

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 7 May 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Fulfiller of the Law (Part 2)

Matthew 5:17

Every day, people die and leave inheritances to their loved ones. Some people leave small inheritances, while others pass on huge fortunes. Yet, no matter how big or small a man's inheritance may be, there are two things that must happen in order for him to pass on his inheritance to his loved ones. First, he must write a last will and testament, and declare how he wants his estate to be divided to his loved ones. Secondly, he must *die*. After his death, his inheritance can be legally passed on to his family.

Now, suppose that a wealthy man dies, and a lawyer calls the man's children together, to read their father's last will and testament to them. Then, after reading the will, he says, "You know, your father had a lovely last will and testament. It really was magnificent. In fact, it is such a beautiful document, that it would be a pity to distribute his estate to you. If your father's estate were distributed to you, this beautiful document would soon be laid aside, and forgotten. In fact, it would mean that your father's last will and testament was only *temporary*, and not complete. It would be an insult to your father, who laboured so hard to write this will for you. It would be like destroying his words! Also, if we distribute your father's estate to you, all his assets will have to be moved from *his* account to *your* accounts. It would change everything! There would be changes of names and titles. New documents would have to be written, to clarify things; and a lot of your father's possessions might end up being liquidated, and never seen again. That's a lot of change; and no one likes change. So, let's just put your dad's last will and testament back into the safe again; and we'll keep your dad's estate the way it always was."

Now, of course, such a thing would never happen. The whole *point* of a last will and testament is to pass on a man's estate after he dies! There is *supposed* to be change! The change is built right into the will itself. In fact, a last will and testament is *not complete* until all its provisions are carried out after the testator's death. Far from being "destroyed," the will is kept intact; and it is re-read, and studied carefully, so that everyone knows exactly what the testator wanted to happen after his death.

So it is with the Law of Moses. Jesus didn't come to *destroy* the Law: He came to *fulfil* its whole purpose. Just as a last will and testament prepares a family for the death of their loved one, and for the changes that will come after his death, so the Law of Moses prepared Israel for the death and resurrection of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. The Old Testament Law has not been "destroyed" since Jesus' death on the cross for our sins: rather, it is still with us to this day, testifying that *Jesus of Nazareth* is the One who came to provide salvation for the family of Adam. To this day, we carefully read and study the Law of Moses, to see how Jesus fulfilled all its promises of salvation. Have there been changes since Jesus died on the cross? Yes, there have been big changes. *But that is what was supposed to happen!*

As Jesus was preaching His Sermon on the Mount, He knew that even some of His disciples were wondering what He intended to do with the Law of Moses. The things that He was teaching them about the Kingdom of God, and about inner purity, and righteousness, were so radically different from what the Pharisees had taught them, that it might have seemed that Jesus was going to *destroy* with the Law. However, Jesus reassured them that He had *not* come to destroy the Law and the prophets, but to *fulfil* it.

Read Matthew 5:17.

In our last message, we examined three ways in which Jesus fulfilled the Law. This morning, we will learn three more ways in which Jesus fulfilled the Law. The title of this message is *The Fulfiller of the Law (part 2)*.

I. Jesus bore the curse of the Law.

Read Galatians 3:10-12.

When a criminal case is brought before a court of law, you need to know exactly *what* the offence is, and exactly what the *penalty* for the offence is. Otherwise, the court can't proceed. The court needs to know whether the accused did, in fact, break the law. Secondly, the court needs to know what the penalty is. How is this information known? By the law. Everything is measured by the law. So it is in *your* "court case" with God.

When I go door-knocking, I ask people this question: "Have you kept God's Law?" Many people answer this question with a confident-sounding "Yes." And so, I show them how *God* defines "keeping the Law." I show them **James 2:10**, which says, ***"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."*** After reading this verse, I then ask them, "Do you still think that you have kept the Law?" Some people realise the implication of this verse, and answer "No." Incredibly, though, some people still answer, "Yes." They don't realise that they are denying what they just read in **James 2:10!**

You see, it doesn't matter how *you* define "keeping the Law." *God* is the one who defines "keeping the Law." And how does He define it? God's standard of "keeping" the Law is that you must keep it perfectly, entirely, and continuously—or else you're breaking it! Consider even our civil laws. When you are caught speeding, the Garda does not ask you, "Were you going the correct speed during the other 99% of your journey, before I clocked you going over the speed limit?" No, the question is, "Were you speeding just now?" If you *were* speeding, then you were breaking the law; and penalty points will follow.

