

Growing in the Grace of God

Lesson 1 **The Law of God**

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Opening Prayer

Father, we thank You so much for the great love You have for us—for the love that is proven and offered to us through Jesus Christ. We thank You for Your Word and its great truth and power. We thank You for Your Holy Spirit who guides us into all the truth. And we ask You now, by Your Spirit, to unfold for us these glorious avenues of the grace of God and teach us what that grace is to mean both in and through our lives.

We come in eager humility, with hunger and need, seeking You, Lord. Thank You for Your great promise that whoever believes in You would not be disappointed. So it is that we anticipate joyfully all that You want to do in this time of study. And we commit it to You for Your work. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

This December will be thirty years since I met the Lord. The twenty-five years before that, I must say, are a very sad tale. But this side of Christ, life has been increasingly blessed, rich, and encouraging. And now for twenty-eight years plus, the Lord has let me teach His Word and I have come to love its teaching.

The theme in the Word of God that I most love to teach about—and that which I believe is the primary theme in Scripture—is simply this: the Lord Jesus Christ. Thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ leads one to recognize His number one characteristic: the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I love to teach on the grace of God.

In fact, for three consecutive quarters, I have been teaching a college course called *Growing in the Grace of God*. Twelve weeks, two hours a week, twenty-four hours on this tremendous theme. And I have never enjoyed teaching the Word of God more in my life than I have in these last three quarters.

However, even in twenty-four hours, I feel like still we are just scratching into the topmost layers of the depths of the grace of God. I have been praying for some time that the Lord would let me offer this as a six-hour seminar. And the time is now. And the place is here. And we are going to study about growing in the grace of God.

By way of introduction, Romans 6:14.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under
law but under grace. (Rom 6:14)

In relating to God and developing a life with God, Christians do such under the terms of grace and not under those of law. Grace *not* law. We develop a relationship with God and a life in the Lord by God's grace—that is, we do so by His provisions for us, and His work in and through us. We do not develop all that He has for us through the terms of law—that is, we cannot cultivate our life in the Lord by trying to live up to the rules and regulations of Almighty God by our own best ability.

Galatians 4:21, by way of introduction.

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the
law? (Gal 4:12)

The natural inclination of virtually every Christian—once he comes to belief, once he becomes a Christian through faith in Jesus Christ—the natural inclination born out of his heart's fondest

desire to please and serve God is to consider that service to the Lord. The Christian naturally operates as if everything hinges upon how well, how fully, and how completely he serves the Lord God, our Savior. As Christians we are inclined, naturally, to live under law.

God says, “Do it.” We want to do it. God says, “Do not do it.” We do not want to do it. God says, “Here is My standard.” We want to live up to it. We just naturally start out there. Plus, that is the way we learn to live anyway: “Hey, you can do it! Hey, it’s in you! Come on, you’ve got to do it. If you do not, who will?” If this is the case, we have left God out of the formula. And glorious is the truth when we at last begin learning more and more to live by the grace of God—to grow in and by the grace of God.

Those who want to live under the law (virtually every Christian at the beginning—at least unwittingly so) do not really hear the law’s radical message. They neither know what the law truly says nor are they aware of the inability of the law of God.

Henceforth we shall look at four things. Concerning the law of God, we are going to learn of its message, its inability, its ability and its fulfillment. Now, this might seem like a strange place to begin in a six-course study on the grace of God. But the relationship between the law of God and the grace of God is strategic. Do you know where our appreciation for the grace of God really grows and develops? It comes only as we understand the law of God.

This first class will be called, *The Law of God*. And throughout, we shall be increasingly ready and hungry to study that grace; because though the law of God is glorious in its own right, its primary purpose is to whet our appetites for (and show us our desperate need for) the grace of God.

The Message of the Law of God

First, we shall discuss the message of the law of God. By the law's message, we mean *what it says*. Or more importantly, we mean what God is saying through the law. Leviticus 19 summarizes God's statement of the law of God. It is right here in the first five books of the Bible, which discuss primarily the law of God.

