

Sermon – God’s Law of Love - Overview

I'm beginning a series of sermons aimed at examining God's Law - the Ten Commandments. We've already seen that these laws are still in effect for Christians and in fact, serve as the framework or outline of God's Law of Love.

So many Christians today are being taught to believe that Jesus came to do away with the Law – that He fulfilled the Law or that He ended the Law. They believe that when Jesus spoke the words “**It is finished**” just before He died, that He meant the Law is finished - done away with.

But do those words actually mean that? Did Christ come to abolish the Law or did He raise it to a spiritual level, making it even more meaningful to a Christian? Did Christ replace the Ten Commandments with the new Law of Love or was love always the basis of the Law? Have we been freed **from** the Law so that we no longer have to keep it? If we try to keep God's Law, are we trying to earn our own salvation?

Today, I would like to look at the Torah or Law or Teachings of God – to see what it really is – to answer those questions we just raised. This sermon will be the springboard for a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments. Over the next few months, we will take each of the Ten Commandments and examine it, expand upon it, look at its usage in scripture and its application today in our Christian life. We will taking an in-depth look at this most famous and decidedly controversial set of Laws, given to us by our Loving Creator.

What Is The Law?

First, let's understand what the Law is. Mostly, when we see the Law referred to in Scripture, it is the Hebrew word “**Torah**” being used and it refers to the Commandments, statutes and judgments of God, or the first five book of the Bible which contain them. But it can mean so much more than that.

Strong's 8451 **torah** {to-law'}

1) law, **direction, instruction**

- 1a) instruction, direction (human or divine)
- 1b) law
- 1c) custom, manner
- 1d) the Mosaic Law

If we think of the Torah only as a set of Laws, it's easy for us to want to “do away with them.” It is human nature to resist being told what to do, especially when that instruction comes from God.

Romans 8:7, “Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

But we should think about the Torah as a set of **instructions** on how to live. They are God's **directions** to us – His **teachings** so that we may have an abundant life now and eternal life with Him in His Family.

Galatians 3:23-25, “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our **schoolmaster** [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

When you go to school to study for a profession, your instructor begins by teaching basic, foundational concepts and principles from your text books. You prove these things to be true by putting them to the test in classroom labs, experiments, field work or whatever. As you grow in your understanding, you build upon those simple rules and principles you first learned. Then one day you graduate, having mastered your field of study. You go out and get a job to put to practical use those things you have studied.

So what's the first thing you do on the job – forget about everything you learned and do whatever feels good? Of course not! You still follow ALL of those first learned rules and principles. They are now a part of you! You don't even have to think about them because they have become second nature to you.

That's what God wants His law to be for us – second nature, or more accurately, First Nature.

Romans 8:1-8, "[There is] therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [is] death; but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace. **Because the carnal mind [is] enmity [hostile] against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.** So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. "

We are to work toward developing in ourselves God's own nature – a divine nature.

2 Peter 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: **that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

What Did Jesus Finish?

Next, let's look at **John 19:30** and we'll begin to see what exactly is meant by the phrase "**it is finished**".

John 19:30 "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is **finished**: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

This word "**finished**" is from the Greek word *teleo* (tel-eh'-o), which is translated **fulfil, accomplish** or **pay**. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, it can mean:

- 1) to bring to a close, to finish, to end
- 2) to perform, execute, complete, fulfil, (so that the thing done corresponds to what has been said, the order, command etc.)
- 3) to pay

Nowhere in this passage of Scripture is there any mention of God's Law. Rather, we understand that Jesus had to die because we broke the Law because sin is the transgression or breaking of God's Law.

Hold your place in John and turn with me to **1 John 3:4** "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law.**"

And turn back a chapter to: **1 John 2:1-5**, “My little children, these things write I unto you, **that ye sin not**. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the **love** of God perfected...”

Notice it is the Love of God that is perfected when we keep the Commandments.

So turning back to John 19, we must understand the phrase “It is finished” in the context of Jesus’ commission to be the propitiation or payment for our sins. In other words, we could read John 19:30 as “it has been paid” (i.e., the debt of our sins).

Just look back at **Verse 28** “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now **accomplished**, that the scripture might be **fulfilled**, saith, I thirst.”

What was the “all things” mentioned here? Was it the Law that was now somehow accomplished or finished?

John 17:4 “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have **finished** the work which thou gavest me to do.”