What about your feelings, though? Do they count for anything? Many people think so. Many people say, "Well, I *feel bad* about my sin, so I'm o.k." However, that's not the question. The question is not, "Do you *feel guilty* about breaking God's Law?": the question is, "*Did* you break God's law?" In an earthly court of law, would a man who ran over and killed someone while he was drunk get off the hook because he "felt bad" about his crime, and because he didn't know what he was doing at the time? Of course not. Why, then, should God overlook *our* crimes against Him, because we feel bad about it, or because "we didn't know what we were doing"? "But, that's not a fair comparison!" you may say. "I've never killed anyone! Is it really fair to compare a terrible sin like drink driving and manslaughter to *my* little sins?"

Well, what does the Law say? Let's look again at **verse 10. (Read Galatians 3:10 again.)** Does God make any distinction as to *how large or how small* a sin happens to be? No. He says, ***"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."*** God doesn't look at sin the way we do, does He? Sin is sin. Now, God will certainly judge men *with differing degrees* of punishment, according to the weight of the sins they committed. The Bible does say that God will judge men ***"according to their works."*** Nonetheless, the *minimum* sentence for *all* sin is eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire. This means that *every* sin is mortal. **Romans 6:23** says, ***"For the wages of sin is death*** (separation from God)." The Lord said in **Revelation 21:27**, ***"And there shall in no wise enter into it (the city of Heaven) any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."***

The question is not, “Are you worthy of death?” We have all broken God’s Law: and the penalty is eternal death. The question is, “What are you *trusting in* to have your guilt removed, and your sins blotted out, so that your name will *not* be blotted out from the Lamb’s Book of Life?” Well, there are only two possible things that you could trust in.

First, you could trust in **your keeping of the Law**. *Most* people who call themselves “Christians” think that they are on their way to Heaven because they try their best to keep the Law. If this be what you are trusting in to get you to Heaven, you need to know what the *conditions* for Law-keeping are. God says that if you choose to be justified by your keeping of the Law, then you must keep the Law **perfectly**. (Read Galatians 3:10 and 12 again.)

God says that if you try to earn your salvation by keeping the “*the works of the Law*,” then you must do “*all things*” that are written in the Law. Not *some* of them, but *all* of them. There are no exceptions! God says that in order to “live” (to have spiritual life), you must “do” the Law. Now, lest you think that you have “done” the Law, please realise that God’s definition of “doing the Law” is doing it *perfectly*, and *continuously*. God said, “**Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.**” If you choose to be justified by the Law, then you must keep the Law perfectly and continuously. If you fail even once in your entire life, you’re doomed. That dooms *every one* of us, doesn’t it? According to the Law, we have *all* sinned: and the “*wages of sin is death.*”

However, there is good news. The good news is that there is a second option, which God will accept. The other option is **to place your faith in Jesus Christ, and in His sacrifice for your sins**. (Read Galatians 3:11 again.) If you choose to be justified by faith, then the sole requirement is this: You must trust in *Christ’s* perfect performance of the Law on your behalf, and in His payment for your sin! If you choose this option, then you cannot ever be condemned again, because Christ performs *all* righteousness perfectly and continuously! That is why Paul said in **Romans 8:1**, “**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.**” If you be “in” Christ, then God the Father sees you as though you had the perfect righteousness of His Son. Placing your trust in Christ and His righteousness is the *only* option that brings life. With this in mind, let’s move on to the next verse.

Read Galatians 3:13.

God’s Law demands the eternal death of the sinner, in hell. This is the curse that our sin has brought upon us. That is why Jesus took our curse *for* us, so that we don’t *have* to die eternally!

Folks, you don’t have to be a Bible scholar to understand this truth! Paul says that Christ has “**redeemed**” us. Think about what “redeemed” means. Can you say that something is “redeemed” if its whole price has *not* been paid? Try taking a few items out of a shop without paying for them. Would the law consider you to be the owner of those items, because you paid for *some* of them? Certainly not. Nearly every week, we hear in the news about people who tried to walk out of a shop without paying for all their items. Where do they end up? In the clink-clink! What’s my point, then? The point is that Christ didn’t redeem us “half-way.” If we *were* only “half purchased,” we wouldn’t be purchased at all. No, we **have been** redeemed! For Christ’s sacrifice to have any redeeming power, He had to pay for *all our sins*, one time forever. Either Christ’s work on the cross is powerful enough to save us completely and eternally, or it powerless. If Christ left even *one* sin unpaid for, He died in vain!

