

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Wowh. A statement like that today, would undoubtedly earn Jesus the title of "Fundamentalist", and that description.. – well, it's a derogatory one these days, and yet, that's what they would call Jesus, for believing that the word of God (He was talking about the Old Testament, by the way) is so literally timeless and important... And He said these words, because obviously what He **did** and what He **taught**, led some to assume that He **did** want to get rid of the law... Isn't that interesting, that today, the real Jesus, we would have to call a fundamentalist, but to some in His day, they thought of Him as a liberal. He said, **17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;**

And obviously that's what some **were** thinking.... You know Jesus knows what you're thinking, hey??? And there were some there, particularly the Scribes and the Pharisees (the scribes were like those who had gone to Bible College and had formally studied the Scriptures, and the Pharisees were a lay-led purity movement)... But these guys always seemed to have a go at Jesus, because they **thought** He **didn't** keep the Law.... The thing was, Jesus kept **God's** Law – not all of **their** rules that they had built up around it.

The Scribes and the Pharisees, were fastidious about keeping the Law, and so they tried to define it to the nth degree, and

“build a fence” around it, so they would know exactly what they had to do in every situation...

In Jesus' day, it was just verbal teaching, but about 300 years later, they wrote it down, and the Mishna comes to about 800 pages, and then there were commentaries to explain the Mishna.....

And all of these were **not** God's Law – they were merely man's explanation and interpretation of it....

For example, God's Law says “Keep the Sabbath holy.” God's Law says, “You shall do no work on the Sabbath”. But then the legalists wanted to legislate and make rules for every situation.

*A new lamp can be moved from one place to another on the Sabbath, but not an old one; hot food may be kept warm by covering with clothes, feathers or dried flax, but not by covering with damp herbs or straw – which could engender fresh heat (and thus ‘work’) on the Sabbath day. An ass may go out on the Sabbath day wearing its saddle cloth **if** this was fixed on before the Sabbath, but may not wear a bell even if it is plugged (that would be work for the ass). Goats may go out with a protective cloth on their udders if it is to keep them dry, but not if it is intended to collect the milk...ⁱ*

If you try to live, completely by the Law, you're going to tie yourself up in knots, worrying all the time “Have I overstepped the bounds?” And so you just end up with more and more complex legislation, to try and cover every situation in life...

And we still do it today.

The governments of our day are always concerned about reducing the road toll. And the way they do it, is to legislate. Currently in Qld, they target what they call “the fatal 5”:

- *Speeding,*
- *drink and drug driving,*
- *failure to wear a seatbelt,*
- *driving while fatigued*
- *distraction and inattention*

The trouble is, not so long ago, it was the fatal 4. Not long before that, it was only really 3. If I think back, I’m actually old enough to remember when they first really started putting seatbelts in cars...

Sure as eggs, it won’t be long until they target 6 things, and then we’ll have the deadly 7.....

What I’m getting at, is you cannot legislate to create a safe driver. The Qld Traffic Act is 61 pages long. And to go with it, are the traffic regulations (190 pages long). And these documents cannot create a safe driver – it has to be an attitude of the heart, that you practice as you drive....

They can set the speed limit at 100km/hr... And there might be 50 kids on the side of the road, night time, pouring down with rain, oncoming traffic, head lights in your eyes, and you can drive at 99km/hr past those kids, and not break the law.... But it’s not safe....

The legalist would say, “We need some more rules. We need to legislate for that situation.”... The libertarian would say “Let me do what I like. Don’t you dare interfere with my rights... I have the right to do whatever I like....” But the person who has a desire for righteousness and safe driving, and care for other people in their heart, are going to slow

down and not put those kids at risk, no matter what the law says....

If you have a desire for road safety in your heart, you will do (by nature) what the law is unable to achieve. You'll regulate your speed to the conditions. You won't drink and drive. You will wear a seatbelt. When you get tired, you will stop and have a rest, even if your log book still has more hours left on it. If you find you're being distracted, you will concentrate....

