

Bible Study

Christ fulfilled the law

(edited transcript)

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Satan, whom Jesus identified as a liar and the father of lies¹, became the father of a lie within mankind at the fall, when, as the craftiest animal in the Garden, he told Adam and Eve that they could be like God².

He was fathering a very specific lie into their consciousness - into the very DNA of mankind. The result was that mankind was drawn into a fellowship other than God's fellowship, a dialogue other than the Lord's.

Fellowship is walking in the light

'Fellowship' is a word we all use, but we need to be very careful about the way we understand and participate in fellowship. We need to be trained as disciples to know and participate in what fellowship actually is. You can grow up in church thinking that fellowship is having friendly conversations over morning tea at the end of a church service, or that fellowship is church people getting together for

an event or a group activity. But true fellowship is very specific because *God* is a fellowship.

When the apostle John proclaimed: 'This is the message...'³, our various church backgrounds might have taught us to auto-complete John's statement: '...that Jesus died for our sins on the cross.' But that is not what John declares at all! Rather, he proclaims:

"This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

As a member of the early church presbytery, John proclaimed this message in the context of a whole letter that he began by inviting all to whom he wrote, including us, to come into the fellowship of the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. He said: 'Our fellowship is with Them. We have seen, heard and touched this fellowship in which we now abide, and we are inviting and entreating you to join us in this fellowship'⁴.

John then went on to explain that walking in this fellowship is walking in the light⁵. Walking in the light is the culture of the offering fellowship of God who is light and love. The light of the love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a consuming fire of light as They make offering to One Another.

¹ John 8:44

² Genesis 3:5

³ 1 John 1:5

⁴ 1 John 1:3-5

⁵ 1 John 1:7

If we walk in the light of *that* fellowship, then two things will result. We will have fellowship together, and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all sin⁵. This is our faith commitment, to die with Christ. And if we confess our sins, Christ will not only forgive us our sins but also cleanse us from all unrighteousness⁶.

What is this unrighteousness? It is the whole bag of self-definition we bring to God. The righteousness of God is only fulfilled in us when we are doing the specific works that *He* wants us to do, not the works that *we* think, as devoted religious people, we should be doing.

God is light and He wants us to walk in His light, not sporadically but as our way of life, our culture. Now, that is not something we naturally know or *can* naturally know. We need to learn it. We need to be taught and disciplined in how to walk in the light.

It's not walking in the light to jaw on to others about your favourite Scriptures. It's not walking in the light to have a different point of view about the meaning of Scripture verses, nor is it fellowship to agree to disagree with others about the word. That is not how God relates! The Father, Son and Holy Spirit don't disagree over the word of God, politely respecting each Person's view and Their right to Their own view. The Son of God did *not* say, 'I only do what the Father says when I agree with what He's saying'⁷, nor did He say, 'If the Holy Spirit agrees with Me, He takes what is Mine and gives it to you'⁸.

We don't understand the fellowship of the Lord unless we enter into it through His death that we join. If we try and enter by agreement, then wherever we *don't* agree, we will turn away. And if we continue turned away, we will end

up, with a fury and a vengeance, walking away from fellowship. This is the history of the church, and this where and how the church is hurt.

Disagreements show whether people are mature or not. When we blow up or give up because things are difficult for us, or because we don't agree, our immaturity is displayed. Hiving off when the pressure's on and doing our own thing is what children do. The apostle Paul testified:

"...when I became a man, I put away childish things." (1 Corinthians 13:11)

My sharing with you today in the word of the Lord is a fellowship with you and an invitation to you to join that fellowship. Fellowship is the way God relates. When we are walking in the light together, then as the word is proclaimed we will have fellowship together and God will do His work in each one of us.

This is what the communion service in which we participate is all about. Someone will come with a song, prepared to bring it into fellowship in the light. If, by the light of that fellowship, their song is not called for today, does that mean they walk away in offense, feeling rejected because their offering is not accepted, or that *they* are not accepted? That response would just highlight their immaturity. In His love, God deliberately crosses each one of us to expose our immaturities so that we turn to Him and away from ourselves, away from the childish offenses we so easily take up against those we think have not understood us.