My friends, let those words sink in: Christ became a “*curse*” for you. He bore the *full* curse for every sin that you’ve ever committed, or ever will commit. He didn’t become a curse only for the sins that we commit up until the time we are saved. No, He took the *full* curse for every sin that you have ever done, or ever will do. This means that salvation is complete! Two thousand years ago, Christ purchased our redemption in full, one time forever. This means that there is no more curse upon us—if we receive His gift of redemption. Do you believe this? Are you trusting in Christ alone to save your soul?

Jesus fulfilled the Law by taking the *curse* that the Law demands upon Himself. But that’s not all. Jesus also fulfilled the Law by making servants into sons.

II. Jesus made servants into sons.

Read Galatians 3:24-25.

In these verses, the Apostle Paul is making a powerful illustration. He compares the Law to a “schoolmaster.” What does he mean by this? Well, in Roman culture, a “schoolmaster” was what we might think of today as a “family tutor.” A father would pay an educated servant, who lived in his house, to teach his son, and to prepare him for the responsibilities of life. Throughout his growing-up years, the son was constantly under the schoolmaster’s authority; and until the son came to the age when his schooling was done, he was essentially no different from a household slave, even though he was the son and heir. However, when he came of age, he was no longer under the schoolmaster. He now had access to his father’s inheritance; and all the *responsibilities* that came with that privilege were placed upon him.

With this in mind, do you see how the Law was *our* “schoolmaster”? The Law, with all its curses, had a purpose. Its purpose was to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Law was never to save people, but to prepare them to believe on the One who *can* save them. Jews who lived under the Law may not have been able to understand the full purpose for all those laws of dress, diet, ritual purifications, and sacrifices; but there *was* an extremely important purpose behind those laws. Through the Law, God was teaching the people of Israel about the depth of their sinfulness; about their need to receive God’s grace and forgiveness; and about their need for the coming Saviour. Also, through the hundreds of prophecies of Christ that are written in the Law, Old Testament saints were being given glimpses of *how* the Saviour would purchase our redemption. The Law was their “schoolmaster” to bring them unto Christ, so that when Christ did finally appear, they could believe on Him, and receive the full rights and privileges of being “sons of God.”

Now, this brings us to our next Scripture. Let’s skip down to **Galatians 4:1**.

Read Galatians 4:1-7.

In the Roman culture, they didn’t have a local “school” where all the kids went to learn at the public expense. Free Roman citizens would buy slaves who were well-educated, and would give them the authority to teach their sons. However, the schoolmaster’s authority went way beyond the “school day.” The schoolmaster ran the child’s life 24-7. Though the son had a relationship with his father, their relationship was somewhat distant. There was a schoolmaster between them. The child answered to the schoolmaster for *everything*. In status, the child wasn’t much different from a slave. Though he was the heir, he had few privileges.

However, when the son came of age, and his schooling was done, he was no longer under the schoolmaster. He was now legally considered to be “adopted.” “Adoption” in Roman culture did not mean “being brought into a new family”: it meant “coming of age, and receiving the legal privileges of a son.” The son now answered *directly* to his father; and he now had access to his father’s inheritance, with all its responsibilities and privileges.

Do you see where Paul is going with this? Paul is using the idea of “adoption” to illustrate the position that the New Testament believer has with God the Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, “adoption” means *receiving the full privileges of adulthood* from the Father. These “full privileges” all flow from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; and the Holy Spirit has been given to us because *Christ has paid for our sins*.

Read John 7:37-39. (The word “*glorified*” refers to Christ’s death on the cross!)

