LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 5 (Part 9) :17-20

Christ...the Fulfillment of the Law

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Okay, let's begin here in Matthew chapter 5 beginning at verse 17. It says this, Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. Let's stop there and let's pray. Father God, open our hearts. As always, Lord, we need you to guide us in the interpretation and application of the Word.

So we invite your Holy Spirit to bring wisdom and grace and insight to us, Lord, as we look at these verses and see what they mean. We ask you to oversee that process and we ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen. This is so important. These are incredibly important verses.

Very very important that we see these, that we understand what they mean, because they are the key, and I don't say that very often, they are the key to understanding the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, they are the key to understanding a great deal, if not all, of what Jesus preached during his earthly ministry. You can't really overemphasize the importance of understanding the relationship of the believer to the Law and where the Law comes into place. If we understand these things properly, they will keep us from falling into legalism. Let me define legalism for you, if I could.

Legalism is the keeping of rules and regulations so that we might be considered righteous in God's sight. Just having rules doesn't make you legalistic. We've been accused of being legalistic around here at Calvary Chapel with the way we've run our children's ministry program. I kid you not, because of the fact that we require that parents, when they check their kids in, and they get their little bracelet, that they have that bracelet and show it with the number on it that corresponds to the number of the child they are getting

out of the classroom. We do that for the protection of the child, because we know that we live in an imperfect world and there's weirdness going on, and we don't want any of that weirdness to touch our children's ministry or our children.

We have a responsibility to protect them. So we created a rule to keep them safe. Well, I had a parent one time just really read me the Riot Act about that rule, and they said, well, you guys are being legalistic. No, no, we're being smart. But legalism is a rule that is done for the sake of being accepted to God.

That's legalism. If it doesn't really involve being accepted before God or being righteous in His sight, then it's just a rule for another reason. You can't look at a police officer when he pulls you over and just say, dude, you're just being legalistic. He's just upholding the law of the land, which you too should uphold in your driving. But that's a whole other sermon for another time.

But you understand what I'm saying. It's not legalism when it's just a rule. It's only legalism when it applies to our relationship with God and when we're trying to please God and be acceptable to God by the keeping of rules. That happens a lot in Christian churches and that sort of thing. So understanding this is going to help us to stay away from that.

And I've got to say, this is really a hugely challenging area for the body of Christ. So you know, you know, you know that there's a lot of churches that struggle with legalism and in various forms, keeping some kind of rules, laws, or whatever, and believing that by the keeping of them, they are more acceptable to God than people who don't. So let's get started. Jesus begins saying here in verse 17, do not think that I've come to abolish the law or the prophets for that matter. When he refers to the law and the prophets, really that's kind of a way of just for us referring to our Old Testament.

It's the Hebrew books of the Bible from Genesis through Malachi. The law is essentially the first five books of the Bible. We call that the Torah, okay? And then the prophets really kind of encompass the rest of the Old Testament as far as you and I are concerned, even though there are some historical and poetical books in there, it's all kind of considered the prophets. So the law and the prophets.

Jesus says, don't think I've come to abolish those things. Don't think that I've come to obliterate those things. I haven't come to do that. I have come rather, what does he say here? It was not to abolish the law, it was to fulfill the law, okay?

Cool. What's that mean? You know, we read these things sometimes and we're kind of like, oh, okay, he didn't come to abolish the law, he came to fulfill it. We don't ever really kind of ask the question, what does it mean when Jesus said, I have come to fulfill the law? Okay, this is important.

When Jesus says he fulfilled the law, he's saying that he is going to satisfy the demands of the law and he is going to come to fulfill everything that it pointed to. He is the fulfillment of the things that the law pointed to. But he also came to satisfy the demands of the law. And the demands of the law are the righteousness, the righteous requirements that God has established. You know, God has set these standards pretty stinking high, you know?

And none of us can measure up to them perfectly. We fail. Because we fail, we are therefore under the curse of the law. The curse of the law, as you know, is death. Isn't this good news?

