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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

The Roman Pilgrimage (Part 9)



Part 9/20

The Roman Pilgrimage
By Derek Prince

In our last session we entered into the final stage of this pilgrimage before we reach our climax and our goal which is Romans 8. We began to study Romans 7 which is the chapter which deals with the relationship of the believer to the law. I warned you that it would be hard work but we went through just the first 6 verses in which Paul uses an analogy of marriage. I'll just review that briefly. Paul says that when a woman is married to a man, as long as the man remains alive she's not free to marry another. But if the man dies then she's free to marry another. The way he applies this analogy is through the covenant of the law, Israel were married to their fleshly nature because the law requires us to do things relying on our fleshly nature, our own ability, not looking to the grace of God. But on the cross, when Jesus died, that fleshly nature was put to death in him. Because of that death we are now free to marry another. The other whom we marry is the one who rose from the dead, the Lord Jesus. So, we can enter into a new marriage relationship, not married to our carnal nature but married to the resurrected, glorified Lord Jesus. Through that marriage union with him we are now able to bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

While we were in the flesh we were incapable of bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit, all we could bring forth was what Paul calls the deeds or the works of the flesh and he lists them in Galatians 5:19 and following. And there isn't one good thing among them. We need to see this very clearly. The works of the flesh are all bad and the fruit of the Spirit is all good. It's not a little bit of one and a little bit of the other, they are totally opposite. We shall see this brought out again in Romans 8.

In the course of talking about the marriage relationship, I got into something which perhaps may have offended some of you or upset you or startled you, on the subject of divorce. I really didn't intend to but I'm very deeply concerned about this because I believe uncounted numbers of Christians today, both men and women, are in a state of bondage or guilt because of a broken marriage. So when I wrote this book, God is a Matchmaker, the editors who had chosen books said write a chapter on divorce. I said, "Brother, I've got enough problems as it is, I don't need any more!" But they pressed me and I prayed and I sought God and I felt God wanted me to write that chapter. It was a very

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hard chapter to write. In this book, although the theme is how to find your mate, there is a chapter for divorcees and there's a chapter for those who don't marry. Now I cannot go into this but if you were concerned about what I said about divorce, I think it would be fair to you and fair to me for you to get this book and read the chapter which is entitled "Divorce and Remarriage." Read it carefully and see if what I say is scriptural. I feel that uncounted numbers of Christians have been kept in bondage or under guilt because of wrong teaching about divorce.

I was guilty of that wrong teaching myself at the beginning of my ministry. I used to teach that way. I've had quite a number of letters from both men and women who read this book and read that chapter and thanked me. They said, "Thank you for releasing me from a sense of guilt and the feeling of being a second class Christian." So that's all I want to say.

Now we're going to go back to Romans 7 and we're going to deal with the second point in our outline which says the law brings sin to life and out into full view. Returning under the law when we've been released from it revives the old man who is still a criminal. Now let's see where this is stated because it's stated several times. First of all, we'll go back for a moment to Romans 3:20. Paul says:

> "By the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight..."

No one will ever achieve righteousness with God by the keeping of a law. Then he concludes:

> "...for through the law comes the knowledge of sin."

The law does not enable people to become righteous but it does bring out sin into the open and it makes us fully conscious the nature and power and evil of sin. That's one of its main purposes.

Then in this 7th chapter of Romans we read one or two verses there just emphasizing this point. Verse 5:

> "For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death."

Notice that what could be a very startling statement for some people. "The sinful passions which were aroused by the Law." Most people don't view the law that way.

And then again in Romans 7:7–11:

> "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting..."

And the same word means lusting. I think Paul had lust in mind more then coveting, if you ask me.

> "...I would not have known about lusting if the Law had not said, YOU SHALL NOT COVET [or you shall not lust]."

So what the commandment did as one of the Ten Commandments is to bring the nature and power of lust or coveting out into the open. Without it Paul says, "I would never have realized the full and true nature of lust."

Then he goes on:

> "But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting [or lust] of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead."

So, so far from the commandment making me able to overcome coveting, it worked in me an increase of coveting. I believe that's psychologically true. I want to say this in a way that will help you. If you are having a problem with lust or fear or hatred or resentment, you will not overcome it by rules that forbid you to do it. In fact, the more you focus on the negative rules, the more power that thing will have over you. If you keep saying, "I must not lust, I must not lust," your whole mind becomes full of the concept of lust. So far from delivering you from lust it enslaves you to it. The same with fear, the same with resentment. "I must not resent my mother-in-law." Well, next time you see your mother-in-law, all you can think about is resentment. That's not the way out.

