
VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: TEN COMMANDMENTS

LECTURE 6: THE LAW AND THE SAINT

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The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

TEN COMMANDMENTS

18 LECTURES

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Lecture 6

THE LAW AND THE SAINT

None are more blessed than those who are called saints of God. Saved by grace, kept by grace, guided by grace and finally transferred from the realm of grace to the realm of glory. Such in short is the definition of the Gospel of God's grace. But what is the role and place of the Law of God in the life of the redeemed? Are we now above the law since Paul wrote to Timothy, Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners?

In this module we will trace the teaching of God's law in the life of the saints of God.

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 6

Greetings, friends. Today's lecture is called *The Law of God and the Saint*. I'd like to frame the lecture around two Scriptures, the one from Romans 8:29, 'For whom God did foreknow, He also did predestinate to the purpose that they be conformed unto the image of His Son.' Similar truth is brought out in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he has chosen us [in him] before the foundation of the world," and there comes that purpose again, "that [we] should be holy and without blame before him in love." So, it's clear from these two verses that God's ultimate purpose in salvation is that they would be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, He wants to restore the original glory of God's image and to make the redeemed live and love according to the law of God. So the way I propose, today, to cover the subject is by looking briefly at three questions. The first, what is now exactly the saint? Secondly, what is God's purpose in the salvation of the sinner? And third, what is the place of the law in the life of God's saints? So, let's look at these three in order.

First then, what is now a saint? A saint is someone who is united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. That definition goes much farther, or deeper, than the claim to be a Christian. The Lord Jesus speaks in Revelation 3 about those who have a name to live. They have a name to be a Christian, but they were dead. Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus's closest disciples. Yet, it appears he was not a saint; [he was] not united to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. So, a saint is a sinner called and regenerated by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Before he was a barren branch connected to his covenant head Adam, no fruit from that forever. At God's time, such are made alive and engrafted into the true vine and are born again, or spiritually resurrected.

Secondly, a saint can be seen as a work in progress, Jesus's work in progress, to be specific. Ephesians 2:10 says, "for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." Now, that statement is also a gospel in itself. We are his workmanship. God is at work to make out of a sinner a saint. And finally, the day will come when He will present His finished work unto His Father as a bride without spot and without wrinkle, faultless before the throne of God, and that is when He brings His people from the realm of grace to the realm of glory.

A saint doesn't necessarily feel saintly in this earthly life. That's in itself not a comforting truth, but it may be comforting to recognize that as a truth. A person who is a true believer will identify himself with the struggle that the apostle Paul describes in Romans 7. And that's the struggle of all the saints. Paul says he delighted in the law of God in the inner man. And yet, he says, I find within me this other law that is bringing me back, or seeking to bring me back, to serve sin and Satan. This reality was a perpetual warfare in the apostle Paul, and it makes him long for the day of Jesus Christ. And he knows that when He comes, he shall change his vile body like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So since it is struggle to be saintly, therefore every saint is to really heed the exhortation Jesus gives us in John 15, when He says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in the vine," and then He concludes that statement saying, "For without me," or apart from me, "you can do nothing." And herein, Jesus encourages people not to seek to rely on themselves, but [to rely] upon Him as that vine and as the source. So, only when we then are, and when we abide, in Christ can we reach the high calling of the saints.

And that's the third thing about the saints. The saints have the highest calling. They have the calling to be blameless, to be harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of the perverse, in a crooked nation among whom ye shine as lights of the world. That statement of the Philippians 2 in short means, our calling is to reflect glory of God's holy law in loving Him and our neighbors in that degree that Jesus Christ loved and lived the law of God.

Our highest calling is thankfully connected to that workmanship of the Lord Jesus Christ that I alluded to already, and both are beautifully combined in Philippians 2:12-13. Paul is speaking to the saints in Philippi, and listen to how he addresses them. He says, "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your [own] salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh within you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Each saint is responsible to work out the details of salvation, the reality of living as this light in the world worked out the details of your life. But, we aren't left to ourselves in this momentous calling. God is at work both making us willing and able to do according to His good pleasure.

So, having looked at the saint, we naturally come to our second main point, which is 'Now what is now really God's main or chief purpose in the salvation of the sinner and turning him into a saint?' Let me picture that with a picture out of our daily surrounding life. Think of those people who make it their task to restore old cars: rusty, banged-up, broken-up, stripped-down cars. When finally they have obtained one of such wrecks, they get to work. [It's] tedious: scraping, unbending, replacing, polish it, paint it. And finally, after much labor, they are presenting the old car as good as new and parade him forth to show off their achievement.