This is great. Actually, you've got to get through this because in order to get to the good news, this is actually the bad news. The bad news is the law creates a standard that is too high for us to keep perfectly. Perfectly. And the Bible says that if you fail in one aspect of the law, you've failed at it all.

Okay? So since we've all failed, now we've kept some aspects, but if we've failed at just one thing, we've failed at it all. And since we have failed at it all, we're under a curse, the Bible says, and that curse is death. Paul says it in the New Testament this way, the wages of sin is death. Okay.

So we know that that's the curse of the law. Jesus came and fulfilled the requirements or the demands of the law. And in so doing, he released us from the curse. But let me just kind of back up here a little bit and show you how Paul develops this in his writings in the New Testament, because he really does a masterful job of explaining this sort of a thing. I'll put these up on the screen for you.

And it begins in Romans chapter 7, verses 9 through 11, and Paul writes this. He says, once I was alive apart from law, but when the commandment came, which revealed the righteousness of God, he says, sin sprang to life. And what happened? I died. He says, I died.

And I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. Why? Is it because there's something wrong with the law? No. He goes on to explain what the problem is.

It's sin in me. He said, for sin, which is in us, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me and through the commandment put me to death. You get that? So the law, the law is good. There's nothing wrong with the law.

Paul actually says that. He says the law is good, righteous, pure, holy, you know, because it's the standard of God. What the problem with the law, guys, is us. I am the problem. You are the problem for the law because we have this sin issue inside of us, and so we mess up.

We can't keep the law perfectly, so we're under its curse, which says, if you can't keep it, you gotta die. Once again, that's kind of the bad news. So the fault is not with the law. All the law really does is it reveals my sin and then pronounces a sentence upon me. Now we can ask the question, once again, how did Jesus fulfill the law?

Well, Jesus came and he did what we couldn't do, first of all. He came and he kept the law. Do you guys know that? Jesus did what you and I can't do. He came and lived on this earth as a human being, but also as the Son of God, and he kept the law.

He kept the law perfectly. That's what we're told, actually. In Hebrews 4, verse 15, here's what it says, for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who's been tempted in every way, just like me and you, and yet was without sin. So Jesus has experienced all of the same temptations that you and I have experienced, and yet he refrained from any kind of a sin. That means he kept the law.

That means he kept the righteous requirements, the standards, okay, that are laid out in the law. But secondly, Jesus fulfilled the law in his ability now to pay off the debt that you and I owed against it. You see, because he kept the law, because he was sinless, he had the ability to step in for you and I and pay the debt that we owed against the law. See, I can't do that for you. If I said, you know, I really love my brother, or I really love my sister, God, I would like to step in and pay the debt that they owe against your law.

God would say to me, I'm sorry, Paul, you can't do that. I'd say, why not? He'd say, well, because you owe your own debt, all right? All right, if you're gonna pay anything, Paul, you're gonna have to pay your debt. You can't even, and it's so steep, there won't be anything left for you to pay anybody else's debt, because the wages of sin is death.

You see how Jesus was uniquely qualified to pay your debt? Because he didn't have a debt. And so because he owed nothing to the law, he was obligated to nothing related to the law. He was able to step in and say, I'll pay it for them. In fact, I'll pay it for all of them, right?

What a beautiful thing. And in that way, he fulfilled the law, he fulfilled the demands of the law for you and me. That is such a cool thing. Here's what Paul says in Galatians 3.3. He says, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

How? By becoming a curse for us. How did he do that? Well, by dying on the cross, because it's written. Cursed is everyone who's hung on a tree.

Jesus literally took our curse, our debt, okay, for you and me, and he died bearing it. It was the debt that you owed. And in so doing, he fulfilled the law. He satisfied the demands of the law. Wow, this is amazing, you guys.

I mean, that's the good news. In case you were missing out on that little part of the equation. The bad news is we're dead when we're born. We're literally born into death because the law stands against us and it killed us, you know, cursed us, showed just how sinful we really are. Paul even writes about this to the Romans.

