

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

Part Seventeen

“Five Things God’s Law Can Do For Us”

I. Introduction to Matthew 5:17-48

A. The Law and the Old Testament For Believers

1. Jesus begins the section by affirming the Old Testament:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

Matthew 5:17

2. He tells us that God’s commandments will never pass away:

"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

Matthew 5:18

3. And He tells us to continue to teach and keep the commandments.

"Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:19 NASB

4. So the commandments are still in effect and Law is good. But it can be mishandled!

“The Law is good, if one use it lawfully.”

1 Timothy 1:8

5. To use the Law lawfully means we have to know His Law and keep His commandments; especially, need to know what it can and cannot do.

B. Review of Previous Lesson

3 Things The Law Cannot Do

- It cannot save us
- It cannot keep us saved
- It cannot condemn us

1. The Apostle Paul tells us that God’s law is holy, just, and good; but he also says....

“By the deeds of the Law no flesh shall be justified in God’s sight.”

Roman 3:20

2. But when some churchgoers hear that the Law cannot save them, or keep them saved or condemn them, they think the Law is good for nothing!

“For because I tell you the Law cannot save, you foolishly suppose God’s Law is good for nothing and can be of no value at all?”

Charles Spurgeon

a. Just because keeping the commandments can’t save us does not mean that we can ignore them!

“Is a thing proved utterly useless because it is not intended for every purpose in the world?”

Charles Spurgeon

We have looked at what the Law cannot do.

TODAY, WE WILL LOOK AT 5 THINGS THE LAW CAN DO!

5 Things The Law Can Do For Us

- **It can teach us about God**
- **It can reveal sin**
- **It can give us guidance**
- **It can show us what love looks like**
- **It's obedience can bring us prosperity**

II. 5 Things the Law CAN Do

A. First: The Law Can Teach Us About God

1. They say you can judge a nation by its laws:

a. Samuel Johnson: "Decent provision for the poor is the true test of a civilization."

b. Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "You can judge the morality of a society by how it treats its children."

c. Lord Acton: "The most certain test by which we know whether a country is truly free is the amount of security enjoyed by its minorities."

d. Gandhi: "The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

2. In the same way you can understand a nation by its laws, so you can understand God by studying His commandments.

- God's laws show that He is compassionate toward the poor

- He tells us how to love our children and that we are to be kind to “strangers”
- His Law even commands us care for our animals!

3. As we learn more about God’s law we learn more about God! Why?

“The Law reflects the will of the Lawgiver. It reflects to the creature the perfect will of the Creator and at the same time reveals the character of the Being whose law it is.”

R.C. Sproul

4. The law of God IS the will of God!

- a. What He likes
- b. What He hates
- c. How He expects us to live
- d. Psalm 119:96 says, “Thy commandment is exceedingly broad”.

Matthew Henry comments...

”God’s commandment is exceedingly broad. The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly.”

Matthew Henry

5 THINGS THE LAW CAN DO

#1 It can teach us about God

#2 It can show us what sin is

B. The Law Can Show Us What Sin Is

“...by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Romans 3:20

1. This is no small matter! Just because we are saved from sin doesn’t mean we don’t sin! But how do I know I what sin is unless I know I know God’s law?

“The Law exposes what sin is and warns us to avoid it. As such, it the Law expresses the unchanging will of God for His creatures, and is no more open to change than God Himself.”

Robert Letham

2. The Law has a use for sinners and saints.

- a. The Law defines sin and shows the sinner why he needs a Savior
- b. But the Law shows the saint how he must ever lean on Christ for His salvation!

“The Law was sent into the world to show sinners the need of a Savior and to keep Christians from self-righteousness.”

Charles Spurgeon

- c. My personal testimony is that I know the Law and how far I fall short of keeping it perfectly; this keeps me “poor in spirit”!

“The law is still very useful as a rule of life; though we are not under it as under a covenant of works, yet it is good to teach us what is sin and what is duty.”

Matthew Henry

3. Thirdly, the Law can give us guidance...

5 Things The Law Can Do For Us

- It can teach us about God
- It can reveal sin
- It can give us guidance

C. Third: The Law Can Give Us Guidance

1. God did not give us the commandments to make us miserable; He gives them to help us stay out of the ditch!

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my pathway.

Psalms 119:105

2. It has been said that no person can really “break” the commandments, but the commandments can surely break the person.

3. The Law cannot save you; but it can keep you out of trouble!

D. Fourth: The Law Can Show Us What Love Looks Like

1. Many make the mistake of pitting God’s law against God’s love; like it’s one or the other.

2. But Jesus taught that all the Law, that every one of the 613 commandments were all given to show us what love looks like!

a. The Pharisees had identified 613 commandments in the Law of Moses; 248 positive (“you shall”) and 365 negative (“you shall not”)

b. They spent all their time debating the importance of one law over another; and in Matthew 22, they asked Jesus opinion; “Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law of Moses?”

37 Jesus replied, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.'* 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'* 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40 NLT

3. The genius of Jesus sums up all 613 commandments are based on 2 things: LOVE GOD with our whole heart and LOVE OTHERS as we love ourselves and we will fulfil them all!

“The main scope and drift of the divine law is to engage us to the love of God and one another.”

Matthew Henry

4. The normal Christian life is to love God and love others!

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law.

Romans 13:8 NASB

“What does love look like? Jesus said, ‘If you love Me, you will keep my commandments.’”

Dr. Tom Ascol

5. The 5th thing the law can do may surprise you....

5 Things The Law Can Do For Us

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E. Finally: Obedience To God's Law Will Bring Prosperity

1. The law cannot save us; but obedience to the Law is our “tool of dominion”.
2. God saved Israel out of Egypt; but possessing the Promised Land was conditional upon keeping God's commandments!
3. The law cannot save us; but meditating on it and keeping it will prosper us!

a. Testimony: I memorized these 2 passages of scripture many years ago, and I commend them to you.

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

b. And the word God gave Joshua after the death of Moses; the promise that he would finally take Israel into the Land....

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Joshua 1:8

III. Conclusion

A. Review

- Jesus says the Law is still in effect; the Law is good if we use it lawfully
- The Law cannot save us; it cannot keep us saved; it cannot condemn us
- But it can do these 5 things: (1) Teach us about God; (2) reveal sin; (3) give us guidance; (4) show us what love looks like; (5) bring us prosperity

Why would we not cry out with the Psalmist...

“Oh how I love your Law! It is my meditation all day long!”

Psalm 119:97