¹And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. ³Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. ⁴Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the LORD your God.’”

(Lev 19:1-4)

Some of the commandments of God are given here: stay away from idols; treat your parents properly and with respect; and honor the Sabbath. And then all is summarized in two words: “Be holy.” A two-word summary of the whole law of God is “Be holy.” Why? Because God *is* holy. So then, how holy do we have to be? Obviously, we must attain a holiness that will measure up to a holy God. Basically, we must be as holy as God Himself. This passage from Leviticus is quoted and repeated directly in 1 Peter 1:15,16—where we are told again to be holy. And again it says, to be holy “for I, the Lord your God, am holy.” In the Old Testament and in the New Testament, God is holy. God is still holy. God is always holy. He always was, He always will be, and He is today. Be holy. We serve a holy God and the law tells God's people to *be holy like just as God is holy*.

Matthew 5 offers another amazing summary of the law of God. Much of the Sermon on the Mount, from where this verse is drawn, speaks of the law of God. We shall touch on that later. In fact, Christ's famous sermon is the law of God intensified. This great summary of God's law comes in Matthew 5:48:

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Mat 5:48)

Another two-word summary of all the law of God is this: be perfect. We might ask, "How perfect?" After all, the saying goes, "nobody's perfect." How perfect? How perfect must we be? Read carefully. "As your Father in heaven is perfect."

The message of the law of God is thus: be as holy as God if you want to relate to Him—be as holy as God if, by your best effort, you wish to measure up to His commands and standards. The message of the law of God is that if one wants to relate to a perfect God through his performance before His standards and laws, then there is one thing that person must be: perfect.

What about the saying, "Nobody's perfect"? Yeah. It is true and it means that everybody is in trouble. Be perfect. Be as perfect as your heavenly Father is. Note well: the law does not say, do your best (because after all, what more could God expect of you?). The startling fact is that God, through His law, demands far more of us than just our best. Our best is not perfect holiness. Our best is not perfection like God Himself. And remember, "Be holy as I am holy."

So many of us have always behaved before the law as though God graded on a curve. “Oh, I’m going to do the best I can. And thank God, it looks like it’s better than sHe is doing. Or at least better than *He is* doing. And maybe I’ll at least get a C-minus in glory. At least I’ll pass.”

That is not what the law says. And the fact that many seem to want to live under the law by their own best effort—thinking they are going to please God—demonstrates how little they understand the law. By their own best effort they are going to get into heaven. By their own best effort, once saved, they are going to be fruitful and effective Christians.

Galatians 4:21 responds: “You want to live under the law? Do you not hear what the law is saying?” You want to relate to God on your own best effort before His commands and demands? Okay, then let us summarize it for you in two words twice. Be holy. Be perfect. How holy? As holy as God. How perfect? As perfect as God. That is the message of the law of God. May we not water it down. May we not make it to be less than it says. Because if we make it to be less than it says, we are not letting it fulfill the work that it is able to do in our lives.

The Inability of the Law of God

Before we look, though, at the ability of the law of God, next we are going to look at the inability of the law of the God. We must see what the law of God cannot do before we can comprehend what it does have power to do. Now beware—these are not my opinions about the law of God. When we talk about the inability of the law, our first reaction might be along the lines of, “Who are you to talk like that about the law of God? The law of God is not able?” The law of God is able to do *what it was intended to do*. It is not able to do what it was never intended to do.

Hebrews 7:18-19 speaks to us from God Himself concerning the inability of the law of God.

There is a divine inability of the law of God; there's a built-in weakness—and not one of God's oversight. It is not as if God gave the law and then people tried to obey, failed, and He recants saying, "Oh, I just have to make it different next time around." No way. God has never made a mistake and never will. He knew exactly what He was doing with the law. And He knew it had an inability and created it that way.