Without realising, we can come to Christ believing we have God's viewpoint when the view we actually have is according to the lie that Satan fathered into us and that the Lord is

⁶ 1 John 1:9

⁷ John 5:19; 12:49

⁸ John 16:14-15

seeking to address in us. The truth is found in fellowship as we walk in the light together.

That is why the Scriptures declare:

“...how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon [Aaron the priest’s] head...coming down upon the edge of his robes...for there the Lord commanded the blessing - life forever.”

(Psalm 133:1-3)

That is the anointing of the Lord!

The lie of another law

When Satan fathered his lie in us, he fathered another law into us - a law of our own that is other than God’s law. This law of ours manifests as our choice, our view, our self-determination, our arbitration of right and wrong, all based on our own understanding. The whole world, every person, has been caught up in making self-generated value judgments about right and wrong. And everyone believes that in doing so, when the scales are finally balanced, the ledger of life will be in their favour. That is why people become upset when someone contradicts them or cuts across their moral view.

God is not a higher moral agent. He is love. One of the fruits of the lie Satan fathered in us is the mistaken belief that as Christians we are on a moral crusade toward ourselves, other people and the world. We are *not* on any such crusade! It is true that the law of God must be fulfilled, and that its fulfilment has moral outcomes. Immorality is certainly proscribed, but the fulfilment of God’s law does *not* rest in our hands. The cross has forever changed our relationship to the law of God, for Christ completely fulfilled it, then nailed it with Himself to the cross⁹.

Those of us who had an evangelical upbringing were taught that there is a tension between law and grace. Someone recently asserted that without that tension, there is no gospel. But that is total nonsense! Wherever there is *any* tension between law and grace, then right there the gospel is not operative, for in the cross of Christ the tension between the two has been completely resolved.

Tension between the law of God and the grace of God is only encountered by us when we revert to trying, by our own vain efforts, to keep the law. For we are not law keepers, nor can we be. By the Spirit of God, who writes His law on our hearts, we are law *fulfillers*. This is how we are to live and walk for the whole of our lives, maturing all the way through until our dying breath. We freely confess, with Paul, ‘I haven’t yet attained, but I’m pressing on in Christ towards His calling for me¹⁰’.

Just as there is no tension between the law of God and the grace of God, neither is there any tension between the Old Testament and the New. Both are fulfilled in Christ. There is no incongruity to resolve.

Satan’s lie, and its resulting law within us, locked us into becoming our own arbiters of right and wrong, good and evil. Sin became our master when Satan’s lie deceived Adam and Eve into disobeying the word of God and severing themselves from God’s fellowship in the light. They began withdrawing from His fellowship the moment they gave ear to the lie. This same withdrawal is true for all of us. The moment we start giving ear to a lie, we begin withdrawing from the light and we retreat further and further into darkness. If we then take hold of the lie as the truth, then the light

⁹ Matthew 5:17; Colossians 2:14

¹⁰ Philippians 3:13

within us turns into greater and greater darkness¹¹.

The carnal default

If we are carnal, the way we operate is by our own law. It is like breathing to us, and is so normal and so appealing to us that we don't think we can possibly be wrong. When we're carnal, we even pray this way, thinking that ideas that come to us while we're praying and that seem good or evil by our own assessment are therefore what we and others should do or avoid. But our good ideas so often oppose the truth! If we're not careful, Satan gets in behind our carnal prayers and deceives us. We have to understand that God is set on delivering us from living in this independent way to living as brethren together in His fellowship!

As we are joined in His fellowship, we find the word of God that is proclaimed giving us the boundaries of our reality each day, and we are no longer creating our own 'reality' or agenda.

Because the other law and the law of sin are within everybody, the mortal body of a carnal person is a body of death¹². Unless and until we are set free, we are unavoidably trapped in a body of death. And having been once set free, we need to be set free daily.

We must walk by the Spirit, otherwise we will fulfil the lusts of our flesh even when we don't want to¹³. It will be as inevitable as gravity. We need to have our senses honed and our understanding increased and enlarged. This is what the process of maturity does. As we grow up in the Lord, we become increasingly able to recognize when carnality is leading us, and we return again to abiding in Him and allowing His word to abide in us. Repentance and faith are

the total reality of our lives and our walk each day.