Now, God's salvation is not quite like that. His purpose is not to make it as good as new. His purpose is to take [a] direct sinner and make him as good as he or she originally was. It is the work of restoration. God finds His people either on the junkyard of the world (think of the Ephesians), or He finds them in the showroom of the church (think of Paul of Tarsus). But, wherever He finds them, they're in the same spiritual condition. Titus 3:3 sums up the condition of where God finds or how God finds all His people. Paul writes, "For we ourselves." Notice [that] he includes himself. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, [deceived], serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." And now it is Jesus's work, it's His workmanship, in the work of this total restoration to renew the sinner in the image of Himself. Every line of that original glory in which we were created, every part of our personhood, it is His purpose to make it as good as the original.

He will grow the fruit of the Spirit and conform us totally to Himself, and that is to reflect the devotional love to God and to all His creation. Incidentally, by having reached that goal, that brings again the ultimate happiness that once filled mankind in their communion with God and with one another. So, to sum it up, God's purpose in salvation is that each saint fulfills the law in perfection, just as we heard earlier in the lecture series of Jesus, "I have not come to destroy the law, but I have come to fulfill the law" (Matthew 5:17). In that same way, friends, the purpose of salvation is that God will fulfill the law in the life of every saint. Do you sense this soul hunger to be holy? Do you sense in your heart that desire to be totally devoted and conformed unto the Lord Jesus Christ in the love and in the walk of your life and to reflect the Creator in His glory? Oh, and if you may see that in yourself,

then do rejoice. For then, God has begun a good work within you, and He will finish that good work in the day of Jesus Christ. That brings me to our last statement: What is now the place or the role of the 10 commandments in the life of the saints?

Now, some answer that the details of the 10 Commandments are no longer important for the New Testament believer. Their scriptural appeal is to some of the New Testament passages in Romans and also some in Galatians, but let me focus on Romans in this lecture. For example, Romans 13:8 is appealed to; it says, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth [another] has fulfilled the law." In verse 10, Paul adds, "love worketh no ill to his neighbor, and therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." So, as long as we love, we fulfill the law. Such is then the conclusion that is made. Romans 6:14, is appealed to when it says, "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." So we have no more to do with the rigid 10 Commandments, for we are no more under the law but under grace.

Now, let's briefly examine that thinking behind this sentiment that the New Testament believer doesn't have to observe the details of the 10 Commandments. First of all, reflect on the previous lectures, the journeys we've made together in our study. We learned that the lawgiver's character is reflected in the law. Now if the law reflects Him in His essential glory, if we were created to shine with this mirrored perfection of our Creator, then why should the restoration work that Jesus Christ is accomplishing in His Church not include living according to the law of God as God expounded on Mount Sinai? Aren't the New Testament believers to hallow His name, to worship Him only in a spiritual way? Are we not as New Testament believers to uphold the sanctity of marriage and to stop killing others and to be honest and upright? Aren't the New Testament believers called to show their devotional love to God and to one another as Adam and Eve were required?

Friends, where did any of the apostles take Jesus's teaching into the direction of 'the details are not important, brethren. As long as you love God and love each other, don't worry about the details.'? If you study the books of the apostle Paul, you'll note that half the book is devoted to details of how to live and how to interact and how to love and speak. As a matter-of-fact, the specific laws of the New Testament are at various places referred or referenced in the various exhortations. I mean to say that the various commandments of the 10 are throughout the New Testament repeated in various ways, in various exhortations. Scholars have found 14 quotations and 12 verbal allusions in the New Testament to the 10 Commandments. That makes Exodus 20, besides Isaiah 53, the most frequently quoted passage of the Old Testament in the New [Testament]. I think that says something about how important the 10 Commandments are for the New Testament believers.

Now, the second thing we learned is that Jesus Christ didn't come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. He fulfilled the law by loving God and His neighbor. He did not replace it with love. He fulfilled it with the details of obedient living. And, of course, the most important element of our obedience and of our actions is that it needs to be love-driven or love-shaped, and that love needs to be the motivation and the spirit of any act of obedience that we show towards authorities, towards equals and towards God. That's the point of Romans 13. Paul says, what lies behind our actions needs to be love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. And yet, of course, the law provides us the direction and the details of how to love God and our neighbors.

Now thirdly, we also learned that Jesus Christ fulfills the law by writing the law on the hearts of His people. That was the promise in Jeremiah 31:33. Now, which law was Jeremiah speaking of? The only law he knew that could be written on the heart of people is the same law that God had written on the tables of stone as a perpetual reflection of His original glory.