But for the government to legislate to make you do it, it'll never work... Because you cannot create a safe driver through legislation. It has to be a change of heart – an attitude within.

And it's the same with God's Law. Jesus came, not to abolish it, but to put it in our hearts, so that it would become an attitude within, which we practiced without.... So that the Law, written on our hearts, could do what the written law could never achieve.

And so Christ came to fulfil the Law, and I believe He fulfilled the Law in 3 ways.

Firstly, Jesus Christ is the first and only person who was able to keep the whole law of God. Jesus Christ was sinless. And so He fulfilled the law.

Secondly, on the cross, Jesus Christ became the perfect sacrifice, and by His blood, the new covenant was inaugurated... Under the Old Covenant, God was unapproachable, and all of the cleanliness laws that we find in

the book of Leviticus, were all about trying to get pure and holy so we could come into the presence of a Holy God.

But when Jesus died on the cross, He said “It is finished – it is accomplished”, and the curtain in the temple, was **torn** from top to bottom, symbolising that no longer, were we cut off from God. And so under the new covenant, all of the cleanliness and ritual law was fulfilled. And that’s why we’re worshipping this morning in the skills centre and not the abattoir. We don’t need to sacrifice any more. Jesus Christ is our once for always sacrifice. You can pray to God this morning. And you didn’t have to bring a lamb or a dove or a bull, or grain or incense to burn for God to hear your prayers. That’s finished with.

Christ fulfilled, all of the requirements of religious law... And in Christ, we are released from that burden. And in Christ, we can come before God.

The Third, way Jesus fulfilled the Law, was by sending us His Holy Spirit. Jesus ascended into Heaven, and on the day of Pentecost, He sent His Holy Spirit, to live in the hearts of all believers.

When the Holy Spirit is living in your heart, you will, by nature (not our nature, but the nature of God living in us), keep the commandments of God, because the Holy Spirit of God, is convicting us, from within, as to what is right and what is wrong.ⁱⁱ

When you’re a Christian, your conscience gets tuned in to God. And you will become more aware of changes you need to make in your life. Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven –

Disciples of Jesus Christ, are urged by the Spirit of God, to live by the righteousness of God.

Who here, wants to live a life of righteousness for God?

Let me be very blunt. “If you don’t want to live a righteous life for God, then I would have to question, whether Jesus is in your heart.”

OK. So that’s what it means that Christ fulfilled the Law:

- He kept it
- He was the perfect sacrifice, which means that through Him, we can approach God (without the religious law); and
- He fills us with His Holy Spirit and writes His law on our hearts.

That’s what it means that Christ fulfilled the Law..

OK. So, what’s the place of God’s Law today? Jesus said, ¹⁸ **I tell you the truth** (that phrase is like saying “Now you can be sure of this – there’s no two ways about this), **until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.**

Has heaven disappeared? No. Has Earth disappeared? No. Is everything accomplished(has Christ returned yet)? No..... No. No. No....

Therefore, not one point of God's law has disappeared....

Jesus Christ has fulfilled the religious requirements, making it possible for us to come into the very presence of God. But if you don't have **faith** in Jesus Christ, then you are still just as cut off from God, and you are still just as hopelessly lost in sin as you ever were. And I urge you this morning, if you feel that, that is you..., then don't go home until you have done something about it. Talk to me before you go home....

But what does it mean for the believer? What does that mean for a disciple of Jesus Christ today? We're set free from the cleanliness and religious rules and regulations... But what about the rest of it? What about the moral code? What about righteous living?

Well, we don't have to guess – Jesus told us v19 ESV.

ESV19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the **least** of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called **least** in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever **does** them and **teaches** them will be called **great** in the kingdom of heaven.

As a bible teacher, I tremble when I read this sort of stuff. I've used the ESV here, because it actually gives a better translation than the NIV. The NIV says “¹⁹ **Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven,**” , but the word is actually

“whoever **relaxes** one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same....”