Old Testament saints had a relationship with the Father, by faith in Him; but they were still under the “schoolmaster” of the Law. Through the Law, they were being prepared for the coming of Christ. They did not have the full privileges of sons, because Christ had not yet died for their sins, and the Holy Spirit did not live inside them. But *we*, as New Testament believers, have that privilege. In **Ephesians 1**, Paul says that God has “*predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself*”: and therefore, he says, we “*have obtained an inheritance*.” In **Romans 8** Paul wrote, “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*”

The point that Paul made about the “*bondage of fear*” is an important one. When a Roman son was under the tutelage of the schoolmaster, he was strongly motivated by *fear of the schoolmaster*. The schoolmaster was there to carry out the strict requirements of the boy’s education, on behalf of his father; and he enforced them vigorously. Likewise, until Christ came into the world, believers were motivated by fear of the Law. Many violations of God’s laws carried severe penalties—including death. Now, that is not to say that the Old Testament saints did not *love* God. Old Testament saints often expressed their deep love for the Lord. Yet, Old Testament believers could not *comprehend* God’s love with the depth that the New Testament Christian can comprehend it. Why? Because they never saw the one who is Love incarnate! They never saw the Son of God. Christ showed perfect love throughout His life; and He gave the *ultimate* gift of love by dying on the cross for undeserving sinners. Though *we* have never seen Christ, we can “see” His love in the written record of God’s Word.

Read Romans 5:1-8.

As long as a Roman son was under his schoolmaster, he could enjoy none of his father’s riches. He was the heir of his father’s inheritance; but he didn’t have the “bank account number.” However, when he came of age, he had full access to his father’s inheritance. So it is in God’s family. Old Testament saints were heirs of God, just as Christians are today; but they didn’t have full access to their inheritance. Now that Christ has died and risen again, and the Holy Spirit has come, we have full access to the Father’s spiritual riches.

Read Ephesians 1:3-19.

III. Jesus established the New Covenant.

We have now come down to the last way in which Jesus fulfilled the Law. Jesus fulfilled the Law by establishing a *New Covenant*.

Now, on the surface, this *seems* to contradict what Jesus said here in **Matthew 5:17**. If Christ has established a *New Covenant*, that means that the Covenant that God made with Israel on Mount Sinai is now...*old*. This means that the Old Covenant (the Law of Moses) has now been set aside. How, then, could Jesus say, ***“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil”***? If Christ have *not* destroyed the Old Covenant, then why do we not continue to keep the feasts and other rituals of the Law?

This is a question that is constantly asked by Orthodox Jews, and by all kinds of apostate cults, and even by some misguided Christians who think that we must still keep the feasts and rituals of the Old Covenant. In these people’s thinking, if there be a *New Covenant*, then the Old Covenant wasn’t truly an “everlasting covenant,” as God repeatedly said that it was.

Now, this *sounds* like a good argument. However, it is based upon a tragic misunderstanding. Those who say these things (including Christians who have been caught up in the “Hebrew Roots” movement) do not understand what the purpose of the Law was in the first place; and they don’t have a clue what Jesus meant when He said, “I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” The *rituals and ceremonies* of the Old Covenant have ceased (except for the Lord’s Supper, which is a little piece of the Passover Feast); but the Old Covenant has *not* been “destroyed.” It has simply been *fulfilled*. Its purpose has been completed. All the rituals in the Old Covenant pointed to *Jesus of Nazareth* as the one who would come to take away our sins; and now that He *has* taken away our sins, the Old Covenant is complete. It’s like a “last will and testament” which has served its purpose of preparing a family for the death of their loved one, so that the inheritance can now be distributed. The permanent indwelling of the Spirit in our bodies, and the gifts of the Spirit, and the union of Jew and Gentile together in one body, the hope of the resurrection, and many other blessings—all these gifts have now been distributed to us, because of what Christ did for us on the cross.

Throughout the Old Testament, God hinted, again and again, that one day the Old Covenant would be set aside, after it had fulfilled its purpose. Moses himself said, ***“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;...And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*”** Now, what does this mean? God raised up *hundreds* of great prophets after the time of Moses; so how could you possibly know which Prophet Moses was talking about? There’s only one way you could know. In order for this great Prophet to have the kind of authority that Moses had, he *would have to establish a New Covenant altogether*. He would have to be a *Covenant Maker*, just as Moses was. *That*, my friends, is exactly who Jesus is! He is the Mediator of a New Covenant!

Now, lest that sound like speculation, let’s just put the matter to rest. In the book of **Jeremiah**, God said, very clearly, that one day He would make a *New Covenant* with Israel.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.

