

# The New Testament Teaching on LAW and GRACE

No question excites more controversy among professing Christians! Is God's Law abolished? Does Grace do away with Law? Here is what your Bible says — the plain teaching of your New Testament!

by William F. Dankenbring

**M**ANY sincere people believe God's Law is "done away." "It was nailed to the cross," they say. The Law of God, they will tell you, was a harsh, stern law — but Christ came to free us from the "CURSE of the law"!

Christians, they will feelingly tell you, are NOT "under the Law." True Christians are under GRACE, and grace does away with the need for law! Often they will quote Romans 10:4 to show you that "Christ is the END of the law." They may go on to cite Romans 7:4 to show that Christians are "DEAD to the law."

## Did Christ Know?

But what are you going to do with Jesus' words?

Jesus Christ Himself said: "If thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS!" (Matt. 19:17.) Did not Christ know? Was Jesus mistaken about the Law?

Now read what the Apostle Paul told the Romans: "Do we then make *void* the LAW through faith? GOD FORBID: yea, we *establish the law*" (Rom. 3:31).

Did Paul know what he was talking about? In one verse he says that Christians are "DEAD to the law." Yet he turns right around and says they "ESTABLISH the law"!

What a paradox!

It is time you understood the TRUTH about law and grace! It is time the truth were made PLAIN, so simple a *child* could understand!

## IF There Were No Law...

Think for a moment! Let's just suppose that God *did* abolish His Law for

some inexplicable reason. Suppose He decided to DO AWAY with it.

What then? Do you realize what this would mean?

This would mean that there would be NO LAW AGAINST committing idolatry, worshipping false gods, cursing, swearing, breaking God's Sabbath — but more, it would mean that murder would be all right; stealing would be acceptable as well; lust, adultery, rape, every sex crime, lying, cheating, bearing false witness — ALL THESE THINGS *would be all right!*

There would be no law against them!

And since there would be NO LAW, there would, of course, be NO PUNISHMENT!

SIN would be impossible, since "sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). If no law, there could be no transgression — NO SIN!

You would be living in a world where EVERYTHING GOES! Nothing would be wrong. There would be no definition of right from wrong. Anything you had a mind to do would be acceptable. If you murdered your mother-in-law, you could get away with it! There would be no such thing as a judge, or a cell, a prison, an execution, or any kind of penalty — and no hellfire!

You could do exactly as you please, regardless of how it affects other people!

You could be a real "devil," as they say. You could be a homicidal maniac, and no one would be able to have you arrested. And, spiritually, GOD would not be able to punish sinners since SIN would not EXIST!

If the spiritual Law of God were nailed to the cross, then from that time nineteen hundred years ago to the present, today, SIN WOULD BE NONEXISTENT! And there would be no need of a Savior—since there would be no need to be saved from sin! Hitler, Mussolini, and all the other arch-criminals — Dillinger, "Pretty Boy Floyd," Al Capone, and all the rest — would NOT BE GUILTY, in God's sight!

Now, does that really make sense?

How does that strike you?

Can you BELIEVE it?

And if there is no sin, from the time of Christ to the present, then there is no such thing as a sinner, no need for repentance, no need for forgiveness, no need for mercy or pardon — NO NEED FOR GRACE!

Absurd, isn't it!

But if you follow the reasoning of the NO-LAW advocates through to its limits, that is where you are finally left — that is where you end up!

But this is not the teaching of Jesus.

Was Christ "at odds" with His Father in heaven, as some say? Was it God's Law that separated man from God — or was it SIN? Just what is the Law? And what is this thing called GRACE? And where does SIN enter the picture? *Why did* Christ have to die? What — who — was nailed to the cross?

No subject is more vital, more urgent, more crucial to your SALVATION.

## What About Faithful Abraham?

To really understand, let's go back to the beginning. Let's get the TRUE PICTURE of God's dealing with man.

Many assume, first of all, that law

did not come until Moses. Prior to the time of Moses, GRACE was the way God dealt with mankind. And the example of grace that ministers usually turn to is the example of Abraham, the "father of the faithful."

Notice, now, the fascinating — and vitally important — example of the patriarch Abraham, to whom the promises were made.

Was Abraham under grace? Did Abraham obey God's Law?

You have probably read what the Apostle Paul wrote about Abraham: "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:1-3).

