in his epistles that we began addressing in the last several sermons here in this series.

We started off in Part 1, and we saw first of all that Jesus Christ Himself directly tells us in Matthew 5 that He did not come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. He very clearly stated that. In fact, He stated in Matthew 19 when He was directly asked the question, "What is required of a person to obtain eternal life?" Christ's answer was, "You have to keep the commandments." So, we saw that Christ doesn't agree with this popular theory that the law was done away with.

Then we saw in 2 Peter 3 that the Apostle Peter directly warns us that Paul made a number of statements that are “hard to understand”. They're the more difficult scriptures for us to grasp and to properly understand, and they're often times twisted. As he says, they twist not only Paul's statements, but all of the scriptures. We saw that that's kind of the key to understanding what the problem is here is Paul being misinterpreted and taken out of context.

Then we took a good look at Colossians 2 and saw that that was a good example of how Paul is often times taken out of context and his words are twisted. And we saw specifically in that chapter, the statement Paul makes about what Christ “nailed to the cross”. There's a popular theory attached to that verse, that Christ actually took all of God's law and nailed it to the cross, and now it's irrelevant. And people don't have to observe God's law. Well, we saw that that wasn't correct. That what Christ actually “nailed to the cross” is, as the New International Version of the Bible words it, it's "the charge of legal indebtedness." In other words, it's the death penalty. It's the requirement of the death penalty for sin. Christ basically abolished that by allowing forgiveness of sin and taking on that death penalty for us.

And then in Part 2, we took a look at this phrase that Paul uses, "the curse of the law". Because that's often misinterpreted as well. It's interpreted to mean that God's law itself is just this horrible curse upon mankind, and Christ did everybody the favor of nailing it to the cross and doing away with the law and removing the curse. And we saw there that first of all, that Jesus Christ Himself did not consider God's law to be a curse. In fact, we also looked at a number of the other Apostles and their teachings on the subject. The Apostles John and James, for example, and we saw that none of them thought God's law was a curse. They thought it was a good thing, and that Christians are required to obey it.

Then we saw that the "curse" that Paul is talking about is not God's law in general. There's a curse associated with the law, and that's the death penalty. And we saw that that's what Christ did away with. He redeemed us from the death penalty by allowing forgiveness of sin and taking on that death penalty Himself.

Today, in Part 3, we're going to take a closer look at Paul's statement about being "under the law." Because we're going to see that Paul refers to those "under the law" and those "not under the law". And he refers to those "not under the law" as being "under grace". But what exactly did he mean by this? Because this is another one of those phrases that's often misinterpreted to come up with the conclusion that you're not "under the law", so you don't have to obey God's law. So, today, we're going to take a closer look at that particular phrase. So, if you'd like a title for the sermon, it's:

The Apostle Paul and the "Curse of the Law" - Part 3

Because, as I mentioned, we're going to take a closer look today at this phrase "under the law." So, if you'll turn over to Romans 3, this is the first time that Paul uses this particular phrase in his epistles. And we'll see as we read through this that, kind of like as we saw last time when we were looking at the "curse of the law", one of the keys to really understanding some of these more difficult statements that Paul makes is understanding the subject of justification. Because in many cases, and particularly in the case of "under the law" here, we're going to see that the whole subject of justification and understanding that subject is key to getting at what Paul is really talking about. But to see the first time that Paul uses this phrase "under the law," let's start reading here in Romans 3 and verse 9 just to get the full context.

Rom 3:9 *"What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10) As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11) There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12) They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 13) "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced 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 they have not known." 18) "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (NKJV)*

So, he's making the point here of basically how bad human nature is. That without God's intervention in our life, without the Spirit of God to alter our thinking, we're just kind of bent on evil. And we're going to see as we go through this sermon, that's one of the keys of conversion and what it's about. Without God's Spirit, we're not capable of obeying God's commandments and following His law. Our nature just inherently wants to fight against it. But let's continue reading here in verse 19.

