

Under Law

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[0 : 00] I want tonight to focus your minds on words you'll find in Romans chapter 6 and in verse 14. Because in many ways they set the parameters for us of this whole discussion on the place of the law in the Christian life.

The words are as follows, for you are not under law but under grace. You are not under law but under grace.

There's no doubt that the law's been a problem to the Church of God ever since New Testament times. There have always been those on the one level who have made too much of the law and have had an egoistic view of our Christian lives and even of our whole approach to God.

There have been those who have held that salvation depends upon our observance of various laws and ordinances. And those who have turned the Gospel itself and its directive to exercise faith in Christ into a new kind of law.

So that faith becomes some kind of meritorious individual act. There have also been those who have taken the opposite view, the anti-Normians, who have held out against the law and said that the law no longer has any place in the life of the people of God.

[1 : 43] And they have turned often to this text and this kind of text that says, you are not under law but under grace. Now this problem was, as I said, present in the New Testament Church itself, as you see from Romans 6.1.

The men who said that we should continue in sin so that grace may abound. And the early Gnostic sects of the Christian sectaries often took this kind of position that the law had no place at all in the life of a believer.

And they even said on occasion that the way to mortify the flesh was to give the flesh its head, to indulge it unreservedly, and through indulgence to exhaust it and to mortify it.

After the Reformation and the 17th century, in England particularly, there was a very powerful party who were at one level hyper-Calvinists and at another level were antinomians against the law.

But found more important than these have been the loss of dispensational persuasion. You know that dispensationalists say divide the Bible history and salvation history into six or seven great dispensations.

[3 : 16] And they say that we now live in the age of the Church. On their way to the age of the Kingdom. Now the law, they say, has no place in this age of the Church.

The law belongs to the age of the law. And that age is now past. And that's why many who hold this view would allow no place in their lives today for Old Testament laws such as the Sabbath law or even for seven amounts because it belongs to the forthcoming age of the Kingdom.

And so they say, in this age of the Church, neither Old Testament law nor Kingdom law is binding upon the Child of God.

Well, we might in fact summarize those three views under three flags. Legalists who lay too much stress on the law, antinomians who are opposed to the law, and what were called neonomians who turned the Gospel itself and the command to believe particularly into a new kind of law.

Now, I think that the existence of those three parties is itself a reminder to us of the difficulty of finding the truth in this area.

[4 : 53] It is very difficult to avoid falling into one or other of those pitfalls, to avoid legalism and antinomianism and neonomianism.

So, against that background, let's turn to those words. You are not under law, but under grace.

Now, those words remind us very, very clearly that in some sense, whatever that sense is, in some sense, Christians are no longer under the law.

In fact, that's true in three or four different senses. It's true, first of all, that we are no longer bound by what is proudly called the ceremonial law of the Old Testament.

Now, in the Old Testament, there is, of course, law, which as we'll see is still binding. There is the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, and that Decalogue had a very special place in the life of God's people.

It enshrines eternal principles of conduct. It was itself the covenant between God and his people, and it was placed in the ark of the covenant to symbolise its sanctity and its permanent validity.

[6 : 26] But alongside the Ten Commandments, there was a large corpus of additional law. And it is this additional law which we say no longer binds the child of God.

There was a great deal of liturgical law bound up with the temple and its ordinances. there was a great deal of civil law, a great deal of political law.

These laws were transitional, they were temporary, they depended on the temple itself continuing to exist, they depended on the land of Palestine, they depended on the wilderness journeys, they depended also on the fact that one day Christ would come and fulfil the symbolism of Old Testament typology.

And so therefore, the specific body of law that dealt with temple ritual that is no longer binding, the specific body of law that pre-symbolized Jesus Christ, the typified Christ, that body of law is no longer binding.

The law that related to the church's wilderness journeys is no longer binding. The law that belonged to the monarchy is no longer binding.

[8 : 10] There is ceremonial law, there is typological enactment, there is a civil code that in its own time and place was valid and binding but is now superseded.

We know, for example, that some of the penalties laid down by the Old Testament had been discontinued before Jesus himself came.

For example, the law that demanded the capital sentence in the case of Sabbath desecration, that law was no longer deemed to be binding in the age of the New Testament.

So, there is, as I say, a compass of law which was really an application of the Decalogue, its application to specific instances that was, shall I say, illustrative of how the law would work in a given society but did not last beyond that society itself.

To quote one other example, it was I don't know already done by the Decalogue, but in fact by the Penichrist, I should say, that if a man built a house, he must then build a parapet around the top of the wall.

[9 : 35] Now, that was a humane provision. It was a safety regulation. But, it was not one that was deemed to be binding of the people of God in all times and in all places.

Of course, the obligation to think of a neighbour's safety, that obligation is binding. But, those who the Spanish Islands built their black houses some hundred years ago were not bound by this enactment to be a parapet around the roofs of their black houses.

But, there was a law which, in its own time and place, was an application of the Sixth Commandment, thou shalt not kill. It was a conditioned, culturally conditioned, safety regulation. tradition. Now, I may add to that, just for a moment, the fact that, in addition to the Old Testament ceremonial law, there was also a great body of Jewish law, which arose through rabbinical tradition. And, that law was a great burden on the people of God at the time of Christ himself. That law is found today in the Talmud, and, that law was a restriction of the liberty of God's people.