The Old Covenant could not have continued forever. Why? Because its depended upon God’s faithfulness *and* Israel’s faithfulness. Well, guess what? *Israel wasn’t faithful!* They broke their end of the Covenant again and again. They *couldn’t* keep the Law, because they

were sinners. That is why God broke His covenant with them, and established a *New Covenant*. (This New Covenant *cannot* fail, because it rests entirely upon *His* faithfulness!) The other problem with the Old Covenant is that the blood of the animals couldn't take away sins. It could only *cover* sins—*symbolically*, and temporarily. It was never meant to last forever. Now that Jesus has paid the price for our sins in full, the sacrifices are not needed.

Now, during the future 1,000-year Kingdom, the sacrifices *will* be practiced again. We know this to be so, because **Ezekiel 40-48** gives us the blueprints of the future Millennial Temple, and the details of the sacrificial system. However, the sacrifices will simply be a *memorial* of the true sacrifice that Jesus made for us. The sacrifices during the Millennium will do what the Lord's Supper does for us today: it will simply *remind* people of Christ's sacrifice.

Before we close this morning, let's take a look at what Paul said about the New Covenant.

Read Hebrews 7:18-19 / 8:6-13 / 9:11-22.

When John the Baptist began to preach, baptise, and point people to Jesus as the Lamb of God, a new era of history began. It is called "the New Testament age." Jesus Himself said, "***For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.***" In other words, when John began his ministry, the Old Testament era *officially ended*, and the New Testament age *began*.

From the very beginning of John's ministry, the things of the New Covenant were already in place. Baptism was being practiced; and the church (small though it was) was now in existence. Little by little, Christ built up His church by giving it doctrine, and rules of discipline. Then, on the cross, He officially *ratified* the New Covenant with His blood, and arose from the grave. After this, He sent the Holy Spirit to live inside believers. He gave to His churches the offices of Apostle, evangelist, pastor, teacher, and deacon; and as the years passed, He gave the 27 books of the New Testament. Eventually, all the ceremonies of the Old Covenant stopped altogether. After A.D. 70, there was not even a Temple or a sacrificial system anymore, because God allowed the Romans to destroy the Temple. (We couldn't practice the feasts even if we wanted to do so, because there is no Temple!)

Yet, despite all these radical changes, Jesus *did not come to destroy* the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them. The Old Testament, with all its sacrifices and ceremonies, was loaded with types of the Messiah; and Jesus *fulfilled* all those types. Now that Jesus Christ has come and paid sin's price, there is no more need to practice these types and pictures. However, the *descriptions* of these types, as written down in the Old Testament Scriptures, are an eternal memorial of Jesus Christ. That is why we study the Old Testament, just as we study the New Testament. The Old Testament is the very foundation of the New Covenant. There had to be the Old Testament in order to prepare us for the *New Covenant*.

Now, as Jesus was preaching this sermon on that day by the Sea of Galilee, did His followers understand these six ways in which Jesus came to fulfil the Law? Were they thinking, "Oh, I get it! Jesus is saying that He has come to keep the Law perfectly; to disentangle the Law from the false teachings of the rabbis; to fulfil all the types and prophecies of the Messiah through His life, death, and resurrection; to bear the curse of the Law; to make servants into sons; and to establish a New Covenant with His blood"? No, they did not understand these things--*yet*! In a few short years, they *would* understand all these things, after Jesus had risen from the dead; but in the meantime, Christ was preparing them to receive all these truths. For the time being, it *appeared* that they were still living under the Law. All the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Law were still in place. Even Jesus obeyed the Law. Yet, even though they

couldn't see it, a huge change *was* underway. The New Testament age had begun; and soon, the ceremonial Law would “*vanish away*” entirely—because Jesus would *fulfil* it!

Conclusion: Thank God, we are no longer under the “schoolmaster” of the Law. Yet, the Law is still with us; and it is still teaching us. The Old Testament Law teaches us that we are condemned sinners, and that we need a Saviour. As we close this morning, I would ask: “Have *you* learned the lesson from the ‘schoolmaster’?” Do you understand that God’s Law *condemns* you, and that you therefore need Jesus to save you? If you haven’t asked Jesus to save you, please do so today! If you are saved already, I would ask: “Are you living the reality of an adopted son of God? Do you serve God because you love Him, and because you are walking in the Spirit? Or is your labour for God mostly external, and mechanical? Do you serve God mostly because you fear punishment if you get out of line? Or are you “made perfect in love”? If you need to rekindle your love for the Lord, please do so today!