“19) Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20) Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (NKJV)

Now, the key to understanding this subject is realizing how it connects verse 20 and how it connects the subject of justification to this whole issue of being “under the law” or being “not under the law”. Because as we go through this sermon, we'll see in more detail exactly what that means. Right now, I just want you to notice the connection between this subject and justification because that is the key to understanding this whole subject.

And to see that, notice verse 20 starts off with the word "therefore" in English. Now, let me share with you the meaning of the Greek word that's translated as "therefore" here in English. It's transliterated into English as “dioti”. It's Strong's # 1360. And the definition I'm going to read to you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates. He defines it as:

“On account of this or that, for this reason, that, simply because, ...”

In other words, he starts this verse off saying, "for this reason". Then he goes into explaining that no one through the deeds of the law is justified. He ties it to justification. But then notice the latter part of the verse here. He says, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." Because what we're going to see here is the very definition of sin. For the concept of sin to exist, you have to have a law because sin is, by definition, the transgression of the law. Because, as we're going to see as we go through this sermon, the contrast with being "under the law" is typically being "under grace". And we're going to see here later, when we read directly in Romans here, that Paul is going to explain to us that those "under grace" they can't go on sinning. They have to be behaving in accordance with God's law.

But just to see here why he says that by the law is the knowledge of sin, let's see how the law is directly connected with the concept of sin. Because sin is the transgression of the law. Turn over to 1 John 3, and we'll see this directly stated. It's 1 John 3, and we're going to read verse 4.

1 John 3:4 *“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.” (NKJV)*

Now, to make this just a little more bluntly clear here, let me read to you this verse from the King James Version. What I just read to you previously is from the New King James Version. But from the King James Version, here's how this verse is translated.

1 John 3:4 *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”* (KJV)

So, sin by definition is transgressing God's law. And see, if there isn't a law, you can't transgress it. In other words, if there's not a law, if the law has been completely done away with. If Christ, when He came in His ministry 2000 years ago, if He abolished God's law, then since that time there would be no such thing as sin. We wouldn't be capable of sinning. And we wouldn't need a sacrifice to redeem us from that sin. To allow forgiveness of that sin, and to save us from that. None of that would be necessary by definition. To notice this, turn back over to Romans 4. It's Romans 4 and verse 13.

Rom 4:13 *“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14) For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, 15) because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.”* (NKJV)

In other words, if you don't have a law, you can't transgress the law. Therefore, you cannot sin. So, if you just think it through, if the law itself is abolished and done away with, by definition, you can't sin. Then you don't need a sacrifice anymore to cover your sins. To justify you before God, to cover your infractions of God's law. None of that would be necessary because the concept of sin simply wouldn't exist. You have to have a law for the concept of sin to even be a thing.

Now, turn over to Romans 6. What we're going to see here is, as I mentioned, the typical contrast that Paul makes with "under the law" is being "under grace". When he refers to those "not under law", he is referring to being "under grace". But notice when he introduces this concept in Romans 6, he is very clear that those who are "under grace", they can't live a life of sin. They can't continue in sin. They have to be behaving in obedience with God's law. To notice this, let's start reading in verse 12 of Romans 6.

Rom 6:12 *“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13) And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”* (NKJV)

Notice he is basically saying you can't continue in a life of sin. Now, how does the Bible define sin? The transgression of God's law. Well, the law still has to apply here, or none of this makes any sense. So, continue on in verse 14.

“14) For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (NKJV)

As we are going to see, the contrast he is making here is in regards to justification. Whether your justification is "under law" or "under grace". And we are going to talk about that in more detail here in a few minutes. But what I want you to notice at this point is he's making it very clear that those who are "under grace", they still have to obey God's law. Because they have to avoid sin, and sin by definition is transgressing God's law. But continue in verse 15 here.

“15) What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16) Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17) But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18) And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” (NKJV)

Because what we are going to see here is through Christ's sacrifice and paying the death penalty for us, He not only released us from the death penalty, allowing forgiveness of sin. This also allowed for conversion. This allowed us to receive the Spirit of God. And what we are going to see here as we go through this sermon is one of the things the Spirit of God does for us is it helps us spiritually fight our evil human nature so that we are capable of obeying God's law. That is part of the point of this. Because it is not just releasing us from the death penalty that comes with sin, it is releasing us from being slaves of sin during our physical lives.