He says, you know, I wouldn't have known exactly how sinful sin can be if it weren't for the law. The law is what tells me how really rotten sin is. I would have just thought, well, sin's kind of like, maybe kind of a bummer. But the law reveals to me that it's way more than just a bummer. It's a death sentence.

That's what the law tells me. It can't help me to get where I want to go, but it can sure tell me where I'm heading, which is to death, right? That's the bad news. Jesus comes along, fulfills the law by keeping it, and then steps into the fray and says, I'll take their debt, I'll take their curse, I'll become a curse for them and die bearing that curse on the cross. I'll do it for them.

So that everyone who looks to me with eyes of faith will also have that curse lifted from them. Wow. So you know what that means, guys? You're no longer under a curse if you're in Christ. If you're looking to him with eyes of faith, putting your hope in him, your faith in him, you are no longer under the curse.

You no longer have that debt that is owed, and your life has now been ransomed. Your life has now been redeemed from the curse of the law that stood against you. That is really an amazing thing. Let me look at this in a slightly more comprehensive way, and this might be kind of helpful to you. I don't know.

Maybe it'll just confuse things more, but the law is essentially made up of three parts, and I'll put these up on the screen here for you. Maybe this'll help a little bit. The law is made up of essentially ceremonial laws, and then it is made up of civil laws, and then finally it is made up of moral laws. Let me kind of explain those in reverse order. Moral laws would include like the 10 Commandments, okay?

Thou shalt not kill, and really it's murder. You know, that's what the commandment is all about. It's about those things that we consider to be moral rules. It talks about not robbing people, not being a thief. It talks about not lying, not committing adultery, things like that.

Those are the moral laws of God's word. Civil laws are those things that applied really to the daily life of Israel. It had to do with how to treat the poor, had to do with how to treat your employees, how to run

your business, how to conduct your business affairs like buying and selling, lending, and so forth. Those were the things that were encompassed in the civil laws, and there's lots of them in the Old Testament. They needed a lot of governing.

We have civil laws in our country. We have moral laws in our country, but there was also this other aspect that you see up on the screen here of the law, and that was the ceremonial aspect of the law, and this would include things like Sabbath-keeping. This would include things like festivals, such as Passover, keeping of those festivals, like the Day of Atonement, and so on and so on. Those are the ceremonial aspects of the law, and here's the deal. When we say that Jesus fulfilled the law, we're saying that he fulfilled all of it, not just some of it.

I've heard people say Jesus came to fulfill the ceremonial parts of the law, but the moral law has not been fulfilled, and the civil, if Jesus didn't fulfill it all, he didn't fulfill any of it. Jesus didn't say, I have not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill a part of it. He said, I have not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, meaning all of it. We separate this, we create these categories of just understand what the law is kind of made up of, but Jesus didn't make those separations. He said, I've come to fulfill it, all right?

How did Jesus fulfill specifically those aspects? Well, let's start with the ceremonial law. This is probably, and I bring this one up at the beginning because this is the biggest area of stumbling for the Christian church and those who are attempting to walk with Christ, and the reason is because, well, there's probably several ceremonies that cause some relation to stumbling, but probably nothing more than the Sabbath, Sabbath-keeping. I would bet that just about of all the people here, either some of us have been involved in some kind of Sabbath-keeping rules in our life at some point, whether it's the seventh-day Sabbath or the first-day Sabbath, which is really not a biblical Sabbath at all. You know, in America here, we were kind of raised to bring the same legalism the Jews had related to the seventh day into Sunday.

I mean, when I was living up in, don't tell anybody I said this, when I was living up in Minot, North Dakota, I don't normally say that in public, just, anyway, that place, that town shut down on Sunday. It shut down. Why? Well, it had been a law, an ordinance in the city for years and years and years that people weren't going to conduct business on Sunday. Now, Sunday was never the Sabbath day to begin with.