For the carnal person, the body of death in which they live their lives is dying under the judgment of the law. Let me illustrate how this works. Imagine that someone offends you, and in response you withdraw and stew on all the rights and wrongs of what's happened. Taking up the law of rights and wrongs again, you reinstate your old relationship with the law, removing it for yourself from the cross of Christ to wield it according to your own assessment of your rights and the other person's wrongs. You have become their judge, perhaps even using the Scriptures to prove your case. But in reverting to the law, you have come back *under* the law and are judged by it. You are back in the body of death.

We have to let go of living this carnal way! A spiritual person responds to the same offense knowing that Christ has already become sin for them and has fulfilled the entire law so that they would *not* be trapped in a body of death. Knowing this, they leave the law where Christ nailed it, and they do not wield it.

The Scriptures say that if anyone is going to live by the law, they must keep *all* of it¹⁴. Next time you are judging somebody, remember that the standard you are wielding is God's and is absolute. If you use the law, He requires you to keep the *whole* of the law, and since you have already broken it if you live this way, you are without hope. We *can't* keep the whole of the law for even one minute. Whenever we bring judgement on someone else, we're shot to bits ourselves under judgment. This is what Jesus meant when He warned:

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged."
(Matthew 7:1)

¹¹ Matthew 6:23

¹² Romans 7:24

¹³ Romans 7:15

¹⁴ Joshua 23:6; Galatians 5:3

He was not speaking against the law of God here. The law is not the problem, for the law and its commands are holy¹⁵. The problem is our fallen relationship to the law and our deceived insistence that we can keep it. However, we can be delivered from the problem as we receive the law *by the Holy Spirit*, and *He* writes His law on our hearts¹⁶.

Through the cross, the Lord has cast your sin into the sea of His forgetfulness. At the end of each day you can be real about where you fell short and you can go to bed with a clear conscience. If you need to make any relationships right, then that is what you must do. Hopefully, that is what we all do as we walk in the light with a clear conscience.

A person who is dying under the judgment of the law will hang onto their hurt, and it will define the way they look at those who hurt them. They will surely withdraw from fellowship in the light, and their offended anger will spread to those who relate to them, potentially destroying people's lives.

As well as using the law to judge others, it is equally possible for us to use it to judge ourselves. If a person has sinned in a way that they feel has 'crossed the line' and is therefore too big to bring into the light, they will withdraw. They will find themselves coming under the judgment of the law because they are using the law to judge themselves as unworthy. They will not see the confusion they are in, considering themselves worthy to wield the very law they are using to judge themselves as unworthy. That is a mark of the lie that was fathered into mankind by Satan. It doesn't even make logical sense. However, we go on doing it, swinging between feeling bad *under*

the law and feeling good *over* the law, thinking we are being sincere, religious people when all the while we are being deceived by Satan's lie and living in the mode of relationship that he fathered within us.

There is no other law in Christ

Christ's body was a mortal body. However, unlike Adam and all of mankind after him, He had no other law within Him. Satan had not fathered a lie in Christ. Jesus did not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; He didn't want to be like God; He didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped¹⁷. He had no element of a law other than God's law within Him, nor was sin His master.

Because Christ was the only mortal man found worthy, He was made sin for us by the Father.

"[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might be the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians, 5:21).

Why? 'Righteousness', like 'fellowship', is a word that describes relationship. It is not a legal word. When a person sins, what is God's view about what has been done? Christ offered Himself to the Father to be made the complete offering for sin. Will God now count a person's sin against them? His promise is that He will not¹⁸. What He *will* count against a person is their unbelief in Christ; their choosing not to turn to Him¹⁹. And if they will not turn to Christ, then He can do nothing with them because every provision that has been made for them is in Christ and has been finished in Christ. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and has opened the way for us in Him²⁰. If a person

¹⁵ Romans 7:12

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:3

¹⁷ Philippians 2:6

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:19

¹⁹ John 16:8-11; Hebrews 9:28

²⁰ John 14:6

refuses His invitation to walk in that way, there is nothing else that can be done.