[11 : 09] Now, that law never had divine sanction. It was a purely human commentary upon an expansion of the law that God had given to his own people.

Now, I don't think that we realize today just what alliberation it was for the men of the New Testament age to be given this great deliverance, both from Morseid enactments and also from rabbinical Judaistic enactments.

It was a yoke that men were able to bear. And, when they became Christians, they found this great new freedom. They were free from Moses and they were free from the rabbis.

Secondly, we are not under law in the sense that our justification no longer depends on compliance with the law.

Our acceptance before God, our justification does not depend on our compliance with the law. Now, there were those, of course, in the early church who wanted to say that justification did depend on works of the law.

[12:32] It wasn't a very clear, a very simple position, you see, because these people weren't opposed to justification by faith. They thought that faith was very important, but they thought and taught that in addition to faith, men must also keep the law of Moses.

And this was true not only of those born as Jews under the law, but also of Gentiles. Gentiles who came to faith in Christ must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, otherwise they said there could be no justification.

Now the providence of God, that problem rose in the early church, and the apostles had for depth with it by divine inspiration. And they lead down with great clarity and explicitness that by the works of the law no flesh could be justified.

It was impossible to be justified by the law. It was impossible because the law, as her confession says, demanded permanent, exact, personal obedience.

It was no use observing the law most of the time. It was no use almost observing the law. It was no use to say the law through somebody else.

[14:03] It had to be personal, it had to be permanent, it had to be exact. And as Paul proved to the point of overkill, no human being had the capacity to give the law that kind of honour and that kind of obedience.

All the law could do was to condemn it. And so Paul says by the law no flesh is justified. Or as he says again, what the law could not do because it was weak through the flesh.

The law could say to men and women, do this. But the law could never secure compliance with its own demands. Now of course, this is what Luther also discovered.

Luther faced with this great shadow of final personal judgment. Trying to make himself right with God. Well he went where his conscience told him to go.

He went to the law. And he began to try to obey the law and by doing so to find peace. And he endeavoured to keep all those commandments.

[15:19] He endeavoured to go beyond the regals of the ten commandments, to go into the whole discipline of monasticism. Those works of supererogation, going far beyond God's demands apparently.

And we found that the harder he tried, the more he fell short of the law's demands. And the law simply flogged him. The law lashed him and scourged him.

The law tormented him. The law was never satisfied. And we learn this, that we are justified by faith. And only by faith, but by faith alone.

That Christ has endured the law's curse in our place, and Christ has met the law's demands in our place. Our father said, but we were no longer under the covenant of works, as the way to life.

Our acceptance before God does not depend on our having kept the law. It's this great question, you see, who does God justify?

[16:32] At the point of forgiveness, at the point of acceptance with God, at the point of adoption into God's family, what kind of people are we? We are astonishingly ungodly men.

We're people who have not kept the law. And the gospel, particularly is in its Protestant form, if there is any other form I don't comment for the moment, but the gospel in its Protestant form is one that insists that God justifies the ungodly through faith in Christ.

Others ungodly man is guilty of having broken the whole law, because James says that he who violates one commandment has in fact dishonored the law in its entirety.

And what a mildest discovery it is for the human conscience to know that even though we have broken the law of God, we are no longer under the law. As Christians, we have faith in Christ, and Christ has kept that law for us, and so the way ungodly, we are still justified.

Thirdly, we are no longer under the law in the sense that it is not from the law that our motivation comes. It is no longer from the law that our motivation comes.

[17:55] Now, I lay that down as a principle according to which we ought to live. I don't make it as a statement of fact that that's the way we do live as Christians, because I do think that very often our motivation does come from the law, and that gets us into very serious spiritual problems.

You see, your followers in Scotland and in England as well, let me add, these men gave lots of thought to this problem. There was what they called a legal repentance.

That is, it was a broken heart, a heart broken by the law, broken by fear of God, by fear of judgment.

That's what they called legal repentance. repentance. And there was legal sanctification, where you mortified sin because of the dread of God, because of God's sanctions, fear of God's justice and it was motivated by law, you see.

Now, these men said, that is not the way it should be with God's children. In fact, they said, you will never get real repentance or real sanctification if your motivation comes only from the law.

[19 : 20] That is servile. That is simply a compliance, a craven fear, inducing compliance with God's requirements. And so many John Cahoon, you see, spoke of evangelical repentance.

That is repentance that is not the response simply to the dreadfulness of God and the terrors of the Lord of God, but a heart broken by the love of God.

And our own catechism grasps that too, you see, although that's not often realized even by ourselves what is repentance unto life. It's a saving grace for my sinner out of a true sense of a sin indeed, but also out of apprehension of the mercy of God and Christ.

You see, that evangelical repentance, that assurance that God is merciful, it is that that leads to grief and hatred of our own sins and turning from our own sins to go to God.

You see it beautifully in the prodigal son, God because he went back to his father, not simply tormented by an accusing conscience, but sustained by the hope of mercy.

[20 : 48] I will return. In my father's house there is food in up and despair. I will return and say to my father, I have sinned, but make me as one of your higher servants.

And the return was sustained by hope. Now this is also through, of course, our sanctification. Walter Marshall, an English late Puritan, wrote a great book called The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification. Now that title itself indicates Marshall's concern. To him sanctification was a mystery because it was a response to the gospel.