And again, sin is the transgression of God's law. So, releasing us from that is basically helping us to fight our evil human nature inspired by Satan and to fight that spiritual battle so that we can then obey God's law. So, we can live in accordance with it. It is not a matter of doing away with the law. To see this, let's just notice the context that leads up to this. Just start at the beginning of the chapter in Romans 6. Notice as we go through this, the discussion that leads up to his comments about being "under law" versus "under grace". It is all about baptism. It is not only about Christ's sacrifice, but the baptismal ceremony and how we symbolically get buried in the water symbolically representing our own death. What this is, is representing the death of the life that we have lived prior to baptism and living a new life. In other words, living a life in obedience with God's law is what this is about. This is in Romans chapter 6 and verse 1.

Rom 6:1 *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (NKJV)*

Notice he is saying we can't continue in sin. What is sin? Violating God's law. So, therefore, what does he have to mean? It means we are going to have to live a life obeying God's law. By definition, that is just what the terms mean. So, in verse 2:

“2) Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3) Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4) Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into

death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (NKJV)

In other words, we should then live a life going forward of obeying God's law. That is the point. In verse 5:

“5) For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6) knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” (NKJV)

In other words, the life we lived before that violated God's law -- the definition of sin. That is supposed to die. And now we are supposed to live a life in obedience with God's law, not sinning. In verse 7:

“7) For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8) Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9) knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10) For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11) Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NKJV)

So, you can see the whole context of what leads up to this, to his statements about being “under the law” or “under grace”. It is all about baptism and conversion. Because again, it is symbolically representing the death of our life prior to baptism. The life that we lived ignoring God's law and violating it. And then dedicating ourselves to a life of obeying God's law.

Because see, the other thing that baptism makes available to us is God's Spirit. It is just like Acts 2 and the story of Pentecost tells us. What did Peter tell them? “Repent and be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.” Because that is part of the process. Well, the reason we are given the Holy Spirit is to change our nature because our evil, carnal human nature is hostile to God's law. It doesn't want to obey it. As we are going to see here in Romans 8, it is not even capable of obeying it. It is such a strong spiritual force upon us that it just overpowers our minds, and we just become hostile to God's law. We are not capable of reigning that in under our own power. One of the reasons why we are given God's Holy Spirit is again to change that nature and to give us the ability to obey God's law. That is the point.

To see that, turn over to Romans 8. We will see this as he discusses basically how bad the carnal mind is without the intervention of God's Holy Spirit. But you will see in this discussion, he tells us the purpose of conversion is to enable us to obey. This is Romans 8 and verse 5.

Rom 8:5 *“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

6) *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* 7) *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*” (NKJV)

Notice the evil mind is not subject to God's law. Well, then what would the righteous mind be? *It would live in subjection to God's law.* That is the obvious contrast and the point here. So, pick up in verse 8.

“8) So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (NKJV)

Because obviously, what pleases God? *Obeying His law.* That is what pleases Him. In verse 9:

Rom 8:9 *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”* (NKJV)

See, those who are "under grace", they are receiving it because they have received the Holy Spirit, and Christ's sacrifice has justified them before the Father. It covers our infractions and where we fall short because even if we strive to obey as diligently as we can, we are still going to sin. We still make mistakes. We can never earn salvation. We have to have Christ's sacrifice to cover that and to justify us before the Father. But this is what enables us to develop the fruits of the Spirit. As we are going to see here, as we read through Galatians 5, the fruits of the Spirit, that is living a life of being in obedience with God's law. Turn over to Galatians 5 and we are going to pick up in verse 16.

Gal 5:16 *“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”* (NKJV)

Notice not being “under the law” is tied to being converted. To having received the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of Christ justifying us before the Father. But let's just continue reading here.

“19) Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21) envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (NKJV)

Now, if you pay attention to that list, several things mentioned there are things directly commanded against in the 10 Commandments. Murder being one of the ones mentioned. You have things that are directly stated in the 10 Commandments. But then you also have the deeper spiritual issues where it gets beyond the action that is a violation of God's law, and it gets into the spirit of the law. Our intentions and our motivations are what it's speaking to. But now notice how it speaks about the fruits of the Spirit. Pick up in verse 22.

