

The Challenge

Group Discussion Series

**Challenging the Contemporary
Presuppositions of the American Church**

Session 2

Law and Gospel

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Justification and Law

The Reformers made perfect law-keeping the standard for justification. In other words, a perfect keeping of the law is required for Christians to remain justified. This fuses law with justification, and fuses justification and sanctification together. Who keeps the law for us as justification's standard is beside the point; there is no law in justification.

When justification and sanctification are fused together, justification can no longer be a finished work, and therefore requires a standard. The Reformed divide justification into three parts: Objective justification, subjective justification, and final justification.

There is no subjective justification; objective justification and final justification were determined upon the just before the foundation of the earth. This isn't necessarily the election issue; this may be more about how God weaves His omniscience and sovereignty together. At any rate, this is just another Reformed fallacy on the list: the idea that Calvinists believe in election. They don't. It is a gargantuan red herring.

The Christian can only gaze upon justification. He/she cannot touch it or affect it. It is finished. It is a gift. Its fullness is incomprehensible to the mortal; it is the very righteousness of God imputed to our account. This is a righteousness imputed to our account APART from the law. Our ability to touch justification in any way is works salvation. Salvation is of God alone.

So, Calvinism fuses justification and sanctification together, fuses the law with justification, and fuses under law and under grace together. Calvinism turns Pauline soteriology completely upside down. Calvin said justification's standard is the law. Therefore, He made much of the Christian's inability to keep the law perfectly. His obsession with the Christian's inability to keep the law perfectly, exposes his gospel for what it is: patently false. Hence, he also fused justification and sonship together with the law. Sin as a member of God's family is also a sin that makes us unjustified. This makes the unregenerate and the regenerate all the same. It makes those under law and those under grace of the same camp.

The verse that speaks to this issue most follows:

Romans 3:19 - Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

First, the law has NOTHING to say to those under grace. It only speaks to those under law in “whatever” it says.

Second, the purpose of the law for those under it is clearly stated: “so that” those under the law “may be” “held accountable.” Hence, Christians are not accountable to the law....for justification.

Thirdly, in regard to justification, the law cannot tell us that Jesus keeps the law for us in order to keep us justified. That regards justification; the law has nothing to say to us in that regard.

Fourthly, no human being is justified by law-keeping. Who keeps it is beside the point, we are justified APART from the law (ROM 3:21, 28). Christ is the end of the law, not the keeping of it for our justification (ROM 10:4).

By ONE ACT of Christ we are justified, not a continuance of law-keeping to keep us justified (Hebrews 10: 10, 12, 14).

Fifthly, in contradiction to Reformed eschatology, Christians will not stand at a future judgment that determines or confirms a “final justification” according to the law because Christians are not “accountable” to the law....for justification. Only those under law are accountable to the law. This would seem evident.

Sixthly, since there is only “knowledge” of sin in the law as set against the backdrop of justification, we cannot be justified by law-keeping, even if Jesus keeps/kept the law for us because it is knowledge of sin in justification. There is no law in justification, and therefore there is no sin in justification to be prevented by

law-keeping. Jesus didn't have to keep the law or fulfill the law for our justification, because we were justified apart from the law and where there is no law, there is no sin:

Romans 4:15 - For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

Romans 5:13 - for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

Romans 7:8 -apart from the law, sin lies dead.

The justified Christian cannot sin against his/her justification because there is no law in justification, and where there is no law, there is no sin. No law-keeping for justification is required, because law is not the standard for justification.

The Apostle Paul makes this case by pointing out that our father in the faith, Abraham, was justified 430 years before the law existed:

Galatians 3:17 - This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. 18 For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. 20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Moreover, the Apostle Paul states with all certainty that there is NO law that can give life. If Christ kept/fulfilled/keeps the law for us in order to keep us justified, that is saying that there is a law that can give life.

Furthermore, there is no need for Christ to fulfill the law for us because we are no longer under it because the old self died with Christ. There is simply no need for Christ to maintain a perfect keeping of the law for a dead person. There are only two kinds of people in the world: those under law, and those under grace (ROM 6:14). The old us that was under law died with Christ. Our sinful self and our sin was imputed to Him, and then we died together with Him:

Romans 6:5 - For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

2Corinthians 5:21 - For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Now that the old self that was under law is dead, we are not held accountable to it; therefore, there is no need for it to be kept or fulfilled in our stead:

Romans 7:1 - Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Christ's death released us from the law and any accountability to it. Why would He have to fulfill it for us? Those who are dead are no longer under it.