It was not something egalistic. Holiness was not a part of fear or a part of doubt. Now as I say this, I'm very conscious that in some Puritan circles today, Marshall is suspect for this very reason that he seems to some not to lay enough emphasis on the law, on the more dreadful aspects of God's revelation.

Now let's do full justice to the biblical proportions here. Our God is a consuming fire. And I am not saying that Marshall was entirely and exactly correct because I haven't checked about that of thoroughness and diligence.

[22 : 27] But his essential thesis is one that I sustain heartily. You see, Marshall said this to us, that to a large extent assurance is the product, a sonification should say, is the product of assurance.

It is the persuasion that God loves me, the assurance that God loves me. It is that that sanctifies, sweetens, and mellows my soul.

Now, Marshall, you see, in the sequel to a legalistic movement in the Church of God, was very well aware that some folks said the opposite. They said, it's the doubts, the fear that you are not saved, that keeps spiritually active.

Marshall said, no, because he said, sanctification is love, loving the Lord. And you can only love him as a response to his own love.

And he said, sanctification therefore, is a gospel thing. It's a response to mercy, a response to the love that God has shown yourselves.

[23 : 34] Now, some of you know at an experimental level the truth of this. You know that sometimes when you have your doubts and when you've got your fears, service, obedience is not easy.

You also know that nothing humbles you, nothing makes you feel so small as this persuasion that God loves you. And so I'm saying that for a Christian the motivation does not come from the law. It doesn't come from the fear of God, primarily, or from doubt. It comes from the love of God. It comes from the assurance that he loves us.

It has been said that in the Christian faith, theology is grace and ethics is gratitude. And so we'll respond with thankfulness to all that God has done to us.

Now I think we should really try to support ourselves tonight. What the law cannot do. The law can say do, but the law cannot give the wherewithal.

[24 : 42] The law can't give the motivation. A slave doesn't serve the master as the son serves the master.

He doesn't have the inward compunction, the constraint, the affection that a child has for his own father. But it isn't only that of course, but also the grace that enables us.

Thank God that our obedience is not simply to be measured as to its potential from the force of the law. The law can come with clarity, the law can come with threats, the law can come with sanctions. that God comes with more, with the motivation of his love and the inward working of his own Holy Spirit. And that's why we have this emphasis here, you are under grace.

It's not the law that keeps you holy, it's grace that keeps you holy. And that grace is that strength on God's part which is made perfect in our weakness.

[25 : 48] God's grace, God's strength, made perfect in our weakness. And so tonight as you face the challenges on your own Christian life, your motivation is not simply the law with its fear and its doubts, but grace with its gratitude and its internal workings in the depths of your heart by the Holy Spirit.

So we are not under the law in those senses. We're not under Old Testament ceremonial law. We don't depend on the law for justification before God.

We don't depend on the law for motivation. We're simply to say we are sons of God, not slaves of God. There's one thing I want to add to that, and that is this, that we do not depend on the law for our experience of spirit baptism or for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We don't depend on the law for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now I say that because again today this has become a very, very serious issue. It seems to me that in the whole charismatic movement we have a view of the experience of the Holy Spirit, of his baptism, of his filling, and overseeing, which in all essentials is legalistic.

In other words, we are told by many preachers and teachers that the church is in a dreadful spiritual state and that we are to blame for that spiritual state.

[27 : 31] We are then told by the preacher, I have the answer to your problem, you need spirit baptism. And then he will say, I will tell you how to get it. And he says, you go through the following steps and then you get spirit baptism.

You believe in Christ. You renounce all known sin. And you thirst for God. And you confess God openly. And you pray expectantly.

Expecting to receive. And so on. There are variations on that theme, but the technology is the same, you see. There are things you are told to do.

And for the more we have this. If the poor child of God comes back and says, Preacher, I've done what you asked, I've been through all those steps, but nothing has happened.

Then the preacher says, but have you really gone through all the steps? Have you really renounced all sin? have you made a surrender of your will to God an absolute surrender, absolute surrender of your will to God and you done that?

[28 : 45] Have you really, really felt it? Really, really, you see this great world, really, really, really, have you really believed, really, really, really, really, really, really, prayed? And of course, the believer says, well, maybe not.

And what is it really, this pure legalism? But the gift of the Spirit depends upon ourselves attaining some kind of higher life.

Now, Paul, in Galatians 3, faced that question directly and specifically. He asked the Galatians, did you receive the gift of the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?

You see, the gift of the Spirit is as much a matter of sola fide by faith alone as is justification.

It's a glorious gospel, you see, really, I hope, I'm not arrogant, but if people let it as it was, as it is, it's such a superb thing, it's gospel all through.

[29 : 54] But when men tamper with it and add bits and pieces to it in the interest of morality, then we get all kinds of problems. It's a great thing that our acceptance before God does not depend on our compliance with law.

We have broken the law, we cannot but break the law. We must be accepted by grace.

In the same way, if our receiving the gift of the Spirit of God depended on the quality of God, the quality of God, the quality of my renouncing sin, the quality of my thirsting, of my humbling for God, the quality of my thirsting, of my glory, quality, that is law.

Really, really believe. There's a very interesting thing, you know, in Acts chapter 8, there's a very interesting variant in the story of the baptism of the Ethiopian.

You'll find that the received text which we have in the authorised version tells us that Philip said to that man, if you believe with all your heart you may.

[31 : 28] And I find it very, very interesting that that language is not found in any of the ancient manuscripts. There is no such condition as if you believe with all your heart.

all your heart. It's really something that the scribe put in, I'm certain of that, to hedge the gospel, you see, to protect it from the morality and so on.