¹⁸For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness [The former commandment in line here, is the law], ¹⁹for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope. (Hbr 7:18-19)

A better hope than the law! We'll look at that extensively further down. "There is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." You want to come close to, to get to know, to walk with, to live with a holy and perfect God? You need a better hope than the law of God.

There *is* a better hope. It's called the grace of God. And it is by which that we do draw near to God.

Here then is the inability of the law. It has a weakness, God says. The law made nothing perfect. Now think about that for a minute. The law of God demands perfection. But the law of God cannot provide perfection. This should not worry us for the Lord has another way to provide what

the law demands. But we get ahead of ourselves. But the law has this inherent inability: though it demands perfection, it cannot provide it.

In the area of justification—as well as sanctification—the law cannot provide what is needed before a holy and perfect God. Justification (the beginning of our new life with God) and sanctification (growing and maturing with God): these are experiences foreign to the work of the law. The law makes nothing perfect, neither in the area of justification nor sanctification.

Galatians 2:16 emphasizes the fact that the law cannot justify. Notice how this verse works backwards and forwards two or three times. It portrays a contrast between how we are justified and how we are not justified. Before reading it, remember that justification means being declared innocent, not guilty—and that the one declaring it is the holy, perfect, righteous Judge.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; [Why?] for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. (Gal 2:16)

It's a pretty strong verse, isn't it? It just works it back and forth. From one angle: only by faith, not by works of the law. And then from the other: not by works of the law, only be faith. Why? Justification simply cannot come by works of the law. Okay Lord, I think we are getting the point. No one will be justified by works of the law.

In other words, God gives us His holy standard. And no one, by their own work attempting to live up to the law's demands will come to that point where God says, "Come on. Come on. Just one more step. Okay! I declare you innocent. Not guilty. No sin. You're righteous." Who are we kidding? If we did not know the many passages that tell us otherwise, we are already convicted inside with our own inability to walk in perfect obedience and righteousness—even on our own best effort before God.

But then, how are we justified? How do we get declared innocent? Not guilty? Forgiven? Simply this: we are justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.

So the law cannot save us. It cannot give us a perfect standing before a holy, righteous, and perfect God. We should now understand that issue. The law cannot justify. If we are reading this and interested in the subject of Christian grace, we are probably Christians. We have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. We have finally admitted that we are not going to earn heaven by our labors under the law. We could not enter into God's family on our own best effort to live up to His standards. And so we have plead, "Mercy! Grace!" In repentance we asked for forgiveness and new life. And we were justified by faith in Jesus Christ. No one can be a Christian unless they understand it is not by works of the law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ that men are saved.

Here we shall presently look at sanctification, the Christian's living and growing and maturing and serving and being fruitful. In fact, over the next six classes, we are going to concentrate mostly in the area of sanctification because we are looking at the subject growing in the grace of God—not just being saved by the grace of God.

As the law cannot justify us, neither can it sanctify us. Lets look at Galatians 3:2 and following.

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by
the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal 3:2)

Now, is that a verse about justification or sanctification? Is that a verse about starting out with God or growing up with God? It is a verse about starting out with God. It's a verse about justification.

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit is in your life. If the Holy Spirit is not in your life, you are not a Christian. 1 Corinthians 13 says, if we have not the Spirit we are none of His. The Spirit lives in a Christian. The Spirit brings that new life of Christ in us. How did we receive that? How did we start out? How did we get the Holy Spirit in our lives letting us be born again by the Spirit of God? Was it by works of the law or by hearing of faith? Was it by trying our hardest to live up to the law and the works of the law until God said, "Oh, you are doing so much better than everyone else. I just cannot hold My Spirit back from you any longer"?

Really? That is not why we are here. That is not how I got the Spirit. No one could get the Spirit that way. It was by the hearing of faith. We heard we were sinners and we believed it. We heard Christ died for us and we believed it. We heard He would forgive us if we would call upon His name and we believed Him. The Spirit came into our lives by the hearing of faith.

