

Until all Is Fulfilled, 2

Last Things

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This lesson is taken from page 1,749, Romans chapter 2, verses 14 and 15.

14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

The word of the Lord. [“Thanks be to God.”]

May we pray.

Help me, Lord, to open your word that it may be profitable, that you may write it on our heart, and that we may love you more and more because you have appeared to us in your final Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came by the power of the Holy Spirit to give the Holy Spirit to each of us that we might love you and love your law and love your people. Hear our prayer, Lord. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Sometimes people will say, “Well, if we’re not under the Old Testament law, what do we look to for civil government?”

And the answer is this: The pagan world knows God in some sense. There isn’t a single solitary soul on the face of this earth who doesn’t have within him or herself a remnant of the image of God (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). Human beings are created in the image of God. It’s a marred image. It’s a shattered image. It’s an imperfect image, what’s left in us. But by virtue of having that image of God in every single human being, there is an innate,

intuitive, before-experience awareness, not only that there exists a Supreme Being, but that the Supreme Being is the Lord God who created us (Romans 1:18-23). Everyone knows that at some level, and so when you preach to people who are pagans, you're telling them something they already know, but they don't want to face, and that is, they know the true God, not in a saving way, but in a basic way.

And the second thing that they know, as we see here on page 1,749, "The Gentiles who do not have the law," that is, do not have God's written law, revealed in Sinai, revealed in Scripture, they don't have it, but what do they have?

Well, in a basic way, intuitively and instinctively before experience they know right from wrong. They know right from wrong. And so that's why people hate Christianity because Christianity confronts them with something they already know (Romans 1:32).

You see it very clearly here in verse 14.

When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

So whoever you're talking about, from Donald Trump to Joe Biden, from the governor of Texas to the governor of California, whoever you're talking about, the most primitive savage that lives in the upper reaches of the Amazon River, they have an intuitive, instinctive sense of right and wrong, and that's what we call natural law. And so all men everywhere, all women everywhere, have an intuitive instinctive sense of right and wrong, and that's the foundation for civil law in every single government that ever exists on our planet. That doesn't mean that people can't suppress that truth. They do suppress that truth (Romans 1:18-20).

But now I want us to look at something else and that is, Christ who has fulfilled the law comes to establish that law in a very radical way.

Turn with me, if you will, to the left, to the book of Jeremiah 31. Jeremiah 31 and we see here that what all men know intuitively, instinctively, a priori, without experience, they know everywhere, we see on page 1,227 this truth, and this is what we read at the bottom of the page, verse 33, Jeremiah 31:33. Now remember, everyone everywhere has a basic sense of the law of God, morality that reflects God's own character, but this is what God says in verse 33.

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel, after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.”

There's something here more than that basic sense of right and wrong that all people everywhere have, and what it is, is a supernatural work of God taking what was engraved on stones on Mount Sinai and writing it on the human heart.

“I will put my law in their minds. I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”
(Jeremiah 31:33-34)

This is what the LORD says.

Now turn with me, if you would, to the book of Hebrews 8 and we're going to go up from 8 into the end of 7. The book of Hebrews 8 and we're going to go up into chapter 7 and you will find this on page 1,870. Page 1,870. Now notice what he says here in verse 1, and we'll go up in a minute into 7. Chapter 8 and verse 1, page 1,870, “The point of what we are saying is this,” the main point he's saying, “This is a summary statement of everything I've been writing to you,” says the author. “We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary,” notice how he describes it, “**the true tabernacle** set up by the Lord, not by man” (Hebrews 8:1-2). And what is he saying here?

Look over at verse 7.

“If there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said,” and now he’s quoting Jeremiah:

“The time is coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them,” declares the Lord. “This is the covenant,” look at verse 10, “I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.” (Hebrews 8:8-10; Jeremiah 31:31-33)

Now let’s see if we can see what he’s saying. What he’s saying is this, the very fact that Jeremiah prophesied a **new** covenant has profound implications for how we look at the Old Testament.

And notice what he says in verse 7. He said, “If there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another” (Hebrews 8:7).

What’s wrong with the first covenant? First covenant’s fine. Problem is, it’s not suited for sinners. I’ll say it again. The first covenant is perfect. It’s wonderful. It’s fine. The covenant revealed by God at Mount Sinai is a wonderful covenant, but notice who God finds fault with, verse 8.

“But God found fault with the people.”

