

# “Gospel Hope for Law-Breakers”

## (Part 2)

### Exodus 20:1-21

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019 – Glenvista Baptist Church

42<sup>nd</sup> and Final Message in The Ten Commandments

Two messages to conclude the study of the Ten Commandments

**Exodus 20:1-21 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> And God spoke all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup> “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup> “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

<sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup> “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.”

<sup>18</sup> Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” <sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” <sup>21</sup> The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.”

## Introduction: “Justification is followed by Sanctification” (Rom 6:1-2)

**Romans 6:1-2 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means!”

- a) In an attempt to bring to conclusion a 40-week study on the Ten Commandments, we find ourselves looking at some significant theological truths that help us view all we have learnt within a proper biblical perspective. The standard that the law sets is high – in actual fact so high – it is humanly unattainable. Man stands condemned under the law and without Christ. The law pronounces everyone cursed that does not obey everything that is in the law. This condemnation comes because the law requires a perfect, spotless, standard of righteousness. **We are born sinners, with both the imputation of Adam's guilt and the corruption of Adam's nature.**
- b) But the news thankfully is not all bad. In Christ, we are taken from the covenant of works, by which we are judged law-breakers and sentenced to judgement – to the covenant of grace. **Whereas Adam, our covenant head, ruined us by his disobedience, so Christ the Second Adam, rescued us by His obedience.** In Christ the believer is declared just – every sin he has done is covered under the blood of the Lamb, and he is viewed in the pure and spotless righteousness of the Lamb of God who takes away our sin. Covered in His righteousness, we are set aside for His glory; what Christ did in keeping the law, He did for us, and His sinless perfection becomes ours as we become co-heirs with Christ, seated with Him in the heavenly realms. Our God indeed has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Whereas the law shows us how powerless we are to achieve any form of righteousness or merit for ourselves, so we see that Christ does for us what no one else can do. To Him be the Glory, for great things He has done.
- c) Last week we worked through key portions of **Romans 1-5**, as we considered the **Grand Doctrine of Justification** in light of the requirement of the law. At the end of this major section on justification, the apostle very wisely anticipates the most likely reaction he could expect from his readers, and we read in **Romans 6:1**, **“<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”** To this of course he offers a resounding **“no”** in **verse 2**, **“<sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”** And this is often one of the objections the moralist will make to the wondrous truth of the Doctrine of Justification. For some will say, seeing a man can be justified, that equally means he can then after his justification live like he wants without any consequences, seeing that the effect of his justification protects him from any further condemnation. But such sentiment is far removed from the picture God's Word presents.
- d) **Here is what we need to see clearly today: when a man has truly been justified by God's electing love, such a man truly will change. Such a man truly will desire inward holiness of heart and life; such a man will progressively desire becoming more like Christ; such a man will no longer be satisfied with his current condition and such a man will truly seek transformation. He will flee from sin; he will no longer want to live the way he lived before Christ intervened, and he will seek continued refuge in Christ alone.** So, if properly understood and applied, this means that justification is always followed by sanctification, and this sanctification will always be progressive in its nature; hereinafter referred to as progressive sanctification. The Gospel of God's free grace always calls for a response from the one who has been set free from his sin, and that call is for the continuous pursuit of holiness. The justified man will long to be a sanctified man. Such a man will pray the prayer our Lord prayed in **John 17** – **“<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”** (John 17:17).
- e) During our Lord's ministry we see Him arguing that it was the tree that made the fruit and not the other way around (**Matt 12:33; Lk 6:43-45; Matt 7:15-20**). If the tree is bad, so will its fruit be. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit; so make the tree good and then its fruit will also be good. In the same way we need to see that it is God's unconditional

acceptance which comes to us through justification, that produces real change in heart and life, and this is called sanctification. From **Romans 6** Paul turns the discussion from what God does **outside of us** and **for us** (*justification*), to what God does **within us** (*sanctification*). **God never justifies a man without sanctifying him**; therefore if someone claims to have been saved, yet there is no clear trace of sanctification in such a man, such man knows not what true justification is, and has not been saved.