I tremble when I read that, because what I teach you today, bears eternal consequences on my heavenly reward. And what you and I **do**, bears eternal consequences on our heavenly reward.

Can you see, what we do, and what I teach, is critically important?..... This is what it means:

If the Holy Spirit lets me know on the inside, what’s right and what’s wrong, how do I know if it’s the Holy Spirit prompting me, or if it’s just my own feelings or if it’s actually the Devil tempting me to do something I shouldn’t?

Well, when it comes to the moral law – when it comes to righteousness and justice and mercy... (because remember, it was the Law **and the prophets**, and the prophets were dead against Religious observance of God’s Law, while neglecting the essential elements of justice and mercy and righteousness)... When it comes to the Law and the Prophets, we don’t get to choose what’s right and what’s wrong. God’s law, serves as a timeless calibration.

(Give demonstration of micrometer calibration)

The Holy Spirit, inside of you, will never direct you to act contrary to God’s written word.

So, for instance:

- Men, you might feel a deep yearning in your heart to be with another woman other than your wife. Or Ladies,

you may feel a deep connection with a man who listens to you, and connects with you on a level that your husband doesn't and feel "I think God wants me to leave my spouse and marry that other person"... Bzzz Against God's word. God will never direct you to do that.

- You might start conducting your business, with prophet as its only goal. Pay minimum wage. Sack my employees before they get long service up. I'll do a few quick, dodgy, but still legal deals.... Bzzz That's against God's word. Act with justice and Mercy... Be fair and generous in all your dealings....
- *New Zealand just passed their Same Sex Marriage Bill, renewing debate here, across the ditch. And it seems, every time it comes up, the pollies lean a bit more towards thinking that's OK.*

And in many churches today, the push, is to normalise homosexuality and the teaching that goes with it says "That's OK – It's not a sin. That's how God made you. We should celebrate that this is how God has made you" It's not a sin. That was just the understanding that people had when they didn't know any better.... And if you feel yourself starting to agree with that, get out your calibration. What does God's word say? And very soon, you find that that is a lie of the devil.

And God forbid, that I ever teach someone to relax a commandment of God. There are eternal consequences at stake.

But these the easy ones, aren't they? How much though, do we relax God's word in our lives all the time? Most of us don't care if we work every day of the week. Most of us can easily turn a blind eye to the poor and the needy. Most of us find it easy to carry a grudge, or to dishonour our parents, or

to covet what our neighbour has..... – Relaxing God’s timeless Law. Friends, Jesus Christ calls His disciples to a radical, life changing transformation. Let Him do it!

Now, about here, some of you might jump up and say “That’s all very legalistic” Michael. All of this talk about keeping the law... Where’s the grace?????

Jesus said, ²⁰ **For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

What hope have we **got**? The Pharisees and the teachers of the law made their entire lives, a striving for God’s righteousness. And they weren’t good enough? How can you ever be good enough to get to heaven? ... You can’t.... How can I be good enough to get to heaven?.... Even less chance than you....

No one’s good enough. Our righteousness is not enough. And that’s the good news of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, forgives sins. Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe and be baptised into His Name. And you’ll be saved.

No one has **ever** been saved by keeping the law. I could never be that good.

I am saved through the blood of Jesus, and His forgiveness. But I’m **not** saved to go on sinning, and neither are you. And

so we live, with God's help, righteous lives out of thankfulness for what He has done.

That doesn't mean you'll be perfect – I'm certainly not. And so it's just as well, that our Heavenly Father forgives us – Over and over again.

So, listen to the Spirit, prompting your conscience. Calibrate your conscience by reading and studying God's word. And live righteously – not so you deserve to be saved – but because you are saved, even though you didn't deserve it.

Questions – comments.

ⁱ Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew (The Bible Speaks Today)*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1988. P.93

ⁱⁱ Romans 2:13-15