

Spurgeon on the Law of God

By Hilton P. Terrell

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Matthew 5:18: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Even in Spurgeon's time (1800's) there were those who taught that the law of God had been utterly abolished and believers were not bound to make the moral law the rule of their lives. Spurgeon rightly called this teaching Antinomianism and condemned it. Antinomianism means "against law." It is unhappily a teaching that is very much alive today. Though there are not many who will hold to the position that the law has been abolished, there are many who in effect teach the same thing: in Spurgeon's words, there are those who teach "that Jesus mitigated and softened down the law, and they have in effect said that the perfected law of God was too hard for imperfect beings, and therefore god has given us a milder and easier rule."

The apostles knew better than this. Paul said, "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man." (Romans 7:22). He also said, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." (Romans 7:12). Paul further stated, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." (Romans 3:31)

This passage in Matthew 5 teaches, Spurgeon declares, that the law is perpetual.

Some think, Spurgeon pointed out, that Jesus was abrogating the law when He healed on the Sabbath, or when he rolled wheat ears between his hands, removing the husk, was Sabbath work. To the contrary, Jesus was not violating the Sabbath, nor instituting a new, gentler law. He was removing false encrustations that had accumulated on the fourth commandment.

Hear Spurgeon on the matter: "Let us not dare to dream that God had given us a perfect law which we poor creatures could not keep, and therefore he has corrected his legislature, and sent his Son to put us under a relaxed discipline. Nothing of the sort. The Lord Jesus Christ has, on the contrary, shown how intimately the law surrounds and enters into our inward parts, so as to convict us of sin within even if we seem clear without."

See Jesus implicitly appeal to the law when he said to His accusers, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46). It was and is the law which defines sin for us. In this question, Jesus holds Himself up beside the law and is found perfect.

There are many who call themselves Christian who maintain that since Jesus kept the law we don't have to. They point out our inability to keep the law and say that we couldn't be expected to do something impossible. This is ridiculous argumentation. Mankind's inability is not the kind which removes our responsibility. Our inability is a moral inability, not a physical one. There are people who so practice lying that they become hardened and habituated in it and can no longer tell the truth. Does this inability excuse their lies? "If your servant owes you a day's labour, is he free from the duty because he has made himself so drunk that he cannot serve you? Is a man freed from a debt by the fact that he has squandered the money, and therefore cannot pay it?"

These questions Spurgeon asked and did not need to answer, since the answer was obvious to his listeners that the answer was, "no." Today, scarcely a century later, the answer is not obvious to many. We have whole categories of "pathological" (or disease-caused) lying, bankruptcy discharges the debts of those who have squandered their means of paying, and drunkenness has flown from being a sin to being an entitlement.

Spurgeon asks the question, "Which particular part of the law is it that God has relaxed?" "Which precept do you feel free to break? Are you delivered from the command which forbids stealing? My dear sir, you may be a capital theologian, but I should lock up my spoons when you call at my house."

If there is latitude in the law nowadays, then we will be sure to cut ourselves slack at just the areas where we need it the most. We thus remove enough law to remove our sin. "When you have done away with sin you may as well have done away with the Saviour and with salvation, ..." for they are not needed.

"To alter the law is to leave us without any law at all. A sliding-scale of duty is an immoral invention, fatal to the principles of law. If each man is to be accepted because he does his best, we are all doing our best. Is there anybody that is not? If we take their words for it, all our fellow-men are doing as well as they can, considering their imperfect natures."

Conclusion of the matter: The moral law of God is perpetual. It has not been overthrown by Christ, but fulfilled by Him. Though since the fall of our race into sin, we have never been able to keep the law, we remained accountable to it and Christ fulfilled it on our behalf as the second Adam.