- f) The very God who grants one that is “**dead in trespasses and in sins**” (Eph 2:1) the ability to be quickened and come to life in Christ by trusting Christ for his justification, is also the God who grants that same person the faith to grow in Christ and become more like Him in his likeness through means of sanctification. And so as Paul moves to the **Doctrine of Sanctification**, that then will be our focus in light of the requirement of the law, this Lord’s Day.

## **Point 1 – “The Requirement of the Law in light of Two Significant Theological Truths”** **Truth 2: Being Made Righteous (Sanctification) (Rom 6:1-7)**

**Romans 6:1-7 (ESV)** “<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin.”

- a) We saw last week that God justifies the wicked. At the outset we need to affirm therefore that God not only **justifies**, but that He also **sanctifies**. Now it is crucial that these two terms are clearly distinguished, so that we do not confuse the **process in which God declares us righteous by His legal decree**, with the **process of making us righteous**. Although the two are inseparably linked to each other, they nonetheless need to be distinguished particularly. Yet as much as these divine actions must be distinguished we must not fall into the error of separating them.
- b) Michael Horton helpfully states: “One is a **pronouncement**, based on Christ’s finished work; the other is a **process** based on Christ’s finished work; but both belong to every believer by grace alone, through the same simple faith God gives us to trust in Christ. Through this faith, we are assured that we are righteous in Christ, even though we do not perceive it in ourselves, and through the same faith we are assured that Christ’s life flows through us, sanctifying us just as surely as the life of the vine forms the shape, color, health, and vitality of the branches.” <sup>1</sup>
- c) **This then is where Romans 6:1-7 comes into our discussion**. Paul is effectively saying two things here: first, **you are justified**, in that God has declared you righteous apart from any works of your own. And second, **you are being sanctified** for not only have you been freed of the guilt of your sin, but equally from its all-consuming destructive power.
- d) **The doctrine of sanctification teaches that sin can no longer master you, because Christ has seen to its dethronement**. Now many of us will be familiar with the following picture

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<sup>1</sup> Michael S. Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom, Relating to God and others in and through the Ten Commandments*, Moody Publishers Chicago (1993) page 263-264

on the screen. One that is regularly used in teaching basic truths of the Gospel; perhaps even one that was used when you were first introduced to the Gospel. There are generally two circles presented, one in which **Self is on the Throne**, whilst in the other, **Christ is on the Throne**. This approach then typically asks the believer, “In which circle are you?”, thereby effectively declaring that it is possible to have Christ as our Savior but not necessarily as our Lord. This teaching is known as the “Carnal Christian Teaching”, and I want to warn you against its error. In this teaching the main idea is that a Christian may **be saved from the guilt of sin** and therefore be assured of his salvation, yet this person may at the same time not necessarily **be free from the rule of sin**. So the preacher’s task in such a situation would always be to lead the believer to make a second decision for Christ, in which such a believer now “allows” Jesus to gain victory over sin’s dominion in his or her life and so put Christ on the throne of his life. I trust you can immediately see how dangerous and false such teaching is.