Further: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his FAITH is counted for righteousness" (verses 4-5). Notice! Abraham was a man of faith. He *believed* God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham did not receive the promises, including the promise of salvation, by works. What the Apostle Paul means by "works" will be made plain later.

Abraham did not earn salvation — or the promises. They were GIVEN to him, by God.

Does this therefore mean that Abraham did not have to OBEY God? Does it mean, even more importantly, that we do not have to obey God TODAY?

Turn to the book of James. Let's notice what the Apostle James tells us about faithful Abraham. James relates, "Was not Abraham our father justified by WORKS, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (James 2:21.)

Wait a minute! Doesn't that sound like a contradiction? Let's *read on*: "Seest thou how FAITH" — now he mentions "faith" — "wrought WITH his works, and BY works was *faith made perfect*?" (Verse 22.)

How about that? James shows us that FAITH works together WITH works. This is no contradiction.

He continues: "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that *by works* a man is justified, and NOT by faith *only*" (James 2:23-24). "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is DEAD, being alone," wrote James (verse 17). How clear. Faith and works, said James under inspiration, go HAND-IN-HAND.

God TESTED Abraham's faith by his obedience — his works. Abraham met the test without flinching, with dauntless courage. After showing God his willingness to obey, even if it required the life of his son Isaac, God confirmed the promises He had made to Abraham. Why? "Because thou hast OBEYED my voice" (Gen. 22:18).

Abraham not only had *faith* in God — BUT BY FAITH HE OBEYED his Creator. His faith went hand-in-hand with OBEEDIENCE. God later told Isaac exactly why Abraham was blessed. What was the reason? "Because that Abraham OBEYED my voice, and KEPT my charge, MY COMMANDMENTS, my statutes, AND MY LAWS" (Gen. 26:5).

How PLAIN. God's spiritual LAW was in force in the days of ABRAHAM — long, long before Moses.

Abraham *obeyed* God. That's what your Bible says. By faith he accepted God's promises — as a gift. God did not owe Abraham the promises. He gave the promises to him because Abraham was willing to obey. Abraham did NOT "earn" them by his works. Nevertheless, unless he had demonstrated his willingness to obey God, through his WORKS, he would NOT have had the promises given him.

The promises came freely through God's grace. But works were involved. Does this sound contradictory?

#### You Cannot EARN Salvation

That does not mean one can ever EARN salvation. Not at all! James said, "Faith without works is DEAD, being alone."

God's grace alone, by itself, will not save us, since God will not GIVE His grace to a person who refuses to obey, who rebels against Him. Do we get the point?

Grace is simply free, unmerited, undeserved pardon or forgiveness. God gives us GRACE when He forgives us of our past sins. But, unless we are willing to OBEY God, and *stop sinning*, we will lose that forgiveness, or grace.

But the fact that Abraham's obedience was involved did NOT EARN him salvation.

Abraham did not "earn" the promises. And no Christian can ever "earn" salvation. NO ONE can ever "EARN" salvation. It is not something which we receive as a result of all our deeds and works. Yet most people believe *their* faith *earns* them salvation.

It isn't *your* faith that gives you eternal life.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "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" (Eph. 2:8-9).

Christ's faith in us is a gift. We do NOT receive it because of all our works. All one's good deeds cannot save anyone. They are only what ought to be done anyway. God gives it because of His merciful pardon and grace — not because we are ever "worthy" of such a gift.

But does this mean that works are not involved? Not at all.

Read the very next verse: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should *walk in them*" (Eph. 2:10).

There you are. Faith WITHOUT works is *dead* — a dead, useless faith. There *are* works involved. But these works, of themselves, do NOT earn us salvation — they merely demonstrate our WILLINGNESS to obey Him and be submissive to His government.

God will not GIVE salvation to any soul that He cannot govern. Before God will GIVE us His promises, we must prove our willingness to OBEY Him, even as Abraham did, to the very end. There are CONDITIONS involved.

These conditions involve repentance, faith, surrender and submission to God — as well as the condition of OBEEDIENCE to His authority.

But these conditions do not earn salvation. They are the conditions God sets

in order that He can *give* you eternal life.

### Could This Be You?

This illustration should help you understand.