Then Paul makes a very amazing statement there which I'll come back to in a minute. He says at the end of verse 8:

> "Apart from the Law sin is dead."

I'll tell you that I meditated on that statement for years. I believe God has shown me the answer but we'll go on

reading a little bit to make our study complete. Verse 9:

> "And I was once alive apart from the Law, but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died..."

The moment sin becomes alive, I die. You understand?

> "...and the commandment which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me."

Through what did sin kill him? Tell me. Through the commandment, that's right. Okay. That's not the words of Derek Prince, those were written long before I was ever thought about.

And then in verses 16–21:

> "But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh..."

I've sometimes commented the difference between Paul and us is he knew it and we don't. But that's the only difference.

> "...I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing that I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."

Do you see what the commandment has done? By causing us to take sides with God's law and say "that's what we ought to do" and then discovering that the more we try to do it, the less we succeed, we have disclosed that there's something in us which works against our own best intentions. What's the name of that thing? Sin, that's right. So what has the law done? It has forced sin out into the open. Before that it lurked there but very often we weren't conscious of it. So the law serves a God given purpose but it's not the purpose of making people righteous, that comes another way.

Now, I want to go back to what I think is a startling statement in verse 9.

> "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died."

Now I'm going to offer you three explanations of what Paul is saying "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin came to live, and I died." First of all, as a descendant of Adam. Paul, in a sense, was represented by Adam as we all were. Adam was alive in the garden. He was a perfect being without corruption or flaw of any kind. We don't know how long he continued in that condition. It may have been, who knows? Hundreds of years, we just don't know. But when the commandment came, sin came to life. Rebellion rose up in him and he did the very thing he was told not to do. There must have been thousands of trees in that garden but he wanted to partake of the only tree that was forbidden. Do you understand? When he partook of it, sin came to life and he died. God had warned him. He said on the very day you eat of it, you will surely die. He didn't die physically for 900 years or more but he died spiritually. He was cut off from God by his rebellion. He was no longer fit for the presence of God. When God came into the garden he hid himself. You know the story. That's one possibly explanation which would apply to all of us since we're all descended from Adam.

Then, Paul was an Israelite, which most of us are not. We need to remember that Israel were redeemed from Egypt and their slavery not by the law. The law didn't get them out. What got them out? Faith in the Passover lamb and its shed blood. The law did not get Israel out of Egypt. It was faith that got them out of Egypt. Faith in a substitutionary sacrifice.

But, when they came to the foot of Mt. Sinai God presented them with the law and they very rashly said, "All that God says, we will do." What were they relying on? Their fleshly nature. All right? "We can do this." What happened? What was the first thing that happened after that? They broke the first commandment. Not just some little trifling commandment but the first commandment, "Thou shall

have no other gods besides me, thou shall make no graven images."

That's not an accident. That's the result of trusting in the flesh. The moment we trust in the flesh we revive that rebel and all he can produce is rebellion. He is not capable of producing anything but rebellion. Paul says, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." I would like you all to say that. Don't say it if you don't believe it. But if you do, say it after me. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." It takes most of us a long while to discover that, doesn't it? I think—I won't go into my pilgrimage but it took me a long while to come face to face with the fact that in my fleshly nature there was nothing good, and it was foolish to expect to get anything good out of it. If there's nothing good in it you'll never get anything good out of it, isn't that true?

So that's an application to Paul as an Israelite. Israel came out of Egypt redeemed by faith in the Passover lamb, they were alive to God. But when the commandment came, they trusted in their own carnal ability, sin came to life and they were cut off from God. They died. That doesn't mean to say they were forever cut off because God opened a way for them to return in repentance but they had to return by faith, not by the works of the law.

Then I think this statement, "I was alive without the Law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died," I think it was very probably an autobiographical statement of Paul in his own Christian experience. I have had more contact than the average, both with Jews and with Muslims, and both Judaism and Islam are totally religions of works. And they say so firmly. They despise Christians who don't have to work. I mean, they'll say all sorts of negative things about Christianity because we don't have to work. They have no real concept of what's involved but they criticize and attack Christianity for that reason. I've pondered on this statement for years. I said to myself, that's true. I think every Jew that I've ever known that came to Jesus, for awhile, went back into legalism. I thought that's true of the Jews. Then it's certainly true of the Muslims. I don't think there's ever been Jew—I mean, this may be incorrect but I could imagine there's never been a Jew or Muslim who came to Jesus and fully escaped from legalism at the first step. It's a very hard thing to do. Of all the difficult things in this pilgrimage, this is the hardest: to escape from legalism.

