

GOD'S LAW...



OR GOD'S GRACE?

The cover image for this booklet depicts two paths reflecting the erroneous beliefs that one must “have works” OR “have faith” in order to be saved! James addressed this controversy in chapter 2, verses 17-18—as we also do in the pages which follow. The cover image shows that the two paths lead to opposite directions, without reaching the same destination.

This booklet is a free educational service, provided by the “Church of the Eternal God” in the United States of America, in collaboration with the “Church of God, a Christian Fellowship” in Canada and the “Global Church of God” in the United Kingdom. Printed in the USA 2016. This booklet is not to be sold.

Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the New King James version ((c)1988 Thomas-Nelson, Inc. Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

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Introduction

The topic of law and grace has been widely discussed among various Christian groups, yet it remains fundamentally confusing for many people. Traditional Christianity believes that Christ came to abolish the law of the Ten Commandments, and that we are absolved from any responsibilities simply because we are under grace. But is this true? How does one who claims to be a Christian know what to believe?

In this booklet we will examine many of the ideas brought forth by mainstream Christianity, many of which are diametrically opposite ideas. Some quote certain passages to say that we will inherit eternal life because of grace, no matter how we live. Others claim that we must keep the Ten Commandments in order to earn our salvation. Still others say that we must also keep the entire Law of Moses, including the ritual laws contained in the Old Testament. Then there are those who say that we earn salvation through our good works. We will show you, through Scripture, why *all* of these concepts are *wrong*.

We will explain what law and grace are, and why we are no longer under law but under grace, and what, exactly, this statement means. We will lay out scriptural proof that salvation is a free gift from God, but that He will not save us if we continue to live with hatred and malice toward Him, thereby showing our total disregard and rejection of His law.

In addition, we will show you how it is actually possible for us to keep God's law and what it means that His law is written on our hearts, because these questions have also been grossly misunderstood.

The first part of this booklet explains the many aspects of God's law and how it is possible for us to keep the law, and the second part discusses God's grace and what effect it has on us.

To be clear, the real issue is not a matter of law OR grace, but rather a matter of law AND grace.

Part 1 - The Law of God

Chapter 1

Christ Fulfilled the Law

What did Christ mean when He said that He had come to FULFILL the law? Does this imply that He did away with the law?

Quite the contrary is correct. Christ's statement that He came to FULFILL the law does NOT mean that He did away with it.

Notice what Christ said in **Matthew 5:17**: "Do NOT think that I came to DESTROY the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy BUT to FULFILL." Christ did not say here that He had come to destroy the law. Neither did He say that "fulfilling" the law meant "destroying it," because if that were true, then Christ's statement would read: "I did not come to destroy the law but to destroy the law," which, of course, would make no sense.

Meaning of "Fulfill"

In the Greek, the word for "fulfill" is "*pleroo*." It is true that this word can designate completion or even cessation—but as will be pointed out, it can also mean continued activity in carrying out something, depending on the context. For instance, in Luke 7:1, the word "*pleroo*" is used in the sense of "end" or "conclude": "Now when He concluded all His sayings..." In Acts 19:21, the Greek word is translated as "accomplished": "When these things were accomplished..." (The *Authorized Version* says "ended" in both passages.)

However, the Greek word "*pleroo*" also conveys the meaning of "filling up" or "making full," with the concept of continuing to carry out a specific task.

In our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound*, we explain on pages 17 and 18:

"Christ did not come to do away with God's spiritual law of the

Ten Commandments. He stated in Matthew 5:17 that He had NOT come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it—to magnify it, to exalt it and to make it more honorable (Isaiah 42:21), to fill it up with its intended meaning, to show how to keep it perfectly in the flesh. The Greek word for ‘fulfill’ is *pleroo*. It literally means ‘to fill’ or ‘to make full’ (*Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*). In Matthew 3:15, it is used in this context: ‘...it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’

“In Philippians 2:2, Paul states, ‘...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love.’ Further, Paul reminds the saints in Colossae that he became a minister to ‘fulfill the word of God’ (Colossians 1:25), and he admonishes Archippus to ‘take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it’ (Colossians 4:17). None of these passages conveys the thought that something has ended—rather, the obvious understanding is that something should be continued to be filled with meaning, or to be brought to perfection... God’s spiritual law, as defined in the Ten Commandments, the statutes and the judgments, ‘stand[s] fast forever and ever’ (Psalm 111:7–8), and... it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away ‘than for one tittle of the law to fail’ (Luke 16:17). A tittle is the smallest stroke in a Hebrew letter.”

In the above-quoted excerpt, the Greek word *“pleroo”* conveys the meaning of fulfilling a task in a continuing way, rather than completing a task and ceasing to do it.

In addition, note this quote from page 4 of the same booklet:

“The apostle James... silences those who claim that we today do not have to keep ALL of God’s Ten Commandments. Let’s read his decisive answer in James 2:8–12: ‘If you really fulfill [that is, keep] the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep [or, fulfill] THE WHOLE LAW, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of ALL. For He who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a TRANSGRESSOR of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.’”

In this passage, the Greek word for “fulfill” is *“teleo,”* but the intended meaning is obviously the same: We are to continue fulfilling

or keeping the law—not ceasing to keep it. This conclusion is clear when we understand what sin is—and that we have to repent of sin to obtain eternal life.

Repent of SINNING Against God’s Law

Please note these excerpts from pages 14–15 of our free booklet, *Baptism—A Requirement for Salvation?*:

“What, exactly, is it that we need to repent of...? Simply put, we must repent of the sins we have committed. What is sin? The biblical definition is: ‘...sin is the transgression of the law’ (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). Which law? The law of God’s Ten Commandments. James calls it the ‘royal law according to the Scripture’ (James 2:8). It defines our love toward God and our love toward neighbor. When we break even one of the Ten Commandments, we are guilty of having broken them all and have become a transgressor of the law (James 2:10–11). The law of the Ten Commandments is a spiritual law, as Paul explains in Romans 7:14, because it regulates not only our actions, but also the motives and intents of our heart. We sin when we commit adultery (Exodus 20:14), but we also sin when we DESIRE or COVET the wife of another man (Exodus 20:17), or when we look at another woman with the desire to commit adultery with her (Matthew 5:28). Additionally, we sin when we kill someone (Exodus 20:13), but we have already sinned by violating God’s spiritual law of the Ten Commandments when we even HATE another human being (Matthew 5:21–22; 1 John 3:15).”

Christ did not come to do away with God’s law; otherwise, there would be no more sin and we would not need to repent of anything. But Christ said that we have to REPENT and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14–15). The resurrected Christ commanded His disciples that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name” (Luke 24:47). And Peter proclaimed that same message, as is recorded in Acts 2:38. Christ had come to FULFILL the law; that is, He kept it PERFECTLY, giving us an example that we “should follow His steps” (compare 1 Peter 2:21). **He did not keep the Law FOR us so that we don’t have to keep it anymore.** Rather, He told a young rich ruler: “If you want to enter into life, KEEP the commandments” (compare Matthew 19:17).

Keep the Commandments

Note this excerpt from our free booklet, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*, on page 24:

“Christ warned those of His time, as well as us today, that not everyone who would just say ‘Lord, Lord’ to Christ, would enter the Kingdom of God, but only the person ‘who does the will of My Father in heaven’ (Matthew 7:21). This same thought is expressed in Luke 16:16: Everyone wants to desperately enter the Kingdom of God. But what does Christ tell us in verse 17: ‘And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.’ In other words, if you want to enter into eternal life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS. Only those who do the will of the Father, which is, to keep the commandments of God, will enter the Kingdom of God.

“And now Christ continues to give us an example of such a commandment to be kept, in verse 18: ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.’ ‘You shall not commit adultery’ is one of the commandments that we are to keep. And divorcing someone for any other than Biblical reasons and then marrying again, is a violation of the law against adultery. In order to enter the Kingdom of God, in order to be part of the Kingdom of God, we must KEEP God’s Law. It is the SAME Law, as we are told in Luke 16:16, that had already been preached up until the time of John the Baptist. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the Law to fail.”

The teaching of the Bible is consistent. In order to inherit eternal life, we must keep God’s law—the Ten Commandments—as well as the statutes and judgments that further define and explain the Ten Commandments. Christ did not come to “fulfill” the law by doing away with it or by destroying it. Rather, Christ came to “fulfill” the law by making it more honorable (Isaiah 42:21), by MAGNIFYING it, by showing us HOW to obey it both in the letter AND in the SPIRIT. This includes ALL of God’s commandments, including the Fourth Commandment, which enjoins us to keep God’s Sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8). For more information on that important subject, please read our free booklet, *God’s Commanded Holy Days*.

Chapter 2

Christ Is the End of the Law

We find the following statement in **Romans 10:4**: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Many use this Scripture to support the false concept that Christ came to end or abolish the law, and that we are free to break the law (which, they claim, does not exist anymore for us), and that all we need in order to be righteous in the eyes of God is to believe in Christ.

End of Sacrificial System

It is true, of course, that with the death of Jesus Christ, the *sacrificial system* found its completion, so that we are no longer bound to keep Old Testament rituals, including animal sacrifices and physical circumcision. We are no longer under a temporary tutor of rituals which brought us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Those ritual laws and sacrifices were **added** because of sin and transgressions until the Seed (Jesus Christ) would come (Galatians 3:19; Romans 5:20). Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). **It is obvious then that Galatians speaks about two different sets of laws—the law of temporary rituals and sacrifices which was added and the permanent spiritual law which defines sin** (Romans 7:14). While the ritual law has been fulfilled in Christ and is no longer in force and effect for us, the spiritual law (some call it moral law) is still binding and, as we will see, can be obeyed by us when the love of God and the faith of Christ reside in us and when we are following Christ’s lead.

Spiritual Law Still Binding

The Bible makes it very clear that theoretical faith “in” Christ is not enough, and that we will not inherit salvation when we refuse to keep God’s spiritual law of the Ten Commandments. When a rich young ruler asked Christ what he needed to do to have eternal life (Matthew

19:16), Christ answered that in order to have eternal life, to enter the Kingdom of God and to inherit salvation (compare verses 24, 25), he had to keep the commandments (verse 17), clarifying that He spoke about the Ten Commandments (verses 18–19).

James confirms the biblical teaching that we must still keep the Ten Commandments today, showing that violating even one of the Ten Commandments convicts us as transgressors of the law, which will judge us (James 2:8–12; see discussion in [chapter 1](#)).

It is false to say that Christ came to do away with the spiritual law of the Ten Commandments, along with the spiritual statutes and judgments that define and explain the Ten Commandments even further. For instance, the Fourth Commandment enjoins us to keep the Sabbath day holy (Exodus 20:8–11). Other passages show that God is not only talking about the weekly Sabbath day (the time from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset), but also the seven annual Holy Days, which are also called “Sabbath” in Scripture (compare Leviticus 23:27, 32, 39, *Authorized Version*). Another example is the Seventh Commandment, which prohibits adultery (Exodus 20:14). Other Scriptures show that God not only prohibits sexual relationships involving at least one married partner, but He also prohibits fornication (sexual relationships between unmarried partners), as well as sexual sins such as homosexuality. The Ninth Commandment prohibits bearing false witness against our neighbor (Exodus 20:16), but this is not limited to giving false testimony in a court of law; it also includes lying, slander, libel, false reports and spreading unsubstantiated rumors.

Spiritual Violations Constitute Sin

In addition, Christ made it clear that not only the literal violation of one of the Ten Commandments (and of the statutes and judgments) constitutes sin, but that even the underlying motives and desires are enough to convict us as transgressors of the law. For instance, not only is committing murder a violation of the Sixth Commandment and therefore sin, but anger and hatred (which could lead to literal murder) are forbidden as well (Matthew 5:21–22; 1 John 2:11; 3:15). Not only is committing adultery sinful, but also “looking at a woman to lust for her” constitutes adultery with her in the heart (Matthew 5:27–28).

Christ came to exalt the law and make it more honorable (Isaiah 42:21).

He did so by keeping it perfectly, without ever sinning; by emphasizing strongly that we must keep it today, revealing to us how it can be done; and by explaining the intent of the law. God shows us through the law that not only must we refrain from carrying out the literal act of a prohibition, but that we must even control our emotions and desires which, if unchecked, would lead to such literal violations. We read that out of the heart “proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19; compare also Mark 7:21–23).

Christ stated very forcefully that those who practice lawlessness and the transgression of the law would NOT inherit God’s Kingdom! He said in Matthew 7:21–23: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who DOES the will of the Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” The Swiss *Zuercher* Bible says: “...you who practice what is against the law.”

John echoed Christ’s statements with these powerful words: “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him” (1 John 2:4). He also said this: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

We will answer herein the question of how we can obtain the love of God—the love which *enables* us to keep His commandments—and how it is actually humanly possible to keep His commandments. In this context, we will explain what Paul meant in Romans 10:4 when he said that Christ was the “end of the law.”

How Is Christ the “End” of the Law?

From what we have seen so far, this passage cannot mean that the spiritual law of the Ten Commandments and of the spiritual statutes and judgments has “ended” or has been done away with so that it would not have any force and effect for us today. The key to understanding lies in the meaning of the word “end.”

Meaning of “End”

The Greek word for “end” is “telos.” It can mean “end,” “goal,”

“aim,” “purpose” and “result.” For instance, we read in 1 Timothy 1:5: “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” It is obvious that this passage does not say that the commandment has been abolished. Just the opposite is expressed here: Its purpose or aim or goal is love out of a pure heart, as well as having a good conscience and unwavering faith.

Peter expressed exactly the same thought in 1 Peter 1:9 when he states that you will be “receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” Peter did not say that your faith would end [in fact, it never will end, compare 1 Corinthians 13:13]; rather, he stressed the point that the goal or aim of your faith is the inheritance of your salvation.

Another example can be seen in James 5:11 where we read: “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” Here, the word “end” is very clearly used as a description of God’s goal, aim or purpose: God intended to show Job through his trials that He was compassionate and merciful. God had to reveal to Job his sin of self-righteousness, which had to be repented of, but throughout the book of Job, God showed His compassion and mercy with Job, even when he began to launch harsh criticism against God.

Christ describes Himself as “the beginning and the end” (Revelation 21:6; 22:13). It was not His intent to convey that He had a beginning or that He would cease to exist, but rather He wanted to show that nothing exists or came into existence without Him, and that His goal, purpose, aim and result will be accomplished. Nobody can prevent His Will from being carried out.

And so, the German *Pattloch* Bible renders the phrase in Romans 10:4 as follows: “Final goal [“Endziel”] of the law is Christ for righteousness for everyone who believes.”