It was always Saturday. That's the Jewish Sabbath, but we incorporated some of the same legalistic sort of thought processes about Saturday. We just brought it over to Sunday and made it legalistic. Hey, I don't have my business open on Sunday, sort of a thing, you know. and that makes me better than you again legalism is when i do something to make me more acceptable to god that's the definition of it it was just a

day of rest usually business owners don't care about a day of rest usually i mean they want to make as much money as they can so the sabbath remains this popular area of legalistic uh...

rule keeping even though the word of god addresses this thing let me show you this from collagens chapter two verse sixteen seventeen some of you are very familiar with this it says paul writes therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink or with regard to here we go a religious festival that would be like the things i talked about passover day of atonement things like that a new moon celebration or look at this or a sabbath day but then paul explains why these are a shadow of the things that were to come the reality however is found in christ and i love that last sentence where he says these are a shadow of the things to come in other words they point they're pointers to things that are upcoming well what's upcoming jesus that's what he says here the reality however is found in christ he is the reality of the sabbath he is the reality of all the festivals he is the reality of the new moon celebrations he is the reality of everything everything points to him he so that's what jesus is is saying when he says i've not come to abolish the law and the prophets have come to fulfill them i am the reality of all those things that you've been doing all those celebrations all those festivals they all point to me they find their fulfillment in me it's a beautiful passage it's a wonderful passage there are others that are similar to it but probably nothing quite like collage in chapter two sixteen and seventeen to really you know just give it to us in clear concise terms that jesus is the reality of the shadow of these things that were laid out for us in the word of god the other two aspects as we mentioned before of the law are moral and civil and you can ask yourself the question now how did christ fulfill those how is it possible that jesus can fulfill for example the moral law which is really my heart relationship before god and the civil law which my relationship between me and you how did jesus fulfill those things the clear he did but the clue to that begins in a wonderful little prophecy that is given to us in the book of jeremiah chapter thirty one goes like this god's talking about the new covenant that is to come through christ he says this is the covenant but i'm gonna make with the house of israel after that time declares the lord here's what i'm gonna do i'm gonna put my law moral civil law i'm gonna put my law their minds and i'm gonna write it on their hearts and i will be there god and they will be my people was just talking about this is this is prophesied hundreds of years before the coming of christ but it's talking about the coming of the holy spirit who brings into our lives the process of taking the law which in the old testament was an external thing did you ever wonder why the law was written on tablets of stone why not leather one of something soft god was making a point about the law he's making a point about the rigidity of the law the ability for the law to be broken but he was also making the point about the law being hard and external and you know when you live by rules those rules are always this hard external sort of a thing what does god say here in the prophecy of jeremiah he says i'm gonna take that hard external thing and i'm gonna put it inside of you and i'm gonna make it soft i'm

gonna make it fleshly in the sense that it's going to be soft and and it's gonna be part of you notice he says i'm gonna write it where on their minds and on their hearts i'm gonna literally take my law and i'm gonna put it inside you through my spirit wow do you guys understand how we have right now those of us who are in christ we have right now something that is so much superior to external tablets of stone we have the law we have the law giver not just the law we have the law giver living inside of us writing his law on our hearts and on our minds isn't that cool it's one thing to have a letter from someone what if you could have that person inside of you literally part of you boy that's an intimate sort of a thing god literally does that through his holy spirit i am going to take who i am my righteousness my purity my wisdom uh... the standards of grace and goodness and mercy i'm not just going to talk to you about them i did that in the old testament i'm gonna cause that to live in you to literally become part of you wow and that's why paul speaks about this law being in us intimate sort of a thing look what he says in second corinthians three three i love this he says to the people in corinth you show that you are a letter from christ the result of our ministry written not with ink but with the spirit of the living god not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts he says you know that's what gets me all jazzed and excited about you guys is that i see christ in you i see jesus on your heart and living out of your lives because he's in there now his law perfection and his wisdom is now inside of you and i see that and it gets me excited and then he wrote to the romans in chapter seven verse six and he said but now by dying to what once bound us which is by the way that regulations of the law we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the spirit not in the old way of the written code keep this verse up for just a second i want you to really see this and think about it we don't live anymore by external written code and that includes sabbath keeping that includes every aspect of the law how do we serve we serve according to the new way of the spirit because now the written code is here i don't just keep the sabbath on saturday i keep it everyday seven days a week we fulfill we keep the requirements of the law all the time because christ is in us the law giver is now in us and we no longer keep rules we live by the spirit we don't talk about following rules anymore we don't say to people so are you a christian if so are you keeping the rules that's not what we say that's inappropriate to say for christians we say are you a christian then you should be walking according to the spirit what's the spirit doing leading me according to his righteousness wisdom purity holiness and so forth that's what the spirit does in our lives people so often will come to me because they've got a question about how they're supposed to live so they come to me as a pastor and i know what they're doing they want a rule they want a law pastor paul this situation now is confronting me and i don't know how to deal with it what should i do do you know what the answer to that question is you need to you need to know god's word you need to be led by the spirit that's the answer to the question well come on pastor paul isn't there somewhere in the bible that just kind of says just give me a rule tell me what i'm supposed to do no