"22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23) gentleness, self-control...." (NKJV)

Notice this last sentence:

"...Against such there is no law." (NKJV)

In other words, these are qualities in accordance with God's law. Because obviously, what we are saying is the previous list of the works of the flesh, those were violations of God's law. They are sin. Continue in verse 24.

"24) And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26) Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." (NKJV)

Well, as I mentioned several times as we have gone through this sermon so far, the key to understanding the whole issue of "under the law" versus being "under grace" is understanding the subject of justification. Because what we have to realize is from an Old Covenant perspective, there was a form of justification "under the law". Now, as we are going to see, it doesn't truly forgive our sins in terms of eternal life and salvation. It could not offer that. But there was a form of justification to kind of cover someone's sins and infractions of God's law and make them right with God symbolically, according to the terms of that covenant.

Now, the important thing to realize here is the Old Covenant was basically a physical agreement. It had nothing to do with salvation or eternal life or the Kingdom of God. That was not offered. That was not on the table as part of the contract. The contract that God made with ancient Israel was basically a deal of physical blessings for letter of the law obedience. In other words, God basically laid out His commandments and instructions to them and said, "If you guys faithfully obey the letter of the law, I will make your physical life a very pleasurable, positive experience. You will be blessed, and life will go good for you, and you will enjoy your experience to the fullest during your physical life."

Now, that was all that was offered. After that physical life was over, well, the movie is over. If you obeyed, you had a pleasant experience, and if you didn't, it was a painful experience. But there was nothing beyond that. Salvation was not on the table. But even in this contract, there was a means, you might say, of justification. In other words,

something to symbolically atone for your sins and to make you symbolically right with God. And that was through this sacrificial system. To see a good example of this, turn over to Leviticus 16.

As you know, the sacrificial system had a number of applications. If you go through the book of Numbers, it gives you specific sacrifices that they did every day. They had sacrifices that they would perform on the weekly Sabbath. They did sacrifices on the new moon, on the first day of the month. And there were specific sacrifices that they would perform for each of the Holy Days. There was an elaborate system and lots of applications to it.

But I think a good example to kind of understand this subject is looking at Leviticus 16, because this addresses the sacrificial ceremony they had to do on the Day of Atonement. This was the one time of year where the High Priest could actually go into the Most Holy Place in the temple. Throughout the rest of the year, they would do sacrifices in the temple, and they could go into the Holy Place. But the Most Holy Place, that was an area that was separated by a veil, and the High Priest could only go in there once a year on the Day of Atonement. If they went in any other time, they could get killed. And that is directly stated in this chapter.

But what I want to read to illustrate this is just the general overview that explains what this day was about. Now, as I have explained in previous sermons, when you look at Leviticus 16 and understanding the ceremony that is done in this chapter, it is actually helpful to start at the end of the chapter rather than the beginning. The reason I say that is oftentimes when you are looking at a detailed subject, it can be really helpful to kind of get the broad general overview of what is being addressed before you kind of get into all the nitty-gritty details. Now this particular chapter is kind of structured in the opposite. It starts off jumping right into all the finer details of the ceremony they are commanded to perform that day. And the broad general overview that kind of gives you the big picture of how to interpret all the details, that's actually covered at the end of the chapter. So, I always recommend to people that if you want to understand this, actually start at the very end and then go back to the beginning. Because then you have the big picture of how to interpret all the finer details.

So, where we are going to start is in Leviticus 16 and verse 29. What I just want you to notice as we go through the kind of overview here is that the whole purpose of this is atoning for the sins of the people of Israel and making them right before God. This is basically the Old Covenant version of justification. This is justification "under the law". This is in Leviticus 16 verse 29.