He didn't want it made too easy for those Ethiopians and for others, so he put it in, if you believe with all your heart you may. And we've been doing that, you see, we've been putting those fatal words with all your heart into the gospel ever since then to torment the people of God.

And it's such a great thing to see this, that as ungodly men and women who believe, we are justified. As ungodly men and women who believe, we receive the gift of the Spirit of God.

And so, here is Paul's statement, you are not under law. Let us leave it there, you see, that's Paul's own teaching, God's own teaching there. You are not under law.

[32 : 35] You are not under the Old Testament ceremonial law. You are not under the law as far as your acceptance with God is concerned. It does not depend on you having kept the law.

Or the gospel is, even if you haven't kept the law and can't keep the law, God will still accept you.

And you aren't under the law of the sense of depending on it for motivation and strength.

In that sense, grace motivates you. And grace enables you. You are moved by the love of God. And enabled by the energy of God.

And fourthly, you are not under the law so far as the gift of the Spirit is concerned. That gift of the Spirit is pure grace. It comes in exactly the same terms as justification with the same safeguards. God builds in his own safeguards. You see, it's a total absurd to say. If that man, if he makes the gift of the Spirit depend on grace alone, he's an antinomian destroying the gospel to get away all hope of holiness.

[33 : 46] because men will take advantage of his teaching. See, that's logic. But what I'm saying is that the gift of the Spirit is a matter of pure grace.

He is a Holy Spirit. And you cannot live an unholy life after the Spirit comes to take advantage of the principle of grace.

You see, the great thing is leave it to grace and grace will not let people be antinomians. Grace will not let people live as they please.

It will not allow folk to be carnival and unspiritual. Grace can look after itself. For far too long and far too often men have been trying to protect grace from itself.

Leave grace to protect itself. Where grace only operates in union with Christ. It operates through an indwelling Holy Spirit.

[34 : 43] And God makes an entire provision to guard against antinomianism by uniting you to Christ and by filling you with a spirit of holiness.

And that's all that we need. In those four great senses we are not under the law. You are not under the law. And I'm saying, well, watch the legalism in your own heart.

I ask the question then posed in Galatians chapter 3. Wherefore then serve the law? What is the use of the law? If we are no longer under the law then what is the use of the law?

Now that is immediately saying to us that we cannot state unconditionally that we are not under the law. I have said in four senses that is true.

And yet in other senses we must be under the law. If you'll bear with me for a moment I'm going to say this. That the idea that a Christian or anybody else can be completely free from the law is a total absurdity.

[35 : 58] Because it would then mean that we lived lives without law. And I simply ask you what is sin?

Sin is lawlessness. Sin is anomia. Nomos for law. Anomia without law.

Anomalous. A life without law is a sinful life. A life completely without law it's a life totally abandoned to sin.

It is not even conceivable that a Christian therefore can be free from the law in this complete and utter sense. The reformers you see to whom we owe such a great debt.

They give enormous attention to this. Luther first of all and then John Calvin after them. And they came up with a very, very important very, very well thought out doctrine with regard to the use of the law.

[37 : 05] I've used this analysis often and will use it once more at the risk of being repetitious and boring. But the analysis was this. They said there is a three-fold use of the law in perpetuity.

I summarise these first of all or denote them and indicate them. First, there is the political use of the law. Secondly, there is the pedagogical use of the law.

And thirdly, there is its use as a rule of life. This is the so-called third use of the law in the work very much of John Calvin.

So, the reformers said to us the law has in perpetuity a three-fold function. First of all, it has a political use.

Now, they were thinking here very much in terms of the relation between state, government, and the law. And they were insisting that government is bound by the law of God.

[38 : 15] They insisted that just as one individual is bound by the whole of the Decalogue, so is a cabinet or a council or any human corporation, not least the state.

The state is bound by the whole law. Now, you see, the only protection you have against an absolutist state is God.

Only if the state is the servant of God, the deacon of God, as Paul calls it, only then do you have limits and protection against absolutism.

So, the reformers said the state is bound by the law of God. They said when the state enacts laws, puts laws on the statute books, those laws must correspond to the law of God.

When the state enacts penal sanctions, those penalties must correspond to the law of God.

[39 : 20] He is God's minister, the avenger of God's wrath. The magistrate, the government, the judge, is not there to express his own personal view of human behaviour.

He is there to express God's view of human behaviour. And he is there not to express his assessment of the gravity of a crime, but God's assessment of the gravity of that crime.

He has no right, the state has no right, the judge has no right, to approach these problems simply from the standpoint of social utility.

To ask what kind of laws will our society accept? Or what kind of penalties does our society need? It's a terrible fallacy, a dreadful problem on our horizon today. People have mentioned that the moment you live away from biblically controlled legislation, you will then get more freedom and more tolerance.

[40 : 29] That is not what you will get. You will get more inhumanity, more barbarism, more savagery. You will get exemplary sentences, you will get revenge.

Because the judge is no longer expressing God's wrath, he's expressing his own wrath. And what Calvin Luther said, the state is answerable to God.

The state legislates in accordance with God's law. The state passes penal sanctions in accordance with God's law.

There is a whole area, you see, for serious believing thought at the present time. The treatment of offenders in the light of the word of God.