In the week before His crucifixion, Jesus told the crowd in Jerusalem:

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:32)

Jesus was lifted up for us on the cross as sin, opening the way through which we could be drawn to Him, to die *with* Him and in right relationship.

When Christ was crucified, dying there beside Him were two thieves, one on either side of Him. These two thieves represent every human being who has ever been or will ever be conceived. No one is left out. One thief believed and died with Christ to eternal life; the other did not believe but rejected Christ and died without Him to judgment and eternal damnation.

Will you believe, join Christ’s death for you and find His life, or will you be like the unbelieving thief and rail against Him in your difficulties? Will you judge God by your own law, demanding that He meet your measure of who He should be and what He should do for you and for the world? Will you have God in the dock and judge Him lacking? If you take this arrogant path, you will die under the judgment of the law that you have taken into your own hands.

Christ was made sin by the Father when He drank the cup that the Father gave Him in the Garden of Gethsemane:

“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39)

Christ was not disobedient, or unwilling. He was authoring a pathway of deliverance for every person from the difficulty of their fallen mortality and entrapment by sin. As He prayed and offered Himself to the Father, He was becoming sin for us. As He drank the cup the Father gave Him, His mortal body was made for us the body of sin.

Now, here is a warning. The very cup Christ drank and now shares with us to free us *from* judgement can also *bring* judgment. It can be to us the cup of Christ, or we can make it a cup of demons²¹. We will receive from one cup or the other at the end of the age, for the cup can be poured out on us for judgment if we will not receive it His way through the cross. He drank the full measure of judgment by becoming sin for all of us. He tasted all of it, drinking every failure by every person of every aspect of the law, down to the minutest detail. So then, do we think He doesn't understand your difficulties?

He does understand, and invites:

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me” (Matthew 11:29).

Jesus has been to every depth to which any person, including you and I, has descended. He has already been all the way down, and He has come all the way back. The death He died, He died to sin²². He became sin, then He died to it, and then He came back from the death of sin, bringing us back with Him.

We cannot remove sin

There is no way for us to deal with our sin ourselves, nor is there any way we can extricate ourselves from the judgment of the law. There is just no way or means, no matter how virtuous, by which we can save ourselves. No theology, activity or defence can justify us. Our

²¹ 1 Corinthians 10:21

²² Romans 6:10

only hope is in joining Christ in the fellowship of His offering, and we can only know this through illumination as we walk in the light.

We can say it this way. Jesus became the embodiment of the principle of sin, the body in which sin was to be killed, through His offering on the cross. Christ didn't merely die for sin through His cross - He took sin right out of the equation, making it possible for us, in Him, to overcome sin, not just be forgiven for it. Forgiveness is a beginning that we surely need, but our coming to Him is not just for forgiveness, as if, unavoidably helpless under sin for the rest of our earthly lives we are now forgiven instead of judged. That is so much less than the love and work of God through the cross! We are participants in the finished work of the cross of Christ, and our commitment is to participate in that work He wrought. As we participate with Him at every stage in life, we grow in maturity commensurate with the maturity that God desires for us.

As a result, when we're adults, we won't still think and behave as children. *That* is not what God wants. We all have failings, but we have to be real about them and understand that God has better things for us and, because of His great love, He joins us to Christ's sufferings so that with Him we can learn and mature. Joined to Christ, we still suffer, but not any longer because of God's judgment. Rather, because of His love. Judgment is the outcome of *not* accepting and participating in Christ's offering and in all that He has for us.

Let's be clear. When Christ was put to death in His mortal body, His body was not a body of death like ours. Until we have been delivered over by God and joined to the offering of Christ, we are all carnal and abiding in a body of death. Outside of Christ and His offering, mankind is

dying. They are aware of their own mortality, and aware that the planet they inhabit is also heading towards death, everything deteriorating and running out of puff. Their whole consciousness is set on keeping things going, physically and emotionally. Positive thinking and happiness methods abound more and more as people become increasingly aware that things are winding down and are not going to survive. But the solutions men propose are becoming more vicious than the problems they seek to address. That is the history of mankind and is always what man does under threat.