You are sitting on murderer's row. You have killed a man. Lonely, miserable, full of fear and terror, you await the telltale footsteps clinking down the corridor of the prison, beckoning you to your fate.

The jury found you guilty of murder in the first degree. The stone-faced judge sentenced you to DEATH. Droplets of cold sweat break out on your forehead. You shiver with fright and dreadful anticipation.

Then, as these thoughts race through your mind, you notice footsteps. Soon a key turns in the lock of your cell door. A voice booms, "Come with me." Depressed, hopeless, you follow the guard down the hall, appalled at the awful deed you committed. A door opens ahead of you, and suddenly you find yourself standing face to face with the warden of the prison. Fear grips you.

Then a voice calmly says, "You are free to go. Your crime has been pardoned by the governor. You are free to go."

You stagger back. You can hardly believe it — FREE! *Free!* In a state of shock, you can hardly grasp what is happening. *Free!* "Free to go!" You have been given a new lease on life!

Sound like a strange tale? It has happened in the past. But why do I mention it?

Because YOU in God's sight, were just like this murderer. You were IN SIN, and the DEATH PENALTY was waiting irrevocably for you (Rom. 6:23). YOU were *doomed!* But Christ set you free by paying your penalty in your stead.

Now is the released murderer freed to go out and BREAK THE LAW? Is he freed to murder someone else? Does the gift of life give him license to KILL? *Of course* NOT. Such a thought is preposterous.

The murderer received pardon. Grace. If he murders again, he will go back to prison.

Even so, when a sinner repents, and

accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as atonement for his sins, he comes under the GRACE of God. His *past sins* are forgiven. The death penalty for sin no longer hangs over his head.

Does this mean he can now DISOBEY God? Does this mean he is free to do whatever he wishes? Obviously not.

The grace of God, and FAITH in the shed blood of Jesus Christ to atone for your sins, must be accompanied by law-abiding WORKS. If you willfully turn again to the way of sin, knowingly rejecting God's way, there remains no more sacrifice for your sins, and you will incur the death penalty once again — this time, without any escape! (Heb. 10:26; II Peter 2:21 — this is further explained in our free booklet *What Do You Mean . . . "The Unpardonable Sin"?*)

Can you see the point?

Salvation is a GIFT. But it is predicated on certain conditions. A sinner cannot *earn* salvation — for he is already CONDEMNED. But through repentance, and the grace of God, he can receive it as a GIFT. He must, however, meet the TWIN conditions of *faith and obedience*, even as faithful Abraham did, setting us an example.

### What About God's LAW?

Abraham, we have found, obeyed God's Law. His faith was combined WITH obedience. But, what about Christians?

"Aren't Christians under GRACE, not law?" you ask.

"Isn't God's Law a harsh monster? — a yoke of bondage?" "Wasn't it but a temporary substitute until the coming of Jesus Christ?"

Notice what God's Word has to say.

Abraham kept God's commandments, His statutes, and His *laws* (Gen. 26:5). Speaking of God's Law, David was inspired to write, "The law of the LORD is PERFECT, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). He added, "The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the COMMANDMENT of the LORD is *pure*, enlightening the eyes" (verse 8).

Notice! The LAW David was speaking about is a GOOD, pure, *perfect* law. There is nothing wrong with it. It is

NOT a harsh yoke of bondage — a stern, exacting, monstrous, EVIL thing. David wrote, "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are SURE. They stand fast FOR EVER AND EVER, and are done in truth and uprightness" (Psalm 111:7-8).

Can you BELIEVE it?

The LAW of God which David spoke of *endures* FOREVER. It is an EVER-LASTING Law. This obviously means it is *in effect*, today.

Clearly, then, it has NOT been done away. Isn't that simple — easy to understand?

Now notice what the Apostle Paul himself had to say about the LAW of God.

"Wherefore the law is HOLY, and the commandment HOLY, and JUST, and GOOD" (Rom. 7:12). Paul went on, "For we KNOW that the law is SPIRITUAL . . ." (verse 14). Those things which are spiritual are ETERNAL.

Now I ask you, would God institute a holy, just, *good* law — a SPIRITUAL law — and ordain it FOREVER, and then turn right around, and abolish it? Do you believe in such a fickle, changeable God? Do you believe in a God who doesn't know His own mind?

Utterly absurd, isn't it? Let's be honest.