Now follow the immediate transition in verse 3 to sanctification—to a life proceeding day by day with Christ.

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now
being made perfect by the flesh? (Gal 3:3)

Oh, what a question that is. Having begun with God, having started out with the Lord, having found new life and a new birth by the Spirit, are you now growing up, being made perfect, maturing, being sanctified, being made more and more like Christ *by the flesh*? Are you so foolish? I was. I have met very few Christians who were not that foolish. We all start out that foolish, I think. “Thanks, God, for bringing me into Your family. New birth. Justification. Oh wow, watch this. I love You. I want to bless You. This is all for You, Lord.” You go out and stagger and stumble. You try to hit. And you miss.

Are we so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are we now growing up in the things of God by the flesh? Are we by human effort attempting to live up to the standards of God? Are we that foolish? Maybe you *are* that foolish.

And I do not say that in any condescending or self-righteous way, because that is exactly where I was. The first three years as a Christian, I know I was that foolish. But you know what? After three years a believer, an amazing thing happened to me. We had a little Bible study group in our home in Dallas where I was studying at Dallas Seminary that began as three couples who simply wanted to gather for prayer. And it kind of grew to a dozen couples. And then they wanted to hold public meetings. And the next thing I knew, I was a pastor. Three years after I was saved and I was a pastor. Talk about staying one week ahead of the hounds! Every week I learned everything I knew and told it all. And then I prayed for another week to do it again. Of course, I *was* the oldest man in the church. I was twenty-nine years old, you know.

For four or five years I was still so foolish as a pastor—believing that having begun in the Spirit, I could be perfected in the flesh. Oh how I preached the law to those dear saints! The strange thing was: they loved it. They loved hearing the law preached—just like I did when I started out.

We were just like Israel. “All that you have said we will do.” The entire history of Israel in the Old Testament is the story of just how they responded to that which God asked of them. We are to learn from these things. We do not have to go through all of it by personal failure in order to learn. Of course we will have plenty of failures to aid our learning, but we can still learn something from those who passed before us. We are told in 1 Corinthians 10 that the history of Israel was written for our admonition. So we can learn from them.

See the inability of the law of God is this: even as the law cannot justify, neither can the law itself sanctify. Remember! The inability is designed and built into the law. God never intended for the law to save people or grow them up in that salvation.

Unfortunately, some folks are ready to abandon the law altogether once coming to this realization. “Let’s annihilate it! My goodness! It cannot save you or grow you up!” It reminds me of a commercial, years ago, in which they blew up Jack-in-the-Box—you know, from the restaurant chain. “We do not need him. He is gone. He is out of here.” I heard Jack is back. But so is the law. The law is still here.

Just because it cannot save us and cannot mature us, does not mean we should toss it out. Why? Because it does have some very strategic abilities. It cannot save us. It cannot mature us. It cannot justify us. It cannot sanctify us. But it is given to do certain things and it does them well.

The Ability of the Law of God

Let's consider from the Word of God the ability granted to the law. Consider Genesis through Deuteronomy, and Matthew 5, 6 and 7. Just think about them for a moment if you are a bit familiar with the Word of God. Genesis through Deuteronomy. The first five books of the Bible. Written by Moses. They are about the law of God, the law of Moses. They define the law of God as given through Moses. Housed in these five books is the basic explanation of God's law.

Think of Matthew 5, 6, and 7. They contain the Lord Jesus Christ's famous Sermon on the Mount. In many ways, the Sermon on the Mount is an intensification of the law of God. Recall how it was taught. Jesus would said, "You have heard it said." And He would follow this by quoting the law of God from the first five books of the Bible. Then He would immediately add, "But I say to you"—and He intensified the power of the law. "You have heard it said that you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, if you lust after a woman in your heart, you have committed adultery." Oh, it's more intense than we thought it was.

