

Dear Friends,

During the Lenten Season we often think of giving up pleasures or repenting of things in life we know are "sinful" that can creep into our hearts and threaten to take space that only belongs to our beloved Savior.

I think it's important to remember that our desire is for *purity of heart* and to be *filled with God's life and love* through the Holy Spirit's living presence within us! The disciplines we practice are not another form of "works" or attempting to achieve God's approval and love. We are not focusing on becoming better keepers of the Law.

Jesus said that he came "*not to abolish but to fulfill*" (Matthew 5:17). In Christian theology this fulfillment is understood to occur in the following ways:

1. **JESUS' PERFECT SINLESSNESS**--Jesus is recognized as the only one in human form to perfectly obey all aspects of the Mosaic Law. His sinless life fully satisfied the law's requirement for perfect righteousness.

2. **FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY AND TYPOLOGY**--Jesus "filled up" the Law and Prophets by being the intended goal of the many promises and prophecies. He fulfilled the "types" and "shadows" found in the ceremonial law becoming the final and perfect sacrifice for sin.

3. **REDEMPTIVE COMPLETION ON THE CROSS**--On the cross, Jesus bore the "*curse of the law*"--the legal penalty for human disobedience--declaring "*It is finished*" (John 19:30) indicating all requirements were met. His death inaugurated a New Covenant shifting the basis of righteousness from external adherence to a written code to *internal transformation* through faith in his finished work and his gifts of grace.

4. **FULFILLMENT "IN" THE BELIEVER**--Through the Holy Spirit, the law's principles are "*written on the heart*" (Jeremiah 31:33), empowering believers to authentically live out the true spirit of God's will rather than just trying to keep rules.

5. **THE LAW OF LOVE**--Christian teaching holds that the entire law is fulfilled in the single command to love God fully and to love one's neighbor as one's self. Our union with Christ (by faith and practice) empowers us to live by the Law of Love. (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14).

I trust that these moments of theological thinking together are an enrichment in your Lenten journey of renewal, refreshment and revival in the Faith!

With love to you,

Pastor Duff