### But Why LAW?

But what is the purpose of God's Law? WHY did God institute LAW in the first place? Was God's Law just a temporary measure for ancient Israel?

Why do we have national laws and state laws today? Why do we have motor vehicle laws, regulating the operation of automobiles and the flow of traffic? Isn't the answer rather obvious?

Men make laws for the well-being of the public. Laws are made to maintain order. Without traffic laws, for instance, city streets would be a scene of sheer chaos. Mayhem would be the common result.

Without penal laws and criminal statutes, crime would go unpunished. The lawless and greedy would be free to ravage society, without fear of punishment. Men's laws are intended to GUARANTEE LIBERTY.

This same great principle applies to

God's spiritual Law. God made His laws for our GOOD. They tell us which way to go. They reveal to us the DIFFERENCE *between right and wrong*.

God's spiritual laws are in motion today. They are ETERNAL, immutable, inexorable — and binding on every one of us. No one that I know of has ever broken the law of gravity. There is ALWAYS a fearful penalty which automatically follows every infraction.

God not only created PHYSICAL LAWS for the control of the Universe — laws of chemistry, physics, mathematics — laws like the laws of gravity and inertia. But God also created SPIRITUAL LAWS for man's happiness — laws which automatically regulate man's relationship with God, and with his fellowman.

Just like the physical laws governing matter and energy, these spiritual laws are ALWAYS BINDING. You break them, and they break you. You may ignore them, but they never ignore you. They are always present; whenever broken, they always exact a penalty commensurate with the offense.

But they were created for YOUR GOOD.

What is wrong, for instance, with a spiritual law which tells you to LOVE your neighbor? What is wrong with a law which says you should love God with your whole being — your very Creator, who gives you every breath you breathe?

What's wrong with a LAW which spells out how you should behave, whom you should worship, forbids you to commit murder, or steal, or commit adultery with another's wife, or lie, or commit other things which are BAD for you? Is such a law WRONG?

What's wrong with it?

Listen to these words of the Apostle John:

"And hereby we do KNOW that we know him, IF *we keep his commandments*" (I John 2:3). John was so positive of his statement, that he continued, in STRONG language: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth NOT his commandments, is A LIAR, and the truth is *not* in him" (verse 4).

John was *inspired* to write these words. This scripture was inspired *decades* after Jesus Christ was crucified.

It means exactly what it says.

But back to the original question. Since the scriptures do NOT contradict one another (John 10:35), and since EVERY scripture is given by DIVINE INSPIRATION (II Tim. 3:16), *how do we explain* those verses which might seem, on the surface, to give the impression God's Law is not binding today?

This is one of the most misunderstood matters in the Bible. This is the rock over which more theologians stumble and fall than perhaps any other.

They have ASSUMED — falsely — that the LAW OF GOD — the Ten Commandments — and the "law of Moses" are one and the same. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Let's understand the proof.

### TWO LAWS — One Eternal, One Temporary

This is the crux of the whole matter.

It is so simple a *child* can understand.

First, then, remember that God's spiritual Law — the Ten Commandments — did NOT start with Moses. The Law of GOD *long anteceded* the time of Moses. In fact, God's spiritual Law has been in effect since CREATION!

Hard to believe?

Notice!

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's instruction and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they SINNED. What is "sin"?

Very few people know the BIBLE DEFINITION of "sin." Here it is, given by the Apostle John: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW" (I John 3:4). There it is! SIN is breaking God's Law. Adam and Eve SINNED. Therefore they broke God's Law! They stole what was not theirs and broke the eighth commandment. God's Law was THEN IN EXISTENCE. They "transgressed" against God. But, we read in Romans, "... where no LAW is, there is *no transgression*" (Rom. 4:15).

Isn't that plain? So there was a Law long before Moses.

Adam and Eve broke God's Commandments. They dishonored their only parent — God — and thereby broke the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12). They stole something which wasn't

theirs (Ex. 20:15). They COVETED something which did not belong to them (Ex. 20:17). THREE of God's basic TEN Commandments were already broken.

The Apostle Paul said, "Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] *sin* entered into the world, and DEATH BY SIN..." (Rom. 5:12). *Death* is the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23). Adam *sinned*. And yet, Paul added, "... SIN is not imputed where there is NO LAW" (Rom. 5:13). But sin was imputed. Adam therefore broke God's Law. And he died — and so have his children. "Nevertheless, DEATH REIGNED *from Adam to Moses*, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression [Adam knew better], who is the figure of him [Christ] that was to come" (verse 14).