Sanctification and Law

This is why we can zealously pursue obedience to the law in our Christian life (sanctification): because we are no longer under it for our justification. Our justification cannot be touched by anything we do in sanctification: “it is finished.” There is no law in our justified state; the law now informs our sanctification:

| Roman 3:21 - But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

Justification is apart from the law, but it is a “witness” in sanctification.

| Galatians 3:21 - Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

We are not under the law for justification, but we are to “listen” to the law in sanctification.

Obviously. Paul gave a straightforward definition of sanctification:

| 1Thessalonians 4:3 - For this is the will of God, your sanctification:[b] that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

Paul would never command such a thing for justification sake. Sanctification is the knowledge and application of how we control our mortal bodies in the Christian life. The law informs us of that. The law is a standard for sanctification, but not justification. Fusing justification and sanctification together fuses law with justification as well, and works salvation can be the only result of that.

This brings us to the new birth. If perfect law-keeping is the standard for justification, the righteousness of the believer must be denied. But not only is perfect law-keeping not the standard for justification, it leads to the biblical misidentification of the righteous believer and fuses the identity of the unregenerate and the regenerate together.

We died with Christ in order to be released from the law as a justification standard, but we were raised with Him in order to be freed from the particular characteristic of those under law:

Romans 6:5 - For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

This is the difference between “under law” and “under grace”: enslavement and freedom are switched leading to a particular direction, not perfection. We are made righteous, but as mortals, we are still susceptible to sin. We are enslaved to righteousness, but free to sin. We are under grace. Those under law are enslaved to sin and free to do righteous acts. The regenerate do not obey perfectly, and the unregenerate do not sin perfectly:

Romans 6:5 - For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.

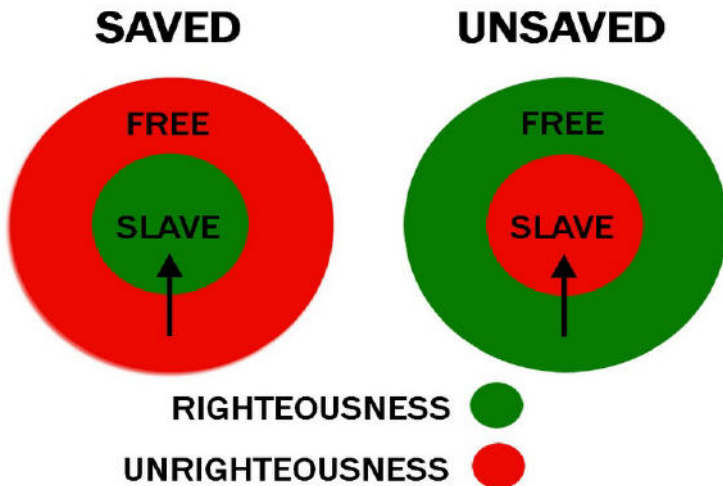
Romans 6:18 - and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness 19.... For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*

*Paul's reference in Roman 7:25 to serving the law of God with his mind has to do with slavery to the law. The word for "serve" in this verse is: g1398. ᾧδῶν δουλεύω; from 1401; to be a slave to (literal or figurative, involuntary or voluntary):— be in bondage, (do) serve (-ice).

The following illustration shows how those under law and those under grace are defined by direction, not perfection.



More definition can be added here as well. Those under law are provoked to sin by the law:

Romans 7:5 - For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Romans 7:8 - But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. 10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

Once again, the word for “serve” in Romans 7:6 is the word for “slave.” And we will add yet another characteristic of those under law as opposed to those under grace; those under the law will be judged by the law:

Romans 2:12 - For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

Paul is saying that those “under the law” will be “Judged” by the law as opposed to those who are enslaved to the law. Those who are enslaved by the law are “doers” of the law. Clearly, Paul is contrasting those who will be judged by the law (under law), and those who are under grace, but enslaved to the law resulting in “obedience from the heart” (ROM 6:17).

Therefore, we have definitions of under law and under grace:

Under law – Enslaved to sin, free to do righteousness, but primarily provoked to sin by the law, and will be judged by the law.

Under grace – Enslaved to the law, free to sin, provoked to righteousness by the law, and will NOT be judged by the law.

Christ came to end the law for justification (ROM 10:4), and to fulfill it through his followers in sanctification:

Romans 8:3 - For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Almost every false gospel there is in the world makes perfect law-keeping the standard for righteousness. This causes the law to be replaced in sanctification by the traditions of men, or posits the idea that there is no law standard in sanctification. The Reformers proffered the idea that Christ kept/fulfilled/keeps the law for us in sanctification in order to fulfill perfect law-keeping in justification. It completely fuses the distinctions between under law and under grace in the Scriptures.

This is another gospel.