Lev 16:29 *"This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. 30) For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD."* (NKJV)

Notice this is the Old Covenant version of justification. This is to cover their sins and to make them right before God. Now we are going to see here later when we contrast the New Covenant version of this in the book of Hebrews that this couldn't offer eternal life. This didn't do away ultimately with the death penalty associated with sin. But again, this is justification under the law in the terms of the Old Covenant. Continue in verse 31.

“31) It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever. 32) And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father’s place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; 33) then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. 34) This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.” (NKJV)

Notice we have it repeated again. This is to atone for their sins, for their violations of God's law, and to make them right before God. Now again, this was a symbolic atonement. This fulfilled the terms of the Old Covenant in terms of justification. This could not offer them eternal life. This could not offer them anything beyond their physical life because, again, the death penalty was still ultimately attached to sin. To have eternal life, that requires the sacrifice of Christ. See, this is the key to understanding justification “under the law” versus justification “under grace”.

Now, let's see the contrast if we turn over to the book of Hebrews. This is Hebrews 9. We will see here it starts off referring to what we just read, the ceremony that was performed on the Day of Atonement in the Old Covenant in the temple. Notice how it is going to compare and contrast this with Christ's sacrifice. It is basically going to explain to us how Christ fulfilled the symbolism of the High Priest and of the LORD's goat in the Atonement ceremony. How the actions of Christ fulfilled all of this. And we are going to directly read this here in Hebrews 9. Let's start in verse 1.

Heb 9:1 *“Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. 2) For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; 3) and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, 4) which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; 5) and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. 6) Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. 7) But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance; 8) the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. 9) It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices*

are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience— 10) concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” (NKJV)

Notice, it is basically explaining that this was a symbolic atonement. That this was justification “under the law” according to the Old Covenant. But that couldn't offer eternal life. That couldn't cleanse one, as it said, in terms of the conscience. It required the sacrifice of Christ to do that. That is justification “under grace” or justification “by faith”. That is through the sacrifice of Christ. Now, continue reading in verse 11.

“11) But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13) For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14) how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15) And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” (NKJV)

See, justification through Christ's sacrifice, through grace, through faith, as it is referred to in the New Testament, this justification could enable eternal life. This could truly cover sins and cover the death penalty for us. Notice in both of these covenants, obeying God's commandment is a requirement. There is just a difference in terms of how justification is obtained. And see, justification is about covering our infractions of the law. Because we are all imperfect human beings, and we are going to mess up. And God knew that from the beginning. That is why in the Old Covenant there was a means of justification under the terms of that covenant. And under the New Covenant, there is a much better means of justification. But this one can offer eternal life. See, this is the key to understanding justification “under the law” -- that is what “under the law” means -- versus justification “by grace” or “by faith”. That is through the sacrifice of Christ. If we continue reading in chapter 10 here, we will see more details about this. This is Hebrews 10 and verse 1.

Heb 10:1 *“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2) For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3) But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4) For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. 5) Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. 6) In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. 7) Then I said, “Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your*

will, O God.’ ” 8) Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), 9) then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. 10) By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (NKJV)

Because see, Christ's sacrifice could offer a true justification that did away with the death penalty for sin. Because justification “under the law”, that fulfilled the terms of the Old Covenant. Doing animal sacrifices and such was a symbolic atonement for sin, and more importantly, taught people the need for the sacrifice of Christ and teaches us the functions of what Christ's sacrifice does for us. But it couldn't offer eternal life. See, this is why Paul contrasts justification “under the law” versus “by grace” or “by faith”, which is referring to Christ's sacrifice.

And see, when Christ redeemed those “under the law”, He was not doing away with the law. He is redeeming us from the death penalty. But also enabling us to receive the Holy Spirit, which again enables us to obey the law. That is what frees us from being slaves to sin. To see this, turn over to Galatians 4. We will see here where it refers to Christ redeeming those who are “under the law”. Again, He is not redeeming us from the law itself in terms of abolishing the law. Again, Christ Himself made that very clear in Matthew 5 where He clearly says He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. That was not being done away with them. And He directly told us in Matthew 19, if you want to receive eternal life, you have to obey the commandments. That is not optional. But pick up here in Galatians in verse 4.

