

CHAPTER 3

WHO ARE THUS UNDER THE LAW

BUT you will say — “But who are those that are thus under the law?”

Answer. Those that are under the law may be branched out into three ranks of men; either, first, such as are grossly profane, or such as are more refined; which may be two ways, some in a lower sort, and some in a more eminent way.

First, Then they are under the law as a Covenant of Works who are open profane, and ungodly wretches, such as delight not only in sin, but also make their boast of the same, and brag at the thoughts of committing of it. Now, as for such as these are, there is a Scripture in the ^{<5000>}1 Timothy 1:9, 10, which is a notable one to this purpose, “The law,” saith he, “is not made for a righteous man,” not as it is a Covenant of Works, “but for the” unrighteous or “lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars,” look to it, liars, “for perjured persons, and,” in a word, “if there be any other thing that is not according to sound doctrine.” These are one sort of people that are under the law, and so under the curse of the same, whose due is to drink up the brimful cup of God’s eternal vengeance, and therefore I beseech you not to deceive yourselves; for

“know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (^{<4000>}1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

Poor souls, you think that you may have your sins, your lusts, and pleasures, and yet you shall do pretty well, and be let to go free in the judgment-day; but see what God saith of such in ^{<6000>}Deuteronomy 29:19,

20 — which shall “bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace,” I shall be saved, I shall do as well as others, in the day when God shall judge the world by Jesus Christ; but, saith God, I will not spare them, no, but My anger and My jealousy shall smoke against them. How far? Even to the executing all the curses that are written in the Law of God upon them. Nay, saith God, I will be even with them, “for I will blot out their names from under Heaven.” And indeed it must of necessity be so, because such souls are unbelievers, in their sins, and under the law, which cannot, will not, show any mercy on them; for it is not the administration of mercy and life, but the administration of death and destruction, as you have it (~~400~~ 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9); and all those, every one of them, that are open profane, and scandalous wretches are under it, and have been so ever since they came into the world to this day; and they will for certain live and die under the same dispensation, and then be damned to all eternity, if they be not converted from under that covenant into and under the Covenant of Grace, of which I shall speak in its place; and yet for all this, how brag and crank ^{fa6} are our poor wantons and wicked ones in this day of forbearance! as if God would never have a reckoning with them, as if there was no law to condemn them, as if there was no hellfire to put them into. But O how will they be deceived when they shall see Christ sitting upon the judgment-seat, having laid aside his priestly and prophetic office, and appearing only as a judge to the wicked? when they shall see all the records of Heaven unfolded and laid open; when they shall see each man his name in the Book of Life, and in the book of the law; when they shall see God in His majesty, Christ in His majesty, the saints in their dignity, but themselves in their impurity. What will they say then? whither will they fly then? where will they leave their glory? O sad state! (~~200~~ Isaiah 10:3).

Second. They are under the law also who do not only so break and disobey the law, but follow after the law as hard as ever they can, seeking justification thereby — that is, though a man should abstain from the sins against the law, and Labor to fulfill the law, and give up himself to the law, yet if he look no further than the law he is still under the law, and for all his obedience to the law, the righteous Law of God, he shall be destroyed by that law. Friend, you must not understand that none but profane persons are under the law; no, but you must understand that a man may be

turned from a vain, loose, open, profane conversation and sinning against the law, to a holy, righteous, religious life, and yet be in the same state, under the same law, and as sure to be damned as the other that are more profane and loose. And though you may say this is very strange, yet I shall both say it and prove it to be true. Read with understanding that Scripture in ~~ROM~~ Romans 9:30-31, where the Apostle, speaking of the very thing, saith, “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness;” mark, that followed after the law of righteousness; they notwithstanding their earnest pursuit, or hunting after the law of righteousness, “hath not attained to the law of righteousness.” It signifies thus much to us, that let a man be never so earnest, so fervent, so restless, so serious, so ready, so apt and willing to follow the law and the righteousness thereof, if he be under that covenant, he is gone, he is lost, he is deprived of eternal life, because he is not under the ministration of life if he die there. Read also that Scripture, ~~ROM~~ Galatians 3:10, which saith, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;” mark, they that are of the works of the law. Now, for to be of the works of the law, it is to be of the works of the righteousness thereof — that is, to abstain from sins against the law, and to do the commands thereof as near as ever they can for their lives, or with all the might they have: and therefore I beseech you to consider it, for men’s being ignorant of this is the cause why so many go on supposing they have a share in Christ, because they are reformed, and abstain from the sins against the law, who, when all comes to all, will be damned notwithstanding, because they are not brought out from under the Covenant of Works, and put under the Covenant of Grace.

