

**Galatians 5: 13 and 14; “Learning to Love Your Neighbor”, # 36 in the series –
“Christ has Set us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 30th,
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The subject of this message is the fulfillment of the law; the fulfillment of the law by every true Christian. Verse 14 says, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” We are going to learn in this study that that no one has fulfilled the law perfectly except our Savior; our Lord Jesus Christ. This ought to be evident from verse 15 – “If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” Evidently there was quite a bit of biting and devouring going on in those churches of Galatia. And yet He still calls them his brethren in verse 13. And he speaks to them about what they could be doing to be learning to fulfill the law. So this evening I would like to attempt to help each one of us to see how the law is fulfilled in us. It is fulfilled by us in the following ways: 1st – By remembering that liberty ought not to lead to license. 2nd – By remembering to love your neighbor as yourself.

1st of all – In order for you to fulfill the law you must remember that liberty ought not to lead to license.

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh.” Liberty, it says here, is what we are called to. Liberty is the power to choose, or the power to do what you want to. It is the quality or the state of being free, according to the Dictionary. But in the Christian life, liberty is not only freedom from the law, it is the freedom to choose not to sin. Let’s look at freedom from the law first. This is the liberty that Romans Chapter 7, verses 1-4, talks about.

Here is what it says: “Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?” “For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives.” “But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.” “So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.” “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”

These are marvelous verses indeed! Because they show us what we have been called to. The law, that is the moral commandments of the law, summarized in the 10 commandments, is pictured for us here as the husband that each of us is married to, by nature. All of mankind is under the law of God by nature, being a descendant of Adam who broke the Covenant of works in the beginning. Even though we are no longer unable to keep the law, we are still expected to keep it. Just because we have lost our power to be able to keep God’s law, it does not mean that God has lost his right to command it of us.

Then the illustration of marriage is used by Paul. “The woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives.” “But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.” So we see from the way that Paul words this, that the law has to die or we have to die to it, if we are to be able to bear fruit to God, in living our lives righteously before Him. As long as we live being married to the law, we can never be free from its bondage; that is, its binding us to itself with the expectation of absolute perfection. The question then becomes – How can we be set free from the bondage of the law and the condemning power of the law?

Verse 3 says: “So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.” The law does not die in its expectation of what we should be doing perfectly, in the sight of God; rather, when we believe in Jesus, it dies in its power to condemn us. Verse 4 - “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of

Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.” Jesus Christ kept the commandments of God perfectly, and He suffered the awful punishment for our sins; a punishment equivalent to our having to suffer the wrath of God to all eternity. And when he accomplished our redemption, He said: “It is finished”. In finishing this great work on the cross and dying for our sins, we were made to die to the law’s righteous requirements being fulfilled by us personally. And therefore, when we first believed in Jesus Christ we were spiritually married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit for God.

We were brought to the place that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. We were brought to that place where we died to that law; to being continually under condemnation because we were not measuring up to the law’s perfect standard, and God’s expectations. But these were all fulfilled perfectly in Christ. Listen to Romans 8, verse 1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. So, this is the kind of liberty that we have been called to. It is a liberty where we have been set free from the law’s condemning power. We now have the liberty to walk in the Spirit, and not according to the flesh.

“The flesh” in this verse relates to our own self-efforts, apart from Christ’s grace to keep God’s holy law and our trying to justify ourselves in His sight. When we find this kind of liberty we should never use it as an opportunity to the flesh, as it says in verse 13. The “flesh” here in this verse is speaking of the remains of the corrupt sinful nature. It still wars against our renewed new nature and the Holy Spirit’s motions in our heart. It is a good and lasting work of grace, which the Spirit is doing there in our hearts. What then, is our responsibility in the process of our progressive sanctification?

We turn over to Ephesians 4: 17-24. “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the Old Man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.”

We see here that we should not use our liberty to pursue the sinful things of the Old Man, the person that we used to be in our sinful state; pursuing the lusts of our flesh. We did not learn Christ in that way. We learned that we need to repent of all such sins, and to mortify the lusts of our flesh. Look over at Romans 8: 12-14. “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors –not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.” “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

The Spirit leads the true Christian to put to death the deeds of the body. This is as John Gill says: “a subduing and weakening the vigor and power of sin in the lives and conversations (behavior) of the saints, to which the grace and assistance of the Spirit are absolutely necessary; and such who enabled to do so, “shall live” comfortably; they shall have communion with Christ here, and shall live a life of glory with Him hereafter.”

2nd – The law is fulfilled in us when we remember to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Verse 14 – For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ It should be understood by every Christian that the law of God is summed up in the two great commandments which our Lord spoke of over in Matthew 22: 34-40. “But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.” “Then one of them,

a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" "This is the first and great commandment." "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Now, you will notice that there seems to be an apparent contradiction between Paul's saying the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and Jesus saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets." But if you will only remember that if you love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, and mind as the first and foremost commandment, you will find yourself loving your neighbor as yourself.

Think about what it says in 1st John 4: 7 and 8. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love." The reason that we should love one another is because God has loved us in giving us His grace, His unmerited favor at the expense of Christ's precious blood. The person who does not love the brethren, who does not love his neighbor as himself, does not know God. Think also about 1st John 4: 20 and 21 – "If someone says, 'I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?' "And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

So, I hope that you can see from this, that the fulfillment of the law in the life of the Christian; your loving your neighbor as yourself, comes from God's having shown you love. Because God has shown you love, then you are desirous to show love to others around you. What then does it mean, then, for you, the Christian, to love your neighbor as yourself? Well turn over to Leviticus 19: 17 and 18 – "You shall not hate your brother in your heart." "You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him." "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." This simple rule, it is apparent, should apply. It is that you would treat others as you yourself would want to be treated. Would you like to have someone hating you in their heart? No. Then you should not hate someone in your own heart.

Would you want someone to take vengeance upon you, or bear a grudge against you? Then you should not think of doing it to someone else. Turn over to Luke chapter 6 and we will look at verses 27-31. "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you." "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also." "And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either." "Give to everyone who asks of you." "And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back." "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise." This is the best possible way to think of how you should love your neighbor as yourself.

Look also at Romans 13: 8-10 – "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." "For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." So, you see here, that love to your neighbor means that you will go about to keep all the specific commands of the 2nd table of the law in the Ten Commandments.

You and I have nothing else that we owe our fellow man, than to love him as ourselves. If we love him as ourselves, we will not commit any of these specific sins against him; adultery, murder, stealing, or coveting his wife or his possessions. But loving our neighbor is more than just our not sinning against him. It also means showing mercy to those who might be shunned by others. And so as we finish our study, I want you to turn over with me to Luke chapter 10. We will look at

verses 25-37. And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" "He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" "So he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." "And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." "But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

"Then Jesus answered and said: 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.'" "Now by chance a certain priest came down that road." "And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." "Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side." "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion." "So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him."

"On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you." "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" "And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." "Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." These are the very important things that you and I must learn to do, if we would fulfill the law as Christians. Having received this grace through our Lord Jesus Christ, we will go about to keep God's commandments. And the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'