

## Chapter Six

### Deliverance From the Law

*“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come . . .” (Galatians 3:19).*

About 3500 years ago God gave to Israel, at Mount Sinai two tables of a Law, that no one since then has ever kept perfectly. This Law as the faultless expression of the holy will of God, and sinful man was unable to keep it. Some 1,500 years after God gave His Law to Israel there had not been one single person – (with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ) – who could claim complete obedience to this Law. This made all men Law-breakers, for one transgression was enough to bring a person under its curse. I remind you again of the all-inclusive indictment of the Apostle Paul:

*“ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10).*

This verse universally and individually condemns every man, for the demands of this Law are entirely out of reach of the best human who ever lived. It was impossible for a sinner born with a depraved heart to please God by obedience to His perfect, holy Law. Again and again the Bible states that, *“No flesh can be justified by the works of the Law.”* Paul says in Galatians that,

*“...if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin...(Galatians 3:21-22).*

It is well to ponder these words – If it were possible for a sinner to have made himself acceptable in the sight of God by a life of perfect obedience to God’s Law, then there would have been no need, no occasion, for the grace and the mercy of God. I would have made the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ wholly unnecessary. For this reason Paul says,

*“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21).*

What a charge to hurl against a righteous God! If it were possible for man to attain righteousness by keeping the Law, then God made a colossal mistake in sending His Son to die on the cross. I repeat, if it were possible for man to be saved by his own merit, works, and obedience to God’s Law, then there was no need of sacrificing the Son of God to save those who were perfectly able to save themselves. This is the force of these words:

*“...If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”  
(Galatians 2:21).*

Paul is stating, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, *“If man could obtain righteousness by keeping the Law, then the death of Christ on the cross was wholly unnecessary and uncalled for.”* The question then arises over and over again, *“If the Law could neither justify, sanctify, or satisfy, then why did God give a Law that He knew no one would be able to keep?”* It is not debasing to the Law to say that it could not save the sinner? What is wrong with the perfect Law of God, if it can do absolutely nothing for the sinner as to obtaining salvation? I must interject here – There is nothing wrong with the Law! The trouble is with the sinner. The standard of the Law is perfection, and holiness. Paul says in Romans 7,

*“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good”* (Romans 7:12).

The Law is *holy*; therefore unholy sinners cannot keep it. The Law is *just*; therefore it condemns the unjust sinner. The Law is *good*; therefore it condemns the evil, wicked heart of the natural man. It was given to reveal the sinfulness of sin, not to enable man to get rid of his sin. The Law makes us see sin, but it cannot take away in. A good illustration would be a mirror. The Law of God can be compared to a mirror in which one can behold him self as he really is. Without a mirror one is unable to have an accurate picture of him self. No one has ever seen his own face. Because our eyes are set back in sockets and can only look forward and sideways, but not backward, I repeat, *no one has ever seen his own face.* When you look in a mirror, in actuality, you do not see your face; you only see a reflection of your face. Even in a photograph of yourself, it is a picture of your face, but you don't actually see your face. Now a perfect mirror will give a perfect reflection. Without a mirror one might imagine his face to be perfectly clean, but looking in the mirror he see that it is dirty, soiled and even filthy.

Before God gave His holy Law, man was unable to see just how he actually looked in the sight of God. He knew something was wrong, for his conscience told him so. But he had no idea of just how sinful and filthy he really was. He had no conception of the real sinfulness of sin. At Sinai, at the giving of the Law, they said, *“All that the Lord hath said, we will do.”* Poor, blinded, deluded souls! They had no realization of how depraved they were, how utterly helpless they were to keep the Law that they were about to receive. So, in order to show them their real conditions, God gave them a perfect Law, as the standard of God's requirements for holiness. It was a revelation of how far short they had come before God. The Law then, instead of showing them how good they were, or how good they should be, or how good they *might* be by obedience to the Law, only increased the sinfulness of sin. The Apostle Paul had to learn by experiencing this great lesson – that the Law, instead of giving life, was a minister of death. Before his conversion, Paul was a zealous Law-keeper. As touching the outward observance of the Law, he was blameless. No one could point the finger of accusation at him. And then Paul came face to face with Jesus Christ, and in a flash Paul saw that all his righteousness that he claimed under the law was only filthy rags, as he testifies in Romans 7:10,

*“And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death”* (Romans 7:10).

Paul found that the Law that he so diligently sought to keep in order to earn salvation, was instead his executioner, and condemned him to death. He says that the Law, instead of giving life, slew him:

*“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me – [sin deceived me!] – and by it – [the commandment or the Law] – slew me” (Romans 7:11).*

And it is then that Paul realized the high standard of God’s Law and adds in verse 12:

*“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12).*

The purpose of the law was to show the real, the awful nature of sin. It did not cause sin, but it revealed the true nature of sin. Continuing Paul’s argument in Romans 7 reads:

*“Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful” (Romans 7:13).*

Notice the last phrase, *“that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”*

Before the Law, man might claim ignorance of God’s perfect will, but once the Law came, there was no longer any self-justification. Paul states the same truth in Romans 5:20,

*“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound” (Romans 5:20).*

The Law then became like a mirror to reveal the true condition of the sinner as he is. Without the mirror man did not see himself as he really is. But that is all a mirror can do – show the filthiness of the face, and the need for cleansing. It cannot do the washing. Using a make-believe, graphic illustration, let me picture you trying to take the mirror and attempting to use it for a washcloth – it, of course, would only smear the dirt all the more and spread it all over your face. To rub the mirror over your soiled complexion will only make matters worse. You must turn from the mirror to soap and water. So, too, in like manner with the ministry of the Law – it was given to show man his true condition and his need for cleansing, but beyond that it cannot go. We must now turn to the grace of God and in true repentance and confession of our guilt, seek for cleansing by the water of the Word and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