Then I thought to myself the strange thing is it happened to me, too. I won't go into the details but I'll say this. After I'd been a Christian about 5 years I married a beautiful lady, my first wife Lydia, who had a beautiful children's home in Jerusalem. That children's home was full of the Holy Spirit. Those little girls walked in the Spirit, they prayed, they saw miracles, they saw visions, they saw answers to prayer. Along I came and became the head of this household and I thought we have to have rules! We have to have set times for prayer, set times for Bible study. God forgive me but I did. I spoiled a lot of what God had done. I think God graciously retrieved it in the end. But I fully recognize that I myself became a prey of legalism. More than once. More recently, in recent experience I got involved in something which some of you know about which was pure legalism. We won't talk any further about that! Thank God he got me out!

Now, you might say the law's a bad thing. Paul says on the contrary, the law is totally good. The badness is not in the law, it's in us. So let's look at what Paul says about the law here.

Wait a minute, before I do, let me point out to you something else about returning under the law. This is a scripture that I hardly ever fail to quote sometime when I'm preaching. Jeremiah 17:5. If I can't turn the page, I know it by heart. But let's see if I can.

> "Thus says the Lord, Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind..."

But that's not good. The Hebrew says who trusts in flesh or trusts in man.

> "...and makes flesh his strength and his heart turns away from the Lord."

Do you understand, that's legalism. When we've known the Lord, tasted his grace, experienced his supernatural power and his deliverance from bondage and sin and we go back to trusting in our own ability, our own rules, our own programs, all the things that the churches are involved in, our heart departs from the Lord. And brothers and sisters, the vital fact is we come under a curse. Cursed is the man who's known the Lord, experienced his power and turns back to his own strength and his own efforts.

You're free to make your own judgment but in my opinion that's the condition of most of the professing Christian church today. Almost every significant movement in the church began in the power of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, it would never have begun. I'm not going to name any denomination but all of you can think of some that began with tremendous men of God and tremendous moves of God and today they are relying on the flesh. They're relying

on their own efforts, their programs, their promotions, their rules, their systems... And instead of having the blessing of God, they're under a curse.

I've been that route. As I said just now, I know what happens when you do that. I came under a curse myself. I saw many people come under a curse. Thank God he was merciful and faithful to open my eyes and show me. But I mean, that was just one of countless examples that have happened in the history of the church. You see, you can't play around with the blessing of the Lord. He gives it freely but we're required to appreciate it. We're required to recognize our total dependence upon his grace and his supernatural power. You cannot be a Christian by your own strength or efforts. It's on a level you can never attain to. When you try to do it in your own strength and your own efforts, having known the supernatural grace and power of God, you come under a curse. I think I better read the next verse, too. This is the one who's done this.

> "For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant."

What a description of somebody under a curse. God has opened my eyes to this truth, I can't deal with it now, but the man or woman under a curse just is a bush in the wilderness. Blessing comes all round, prosperity, liberty, freedom, but he's there in his little bush. He never feels the rain, he never enjoys the greenness, he's under a curse.

I think the commonest reason why Christians come under a curse is legalism. If you turn to Galatians you'll find this is the theme of Galatians. It's summed up in chapter 3.

> "Foolish Galatians. Who has bewitched you..."

Do you know that you can be bewitched? They were Spirit filled Christians but they were bewitched. How did Paul know they were bewitched? Because they'd lost their vision of Jesus on the cross.

> "Who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was set forth evidently crucified?"

What was the evidence?

> "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now trying to be made perfect by the flesh?"

That's foolishness. We are bewitched when we try to do that.

Then Paul goes on:

> "If you come back under the law, you come back under a curse."

He reminds them. Galatians 3:10:

> "Cursed is everyone who doesn't continue in all the works law, and do them."

If you once tried to be justified by the law, you've got to keep the whole law all the time or you're under a curse. My advice is don't try because you certainly won't succeed.