Christ’s Work Is Not Finished

Jesus finished the work that the Father had given Him to do . . . On His **first** coming to this earth. Only the part of his work had been accomplished. But there was still more work to do...notice:

Luke 4:16-21 (NKJV) So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."* Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is **fulfilled** in your hearing."

Here we see Christ talking about the **first** part of His commission. Now let’s see that there is more to His work than He completed during His first earthly ministry. Let’s read from Isaiah 61:1-3, the Scripture that Jesus was reading from. The first part which He read is grayed out below to show that He didn’t read the complete Scripture, only the part HE would fulfill at His first coming.

Isaiah 61:1-3 (NKJV) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."*

That second part describes His Second Coming on the Day of the Lord, to bring and end to mankind's misrule of the earth and to establish the Kingdom of God. We'll see at that time – 2000 years after Jesus died and fulfilled the first part of Isaiah 61:1-3 – that something else will be “finished” - the Mystery or Plan of God!

Revelation 10:7 “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be **finished**, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

If Jesus finished the work of God when He came the first time, what is this mystery of God that is to be finished in the future at the Day of the Lord? Clearly Jesus did not finish the whole Plan of God at His first coming. He only finished the first part, as we observed in Isaiah 61.

Some still believe Jesus “finished” or did away with the Law. This is nonsense. How exactly do you accomplish, complete or finish a law anyway? Is that really the intent of Jesus' death – that we don't have to keep God's Laws anymore? Let's think about that from the viewpoint of human laws.

Suppose you were in jail for breaking some law and another came and paid your debt. You are now free again. Would that person who paid you debt expect for you to go out and break the law again? Of course not!

How would society feel if a known murderer or rapist was given a presidential pardon, and then went out and killed or raped someone? We'd be outraged! Yet every week, Christian minister teach that we don't need to keep the Law of God because Jesus kept it for us. How can someone keep a law for someone else? Jesus paid the penalty for our past sins, but we must strive not to break them in the future.

The End of the Law?

Some have said Christ is the **End of the Law** and claim that means the Law has ended.

Romans 10:4 “For Christ is the *end* [telos] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

According to Arndt and Gingrich's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, the Greek word *telos*, used 42 times in the NT, has to mean “finish, cessation, or termination” in four or five places. But in the great majority of cases its meaning is either (1) “aim, purpose, goal” toward which a movement is being directed, or (2) “outcome, result, consummation, last part” of a process not obviously being directed and which may or may not terminate.

(1) “aim, purpose, goal”

1 Timothy 1:5, “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and [of] a good conscience, and [of] faith unfeigned:”

1 Peter 1:9, “Receiving the end of your faith, [even] the salvation of [your] souls.”

(2) “outcome, result, consummation, last part”

Romans 6:21-23, “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things [is] death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Does “Fulfill” mean “Do Away With”?

Some will ask, “Jesus said he fulfilled the Law, doesn’t that mean He did away with it?” Well, does it? Did He? Let’s see!

Please turn to **Matthew 5:17-19**: “Do not think that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I have **not** come to destroy, but to **fulfill**. For verily I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass, neither one jot nor one tittle shall pass from the law, until all be **fulfilled**. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Clearly, Jesus said He did **not** come to destroy the Law. But some say that *fulfilled* means ended, finished or completed, therefore we no longer have to keep them because Jesus kept them for us.

This word “**fulfill**” is from the Greek word “pleroo” (play-ro'-o), which according to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon can mean:

- 1) to cause to abound,
- 2) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim,
- 3) to make complete in every particular, **to render perfect**,
- 4) to carry into effect, bring to realization,
- 5) to perform, execute,
- 6) to fulfill, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment

Could Christ have kept the Law for us?

How do you keep a law **for** someone else anyway? You can **pay** the debt that the law exacts, but you can’t **keep** the law for them. And notice verse 19 – Jesus criticizes those who would teach others not to keep the commandments. This would be inconsistent if “fulfill” meant finished or completed.

If you examine the rest of **Matthew 5**, you will find that, rather than do away with the Law, He expanded upon it, made it more **spiritual**.

Matthew 5:21-22, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. "

Matthew 5:27-28, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. "

Matthew 5:31-32, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. "

What Did Jesus Teach?

Some people say that instead of having us keep the Law, Christ gave us “**the Golden Rule**” about doing unto others as we would have them do unto us, right? Well if you read where this is given in Scripture, you may be surprised where Jesus says this idea comes from:

Matthew 7:12, “Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”

We’re beginning to see that the Law, rather than being a harsh set of “do’s” and “don’ts”, is based upon the simple concept of Love. Let’s look at another example of this concept.