The ministry of the Law is **NOT** to save, but to show the *need* of salvation. When God gave the Law to Israel, they did not yet know the gravity of their sin. They imagined they were capable and able to earn and merit the favor of God by their own behavior and good works. So God gave them a set of conditions, a set of rules, to be observed if they were to merit God’s favor. For sixteen hundred years Israel lived under

this Law, and yet in all those sixteen hundred years, not one single Israelite was saved by keeping that Law. Without exception, all who were saved were saved by *grace*, through faith in God's atoning sacrifice. When God gave the law on Mount Sinai, He also gave the pattern of the Tabernacle and the ordinances for the bloody sacrifices. These sacrifices and the Tabernacle pointed to the coming Redeemer. Had God given only the Law on Sinai, without God's provisions for the pardon in the pattern of the Tabernacle with its bloody atoning sacrifices, not a single Israelite would have been saved.

### From Sinai To Calvary

To the believer who comes to Christ and abandons all hope of saving himself, Christ becomes the end of the Law. Perfect obedience to the Law is not to him the condition of salvation, but confession of failure and acceptance of grace result in his justification.

*"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4).*

Notice, "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness*" to the believer. He does not say that the Law ceases to exist, but for the believer the Law is ended as a means of obtaining righteousness through obedience to it. The believer is now saved by grace. So today we are not under Law, but under grace. The believer is not under the Law, its threatenings, or its penalties. The believer is "*dead to the Law*" (Galatians 2:19), free from the Law, delivered from the Law.

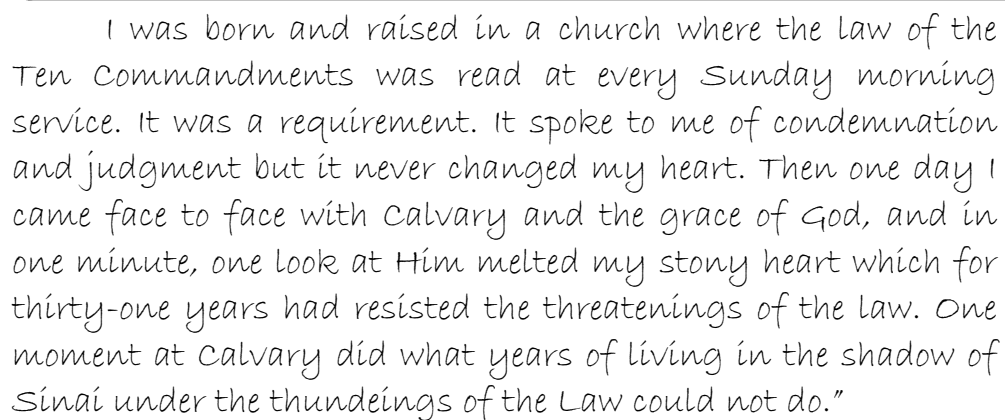
Free from the Law, O happy condition  
 Jesus had died, and there is remission;  
 Cursed by the Law, Ruined by the fall,  
 Christ hath redeemed us, Once and for all  
  
 Once for all, O sinner, receive it;  
 Once for all; O doubter, believe it;  
 Look to the Cross, your burden will fall,  
 Christ hath redeemed us, Once for all.

With the death and resurrection of Christ, the dispensation of Law ended, and when Jesus cried, "*It is finished,*" He had met all the demands of the holy Law, paid its penalty, and to us who believe "*the righteousness of the Law is imputed to us and fulfilled in us.*"

You may ask, "*Do we not need the Law today to show us what sin really is?*" I answer that question with this, "*Do you honestly think that we need to go to the Law to see what sin is and does?*" To be sure, the Law still stands to condemn the sinner, but we now have a much more convincing demonstration of the true nature of sin. It is seen not at Sinai, but at Calvary. After sixteen hundred years of the thundrings of the Law, not one single individual to whom the Law was given ever kept it, but instead at the of those sixteen hundred years they committed the capital crime of the ages by nailing the only One who ever kept the Law perfectly, to the cross of Calvary and condemned Him to die as

a criminal and a Law-breaker. Mark this fact well – after living for centuries under the Law, they ended up by committing the crime of all crimes, crucifying the Son of God. If you really want to see what sin is in all its naked depravity, then come to Calvary. See the perfect, sinless Son of God bleeding, dying in agony and shame, because of *our* sin. There at the cross is the picture of sin – and it is there that we see what sin really is, and what sin deserves, for Christ Jesus bore *our* sin on that cross. If you want to know what sin is – go to that scene at Calvary! You will never truly repent of your sin until you see what your sin did to the Savior on the cross.

One preacher writes:



I was born and raised in a church where the law of the Ten Commandments was read at every Sunday morning service. It was a requirement. It spoke to me of condemnation and judgment but it never changed my heart. Then one day I came face to face with Calvary and the grace of God, and in one minute, one look at Him melted my stony heart which for thirty-one years had resisted the threatenings of the law. One moment at Calvary did what years of living in the shadow of Sinai under the thundereings of the Law could not do."

Let me invite you right now to turn from your own efforts, and confessing that you are a guilty sinner, who has broken every Law of God, and turn to the Christ of Calvary for grace and mercy, and find His peace.

I saw One hanging on a tree,  
In agony and blood,  
He fixed His loving eyes on me,  
As near His cross I stood