God is going to have the final say on the whole matter because He will roll all things up like a scroll²³. It will all be gone. What every person will then see, face to face, is Him. And that will either be to us a terrifically liberating sight, or the end. Which will it be for you and me? Will we now fall on our knees, on our faces, and say: 'Lord, I belong to You.'? If we will, He will affirm that He knows us and our works.

Does God know you and your works? Or are you hoping that your theology, your church attendance and the 'good' things you've done here and there are going to win the day for you?

Resurrection life in the blood of Christ

Jesus did not have another law within Him as we do. He knew no sin at all²⁴. Christ's body was not a body of death like ours. He was made sin for us so that His body became the body of sin. As the body of sin, Christ dealt with sin, encompassing and destroying it utterly in His death.

The resurrection life of God the Father was in Christ's blood and mortal body. We certainly don't have that kind of life in ourselves! The life

²³ Isaiah 34:4; Revelation 6:14

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:21

is in the blood²⁵, and because the very life of God was in Christ's blood, so too was God's full capacity for resurrection. That is why His body was never a body of death and why it did not decay in death²⁶. When it was time, He just exited His burial wrappings, folded up His head covering and went out for a morning stroll²⁷. Someone even thought He was the local gardener²⁸.

Jesus was not just resurrected by the Father. He had the capacity of the Father's resurrection life *within* Him. Death did not take His life from Him. He *gave* up His spirit²⁹ and then went into the bosom of the Father for three days and three nights and fellowshiped with Him there. He then ministered to His disciples on earth for a short time, then went up bodily into heaven³⁰. That fact that He was taken up bodily, in His mortal body, is wonderful, and is why *we* will have a new body in the new heavens and new earth³¹.

Christ destroyed sin and its power by going forth as God's righteous slave, conquering and to conquer. Just as the white horse and rider are seen in the time of the end going forth conquering and to conquer³², Christ went forth, in the seven reproaching events that He suffered as He journeyed from Gethsemane to the cross, conquering and to conquer. At no point was any bone of His broken³³. It must have completely confounded Christ's attackers that no matter what they did to Him, they could not break Him. This was a wonder!

As we join Christ, and live by His faith, we too will walk through difficulties in a way that will confound those around us in the world, in whose minds we should not be able to cope

with the pressures that are upon us. They will think we should be defending ourselves; we should be angry; we should be depressed; we should be collapsing; we should not be able to walk; we should not be able to forgive or love our enemies who are persecuting us. It will confound them when we are simply abiding in Christ, overcoming in Him.

In all the reproaches Jesus suffered for us along His way to the cross, He overcame in this way. In so doing, He judged the very law that was coming at Him in the hands of His persecutors. His adversaries thought they were overcoming Him through their use of the law, yet all the while He was filling up judgment on all they were doing, and He was overcoming. The world, motivated by sin through the other law that was in them, endeavoured to use the law and legal argument to kill Christ, empowered to do so by their own sense of morality.

In these days and times, we find the same thing happening, for this is the way the world views and speaks of the church and the Scriptures. Every criticism is framed in moral terms so that people are not satisfied merely to disagree with us - they are driven to prove that Christians are morally bankrupt. Now, in Christ, with Him, you and I are overcoming this antagonism instead of being overcome by it. We don't need to keep listening to its onslaught, and we don't need to keep trying to develop arguments against it. We are in Christ, who through the cross overcame the power of sin without opening His mouth³⁴. We are participating in His finished work. The world has come under God's judgment, but we have found refuge in Christ.