Objection. “But can you in very deed make these things manifestly evident from the Word of God? Methinks to reason thus is very strange, that a man should Labor to walk up according to the Law of God as much as ever he can, and yet that man notwithstanding this, should be still under the curse. Pray clear it.”

Answer. Truly this doth seem very strange, I do know full well, to the natural man, to him that is yet in his unbelief, because he goeth by beguiled reason; but for my part, I do know it is so, and shall Labor also to convince thee of the truth of the same.

1. Then, the law is thus strict and severe, that if a man do sin but once against it, he, I say, is gone for ever by the law, living and dying under that covenant. If you would be satisfied as touching the truth of this, do but read ⁴⁸⁸⁰Galatians 3:10, where it saith “Cursed is every one,” that is, not a man shall miss by that covenant, “that continueth not in all,” mark, in all “things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Pray mark, here is a curse, in the first place, if all things written in the book of the law be not done, and that, continually too — that is, without any failing or one slip, as I said before. Now there is never a one in the world but before they did begin to yield obedience to the least command, they in their own persons did sin against it by breaking of it. The Apostle, methinks, is very notable for the clearing of this in ⁴⁸⁸⁵Romans 3:5. In the one he endeavors for to prove that all had transgressed in the first Adam as he stood a common person, representing both himself and us in his standing and falling. “Wherefore,” saith he, “as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men,” mark that; but why? “for that all have sinned” (⁴⁸⁹⁰Romans 5:12). That is, forasmuch as all naturally are guilty of original sin, the sin that was committed by us in Adam; so this is one cause why none can be justified by their obedience to the law, because they have in the first place broken it in their first parents. But, in case this should be opposed and rejected by quarrelsome persons, though there be no ground for it, Paul hath another argument to back his doctrine, saying, For we have proved (already) that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin.

1. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.”
2. “They are all gone out of the way, they are together,” mark, together, “become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”
3. “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips.”
4. Their “mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”
5. “Their feet are swift to shed blood.” In a word, “Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known.” Now then, saith he, having proved these things so clearly, the

conclusion of the whole is this, “That what things soever the law saith,” in both showing of sin, and cursing for the same,

“it saith” all “to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”

(^RRomans 3:10, 19).

So that here, I say, lieth the ground of our not being justified by the law, even because, in the first place, we have sinned against it; for know this for certain, that if the law doth take the least advantage of thee by thy sinning against it, all that ever thou shalt afterwards hear from it is nothing but Curse, curse, curse him, “for not continuing in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

2. Thou canst not be saved by the righteous Law of God, the first covenant, because that, together with this thy miserable state, by original and actual sins, before thou didst follow the law, since thy turning to the law thou hast committed several sins against the law — “In many things we offend all.” So that now thy righteousness to the law being mixed with sometimes the lust of concupiscence, fornication, covetousness, pride, heart-risings against God, coldness of affection towards Him, backwardness to good duties, speaking idle words, having of strife in your hearts, and such like; I say, these things being thus, the righteousness of the law is become too weak through this our flesh (^RRomans 8:3), and so, notwithstanding all our obedience to the law, we are yet through our weakness under the curse of the law; for, as I said before, the law is so holy, so just, and so good, that it cannot allow that any failing or slip should be done by them that look for life by the same. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in everything” (^RGalatians 3:10). And this Paul knew full well, which made him throw away all his righteousness. But you will say, that was his own.