Now let me return to the statement that I will close with. The fault if not in the law. Let's look in Romans 7 quickly before we close this session. Romans 7, you'd think I could get there by now. Verse 7:

> "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Perish the thought! On the contrary, I would not have known sin..."

And then verses 12–14:

> "So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Therefore did what is good become a cause of death for me? Perish the thought! Rather it was sin..."

And then he goes on in verse 14:

> "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage under sin."

So there's nothing wrong with the law. It's good, it's holy, it's spiritual. Don't blame the law. The problem is not in the law, where is the problem? In us, in our flesh. The law performs the vital function of confronting us with the real condition of our fleshly nature.

Now I've used the word legalism. Probably I'd better define it. I just have time to do that because I don't want to use the

word vaguely. I'll offer you two definitions of legalism. First of all, legalism is the attempt to achieve righteousness with God by keeping any set of rules. Okay? No matter whose rules. The Catholic rules, the Baptist rules, the Pentecostal rules; if you are attempting to achieve righteousness with God by those rules, you're under legalism. I mean, I have to say enormous numbers of people are in that category. I'm a Pentecostal if I'm anything but I'd have to say many of my dear brothers and sisters in the Pentecostal movement are not in the liberty of the Spirit, they're under legalism. They're the captives of sets of rules.

Now there's nothing wrong with rules. We need rules. What is wrong is imagining that keeping those rules will make us righteous with God. Did you see that? Have I made it clear? I'm not preaching lawlessness. I'm not preaching throwing off all the traces and just doing what you please. What I'm saying is don't deceive yourself into thinking that keeping all the rules—my friend Bob Mumford said that in the church he pastored has 33 rules. Somebody came to him one day and said, "Why did Moses only have ten commandments and we have 33?" But if you keep all 33 rules, it doesn't make you righteous. Did you get that?

The other alternative definition of legalism is adding to what God has required for righteousness anything more of ourselves. No one is authorized to add to God's requirements of righteousness any requirements of us. And God says, "All I ask is that you believe in God who delivered Jesus for our offenses and raised him again for our justification." That's all you have to do to be righteous.

(end session one)

Session 2

In our previous session we examined in some detail the very surprising statement that the law brings sin right out into the open. So far from giving us victory over sin, it actually strengthens sin and provokes sin out of us which is a statement that astonishes most people although Paul states it at least half a dozen times in Romans and probably elsewhere, too. So we considered what was the function of the law and the answer was the law does not deliver us from sin but it brings us face to face with the reality of sin and with the inherent evil and weakness of our own carnal nature. Thus, bringing us to the place where we'll turn to God's alternative way which is the way of faith and not of works.

Now we're going to continue with our study in Romans 7 and I want to point out to you that being confronted with the law tends to produce in us a kind of inner spiritual conflict. A war starts within us. As a matter of fact, Paul talks about being brought into captivity to the war of sin which is working in his members. I suppose the more concerned we are to be good and to do good, the more conscious we are of this inner conflict. People who don't care about righteousness or goodness probably don't have much of a conflict. But the more people care and the more they have a desire to be good and to do good, the more conscious they become of this inner conflict.

I believe that the Bible gives us a kind of picture of this conflict in the experience of Rebekah. You'll remember Rebekah was Isaac's wife and they were married for a good many years and couldn't have any children because Rebekah was barren. I don't know whether you've ever considered how many of the women of the Bible for whom God's purpose was that they should become the mothers of most significant children were barren. Sarah, Rebekah, and many others. It's as though God brings us to the place where we have to pray through to the fulfillment of his revealed will. And I think that's an experience that happens in the lives of many of us. God shows us this is my will and it's impossible. But God puts us in a place where it's impossible in order that we may learn to pray through the impossible. So we'll read here in Genesis 25:21 and following about Rebekah.

> "And Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived."

So here married couples who long for children and don't have them, don't give up. I can't count the number of couples who were barren for whom Ruth and I have prayed and when we broke the curse of barrenness, the next news was there was a baby on the way.

Now, going on with the story of Rebekah, verse 22:

> "But the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it is so, why then am I this way?"

In other words, God, what is the meaning of this? Why do I have a struggle inside me?

> "So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples shall be separated from your body; and one people shall be

> stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger."

Which is contrary to natural tradition and culture, especially in the Middle East.

> "When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. And afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob..."

And the word Jacob is derived from the word for a heel. The Hebrew for heel is ?akol? and the Hebrew for Jacob is ?yakol?. It just means he will take by the heel. So he was called after that.