The problem with the first covenant is they didn’t have a heart to keep it. The problem with them was it was all external, outside of them, and the problem with the first covenant lay with the people who entered into a covenant with God at Mount Sinai, and who renewed that covenant on the plains of Moab before they entered the Promised Land.

The problem is people, and the problem with the first covenant is: It’s not a suitable covenant for sinners. And I can tell you this, I am a sinner. I’m not the sinner I used to be, but I still struggle with sin. I still come short of being what I ought to be and that bothers me, but the beautiful thing is, because

there's a new covenant, the new covenant is adapted for sinners, **finding fault with them** (Hebrews 8:7).

And you know, as you read through the Old Testament—I read through the Old Testament at least once a year, and as I read through it, I come to these statements over and over again about God being angry with the people of Israel, and God saying, “I’m going to clean your plow. I’m going to wipe you out. And you broke my covenant, and this is what’s going to happen to you. You did this, this is going to happen” (Cf. Deuteronomy 28:15ff.; Leviticus 26:14ff.; Hosea; Jeremiah).

And all of God’s covenants, going back—except for the very first covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 15—all of them depend on human beings doing right. And it’s like God’s promise to David, which God keeps, but David’s descendants did not keep, and they broke his covenant over and over again. The whole record of the Old Testament is, “Woe is me; I am a sinner! I am undone! I cannot do this, it’s contrary to my nature” (Cf. Isaiah 6:5).

And so, God finding fault **with them**, issues a new covenant. That’s what he says, and this is the covenant. He says in verse 10,

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.
I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will
a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, “Know
the Lord,” because they will all know me.

What is in view here is the fact that as you read the Old Testament, it’s pretty apparent that most of the people who were part of the nations of Israel and Judah, most of the children of Abraham, did not have a personal relationship with the Lord.

Now if you look at David, David’s a terrible guy in many ways, but he’s a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). What does that mean?

It means that David, an Old Testament believer, had New Testament experience. Let me say that again. David, an Old Testament believer, had New Testament experience.

But what did David do, a man after God's own heart? Well, when David took his eyes off the Lord, and when he decided, "Man, I got it made; it's time to sit back and enjoy life and just rest on my laurels," as a godly man, he doesn't go out to war. He sends his people out to war. He stays home living life in luxury and one day he looks over the walls of his house, because houses had roofs and that's where you'd go to stay cool in the middle of the day, they'd often have a tent there, and he looks over there and there is one of his most loyal soldiers who was himself not an Israelite but a Hittite who was loyal to David, one of his commanders, and he looks over and he sees somebody taking a bath.

Have you ever thought about what if they had never invented bathtubs? You know the problem with human sin is not objects like alcohol, the problem is the human heart.

And so David looks over there, and I'm going to tell you, she must have been a knockout because David couldn't get her off his mind, and instead of doing what New Testament believers can do right here on the 13th day of August, and that is take authority over the thoughts that come into our mind that are not healthy, that are not good, and that have within them death, instead of taking authority over those thoughts by the name and authority and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, David just said, "Well, let me see. I'm not going to eject that DVD. I want to wallow around in that imagination a little bit."

And so, David goes through all the imaginations, and the more he's thinking, the more he's overcome by the power of sin, which is in every single human being, even in those who believe, and what happens is, it isn't long before David sends for Bathsheba to come to him.

And you know the story. It happened to be that she was at a very fertile time, her husband was off fighting, and next thing you know, she sends word to David, "I'm with child."

And that is often for people a wonderful thing. I remember every single time that Sandy got pregnant. We were so excited, except the last one, and at that point, we were surprised and six years after the last child, we discover we are having another child. But we were happy, but we weren't jumping up and down, because we were older people.

But God blessed us with a special boy, the one that lives in Memphis. So anyhow, that's often, wonderful news, but then you know it's often very bad news and sadly, because we live in a world where men are often creeps, I mean, really bad, it's a man's world still, sadly, and men do oppress women and men do turn their backs on women.

And so when that word comes, David thinks, "What am I going to do?" Because remember, under the old covenant law, the penalty for adultery was death and even though David's the king, David's aware of that law. And so, he comes up with a scheme, and he sends for Uriah the Hittite, and he has General Joab send Uriah to him. And so, when soon as Uriah arrives, "So glad to see you. How are things going in the war out there at Rabbah (I called Rabbah, Ramoth-Gilead)?" And Uriah said... And he said, "Look, here's some food and some wine. I want you to take this and go to your home, just next door, and spend time with your wife and refresh yourself." And then people who are in deep sin don't want to hear this word, loyalty. Uriah was so loyal to King David, he said, "While my Lord the king's soldiers are in battle, I cannot do this." And so, he camps out at David's doorstep (2 Samuel 11:11).

