

THE LAW FULFILLED

“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.”

—MATTHEW 5:17

Under the Old Covenant, there are three categories of law God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. The ceremonial law concerned the rituals and regulations of animal sacrifice by which a person could approach God. These were abolished and fulfilled by the work of Christ on the cross. The civil law was constitutional for ordering the national life of Israel as a theocracy. It concerned responsibilities, marriage, family, crime, punishment and many other laws that would enable a society to function in a wholesome manner.

The third category, the moral law, concerns the Ten Commandments and is the law Jesus was referring to when He said, “I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” The basis of conduct is enshrined in the moral law of God. They may appear to be unrealistic from a human perspective, but from a divine perspective they are utterly realistic, and as relevant today as they were when first given to Moses. Jesus said, “Until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18). The law is more secure than the earth on which we stand and even more secure in the heavens.

The law is realistic, relevant and also right. Jesus said, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the

law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). The Pharisees were renowned for their discipline and strict observance of the law, but had failed to personally connect with God. Their righteousness was externally imposed and dealt with outward activity, but the righteousness of Jesus deals with the internal from which attitudes and behaviours derive.

Jesus goes right to the root cause of sin, which is not what we do, but what we are. We are sinners, but not because we sin. Just as a plum tree cannot produce anything but plums, because it’s a plum tree, we sin because we are sinners. Jesus sets Himself in the midst of this and works to change us from the inside. For example, it’s anger from within that causes a murder; lust from within that causes adultery, and greed from within that causes theft and coveting.

Anger, lust and greed are the root cause of most sin. By human effort, these sometimes deeply embedded poisons are impossible to eradicate from our lives. It is only by the indwelling Spirit of Christ that righteousness is produced in us... a righteousness derived from Christ alone. When we understand this, we know what Jesus meant when He said, “I have come to fulfill the law.”

PRAYER: Thank you, Lord, for creating within me an appetite for righteousness. I pray for a deeper work of your Spirit so that my life may reflect more of what You are like.

TO REFLECT UPON: How has the righteousness of Christ revealed itself the most in me?