Christ Must Make Us Righteous

This leads us to the question as to why Christ is the “end”—that is, the aim, goal or purpose—of the law “for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Righteousness is defined as keeping God’s commandments

(Deuteronomy 6:25). But based solely on our own strength, we cannot keep God's law. We need Christ to make us righteous. When we sin, we commit unrighteousness (1 John 5:17), but when we repent and believe in Christ's Sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins, then we are washed clean and become righteous again. The law shows us what sin is (Romans 3:20; 7:7), but it does not make us righteous. Only God, through the Holy Spirit, can do this.

We read earlier (in 1 John 5:3) that this is the love of God that we keep His commandments. This is the case because His commandments define for us what God's love is (Romans 13:8–10). When we love our neighbor, we fulfill the law that tells us how to love him (by not murdering him, stealing from him, committing adultery with his wife, lying to him, etc.). The Bible also shows us how we CAN receive the love of God ("This is what the love of God IS: keeping His commandments," *New Jerusalem Bible*). Romans 5:5 tells us that "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit [which] was given to us."

The important point to realize is that Christ must make us righteous. It is actually Christ, dwelling in us through the Holy Spirit, who fulfills the law through us if we allow Him to do so, and if we don't resist His lead. Romans 8:3–4, 9 states:

"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh [our flesh was too weak to keep it], God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit... Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he is not His."

The German Revised *Luther Bible* translates Romans 8:4: "...so that the righteousness, demanded by the Law, would be fulfilled in us."

The *Living Bible* translates Romans 8:4: "So now we CAN obey God's laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us..."

We can only keep the righteous requirements of the law, IF Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, and IF we follow Christ's lead. When God's Holy Spirit lives within us, then the love of God and the faith of Christ live within us. And THAT is what will make us righteous.

Romans 3:21–22 (*Authorized Version*) talks about the “righteousness of God which is by faith OF Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”

We need to believe in Jesus; that Jesus is the Son of God; that He died for us; that His Sacrifice allows God to forgive our sins and removes our death penalty (because the wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23). Understand, though, that such belief is just the beginning! **The faith necessary for salvation is Christ’s faith—the faith OF Christ—living in us and enabling us to keep the law.**

The Bible teaches that the faith of Christ—Christ’s faith in us—makes us righteous. Those who believe in Christ must have the faith OF Christ living IN them.

Philippians 3:9 (*Authorized Version*) says: “... and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith OF Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

The faith of Christ in us is a living, obedient faith, which brings forth good works (James 2:20, 26). We are called upon to uphold the OBEDIENCE of the faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26). And remember: “This IS the love of God (which is given to us by the Holy Spirit), that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3).

All of this is expressed in Paul’s profound statement in Romans 10:4 that Christ is the real purpose of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. The law shows us what sin is, and Christ in us fulfills the law through us, thereby enabling us to obtain God’s righteousness, if we believe that Christ forgives us our sins (doing away with our unrighteousness) and that He, through the Holy Spirit in us, helps us to obey the righteous requirements of the law.

Chapter 3

Did Christ Nail God's Law to the Cross?

Some claim that **Ephesians 2:15** and **Colossians 2:14** teach us that Christ nailed God's law to the cross so that we do not have to obey it anymore.

Ephesians 2:15 reads that Christ has "abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in *ordinances*..."

Colossians 2:14 reads that Christ has "wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." The *Authorized Version* says that Christ "[blotted] out the handwriting of *ordinances* that was against us..."

The Debt of Sin

In a letter some years ago from the Letter Answering Department of the *Worldwide Church of God*, the following comments were made regarding Colossians 2:14:

"The 'handwriting of requirements'... simply refers to the debt each of us owes for our sins (Rom 6:23; I John 3:4). Our individual, personal sins separated us from God and demanded the death penalty (Isa. 59:2). This debt of sin is what Paul said was 'against us' and 'contrary to us' (Col. 2:14), because it would prevent us from being in God's Kingdom."

"Ordinances"

In an earlier and much more comprehensive letter that also discussed Colossians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:15, the *Worldwide Church of God* wrote the following:

"... the word 'ordinances' in these passages does not refer to God's law. It is translated from the Greek word '*dogma*' and relates to human laws and decrees—the 'commandments and doctrines of men'

(Col. 2:22). These human ordinances included both the restrictive pharisaical decrees burdening the Jews and the ascetic, oppressive ordinances of ‘touch not, taste not’ bound on the gentiles of Colossae.

“Both sets of human ordinances contributed to feelings of prejudice, animosity, suspicion, and separation between the Jews and gentiles who were being called into God’s Church. These ordinances acted as a ‘middle wall of partition.’ But, Jesus abolished that barrier through His supreme sacrifice: ‘For he [Christ] is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us’ (Eph. 2:14).

“In Paul’s day, many newly-begotten Christians continued to suffer from the burden of their former teachings. For example, at the Temple there was a literal wall which separated the court of the gentiles from that of the Jews. Death was the penalty for any gentile who dared to pass it. Some converted Jews found it difficult to forget and change that deeply-ingrained part of their lives. It affected even Peter. See Galatians 2:11–12.

“On the other hand, the gentiles were under the sway and influence of pagan philosophers, with their restrictive rules. Colossae was known for its ascetic society. The pagans judged their Christian neighbors for their freedom in eating the various meats ordained by God [food from clean animals], for drinking wine, and for keeping the weekly and annual Sabbaths in the joyous manner prescribed by God. Ascetics were taught that they could receive release from their guilt by doing penance—through abstinence, fasting, and their self-inflicted punishment.

“All such practices had no spiritual power or benefit, and Paul spoke out against these human standards and judgments: ‘Beware lest any man spoil you through [human] philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ’ (Col. 2:8). Christ came to pay the penalty for all our sins—to release us from the penalty of death incurred through sin and to cleanse our conscience from all guilt.

“Christ abolished the ascetic ordinances of the gentile philosophers as well as the Talmudic traditions, which all were yokes in bondage... He made it possible for both Jew and gentile to become spiritual Israelites, the children of God (Gal. 3:26–29), so they might live together in freedom within His perfect law (Jas. 1:25)...”

More on the Meaning of “Ordinances”

In our free booklet, *Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians—How to Understand It*, we offer further explanations as to the meaning of the biblical passages in Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 2:14. When discussing Ephesians 2:14–17, we state the following:

“... the Greek word is the same in Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 2:14, and should be consistently translated. In both passages, Paul uses the word ‘ordinances.’ This word does not refer in any way to the Ten Commandments or the statutes and judgments defining and magnifying the Ten Commandments. Sin is defined as the transgression of the law. Christ said He did not come to abolish the law. He said that if we want to enter into life, we have to keep the commandments, and James said that if we break one of the commandments, we are guilty of having broken all of them.

“The law of commandments contained in *ordinances*’ in Ephesians 2:15 and the ‘handwriting of ordinances’ in Colossians 2:14 is not a reference to the Ten Commandments. The Greek word for ‘ordinance’ is ‘*dogma*’ and refers to a ‘decree.’ In Luke 2:1, it is used to describe a decree of Emperor Augustus; Acts 17:7 refers to decrees of Caesar; and in Acts 16:4, it describes the decrees issued by the apostles regarding decisions made during the ministerial conference in Acts 15. In Colossians 2:20, Paul says that the Gentiles in Colossi were still subject to ordinances or decrees (in Greek, ‘*dogmatizomai*’; the *New King James Bible* says, ‘requirements’), which were, in that case, based on ‘the commandments and doctrines of men’ (verse 22).

“We see, then, that the word for ordinances or decrees was never used to describe laws that were given directly by God. [In the case of Acts 16:4, even though these decrees were made and pronounced by men, they were backed up by God, but in many other places, they describe human regulations, which were contrary to God’s Word.]

“*Vincent’s Word Studies* explains that the ‘ordinances’ or decrees identify the nature of the ‘law of commandments’ mentioned in Ephesians 2:15, stating: “The middle wall of partition, the enmity, was dissolved by the abolition of the law of commandments. Law is general, and its contents are defined by commandments, special injunctions, which injunctions in turn were formulated in definite decrees. Render the entire passage [in Ephesians 2:14–15]: brake [*sic*] down the

middle-wall of partition, even the enmity, by abolishing in His flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances.’...

“Paul is not talking about ANY law, which God gave the people. Rather, he is talking about human laws, commandments and decrees.

“These laws or ordinances included restrictive pharisaical decrees—inventions and traditions of men—as well as ascetic oppressive ordinances of Gentile philosophers. In both cases, following these ordinances leads to sin, as they are contrary to the law of God.”

Human Laws of Judaism

Continuing to quote from our booklet on *Paul's letter to the Ephesians*:

“Christ said about the man-made rules of Judaism that people did away with the commandments of God in order to follow their own traditions (Mark 7:7–13)... In addition, Paul told the Gentiles that they violated God’s laws by adhering to the practices taught by their philosophers, which were ‘empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles [or rudiments, *Authorized Version*] of the world, and not according to Christ’ (Colossians 2:8, *New King James Version*).

“Paul also said in Colossians 2:14 that Christ blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, that was against us, and nailed it to the cross. Paul is referring to a ‘handwriting’ containing sins we committed by following decrees, traditions and philosophies of man—contrary to the Word of God. In the Greek, the phrase for ‘handwriting’ means literally, ‘certificate or acknowledgment of debt in the handwriting of the debtor.’ The phrase ‘of ordinances’ or ‘decrees’ [in ‘handwriting of ordinances’ in Colossians 2:14] should be translated as ‘in’ or ‘consisting in’ ordinances or decrees (compare *Vincent’s Word Studies* and the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary*).

“Paul is referring to the fact that Christ blotted out the handwriting in—or consisting in—ordinances which was against us. This wording indicates the basis for the certificate of debt—we incurred it because we kept man’s ordinances, which were contrary to God’s law. But through Christ’s death, we obtained forgiveness of our sins—He took the certificate of debt out of the way and nailed it to the cross, thereby abolishing, nullifying, and extinguishing it (Colossians 2:14). *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains: ‘It is said that there is an allusion

here to the ancient method by which a bond or obligation was cancelled, by driving a nail through it, and affixing it to a post.’

“In the same way, Paul is saying in Ephesians 2:15 that Christ abolished in His flesh, and through His death, the ‘law of commandments contained in human decrees or dogma,’ which were contrary to the Law of God. As he states in verse 14, these human laws had not only created enmity between God and man, but also between Jews and Gentiles. This was even compounded by the fact that in Old Testament times, God did not call the ‘uncircumcised’ Gentiles, in general, to the truth (see again Ephesians 2:11–13).

Separation Broken Down

“In perhaps alluding to the wall, which separated the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Israelites in the Temple, Paul compared the human traditions and rules with a ‘middle wall of partition’ (Ephesians 2:14). But Jesus Christ broke down and abolished that barrier through His supreme sacrifice. We also recall that the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died—indicating that all true Christians have direct access to the Father in heaven. We read that in God’s Church—the BODY of Christ—there is no longer Jew nor Gentile, but they are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:26–29).

“Through Christ’s death, we were reconciled to the Father (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:19–20). Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), who has made true Christians—of Jewish and Gentile origin—ONE in Him (same verse), ‘as to create in Himself one new man from the two [Jew and Gentile], thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity’ (Ephesians 2:15–16, *New King James Bible*)...”

So we see then that Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 2:14 do NOT teach that Christ nailed God’s spiritual Law to the cross. But they DO teach that He nullified any human laws and traditions which lead to sin, as they are contrary to God’s Word, and He also nailed our record of sins to the cross, since we obtain God’s forgiveness upon our genuine repentance and acceptance of Christ’s Sacrifice.

Chapter 4

“Free From” and “Dead To” the Law

Are we free from the law so that we do not have to keep it anymore? Is that the meaning of Paul’s statement in **Romans 7:1–4**?

“(Verse 1) Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? (Verse 2) For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. (Verse 3) So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. (Verse 4) Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”

Many claim that these passages convey the thought that the law of God (including the Ten Commandments, and especially the law against adultery) has no more force and effect for us today, as the law has “no more dominion” over us; as we are “free from the law”; and as we have “become dead to the law.” Was that Paul’s point?

Adultery Is Sin

Imagine what this would mean, for example, with regard to adultery. It would mean that a true Christian could commit adultery today without being guilty of sin. However, the New Testament teaches the exact opposite. Focusing only on the law against adultery, we read that in order to inherit eternal life, we must obey the commandments, including the commandment against adultery (Matthew 19:17–19). We read that adulterers will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:19–21). We also read that God will judge “fornicators and adulterers” (Hebrews 13:4).

Paul explains that if we commit adultery, we do not love our neighbor as ourselves (Romans 13:9). Christ even said that when we LOOK at another woman with evil thoughts, we have already committed adultery in our heart. He also warned us not to marry a woman whose marriage had been bound by God and who subsequently became divorced without a biblical reason (Matthew 5:27–32).

We can clearly see that the idea that we are free today to commit adultery is preposterous and in total contradiction to the teaching of the Bible. It is also clear that Paul could not have possibly meant in the above-quoted passage in Romans 7:1–4 that we are now free to sin by committing adultery.

Hopeless Confusion in Commentaries

Before we explain what Paul DID mean, let us quote several statements from commentaries to show the HOPELESS CONFUSION in traditional or orthodox Christianity.

For instance, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* writes:

“So long as a man continues under the law as a covenant... he continues [as] the slave of sin in some form... By death we are freed from obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her vows to her husband... we are dead to the law, and have no more to do with it than the dead servant, who is freed from his master, has to do with his master's yoke...”

As we pointed out before, this explanation makes no sense.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible does not present a better explanation:

“... believers being dead to the law, and the law dead to them, which is all one, they are loosed from it... they are out of the reach of its power and government... it has no power over them, to threaten and terrify them into obedience to it; nor even rigorously to exact it, or command it in a compulsory way...”

The following explanation by the *Broadman Bible Commentary* is also ([Romans] 6:2), so he is free from the law because he died to the law...”

Commentaries Seem to See Their Own Error

On the other hand, the same commentaries seem to grasp the total fallacy of their conclusions, since utter lawlessness and anarchy

would be the inevitable consequence. Realizing the repeated injunction in Scripture to be OBEDIENT to God, they give lip service to this requirement by saying that we must obey God, without ever explaining how obedience is possible without law or rules or regulations. (For instance, *the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* speaks of “Christian obedience,” without explaining this concept). How are we supposed to “obey” God without being told in what way we are to obey? This remains an unexplained mystery to the reader.

In spite of these glaring inconsistencies, note the following excerpts from *Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*:

“They are represented as... ‘dead to the law’... it has no power over them... nor is there any need of all this, since believers delight in it after the inward man, and serve it with their minds freely and willingly; the love of Christ, and not the terrors of the law, constrains them to yield a cheerful obedience to it...”

Did you catch this? The commentary says that the law has no more power over a Christian who, through the love of Christ, yields to a cheerful obedience to IT—the LAW!

False Distinctions by Commentaries

Apparently realizing that this interpretation leads to the slippery slope of incredible inconsistencies, an APPARENT DISTINCTION is being created between “the law” and “the law of Christ.” The law then is reduced, mainly, to the law administered by Moses, while the law of Christ is supposed to be something different, even though it is never explained what the difference within the law should be. Hopelessly caught in a maze of confusion, *Gill* goes on to write:

“[Christ] is raised from the dead; and is a living husband, and will ever continue so, will never die more; and therefore as the saints can never be loosed from the marriage bond of union between Christ and them, so they can never be loosed from the law of this husband; wherefore though they are dead to the law as a covenant of works, and as ministered by Moses, and are free from any obligation to it, as so considered, yet they are ‘under the law to Christ’, 1 Corinthians 9:21; under obligation, by the ties of love, to obedience to it, and shall never be loosed from it.”

Apparently, the idea is supposed to be conveyed that we are under

obligation to OBEY the “law to Christ,” while we are no longer under obligation to keep the law “administered by Moses,” but as we said, it is totally nebulous which two sets of law this commentary is talking about.

Let us take adultery as an example (because, after all, this is the law that Paul uses in his analogy in Romans 7). Whether it was administered by Moses in the Old Testament or whether it is part of the law of, or to, Christ in the New Testament, it is still a rule to be obeyed. David had God’s Holy Spirit, but he still committed adultery and God punished him for it. David was in no way free from the obligation to keep that law (nor was he incapable of violating it), and neither are true Christians today.

The truth is that Paul is speaking in Romans 7 about the spiritual law of the Ten Commandments and the spiritual statutes and judgments, NOT about any temporary ritual law. The prohibition against adultery is part of the spiritual law of the Ten Commandments, not of a ritual law that is no longer valid today.

False Assumptions

It is a usual fact of life that wrong conclusions are oftentimes reached when we operate from wrong premises and presumptions. This is not different in the field of “Christian theology.” Traditional Christianity is hopelessly confused regarding so many of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible because it starts its thought process with WRONG ASSUMPTIONS!

Regarding Paul’s statements in Romans 7:1–4, there are numerous wrong assumptions employed by Christian commentators which inevitably lead to wrong conclusions, as we just pointed out.

Paul Did Not Say That the Law Is Dead

One of these wrong assumptions is that Paul stated that the LAW WAS DEAD. However, Paul nowhere said this. He said that true Christians have become DEAD TO THE LAW; he did not say that the law is dead. This fundamental difference is overlooked by most commentators.

For instance, *Gill*, in glossing over this all-important distinction, writes that “the law... must be dead, and they dead to that, that so their marriage to Christ might appear lawful and justifiable.”

Gill also states this:

“The law may be said to live, when it is in full force, and to be dead, when it is abrogated and disannulled; now whilst it lives, or is in force, it has dominion over a man; it can require and command obedience of him, and in case of disobedience can condemn him, and inflict punishment on him: and this power it has also as long as the man lives who is under it, but when he is dead it has no more dominion over him; then ‘the servant is free from his master’, Job 3:19; that is, from the law of his master; and children are free from the law of their parents, the wife from the law of her husband, and subjects from the law of their prince.”

His erroneous conclusions (that the law is no longer binding for us) are based on the false premise that Paul allegedly stated that the law died and was dead, which Paul did not say.

The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary makes some cautionary remarks, as the authors seem to understand that Paul did not preach that the law was dead:

“It has been thought that the apostle should here have said that ‘the law died to us,’ not ‘we to the law,’ but that purposely inverted the figure... It was essential to his argument that we, not the law, should be the dying party, since it is we that are ‘crucified with Christ,’ and not the law.”

Paul Did Not Say the Unconverted Is Married to the Law

In addition to the false premise that the law is dead (which Paul did not say), commentaries have created another false premise, which is that Paul taught that the unconverted person was MARRIED TO THE (Old Testament) LAW, but that the converted Christian is married to Christ, and therefore, the (Old Testament) law had to die so that we are free to marry another.

Gill adopts this view, stating that “the law, their former husband, must be dead... that so their marriage to Christ might appear lawful and justifiable.”

But Paul did not try to explain in his analogy that the first HUSBAND was the LAW, and when the law died, we could marry our second Husband, Jesus Christ.

The first question is whether Paul intended to apply the analogy

in Romans 7:1–3 to a Christian (in verse 4) beyond just making the statement that with the death of a person, the law (any law) ceases to have dominion over the person—that is, in using the marriage covenant as an example, a woman is no longer charged by the law as an adulteress if she marries again after her husband’s death. It might very well be that this is ALL that Paul was trying to convey.

What Was Paul’s Analogy?

If we take the position that Paul meant to apply the different “roles” in this analogy (in verses 1–3) to the life of a Christian, then Paul would not have meant to identify the first husband as the *law*, but he would have had a completely DIFFERENT “FIRST” HUSBAND in mind.

This concept is something that some early Christian commentators might have understood, to a degree, who otherwise struggled with the problem that Paul could not have said that the law—as a husband—had died and was dead. The *Pulpit commentary* explains:

“... it may be observed that throughout the whole passage there is no phrase to suggest in itself the idea of the Law’s death... the former husband is not the law, but the lust of sin... Augustine... is the author of this view... [I]n the death of the mortal Christ this old man is dead with him; and, as the individual man is grafted by faith into Christ, his old man dies...”

In light of this viewpoint, the meaning of the passage in Romans 7:4 would have to be looked at in a completely different light (while understanding that we can carry an analogy, an allegory or a parable only so far. Analogies, allegories or parables are meant to explain spiritual lessons; not every aspect is to be taken literally): The wife would first be “married” to her evil desires—her carnal human nature—the “old man.” With the death of that old man, she became free from unrighteousness and became subject to (“married to”) the righteousness of the new man (Romans 6:6, 13, 16–19). The human being is represented here as a wife [or a bride] before and after conversion, in order to stay within the analogy of her becoming the bride of Christ who will marry her new Husband.

We Died to the Law through the Body of Christ

In addition, Paul tells us in Romans 7:4 that WE DIED TO THE

LAW THROUGH THE BODY OF CHRIST. He does not say that the law is dead. The spiritual law of the Ten Commandments and its statutes and judgments is very much alive and binding for us today.

Paul says in Romans 7:5: "For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which were aroused [or revealed, made known, compare Romans 7:7] by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death [the wages or penalty of sin is death, Romans 6:23]."

Before we repent and receive forgiveness for our sins, we live with the fleshly desires of the natural mind. But note as well that the words "were aroused" are not in the original. And so, the *Lamsa Bible* translates Romans 7:5: "For when we were in the flesh, the pains of sin, which were by the law, worked in our members to bring forth fruits to death." Sin is the violation of the law, and sin brings pain.

The *Living Bible* says: "When your old nature was still active, sinful desires were at work within you, making you want to do whatever God said no to, and producing sinful deeds, the rotting fruit of death."

Freed from the Law's Penalty

And so, Christ died for us and delivered us from the PENALTY OF SIN, which is death. He delivered us from the PENALTY OF THE LAW.

Paul says in **Romans 7:6**: "But now we have been delivered from the law [its penalty, because we had transgressed against it and sinned], having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

Today, we keep the law by including its intent and purpose. We are not only committing the sin of adultery when we carry out the very act [the letter], but we are already sinning [in spirit] when we look at a woman with the desire of committing adultery with her.

Christ died for us, making forgiveness of sin possible. The law has no more claim over us; it does not and cannot claim our lives anymore when we repent and believe in and accept the Sacrifice of Christ. "There is therefore now no more condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ [and He in us], who do not walk according to the flesh [with its evil and sinful lusts and desires], but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

With proper baptism, the old man dies, and the new man is raised in whom Christ lives (compare also Ephesians 4:20–24; Colossians 3:9–10). And it is Christ who fulfills the righteous requirements of

the law IN and THROUGH us (Romans 8:4). We were baptized into Christ's death and "we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3–4). Romans 6:10–11 says: "For the death that [Christ] died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin [which is the transgression of the law, 1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*], but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Christ Died for Us

We died to the penalty of the law "through the body of Christ" (Romans 7:4) because we could have no forgiveness without the death of the body of Christ (Hebrews 10:10; 1 Peter 2:24). Since everyone has sinned, we would still be under the law's death penalty. But since Christ died for us and since we have accepted His Sacrifice for us (He died to pay the penalty for our sins on our behalf), the law (its penalty) has no more dominion over us (Romans 7:1). We, our old man with his lusts, died or have become dead to the law (its penalty), so that we, as the new man, have become betrothed to our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ (Romans 7:4), who enables us to keep the law. Christ will consummate the marriage with us when we become immortal Spirit beings, incapable of sinning, after we have qualified to enter the Kingdom of God.

Was Paul Without Law?

1 Corinthians 9:20–21 is another Scripture that has been used by some for the support of their false claim that Paul no longer taught obedience to God's law. This is, however, not at all what Paul was saying here.

Let us read the entire passage of 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, in context:

"(Verse 19) For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; (verse 20) and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; (verse 21) to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might

win those who are without law; (verse 22) to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (Verse 23) Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you."

In a "theological" article, the following "explanation" of this passage was conveyed to the readership:

"Paul acted like something he was not. Some people might call that hypocritical or deceptive; Paul calls it part of his evangelistic strategy... For someone to act like a Gentile, they would eat foods that Jews could not, and they would not observe the Sabbath... When Paul was with Jews, he kept the old covenant food laws and weekly and annual Sabbaths. When he was with the Gentiles, he did not. He sometimes acted differently from what he believed."

Paul Was Not a Hypocrite

Is this "explanation" correct? Was Paul a hypocrite? Did he fail to keep the Sabbath or the Holy Days when in the presence of Gentiles so as not to offend them? Did he teach the Gentiles that they did not have to keep the Sabbath, the annual Holy Days, and the dietary laws?

Of course not! The idea that Paul acted as a hypocrite—that he lied and deceived; that he had double standards; and that he refused to keep God's law and taught others they did not have to keep it—is highly offensive and unscriptural.

Paul recognized the ongoing validity of God's law (especially the Ten Commandments, which includes the command to keep the Sabbath holy). Our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*, explains in detail that the Sabbath, the annual Holy Days, and God's dietary laws are still binding. They are not "old covenant laws." In fact, to call them such reveals total ignorance regarding the meaning of a covenant. A covenant is a contract, which is based on law—it does not bring law into existence. So then, when a covenant becomes obsolete, this does not affect the laws on which the covenant is based. To term certain laws "old covenant laws" is just an idle and futile attempt to somehow make those laws obsolete.

We should note that Paul kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days, even when in the presence of Gentiles. In fact, as our booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*, points out, Paul even **COMMANDED** the

Gentiles to keep the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and the dietary laws.

What, then, did Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 9:20–21?

Sacrificial Laws Were a Temporary Tutor

The New Testament makes it clear that certain SACRIFICIAL laws are no longer binding today. Paul calls them “a tutor” in Galatians 3:24. This ritual law, which is referred to as a “LAW,” “was added because of transgression” (Galatians 3:19). Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), the Ten Commandments (James 2:8–12). We see, then, that the Ten Commandments—the “LAW”—had to be in effect BEFORE the sacrificial law system was added, as it was added BECAUSE OF transgression. The sacrificial system with its ritualistic rules is no longer necessary to be kept. However, it would NOT be SINFUL to keep it while in the presence of Jews. Therefore, when Paul was with Jews, he would not offend them by refusing to keep their customs. He would not keep those customs, of course, when he was with Gentiles, as these customs or ritualistic laws are no longer binding. Paul DID make it clear, however, that he DID teach and keep the *spiritual* LAW of God (Romans 7:14) that IS still binding, including ALL of the Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:17–19).

Conforming to Customs

Notice how the *Nelson Study Bible* explains 1 Corinthians 9:19–23:

“Paul put his ministry of the gospel above his personal desires. He was willing to conform to the customs of other people, whether Jew or Gentile, in order to bring them to Christ. For example, in order to relate to the Jews in Jerusalem he made a Nazarite vow in the temple (Acts 21:23, 24). Around those who were under the Law — the Jews — Paul obeyed the Law. Around those who were outside the Law — the Gentiles — Paul did not observe JEWISH CUSTOM. Paul clarified this, however, lest anyone misunderstand his actions. He obeyed GOD’S LAW through obedience toward Christ.”

The *New Bible Commentary* concurs, referring to the ritualistic sacrificial law as the “Mosaic” law:

“Paul has surrendered more than his right to personal subsistence. Though he is free from all men, i.e. in no sense bound by the standards or fashions of others, he is prepared to make himself a slave to all, and

conform to their standards or fashions, providing no real principle is at stake, in order to win as many as possible... So when among Jews he acts as a Jew, conforming to their customs under the Mosaic law (Acts 16:3; 18:18; 21:26), though as a Christian he himself is no longer obliged to keep that law (cf. Gal. 2:11–21). Similarly he is ready to identify himself with those who are not bound by the Jewish law, i.e. Gentiles; though he adds an important proviso. Gentiles not only disregard the Mosaic law [our comment: that part of the law of Moses that is ritual and no longer binding], but may also refuse to recognize any divine commandments [our comment: the Ten Commandments with its statutes and judgments — including the Sabbath, the annual Holy Days, and the dietary and tithing laws].”

Giving No Offense

Paul never taught others to sin, and he was careful that he did not sin either. He would never have disobeyed God by breaking His law, only to “win” the Gentiles. He was NOT without God’s law, although he no longer preached as binding and mandatory certain sacrificial rituals, such as physical circumcision, as those temporary laws had been abolished by God in the New Testament. At the same time, he did not offend his Jewish audience by violating their customs and traditions, as long as he could keep them without sinning against God.

Finally, although he was not “under the law,” he became as one “under the law,” so that he might win those under the law. As we will explain later in this booklet in much detail, the term “under the law” refers to its penalty. When we sin, the penalty of sin—death—is hanging over us like the sword of Damocles. Through our repentance and our belief in and acceptance of Christ’s Sacrifice, we can have forgiveness of our sins; that is, we won’t have to die anymore because the death penalty is no longer hanging over our heads. In order to win those who had not yet accepted Christ’s Sacrifice, Paul became as one of them. He showed them compassion and sympathy rather than condemning and offending them. He became as one under the penalty of the law because he understood what it was like to live in sin, being cut off and separated from God.

Paul never taught that any of God’s abiding laws could be broken. He taught: “It is the duty of the people of God to keep the Sabbath”

(Hebrews 4:9; *Lamsa* translation). Those who want to REFUSE to keep God's spiritual law, including the weekly and annual Sabbaths, are simply twisting certain Scriptures and inventing arguments to justify their sinful conduct. They do this, however, "to their own destruction" (compare 2 Peter 3:14–16).

Chapter 5

Cursed For Keeping the Law?

Some teach that we are cursed when we keep the law of the Ten Commandments. But then, we read that we are cursed if we don't keep it (compare Matthew 25:41, 46). What are we to believe?

The Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments

Some confuse the Ten Commandments with the law of Moses, but there is a definite distinction, and it is important to understand this distinction because it might very well determine one's eternal life or death (compare Revelation 21:8; 22:15). We must fully realize what the Bible means in referring to the "law of Moses"; what the apostle Paul taught; and what the Church decided in Acts 15.

Did Paul say that we are cursed when we keep the Ten Commandments? In addition, did the Church decide in Acts 15 that Christians don't have to keep the Ten Commandments and can still be saved? We have thoroughly discussed and answered these and many other related questions in our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*, and we will quote herein from pages 15–16 of this booklet to explain what Paul meant with his statement in **Galatians 3:10–13**.

The Book of the Law

"... we should be able to better understand what Paul is telling us in Galatians 3:10–13, where he speaks about the 'works of the law.' In reading this passage, remember to consider the context to see what specific law this passage has reference to. Beginning in verse 10, 'For as many as are of the works of the law [including the sacrificial and ritual works that had to be performed] are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the **book of the law**, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by

faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them [i.e., the rituals and sacrifices] shall live by them [that is, God did not kill them as long as they lived within the sacrificial system.]" Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree").'

"Anyone who did not continue in everything, which was written in the Book of the Law, including the regulations pertaining to washings, rituals and sacrifices, was cursed. Although the Book of the Law included, of course, the Ten Commandments and its spiritual statutes and judgments, it also included the physical works of the law, that is, the sacrificial system, as well as the death penalties for the violations of God's law.

"Paul's statement, then, that the law was added because of transgression (Galatians 3:19), refers to that part of the law or laws in the Book of the Law which have to do with sacrifices and other rituals, as well as the curses or penalties for violating God's spiritual law."

Another Law Was Added

We later explained in our booklet (though it is worthy of explaining here again) that the "law" mentioned in Galatians 3:19 was ADDED "four hundred and thirty years" after God's covenant with Abraham (compare verse 17). It was added because of transgression (verse 19). The Bible teaches that SIN is the transgression of the LAW (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). Because the people had sinned by transgressing the LAW of the Ten Commandments, as well as those statutes and judgments that enlarge upon those righteous commandments, ANOTHER "law" was ADDED, the temporary law dealing with sacrifices and other rituals.

To continue with our quote from page 16 of our booklet:

"We need to keep firmly in mind that 'the Book of the Law of Moses,' sometimes referred to as 'the law of Moses,' included all kinds of laws. We must therefore be careful not to draw hasty conclusions when we read about the Book of the Law in the New Testament. Again, we always need to analyze in context, which particular and specific laws the author is talking about.

"For instance, we read in Acts 15:5, 'But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise

them [Gentiles who became Christians], and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

“The context of the discussion shows us that they were not arguing about the Ten Commandments — including the Sabbath — but whether circumcision and other rituals contained in the Law of Moses were mandatory for Gentile Christians. Now, notice, how this question was decided in the first ministerial conference in Jerusalem. Notice that it is James who is saying these words — the same apostle who later talked about the Ten Commandments as a package [compare James 2:8–13], saying that we are guilty of violating them all if we break even one of the Ten: “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:19–20; compare also Acts 15:28–29).

“James was not talking about the Ten Commandments. But, why does James specifically mention that the Gentiles must abstain from idols, sexual immorality, strangled meat and blood? These four aspects in the Law of Moses were mentioned here in connection with rituals and sacrifices (Leviticus 17:7, 10). Gentiles would often times drink blood with their sacrifices, or they would eat their sacrifices with the blood still in the meat (as happens when animals are strangled), or they would commit fornication with temple prostitutes. So that there would be no misunderstanding, the apostles and elders clarified to the Gentiles that those laws, although mentioned in the context of the sacrificial system, were still valid and binding on them.”

This passage in Acts 15:5 will be explained in more detail in the next chapter of this booklet.

What Was Abolished in the Law of Moses?

Some claim that God abolished the entire “law of Moses” with all of its commandments, statutes, judgments and regulations. They fail to realize that the “law of Moses” or the “Book of the Law” included both temporary ritualistic statutes and timeless spiritual commandments. They are ignorant of the fact that not the ENTIRE “law of Moses” was abolished. They don’t understand what the Bible means when it talks about “law.” Neither do they grasp the difference between law

and covenant, falsely teaching that these are identical, and that the Ten Commandments were abolished when the “Old Covenant” was revoked. (For a thorough discussion regarding that false teaching, read page 21 and the following pages of our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*) This biblical ignorance has created a lot of harm, and those false teachers have deceived many who have followed their destructive heresies. However, God makes it clear that they will have to give account for their wrong example, as they live in sin and have induced others to sin likewise.

Let us briefly review the question whether the apostle Paul taught that we don't have to keep the Ten Commandments any longer. A careful study shows that this was not the case, and that Paul was not even ACCUSED by his enemies of teaching this.

Quoting from our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*, pages 12–13:

Ritual Laws and Customs of the Jews

“We read in Acts 21:18–24, ‘On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.”’

“What ‘law’ is this passage talking about? The law of the Ten Commandments? Note that the specific context is circumcision, purification, and other rituals in connection with the making of a vow. Consider also what Paul actually did do when following the ‘customs’ of the Jews: ‘Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified

with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them' (verse 26).

"The reference to the 'law' or the 'customs' is solely in regard to that portion in the writings of Moses that dealt with sacrifices, washings and rituals — in other words, the 'law that was added,' and not the Ten Commandments at all [nor does it refer to the statutes and judgments which embellish the Ten Commandments].

"We might add here that it was of course not sinful for Paul to participate in these customs, although they were no longer required. Paul said that he became a Jew to the Jews in order to win some (1 Corinthians 9:20). And, although he had made it clear that circumcision was no longer required [see the detailed discussion later in this booklet], he still circumcised Timothy, for the Jews' sake, in order not to place a stumbling block before them (Acts 16:1–3)."

When we refuse to keep the Ten Commandments, we sin. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)—eternal death—and we *WILL* suffer eternal death, unless we *REPENT* of our sins and begin to *WALK* in the way of righteousness (compare Psalm 119:172).

False Teachers Claim Abolishment of the Ten Commandments

Christ warns and rebukes all of those who teach that the Ten Commandments are abolished or no longer valid. This is not a light matter in the eyes of God. He says in Matthew 5:19: "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and *TEACHES* men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and *TEACHES* them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

We should be able to see the tremendous responsibility of the "teachers of the law" to teach man the ongoing validity of God's Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath commandment. If they fail to do so, they will not be held guiltless by God. On the other hand, if we want to be a part of the "people of God," we *WILL* keep the Sabbath, because we read in Hebrews 4:9: "It is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep the sabbath" (*Lamsa* translation). God, knowing that some would attempt to change this command, wrote the commandment in a unique way: "REMEMBER the Sabbath day, to KEEP it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

Chapter 6

Gentiles Free from the Old Testament Law?

Some claim that the Scripture in Acts 15:19–20 shows us that Gentile Christians are only obligated to abstain from the four things which are specifically mentioned in that passage, and that they are otherwise free from the “Old Testament” law. Others claim that today, they don’t even have to abstain from these four things anymore.

However, Acts 15:19–20 does not teach anything of the kind. It quotes James as saying: “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.” This concept is reiterated in Acts 15:28–29.

We touched upon Acts 15:19–20 in the previous chapter. We will discuss it now in more detail.

Context of the Jerusalem Council

To fully understand this passage, we must review the context. The Jerusalem Council was held because the charge had been made by some that Gentiles could not be saved unless they became “circumcised according to the custom of Moses” (Acts 15:1) and unless they kept “the law of Moses” (verse 5; compare Acts 15:24).

During the discussion, it was emphasized that God had called Gentiles to repentance irrespective of circumcision and the observance of ritual laws (verses 6–9). As mentioned, the discussion evolved strictly around the “custom of Moses” and the “law of Moses.”

As we saw in the last chapter of this booklet, the law of Moses included ALL kinds of commandments, including the spiritual law of the Ten Commandments (Romans 7:14) as well as the temporary laws of animal sacrifices, physical circumcision and ritual washings. All these laws were written in the “book of the law of Moses,” sometimes

referred to as “the book of the law” or “the law of Moses” (Deuteronomy 17:18; 28:58; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26; Mark 12:26).

The decision, which was pronounced in Acts 15:19–20, did not address the Ten Commandments. It would have been a rather strange conclusion to say that Gentiles were entitled to kill someone, steal from someone, lie to and about others, commit adultery, or dishonor his or her parents. In the entire New Testament, it is emphasized time and again that true Christians must keep the Ten Commandments, and since the law of the Ten Commandments is a package (compare James 2:8–11), they are therefore obligated to keep the first four commandments as well, including the Sabbath commandment.

Why Only Four Prohibitions Mentioned?

Why was it specifically mentioned that the Gentiles must abstain from things polluted by idols, sexual immorality, strangled meat and blood? These four aspects can be found in the law of Moses where they are listed in connection with religious worship at the tabernacle, including temporary rituals and animal sacrifices (Leviticus 17:7, 10).

Please note that it was commanded in the law or the book of Moses to abstain from things polluted by idols (Exodus 34:15–16; compare Psalm 106:28, 37–38); from sexual immorality (Leviticus 19:29; Deuteronomy 23:17–18); from things strangled (Leviticus 22:8); and from blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17).

These four prohibitions were specifically mentioned in Acts 15 to emphasize to the Gentiles that they were still binding on Christians, to avoid any misunderstanding. Prior to their conversion, many Gentiles would engage in those practices. They would of course sacrifice to idols; they would often times drink blood with their sacrifices or they would eat their sacrifices with the blood still in the meat (as happens when animals are strangled); or they would commit fornication with temple prostitutes in their religious services. Even though it would be made clear to the Gentiles that temporary ritual laws, animal sacrifices and circumcision were not binding on them, the apostles and elders clarified to the Gentiles that those four categories, although mentioned in the context of the sacrificial system, were still valid and in force and effect. The emphasis here was not on what had to be done, but on what was NOT to be done.

At the time of Acts 15, the temple still stood, and animal sacrifices were still being given (even though it was no longer a necessity to do so, since Christ's death did away with the need to bring animal sacrifices, compare Hebrews 9:9–10). But since the priests would bring daily sacrifices and perform other ritual washings, until the temple was destroyed in 70 AD, it was needful to explain to the Gentiles, so that there would be no misunderstanding, what was clearly NOT permitted, even though those practices were mentioned in the book of Moses in connection with the sacrificial system.

Many say today that these four things were specifically mentioned to the Gentiles so as not to offend "Jewish" sensitivities, but as more and more Gentiles became converted, it became no longer necessary (so they say) to abstain from these four categories. Even though it should be obvious to converted Christians that sexual immorality will never be permitted by God, this is, sadly, not obvious today to many professing Christians.

With their liberal "live-and-let-live" attitude, they condone and justify more and more the concept of sexual immorality and fornication, including living and sleeping together without being married, while also attending and participating in religious services; or functioning as practicing homosexual priests and ministers. In addition, many nominal Christians have no compunctions eating food with blood in it, or dinking blood (blood sausage is very common in many Catholic and Protestant countries). Finally, they may enjoy eating food sacrificed to idols (including Easter or Christmas cakes, compare Jeremiah 7:18).

Food Sacrificed to Idols

Even though Paul made it clear that true Christians can eat food which has been sacrificed to idols, as long as they do not approve of the sacrificial idolatrous practice, they should not do so when the conscience of others becomes defiled (1 Corinthians 8:4–13; 10:25–33). Still, it is clearly wrong to eat food which is sacrificed to or "polluted" by idols in the context of religious practices [For instance, one participates in a wrong kind of "communion" (compare 1 Corinthians 10:14–22), or one partakes of an Easter or Christmas meal as part of Easter or Christmas celebrations, which are polluted by pagan sun and moon gods and goddesses].

Note what the New Testament has to say about these kinds of wrong practices, mentioned in Acts 15:19–20, which are still clearly prohibited for Christians today.

Sexual Immorality

Regarding “sexual immorality,” Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:18: “Flee sexual immorality. Every SIN that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.” Compare also 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Eating or Drinking Blood (of Strangled Animals)

In a prophecy for the end time, God condemns those who eat, drink or sacrifice the blood of animals, as well as those who eat unclean animals.

We read in Isaiah 66:3 (*Living Bible*): “But those who choose their own ways, delighting in their sins, are cursed. God will not accept their offerings. When such men sacrifice an ox on the altar of God, it is no more acceptable to him than human sacrifice. If they sacrifice a lamb, or bring an offering of grain, it is as loathsome to God as putting a dog or the blood of a swine on his altar! When they burn incense to him, he counts it the same as though they blessed an idol. I will send great troubles upon them—all the things they feared...”

In addition, we read in Isaiah 65:2–6: “I have stretched out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way that is not good According to their own thoughts; A people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face; who sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves, And spend the night in the tombs; who eat swine’s flesh And the broth of abominable things [Margin: unclean meats] in their vessels; who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!’ These are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day. Behold, it is written before Me: ‘I will not keep silence, but will repay—Even repay into their bosom...’”

The *Living Bible* renders verse 4 as follows: “All night they go out among the graves and caves to worship evil spirits, and they eat pork and other forbidden foods.”

Warning for God's Church

Finally, in a message to the church in Pergamos, we read this dire warning: "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam... to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality... Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth (Revelation 2:14, 16).

It is clear that all Christians must still abstain today from the four categories mentioned in Acts 15:19–20, but it is also clear that these are not the **ONLY** four things they must avoid doing. Those who believe the contrary are condemned with the strongest terms in the book of Revelation:

"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake of fire, which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

And:

"But outside [the new Jerusalem] are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie" (Revelation 22:15).

We must avoid following the deceitful doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1–2), which God condemns. Rather, we need to listen to Christ who tells us: "If you want to enter into [eternal] life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17; compare also 1 Corinthians 7:19).

Chapter 7

No More Written Rules?

Some teach that since the law of God is in our hearts, we no longer need written rules, especially since we are to live by the Spirit and not by the letter.

In this chapter, we will explain that it is a common misconception, and a very deceitful one at that, that Christians do not need any written rules, as (so it is claimed) they will automatically do what is right, since the law of God is written in their hearts. With this dangerously deceptive concept, traditional Christianity attempts to justify their claim that Christ came to do away with the rules and regulations of the Ten Commandments of the “Old Testament.” They state that Christians today only need to follow some nebulous and ill- or non-defined spiritual principles, without the need of written rules. They even claim that this is so, as we are not to follow the letter of the law, but the Spirit.

It is true that God’s law must be written in our hearts. But as we will see, that fact does not mean that there are suddenly no more written rules that define the law of God. Rather, what is meant by this is that the written rules have become an integral part of the person. The true Christian has internalized these rules and identifies him- or herself with them. To put it differently, the written rules have become an inward part of the Christian; they have become part of his or her character; they identify the Christian and describe his or her personality and very being.

God’s Words WRITTEN in Our Hearts

For instance, Deuteronomy 6:6–7 states, in connection with the pronouncement of the Ten Commandments: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in

your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

Deuteronomy 11:18 states, in connection with the second giving of the Ten Commandments: “Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul...”

Proverbs 3:3 says: “Let not mercy and truth forsake you... WRITE them on the TABLET of your heart...”

Proverbs 6:21 states that we are to BIND a particular law continually upon our heart. The context is the command and admonition against adultery, compare verses 20, 22–24, 27–29.

Today, God’s Holy Spirit in us reminds us of God’s law, and the law of God is being written on our hearts and minds. Romans 5:5 says that the love of God, which is defined as keeping the commandments (1 John 5:3), is poured out IN our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 8:10 describes the New Covenant, and true Christians—spiritual Israelites (Galatians 6:16)—are living already today under the conditions of the New Covenant:

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and WRITE them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

God’s law must be written in our hearts. But notice, it is still God’s spiritual law (Romans 7:14)—which is defined and described by the words and the RULES of the Ten Commandments—which is WRITTEN in our hearts.

New Covenant Based on God’s Law

We explain in our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*, that the New Covenant is not a covenant without written rules. Just the opposite is true. We read in Hebrews 8:6 that the New Covenant is “established” on better promises. The *New Revised Standard Version* says here, “enacted through better promises.” The *New Jerusalem Bible* states, “founded on better promises.” The Greek word, translated as “established,” “enacted” or “founded,” is “*nomotheteo*.” The word “*nomos*” means, “law.”

In Hebrews 7:11, the same word “*nomotheteo*” is translated as “received the law.” In James 4:12, the noun “*nomothetes*” is used in the Greek and rendered there as “Lawgiver.” In Romans 9:4, the related

Greek word “*nomothesia*” is translated as “giving of the law.”

Hebrews 8:6 tells us that Jesus Christ is Mediator of a better covenant, which, having better promises, including the promise of the Holy Spirit and eternal life in the God Family, is BASED or ENACTED or FOUNDED on God’s given law! The New Covenant is based on God’s spiritual law, but not on laws that God has decreed are no longer valid. The New Covenant is not based, for example, on the sacrificial system, the Levitical priesthood, and other rituals and washings.

Ten Commandments Written on Tablets of Stone

Paul does not say anything differently in **2 Corinthians 3:3–11**. We discussed this passage in detail in Appendix A of our free booklet, *Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?*

For the purpose of the subject of this chapter, we will just focus on verses 3–6:

“(3)... clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. (4) And we have such trust through Christ toward God. (5) Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, (6) who has also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life...”

In verse 3, reference is made to the Ten Commandments, which were written “on tablets of stone.” Christians today are to keep the Ten Commandments in their hearts. They are written on the TABLETS of our hearts. It is not sufficient to possess tablets of stone which include the Ten Commandments. It is not enough to just know about the Ten Commandments, or perhaps even to memorize them. Rather, we are to internalize the Ten Commandments.

The Israelites had the law written on tablets of stone (2 Corinthians 3:2–3). These tablets of stone never became part of their being—never entered their hearts. As the tablets were of stone, so were their hearts. That is the reason why God, in a New Covenant, replaces our stony hearts with hearts of flesh, so that we can walk in God’s statutes and do them (Ezekiel 11:19).

Keeping God's Law in the Spirit

2 Corinthians 3:3–6 does not teach that the Ten Commandments are abolished. Quite to the contrary, the passage teaches that the Ten Commandments must be kept today. However, they must be kept in the Spirit; that is, they must be applied in our lives with their spiritual intent.

Paul reiterates the same in Romans 7:6, which reads:

“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

(In [chapter 4](#), we explained in detail what Paul meant with his statement that we have been “delivered from the law.”)

We must also realize that Christ came to EXALT the law and make it honorable (Isaiah 42:21). He came to teach His followers the spiritual application of the law, going beyond the application of the letter.

For instance, we read in Matthew 5:21–22 that we sin already and are guilty of murder when we hate someone. Under the letter of the law of the Ten Commandments, we would only be guilty of murder if we actually killed someone. But serving God in the newness of the Spirit, we are already guilty of murder when we have the wish to kill another person, because we are filled with hate and rage toward him or her.

Looking Beyond the Letter

When we keep the law in the Spirit, we are to look beyond the letter and keep the law in accordance with the spiritual intent. This COULD also mean that sometimes, the letter might appear to prohibit something, when viewed with the carnal mind, but it does not really do so when considering the spiritual intent.

The Spirit May Permit What the Letter Appears to Prohibit

A good example is the way in which the carnal Pharisees and Sadducees taught the people about the Sabbath. They applied the law quite literally—from a very carnal viewpoint—but since they did not have the Holy Spirit and since they did not have God's law written in their hearts, they did not understand and teach the spiritual intent.

Making the Sabbath a Burden?

We explain in detail in our free booklet, *God's Commanded Holy Days*, how the carnal religious leaders at the time of Christ had made a burden out of the Sabbath rather than a blessing. Jesus Christ restored the original intent of the Fourth Commandment, using much of His time to show us how to observe the Sabbath. The fact that the Sabbath had to be kept was not in doubt, but Christ had to show—by words and deeds—how to keep it.

Quoting from the above-stated booklet:

“We read in Matthew 12:1–8: ‘At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord... of the Sabbath.”

“This important episode teaches us a great deal about the right attitude toward observing the Sabbath. First of all, Christ points out that it is not the Pharisees—or any human being for that matter, but only God Himself, through His Son Jesus Christ—who is to tell us how to keep the Sabbath as far as what is permitted and what is prohibited. This is not just a matter of pointing at a particular statement in the Bible. One has to focus on the context and on the spiritual application.

“Christ was chiding the Pharisees for being merciless. They did not allow the disciples to pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath, even though they were hungry. Christ compares this situation with David when he and his men ate from the showbread because they were hungry. The law against eating from the showbread was not given, however, for a situation where someone was hungry and had nothing else to eat. Likewise... the commandment against work did not apply to the priests

who brought sacrifices at that time, nor to God's ministers today who engage in ministerial functions on the Sabbath..."

When we keep the rules and regulations of the law of God in the Spirit, we keep them in accordance with their spiritual intent, which might mean that we have to be more "restrictive" or more "permissive" than the mere letter. The rules of God's spiritual law are written in our hearts; that is to say that they have become part of our inner being. Isaiah 51:7 tells us that God's people "who know righteousness," are those "in whose heart is My law." David exclaimed that God's law was in his heart (Psalm 37:31). But at the same time, we read that he meditated on God's statutes (Psalm 119:23); and that he did not forget God's law (verse 61).

He obviously read the written "rules" of God's Law in the Bible. The idea that he rejected any written rules and believed that he was just "automatically" doing what was right because God's law was in his heart, is simply ridiculous.

Paul spoke about the fact that we need to obey God's teaching "from the heart" (Romans 6:17). We can and will do so, with the help of God's Holy Spirit within us, when God has written His law in our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

This concept will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

How to Keep God's Law from the Heart

In the last chapter, we discussed the fact that even though God's law is written in the heart of a true Christian, that does not mean that he or she can ignore written rules defining and explaining God's law. We pointed out that we must follow God's law, including its written rules, from the heart (Romans 6:17), and that we can only do so if God's Spirit dwells in us.

In this chapter, we will discuss the practical consequences when God's law is written in our hearts.

Why the Sacrificial System and Penalties?

In Old Testament times, God revealed the law of the Ten Commandments to the people, but since they did not have the Holy Spirit, they were unable to keep the spiritual intent of the law. However, God expected them to keep at least the letter of the law, but they were also disobedient in that regard. They sinned gravely, and sin is the transgression of the spiritual law (1 John 3:4). Because of their sinful conduct, God introduced a sacrificial system of ritual laws and regulations to remind them of their sins and to make physical amends (Hebrews 10:1–4). This system of ritual laws was only temporary (Hebrews 10:8–10). It included the laborious task of offering animal sacrifices, and sometimes it included very rigorous physical penalties, such as death by stoning. Dealing with carnal human beings, God knew that only harsh measures could prevent them from totally rebelling against Him and from living a terrible life of depravity and violence (compare Ecclesiastes 8:11). Nevertheless, even those measures did not help, and they ultimately became totally and completely corrupt (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

It was never God's desire to "force" people to obey Him. It was never His desire to introduce harsh physical penalties for disobedience. He

never wanted a sacrificial system. He did not desire animal sacrifices, but rather, that men would live in a way that such sacrifices [and penalties] would not be necessary (Psalm 40:6; 50:8–14; 51:16–17).

God created man as free moral agents, with the ability to decide for himself whether or not to follow God's rules. God offered Adam and Eve the gift of the Holy Spirit (symbolized by the Tree of Life), but they rejected that gift and ate instead from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, representing the concept of determining and deciding for themselves what seemed right to them. The consequence was that man began to call good evil, and evil good (Isaiah 5:20), ending up in his unspeakable depravity and his destruction in a worldwide flood (Genesis 6:5–7).

The God Family

God is a Kingdom—the Family of God ruling over creation. At this point, the God Family consists of the Father and the Son. God wants to enlarge His Family through man. God cannot sin because He does not want to sin. It is totally against His character to sin. He is love (1 John 4:8), and love is the keeping of His commandments (1 John 5:3). God does not keep the law because of fear of punishment for violating His law. He keeps the law because of love, KNOWING that His law is the only way to happiness and peace. He has purified His words (His law) seven times (Psalm 12:6) so that He can be absolutely sure that His law is perfect, right, good and complete (Romans 7:12). It cannot be improved (compare Psalm 18:30).

Right Conviction

God wants His people to develop the same attitude toward His law that He has. He wants us to become convinced that His law is always right, and when we disagree on a given point, we are always wrong. When we have reached that conclusion and become persuaded of the goodness of God's Word, then we will want to follow it from the heart. But we still won't be able to do so automatically or without fail, because there is still a war going on in our members (Romans 7:14–24). Many times, we may want to do what is good, but the evil within us has not completely died.

No Fear

However, to the extent that we embrace God's law and have it written in our hearts, we will begin to do what is right, without having to be forced to do so or because of living in fear of punishment. When we have fear, then God's law in us has not reached perfection, because God's perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

No Teachers?

When that point is reached, then we do not need to have anyone teach us the law anymore because we have now internalized it (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:11). We will do what is right, and we won't need to have someone tell us what is right (1 John 2:27; compare John 14:26). When God's law is written in our hearts, then we will not listen to nor follow those who want to deceive us and teach us that the law has been done away with (1 John 2:26). However, we will not always obey (there is no one who does not sin, compare 1 John 1:8, 10; 1 Kings 8:46; and Ecclesiastes 7:20 in the *Living Bible*), and we may not always be totally and perfectly firm in our conviction, and then it is needful and necessary that God's ministers point out to us and remind us again what the truth is about sin, and how to avoid sinning on our way to perfection (Ezekiel 44:23–24; Ephesians 4:11–16). Even though we are taught by God to love one another (1 Thessalonians 4:9), this teaching was communicated to us through God's ministers (Romans 10:14–15), and it sometimes needs to be reiterated by the ministry; further, we would not understand this teaching unless God had given His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible states with regard to **1 John 2:27**:

"...and ye need not that any man teach you; not that they were perfect in knowledge, for no man is absolutely, only comparatively so, in this life; or that they needed not, and were above and exempt from the instructions of Christ's faithful servants; for John himself taught them, and to teach and instruct them was the end of his writing this epistle to them; but the sense is either that they needed not the teachings of these men before mentioned, the antichrists, liars, and seducers, being better taught, and having an unction by which they knew all things; or they needed not to be taught as if they were babes in Christ, as unskillful in the word of righteousness, but so as

to increase in spiritual knowledge, and go on to perfection, and be established in the present truths, at least so as to be put in remembrance of them... this passage does not militate against the external ministry of the Gospel, or human teachings according to that perfect rule and declaration of the whole mind and will of God..."

People to Be Led to the Law

When God writes His law in the hearts of men, then they will respond. In the Millennium, Christ will teach the people about the horrors of war (Isaiah 2:3–4), but that teaching alone will not necessarily convince everyone that they should stop going to war. At the beginning of the Millennium, hordes from the East will still want to fight. And so, God will supernaturally intervene and stop that potential fight (Ezekiel 38:1–13). People will be led to the understanding that war is wrong and also completely unnecessary, as God will fight our battles for us (compare Exodus 14:14). And to the degree to which God's law against murder, war and killing is being written in their hearts, they do not want to learn war anymore, and they will destroy their weapons of war and exchange them with useful agricultural tools (Isaiah 2:4).

God's Law Becomes Part of One's Character

They do not do this because they are forced to do this; rather, they will do so because they accept the fact that God's law tells them that this is the only right way; and since God's law has become part of their character, they will be following it willingly and joyfully. This, in turn, will motivate others to do likewise, and we will not see war throughout the remainder of the Millennium, until Satan is released from prison for a short while (Revelation 20:7). When this happens, then many of those human beings, who are alive at that time, will follow Satan's evil devices and his deception, and they will want to fight in war again (Revelation 20:8–9). They never had God's law against war written in their hearts. They might have refrained from fighting in war because nobody else did, but when they will be given an opportunity, they will choose to fight.

God wants us to embrace and internalize His law of love (Romans 13:8–10). God desires that we obey His law willingly and cheerfully—

without compulsion or fear of punishment. God will not bring us into His Family if we only obey Him because we have to. God lives the Way of give, because love is the outgoing concern for the welfare and benefit of others. And so, God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7)—someone who loves to give willingly (compare Exodus 25:2). God loves someone who understands that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). God has always loved His Son (Matthew 3:17), but He GAVE Him for the salvation of the world (John 3:16). In addition, Christ laid down and GAVE His life for us (John 10:17; Matthew 20:28). Nobody forced the Father and the Son to do this; they did it willingly and joyfully for our benefit. We are to be living sacrifices as well (Romans 12:1), giving of ourselves to others. Somebody who gives, but does it grudgingly and under compulsion, does not really live the WAY of give and does not really have God's love in his heart (compare Romans 5:5). Such a person wants to really live the way of get, and he will do so once the opportunity presents itself.

Loving to Obey

When God's law is written in our hearts, then we will live the Way of love and of give, and we will do so joyfully and happily. We will love the truth (compare 2 Thessalonians 2:10) and we will love God's law (Psalm 119:97). We will love to honor and praise God as our ONLY God, rather than choosing other gods and using God's Name in vain; and we will love to keep God's weekly and annual Holy Days. We will love to honor our parents; to always tell the truth; to give to others rather than stealing from them; and to respect the marriage of others rather than committing adultery with our neighbor's husband or wife. We will love to give others joy and happiness rather than killing them; and to rejoice when others are blessed, sharing actively in their joy, rather than envying them and being willing to take from them what they have.

God owns everything, and He wants to give and share everything with us. His law is written on His heart, and He wants to write it on our hearts too. We must allow Him to do so, and then we will be fulfilling God's law by loving Him with ALL of our heart, and our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36–40).

Chapter 9

All You Need is Faith?

Some teach that obedience to God's law is no longer necessary to inherit eternal life, as Paul allegedly said *that all that is required is to believe in Jesus*.

It is correct that Paul told the Philippian jailer in **Acts 16:31**: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." And it is true that we **MUST** believe in Christ, as only in His name can we find salvation (compare Acts 4:12).

But Faith Is Not All

However, Paul did not say that belief in Christ is ALL that we must have. Rather, belief in Christ is only the starting point. Notice how the record in Acts 16 continues, in verses 32–33:

"Then they [Paul and Silas] spoke the WORD of the LORD to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes [The jailor responded to Paul's teaching of the Word of God by showing kindness to Paul.] And immediately he and all his family were baptized [They had repented of their sins and showed their faith by baptism, so that they could receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit, compare Acts 2:38]."

Faith Shown by Practicing Love

Paul did not preach, and the jailor did not understand him to preach, that ALL that was required of him was just to believe that Jesus was the Christ. Rather, his belief had to be accompanied and manifested by obedience to Christ's words.

Jesus told us in John 15:14: "You are My friends if you DO whatever I COMMAND you." He continued in verse 17: "These things I COMMAND you, that you LOVE one another."

The jailor showed LOVE to Paul when he washed his stripes and

gave him food to eat (Acts 16:33–34). Paul told us in Romans 13:8–10 that when we love each other, we FULFILL God’s LAW of love. He said in verse 9: “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

In other words, if we LOVE our neighbor enough so that we don’t kill him or steal from him, or lie to or about him, or covet what he has, or commit adultery with his wife [which are all injunctions contained in the Ten Commandments], we FULFILL God’s law. We read in 1 John 5:3: “For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments.” 1 John 3:23 explains: “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, AND LOVE one another.”

Obedience to the Faith

When a young man asked Christ what to do to inherit eternal life, Christ told him: “But if you want to enter into life, KEEP [or OBEY] the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). He proceeded to list some of the Ten Commandments in order to show which commandments He was talking about (verses 18 and 19). And James would later explain that we break ALL of the Ten Commandments when we break just one of them (James 2:8–11). As the Ten Commandments define love to God and neighbor, we don’t show the love of God in our lives when we transgress His law.

Paul did not tell the Philippian jailor that all he had to do was just to believe in Jesus Christ. James tells us that even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). Rather, Paul was teaching that we need to OBEY God, once we come to believe in Him.

We read Paul’s word in Romans 1:5: “Through Him we have received grace and apostleship FOR OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH.” He also stated in Romans 16:26: “... [the mystery] has been made manifest... according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH.”

Acts 6:7 reports about the beginning of the New Testament Church: “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were

OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH."

We read in John 3:36 (correctly translated from the Greek, compare the *Revised Standard Version*): "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does NOT OBEY the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him."

When the Bible talks about the kind of faith we must have to inherit eternal life, it equates faith with obedience—the right kind of faith. Having faith in Christ that does not manifest itself through an obedient lifestyle to God's Law, is NOT enough.

In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 2:8 that God will pour out "indignation and wrath" on those who "are self-seeking and do NOT OBEY the truth, but obey unrighteousness." And "truth" is defined as "all Your commandments" (Psalm 119:151). Paul reiterates in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 that God will take "vengeance on those who... do NOT OBEY the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." In Romans 6:17, 22, Paul states: "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin [and sin is defined as the "transgression of the LAW," 1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*], yet you OBEYED from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered... having become SLAVES of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and THE END, everlasting life."

Further proof that our faith must be accompanied by OBEDIENCE can be found in Peter's first letter. Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:2 to the "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, FOR THE OBEDIENCE and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." He continues in verse 22: "Since you have purified your souls in OBEYING THE TRUTH through the Spirit in SINCERE LOVE of the brethren, LOVE one another fervently with a pure heart."

Peter also admonished the brethren to conduct themselves as "OBEDIENT CHILDREN, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (verses 14–15). Again, in 1 Peter 4:17, we are warned about the fate of those who do "NOT OBEY the gospel of God."

We will only inherit salvation and eternal life if we OBEY God. This is very clearly expressed in Hebrews 5:8–9: Even Christ "learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation TO ALL WHO OBEY HIM."

As Christ obeyed God's commandments, so must we (John 15:10). Only if we *DO* the will of our Father in heaven—only if we *cease practicing lawlessness*—will we enter God's Kingdom (Matthew 7:21–23). The MERE confession that we believe in Christ will NOT be enough (verse 21).

Peter made it very clear that we must obey God at all times, even if that means disobeying man (Acts 5:29). He also declared that God would give His Spirit—a guarantee of inheriting eternal life (Ephesians 1:13–14)—only to those who OBEY Him (Acts 5:32).

For more information on this important subject, please read our free booklet, *Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?*

Chapter 10

The New Commandment of Jesus

Some claim that Jesus came to do away with the Law of the Ten Commandments and replace it with a “new” law, which happens to be identical with the Ten Commandments, except for the omission of the Sabbath. This treacherous and deceitful argument has convinced quite a few people that they do not have to keep the Sabbath anymore. But the truth is that the Ten Commandments have not been abolished, and when you break one of the Ten Commandments, you break them all.

Please note these excerpts from pages 14–15 of our free booklet, *Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?*:

“What, exactly, is it that we need to repent of...? Simply put, we must repent of the sins we have committed. What is sin? The biblical definition is: ‘...sin is the transgression of the law’ (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). Which law? The law of God’s Ten Commandments. James calls it the ‘royal law according to the Scripture’ (James 2:8). It defines our love toward God and our love toward neighbor. When we break even one of the Ten Commandments, we are guilty of having broken them all and have become a transgressor of the law (James 2:10–11).

“The law of the Ten Commandments is a spiritual law, as Paul explains in Romans 7:14, because it regulates not only our actions, but also the motives and intents of our heart. We sin when we commit adultery (Exodus 20:14), but we also sin when we DESIRE or COVET the wife of another man (Exodus 20:17), or when we look at another woman with the desire to commit adultery with her (Matthew 5:28). Additionally, we sin when we kill someone (Exodus 20:13), but we have already sinned by violating God’s spiritual law of the Ten Commandments when we even HATE another human being (Matthew 5:21–22; 1 John 3:15).”

Christ's "New" Commandment

It is true that Christ said that He gave the disciples a "new" commandment, but as we will see, not even the most liberal "interpretation" of His statement should persuade an honest person that the Ten Commandments are no longer valid. Christ never said that He gave a new commandment to replace the Ten Commandments. Quite to the contrary, He told the young rich ruler that he had to keep the Ten Commandments if he was to enter the Kingdom of God and inherit salvation and eternal life (Matthew 19:16–26).

What then did Jesus say, and what did He mean, when He spoke of a "new commandment"?

Loving Neighbor Not New

He says this in **John 13:34**:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another..."

The Greek word for "love" is "*agapao*," which is derived from "*agape*," describing "godly love."

But to love one another is hardly a commandment that was new or had never been stated before. When Christ was asked what was the greatest commandment in the law, He responded by quoting two Old Testament passages, demanding that we love God with all our heart and our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36–40). In both cases, the Greek word for "love" is "*agapao*," referring to "godly love." And as was pointed out above, when we keep the Ten Commandments, we show our love toward God and neighbor, because we honor God in the way which is required of us, and we don't harm our neighbor, for instance, by killing him, lying to him, committing adultery with his wife or with her husband, or lusting after the things that our neighbor has.

1 John 3:11 confirms that the message of love toward one another is not really anything new: "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."

And again, we read in 2 John 5–6:

"And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. This is love [Greek: "*agape*"], that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it."

At the same time, we read this startling statement in 1 John 2:7–10:

“Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him...”

Again, the context is loving our brethren. And even though John says that this is NOT a new commandment, he goes on to say that it IS a new commandment. Is there a contradiction? Some try to explain this by saying that even though it is an old commandment, it is always new for us. But this is not the most compelling explanation.

How to Love

The key to understanding this “mystery” is to return to Jesus’ statement in **John 13:34**. When quoting this passage above, we purposefully omitted the second part of Christ’s saying. Let us now read the passage in its entirety:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, that you also love one another.”

The *New King James Bible* erroneously places a semicolon before “as I have loved you,” thereby totally obscuring the meaning. In the original Greek there were no commas or semicolons, and the translator added those, as he felt best, but in this case, he did so wrongly. Christ was saying here that we are to love one another AS He loved us; that is, in the SAME WAY AS He loved us.

He repeats this command in **John 15:12**: “This is My commandment, that you love one another AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.” And He explains in the next two verses this extraordinary love: “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do WHATEVER I command you” (verses 13–14).

The connection between loving each other—even to the point of death, if necessary—and obeying Christ is obvious (compare John 14:15, 21). Christ gave up His eternal existence as an immortal God being and became a mortal man and died for us so that we could

inherit eternal life; and He demands of us that same KIND of unselfish and outgoing love toward others.

Can't Do It Without God's Spirit in Us

We must understand though that this is not remotely possible for a human being to fulfill, except through and with the help of God, through His Holy Spirit dwelling in us. ONLY if God's Holy Spirit dwells in us, will we be able to begin to manifest that great godly love toward God and others. As a whole, and barring a few exceptions, Old Testament Israelites did not have the Holy Spirit within them, and neither did the disciples prior to Christ's resurrection and the Day of Pentecost. Christ announced that the Holy Spirit would be given to them (John 14:16). Only then would they have the power to LOVE each other AS Christ loved them.

Even though the command to love God and neighbor had been given from the beginning—and it was therefore an “old” commandment—it had now become a “new” commandment, in that it encompassed a much more demanding DEGREE of love which can only be manifested through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In fact, if you are a truly converted Christian, you have received the Holy Spirit of God, dwelling in you, and through the Holy Spirit you have received the love of God (Romans 5:5). The love of God is defined as keeping the commandments. 1 John 5:3 says: “For this IS the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” Paul tells us that “love is the fulfillment [better: “fulfilling,” *Authorized Version*] of the law” (Romans 13:10). Love does not do away with it; quite to the contrary, it FULFILLS or KEEPS it. **Rather than thinking that the Ten Commandments have been abolished, God's Holy Spirit in you reveals to you that they are still binding for you, and God's love in you will motivate you to KEEP them.**

One good way for a person to determine if he has really responded to his call to repentance and conversion, is to analyze and examine himself to find out whether he is willing to keep ALL of God's Ten Commandments, including the Seventh-Day Sabbath. If a person believes that these laws are no longer required and that he is “free” to ignore or break them, then it is extremely unlikely that he is truly converted and that God's Holy Spirit dwells in him. If this applies to you, then

you need to pray to God that He may open your understanding to the truth and REPENT of your errors and sins; ACCEPT and BELIEVE IN the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ; understand that Christ DIED for YOUR transgressions of His LAW; and become baptized to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Becoming a New Creation

In order to fulfill Christ's "new" commandment to love each other AS HE LOVED US, we must become a "new" creation and put on the "new" man (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). We are to become a "new lump"—"unleavened" (1 Corinthians 5:7), without malice and wickedness (verse 8). We must walk the "new and living way" of love which Christ consecrated for us (Hebrews 10:20). When we have been baptized and received God's Holy Spirit, we are to walk "in newness of life" (Romans 6:4)—or, as we quoted John above, we are to "walk" "in love."

In order to become a new creation, enabling us to keep Christ's "new" commandment, we must receive God's Holy Spirit and be led by it (Romans 8:14).

We read in Ezekiel 18:31: "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die...?"

Let us notice God's promises:

"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, THAT they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19–20).

And again:

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26–27).

Far from abolishing the Ten Commandments, Christ commanded us to keep them in a new way—with even more zeal and enthusiasm and much deeper spiritual understanding and commitment—showing the love toward God and neighbor in a way which is impossible for

the carnal mind (Romans 8:6–9). It requires that God gives us a “new heart” and a “new spirit,” and that is exactly what He promises us so that we can obey the “new” commandment of manifesting godly love by keeping His commandments.

Part 2 - God's Grace

Chapter 1

What Exactly Is God's Grace?

Simply put, God's grace is God's unmerited favor. It is the gift of God. It includes manifold facets of God's undeserved pardon and forgiveness, His mercy and His compassion.

For instance, our heart is established and made firm, and becomes totally convicted through grace, preventing us from accepting wrong doctrines (Hebrews 13:9). It is grace with God when we suffer wrongfully for righteousness' sake (1 Peter 2:19); after all, when we experience wrongful persecution, our reward will be great (Matthew 5:10–12).

We are to grow in the grace of or favor with Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18), as Jesus Himself grew in the Father's grace or favor (Luke 2:52). And so, John wishes that the grace of Jesus Christ would be with all of those who read and keep what is written in the book of Revelation, and who do His commandments (Revelation 22:7, 14, 21).

Paul adds in Ephesians 6:24 that God's grace will be given to all those who love Jesus Christ in sincerity, and Christ told us that we love Him if we keep His words and commandments (John 14:15, 23).

God called us out of this world because of His grace—not because of anything we might have done (Romans 11:5–6; compare also Romans 9:11–16). Ephesians 2:8–9 explains that we were and are saved by grace through faith—not because of our works.

Being justified by His grace, we should become heirs of eternal life (Titus 3:7). Peter clarifies in 1 Peter 3:7 that both husband and wife (male and female) are together heirs of the grace of eternal life. And Romans 5:17, 21 adds that, after having received an abundance of God's grace and the gift of righteousness, it is our potential to finally reign and rule under Christ for all eternity.

Understanding that our salvation and eternal life in the Kingdom

and Family of God is being made possible through the grace of God, some conclude that therefore they don't have anything to do in the process—that God does it all for them, and that their way of living has no bearing on their inheritance of eternal life. This is a fatal and terrible error!

Continuing in Sin?

Paul asks the question in Romans 6:1 whether we should continue in sin after we have obtained God's grace of forgiveness. His conclusion is: Absolutely not! He says that we were once slaves of sin, but that we now have become slaves of righteousness. If we were to continue in the practice of sinful conduct, we would have received God's grace in vain.

Paul warns in Hebrews 12:15 that we must be diligent not to miss out on God's grace. He cautions us against becoming bitter, implying that living in such a way can lead to the loss of our salvation. In Jude 4, we read of evil ungodly persons who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, thereby denying Christ. They are described as being twice dead, for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved forever.

Don't Take God's Grace for Granted

The message is very clear: God's grace is not to be taken for granted, neglected or abused. If it is, it may be taken away from us and we might not inherit eternal life, but suffer eternal condemnation instead.

Chapter 2

Does Grace Free Us From Obedience?

Some teach that since we are under grace, we are no longer obligated to keep God's law and be obedient to Him. This is a dangerous conclusion.

In the last chapter, we discussed the meaning of grace. We pointed out that grace does not dispense with individual responsibility. In this chapter, we will show in more detail what God expects of us.

It is claimed that the New Testament teaches that we are no longer obligated to keep God's law, and that Paul especially made clear that the law is no longer binding for us. This is a terrible and, quite frankly, abominable doctrine stemming from demons!

An important tool for right Bible study is to look first at the clear and plain passages before trying to understand the more difficult ones. Even Peter said that Paul wrote a few things, which are difficult to understand, and that the unlearned try to misinterpret and twist them for their own purposes (2 Peter 3:16). Let's not make the same mistake, but rather look at Paul's clear and plain statements.

Doers of the Law Will Be Justified

Paul tells us in Romans 2:13 that the doers of the law, and not the hearers, will be justified. (James 1:25 says the same thing, and James 2:8–12 shows that the law is a reference to the Ten Commandments, and that we are guilty of the transgression of the entire law if we break just one of the Ten Commandments. Compare also James 4:11–12.)

In Romans 2:22–23, Paul reconfirms that he is speaking of the Ten Commandments (referring to idolatry and adultery as examples), when he says that we dishonor God when we break the law.

In Romans 2:27, he states that those who keep the law, even though they are physically uncircumcised, will judge those who are physically

circumcised, but who transgress the law—clearly referring to the Ten Commandments.

Romans 3:31 does away with the wrong concept that because of faith, we are no longer bound to keep the law. Rather, Paul says here that we do not make void the law of God through faith, but to the contrary, we establish the law.

To leave no doubt as to how Paul felt about the law of God, he tells us in Romans 7:12 that the law is holy and that the commandment (that is, any one of the Ten Commandments) is holy and just and good.

He also adds in Romans 7:14 that the law of God is spiritual. He states in Romans 8:7, 9, that the carnal mind does not and cannot obey the law of God in its final spiritual application, and that one must have God's Spirit dwelling in us to be able to obey the law of God.

True Love

In Romans 13:8–10, Paul emphasizes that God's law is a law of love, and that we fulfill the law (the portion of the law which deals with our relationship with our fellow man) when we love our neighbor. He stresses the same in Galatians 5:14, stating that all the law (dealing with our fellow man) is fulfilled by us when we love our fellow man. He says in Galatians 6:2 that we fulfill the law of Christ when we love our neighbor by bearing his burden.

However, many have a wrong concept of love, thinking that we can love someone while breaking God's law. This is totally false. When we break God's law, we do NOT love our fellow man. God's law DEFINES for us what true love is. We read in 1 John 5:3 that "this IS the love of God, that we keep His commandments." When we commit adultery with our neighbor's wife, we do not love our neighbor or his wife. When we kill or lie to or steal from our neighbor, we do NOT love him.

Paul says in Galatians 5:22–23 that when we love our neighbor and live in peace with him, have patience with him and bring joy to his life, etc., then we do not transgress the law, because against such right conduct and feeling there is no law. In other words, the law does not prohibit right conduct. It does not tell us, for example, not to have peace with your neighbor.

The same is expressed in 1 Timothy 1:9–10 where we read that the law is not made for the righteous man, but for the lawless and

disobedient, and then Paul lists numerous examples of sinful conduct. This statement must not be twisted to say that the righteous is under no obligation to keep the law. Rather, as long as he lives righteously, he obeys it and the law does not convict him as a transgressor; but once he begins to disobey it, he no longer lives in righteousness and has become a transgressor of the law.

And so, Paul tells us that if we are unrighteous and abide in the kinds of sins which he listed in 1 Timothy 1:9–10, we will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Refusing to Repent

A fundamental statement of John the Baptist can be found in John 3:36 to the effect that he who believes in Jesus Christ will inherit eternal life, but that God's wrath rests upon a person who does not "obey" Christ (compare the correct rendering in the *Revised Standard Version*).

John had refused to baptize those who came to him without having shown fruits of repentance, challenging them with the question as to who had warned them to flee from the wrath to come (Matthew 3:7–12; Luke 3:7–17). In Matthew 23:33, Christ reiterated John's warning, ultimately equating the wrath of God with the condemnation of hell fire. That is, if someone refuses to repent and obey God, ending up committing the unpardonable sin, he will be destroyed in the lake of fire.

Colossians 3:6 tells us that the wrath of God will come upon the children of "disobedience." Paul adds in 2 Thessalonians 1:6–9 that Christ will take vengeance on them that "do not obey" the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important to realize that we are going to face God's wrath if we refuse to obey Him! The book of Revelation announces in vivid terms what will happen to mankind when God pours out His wrath on rebellious and disobedient people (Revelation 6:15–17; 11:18; 14:9–10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15).

On the other hand, 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10 states that Jesus Christ delivered us from the wrath to come since we turned from idols to serve the living God. Paul reconfirms in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ.

How to Escape God's Wrath

Clearly, the Bible emphasizes repeatedly that we must be obedient to God in order to escape His wrath and to inherit eternal life. In Acts 4:19; 5:29, 32, we read that we must “obey” God rather than man (if there is a conflict), and that God gives His Holy Spirit only to those who “obey” Him (which includes continuing obedience even after we have become converted so that God can provide us with a steady supply of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis, rather than taking the Holy Spirit away from us).

We read in Acts 6:7 that when the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem, many priests also became “obedient to the faith.” Romans 1:5; 16:26 speaks as well of “obedience to” or “of the faith”; and Romans 15:18 says that Christ, using Paul as an instrument, is making the Gentiles “obedient,” while Romans 16:19 explains that their “obedience” has become known to all.

Paul states in 2 Corinthians 10:5–6 that we must even bring our thoughts into captivity to the “obedience of Christ,” and once our obedience has been fulfilled or perfected, we will be able to rule with and under Christ, to deal with and revenge all the disobedience of rebellious men.

Peter admonishes us to be “obedient children” (1 Peter 1:14) who have purified our souls in “obeying the truth” through God’s Spirit (verse 22).

John explains that we know God when we keep His commandments; that we are liars when we say we know Him and don’t keep them; and that the love of God is being perfected in us to the degree that we do keep them (1 John 2:3–5). He even states that we know that we love God’s children when we love God and keep His commandments (1 John 5:2–3).

Obedience and Disobedience

Paul has much to say about obedience and disobedience in his letter to the Hebrews. He explained that the Israelites who had left Egypt could not enter the Promised Land because of sin, unbelief and “disobedience” (Hebrews 3:17–19; note that in verse 18, the correct rendering is “disobedience,” not “that believed not,” as the *Authorized Version* renders it. The *New King James Bible* and the *Luther Bible*

translate it correctly.). Again, in Hebrews 4:6, 11, Paul states that they were unable to enter the Promised Land because of “disobedience” (as it should be in both verses; compare the *New International Version* and *Luther*).

In Hebrews 5:9, we are told that Christ became the author of eternal salvation for all those who “obey Him.” Hebrews 8:10–12 quotes a prophecy from the Old Testament to the effect that God will write His law in the hearts and minds of the people, so that they will know Him and obey the law and not sin anymore (compare also Hebrews 10:15–17).

In the very last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, the need for obedience of God’s law is stressed again. In Revelation 12:17, we are told that Satan will persecute members of the Church of God who keep the commandments of God. In Revelation 14:12 we read about those who, in the face of persecution, have the patience of the saints and the faith of Jesus, and who keep the commandments of God. Finally, God warns those who refuse to obey God’s commandments and who instead live in and practice sin, that they will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27; 22:15).

At the same time, He tells us that we are blessed when we keep His commandments, so that we may enter the Holy City (Revelation 22:14); and that when we overcome sin, self, society and Satan, we will inherit all things and won’t have to die the second death in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:7–8).

We are left with strong encouragement to continue living in righteousness and holiness if we want to enter the Family of God (Revelation 22:11), knowing that Christ will return soon to give us our reward in accordance with our works (Revelation 22:12). We cannot afford to slip and fall and turn away from the holy Word of God, by giving heed to human fables and fairy tales and demonic philosophies that will try to convince us that we don’t need to be obedient to God’s law, because we are now under grace. Paul says that the condemnation of those is just who teach such heresy.

We will discuss in the next chapter what it means to be “under grace.”

Chapter 3

Not Under Law, But Under Grace

The Bible says that we are no longer under law but that we are under grace. Does this mean, as some claim, that we are no longer obligated to keep the law?

We read the following in **Romans 6:14–15**:

“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

What does it mean to be under grace and not under law? And how does this explain why sin does not rule over us anymore?

More Confusion in Commentaries

There is much confusion in traditional Christianity regarding this passage (“not under law, but under grace”). It is one of the most misunderstood statements in orthodox Christianity. The common explanation is that the law has been abolished and that we are now under God’s grace and freed from any obligation to keep the law.

Notice the following examples from Bible commentaries:

The *Pulpit Commentary* states: “... grace condones sin... the principle of law is to exact complete obedience to its behests; but the principle of grace is to accept faith in lieu of complete obedience...”

The idea is expressed here that grace has replaced the law or obedience to it.

The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary writes: “To be ‘under the law’ is, first, to be under its claim to entire obedience; and so, next under its curse for the breach of these. And as all power to obey can reach the sinner only through Grace, of which the law knows nothing, it follows that to be ‘under the law’ is, finally, to be shut up under an inability to keep it, and consequently to be the helpless slave of sin... The curse of the law has been completely lifted from off them... when they were ‘under the law,’ Sin could not but have dominion over them...”

Even though a few remarks in the quote are at least partially correct, it must be recognized that the authors probably did not understand their own words. That is to say that we cannot assume from the foregoing that the writers of the commentary grasped the correct meaning of the term, “the curse of the law” or what it actually means to be “under the law,” as it equates the law with being a slave of sin. The overall tenor is again that grace has replaced the law.

The *Geneva Study Bible* writes that “the law is... the power and instrument of sin.” It does not explain what this is supposed to mean, but the impression is that the law causes us to sin. This would be totally wrong.

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible states: “We who are Christians are not subject to that law where sin is excited, and where it rages unsubdued.”

This is equally difficult to understand. However, the commentary continues with the following pertinent question:

“What is meant by this declaration? Does it mean that Christians are absolved from all the obligations of the law?... The apostle does not affirm that Christians are not bound to obey the moral law. The whole scope of his reasoning shows that he maintains that they are. The whole structure of Christianity supposes the same thing; compare Matthew 5:17–19.”

So far so good. But then, the commentary goes on to mix elements of truth with elements of error, saying:

“... the apostle means to say that Christians are not under the law as legalists, or as attempting to be justified by it. They seek a different plan of justification altogether: and they do not attempt to be justified by their own obedience.”

It is true that we cannot be justified by the law. But in failing to understand what is meant with being “under the law” and seemingly equating this with being “legalists,” the reasoning in the commentary is faulty.

No Longer “Under Law”

Let us begin to give the answer as to what Paul meant, by explaining the statement that true Christians are no longer “under law.”

Even though it is true that, at times when Paul uses the word “law” he is referring to the temporary ritual law which is no longer in force

and effect for us today (compare, for example, Romans 5:13–14; Galatians 3:17, 19, 24–25), the context of Romans 6:14–15 addresses, at least in part, the spiritual law (some call it “moral law”) of the Ten Commandments.

In what way then are we no longer “under law”?

In our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*, we explain this phrase as follows, on page 18:

“... Others quote Romans 6:14, stating that we are no longer ‘under law but under grace,’ saying this means we don’t have to obey the law anymore. However, the correct meaning of this passage is that when we violate the law, we are no longer under the curse of the law—the death penalty—as the blood of Christ, given to us by grace, has covered and forgiven our sins—has paid the death penalty that we earned. Paul explains in the very next verse (verse 15), that this does not mean that we can now continue to sin—that is, to break God’s law. Rather, we are now to be ‘slaves of righteousness’ (verse 18), in keeping God’s law.”

The Greek Word “HUPO” for “Under”

Some may question this statement, asking for further proof that this conclusion is correct. Let us therefore review additional passages where the term “under law” is mentioned, and let us see in what way this phrase is used. We need to note that in Romans 6:14–15, the Greek word for “under” is “*hupo*.” We will limit our discussion to the use of that Greek word.

In **Galatians 4:4–5**, we read:

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born UNDER (Greek: “*hupo*”) THE LAW, to redeem those who were UNDER (Greek: “*hupo*”) THE LAW, that we might receive the adoption as son (better: “sonship”).”

No Longer Under the Law’s Penalty

In our free booklet, *Paul’s Letter to the Galatians—How to Understand It*, we explain this passage as follows:

“Christ had to be made UNDER the law—subject to its penalty—as Christ never sinned. He never was under the law—its penalty—due to His conduct; rather, He had to be placed or made under the law, so that He could pay the penalty of sin for us. We came under the law—its

penalty—through our conduct, so Christ had to be MADE UNDER the law, in order to redeem us who were under the law—its penalty.

“And why? To give us SONSHIP! The *Authorized Version* translates verse 5, erroneously, as ‘adoption’ (compare, too, Romans 8:15), but the correct rendering is ‘sonship.’ God is not only ‘adopting’ us ‘as sons,’ by granting us certain privileges and possessions, but He is reproducing Himself—His very divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)—in us. When we receive His Holy Spirit, we are BEGOTTEN sons and daughters of God, and when we are changed into spirit at the time of Christ’s return, we are then BORN AGAIN children of God—not just adopted children, but children with the very same NATURE and MIND of God (Philippians 2:5).”

Another passage, where the term “under the law” is used, is in **Galatians 4:21**.

It reads: “Tell me, you who desire to be under (Greek: “*hupo*”) the law, do you not hear the law?”

Desire to Be Under the Law?

In the above-mentioned booklet on *Paul’s letter to the Galatians*, we state:

“Paul is not saying here that they desired to be under the law in the sense that they wanted to be under the penalty of the law. They did not desire to die because of their sins. But they seemed to desire to live their old way of life again (which brings forth death)—or they desired to follow wrong teachers believing that they must be circumcised in order to be saved.

“But as we saw, circumcision does not justify us—nor do even the Ten Commandments. In violating just one of the Ten Commandments, we have sinned and incurred the death penalty. What saves us is Christ’s sacrifice, by which God forgives us our sins and removes the penalty—but we can’t keep on sinning so that grace may abound.

“To put it differently, if we desire to break God’s law of the Ten Commandments, we are again under the law; that is, under or subject to its penalty. Also, if we desire to obtain justification apart from Christ, we are still under or subject to the penalty of the law, as we can only become justified through Christ.

“Furthermore, Paul is using the word ‘law’ in different ways in verse

21. To be 'under the law' means, under its penalty; when he then says, 'hear the law,' he means the five books of Moses."

A third passage can be found in **Galatians 5:18**.

It reads: "But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under (Greek: "hupo") the law."

Not Under the Law When Led by the Spirit

Again quoting from our booklet on *Paul's letter to the Galatians*:

"We can choose to walk in the Spirit (verse 16), which will motivate and empower us to KEEP the law of love, and when we do, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh which will induce us to sin and to break the law (compare 1 John 3:4: 'Sin is the transgression of the law.'). But if we chose, instead, to walk in the flesh, we don't show love, but selfishness, and we will engage in biting and devouring one another (verse 15)..."

"To walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh is a constant struggle, as Paul explains in verse 17. There is a battle going on in our minds between God's Spirit and our fleshly desires... When we are led by God's Spirit and do the things which are pleasing in God's sight, we are no longer 'under the law' (verse 18). When we walk after the Spirit and are led by it, we will keep the law. And since and as long as we don't break it, we are not under the penalty of the law."

When we are under the law, we are under its penalty for having violated it. The law has dominion over us in that it can demand our life. The penalty of the law is also described as the "curse of the law." We are under that curse when we sin, and nothing that WE might do subsequently can abolish that curse.

Galatians 3:10, 13 tells us: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under (Greek: "hupo") the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'... Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')..."

Those Who Are of the Works of the Law Are Cursed

In our booklet on *Paul's letter to the Galatians*, we state the following:

"Paul conveys the thought that nobody kept all the physical works of the law, including all of its rituals, washings or sacrifices. In addition,

nobody even kept all of God's spiritual commandments of the Ten Commandments and its judgments and statutes. Therefore, everybody is under the curse or penalty of the law, which is the second death for spiritual sin or which might be physical death or other physical penalties for civil or criminal infractions...

"The curse of the law is the penalty for breaking or violating the law. Christ redeemed us from the curse or penalty of the law—not the law—as He became a curse for us, in that He took our sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for our sins on our behalf. He thereby redeemed us or set us free from the penalty of death, which we brought upon ourselves by sinning—breaking the law."

Under Sin

In the same way, we are "under" sin (Greek: "*hupo*"), as **Romans 3:9** says ("we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin."). When we sin, then we are under the power or influence of sin. Sin has us in its clutches. Rather than ruling over it (Genesis 4:7), it rules over us. And as carnal human beings, we cannot keep the law of God (Romans 8:7). But even after conversion, a fight of good versus evil is going on in our minds and in our lives. Paul was still compelled to say, years after his conversion, that he was "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14; Greek: "*hupo*") and did "evil" (Romans 7:19), obeying the "sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7:17, 20), and being held in "captivity" to sin (Romans 7:23).

When we sin by transgressing the law (compare Romans 4:15), then we are under sin, under the law, under the curse of the law, under its penalty. Sin has power over us so long as that penalty is not removed, because the penalty of sin—the wages of sin—is death (Romans 6:23). So, death needs to be removed.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:54–57 that death will be swallowed up in victory when we become immortal Spirit beings (unable to die anymore), exclaiming: "O Death, where is your sting?... The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." When we sin (by transgressing the law), then we bring the death penalty upon us. But Paul continues: "But thanks to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Under God's Protection

Notice that it is God who GIVES us the victory. The Bible tells us that we can find mercy, forgiveness, protection and help from God. We can be placed under God's grace, rather than living "under the penalty of the law."

God—through Jesus Christ—is offering us His grace, so that we can be freed from the law's death penalty. When we accept God's grace, then we are UNDER His grace. We can be under God's protection.

Jesus uses a similar analogy when He states in Matthew 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under (Greek: "*hupo*") her wings, but you were not willing."

You must be willing to come under Christ's wings. You must be willing to "humble yourselves under (Greek: "*hupo*") the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

The use of the Greek word "*hupo*", in English "under," is important. We are no longer "under" the law—its death penalty—but "under" grace. Since God is willing to give us protection by, symbolically speaking, gathering us "under" His wings, and as we are to humble ourselves "under" the mighty hand of God, we can come "under" God's grace; that is, under God's protection and authority. In Matthew 8:9, a Roman centurion states that he is "a man under (Greek: "*hupo*") authority, having soldiers under (Greek: "*hupo*")" him (compare also Luke 7:8). In the same way, we are "under" God's grace, coming "under" and putting our trust "under" the shadow of His wings (compare Psalm 17:8; 36:7).

We are still using similar terminology today when we want to express the thought that someone is under authority of someone or something else. We speak of someone who is "under the influence" of alcohol; or that someone is placed "under observation."

What, then, is meant in detail that we are to live "under grace"?

Under God's Grace

Simply put, God's grace is God's unmerited favor. It is the gift of God. It includes manifold facets of God's undeserved pardon and

forgiveness, His mercy and His compassion, and more.

The Greek word for “grace,” “*charis*,” can mean benefit, favor and gift. The Greek word “*charisma*” is derived from the word, “*charis*.”

God’s grace is a gift, and it includes forgiveness of our sins and thereby the removal of the death penalty. We were freely justified by God’s grace in that God forgave us our sins, following our repentance and belief in Christ’s Sacrifice (Romans 3:23–24).

Paul makes it clear that we cannot justify ourselves. When we sin, we incur the death penalty, which needs to be forgiven. The law—any law, whether ritual or spiritual—cannot forgive our sins or justify us. We read in Galatians 5:4: “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

When and as long as we are under grace and not under the law’s death penalty, then we have the promise of eternal life (Romans 6:23: “the GIFT of God is eternal life”)—something which is promised to us by grace. (1 Peter 3:7 speaks of the “grace of life.”)

We need to realize what is included in the concept that we are under grace. First of all, grace is a GIFT which is FREELY given to us. We cannot earn it—nothing that we do “entitles” us to receive God’s gift of His grace (Romans 5:15; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 3:7).

We read that God calls us to salvation through His grace (Galatians 1:15). It is a gift from God that we CAN even come to Him. We read in John 6:44 that we cannot come to God unless God draws us to Him (and John 6:65 says that this must be “granted” to us). And Romans 2:4 adds that repentance is a gift from God as well.

We read that we believe through grace (Acts 18:27). It is a gift from God that we CAN even believe.

We read that it is through the grace of God that we have been and can be saved (Acts 15:11; compare Ephesians 2:8).

Grace Does Not Nullify the Law

None of this does away with the need to keep God’s law, as we have thoroughly explained throughout this booklet.

To briefly reiterate, Paul asks the question in **Romans 6:1** whether we should continue in sin after we have obtained God’s grace of forgiveness. His conclusion is: Absolutely not! He says that we were once slaves of sin, but that we now have become slaves of righteousness. If

we were to continue in the practice of sinful conduct, we would have received God's grace in vain.

Grace Helps Us to Serve God Now

Grace is not limited to the past. Rather, it is through grace that we can serve God now. Hebrews 12:28 says: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, BY WHICH we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." We are to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1).

It is through grace that God gives us His Holy Spirit, and that is why we are warned not to insult "the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29).

Grace includes more than forgiveness of past sins. Otherwise, sin would again rule over us the minute we fall for its evil devices. And we oftentimes do. But when we do, we can again obtain forgiveness after true repentance and belief in Christ's Sacrifice, and God then cleanses us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8–9). But grace is not a license to sin. God expects us to improve toward perfection—to live more and more without sin.

However, as we saw, we cannot keep God's law or be obedient to God just on our own strength. We need God's grace to be able to accomplish this.

God's Grace Gives Us Power to Conquer Sin

And so, grace is not only the favor of forgiveness of past sins, but it also includes the strength and power to overcome sin now and in the future, and to live more and more righteously. This is an all-important reason WHY sin will no longer have dominion over us, as we read in Romans 6:14–15.

In Titus 2:11–12, we read that God's grace that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that we are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we must instead live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world. The German *Luther Bible* is even clearer, emphasizing that it is the grace of God that helps and motivates us to forsake ungodliness and to embrace a righteous and godly life.

The *Life Application Bible* has the following annotation: "If we're no longer under the law but under grace, are we now free to sin and disregard the Ten Commandments? Paul says, 'By no means.' ... the

law does not justify us or help us to overcome sin. But now that we are bound to Christ, he is our Master, and he gives us power to do good rather than evil.”

Christ Lives in Us

Romans 5:8–10 adds that we were justified and reconciled to God through *Christ's death*, but that we will be saved by *His life*. It is Christ's life in us that *continues* to justify us and that saves us.

When we are under grace, we receive justification for our sins when we repent of them and believe in Christ's Sacrifice. We become justified through faith. We must believe in Christ, but we must also have the faith OF Christ in us (Galatians 2:16, *Authorized Version*), which is given to us through the Holy Spirit. Christ must be living in us. It is HIS faith which continually justifies us.

In addition, we receive power and strength to become more and more righteous. God's righteousness, which we are to seek (Matthew 6:33), is also God's gift, as is God's grace (Romans 5:17). In other words, God gives us His righteousness through His grace. He offers it to us, but we must accept it. When we let God live in us and guide us through the power of the Holy Spirit in us, then we will become more and more righteous.

We can only keep the righteous requirements of the law, IF Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, and IF we follow Christ's lead. Christ must keep the law in and through us (Romans 8:3–4). He condemned sin in His flesh—and we must allow Him to condemn sin today in our flesh!

Rather than abolishing law through grace, it is God's grace which cleanses us from sin; which frees us from the death penalty; and which enables us to become more and more righteous by obeying the law. We are under grace—including its power to overcome sin—thereby abolishing sin's dominion over us.

Conclusion

We have shown you in this booklet that true Christians, who are under God's grace, must strive to keep His law. Grace does not do away with God's spiritual law; rather, God's grace helps us to keep the law. At the same time, Christ must live IN His disciples, empowering them to be obedient, but they must be willing participants in the process of becoming righteous and inheriting eternal life in the Kingdom and Family of God.

God has revealed His character in the law of the Ten Commandments, and the statutes and judgments, which explain the Ten Commandments even further. God wants us to become perfect, as He is perfect. When Christ was here on earth as a human being, He kept the law perfectly. He magnified the law in His life to show us how to keep it in the spirit, not just in the letter. When we are under God's grace of deliverance, we are no longer under the penalty of the law, as Christ's death paid the penalty on our behalf. When we are under God's grace of power and protection, we receive Christ's help to become more and more righteous and successful in conquering sin.

God's laws include so many facets of life, all of which can be found in the Holy Bible. Some of His laws were temporary and of a ritual nature, while others were and are spiritual and must still be obeyed. We have prepared many booklets to explain to you which commandments are still binding today for true Christians, and how they are to be kept in the letter and in the spirit. Please review our list of available free literature at the end of this booklet, and send us your request. We will be happy to assist you on your journey toward eternal life.

Did God Give Israel Bad Laws?

Some quote Ezekiel 20:25 (*Authorized Version*) for the proposition that God gave Israel laws that were not good. But when we review from God's Word what He tells us about His laws, we can know this statement in verse 25 of Ezekiel 20 cannot be complete as presented.

In Psalm 19:7–10 we read: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

Romans 7:12 tells us: "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."

What then could this verse in Ezekiel be revealing to us? Much can be learned by reading the preceding twenty-four verses of this 20th chapter of Ezekiel. Israel, of course, had been in captivity under the rule of the Egyptians for a long time and had totally lost any knowledge of God and of His Ways. God had determined to reveal Himself once again to these descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel).

In verse 11 of this chapter we see that God gave them His statutes and judgments, "which if a man does, he shall live by them." Continue in verses 12–13:

"Moreover, I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, 'which, if a man does, he shall live by them'; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths."

Thus, God turned against them (verses 23–24): "Also I lifted My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries, because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers' idols."

Somewhat clearer than the *Authorized Version*, the *New King James Bible* gives a little more understanding relative to verse 25, stating that God "... GAVE THEM UP to statutes that were not good." The *Living Bible* states it this way: "I let them adopt customs and laws which were worthless. Through the

keeping of them they could not attain (eternal) life.”

These were laws and statutes *they* had determined for themselves to live by. Yet, in so doing, they could not please God!

What were these laws, these statutes and these judgments that the people took to themselves? They are the laws Paul spoke of in the second chapter of the letter to the Colossians. He described these laws as “philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and NOT according to Christ” (verse 8). Paul identified these human “regulations” (verse 20) as “commandments and doctrines of men” (verse 22).

In Psalm 81:11–12, God reveals exactly what He did in this matter with Israel. “But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels.”

Notice, also, Acts 7:41–42: “And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven (false worship), as it is written in the book of the Prophets...”

Yes, God *allowed* them to go their own way. It was their choice, as it is with God’s people today! Proverbs 14:12 tells us: “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

Moses explained to Israel in Deuteronomy 4:5–8 that *God’s righteous laws* were for their wisdom and understanding in the sight of all the nations. This was a blessing to them from the Almighty!

Notice verse 8 of Deuteronomy 4 (*Authorized Version*): “And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” And in Deuteronomy 6:24–25 (*Authorized Version*): “And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, *for our good always*, that He might preserve us alive, as it is today. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all the commandments before our God, as He hath commanded.”

God’s people would do well today to follow these righteous instructions from their God!

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