Gal 4:4 *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5) to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6) And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” 7) Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” (NKJV)*

You see, Christ not only redeemed us from the death penalty by allowing forgiveness of sin and allowing the opportunity for salvation for us. By making the Holy Spirit available for us, it frees us from being a slave to sin during our physical life. Again, let's remember the definition of sin according to the Bible. Sin is the transgression of God's law. Well, He enabled giving the Holy Spirit to us which gives us the spiritual ability to obey God's law. To live a life in obedience to God's law.

Well, the next thing that we need to address is another statement that Paul makes. It's the statement of those "without law." Because oftentimes people read his statement in 1 Corinthians about those “without law”, and they equate it to those "under grace" or “not under the law”. And they assume these are one and the same. They are actually not. This is a third concept that Paul is referring to here. Turn over to 1 Corinthians 9,

and we'll notice here where he makes this particular statement. It is 1 Corinthians 9, start reading in verse 19.

1 Cor 9:19 *“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; 20) and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; 21) to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; 22) to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23) Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.” (NKJV)*

Now, the greater point that Paul is making here is he tried to basically meet everyone where they were at. In other words, the approach he took in appealing to people and communicating with them. He tried to take into consideration their background and their culture, their way of thinking, and appeal to them in ways that they would understand. And would basically, as we oftentimes say today, would build bridges rather than barriers. That is the greater point that he is trying to make here.

But oftentimes his statements here of those "without law" gets twisted to mean, "Well, the law has been done away with. We are "without law" because we don't have to keep that law." Well, let's look in greater detail here to understand what he is actually saying. Now, we are first going to start looking at it in greater detail in verse 20. Because what I just read to you is actually from the New King James Version. There is a phrase that the New King James doesn't include here that most Bible translations include in this particular verse. I'll just read again verse 20 from my New King James to start with.

“20) and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;” (NKJV)

Now in the latter part there, just right before the comma in the New King James translation, there is a little number 1 next to "the law" in my New King James. It basically points out that most translations add there these words: "though not being myself under the law." In other words, that particular phrase that they have left out, most translations put that in there. Now just to give you an example, let me read to you verse 20 from the New Revised Standard Version.

1 Cor 9:20 *“To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law.” (NRSV)*

Now they leave out the part where Paul is saying, "though I myself am not under the law." But again, that is oftentimes interpreted as, "Well, Paul could just live however he wanted to because he doesn't have to obey God's law." *That is not what he is saying.*

Again, he is referring to justification. He has been baptized. He has received the Holy Spirit. He is pursuing justification through faith in Christ, and not through the sacrificial system. That is what he is referring to.

Now let's look at verse 21. Now again, here is where we have the statement "without law" that is oftentimes misunderstood. I will just read to you again verse 21.

"21) to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ)..." (NKJV)

Notice Paul made a point of making a statement here and clarifying that he was "not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ." In other words, Paul is not including himself in this group that he is calling "those who are without law". We are going to see when we dig into the meaning of the Greek here why Paul is making it clear that, "Yeah, I am appealing to that group, trying to speak to them in a language they'll understand, but I am NOT including myself as part of that group." Well, the reason he is saying that -- the Greek word here that "without law" is translated from -- now it is two words in English, "without law". It is one word in Greek. The Greek word is transliterated into English as "anomos". It's Strong's # 459. And again, the definition I am going to read to you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates, and he defines it as:

"Without law, lawless. Not having, knowing or acknowledging the law...; lawless in the sense of transgressing the law, a transgressor, wicked..."

Now you can tell from that definition clearly why Paul would want to say, "Yeah, I am appealing to this group, but I am not considering myself a part of that group." He is making that very clear. Because to understand this, remember the whole key to understanding the distinction of "under law" and those "not under law", or those "under law" or "under grace", this is about justification. What covers our sins or infractions of God's law. As we saw, the Old Covenant that is why he refers to the Jews as those "under the law". Well, if you are a good, obedient Jew, you are following the sacrificial system as your means of justification. You are pursuing justification "under the law". And Paul makes it clear, "I am not "under the law" because I am following Christ and I am accepting His sacrifice as the form of justification I am pursuing."