What then can the law of God do? It reveals God's character. He is a holy God. He is neither a cheater, a liar, nor a thief. He is not an adulterer. So neither are we to be such. The revelation of His character is one of the abilities of the Word of God as the law of God.

It also reveals His standards and His moral will. Do this. Do not do that. The law can reveal these things to us. So remember, the law can function like a sort of spiritual yardstick—though you maybe have never seen one of those. When I was a child, everyone had a yardstick. Ours was used to measure and to treat the children. A yardstick—a three-foot ruler. Now everyone has metal, push-button, retractable tape measures or something like that. But whether we speak of a

tape measure, a measuring rod, or a yardstick, we have a good picture of the law of God. The law holds up the standard, the measurement, of what a holy life should be as one stands before God. But it cannot make you what it measures.

For example, if you stood someone up in your household—someone who wanted to be 6' 2". Out comes the tape measure and they only end up measuring to 5' 8". "Well, we've got to get you up to 6' 2". Here, eat six inches of this tape measure!" That won't help him grow up. The tape measure just shows how far they fall short.

So it is with the law of God. As the tape measure rules us against the height we wish to attain, so the law of God measures us against the perfect life that we are called to lead. But what it accomplishes in the end is that the law simply shows us how far short we are. And we cannot grow up to meet that perfect measure by only feeding on the commandments that measure us. The law is like a yardstick showing God's character, His standard, and His will.

To put it more specifically, Paul speaks of three abilities God has granted to His law.

¹⁹Now 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. ²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Rom 3:19-20)

First, the law is able to silence every mouth. Imagine having to stand before God to justify ourselves by the standard of the law of God explaining how well we did or why we failed. And

God simply says, “Be holy. Be perfect.” And we stand up before Him and say... nothing. Silence. The law stops every mouth. What can we say? That which He has demanded of us, we are not. Not on our own in any case.

Second, the entire world is accountable to God because all have violated His standard. His glorious standard of holiness—and all of us have fallen short of it.

Third, the law gives us the knowledge of sin. Ultimately, how do we know that cheating and lying and killing and lusting and craving and coveting are sinful? The law tells us. You shall not do it because it is unholy in the sight of a holy God.

The law does have ability and we want to let the law do its work. Continuing in our look at Galatians 3:

Therefore the law was our tutor [our schoolmaster, our child
trainer] to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
(Gal 3:24)

The greatest ability and greatest purpose of the law of God is to tutor us, teach us, train us, and instruct us of our absolute and total need for the Lord Jesus Christ. The law says, “Be holy.” And we can only answer, “Holy? But I am unholy.” Because of the measure of the law, we recognize we need something better than the law. We recognize our need for Christ. The law says, “Be perfect.” And we can only respond, “Perfect? But I am far from perfect.” Yes, you need Christ. This is the message of the law; it leads us to Jesus Christ.

Do not imagine that this course is inferring that the law is bad.

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully.

(1Ti 1:8)

The law is good; if one uses it lawfully. If you try to use the law to get people saved and forgiven and in heaven, that is an unlawful use of the law. It is like telling a little boy, “Johnny, you be good and obey the Ten Commandments and do the best you can and you’ll get to heaven some day.” That is unlawful (and in fact, quite misleading!) to tell a child. It is against the law of God. It simply is not true! But that does not mean the law is bad. The law is good if we use it lawfully—if we use it for the reasons God sent.

The law has still more interesting work that it can accomplish in the life of a Christian—even once we have found Christ. The law deals with rebelliousness and carnality. Continuing further in 1 Timothy:

Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person,
but for the lawless and insubordinate [that is, rebellious], for the
ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, [and the list
goes on]. (1Ti 1:9)

Primarily, Paul is here speaking of the unsaved who are walking in godlessness. However, Christians sometimes walk after the flesh and behave that way. Become lawless, rebellious, and insubordinate to God the heavenly Father.