Not in the light of society's own vengefulness or humanism or whatever. But this political use of the law.

[41 : 30] It means that the state in its marriage laws, in its industrial legislation, the state in its attitude towards the Lord's day, must always be conscious of God looking over its shoulder.

It never has a right to pass autonomous legislation. And therefore this process is today, only in its infancy in this country of ours, the process has begun of a legislative tradition that is divorced from absolute norms in God himself.

We are moved from God's standard to question simply of social convenience. They said that these reformers said, first of all, the law has its political use.

Secondly, they said there is the pedagogical use of the law. Pedagogical. Now, this is of course the Greek word, pedagogos, which in a general sense can be taken to mean a teacher.

We use that word pedagogue in English today. Now, it may not be fair to you to simply leave it there, because the pedagogos of whom Paul was speaking in fact, wasn't a teacher.

[42 : 50] He was the slave who brought the child to the teacher. And I say, I really, I'm only making clarification because I think it's misleading to equate the law with the teacher here.

The teacher, in Paul's thought, is Christ himself. The law is the pedagogos, the servant, who performs this humble function of taking the child to Jesus, or bringing the soul to Christ.

Now, this was very much what Luther was interested in. The law could not justify, but the law could bring it to Christ. And this was explored in different directions, in great depth and often very movingly.

There are such intriguing things going on here. What does the law do as a pedagogue, as a pedagogue? The one thing that the law does is to multiply transgressions, you see.

You're thinking of the Mosaic law. You know, those of you who are teachers know that there is a very common technique, or worse, when I happen to be in school anyway, that the headmaster enacted certain rules, which were, to say the least, not in the Decalogue, and which also had no, sometimes no real basis in equity.

[44 : 21] But they had the effect, the deliberate effect, of multiplying transgressions, to enhance the consciousness of authority.

If there were two gates, you see, one might be barred, for no safety reason, but to establish parameters. Now, I'm saying that, if you think of your own schools, you work out, and many of the rules you have are in fact positive, rather than examples of natural law or of equity.

But, if you go back to the Old Testament church, you see, in its position, it could hardly move without falling over some legal tripwire.

When they ate food, when they sowed their seed, when they made their clothes, when they went to war, when they sowed, when they bore children.

See, at every point, there were rules, things you couldn't do. Many of them long since discontinued. But, the effect of them, you see, was, for the Church of God, in its non-age, in its minority, to heighten the sense of sin.

[45 : 40] Like boys in a public school. Rules, rules, maybe everywhere, to heighten the sense of authority. And the law, the Church was, in the Old Testament, in its minority.

It was a child. And, because of that, the law multiplied transgressions. Augustine tells us something which you might find even more risque, this particular connection.

That is, that sometimes the law, in fact, itself, caused sin. And, Augustine was, in fact, building on Paul's covenant, I had not known sin, except that the law said, thou shalt not covet.

And he said, sin worked by the commandment. And sin, through that commandment, brought in me all kinds of concupiscence, all kinds of covetousness.

Now, you know, it's brilliant psychology. The prohibition itself prompting the disobedience. I mentioned Augustine, because in the Confessions, Augustine tells a marvelous story of how his children, they lived near and not sure, full of pears.

[47 : 03] And he said, we hated pears. But those pears were banned. And so, every day, we broke in and stole them.

The ban was the concupiscence. Now, it's not simply psychology, it's Paul's own teaching, sin working by the commandment.

Those who are in charge of young people are surely aware that it is often the last thing we need to do is to suggest new sins to them.

And very often, the well-intentioned attempt to forbid or to ban something becomes instead the suggestion of an idea never before present in the child's mind.

And sometimes the law has that function. The fact of its being forbidden can itself provoke or induce disobedience. Paul says, the commandment thou shalt not covet, that would be covetous.

[48 : 12] And it was there I learned my sin. But the chief thing, of course, is that the law brings us to Christ by giving us a bad conscience.

It is by the law, Paul says, that there is the knowledge of sin. Remember, those who are whole don't need a physician. I haven't come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

And the function of the law is to create that sense of need, that conviction of sin, out of which alone faith can be born. So, there is, as I said, the political use of the law, there is its pedagogical use, and then thirdly, there is its use as a rule of life for the believer.

For the Christian, for the child of God, the law is the rule of life. It is the way in which we are supposed to walk. Now, this is why the subject, you see, requires such discrimination.

What the law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and false sin condemns sin of the flesh.

[49 : 31] Why? That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled by us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

We are not justified by keeping the law, but having been justified, we keep the law. Being justified by Christ, we walk after the Spirit and by doing so, we fulfil the righteousness of the law. Now, that's why a huge proportion of the Bible is law. The Bible addressed to the people of God, you see.

The bulk of the Bible's exposition of law is not aimed at politicians or at unconverted people. The bulk of the law teaching the Bible is aimed at Christians, the Lord's own people.

The Decalogue, you see, the Ten Commandments, these weren't for the Assyrians or the Babylonians. They were for the people of God. The Lord's own ministry.

[50 : 47] Most of it is concerned with expounding the great principles of conduct. We find that particularly, of course, in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5-7.

And it says that, seeing his disciples, Jesus opened his mouth and taught them, saying, it was law, that sermon, is law from beginning to end and it's law for the people of God.

Take the epistles. Take Paul's epistles. The normal pattern is that you have the great teaching in Romans and Ephesians and so on and then you have the law, the application of the teaching, often in very, very great detail.