But then he refers to those who are "without law." Well, let's remember Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles. He is reaching out to people who are not from a Jewish background. These are people that grew up in a culture worshipping pagan gods, pursuing pagan rituals and pagan practices. Totally unaware of God's law. Now think of that in terms of the definition we just read. Part of this definition was "not having, knowing, or acknowledging the law." These are people who would not be aware of God's law at all. That was a foreign concept to them. And they are just living a total carnal life, and that is why the definition is "lawless in the sense of transgressing the law, a transgressor, wicked." Well, that would describe these people. They were not even aware of God's law. They are not pursuing any form of justification. They don't see

a need to have any form of justification because they don't even know about God's law or care about it. See, that is what he is referring to.

Because what Paul is saying in these verses, he is simply referring to the fact that he understood when he is going to these different audiences and trying to preach the gospel to them, that you have to communicate to them in a way that they are going to be receptive to. In language that they are going to understand. And use logical appeals that are basically going to build bridges rather than barriers. That is what Paul is referring to. He is not saying that we are "without law" and God's law has been done away with.

Because, as I have demonstrated throughout this sermon series, Christ Himself -- as again I have repeated multiple times -- told us in Matthew 5. He made it very, very clear: "Don't think that I came to do away with the law. If you think that, you have totally got it misunderstood." We saw in Matthew 19, He directly said, "If you want to receive eternal life under the New Covenant, you have got to keep the commandments." That is a requirement. And we have seen repeatedly through the Apostle John, the Apostle James, through Paul himself, they all agree that keeping God's law is a requirement for Christians.

You see this whole notion that God's law has been done away with, that all we have to do today to be considered a Christian is just profess an intellectual belief in Jesus Christ as our Savior, and He died for the sins of mankind, and then just be a "nice person". And then we just have "love". Love as defined by human emotion rather than being defined by God's law. As we saw previously in this series, Godly love is defined in terms of God's law. See, this whole notion that God's law has been done away with is probably one of the greatest heresies in the history of Christianity.

Because again, just to review this scripture, we looked at this previously in this series. But turn over to 1 John 2. I just want to review the fact that the Apostle John, the beloved Apostle, directly tells us if we are claiming to be a Christian and we are not keeping God's law, we are just in self-deception. We are just lying to ourselves. It is in 1 John 2 and verse 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)

Again, that is a very blunt, straightforward, easy to understand statement. There is no such thing as claiming to be a Christian and saying that God's law has been done away with, "I don't have to keep God's commandments." Because, as Jude even tells us, he warned that this would happen. That people would turn the grace of God into a license to sin.

To see this, just turn over to Jude. It is only a one chapter book. Just right before the book of Revelation. Let's notice verse 4 here, because he directly tells us that one of the

things that was going to happen -- and was already happening in his time, and it has certainly been happening during our lifetimes -- is we have this popular belief that God's grace means we have a license to sin. We have a license to violate God's law because it doesn't exist anymore. That is the argument as it is presented. This is Jude in verse 3.

Jude 3 *“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4) For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (NKJV)

Now, just to state this again, just a little more bluntly and clearly, let me read to you this same verse out of the Complete Jewish Bible. I think it translates it just a little more bluntly and clearly. This is again verse 4 out of the Complete Jewish Bible.

Jude 4 *“For certain individuals, the ones written about long ago as being meant for this condemnation, have wormed their way in — ungodly people who pervert God’s grace into a license for debauchery and disown our only Master and Lord, Yeshua the Messiah.”* (CJB)

See, that is what this doctrine basically has become: a license to sin. Teaching that God's law has been done away with. Well again, if it is done away with and I don't have to obey, well, then I can just live however I want to. That is a license to sin. Because sin, by definition, is violating God's law. So, we can see here that this popular idea that is extant in popular Christianity today is really just heresy. And if we are serious about obeying God, we are going to strive every day to obey God's law.

So, as we go forward from this Sabbath, let's understand that if we are going to call ourselves Christians and say that we are following God, we have to follow His commandments. We have to keep the Sabbath. We have to keep His Holy Days. We have to follow the things that the Bible commands us.