> "...with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them."

So he had to wait to age 60 before he had his children. But I just want to take that as a little picture. Rebekah felt this struggle going on inside her and she couldn't understand what was going on so she went and asked the Lord and the Lord said you've got two kinds of men inside you. He didn't give much detail but he said contrary to normal culture and custom, when they come out, the older one will be the servant of the younger. And out came Esau and then out came Jacob.

Now Esau is all through the Bible a type of what we call the carnal nature, or the carnal man. Jacob is a type of the spiritually disposed man. That doesn't mean that Jacob was always good, you know that. You might wonder why God said, "Esau I've hated, Jacob I've loved." In our culture today Esau would be the good guy and Jacob would be the one the people would take their stand against. That's a remarkable fact but it's true. Esau didn't do anything very wrong but the thing about him that God hated was he was not concerned about his spiritual birthright. He was prepared to sell it for a bowl of soup. And God hates that. Indifference and unconcern about the grace and the spiritual blessings of God is something that provokes God's wrath.

Jacob's one redeeming feature was he esteemed the birthright and the blessings. He was very crooked in the way that he went to get them. He did a lot of things he shouldn't have done and he paid for them. But all through he still had this one redeeming feature. He was determined to get the birthright and the blessings. And that really is about the best that can be said of any of us.

So here are two kinds of nature. The carnal nature is unconcerned about the things of God and the blessings of God. It just wants a good time and plenty to eat and plenty of money and a nice house and a swimming pool. Of course, that's in America. A lot of places are different. The spiritual man is not good, there's a lot of crookedness in him but he has this one redeeming feature that he really is determined to get the blessing of God. And you remember it ended up in a wrestling match where Jacob wrestled all night against an angel. Now there are not many of us who would wrestle all night against an angel. He was a man of strength and determination. He walked away from that wrestling match with his thigh out of joint and from then on he limped. There are lots of men and women who have to have a meeting with God that leaves them limping. For the rest of their days they do not walk in their own strength. At last, Jacob had learned he couldn't do it by his own effort. The last thing he said to that angel who was his redeemer, who was to be his Messiah, he said, "Unless you bless me, I will not let you go. I see the one thing I must have is your blessing."

That's very real to me because the night I met Jesus, without any real knowledge of the Bible, I ended up saying exactly the same thing. Unless you bless me, I will not let you go. And that's when I made contact with him for the first time in my life. So this is a very real story to me.

But what I'm trying to say is don't be disturbed if there's a conflict in you because every one of us—not every one of us. Some of us don't have a Jacob in us. Every one has an Esau, I think. But if there is a Jacob as well as an Esau, there's going to be conflict. These two natures cannot agree.

Now, let's return to Romans 7 and see the way out of the conflict. It's very obvious that Paul had this conflict in a very marked degree. He says at the end of Romans 7:24–25:

> "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"

Or this dead, carnal nature of mine. This body nature that always fights against the things of God, that resists my best

intentions to do good and to keep God's laws. Who will deliver me? It's a cry of anguish.

Now the translations don't bring it out but the text goes on:

> "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

But what he's really saying is "Thanks be to God, there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord!" That's what I want to leave with you. There is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord. The way out is through the cross. It's through the substitutionary sacrifice and death of Jesus. We go back to Romans 6:6 which says:

> "Our old man [our fleshly nature] was crucified with him..."

It was put to death. And because of that we can be delivered from the fleshly nature and come into the fullness of the freedom and the life in the Spirit. But it's only through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. It's only when we do two things. You remember what it said in Romans 6? "Knowing this and reckoning it true." Knowing that our old man was crucified with him. Reckoning that old man to be dead. And as long as we continue reckoning in faith, we will experience it.

Now, we are therefore confronted with the fact that we only have two possibilities. They are these: We're either under the law dominated by sin or we're under grace and led by the Holy Spirit and free from the law and from sin. They are mutually exclusive alternatives. You cannot be in both. That's the important fact. Turn for a moment again to Romans 6:14, just this one statement.

> "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace."

I've already pointed out that clearly implies that if you are under law, sin will be master over you. If you are under grace, you are not under law. You cannot be under law and under grace at the same time. You have to make your mind up.