And then — you know the old saying, "Candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker," said by Ogden Nash — David decides to do a trick. It's an old trick. It's how people have gotten people to do wicked things over the years: alcohol. And remember, the problem isn't alcohol, any more than the problem is bathtubs. The problem is the wicked human heart. And so, what David does is, he keeps giving Uriah more, "Here, have some more! Come on, man, you need to have some more wine here." And he gets him soused drunk, and what does Uriah do? He sleeps there at the doorstep of David (2 Samuel 11:13).

So, David then says, "Uh-oh." So, he writes a letter.

Now if you think that politicians are not capable of murder, I want you to think about this for a moment. David writes a letter, and he seals it, and he gives it to Uriah. He has Uriah the Hittite take this very secret document in which he says to General Joab, "I want you to put Uriah the Hittite into the heat of the hottest battle and when he gets close to the walls of the city, I want you to sound a retreat at a time when he can't retreat" (2 Samuel 11:14-17).

Have you ever heard of such a thing? Do you think that Presidents of the United States have ever done things like that?

Do you think that Presidents of the United States might have known that the Japanese were about to hit Pearl Harbor but let it happen because we needed to help the British against the Nazis? Do you think that's possible?

Do you think it's possible that a President of the United States, Teddy Roosevelt, told the Japanese before World War I that the United States would not mind if they invaded Korea and took it? Do you think a President did something like that? What do you think happens? What do you think when people have an agenda and somebody's blocking it?

Who killed John F. Kennedy? I know. I talked to a man who worked for the man. Lips are sealed. It was the head of the mafia of the Gulf Coast. Why will we never know that? Because there are too many other pieces of the puzzle that expose people.

Do you know there were three future United States Presidents in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963? Three. Well, you know Lyndon Johnson was there. Richard Nixon flew out that morning. And George Herbert Walker Bush was there. as well. Just strange things.

History reveals human depravity. It does. We should never forget it. It reveals human depravity. And so, David, a man after God's own heart, takes his eyes off the Lord, a man who was an Old Testament believer, who had New Testament experience because he knew the Lord personally, could fall into sin that's grievous and commit murder to cover up his adultery. So, David's guilty of two capital crimes in the Old Testament.

And so, here's the deal, as you read the Old Testament, it's very apparent that with the exception of people like David and the prophets, by and large, the mass of the Israelites, the mass of the people of Judah, did not have a personal walk with the Lord. For them, it's external commandments here. It's a law outside of us. But what happens in the new covenant is that God takes those commandments, and he creates a personal relationship with every individual who will come to him and trust in him, and he writes that law on their hearts.

Verse 10 of Hebrews 8. He says, “I’ll put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I’ll be their God. They will be my people.”

Verse 11: “No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.”

And then look at the last statement in chapter 8, verse 13: “By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete.”

So, what can we say of the Old Testament? It’s obsolete. Are you shocked to hear me say that this portion of the Bible is obsolete? What is the writer of Hebrews who may have been, I won’t speculate, but anyhow, no point in opening up one more can of worms without being able to keep the worms in. But the writer of Hebrews says, “This part is obsolete.” Obsolete. Wow!

Going back then to Hebrews 8 where he says that, look at what he says in the rest of that book as he says in chapter 7. Hebrews 7 and looking there at page 1,869. Listen to what he says, and he’s quoting there in verse 17, he’s quoting from Psalm 110.

“You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” This is said about David’s son, quoting Psalm 110:4. And then he says, look at verse 18, “The former regulation is set aside” (Hebrews 7:18). Set aside.

Why don’t we have Levitical priests today? Why don’t we bring lambs in here and bulls and goats and slit their throats as in the Old Testament? Why don’t we do that? And the reason is, in verse 18 of Hebrews 7,

“The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and,” what?
“Useless.”

Why was the Old Testament, the old covenant useless? The reason it’s useless is, it’s not adapted to the needs of sinners who struggle with sin and sometimes lose.

And he says, verse 19, “(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.”

And then he goes on about the Old Testament priests, and he talks about God's oath and then he says in verse 22, "Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant."