²⁵ Leviticus 17:11

²⁶ Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27

²⁷ John 20:3-7

²⁸ John 20:15

²⁹ Luke 23:46

³⁰ Acts 1:9-11

³¹ 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

³² Revelation 6:2

³³ Psalm 34:20; John 19:33-36

³⁴ Isaiah 53:7

When the soldiers, chief priests, captains of the temple guard and elders, motivated by the law of sin to kill Christ, came to arrest Him, He said to them:

“Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” (Luke 22:52-53)

Jesus was identifying exactly what was going on, and the nature of their exertions against Him. However, Jesus did not die under the judgment of the law. The law did not kill Christ. Instead, He fulfilled the law by laying His life down for us in offering. *This* was the death that He died, which was distinct from the death that we die because of sin. Jesus didn't have to die that death, for He had no sin. Rather, in love He fulfilled the law. He took it all the way to its conclusion, drinking the cup of our cursing, becoming sin for us and then taking the law that He fulfilled and nailing it to His cross.

Therefore, through the cross, our relationship to the law has changed. The apostle Paul, whose initial relationship with the law had been as a Pharisee trying to keep the law, describes the changed relationship. He tells us that when he heard the law not to covet, he started coveting, could not help coveting, and was in a body of death from which he needed deliverance³⁵. But then he tells us, praise be to God, there is now a way of deliverance from the body of death that is inescapably under judgment³⁶. We join Christ, who knew no sin but offered Himself to be made the body of sin and take it to death, so that in Him we *can* overcome sin, no longer trying by our own resolve and efforts not to covet, but not by the

grace and capacity of God who does not covet, no longer coveting.

Christ fulfilled then crucified the law

Christ fulfilled the law of God through offering Himself in obedience to the Father. Having removed the law out of the hands of sin by fulfilling it, He therefore *could* nail it with Himself to the cross.

Sin has a volition and an initiative to kill us with the law, and it takes occasion to do so by using the law³⁷. But now the law has been removed by Christ out of the hands of sin. He took it completely out of action, nailing it with Himself to the cross. No man had ever kept the law or could ever keep the law, so He completely reoriented our relationship to the law through His cross.

That is why the apostle Paul said that his message and relationship with everyone and everything was nothing but Christ and Him crucified³⁸. Many, by their own law, didn't like the apparent weakness of Paul's message or of Paul himself. However, he did not try to win people over by a show of strength or by his legal expertise, which they were daring him to do and which he had the capacity and authority to do. Why did he not do that? Because Paul had learned, through the cross, that the power of God is manifested in weakness³⁹.

Once Christ had fulfilled the law and taken it out of the hands of sin by nailing it with Himself to the cross, sin could no longer use the law as a weapon to kill and destroy us, provided we abide in Him. If we do *not* abide in Him but take the law back into our own hands, it will again destroy and kill us. Sin will use the law again and we will be condemned, finding misery, anger and amorality for we cannot keep the lid

³⁵ Romans 7:7-24

³⁶ Romans 7:25-8:4

³⁷ Romans 7:11

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:2

³⁹ 2 Corinthians 12:9

on our own corruption. Even if we could, God, in Christ, has forever closed off that way.

The way He has opened for us is that we can receive and have in us the seed of Christ's life, going with Him into the ground to die and then springing forth with Him as a first fruit of His resurrection life. *This* is the nature of the cross! Sin had reigned in death by using the law, but now through Christ's righteous obedience, grace reigns in life⁴⁰, for Christ has fulfilled the law through the cross, just as He said:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to destroy them but to fulfil them.” (Matthew 5:17)

In our fallen condition, we do not know what fulfilling the law of God even looks like it. But in Christ, we *do* see. The law of God was fulfilled through His perfect love, and the judgement of the law was also fulfilled as Jesus took it 'outside the camp'⁴¹ and left it there, coming back in and bringing us, who had been captive to sin, with Him.

As a result, mankind can find liberty with Him. Or, we can reject it. If we reject His way of liberty, we face everlasting burnings. If we receive and join Him, we join the liberty that comes from His disempowering of sin so that it no longer reigns over us. Sin no longer has mastery or dominion over us, and having been set free by the Son, we are free indeed⁴².

There is so much the Lord is showing us and helping us to see and understand! Little by little He is leading us into the truth and away from the mistaken assumptions, beliefs and ideas we've held that have caused so much grief.

May the Lord help us see and receive what He is saying to us!

⁴⁰ Romans 5:21

⁴¹ Leviticus 4:12; Hebrews 13:13

⁴² John 8:36