So, the Lord's people need guidance as to how they are to live. Let me make just a few comments on that and then I close.

Let me say, first of all, that in God's order the indicatives always go before the imperatives. Now, what I mean by that is this.

[51 : 59] That God's work of redemption always comes before God's exposition of obligations. That is put for us quite marvelously in what we know, or you know, as a preface to the Ten Commandments.

The preface of the Ten Commandments is, I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods beside me. You see, the whole glorious truth is this. God did not take them out of the land of Egypt because they kept the Ten Commandments.

They were to keep the Ten Commandments because God took them out of the land of Egypt. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies living sacrifices in reasonable service by the mercies of God.

Matthew 5 to 7 is not about how to become a disciple of Christ. It's about how to live once God, by His grace, has made you a disciple.

[53 : 21] It comes back to the principle of Augustine that I keep referring to. His prayer, Lord, give what thou dost command, and command what thou wilt.

God saves us first. God gives before God commands.

You see, before God says to me, live Matthew 5 to 7, before God says that to me, God unites me to Christ.

God fills me with His Holy Spirit. God makes me a new creation. I don't say that Matthew 5 to 7 also binds the non-Christian.

Of course it does. It does bind the non-Christian. But it only binds them because every man and woman is bound to be a Christian. There is no way that you can say, well, I don't want to be a Christian, but I want to keep a Sermon on the Mount.

[54 : 29] We can only keep it if the indicatives have happened. Only if God's grace has taken over. Secondly, I say this.

There is no room in the Bible for an antithesis, a tension between law and love. It is indeed possible that there is legalism where there is no love.

But there is no place for setting law over against love. This was done by situation ethics. It is impossible because it is the law itself that says, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.

The law says that. The law itself commands love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. You don't stand before that great song in 1 Corinthians 13 and say simply, what a marvelous idea.

But it's unattainable. Instead you say, no, this great description of love, that binds me. That is law.

[55 : 44] Just as thou shalt not steal and thou shalt not kill is law. Thou shalt love. If I am envious, if I am puffed up, if I am easily provoked, if I think evil, if I seek my own, I am breaking the law.

It cannot be said of a man, he is great at keeping the law, but he has no love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. And conversely, you see, if you love God, you keep his commandments.

That's how we should. We do what is well-pleasing because this whole business of being a Christian is about a personal relationship with God.

And it's about loving God. And if two people are in love, and the bond between the believer and God is a bond between lovers.

In love. God is in love with his people. His people are in love with God. It's our relationship. And because they're in love, they want to please one another. There's no doubt that God acts to please us.

[56 : 59] To do what's good for us. To do for us what manifests as love. We show that we love him. You wouldn't hurt somebody you loved, would you?

You wouldn't hurt. Would we love God when we hurt God? Would we do what God forbids? Do what God condemns.

If you love me, keep my commandments. You cannot forget that love is laid down in the law. You cannot forget that love shows itself in keeping the law.

So you can't set law over against love. And thirdly, I want to say that no matter the clarity of the great biblical principles, every one of us needs very, very great wisdom to apply the law in particular situations.

You see, it's very well to have a gut reaction against situation ethics. And yet, all of us know that life is often a moral struggle.

[58 : 12] In the sense that we do not see, in given situations, what is the exactly right thing to do. We speak often of things not being black and white.

Now, I don't want at all to take the rigor out of those moral dilemmas. You see, these divine principles, laid down in the Ten Commandments, these express absolute sanctities.

Inviolable sanctities. Lying is always wrong. Coveting is always wrong. Blaspheming is always wrong.

There's no way that these things are not sinful. And yet, you see, armed with precise knowledge of all the Bible says, from Genesis to Revelation, there can still be situations where we do not have clear answers, where we have to accommodate, we have to adjust.

There are situations, for example, where the principle of the sanctity of truth is in conflict with the principle of the sanctity of life.

[59 : 27] Where it is impossible to simultaneously tell the truth and save the life. There are situations where it may be impossible to save two lives simultaneously.

Where one life must be sacrificed. There are situations where it may be impossible to save life without taking away somebody else's property.

You see, I may think that I know it all. I put in a panel, you see, it's happened to me last week. I must. What do I think of Halloween? Well, you see, you may have all the principles, but how do you adjust them?

There is no text in the Bible about Halloween, as far as I know. So, you begin to work out what are the principles relevant to this issue.

Is the mere fact that something began with a satanic association? Does that mean that we can never, never again use that vocation for any sanitized, unwholesome parables?

[60 : 47] Halloween, All Hallows evening, linked into demonism, and therefore we don't use it. But then, you see, I take a day like Wednesday, a warden's day.

What do I do with warden's day then? Or do I say simply no, it's all childish, are all those masks simply childish? Or is there maybe something more going on, something more satanic, more demonic?

Now, I would answer the questions for you, because at the moment maybe I can't. But I'm simply saying this to you, that you have sometimes to try to apply to a precise situation, a wide series of principles.

God himself accommodated to what Calvin calls the rudeness of his ancient people, the hardness of heart, allowed a divorce law that fell short of his own ideal for monogamous marriage.

He made an adjustment in the situation. Well, there it is. In some senses we are not under the law, but still those three great things binding us, the political use of the law, the pedagogical use of the law by which we are brought to Christ, and the law as a rule of life.