And fourthly, we have also learned already, friends, that God's laws were intended for our good to promote and to preserve the joy and beauty of the relationship with Him and with each other. Only when we honor the rules of the relationship will we experience the beauty of holiness and the joy of communion. Now, why would that not be the case for the New Testament believer? Why are the rules of the relationship that God puts out in the 10 Commandments no more valid for us in the New Testament days? To say that all God wants is [for us] to love Him and our neighbor and not to worry about the details is like me saying to newlyweds on their marriage day, "Now that you're married, don't worry about how you live. Don't worry about what you do, as long as you love each other.' You know such a marriage will not flourish when we don't watch the little details, the little dots in the i's and the little crossed t's in our daily interactions.

Then, what about Paul's words in Romans 6:14? He says, "You are not under law but under grace." Friends, the context of that chapter is the first clue to the answer. If you read through chapter 6, you know that that is Paul's answer to those who claim that it doesn't matter how we live as long as we live, for we're under grace. Jesus battled the Pharisees in His days who made too much of the law in their relationship to acceptance with God, that works-based salvation. But, Paul is battling, in Romans 6, another group of people who are making too little of the law and of obedience. They turned *saved by grace* into a license to sin. They didn't take God's law [seriously] enough, and that's the context of Roman 6.

So, how then does Paul answer this thought, "Don't worry about how we live"? Now it's a very complex and also very dense chapter. I draw only two or three thoughts out of it for you. First, Paul says if you're united to Christ, it is impossible to live in sin. In this chapter, Paul is writing about being in Christ. Did you know that Paul stated over 120 times in the New Testament that the believer is in Christ, that we share with Him in His death and in His life? That unity, that sharing with Him is pictured in baptism as he brings it out in verses four and five, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection." So, we see that sharing. What's the purpose of that sharing?

Verse six tells us that "knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." That's the purpose. This union is purposed to bring forth the fruit that we should not sin, or to say it positively, that we would reflect the law of God in holy living. The second thing that Paul brings out in this chapter is: Christ is your new master; you're no more under Satan or under sin or under the law, in the way you were, but you're under the new master, Jesus Christ, [and] under the life of grace. Before we were saved, we were under the master of sin and Satan. Now, when we're under the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ, we're no more under that bondage and that curse of the law. Now, that's a radical and a glorious change and deliverance. And that is what Paul seeks to bring out in that statement, 'We're no more under the law, brethren. We're under grace. We don't serve Satan anymore. We're no more in bondage or in slavery to our former master. We're now in grace under our new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

So, Paul exhorts the Roman believers no more to think themselves slaves to sin and Satan. Instead, realize that you belong to Jesus. And, he says that in several verses. For example, verse 12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." "Know you not, that to whom you yield yourself servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (verse 16). In between these verses, you notice that Paul keeps saying that we're dead to sin. In verse two, in verse seven, and in verse 11, he makes a statement: dead to sin.

There are two ways to explain this statement. The one [way is to] say *dead to sin* means that we're dead to the curse of sin. The other way says that means we're dead to the reign, to the dominion, and the authority of sin. Both interpretations are true, but in the context, the second one fits better. Sin is still present. Sin is still pressing its claim. But, remember, being united to Jesus, it has no more claim over us. So, in plain language, Paul says, 'Look, when sin and Satan, your former masters, come knocking on your door, you tell them, No more. I am dead to you. You are no more my master. All my members now belong to my new master, Jesus Christ. I yield my tongue, my eyes, my hands, and everything to Him to serve as instruments of righteous living to Jesus, my new Master.'

So, for me sum up this whole chapter in one short statement, nowhere in chapter 6 and beyond does Paul suggest we do not need to bother about the details of the obedience to the law of God, friends. The teaching that we are justified by faith apart from the works of the law never leads Paul to teach anywhere that we have a license to sin or to live the way we please. So, if I bring it together then, God's law remains the rule of life for the believers. Having been redeemed, each saint will ask the question, "What shall I render to the Lord for all these great benefits?" Now, Jesus has answered that. He said this, 'Show your love to Me and My Father by keeping My commandments, honoring My will, reflecting My character, following in My footsteps, being the light of the world as I am.'

One preacher once summed it up beautifully like this, "the law sends us to the gospel that we may be justified. The gospel sends us back to the law to inquire what our calling is now that we are justified." And why is it so important to emphasize this to each other? First, because it honors our lawgiver as we reflect in the practice of our daily life. Secondly, because it's the only way of experiencing the communion with God as Jesus taught us

in John 15:10–11. He says, “If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” There was no greater joy for Jesus than to experience communion with His Father. Likewise, there’s no greater joy [for] you and me [than] to experience communion with the Father and the Son. And that always and only will be in the context of holiness.

Friends, we’re ready to move a little closer to Mount Sinai. I request you for the next time to read carefully through Exodus 19 in order to prepare us to study the law of the Lord on Mount Sinai. Thank you, and may God bless us.