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## Faith Establishes the Law

*Romans, Part XIX*

Romans 3:31

Stuart W. Bryan

### I. Justification by Faith Alone

So if we are set right with God through faith alone in Christ alone, doesn't this undermine the law? Doesn't this say that God's law is not important or valuable? Paul asks:

*<sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup>even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup>to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. <sup>27</sup>Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup>Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law... <sup>31</sup>Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. (Rom 3)*

### II. Faith Establishes the Law

#### A. Faith establishes the *purity* of the law

Justification by faith alone does not compromise or lessen the demands of the law. Faith says that the law demands all it says it does. As James declares:

*<sup>8</sup>If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; <sup>9</sup>but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup>For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. <sup>11</sup>For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup>So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup>For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas 2:8-13)*

Justification by faith \_\_\_\_\_ makes no excuses for disobedience. Disobedience to God's law merits God's just wrath. Hence, by nature, all merit condemnation. Justification by \_\_\_\_\_ or by some combination of \_\_\_\_\_ and faith inevitably lowers God's standard revealed in His law.

#### B. Faith establishes the *primary purpose* of the law in our fallen world

Second, faith establishes the primary purpose of the law in our fallen world. On the one hand, the law reveals our sin and guilt and, on the other hand, drives us to Christ for forgiveness and reconciliation with God. First, the law reveals our sin and guilt:

*<sup>7</sup>What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." <sup>8</sup>But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. <sup>9</sup>I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. <sup>10</sup>And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. <sup>11</sup>For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. <sup>12</sup>Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. (Rom 7:7-12)*

So once the law has exposed our sinfulness, what next? An awareness of our sin is intended to drive us to God's mercy in Christ. As Paul proclaims later in Romans 10:4 – "For Christ is the \_\_\_\_\_ [telos] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." The psalmist anticipated this merciful work of God in Psalm 130:

<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; <sup>2</sup>Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications. <sup>3</sup>If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? <sup>4</sup>But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. <sup>5</sup>I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. <sup>6</sup>My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning— Yes, more than those who watch for the morning. <sup>7</sup>O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption. <sup>8</sup>And He shall redeem Israel From all his iniquities.

The law serves the promises of God; it highlights our need for God's grace and mercy: <sup>21</sup>Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. <sup>22</sup>But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. <sup>23</sup>But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Gal 3:21-25)

### C. Faith establishes the *perpetuity* of the law

Finally, faith establishes the *perpetuity* of the law. For believers, God's moral law is a gift and teaches us the way of righteousness and how we can best please the Lord.

<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom 8:1-4)

Jesus died and rose again in order *that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us by the power of the Spirit*. So we sing with our Lord Jesus in Psalm 40:

<sup>6</sup>Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. <sup>7</sup>Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. <sup>8</sup>I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my \_\_\_\_\_."

Many professing Christians want to drive a wedge between God's moral law and the demands of \_\_\_\_\_. However, in Scripture \_\_\_\_\_ and law go together:

- John 14:15-17, 21 - <sup>15</sup>"If you love Me, keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—<sup>17</sup>the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you... <sup>21</sup>He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."
- John 15:9–10 - <sup>9</sup>"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."
- Romans 13:8-10 - <sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup>Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

## III. Conclusion