[62 : 11] And I simply close on this principle again of Augustine's, Lord give me what you command me to have. Let's not trifle with this, really it's a difficult thing to be a teacher of the

Christian church, because one is very conscious of one's own shortcomings.

But the thing is, these laws are there, they're binding obligations on every single one of us. They're there to be kept.

Not in order to our being saved, but because we are saved. The obligation that lay upon us as creatures has been intensified by our redemption, by our salvation.

But the great thing is, you see, that whatever God commands you to do, God will enable you to do. We must grasp that, but I leave it there.

Well, there is now the opportunity for questions. Who would like to be the first one to start us off? I can't imagine that there are no questions.

[63 : 36] We haven't had an evening with no questions yet, but there's always something new. I don't mind at all about those questions. Oh yeah, I'm sure you don't. It might be that the audience would mind it though.

Well, I do have a question, although I'm reluctant to ask it just for the sake of getting things off the ground.

I don't want to encourage questions that are not... questions that really need to be asked, but I think perhaps I know the answer, but maybe I don't.

It's about the law not being a proper motive in the life of the Christian. Would I be right in thinking that you were really saying it would never be sufficient as an exclusive foundation for motive, but yet it might be there as an accompanying motive along with the greater motive of the love of God? Would you like to comment on that? Well, it's a very fair question. I come back again to my basic standpoint of this, that we are sons and not slaves.

[64 : 58] And I think that the son may in fact respect and even fear his father. And that's one motive for obeying whatever is asked of him to do.

But as you say, it is never the entire or even an adequate motive. There must be love and gratitude as well. But I also thought I didn't go into much detail, wanted to say that grace isn't simply a motive, but grace is also unenabling.

And the law can never get inside us and give us the ability to do what God asks us to do. But grace is inside us to give exactly that enabling that we require to comply with God's own commandments. It is to me very important again to insist that the law has a place in the Christian life, but we don't want to be controlled by servile fear.

But certainly, if we take the Lord Jesus himself, who was by no means given to servile fear, he called God the Father both Righteous Father and Holy Father.

[66 : 17] And that's different from today's habits whereby we approach God very flippantly in many, many branches of the Christian church. And yes, I do allow that we are motivated by the fear of God.

But I'm saying, as Mr. Mackay suggested, no, it is not by itself sufficient. And it can never become this driving force within us that grace becomes.

Because of course, grace is simply the Holy Spirit within us, pointing us and drawing us to words, complying with God's own law. I remain on my feet because it's hard work getting up once you're over thirty.

John? I remember what you were saying about the kind of God in your sugar, but with the right in thinking, really, that the law was a sort of straitjacket, which people were buying as soon as they went to move, the redactional law, it was inevitable.

The law had to be broken as soon as he did anything. You know, they were so hemmed in by God's laws that there was nothing that they could do which would not result in their making of the laws.

[67 : 31] And as such, the law was inevitably going to force them to go to God for mercy. Yes. Well, I think the principle that you laid down is very important, John.

I don't know that the straitjacket is the best metaphor to use, but certainly it is true that in the Old Testament particularly, that every single turn they were made by law.

For example, there were all the food laws, the kosher laws, with regard to cooking and so on. And especially as the rabbis elaborated those, for example, you couldn't eat butter along with meat.

Again, if you were sowing seeds, you were taught you didn't mix the seeds. You couldn't mix fibers. You couldn't plough with different animals simultaneously.

And, you know, even natural functions were controlled by law as well. So at every single point, you had this problem that you were violating something.

[68 : 32] You couldn't get away from law. It was a very pervasive element in the life of the Old Testament people of God. And part of the Gospel is that we today have been delivered from that bondage.

That these elements of the mosaic yoke have been abrogated. And we should be thankful for that. Now, are we to think of the pedagogical use of the law only as a pre-justification experience? Or are we to think of it also after justification in the work of sanctification?

Well, that's a very perceptive point again. And it makes good omission. I tend to say more than the things I didn't intend to say I say. I didn't say at all tonight.

But that is a very important point which I did omit. That obviously we can't refer to the law as a pedagogos after we have come to Christ. Because he has done his job by that time as a pedagogos.

[69 : 36] But I do believe very much that conviction of sin is by no means over with our conversion. And the law has that function in our lives.

So long as we are here on earth frankly. We are confronted with our own spiritual incompetence. And every one of us groans every day. The law points out our failings to us.

So I think certainly yes. I wouldn't say the pedagogos metaphor still holds. But the law's function as giving us a knowledge of sin.

Is something that does go on. And it's amazing you know how we tend to think well we know the law. But I think all of us realize that we do often come across principles and we say I never knew that was wrong.

And then the law says yes it is wrong. You never knew it but it is wrong. But then there is the other problem which I throw out to you. What Rabbi Duncan said of Thomas Boston.

[70 : 41] He had a pernicky conscience. And there are folk who have pernicky consciences. And it is one thing to be flogged by the law.

It may be quite different to be flogged by conscience. And we have to make sure that conscience itself really is educated. Because some folk have very lax consciences.

There is a famous story about a Highland pseudo-worthy disruption. Who didn't join the Free Church. And who was said well it is a matter of conscience to join the Free Church.

Apologies to all the Church of Scotland folk present. And he is supposed to have said it is a poor conscience that will nae bend. And I think some consciences bend quite easily.

And some consciences are lax. And some are pernicky. So I think it is very important that conscience should talk to the law as often as possible.