- e) **But I want you to see that according to Romans 6, every believer is in the same circle with Christ on the Throne.** Paul nowhere in this passage encourages the believers to enter the higher life, to gain victory over sin, to live the victorious Christian life, or to put Christ on the throne. On the contrary he makes clear that all of this has already been accomplished for the believer in Christ and is all at once given to the believer by grace through means of faith, at conversion. **Here’s what we need to hear: the very moment a sinner comes to faith in Jesus Christ, that very instant the guilt and the control of sin are both conquered immediately and completely.** Never again does such a believer ever have to worry about being judged for his sin or of being controlled by his sin. We do not achieve the victory; Christ already has! And that is why Paul can write that we “**have died to sin**” (v2), that our sinful nature “**was crucified**” (v6) and that “**we have been raised with Christ**” (v4). Further to that he concludes, “**for one who has died has been set free from sin**” (v7). Have you noticed that all of these are in the past tense? It’s something that has already happened to the believer, and this is why he does not call the believers to die to sin, or to remove themselves from the throne and “allow” Christ on the throne, but rather he reminds them to “**consider themselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus**” (v11). That means the believer is already holy in Christ; sin has already been dethroned; we are raised to new life and we are seated in the heavenlies with our Lord (Eph 2:6). You see, Paul’s response to this matter is “**1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?**” (Rom 6:1). On the other hand the erroneous approach to this would be: “*By no means! Don’t you know that if you don’t subdue sin in your life and let Jesus take control that you will fall under the judgement of God again?*” I trust you can clearly see the error of such.
- f) **Now this leads to an important question in terms of the process of sanctification.** Does the teaching on justification mean that in my process of sanctification I will be completely rid of sin and I will have no struggle with sin whatsoever? Is that what this teaching is making known? Does this mean that the believer is perfected the moment he or she believes? The apostle in a most pastorally sensitive manner responds to this scenario by using his own failures and his own struggle with sin as a means of encouraging the saints in Romans 7. We read in Romans 7:15-20, “**15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.** **16** Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. **17** So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. **18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. **For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.** **19** For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. **20** Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells

within me.” I need you to notice that Paul is speaking here as a born-again believer; this is after his Damascus Road experience in which God awakened him from his sin. After the optimism of **Romans 6** Paul seems to express a great frustration in **Romans 7**. He deals openly and honestly with his very real daily struggle with sin as one who has been set free from sin, and it is precisely the glorious truth that he has already been set free from his sin, that makes him so frustrated that he does still sin. We need to affirm then that the very experience of Paul is the experience of every Spirit-filled believer, and it is the very fact that Paul does possess the Spirit of God, that makes him so disappointed with his own struggle against sin.

- g) Dear friend, in your own sanctification, and in your own struggle and disappointment at sin in your own life, recognize that the unbeliever is never disturbed at his law-breaking, whereas the Apostle here is outraged at his failure at every attempt to keep the law. **The one who loves the law of God will always be disturbed at his own inability to adhere to the law.** Sanctification means being continually horrified at the remaining effects of sin in our lives, and in continuous prayerful dependence upon the Lord, looking to the Lord, to transform us and rescue us from the remaining struggle between the flesh and the Spirit.
- h) But God thankfully does not leave us in despair. Not even the apostle was left alone in his struggle, for in the very passages in which he declares his continued struggle he also declares his hope and his rescue. He asks a prominent question in **Romans 7:24**, **“24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”**, which is then followed by this glorious answer, **“25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”** And that dear friends is our hope. As much as the justified believer will have a continued struggle in his sanctification against sin, such a struggling sinner is always reminded that Christ already has gained for him the ultimate victory and that the Glorious Day is coming in which the believer will be glorified with Christ.

## **Point 2 – “The Requirement of the Law in light of Christ, our Only Hope” (Rom 6:6)**

**Romans 6:1-7 (ESV)** **“1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.”**

- a) The law cannot change us; the law cannot save us; the law can neither assist grace in the process of saving us. The law is utterly worthless in accomplishing this for us. The law can only condemn – not because the law has an inherent weakness, but because our sin nullifies every attempt at keeping the law.
- b) And that beloved, means, that even the Christian is brought back every time to Christ and His accomplishment on our behalf on the cross. How very despondent we become each time we fall into some sin we struggled with before our conversion! Paul writes in **Romans 7:15**, **“15 For I do not understand my own actions.”** How utterly we then feel our own inability at mastering this sinful tendency that seems to grab us in its clutches time and again. And we feel so discouraged by it that at times we even wonder whether we are

truly saved or not. We all know this feeling, right? But you see, this is where we need to reaffirm afresh this morning that the law can only be seen in its proper light if viewed through the redemption that comes to every believer who is in Christ. For you see friends, it's those very moments when we think we are strongest, that we need to realize that we are at our most vulnerable and that the possibility for us to fall is ever so close. And it is in those moments, in which our consciences have to agree with the law, that we are unholy and unrighteous, and that we can look to Christ alone who pronounces this verdict over his bride: **“<sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