that's legalism if if you come to me for rules about how to live you're gonna have to keep coming to me for rules on how to live and that's not my calling i'm a teacher of god's word i am not a rule giver good grief guys the rule giver lives inside of you talk to him he'll tell you which way to go and he'll always do it in a manner that is consistent with his word he will never go against his own word it will always be consistent with it and he will speak to you from the pages of this because this is alive as We see in the Word of God alive and active and so forth So don't look for a rule. What should I do about this pray about it be led of the Lord But what if I make a mistake? Good grief you trying to walk through life without making mistakes Wow what a burden I Make them all the time You know not callously not recklessly not casually, but I make them And when I make them I come to God and I get forgiveness And then you learn how to do better next time how to listen better next time Jesus Make me make me to hear your voice You know turn up the volume because I'm like almost deaf you got to really talk to me You know loud you know you ever say that to God. You know would you please turn that up because I don't I can't I can't hear none of this still small voice garbage.

I'm talking shouting here right. I want to know your will I want to know your heart God responds that he loves when his children. Just come to him and say I want to know you I want to have you in my life. I want to hear your words. You know I want to be led by the Spirit Not rules and regulations because that's that's not what we do as Christians Finally Galatians 518 it says if you're led by the Spirit you're not under law How you like that that one just comes right out and just kind of boom says it doesn't it If you're being led by the Spirit you're not under law You're not under law You got something better Spirit lawgiver He's got a whole lot more to say to you that can fit on two tablets by the way rounded at the top He you know the Spirit is just he can say anything he wants.

He's got this endless conversation going on in your heart There are only so many things that you can fit on a couple of stone tablets, but God is speaking to his children through his Spirit and If we're led by the Spirit we're no longer under law Which is why I know I'm throwing these out to you at the speed of light It's why the Apostle Paul can now say from Romans chapter 10 verse 4 Christ is the end of the law The completion of it so that there may be righteousness now for everyone who believes you see That what this verse is saying you see is that people believed that by keeping rules They were going to be righteous before God How do you how do you get to be righteous before God do this do this do this do this do this do this don't do? That that's how Well, we don't live by rules now as Christians. We live by the Spirit and So now Paul writes Christ is the completion of that law for you and I Right so that there's righteousness now for everyone who? Believes notice it didn't say righteousness for all who keep the rules Our

righteousness is now by faith all right, we'll talk more about that later Galatians 3 another wonderful passage. He says Paul writes.

You know before this faith came We were literally held prisoner By the law the law locked us up. He said literally until faith should be revealed and so The law was put in charge originally, but what was its major function well? It was to lead us to Christ So that we might be justified by faith not by keeping rules now that faith has come look at this we are no longer under the supervision of the law Pastor do you guys keep the Sabbath? Oh? You've missed the whole point Literally when somebody asked me that question they miss they're missing the whole point really a large enormous part of the New Testament Haven't you read that we're no longer under the supervision of the law because the lawgiver now resides in our heart How can you ask me?