[71 : 40] That is a very long answer to a short question. Well that is the blessing of the Christians. You see they always tease out new insights. Any further questions?

Mr. Mubarak. You have said that in Judaism we have the addition to the Old Testament law by the rabbis. Yes.

And you cited some modern day examples within the evangelical church of a misuse of the law. For instance in seeking the baptism in the spirit and as a motivation for Christian living.

Now have any thoughts as to what motivates man to misuse the law of God? You have there the ancient example. You have the modern example. And the same kind of thing. Yes.

What is driving us in this direction? Well I think that man is at heart a legalist. He is also at heart an antinomian. I mean both tensions are present in every human heart in my view David.

[72 : 42] But I think that the idea of self salvation appeals to the human ego very very profoundly. And it is very difficult for us to accept that we are saved entirely by grace.

And we will almost always find some way of bringing self into the relationship. And in fact I believe that most of the lack of assurance prevalent in our own circles as reformed Christians has a legalistic root.

That we forget that we are saved by grace. We find some defect in our own lives. And because of that defect we lose our assurance. But it is very very difficult to drive the principle of autosoterism as it has been called out of the human heart.

Man wants to walk into heaven with his head high and say I did it myself. And whether it is circumcision or moralism or turning faith itself into an act of obedience that has inherent merit.

He has a terrific propensity for finding some element of his own to contribute to it. And I think that that legalistic drive as I said is prime evil.

[74 : 05] It is very basic towards human nature. We perhaps have one more question. And then perhaps Mr. Macaulay from Milton will conclude with prayer please.

Sir? Yes. As we have heard, in Corinthians Paul speaks about becoming like those under the law. And also becoming like those under the law.

Yes. Can you comment on how the practical way he actually did that? Yes. Well I think that that is what is called today contextualisation.

That for the sake of the gospel you accommodate to your environment on things which are matters of personal liberty.

It would mean that when Paul was among Jews he complied with rabbinical traditions insofar as he weren't against the Christian gospel.

[75 : 10] And when among Gentiles he behaved as a Gentile. In other words he accepted the local culture as far as he possibly could. I think that we have to accommodate in that way.

And for the sake of the gospel when William Chalmers Burns went to China for example and Hudson Taylor. They both began to dress as Chinese not as Western Europeans as missions had done before them.

And I think that is something that all the community must be prepared to do. If I go to the free church Mecca to Lewis for example I must behave as a Lewis man.

And if I go to the other parts of the world I must try to conform to their attitudes. I must say on non-essentials. We can never never bend on principles that God has laid down for us.

But we become all things to all men so that by some means we might save some. Or by any means we might save some. I might even contemplate wearing a clerical collar in some situations.

[76 : 29] That is the very ultimate act of heroism on my part. I think that is well right. One more John, a quick one.

In Romans chapter 3, we read these words for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. That made me free from the law of sin and death. What then is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus?

Well that is one of the great crux of the New Testament interpretation. But my view of it at a distance John is that the law there is used in a different sense as principle.

The principle of sin and death. The gospel itself is a life giving principle. There is another principle which is one that works corruption and finally works judgment.

And the gospel is I think life giving spirit. And that liberates from the principle of law and sin and death.

[77 : 44] Paul also speaks in Romans 7 of a law in his members. What he gives the law of his mind. And I think that he is saying that there is a principle of sin in his members.

That works against the principle of the gospel which controls his mind. I mean part of the difficulty if you want to study the subject more thoroughly is that the word law. law has many different meanings in the New Testament.

Sometimes it is a principle. Sometimes it is the moral law. Sometimes it is the mosaic law. Or maybe variance in any of those themes. But I do want to say that these have been very perceptive questions tonight.

They are not so many as sometimes. But I appreciate the challenge of how to respond to some of those issues. Well thank you very much.

I am sure we will certainly agree that there have been perceptive answers. And we are as always most grateful for that. And it has been lovely to have had this time of fellowship and learning again this evening. Now let us conclude in prayer please.

[78 : 53] Thank you, O CHO, my Lord. If you ask Me, that ye might approach Me in a proper spirit of humility and gratitude.

We do praise Thee for the waited Himself as the real titled ■i- Britain as Thine book and a God of humanity and we do praise Thee that Thy great expression of Thy ■■ to thy love in the giving of thy holy begotten Son, to thy that we might live, and that we might live holy lives, to be conformed to this image. We do bless thee that thou hast to be thy love to us in thy word, that we might thereby in the power of life that he conform to the image of Jesus Christ. We thank thee, true Lord, that thou hast left us thy God who would minister thy word to us. We ask thee that thou would give us him the minister of church tonight, that thou would extend his ministry, and that thou would continue under Jesus' faithfulness. We ask thee, Lord, for I am all my servants here who ministering the preaching of the word, that thou would be with them that thou would accompany their Lord, for thy power, for

thou alone master power, to bear in touch. I ask thee, Lord, to remember all those of thy people here, that thou would be with them to resolve their own individual ministry, as they walk to their Christian lives, that all that they may do, that thou would use us to thy great end, thy own glory, that thou would be with us, that thou would remember thy people, as they move into themselves, that thou would indeed fulfill the great law of loving thee and loving your neighbour as ourselves, and express that love by desiring the faith in Jesus. We ask thee to remember all that the ministry of the Christmas night, that grant that thou would be with the Father in him, and that great day come. And all these things we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.