- c) **This good news, beloved friends, is not only for him who is initially brought from darkness into the Kingdom of Light:** it's for all believers at all times in their walk with God. It is not only the unbeliever that is rescued from his guilt and shame, it is especially also the believer who finds himself returning to his sin, that can be forgiven of his sin. And our God through His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is lavish with His grace and He is more anxious to clothe us in His righteousness than we ever will have a desire for such righteousness.
- d) **And so friends, we need to constantly be hearing the law of God, in spite of the fact that we cannot conform to it, so that such awareness of failure would cause us to constantly be running to Christ.** And therefore it is not only our justification but also our sanctification that depends on Christ. Without Him we cannot become more like Him; without Him we will fall into despair in our continuous struggle against sin.
- e) And therefore the law must be preached in all of its perfection, never lowering its standard, nor downplaying the depth of its call, but always pointing the hearer to Christ, who calls us to His very best and expects that from all. All who fall short of that, can only find grace and comfort in the knowledge that Christ mastered the law and died the perfect death on the cross as substitution for all who believe.
- f) Christ indeed is our only hope, for Him we long and to Him we cry out – “Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus, Come!”

## **Conclusion: “A call to Realism, not Perfectionism” (Rom 7)**

**Romans 7:24-25 (ESV)** **“<sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”**

- a) In conclusion then this morning, right at the end of 40 weeks of exposition of the Ten Commandments we need to see that this study calls for **realism** and not **perfectionism**. You see, we need to ask why all this is so important? And the answer is actually quite simple. Ask any believer who is struggling with his sin, in terms of ongoing sinful habits, behaviours and desires and they will tell you exactly why this is important.
- b) **This is important, because dear believer, fail you will!** And the apostle Paul lists his own failures here in **Romans 7** as an example of the realism we ought to have in the journey of our sanctification. Failure is part of the process of growing in Christ and becoming more like Him. And the reason we need to know these things is so that when the failure does come, we will not be shattered by it as a result of an overly optimistic view, that then becomes disillusioned with the Gospel, simply because of a wrong understanding of what biblical sanctification truly looks like. The law cannot change us, it can only show us how much we are in need of change and in so doing point us to Christ.

- c) You see, one cannot truly grow in Christ unless one is prepared for failure. Every time the inevitability of failure crosses the path of the believer, we are not to lose heart but simply acknowledge the goodness of God in forgiving us each time we fail and look to Him afresh for help and grace in our time of need. Even though by grace, we are a new people with a new identity, we still bring with us the sinful affections we had before we were converted. The difference however is that Christ has given us a new heart, and because of this new heart, we can no longer love our sin, as we now love the law of God, and hate everything that opposes that which is holy and pure and good, and such of course is the law of our God. For the law of God no longer is merely written on tablets of stone or on our consciences, but is primarily now written on our hearts. We therefore have a new framework by which the believer seeks to please his God and bring him honour.
- d) Yet there will remain this war within us until that glorious day when Christ comes to fetch His bride. Until then the war will be between the new man God has created within, and the sinful tendencies of the old man that continue seek to plant its roots within our hearts. Until then, we look to Jesus, until then we seek to honour Him by obeying His law, praying daily for grace and sustenance that comes from the throne of glory above, unto undeserving sinners, who nonetheless have been made worthy by the blood of the Lamb.
- e) For this we long, to this we strive and ultimately, this, we know, will be perfected in us, that Day when Jesus finally rescues us from this body of death in which we live. Until then may God enable us to live for His praise and for His honour.

Amen!

Soli Deo Gloria (For God's Glory Alone)

Glenvista Baptist Church – 12 May 2019