Do you keep the Sabbath? You've missed it. You've missed you've literally stumbled over grace You've stumbled over this powerful thing that God started talking about hundreds of years Before he Christ even came you know as he spoke through Jeremiah and the other prophets you missed it How could you miss it? This is what it's about You guys You know and yet, we're calling ourselves Christians. You know and this is what we do.

I'm a Christian Got a toe the line oh Doesn't it just break your heart that people actually live under that bondage of I got to do you got to do we got to do Rather than being led by the Spirit And then finally Hebrews chapter 7 verses 18 and 19 says the former regulation and that's talking about the law is Set aside why he says because it was weak and useless For the law made nothing perfect and a better. Hope is introduced by which we draw near to God Okay, what does he mean by that? It's what I said earlier The law can't make you a righteous person. That's what he means when he says it made nothing perfect I Can give you rules, but they can't change your heart right I Can give you you want rules? Oh?

Yeah? We'll lay down a bunch of rule do this do this do this do this do this you know there now What has that done for you? Nothing It basically just kind of put these rules around me, but you can't change my heart with rules You can't make me into a different person with rules You know How are you going to begin? to be Changed no that's got to start on the outside so you can't you can't do that from the from Excuse me that's got to start on the inside You can't make somebody different from the outside you can't just sit and talk to him and say be better be better be better They need a new heart Starts here, so God takes his spirit, which of course he is the lawgiver Comes into our hearts changes our hearts Now it's no longer thou shalt not commit adultery It's different now it's like man. I don't want to do that I Don't want to do that.

I don't I don't need a law anymore saying thou shalt not steal God's changed my heart I I See people's possessions differently than I did before I used to think I was entitled I deserved things Before I came to Christ now I realize That God loves all people and I'm to respect those people and so you see things have just changed My mind has changed my thoughts have changed. This is better in this better What can't you know we do raise our kids with rules don't we I know you know in work We got a little kids in the house. We you know because they don't know any better. We raise them with rules We don't touch that Don't touch that I Said don't touch it You touch that You're gonna get spanky You know or or you're gonna get burned don't touch that you'll get burned and the kids are going They don't know they don't understand it's not in their heart It's just all they hear is the command right that's all they have is the kind don't touch that don't go there Here's as far as you can go don't walk past that area there You can't go over and play with that kid because we just don't and you know We don't explain all those kinds of rules We just give them the laws don't we but can you imagine having an 18 year old in your house? And you have to say don't touch that Or You know or something that was just ridiculously Childish You hope that by the time your child gets older They're gonna begin to understand it's gonna be in here I Don't have to be told when I'm 18 years old not to put my hand on the stove when it's red.

I I know it's in me that's a Illustration not a great one, but an illustration of what it means now to have the Spirit and live by the Spirit God is helping us to know these things inside Not with this external command, but to know here that affects now the way we live you see That's this powerful Powerful thing we're gonna end with look at verse 20 last verse of in in your Bible Jesus says for I tell you that unless your righteousness Surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven Wow what a line People must have been floored When they heard Jesus say that do you know that the righteous the righteousness of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law? What's considered by the people to be impeccable? Impeccable These guys are blameless Of course Jesus found plenty of to blame him for but you know what I mean from a earthly standpoint people looked up to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law and Jesus comes along and he goes. Oh by the way you got to be better than them What are you talking about Jesus have you flipped your cork How can you possibly be more righteous than a Pharisee ah Because you see that we're and we're gonna get into this So this is really the lead-in to the rest of largely what Jesus is going to say in the Sermon on the Mount. He's going to say, they're just concerned with all the things on the outside.

But I've already explained to you that the law is now here. It's inside. So guess what? The requirements of the law are now inside. And he's going to begin to talk about certain aspects of the law that they thought they were good to go on just because they weren't doing it on the outside.

And Jesus is going to explain to them that, oh, well, now, wait a minute. There's a inside issue. We'll get into that. So as they say, stay tuned.