The alternative is being under grace and being led by the Holy Spirit. This is vitally important because a lot of people say, "Well, if I'm not under the law then I can do whatever I please." That's totally incorrect. The alternative to being under the law is not doing what you please, it's being led by the Holy Spirit. And let me tell you one thing for sure, the Holy Spirit will never lead you to do anything evil or displeasing to God. You can trust him better than you can trust your own efforts to keep the law.

Let's look at these statements then very powerfully made, let's go to Romans 8:14. We'll get there later but we have to look at it now.

> "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

And the word means mature sons. You see, in order to become a child of God, you have to be born of the Holy Spirit. You know that. But in order to become mature in Christ, you have to be led by the Holy Spirit. The only path to maturity is being led by the Holy Spirit. And I would say there are uncounted numbers of God's children who've been born of the Spirit but never learn to be led by the Holy Spirit and they always remain spiritual babies all their lives because the only path to maturity is being led by the Holy Spirit. As many as are regularly led by the Holy Spirit, and it's a continuing present tense, these and these only are sons of God.

So let me say this very clearly. The alternative to being under the law is to be under grace. And if you're under grace, you are being led by the Holy Spirit. Don't ever say Brother Prince said we didn't have to keep any rules so we can do whatever we please. That's totally wrong. The alternative to keeping the rules is being led by the Holy Spirit.

The rules are perfectly all right, you see. But you can't keep them. So, you've only got the other alternative. Trust the Holy Spirit. Learn to be led by him. He'll never lead you astray.

Look now in Galatians 5 for a moment and we'll see the same truth brought out again. Galatians 5:18:

> "But, if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

Could anything be clearer than that? They are mutually exclusive alternatives. If you're being led by the Holy Spirit, you're not under the law. If you're under the law, you're not being led by the Holy Spirit. But the only way to maturity is to be led by the Holy Spirit. So you cannot come to maturity being under the law.

Then let's look in 1 Timothy 1. This is one of those passages that I get a mischievous delight in reading, I'm sorry to say, because it's so totally contrary to the way so many Christians think. I don't desire to shock people but

sometimes I desire to awaken people. 1 Timothy 1:9. Paul says in verse 8, we'd better get that:

> "But we know the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that the law is not made for a righteous man..."

Have you been made righteous by faith in Jesus Christ? Yes or no. Yes, all right, then the law is not made for you. Let me list the kind of people that it is made for and just ask yourself do I want to be among that list.

> "...but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching."

Do you want to be in that list? Well, those are the people that the law is made for. Then Paul sums it up:

> "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted."

This is the message of the gospel. You cannot be made righteous by keeping the law. The only way you can achieve righteousness is through faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Okay. Now in Galatians Paul uses an analogy from again, the experience of the patriarchs. The two sons that were born to Abraham. First Ishmael and then Isaac. Again we have their types. Ishmael is a type of the slave woman Hagar. Paul says in Galatians Hagar corresponds to the covenant that was made at Sinai, to the covenant of the law. So Ishmael is the product of the law, he's the works of the flesh. He's the result of Abraham doing his best to achieve God's purpose by his own efforts. He lost patience, he got tired of waiting for the son that was promised and he listened to his wife who said, "Let's have a child by my maid Hagar." It was not immoral in those days, it was perfectly legitimate within the culture of that day. But it was out of faith, it wasn't in faith. The Bible says whatsoever is not based on faith is sin. Did you know that? Romans 14:23:

> "Whatever is not based on faith is sin."

I'll tell you, God forgave Abraham but he paid a heavy price for that act which is still being paid today. 4000 years later it's the descendants of Ishmael who are the main source of problem to the descendants of Isaac. Could that be interpreted as a warning it doesn't pay to beget things in the flesh? Because, we'll have to live with them.

One interesting fact about Abraham is his only errors did not come from failing to do what God told him, they came from doing more than God told him. I would suppose for most committed Christians that's the same. Our problems will not be disobeying and failing to do what God says, they'll be going beyond what God says and doing our own thing and taking our own initiative. The result will always be an Ishmael. The hardest thing to do sometimes is what? Wait. That's where we usually jump in and beget and Ishmael because we get tired of waiting.

I want to see what Paul says here in Galatians, he says when Isaac came, Ishmael immediately started to make fun of him. The flesh always ridicules the Spirit, you see? And Sarah got angry and she counteracted her own advice. How typical when we're in the flesh! She'd said to Abraham, "You have a son by Hagar." Now she says, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son." Each time Abraham took he advice. The first time it was wrong, the second time it was right. But this is the message. When the child of faith and grace comes, there's no room for the slave woman and her child. Cast out the law and the products of the flesh when the faith child comes.