Galatians 5:18 is a good verse to read with this, because it tells us, by implication, of an amazing and somewhat frightful thing that is happening to us when we walk in rebellion.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

(Gal 5:18)

When led by the Spirit, God's children are not under the law. What if you are not being led by the Spirit? The implication is that you are putting yourself back under the law. If we are being led, day by day, by the Holy Spirit, walking in the Spirit, depending on the Spirit, *then* we are not under the law. We are content in that we are not relating to God by how well we perform according to the standards of God. Rather, we are relating to God by the Spirit's work in and through and with us. But if we are walking in self-sufficiency, walking according to the flesh, we throw ourselves in the midst of our rebellion back under the law.

So then, the law can have a work in our lives as Christian. The law can minister rebuke from a loving, heavenly Father. It can minister to our need for humbling in light of the rebelliousness and self-sufficiency in our lives. We, who are not walking by the Spirit, have put ourselves back under the law. And the work the law's commission is to humble us. The law reveals to us our self-centeredness, our self-sufficiency, and our self-will. It speaks to our redeemed hearts reminding us that we need to return to dependence on Christ and His Holy Spirit. We need to flee back to grace.

So the message of the law is that we must be holy and be perfect. But the inability of the law is this: it cannot make us perfect, neither in justification nor sanctification. So then, its ability thus: its power to reveal God's character, His standard, and His will; its power to hold us accountable

to God; its power to strip men of every defense before God; and most importantly, its power to reveal the truth and depth of our sin and thereby tutor us to Jesus Christ.

The Fulfillment of the Law of God

But to our last question! How is the law fulfilled in our lives? To put it another way, how are its demands met in our day-by-day Christian living? This is an exciting, encouraging truth that Jesus begins to expound in His Sermon on the Mount.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. (Mat 5:17)

Jesus did not come to crush, annihilate, and discard the law of God. The law is not done away with for it still has a purpose and various works to fulfill. Jesus said, "I did not come to destroy, but I came to fulfill." Jesus did not come to annihilate God's law; rather, He came to fulfill that law. Of the ways in which He fulfills the righteous law of God, there are three in particular.

First of all, Jesus fulfills the law by example. He fulfills it by His life. Think of this: there was one human being (and only one) who lived on this earth and never violated the laws of God. He said truthfully, "I do always those things that please My heavenly Father." The Father said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The Scriptures say He was without sin. He fulfilled the law by His life. He fulfilled its every demand. What it said, He did. What it described, He was. He is both the Holy Son of God and perfect man all at the same time.

A second way He fulfilled the law was not in His life, but in His death at the cross. In that, He was fulfilling the penalty of the law. The law said, "The soul that sins must die." And we were all

under the curse of the law and deserved death. He died on the cross that separated Him from the Father—when all along it was we who deserved death. Thank God, He fulfilled that law. Otherwise we'd have to fulfill that part ourselves. It would be all over. And eternal death would be ours for the eternal crime of transgressing against an eternally holy God.

Now here is where our study concentrates in these six classes: the third fulfillment of the law. Jesus fulfills the law by empowering us to walk day by day in godliness. Colossians 1:27, you may recall, says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ in you, the hope of glory. What is our hope of getting to glory? Christ now lives in us. What is our hope of a glorious life that brings day-by-day glory to the Father? Christ in us, the hope of glory. Think of this. The same Lord Jesus Christ, who never once sinned before the law, now lives in you if you are a child of God. My hope of a life that pleases the Father is like Galatians 2:20 says, "I've been crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me." The more I depend on the Holy Spirit, the more I look to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the more I look to the Lord Jesus Christ, the more He is expressed through me. And the more He is expressed through me, the more I do measure up to the law of God. And the more I do measure up to the law of God, the more my life looks like the life Christ lived that never violated the law.

Romans 3:21-24 also goes a long way toward telling us how Jesus fulfilled the law in the area of justification on our behalf.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed.