What can you say about the New Testament? It's a better covenant. Why is it better? Because it's adapted to the needs of weak people, of strugglers, of people who come short of being what they want to be and ought to be. And so, then he says he's the guarantee of a better covenant.

Now look at verse 23, "Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office."

But look at verse 24, "but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood."

Look at verse 25, "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

I want you to think about that for a moment.

The difference in this Testament and this Testament is that we have one high priest who lives forever, and he lives to do what? He says, always lives to intercede for them.

So when we're having accidents trying to get out of our house after a discouraging day, the day before, trying to work for my presbytery, when having discouragements, when I've left my hearing aids, and we need to make a U-turn on the highway and go back home to find them and not find them, and here I am—hopefully you'll look at me when you talk to me so I can read your lips—when I'm in the middle of that, I've got to confess sometimes, sometimes words come out of my mouth that shouldn't come out.

And sometimes when I say those words, I say them in an angry way, and I'll say that's when Sandy pulled the gas pump out of the car (with the gas nozzle on and still pumping gas out), and I walk out there flabbergasted, because we had burned up too much of our gas by the time we were in Myra, Louisiana.

I said, “What have you done?” See, I need somebody to pray for me. I do, every day. Sunday mornings, every day, pray for me.

“What have you done?”

Have I ever done something like that? Oh, I’ve done worse. I’ve driven off with the gas fuel line in the car and pulled it out of the pump, and I’ve done that not once, but twice. They now build those things, so they disconnect, but it ain’t no fun, and you’ve got to pay for it.

So, all I’m saying is I need prayer. Do you need prayer this morning?

Listen, we’ve got a priest, a high priest, he’s better than any priest that’s ever been on the face of this earth. He’s the last and final priest, and in him we too are priests as we intercede for others. And he said he always lives to intercede for them. Now look at this, the next verse, “Such a high priest meets our need” (Hebrews 7:26).

You see, I can’t meet your need. Why?

Because this is not true of me:

One who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people (Hebrews 7:26).

Look at that next statement the top of page 1,870, “He sacrificed for their sins **once for all** when he offered himself” (Hebrews 7:27).

Once for all. That brings to mind things of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is not a re-sacrifice of Christ. Christ was offered once for all time. The Lord’s Supper connects us with that once for all sacrifice, but when Jesus died on the cross, the sin issue was settled (Hebrews 7:27; 9:26-27; 10:10-14, 18). It was never settled in the Old Testament.

There was a reminder day after day. And then he says here in the next verse, “For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever” (Hebrews 7:28).

I want to commend to you my perfect Savior. Do you know the Lord Jesus? And I address again, as I often do, those who may be watching on the variety of means we have.

You know, if you're honest with yourself, you know you come short of being what you ought to be. You're not the only one who is struggling with sin, and you're certainly not the first person to think, "Well, I'm not like So-and-so, I'm better than she is, I'm better than he is."

Listen, be gone with all such thoughts.

Deep down in your heart, you know that you have offended a holy God and you're going to answer to him one day. And I want to say, there is only one hope for you, and it's the same hope that I have, and it's not like a hope that's vague. "Well, I hope one day I'll win the lottery." I don't gamble anymore. I lost two times years ago in high school. "But I hope to win the lottery." That's not that kind of hope. It's a sure thing. "I know I'm going to be with Jesus when I die because he's my Savior, because he loves me, because he died in my place."

Do you have that assurance? Let me ask you that question as we close here, do you know that if you were to die today that you would go to heaven?

Do you know that you can know that? How can you know that? You can know that for this basic reason: If you will turn from yourself and cast yourself on God's mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ, he'll receive you with open arms. "All the Father gives me will come to me and him who comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37). Jesus will receive you just as you are. Why don't you pray right now on the 13th day of August this prayer with me.

"Lord Jesus, I know that I come short of being what I ought to be. Would you please forgive me of all my sins? Would you give me that new heart promised in the new covenant? Would you cause me to love your law, your Word, your person, your people? Would you do that for me, Lord? Would you fill me with your Spirit, so that I might be empty of myself? And would you grant to me, in the course of time, full and complete assurance that I am a Christian and that I am going to go to heaven because I have a Savior who died on the cross in my place and who is living now, this very moment in time, when I'm praying this prayer, he is praying for me as well. Lord, hear our prayer. For Jesus' sake. Amen."