Notice Isaac was not the product of Abraham's ability, he was the product of a supernatural impartation from God. That's all that's acceptable. What we can do in our own ability is never sufficient to please God. We have to operate on the supernatural level. That's not to become super Christians, that's to become Christians. You cannot live the Christian life on the level of your own ability. You just read through the Sermon on the Mount once and ask yourself how much of that can I do in my own ability, in my own willpower?

Let me say it again, Christianity is not a set of rules.

Now, we're coming to something tremendously important. To be under the law when you have once known grace—I'm not talking about people that have never known grace. But if you've known grace and you go back under the law, you are out of grace, you cannot be under the law and in grace at the same time. Galatians 5:3–4. What was the problem of the Galatian church? They had known God's supernatural grace and power in a wonderful way, and then because of false teachers, Jewish teachers, they had felt that they had

to go back and keep the law of Moses. As I say, Paul was more upset with the Galatians than any other church. It's the only church he wrote to that he didn't thank God for. He can thank God for the Corinthian church even though there was adultery and incest and drunkenness, he still thanked God. But when he started to write to the Galatians he got so upset that instead of saying "I thank God for you" he said, "I marvel that you are so soon turned away from the grace of God." If Paul had a collar, I think he was hot under the collar at that point. It's really worth noting his reaction to that situation.

So this is what he said in Galatians 5:3–4, and he's speaking to people who are circumcised in order to keep the law of Moses, do you understand that? A Jewish baby is not circumcised to keep the law of Moses, you have to understand that. He's circumcised because of God's covenant with Abraham made in Genesis 17. This is very interesting and I'll just point this out to kind of substantiate what I'm saying. Paul had two of his closest disciples, Timothy and Titus. Timothy was born of a Jewish mother and therefore was legally Jewish and Paul had his circumcised for that reason. Titus was totally Gentile and Paul fought a tremendous battle not to have him circumcised. You see that? So for a Jew, circumcision is not keeping the law although it may be in the law. Jesus himself said it wasn't of the law, it was of the fathers. We don't need to go into that because most of you are not Jewish but if ever I meet a Jewish believer I say if you ever have a son, be sure to have him circumcised.

Now, we're talking about people who were Gentiles who were circumcised in order to keep the law. And this is what Paul says to them:

> "I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law."

You cannot just keep one point of the law, you either keep it all or you're not under it at all.

> "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."

I don't think that means they were lost souls but what it means is they were no longer living in the grace of God. That's a very solemn statement. "You have been severed from Christ, those of you who are seeking to be justified, to achieve righteousness, by keeping the law." Could that apply to Christians? It applies to millions of Christians.

Let me close with a little quick picture of the alternatives. You are on a journey from a certain place to a certain place and you've got two alternatives. One is a map, the other is a personal guide. The map is the law, the personal guide is who? The Holy Spirit, that's right. So every one of us is pretty conceited by nature and we say, "I'll take the map. I can handle that." So we start out on our journey and the sun is shining and the birds are singing and we're making terrific progress. But 48 hours later we're in the middle of a forest, it's totally dark, it's raining, we're on the edge of a precipice and we don't know whether we're facing north, south, east or west. That's relying on our own ability to read the map. There's nothing wrong with the map, it's perfect. So a gentle voice says, "Can I help you?" And you say, "Holy Spirit, I need you." "Give me your hand, I'll lead you out." So there we are, the Holy Spirit is leading us, we're on the road, we're doing fine and the sun is shining. We say within ourselves, "You know, I was dumb. I really didn't need to get so scared. I could have made the way out by myself." We turn around and do you know what? The Holy Spirit isn't there any longer.

So about four days later we're in the middle of a bog. Every step we take we're sinking deeper. We're too embarrassed to tell the Holy Spirit we need him now but he says gently, "Maybe you need me." "Oh, Holy Spirit, get me out of this bog." And he does.

Now my question is how often does that have to happen? How many times are we going to snub the Holy Spirit? How long will it be before we realize we can't make it with the map? The map is perfect, the problem is in us. We have to have the personal guide. Then we say to the Holy Spirit, "Look, I've got a map." He says, "Thank you, I don't need the map, I know the way. Besides, I made the map!" You see the picture? Okay.

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Sermon

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