Answer. But it was even that which while he calls it his own, he also calls it the righteousness of the law (^RPhilippians 3:7-10) and to account it but dung, but as dirt on his shoes, and that, that he might be found in Christ, and so be saved by Him “without the deeds of the law” (^RRomans 3:28). But,

3. Set the case, the righteousness of the law which thou hast was pure and perfect, without the least flaw or fault, without the least mixture of the least sinful thought, yet this would fall far short of presenting of thee blameless in the sight of God. And that I prove by these arguments —

(1.) The first argument is, that that which is not Christ cannot redeem souls from the curse, it cannot completely present them before the Lord; now the law is not Christ; therefore the moral law cannot, by all our obedience to it, deliver us from the curse that is due to us (^{<4442>}Acts 4:12).

(2.) The second argument is, that that righteousness that is not the righteousness of faith, that is, by believing in Jesus Christ, cannot please God; now the righteousness of the law as a Covenant of Works is not the righteousness of faith; therefore the righteousness of the law as acted by us, being under that covenant, cannot please God. The first is proved in ^{<5106>}Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him;” mark, it is impossible. The second thus, “The law is not of faith” (^{<4812>}Galatians 3:12; ^{<5006>}Romans 10:5, 6), compared with ^{<4811>}Galatians 3:11.

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith.”

But for the better understanding of those that are weak of apprehension, I shall prove it thus —

1. The soul that hath eternal life, he must have it by right of purchase or redemption (^{<5012>}Hebrews 9:12; ^{<4007>}Ephesians 1:7).

2. This purchase of redemption must be through the blood of Christ. “We have redemption through His blood.” “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Now the law is not in a capacity to die, and so to redeem sinners by the purchase of blood, which satisfaction justice calls for. Read the same Scriptures (^{<5022>}Hebrews 9:22). Justice calls for satisfaction, because thou hast transgressed and sinned against it, and that must have satisfaction; therefore all that ever thou canst do cannot bring in redemption, though thou follow the law up to the nail-head, as I may say, because all this is not shedding of blood; for believe

it, and know it for certain, that though thou hadst sinned but one sin before thou didst turn to the law, that one sin will murder thy soul, if it be not washed away by blood, even by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, that was shed when He did hang upon the cross on Mount Calvary.

Objection. But you will say, “Methinks, that giving of ourselves up to live a righteous life should make God like the better of us, and so let us be saved by Christ, because we are so willing to obey His law.”

Answer. The motive that moveth God to have mercy upon sinners is not because they are willing to follow the law, but because He is willing to save them.

“Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprighteous of thine heart dost thou go to possess their land” (⁽⁻¹⁰⁰⁾Deuteronomy 9:4-6).

Now understand this: if thy will to do righteousness was the first moving cause why God had mercy on thee through Christ, then it must not be freely by grace — I say, freely. But the Lord loves thee and saves thee upon free terms, having nothing beforehand to make Him accept of thy soul, but only the blood of Christ; therefore to allow of such a principle it is to allow that grace is to be obtained by the works of the law, which is as gross darkness as lies in the darkest dungeon in Popery, and is also directly opposite to Scripture — For we are “justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ;” not through the good that is in our selves, or done by us, no, “but by faith, without” — mark that — “without the deeds of the law” (⁽⁻¹⁰²⁾Romans 3:24-28). Again, “Not of works, least any man should boast” (⁽⁻¹⁰⁰⁾Ephesians 2:9). No, no, saith he, “Not according to our works,” or righteousness, “but according to His own purpose;” mark “according to His own purpose and grace, which was” a free gift, “given us in Christ Jesus,” not lately, but “before the world began” (⁽⁻¹⁰⁰⁾2 Timothy 1:9).

Objection. But you will say, “Then why did God give the law, if we cannot have salvation by following of it?”

Answer. I told you before that the law was given for these following reasons —

- 1.** That thou mightest be convinced by it of thy sins, and that thy sins might indeed appear very sinful unto thee, which is done by the law these ways — By showing of thee what a holy God He is that did give the law; and, By showing thee thy vileness and wickedness, in that thou, contrary to this holy God, hast transgressed against and broken this His holy Law; therefore, saith Paul, “the law entered, that the offence might abound,” that is, by showing the creature the holiness of God, and also its own vileness (⁴⁸¹Romans 5:20).
- 2.** That thou mayest know that God will not damn thee for nothing in the judgment-day.
- 3.** Because He would have no quarreling at His just condemning of them at that day.
- 4.** Because He will make thee to know that He is a holy God and pure.