John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love** one another; as I have loved you, that ye also **love** one another. By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have **love** one to another.”

Some will say this is Jesus changing things – doing away with the old Law and establishing this new Law of Love. But is it really new?

Turn to Matthew 22:36-40, “Master, which [is] the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt **love** the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt **love** thy neighbour as thyself. **On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**”

Did you hear that? Jesus says LOVE is the basis of the “law and the prophets” – in other words – the entire Bible. Now if Jesus’ intent was to do away with the Law, here was a perfect opportunity. He could have said, “Law? Why the Law is going away, but I’ll show you a better way – Love!” But He didn’t. So where did Jesus get this “new” concept of Love? It couldn’t have come from the Old Testament Laws, could it?

Deuteronomy 6:5, “And you shall love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

Leviticus 19:18, “You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but you shall love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.”

So this “**new concept**” isn’t new after all! Now how do we know Jesus was referring to the Ten Commandments when he said “*On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*”? Let’s see...

Matthew 19:16-21, "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God: but if thou wilt enter into life, **keep the commandments**. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and [thy] mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go [and] **sell** that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come [and] follow me. "

So it seems there’s a direct connection between the Godly Love that Jesus taught and keeping the Ten Commandments. Now although we’ve shown that the Law or Torah encompasses all of God’s teachings and instructions to us, Jesus clearly said that the basis of all these teachings are the laws of

Love toward God and Love toward men – with the Ten Commandments being the outline or framework for understanding how to do this. The first 4 of the Ten Commandments teach us how to Love God, while the last 6 teach us how to love our fellow man. Paul understood this when he said,

Romans 13:8-10, “Owe no man any thing, but to **love** one another: for he that loves another **has fulfilled the law**. For this, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall love thy neighbor as thyself. Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law.**”

When Paul said “**he that loves fulfills the Law**” do you think he meant “he that loves does away with the Law?” I don’t think so either! But replace “**Law**” with “**Teaching**” or “**Instruction**”. Does it now begin to make more sense, especially when we think about Jesus telling us to become perfect like our Father in heaven is perfect? Then think about this scripture:

1 John 4:7-8, “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for **God is love.**”

KEY: Being or becoming like God (Who is LOVE) involves fulfilling the Law (learning His teachings - His character)!

God’s Law is for Our Own Good

God’s Law is for our own good, much like the rules and regulations that your parents might have set down when you were young. Nobody likes those laws or rules when they are a child growing up. But once we’ve grown up, we realize that our parents established those laws because they knew better than we did and they did it for our own good, because they loved us. God has done the same, only on a much grander scale. He is the perfect parent and His laws are all meant for our own good, not His.

God’s commandments were kept before Moses received them on tables of stone at Mount Sinai. Jesus kept His Father’s commandments and taught us to do the same. Paul and the other New Testament apostles kept and taught them. And they are prophesied to be kept in the future in God’s Kingdom. Look at these scriptures:

Before Sinai:

Genesis 26:5 “Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my **commandments**, my statutes, and my laws.”

Exodus 15:26 “And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his **commandments**, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I [am] the LORD that healeth thee.”

Exodus 16:28-29, "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my **commandments** and my laws? See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

In Christ's Teachings:

Matthew 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the **law**, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

John 15:10, "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."

Matthew 19:17 "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the **commandments**."

In Paul's and Other Apostle's Teachings:

1 Corinthians 7:19 – NRSV, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but obeying of the **commandments** of God is everything"

Romans 3:31 "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the **law**."

1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his **commandments** are not grievous."

And Paul told us to follow him as he followed Christ.

In Prophecy/In the Future:

Micah 4:1-2, "But in the last days it shall come to pass, [that] the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the **law** shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

Hebrews 8:8-10, "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts**: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: "

God's **Law of Love** (outlined by the Ten Commandments) is eternal and will be written in the hearts of men in the future New Covenant. Over the course of the next ten Sabbaths, we will be going beyond the physical or carnal understanding of each of these Laws. We will be digging deeper to uncover the true spiritual intent that God wants us to make a part of our own nature. These Commandments reflect His nature and we need to think like God and become perfect like our Father in heaven is perfect.

Have the Ten Commandments been done away with? No Way! They form the framework for God's Law of Love. They are the foundation of God's Holy righteous character, which is Love and in the future, when God writes them in our hearts, they will be a part of our nature as well!