(Rom 3:21)

Pay close attention here—this is good news! May it be that these verses are used of God to bless your soul. The righteousness of God is there in the law for it says, be righteous just as God is righteous. But notice:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed,
being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. (Rom 3:21)

The law of God tells us how righteous God is—and how righteous we ought to be. But here we note a righteousness that is apart from the law; it is wholly unavailable through the power of the law.

²²Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to
all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³for all
have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:22-23)

If you are here studying and you read this and it's nothing but confusion or condemnation, remember: all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. You might think, "My goodness! I guess I do not fit in with these religious people. They seem to be able to handle all of this holy, perfect, righteous law stuff." No. No, we could not. We could not live up to it either. We all fell short of the required measure of righteousness. And apart from Christ in us, we would fall short more and more everyday. Be encouraged. You who have also fallen short in sin, though not able to measure up to the glorious standard of God, still is there hope for you.

Being justified freely by His grace [How?] through the
redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom 3:24)

Christ died on the cross and paid the debt for sin. He bought us out of bondage to sin so that we might be justified freely by His grace. Justified! Declared innocent! Even more, declared not guilty! And all this is obtained by His grace because Christ paid the debt.

Oh the grace of God! That is how we find salvation. If you have not been justified by the grace of God freely through faith in Christ, just tell Him even now, “Lord Jesus, I see I’m one of those all who sinned and fell short of Your standard. Forgive me by Your grace through Jesus Christ.”

The fulfillment of the law for justification is complete. The penalty of the law has been removed through Jesus Christ.

The last verse in our study, Romans 8:4, speaks to the manner of our sanctification. Just previous, in verse 3, Paul tells the reason us that God sent His own Son to take care of sin in the flesh.

That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us
who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the
Spirit. (Rom 8:4)

What is the righteous requirement of the law? Be holy. Be perfect. There is now a way for the righteous requirement of the law to be fulfilled in us. Can you imagine that? Day by day, more and more, what the law demands can be taking place in our lives. How? If we will be those who do not walk according to the flesh (the way of the flesh is self-resource, works of the law, carnal effort to prove we can live up to the things of God), but rather, live according to the Spirit.

Humbly depend on the Holy Spirit to make the life of Christ in yourself: real in your strength and your resource and your daily portion.

Christ is fulfillment of the law for us in justification, and in and through us for sanctification. We are justified freely by His grace. We are sanctified by His grace day by day. And that is the central theme of these studies. As we walk in dependence on the Holy Spirit, this allows Jesus to live in and through us; and God's grace is the dynamic at work day by day in our lives.

To Conclude

In conclusion, remember the law of God says, "Be holy. Be perfect." But its inability lies in the fact that it cannot make us perfect. Its ability is it can show us our need for the Lord Jesus Christ. And then the fulfillment of the law is through faith in Jesus Christ both for salvation and for daily living. Ultimately we could say this: God's law reveals to us our great need for the grace of God. And that is what we shall study directly our next time together.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we acknowledge Your holy law. How high and lofty. It's a description of You, Lord. And all of us have sinned and fallen short. We pray for any who have never known Your saving, justifying grace that will just give their heart to You right now in faith. And for those of us who know You, Lord, have the Spirit in our lives, we've been justified, declared innocent through Christ, teach us how to be sanctified, growing, maturing, growing in and by the grace of God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Law of God

(Study #1 of 6)

Introduction:

Romans 6:14

Galatians 4:21

Its Message:

Leviticus 19:1-4

1 Peter 1:15, 16

Matthew 5:48

Its Inability:

Hebrews 7:18, 19

Galatians 2:16; 3:2, 3

Its Ability:

Genesis-Deuteronomy; Matthew 5-7

Romans 3:19, 20

Galatians 3:24

1 Timothy 1:8-10

Galatians 5:18

Its Fulfillment:

Matthew 5:17

Romans 3:21-24; 8:4

Conclusion: