
The Nature Of



Law & Sin

AN ARTICLE REPRINT SERIES

WHAT IS SIN?

Most people have an opinion about what sin is. But what does God say it is? The Bible says much about sin you may not have noticed. See page 3.

THE ANSWER TO SIN

We all want to be successful, to live a happy and productive life. But too often we miss the mark — sin — and reap unhappiness. This article will help identify the pitfalls of sin and show how they can be avoided. See page 6.

IS GOD'S LAW "BONDAGE"?

Is God's law a burden? Is it against your best interests? Is the law bad, wrong, evil? Was the law given to oppress and enslave? Should we keep the law today? See page 9.

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AH FLOOVah Chicago, an' bruthern, ah sawr sin!"—wailed the itinerant tent-meeting evangelist. Everywhere this fiery "preachuh" went, he saw "sin." But he never got around to telling his congregations what sin is!

Do You Know? Are you sure you know what sin is?

Do you realize how broad, how gigantic and ghastly sin is?

Many of you probably do know the main Bible definition of sin—I John 3:4: "Whosoever commits sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (see Charles B. Williams' translation: "sin is lawlessness").

But that's not all the Bible says about sin.

Actually the Bible portrays and defines law-breaking in several dozen ways. The subject "sin" becomes so gigantically broad (if you really study God's Word) you will probably be surprised.

And did you know that all sins fall into three kinds—three categories?

Turn to I John 2:15-16. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world [Greek *cosmos*—meaning "society, way of life"], the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world [*cosmos*], the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Do you love your life-style, your way of doing things? If so, God says you love this world. And this world is passing away—disappearing (verse 17). You must forsake your way, or you too will perish.

Now notice that John divides everything "in the world" into three classes or categories (verse 16) — three divisions. One: "the lust of the flesh." This particular lust is that pulling, yearning, down-dragging powerful desire—temptation—to

satisfy and please the body. Remember, lust is an *unlawful desire* to satisfy, not just the normal, lawful desire to be comfortable. God wants us to be in good health (III John 2).

Two: "the lust of the eyes." Here is another illegal desire, but this time through the eyes. Our eyes focus on things that do not belong to us. Then we think, "Ah, now that would be nice—wouldn't I like to have—wouldn't I like to lay my hands on that!" Our eyes incite us to lust and covetousness, greed and envy. That is the lust of the eyes.

Three: "THE PRIDE OF LIFE." John is here speaking of *physical* life. John's original word for "pride" means the puffing, swelling, heady, billowing, superior, proud, exalted feeling which all human beings experience. The pride of life is that warm, "good," elevated self-satisfied feeling we get when someone pats us on the back—when someone tells us we are pretty good.

We have all experienced the "pride of life" somewhere in our lives, haven't we? We thought—deep down inside—we were *right*; but we were wrong. Our "righteousness"—whatever its form, whatever its brand—was just so much ego and pride.

All sins appear to fit generally into one or more of these three categories of I John.

Man's First Sin. Let's see how closely man's first sin fits John's three-way description. Turn to Genesis 3:6. "And when the woman saw that the tree was [1] good for food, and that it was [2] pleasant to the eyes, and a tree [3] to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat. . . ."

Did you catch that? Eve—not satisfied with the food God gave her—saw that the fruit was "good for food." That is, her flesh, her taste buds, her appetite lusted for that par-

ticular food. Eve had an illegal desire to satisfy her body. What is that, but "lust of the flesh"?

Secondly, it was "pleasant to the eyes"—her mind (through the eyes) lusted after something pleasant to the sight. The same as John's "lust of the eyes"!

Lastly, in her mind she *desired* it to make her *wiser*. She looked for something to exalt, puff up, expand, and swell the self. That is the "pride of life"!

So both Adam and Eve yielded to the triple temptation; they disobeyed God, they sinned. Man's first sin fit all three of John's categories for law-breaking.

Too many of us today are like Adam and Eve. The fruit God gave them was not good enough. It is always the *forbidden* fruit that appeals to us. It's the other fellow's house, the other fellow's championship, the other woman's fur coat, somebody else's name on the record book, the other fellow's wife and not our own that appeals. Our eyes, our minds, our bodies deceive us into thinking the grass is always greener on the other side.

Now we know how sin affected our first parents. Let's go on through the Bible to see how sin affects us today! We must know more about sin in order to root it out.

Sin Is Many-sided. The Bible uses various words for "sin" in the original texts, showing various shades of meaning. God shows us that sin is complex—not as simple as we might think. We will analyze some of these "sin" words to see what special facet of sin God is emphasizing.

Remember one thing before we continue. All these words can be correctly classified as "sin." Their meanings all overlap to a certain degree and may even be synonyms in some contexts. However, as we go through the different passages where

the various words are used, we see various kinds of sin. Let's notice some of these words in the Old Testament and the contexts in which they occur.

The first and most common word for sin is *khata*. *Khata* means "to miss the mark." Here's the point for us: "missing the mark" is not necessarily from the habit of sinning. If you miss the mark in daily Christian living, it isn't necessarily because you are a practicing sinner. Of course, you *can* fail for that reason too.

We often fail, not because we want to sin, not because we hate God in our conscious mind, but because, even though we are aiming for the mark, we are not able to hit dead center. We miss the mark because we don't want to hit it badly enough, because we don't practice hitting it, and because we don't have enough of God's help. We need to realize we have all come short of the mark—we are mark-missers. God knows we will begin by missing, but with His help we can start hitting.

Most of us, at some point, yield to temptation. If you yield to temptation you miss the mark, you *khata*! Notice what David said when he committed adultery with Bathsheba. "Against thee [God], thee only, have I sinned [*khata*], and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:4). David had allowed himself to drift away from God—the temptation overcame him.

God told Cain that sin (*khata*) would try to pull him down. God's words to Cain apply to the whole human race: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well [if you disobey], sin lieth at the door" (Gen. 4:7). The Revised Standard Version makes the last part of this verse clearer, saying in effect: "Sin's desire will be to pull you down, but you must master it!"

We must resist temptation—we must not yield! We must strive always to hit the mark!

Your Duty and Mine. Jeremiah 51:5 describes a time when the entire land of Israel was filled with sin. The Hebrew word for sin here is *asham*, meaning "incur guilt" (sometimes through ignorance or neglect).

Do you really produce on your job? Do you produce poor work? You machinists, draftsmen, design engi-

neers, gas station attendants, farmers, bus and truck drivers, elevator operators—workers of all kinds—do you put out sloppy, dowdy, half-done work? Are you guilty?

Remember, a Christian strives to do the job better than anybody else. True Christians are not often the great of the world. We may just pump gas. We may just sit and type what the boss dictates. Perhaps we just answer the phone. We may drive a truck. Possibly we plow the soil. But we must strive to do it *right*—and the *best*!

You may say you don't have as much ability as the next man—you can't do as well as he. But your zeal, your attitude, your zest for work can still put you in front! (Remember, you are in competition against yourself, not the other fellow).

How about wage cheating? Do you punch the clock a little early? Earlier at quitting time, that is? Or do you punch it earlier, before work starts? Do you do the job as you would want it done for yourself? For Christ?

How about you women? If you are at home, do you live up to the high standard that "wife" and "mother"



"God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16, 17).

imply? If you are working, do you produce on the job? Or are you letting down (*asham-ing*)?

Something or Nothing? Another very common Old Testament word for "sin" is *aven*. The word is quite often connected with idolatry. Remember, an idol is anything in your mind higher than God, or anything you love more than God. The word sometimes expresses the "nothingness of sin." It may include deception, self-deception, and legal injustice.

Read I Samuel 15:22-23. *Aven* occurs in the phrase "and stubbornness is as iniquity [*aven*] and idolatry." The Bible says stubbornness is a form of idolatry!

Notice how the concept of idolatry connected with this "*aven*-type" sin helps explain Isaiah 1:13. "... The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity [*aven*], even the solemn meeting." As the next verse says, these days were "*your* new moons and *your* appointed feasts."

Remember Christ's famous rebuke of the false ministers in His sermon on the Mount? Perhaps you did not know part of His condemnation (Matt. 7:23) is a quote from the Old Testament: "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (*aven* in Hebrew, quoted from Psalm 6:8). False ministers are still "working" deception (*aven*) in their lives today!

Are you still stubborn? Bull-headed? Or is your particular brand of vanity personal idolatry?

Perhaps you are caught up in the vanity of this world's vogues and fashions. Possibly you're all hung up on being "in." Maybe you preen like a peacock before the "vanity mirror" by the hour in a vain attempt to keep up with the current trends. Of course there is nothing really wrong with being in fashion, but it shouldn't become a preoccupation.

Offbeat. Vanity is not all that is wrong with our society! Satan is twisting everything he can. Crazy, weird, outlandish, far-out, offbeat, perverse—that describes our society. *Avon* means "crookedness" or "intentional sin."

What about some of our modern music? Have you heard some of the weird, outlandish—yes, fiendish—modern noise? It seems that the goal

of many modern “composers” is to make as many notes clash in discord as possible.

God knew this final generation would bend, twist natural laws and natural beauty into a wrong use. That is why He inspired the word *avon* to describe our sins today.

“Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? Or what is our iniquity [*avon*]? Or what is our sin (*khata*) that we have committed against the Lord our God? Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Eternal, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law . . . therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not . . .” (Jer. 16:10-13).

Yes, God knew that we would come up with crazy, offbeat modern art, weird music and lustful dances! Surely our iniquity (*avon*) is not hidden from God’s eyes (Jer. 16:17).

“Painful.” Another Hebrew word for sin is *amal*, meaning “labor, toil” (usually including the idea of wear-

some, painful effort). Though this word can be translated “sin,” it brings out a special aspect of sin. Sin is not delicious or sweet. The results of sin always bring painful, agonizing unhappiness and toil.

Imagine how much work a gambler goes to, just to make a “fast buck.” Stays up all night, drives all the way across the state, skips meals, worries, schemes and plans and plots, fights off headache, backache and hangover—just to get something for “nothing.” *It doesn’t work!* As King Solomon wrote: “. . . The way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15).

A lot of painful labor and toil (*sin, amal*) often goes into the body-building game. Have you ever stopped to wonder just exactly what in the world mirrors have to do with lifting weights? I am speaking of these popular—and money-making—gymnasiums which advertise the “body beautiful” for men (!) and women. We know what bars are for, and disks of iron, weights, pulleys, rowing machines, etc. But what about the mirrors?

Mirrors are an essential part of body-building apparatus. The mirrors are there so they can *see* themselves—that is why so many body builders don’t walk normally. They must tense their arms slightly to make the biceps and triceps bulge, and spread their “lats” (the muscles that make the V-shape in the outer part of the upper back), etc.

You will note that many body builders usually work in tight bathing trunks, or at least stripped to the waist. The reason for all this is simple. They want to *see* themselves! Many of them have to build up vanity: the “pride of [physical] life”! And all the labor and toil they go through becomes *amal*—that is *sin*—as long as it is for a vain purpose.

It actually *hurts* to build a body. It actually takes pain and sweat and strain. But, for some, as long as they have a mirror in front of them, they’re in business. The mirror pulls them on—that vanity of seeing themselves.

A Nation of Cheats. *Amal* also includes the great, strenuous effort so many students put forth to cheat. Some years back over one hundred top men in the nation at the Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, were expelled for cheating! Those

men had tremendous advantages at the academy—the best of everything. Beautiful area, mountain setting, fabulous new buildings, everything going for them. They had great *esprit de corps*—spirit and zeal.

But at least a hundred of them—the nation’s cream of the crop—were cheats!

The *work* involved in cheating is phenomenal. It takes great effort, much eye strain and mental strain to secrete the answers where a sharp-eyed examiner will not spot them.

Stop to ask yourself how much effort you are putting forth just to get around the law. It takes pain and toil (*amal*) to get around God’s laws and man’s laws.

Good as Gold? Once upon a time men used to keep their word. Sounds like a fairy tale now, doesn’t it? A fairy tale, because so few men today keep their word. If you are disloyal, faithless, perfidious, or hypocritical, you are sinning; you are *ma’aling*. *Ma’al* is a Hebrew word meaning to act treacherously, unfaithfully, or fraudulently. This word is used with adultery—which is a form of disloyalty and dishonesty—and



“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her . . .” (Gen. 3:6).



“The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground . . . So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword . . .” (Gen. 3:23, 24).

adultery *fills our nation!* The returned captives from Babylon under Ezra had transgressed (*ma'al*) in taking their strange wives and thus acted treacherously and perfidiously with Almighty God (Ezra 10:10).

You may not be an adulterer, but how good is your word? It should be "good as gold"! Christians are supposed to place so much stock in their word so as to bring back the old days of "once upon a time." Are you willing to *suffer* in order to keep your word?

God's Word never fails! "Thy testimonies are very sure . . ." (Ps. 93:5).

Ask yourself how loyal you are to God's Work. Are you loyal only

while it is convenient for you? Or are you—as David was—willing to hurt yourself, suffer loss, sacrifice whatever, rather than to see the Work take a loss? How about before the judge and the magistrates? How about before the police, the medical profession or the boss?

If you are loyal, God will reward. If you are not loyal, you are a sinner—you are guilty of *ma'al*!

When Uzziah the king stepped out of his office and tried to gain God's favor by burning incense, Azariah the priests condemned Uzziah of treachery, faithlessness, disloyalty, saying to him: "Thou hath trespassed" (*ma'al*). See II Chronicles 26:16 and 18.

Another common sin coming under this category is sneakiness and petty thieving. Have you broken all your habits of petty thieving? You must train your children against this vice also. Petty thieving and sneakiness are common among children.

Enough? Are you tired of reading about sin? Have you had enough?

God has had *enough*!

God is fed up with sin. Christ is busily preparing for a new world in which we will gradually stamp out sin. Right now Christ is purging sin out of His Church. In the next article you will read more about sins you must purge out if you are to be with Christ in that new world He is building. □

THE ANSWER TO SIN

We all want to be successful, to live a happy and productive life. But too often we miss the mark—sin—and reap unhappiness. This article will help identify the pitfalls of sin and show how they can be avoided.

As we saw in the preceding article, society is set up to appeal to the negative factor in our nature—and we yield too often! That is, we "miss the mark" (Hebrew word *khata*). We saw that vanity often involved in personal appearance, bragging of children, and general senseless frivolity is *amal*—that is, "nothingness and vanity" (sin)! We saw that modern art and music is often greatly "twisted"—bent, wrested and perverted from its right use—*avon*. We found that "sneakiness," "treachery" (Hebrew *ma'al*) included word-breaking, disloyalty, petty thieving, etc.

We saw how clearly, how unmistakably the Bible pictures, brands and condemns sin.

Know Your Enemy. These two articles are intended to help you personally to locate, spot and pinpoint the sin in your life—and root it out. Your enemy—sin—has a real target: *you*. "... Its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen. 4:7,

RSV). If you do not "master" sin now—while you have the chance—you may end up a *reprobate*: a person who "cannot cease from sin"! (II Pet. 2:13-15).

Sin, of course, is not a person or personality. Sin is a force, a power. Sin pulls you down, makes you want to go the wrong way, which makes you want to give up, quit. In short, sin is what robs us of the blessings and good things the Creator intended for us.

To win this battle against sin you must clearly see what sin is. You must know your enemy to defeat him.

More Sin. Before we give the answer to sin, let's discover a few more facets and kinds of sin—both national and personal—which God identifies in the Bible.

Last time we mentioned only sins which were "not necessarily intentional." But the Bible does talk about intentional sin—since all human beings and nations do sin intentionally,

sometime or other in life. The Hebrew *zimmah* means "meditated wickedness," "a plan for evil," especially with sins of unchastity, incest, rape. Many such sinners (people *plotting* crime, sexual criminals) roam our streets today. We don't call them sinners; we call them homicidal maniacs, psychopaths. By what law enforcement officers call the "bleeding hearts," these criminals are labeled "unfortunate" or "misunderstood." The ugly episode of the concubine is termed *zimmah* (King James "lewdness") in Judges 20:6: "... For they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel."

The Western world is filled with sexual looseness and lewdness—for which we will be punished! (Read Jeremiah 13, especially verse 27 where "lewdness" is *zimmah*.)

Our national lewdness will mean our very destruction! (See how frequently the word "lewdness"—*zimmah* in Hebrew—is used through the middle chapters of Ezekiel.)

A Worldwide Sin. God is going to intervene soon—because of sin—and shake this earth! All nations, and probably all individuals too, are guilty of revolt, rebellion. “To break away from,” “to change allegiance,” “to fall away,” “apostatize,” “rebel” is the definition of the Hebrew *pasha*—another word translated “sin” in the King James translation. God says our teachers have committed *pasha* in Isaiah 43:27: “Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.” Furthermore, Jeremiah shows that the priests and pastors have also rebelled: “The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed [revolted, *pasha*] against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit” (Jer. 2:8).

The leaders, teachers and educators of this world have rebelled! And rebellion never goes unpunished (see Prov. 17:11). Make sure that rebellion is not a part of your personal life!

Sin Is Personal. Sin is not only national and worldwide, it is individual and personal.

Can you control your rashness, your temper? The sin of going astray is serious, once requiring the blood of a sin offering (see Lev. 4:13-14 and Numbers 15:27-29). You must be constantly on guard against this sin of piercing, or breaking through the limits of self-control and decency. This sin of going astray through ignorance or temperamental rashness is called *shagag* in Hebrew, and requires the blood of Jesus Christ to wash a person clean.

Even David fell victim to this sin: “Before I was afflicted *I went astray* [*shagag*]: but now have I kept thy word” (Ps. 119:67). David also overcame, as the phrase “now have I kept thy word” shows.

Worse Wandering. A related word, *shagah*, means “to stray,” “swerve,” “meander”; that is, either mentally or morally. Does this ancient word have a modern application? Most assuredly. Notice Proverbs 20:1: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” In Isaiah 28:7, *shagah* clearly refers to going astray by too much alcohol.

Sad to say, many people get car-

ried away by too much alcohol. This is gluttony. The Bible demands self-control and moderation (true “temperance”) in all things (Gal. 5:23; Phil. 4:5).

Do you “get carried away” eating? Many people are overweight; they need to change—stop getting carried away.

Another very common sin included under *shagah* is just exactly what the word says: mind wandering. An uncontrolled, wandering mind (even without the help of alcohol) produces forgetfulness and absentmindedness.

Do you often forget when you should remember? Some forgetting of course is innocent. But forgetting can also be a sin. Sometimes we forget because we want to forget—to remember is unpleasant.

Stop forgetting! If you have to, carry a notebook or three-by-five cards with you at all times. Jot down things you must remember: important appointments, vocabulary words, a grocery list, daily duties, etc. Make it a habit to check your card or notebook every day.

Moreover, too many of us allow our minds to wander in uncontrolled daydreaming. Possibly a little daydreaming is all right. But we should realize that daydreaming can become wasteful, destructive and therefore sinful.

Are you letting your children get into this ugly habit? If you punish them by “isolation,” or by sitting them in a corner with nothing to do, you may unknowingly be encouraging this negative trait. If you allow them to stay awake, lying in bed for long periods of time, they will pick up this wrong habit. Letting the mind just “flit off” into a never-never land of make believe and dreams is a vicious, mind and character-destroying sin.

However, don’t confuse daydreaming with using God-given imagination constructively—creative thinking. We should always occupy our minds with something constructive. **Falsity and Sham.** How open and honest are you?

Openness, innocence and straightforwardness are earmarks of conversion. The direct opposite qualities—treachery, slipperiness, deceit and sham (Hebrew *bagad*)—are earmarks of carnality and sin. *Bagad*—“act treacherously, faithlessly” (as in

marriage, with property or rights, in contracts or in any general way)—includes the idea of slippery dealing—what we sometimes call double dealing. *Bagad* is often translated “perverseness.” Business today is filled with double dealers, slippery salesmen, deceitful advertisements, sales “pitches,” and falsified claims for phony products. God condemns slippery, crooked business in Proverbs 11:3, 6.

Examine yourself. Do you once in a while—as wives—use just a little deceit to convince your husband? And you husbands, do you once in a while exaggerate to impress the men at the office, the wife, the family? Stretching the facts is a form of deceit and sham—slipperiness. And all deceit, all slipperiness is sin.

The New Testament Speaks. Just as there are differences in Hebrew synonyms for sin, so also the New Testament shows various aspects of sin by using different words. Interestingly enough, the most common word for “sin” in the New Testament is *hamartia*, meaning about the same as the Hebrew *khata*—“miss the mark.” The English word “sin” translates *hamartia* in the great Bible definition of sin, I John 3:4. It was this sin that “entered the world” with Adam. See Romans 5.

Many of us are too talkative. We pass on information often in the form of unconfirmed, harmful rumors. This type of gossip is condemned by the Bible. Titus 2:7-8 shows what we ought to practice: “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech [not gossip and senseless talk], that cannot be condemned . . .” The same verse shows that people in general will set the opposite example in their speech: “. . . that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.” This “evil thing” is *phaulos* meaning “evil,” “bad,” or “worthless” thing, something without basis. Isn’t that exactly what gossip is?

It is easy to speak senseless things and to gossip. If we allow ourselves to fall into this easy trap of backyard or water-cooler scuttlebutt, we are guilty of sin.

Check yourself next time you pass

on information. Gossip is *phaulos*—evil, worthless talk.

The Answer. Now we're ready for the attack.

Actually, if you read these two articles on sin, and if you got the point, you are already well on your way to changing! You see, the first step in conquering sin is to *see* sin.

You must know your enemy. You must pray, study the Bible, examine your own self and strive to see your sins. If you do not see them, how can you fight them? Paul said he would not have known (understood) sin, unless the law revealed what it was (Rom. 7:7).

If you do not think you have any sins, or have not seen a new sin for a long time, you may be self-righteous. Ask God to show you how you look to Him—and He will do it!

That's the first step. But there are two more steps.

The Second Step. Here is a simple-sounding, but difficult-to-perform point. Pay close attention. You may be missing this vital key. "Hate the evil, and love the good . . ." (Amos 5:15). The Bible commands you to hate—to loathe—your sins.

There is one great reason that sin is difficult to hate—the human mind seems to love sin. ". . . We all had our conversation [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). Here is the point: lusts are pleasant, appealing, strongly pulling desires—desires which are illegal. The human mind loves its lusts. It hates God's way—hates to give up its lusts.

Can you see this terrible tendency in yourself? Can you realize your mind wants its way—not God's? If so, you can overcome.

But how?

Here's how. God *hates* sin. Notice Proverbs 6:16: "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him." Read the rest of the verses of chapter 6 for yourself. When you really hate sin, as God does, you will begin to overcome. Ask for God's mind—ask for help to hate sin.

Another aid in the direction of hating sin is something you can do for yourself. Did you realize the entire Old Testament history is a chronicle of the results of sin? Read, meditate,

think deeply on the sufferings and failures of Old Testament men and women who sinned. Meditate on the results of your personal sins. Picture yourself locked out of God's Kingdom—thrust into oblivion. Think about eternal failure, about death. Your sins will kill you if you do not change!

Receiving God's own help through His Holy Spirit, meditating on the results of your sins, will make you an overcomer.

The Third Step. Repent!

II Corinthians 7:10 shows that there are two kinds of sorrow: one worldly, one godly. Worldly sorrow is what Saul demonstrated in I Samuel 15, when he begged Samuel to pardon his sin and pray for him. Read

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ing Saul's words would make you think he was really repentant. But the fruits showed otherwise.

Godly sorrow—which Saul did not have—does work a change—*repentance!*

How can you have godly sorrow?

You must become more concerned about God and His Work than yourself. You must draw so close to God that you really care what God thinks and feels about you. Make no mistake: your sins do affect God your Father. God is not an insensitive monster, but a kind, loving and deeply interested Parent—a Parent who grieves over His errant children.

If you understand God's parenthood, if you are this close to God, you will be able to truly repent toward God when you sin. You will be ashamed of yourself, for what you have done to God personally, to God's love, to God's ways, to His outstretched helping hand. Yes, godly sorrow—sorrow strong enough to

make you change—is sorrow to God, not just sorrow for "having messed yourself up."

Worldly sorrow is sorrow all right—maybe to the point of bitter tears—but it is sorrow for having failed *yourself*.

You are sorry because you have not lived up to the "image" you have of yourself. You are sorry because this mistake does not exalt you. It tarnishes your picture—it spoils your self-esteem, it lowers you in your own mind.

That is selfish, worldly sorrow.

For Failure Take This. If you are trying to overcome, but not succeeding, then try this. Analyze the reason you are trying to overcome. Is it purely selfish, in the same way as *worldly* sorrow described above?

Do you want to overcome so that you may put yourself forward? So that you will rise in the eyes of others? So that you will be advanced? So that you may "get ahead"? So that your position will be raised? If so, your motive for overcoming is selfish. We just naturally want to "get ahead" (walking "after the flesh"). The godly mind (walking "after the Spirit," Romans 8) wants to serve others.

Analyze yourself—honestly now. For what reason do you want to get rid of sin? If it is just for yourself, and not for God, you probably are not overcoming.

Change your motive for overcoming, pray for the desire to serve others. When you really have a desire to serve others, you will realize why you need to overcome. You will have an *unselfish* goal for changing. Seeing other peoples' sufferings and needs will give you a desire to change for their sakes, to help them.

You will begin to overcome.

The New Building. As you begin to overcome, it will help you to strive for a new habit. Let's put it this way: "Be not overcome of [the habit of] evil, but overcome evil with [the habit of] good" (Rom. 12:21).

Sin is hard to root out because it is customary, usual, pleasant, easy, habitual. Build a new habit. Make yourself do the opposite of sin. Make yourself practice the right way.

To pick a simple example as an illustration, take smiling. Suppose you are a "frowny" person, can't make yourself smile. Well, then, once you

find a good reason for smiling—and you do actually smile once—then make yourself smile again. Smile several times in succession. Instead of practicing your old habit of constantly frowning, search for reasons, excuses, opportunities to smile. Smile at yourself. Smile at others. Smile just because it's a good feeling to do

differently than your old sinful way. Smile, *smile*, SMILE! Pretty soon, smiling will be easy.

Work at, build the *habit* of righteousness. (Connect this with Hebrews 5:14—note the word “exercised.”)

The Answer. The answer to sin is . . . STOP!

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath

suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh *hath ceased from sin*; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (I Pet. 4:1,2).

Ask God for the understanding and strength to cease from sin! □

IS GOD'S LAW “BONDAGE”?

JESUS CHRIST said: “. . . If you will enter into life, *keep the commandments*” (Matt. 19:17). So there would be no question about which law He was referring to, Jesus proceeded to enumerate *five* of the Ten Commandments (verses 18, 19).

Among Jesus' final words in the New Testament (recorded in the last chapter of the book of Revelation), He said: “Blessed are they that *do his commandments*, that they may have right to the tree of life . . .” (Rev. 22:14).

Jesus' words are plain enough, but somewhere along the line most professing Christians have missed the point. To many, the very mention of the Ten Commandments conjures up something harsh and repressive. Perhaps it is best summarized by the lyrics from one well-known hymn: “Free from the law, oh, happy condition. . . .” A common teaching of today is that Christ died to “free us” from the law given by the harsh God of the Old Testament. Some even refer to it as “bondage”—a sort of moral straitjacket with which an unyielding God seeks to restrain mortals from everything that makes life enjoyable.

But is this true? Is God's law a burden? Is it *against* your best interests? Is the law *bad, wrong, evil*? Was the law given to oppress and enslave? Is it wrong to keep the law today?

God's Word long ago predicted that men would call those things which are evil good and that which is good evil. “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness. . . . *they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts*, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 5:20, 24).

True to form, men today have things exactly backwards. They claim the law is a burden, a curse, and should not be kept today. But Paul was inspired to write: “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and GOOD” (Rom. 7:12). What law? The law that says “Thou shalt not covet” (verse 7). And it is *this* law that Paul calls “spiritual” (verse 14)—and spiritual things are eternal!

Now, according to the Bible, what is it that places people in “bondage”? There are a number of clear and unmistakable scriptures that reveal the answer—and again the truth is the exact *opposite* of what most people have assumed.

In II Peter chapter 2 an amazing prophecy is found concerning what would be taught in the world today. Peter wrote that false teachers would arise, propounding “freedom from the law.” In the context notice that these men are those who “cannot cease from *sin*” (verse 14). (I John 3:4 gives the definition of sin: “the

transgression of the law.”) They have transgressed God's laws and have “forsaken the right way” of life that God reveals (verse 15). Further, they have turned from “the holy *commandment* delivered unto them” (verse 21).

In verse 19 Peter writes: “While they promise them *liberty* [freedom from the supposed bondage of God's law], they themselves are the *servants* [slaves] of *corruption*: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in BONDAGE.”

Did you notice *who* have rejected the law and have become the “servants of corruption.” These men *promise* freedom, but in reality they have rejected *true* freedom—they become slaves to, they are overcome by, their *own sins*!

The Apostle Paul wrote: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of *sin* [remember the definition of sin?—I John 3:4] *unto death*, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16.) If you serve sin, you become a *slave* to sin!

Far from being bondage, James calls God's spiritual law “the PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY” (James 1:25). David wrote: “So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk AT LIBERTY: for I seek thy precepts” (Ps. 119:44, 45).

Clearly, it is *sin*—breaking God's

perfect law of liberty—that enslaves and oppresses.

Rejection of God's spiritual law is the sum total of what is wrong in the world today. The misery, suffering, heartache and wretchedness that you see around you is the direct result of *sin*—the result of man seeking his own way—the way that *seems* right, yet ends in *death* (Prov. 16:25). The entire world is mired in oppressive *bondage* because it has rejected those spiritual laws that were given for man's good!

What did Jesus Christ teach on this subject? What is the "bondage" that Christ came to free us from? Does Jesus' teaching agree with the scriptures that we have already read?

Turn to John the eighth chapter. In verses 31 and 32 Jesus said: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you FREE."

Free? Free from what? This is the same question the people asked Jesus. "They answered him, We . . . were never in BONDAGE to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (Verse 33.)

Notice the reply in the next verse. "Jesus answered them . . . Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

Of course! Isn't that exactly what Peter and Paul said? The "bondage" Jesus came to free us from was sin—the misery and servitude that results from the transgression of God's law.

Jesus said that *if* we would continue in His word we would become free. Now exactly what *is* Jesus' word or teaching that will make us free?

In John 15:10 Christ said that He kept the commandments. In the same verse He instructs His true followers—those who call themselves "Christians"—to do the same. Why? Certainly not because the law is oppressive or burdensome in any way. Jesus said in verse 11: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Christ said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. . . ." Instead of abolishing God's law because it was "bondage," He came to *magnify* the law in its

spiritual intent (Isa. 42:21; Matt. 5:17-28). He lived a life free from sin as an example for us—"that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21, 22).

Does it make any sense that Christ would abolish a perfect, eternal spiritual law that was given for man's good and joy? Jesus knew that obedience to the Ten Commandments was the way to *freedom* from sin—the way that leads to a truly abundant life, happiness and blessings.

That law is merely love, and love is an outgoing concern, not an incoming lust. It's the way of love. It's the way that love should be expressed—love toward God and toward neighbor.

The Law Restored. The Prophet Isaiah wrote of the commission Jesus would fulfill: ". . . To preach good tidings to the meek . . . to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa. 61:1; see also Luke 4:18).

Jesus Christ is soon going to return to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords to release all mankind from the bondage and slavery of sin. How will He begin liberating mankind? By reeducating the world and restoring the knowledge of God's perfect laws! "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:4).

What will be the result when the law is restored? "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (verse 7). This is figuratively referring to "prisoners" of sin who will be freed. The light of God's truth will shine upon this darkened world, and those who have been spiritually blinded will have the knowledge of God's ways clearly revealed to them (Isa. 60:1-3; 11:8; 42:16).

This present world is in the snare of the devil, taken captive by him to do his will (II Tim. 2:26). At Christ's coming Satan will be bound so that he cannot deceive the nations. The spiritual blindness that covers all nations will then be removed (Isa. 25:7). Spiritual ignorance and superstition will be replaced by the true knowledge of the true God. The Utopian paradise that mankind has always longed for will finally be

ushered in when the nations begin obeying God's truth, His laws and His ways that bring prosperity, blessings and peace.

Surprising to many, the God who gave the Ten Commandments to ancient Israel is the same Being who became Jesus Christ of the New Testament. (This important truth is thoroughly explained in our free reprint "Who Was Jesus?")

The Israelites who heard the Ten Commandments thundered from Mt. Sinai were being reminded of a great spiritual law that had been in force since creation. (Though there is not room to explain here, this is proved in our free article "Were the Ten Commandments In Force Before Moses?")

But what was Christ's *motive* in giving this law to Israel? Was it a law that He would later need to come to free us from?

In the fifth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, the Ten Commandments are listed. In the same chapter, Moses exhorts the people: "You shall walk in all the ways [including the Ten Commandments which he had just recited] which the Lord your God has commanded you. . . ." Why was it so important that they keep God's commands? Was the law given to man by a harsh God of the Old Testament to be a cruel yoke of bondage? Notice: ". . . That ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess" (verse 33).

In the next chapter we find the same reason repeated: "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 . . ." (Deut. 6:24).

The Blessings of Obedience. The law was given for man's good, for his well-being and so that he could live a long and prosperous life. The Bible actually reveals a *way of life* based upon a spiritual law that is as moving, as active, as real as the law of gravity. When you break that spiritual law it exacts penalties. When the law is obeyed, it produces peace, happiness, success—the way that guarantees automatic blessings!

This theme is so important that God repeats it over and over—espe-

cially in the book of Deuteronomy (see Deut. 4:1, 40; 6:1-3; 10:12, 13; 32:46, 47). Notice the *promise* that is attached to the fifth commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; *that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee . . .*" (Deut. 5:16).

Do you desire for yourself the greatest happiness and the most abundant life possible? Certainly, we all do. Solomon wrote, "Righteousness tendeth to life" and "In the way of righteousness is life" (Prov. 11:19; 12:28). What is the "way of righteousness"? In Psalm 119:172 "righteousness" is defined as the keeping of God's commandments.

The way of life revealed in God's Word—summarized by the Ten Commandments—leads to long life, length of days and every good thing that people want (Ps. 34:12-14; Prov. 3:1, 2).

The promises and blessings for keeping God's living laws still apply to all nations and individuals who will obey today. They include understanding and wisdom (Ps. 111:10; 19:7-11), mental health and peace of mind (Ps. 119:165), safety and security from enemies (Ex. 23:22; Lev. 25:18, 19; 26:6-8; Deut. 28:7), agricultural prosperity (Deut. 7:11-14; 28:8-12; Lev. 26:3-5; Isa. 1:19), happy family life (Ps. 128), healthy children (Deut. 28:4), freedom from sickness and disease (Ex. 15:26; Deut. 7:11, 15), to name just a few.

Aren't these the things that you want? Can you imagine a world where *all* people enjoyed all these blessings? God wants to pour out His richest blessings—but it is *sin*—the *transgression* of God's law—that withholds good things from us! (Jer. 5:25.)

In His Word, God sets before us the way to life, good and blessings—as well as warning us about the way that leads to death, evil and cursings (Deut. 30:15, 19; 11:26-28). The way to life is obeying God's commandments; the way to curses and everything that will harm you is disobedience. You can read about all these curses (as well as the blessings) in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26.

God wants each person to make the decision that will be to his good

and happiness. He says, "*Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live . . . for he is thy life, and the length of thy days*" (Deut. 30:19, 20).

God *commands* to choose life—He gave His law so that man would know the way to life—but He allows each individual the freedom to make his own decision. He says to "choose."

You want happiness. You want to be happy above all things. Everyone does. You want to lead a life that is comfortable, pleasing and agreeable. You would like to lead a life that is full and abundant and interesting—as a matter of fact, a little bit exciting all the way along—wouldn't you? And you want a life where everything is pleasant, where there are no pains or suffering.

You don't want a life of boredom. You don't want a life of sorrow, pain or suffering. You want a happy life, and you would love to feel well, jolly and joyful—happy all the time.

You could have a life like that. Everyone could.

This entire world could be like that—if we only understood the way!

God Almighty in His great love for humanity set a law in motion. That law was designed to produce just that kind of life for you.

The Apostle Paul tells us what sin is in Romans 7:7: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" People think that the law is all wrong, that it's sin. Paul continues, "God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." In other words, by the law is the *knowledge* of sin, as Paul had said previously in Romans 3:20.

The law gives you the knowledge of what sin is. It directs and guides you as to what you ought to do.

Not Bondage. Is God's law bondage? The Apostle John answers: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: *and his commandments ARE NOT GRIEVOUS*" (I John 5:3).

Perhaps the answer appears to be too simple. It doesn't require a conclave of religious leaders, exegesis of Hebrew and Greek scholars, or the opinions of doctors of divinity. The answer has been there all along. Anyone can read the numerous scriptures on this subject in his own Bible.

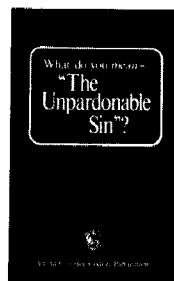
The Creator of mankind says HE has *revealed* the way that is GOOP (Micah 6:8). He has not left man without this important revelation. He says: "I am the Lord thy God which *teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldest go.*" God's ways were given for our profit and benefit. They are the ways that lead to the greatest satisfaction and happiness, the way of life that is *best* for you. Continuing in the same passage, God says in the first person: "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! *Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea . . .*" (Isa. 48:17, 18). Man has rejected God's perfect law—and that is why there is so *little* peace, so *little* good, in the world today.

But you as an individual can begin experiencing the *rewards* of obedience. Request our free, fully illustrated booklet *The Ten Commandments*. It goes into detail, expounding each point of God's living law, showing how it is applicable to your everyday life. Write for it today—let the *truth* make you free! □

A SPIRITUAL 'POINT OF NO RETURN'?

Can a person ever reach a "point of no return" in his relationship with God? Is there an unpardonable sin?

The booklet, *What Is The Unpardonable Sin?* explains the Biblical answers to these questions. For your free copy, write to one of the addresses on the back cover.



MAY A CHRISTIAN BREAK THE LETTER OF GOD'S LAW?

What is the difference between the "spirit" and the "letter" of the law? God wants you to keep His commandments. Satan wishes you to break them. How does the devil deceive the world—and some Christians—into breaking God's law?

Some think you only need to keep the "spirit" of God's law. Others believe you must always obey the strict "letter." Both views are incorrect.

Does God want you to keep the "spirit" or the "letter" of His commandments? Or does He want you to keep *both* the "spirit" and the "letter" of His law?

Some believe the keeping of God's Ten Commandments is *unnecessary* for salvation. Many professing Christians believe they should keep *nine* of the commandments, the exception being the Sabbath command.

Still others profess to believe in "the Ten," but break the first and second commandments by reverencing idols, break the fourth commandment by substituting a counterfeit sabbath, or break other of "the Ten" by their actual belief and practices.

A Deceived World. Your Bible reveals that Satan has deceived the "whole world."

And the founder of Christianity warned: "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matt. 24:4). Furthermore, He foretold that "many false prophets shall rise, and shall *deceive many*" (verse 11).

Paul also sounded the alarm: "But," said he, "evil men and *seducers* shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13).

The apostle John, even in his day, had to warn of "many antichrists" (I John 2:18). He therefore admonished: "Beloved, believe not every

spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

Peter also foretold great apostasy: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies . . ." (II Peter 2:1).

Would they be successful in leading multitudes into error? "And *many* shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (verse 2).

False teachers, with cunning deceptions, would become so diabolically effective, said Christ, that "if it were possible, they shall *deceive the very elect*" (Matt. 24:24).

Already, some of the "very elect" have listened to "false teachers" and have been caught off balance.

The Ten Commandments. Is obedience to the Ten Commandments necessary for salvation?

What did Jesus say?

When a young man asked Him what he must do to receive eternal life, He told him to "keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:16, 17; cf., Mark 10:17-19).

Christ mentioned five of the Ten Commandments (Matt. 19:18, 19), and then quoted one of the two "great" commandments (see Matt. 22:36-40): "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 19:19). Of course, the other five commandments were just as binding as the five

which Christ specifically enumerated.

Furthermore, Jesus knew some would falsely teach that He came to "do away with" the commandments of God. He said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

Then He warned: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these *least commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (verse 19).

Which of the commandments do you look upon as being the "least"? Is it the *fourth* commandment? The second? The third?

Christ did not do away with the law of God—rather He magnified it and made it glorious: "He [Christ] will *magnify the law*, and make it honourable" (Isa. 42:21).

But how did he *magnify* the law of God? Notice how Christ enlarged the sixth commandment: "Ye have heard," said Christ, "that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not *kill* . . . But I say unto you, That whosoever is *angry* with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment . . ." (Matt. 5:21, 22). "Whosoever *hateth* his brother," said John, "is a murderer . . ." (I John 3:15).

Here is how Christ magnified the seventh commandment: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old

time, Thou shalt not commit *adultery*: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already *in his heart*" (verses 27, 28).

Now what "law" or "laws" was it that Christ came to *magnify*? Did He come to enlarge or magnify the "ceremonial," "sacrificial" or "ritualistic" laws—as found in the law of Moses? Or did He come to magnify the "spiritual" law—commonly called the "moral" law—the Ten Commandments (Rom. 7:14)?

The Law of Moses. It is true that the entire "law of Moses" as given in the Old Testament is *not* totally applicable to Christians today. But this doesn't mean that all of the laws contained in the books which Moses wrote are meaningless today. Christ made the two great commandments of Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5 just as binding on New Testament Christians as they were for those under the law of Moses: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and [you shall love] thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27).

God's law is upheld all the way from Genesis to Revelation. "*Abraham* obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, *my commandments*, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). Abraham mixed his *faith* (his belief) with *works*—with active obedience: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" (James 2:21, 22.)

And yet there are those who think Christians only need "faith" or "belief"—with no works. God's Word says we need to have both faith and works mixed together (James 2:14-22). So don't ever let anyone tell you there are "no works" for the Christian!

The New Testament reveals that it is not necessary for a believer to observe the entire "law of Moses." But this does not mean that none of Moses' commands are binding on the Christian!

A council of the New Testament Church (A.D. 49) concluded (among other things) that it was no longer

necessary to keep the whole law of Moses. At that time certain men were teaching that Christians must be "circumcised after the manner of Moses" in order to be "saved" (Acts 15:1).

They taught that the "law of Moses" in its entirety must be kept: "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which *believed*, saying, That it was needful to *circumcise them*, and to command them to keep the [entire] law of Moses" (verse 5).

The apostles, under divine inspiration, decided it was no longer necessary to practice circumcision, which was part of the Mosaic law.

They then wrote letters to all the churches explaining this matter: "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have *troubled you* with words, *subverting your souls*, saying, Ye must be *circumcised*, and *keep the law* [of Moses—verse 5]: to whom we gave no such commandment" (verse 24). The Gentile converts were informed what they should do to please God (verses 28, 29).

The question of obedience to God's Ten Commandments was not even brought up at this council. Rather, they disputed about keeping the law of Moses with all its washings, rituals, carnal ordinances, sacrifices, etc.

Later, Paul explained that "gifts and sacrifices" could not make the practitioner "perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in *meats and drinks*, and divers *washings*, and *carnal ordinances*, imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:9, 10).

Jesus taught men to worship God from the heart: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in *spirit* and in *truth*" (John 4:24).

Meaning of "the Law." Many people get confused concerning the meaning of the word "law." The Hebrew word for law is *torah*, and the Greek word is *nomos*.

The word "law" (*torah* or *nomos*) is very broad and can mean many different things. It can refer to the Word of God, to the Five Books of Moses, to the Ten Commandments; or it can refer to sacrificial, ceremonial, ritualistic or carnal "law(s)"—all depending on its context.

When Christ said He did not come to "destroy the law," He was referring to the eternal "spiritual" (or moral) law of God—not to the ceremonial, sacrificial, ritualistic or carnal laws contained in the "law of Moses."

Likewise, when Paul spoke of the "law" he sometimes referred to the Ten Commandments, and at other times he plainly pointed to the "lesser" laws contained in the law of Moses.

Notice how Paul refers to the Ten Commandments in the context of Romans 7:1-25. Paul commented: "I had not known *sin*, but by *the law*: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (verse 7).

"The law" here mentioned clearly refers to the Ten Commandments. Of this law, Paul says: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (verse 12).

Furthermore, he plainly says: "For we know that the law is *spiritual* . . ." (verse 14).

Yes, the Ten Commandment law is "spiritual" and it is "holy," "just," and "good."

Paul is not talking here about the ritualistic, ceremonial, sacrificial or carnal laws contained in the law of Moses. Rather, he clearly means the Ten Commandments (verse 7).

The "lesser laws" contained in the law of Moses were a "yoke"—but not the Ten Commandments. Rather, they are called the "perfect *law of liberty*" (James 1:25). James also refers to the second great commandment as a "royal law" (James 2:8).

Clearly, in chapters one and two, James is referring to the "spiritual" law of God as contained in the two great commands, and further amplified in the Ten Commandments.

Did James think *any* of the Ten Commandments were "done away"? "For whosoever shall keep the *whole law*, and yet *offend* [transgress] in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). The Ten Commandments are like a chain having ten links. If one link (or point) is broken, the whole is broken.

How many *points* are there in this law of which James spoke?

He mentions the commands against adultery and killing (verse

11). Then he says that this "law of liberty" is the law by which we will be judged (verse 12).

The Fourth Commandment. The Bible clearly enjoins God's people to keep the Ten Commandments.

Many "Christians" at least profess to keep nine of the ten, but the fourth commandment is the one that causes many to stumble. This in spite of the fact that Jesus Christ and His apostles kept God's Sabbath. Christ plainly said: "The sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27).

Jesus customarily kept the Sabbath—though not according to the hidebound traditions of the Pharisees (Luke 4:16; 6:6; 13:10-17; 14:1-6). We know the apostles also kept the Sabbath. And, of all people, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, kept the Sabbath (see Acts 13:14, 42, 43; 17:2; 18:4).

Was the Sabbath changed from the *seventh* to the *first day* of the week, as some claim? Both Scripture and secular history prove that the early New Testament Christians kept the Sabbath. Sunday observance came into popular usage by Christian-professing groups centuries after Christ and His apostles died. The Emperor Constantine finally made "Sunday" the official day of worship in A.D. 321-323. (Write for our free booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*)

Other Christian-professing teachers attempt to spiritualize away the fourth commandment. They claim to keep the Sabbath every day of the week. Notice how this is explained by one proponent of this false doctrine: "Let us now turn our attention to the seventh-day weekly sabbath. The sabbath is a beautiful institution. . . . But through Christ, the physical sabbath has been superseded by a perpetual one which Christ has given for us to keep. We are now experiencing, in a spiritual way, God's sabbath every day of our lives."

Now this teacher does not offer scriptural *proof* that God made all seven days holy. He does not have any biblical authority for his unscriptural assertions. He just makes dogmatic human pronouncements—with no scriptural validity whatsoever.

Furthermore, this teacher writes: "The Christian has every day as a spiritual rest or sabbath-keeping, and

there is no need to return to the one-day-a-week physical sabbath which Israel was required to observe under Moses."

But this teacher has to explain away a lot of scriptures: God says the Sabbath is the "seventh day." He affirms it was made for "man"—not just for the Jewish people. God shows that this day was given as a day of physical rest and relaxation, as well as a day of spiritual rejuvenation through worship of one's Creator.

Those who teach against keeping God's Sabbath must ignore the examples of Christ and Paul. They vainly assume you can "keep" the other six days "holy" when God has *not* made them holy. Remember, you can't keep water hot or cold until it is first made either hot or cold. Likewise, you can't "keep holy" that which has not first been made holy—and *man* doesn't have the power to make anything holy! Only God can make something (including *time*) holy!

Only Keep the "Spirit" of the Law? Some have concluded that we need only keep the *spirit* of the law but not the *letter*.

What about it? Should a Christian observe God's law according to the "letter," the "spirit," or both?

The Bible makes it amply clear that we are now to "worship God in spirit and in truth," but this does not mean we are to ignore the *literal* commandment—flagrantly violating the *letter* of the law.

Christ taught that we must not only *not murder*, but learn to keep the "spirit" of this commandment—we must not "hate"—must not murder in our minds and hearts.

Not only must we not commit adultery, but we must learn to keep this commandment according to its *intent*—we must not even "lust" in our hearts. When we lust after a man or woman, we thereby commit spiritual adultery. And when we "hate" someone in our hearts, we thereby commit spiritual murder (I John 3:15).

In order to keep the commandments in our minds and hearts (according to the true intent and purpose behind the law), we must also keep the law in the letter. Can we commit literal adultery or murder and yet obey the spiritual intent of

these commandments? Of course not.

And the same applies to the fourth commandment. Truly, we should keep the Sabbath in the spirit—not "doing our own thing" on that day. We are to cease from our physical labors—just as God did after His six-day creation (Gen. 2:1-3; Heb. 4:4).

In other words, we must learn to keep the Sabbath in the *spirit*, according to God's original intent, but we must also keep the *literal* seventh day. We cannot keep the Sabbath in our hearts, and at the same time do our normal work or business, pursue worldly pleasures or other activities not in keeping with the spirit or intent of that holy day.

Of course, there might be times when one would have to "break" the "no-work" letter of the Sabbath in order to "keep" the "spirit" or intent of that day. Examples would include emergencies or saving human life on that day—even if it meant doing hard work.

Saved by Grace. No amount of good works or commandment keeping, no kind of legal observance (whether the Ten Commandments or the ceremonial, sacrificial or ritualistic laws) can possibly *justify* us. Keeping any law cannot forgive us for the *past sins* (the violations of the spiritual law of God) which we have committed.

This is where the sacrifice of Christ comes in. Christ's substitutionary death was sufficient to pay the penalty for all the sins which mankind has ever committed or will commit. Therefore it is truly "by *grace* [that] ye are saved" (Eph. 2:5).

Grace means something which is freely given. It is by God's free gift of forgiveness that our guilty past is wiped clean. It is by His free gift of the Holy Spirit that we receive the strength and power to live a godly life in the future.

So it is by His *grace* (His free *gift*) that we are saved—not by our own works. But many other scriptures show that we must obey God—we must have good works: "For by *grace* are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the *gift* of God: Not of *works*, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *good*

works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8, 9). (Write for our free article “No!—You Can’t Earn Your Salvation”.)

Jesus Christ inspired His servant John to write: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (I John 2:3, 4).

But the Christian is to go beyond what is commanded—going beyond “duty” (Luke 17:10). “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (I John 3:22).

Furthermore, this same apostle was inspired to reveal that God’s true Church would be a commandment-keeping Church (Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

Is commandment-keeping important? Does God intend that we keep His Ten Commandments—all ten?

Will we be blessed if we keep His commandments—or will we, as some would have you believe, be under a terrible *curse*? What does God say? “*Blessed* are they that *do his commandments*, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

Notice that this verse does not say “Blessed are those who keep *some* of his commandments.”

When Jesus told the rich young man to “keep the commandments,” He clearly referred to the spiritual (or commonly called “moral”) law of God (Matt. 19:16-19).

Will we repent of sin—repent of breaking God’s spiritual law? God commands us to repent—to quit *sinning*—to quit breaking His law (I John 3:4).

David, a man after God’s own heart, was inspired to say: “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps. 119:97).

And Isaiah also knew that obedience to the law of God is the only way to peace, happiness, prosperity and eternal life: “O that thou hadst hearkened to *my commandments!* then had *thy peace* been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (Isa. 48:18). □



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Are they really relevant to a crime-conscious 20th century? Times have changed since God gave His law to the nation of Israel. But humanity is still beset with the same basic woes as our ancestors were thousands of years ago. The solution to society’s problems—summed up in ten perfect points—has always been the same. See how all ten commandments apply to today’s world problems. Learn how obedience to all ten would solve your personal problems. Request our free book titled *The Ten Commandments*. To obtain your copy, simply write to the mailing address nearest you.

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