SIN was now in the world. Sin is the transgression of God's LAW. Death is the penalty of sin, and death reigned from Adam to Moses — for sin is not imputed where there is no LAW. That's Paul's teaching. Those are the plain words of the New Testament.

God's LAW was in effect from ADAM TO MOSES. Nothing could be clearer.

But then, exactly WHAT did Moses bring?

### Another LAW

The Bible does, very plainly, speak of a LAW which came by Moses. This is the *ritualistic* law which was added 430 years AFTER the covenant was confirmed to Abraham.

Notice it.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "And this I say, that the covenant [of promise] that was confirmed before of God in Christ, *the law* [of rituals], which was four hundred and thirty years AFTER, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (Gal. 3:17).

Paul was here speaking, clearly, of the RITUALISTIC LAW. What was *this* law? Let's go back into the days of Moses, for a moment, AND SEE.

Moses, you will remember, was the one whom God used to lead the Israelites out of bondage to Egypt. He was a type of Christ, who is our deliverer from SIN. After crossing the Red Sea, in great and awesome glory, the Israelites

came to the Sinai Peninsula and the hot desert.

They began to murmur, grumble, and gripe. Nothing seemed to please them. It was not long before rebellious men began complaining openly against Moses and against GOD (Ex. 16:2-8). They flagrantly **DISOBEYED** God. What did God say?

"And the LORD said unto Moses, *How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?*" (Verse 28.)

*Notice!* This was **WEEKS** before they came to Mount Sinai. This was almost immediately after they crossed the Red Sea. Yet, already, plainly, **GOD'S LAWS** were in force — and the Israelites were found disobedient and rebellious.

Consequently, God **ADDED** another law for the Israelites. It consisted of ceremonial washings, various laws of offerings and sacrifices, and carnal, physical ordinances, enjoined upon the people and the Levitical priesthood. It was not a spiritual law. It could save no one.

Then why was it given to ancient Israel?

Let the Apostle Paul give us the answer. "Wherefore then serveth the law? [What purpose did the ritualistic law serve?] *It was ADDED because of transgressions, till the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator*" (Gal. 3:19).

Did you catch that? This was **ADDED** — why? "**BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS!**" There was another Law — a spiritual Law — in effect, which was being transgressed, broken, by the Israelites. What Law?

Remember, God had said, "How long refuse ye to keep **MY** commandments, and **MY** laws?" (Ex. 16:28.) They had been breaking God's eternal **SPIRITUAL LAW**, the Ten Commandments.

Because Israel had been breaking God's Law, He added another special law to **TEACH THEM THE HABIT OF OBEDIENCE**. To teach them to acknowledge their sins. He gave them certain ceremonial washings, offerings, and commanded sacrifices, and carnal ordinances, to foreshadow things to come. What things? The coming of the **TRUE SACRIFICE** for our sins, Christ Jesus Himself. And the Holy Spirit which cleans us up spiritually within. These

duties, sacrifices, and washings **TAUGHT** them their **NEED** for a coming Saviour and God's Holy Spirit.

"Wherefore the **LAW**" — the law of rituals—"was our *schoolmaster* to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24-25).

This law, with its constant round of sacrifices and washings, had been put upon the ancient Israelites, because they **REFUSED** to keep God's spiritual laws and commandments.

Are Christians today required to keep the ritualistic law?

No — clearly not. As Paul said, "... We are **NO LONGER** under a schoolmaster." As Peter said, "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10.)

Paul also wrote, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). "But in those sacrifices there is a **REMEMBRANCE** [a recalling, not a forgiving] again made of sins every year" (verse 3).

Speaking of the law of physical works, Paul wrote: "Which was a figure for the time **THEN** present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could **NOT** make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks [that is, meal and drink offerings], and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, *imposed* on them **UNTIL THE TIME OF REFORMATION**" (Heb. 9:9-10).

These animal sacrifices, washings and such were hard physical work. Neither could they nor any other kind of "works of the law" save anyone (Gal. 2:16).

Those things, of course, are **NOT** obligatory on true Christians, today. They clearly were **TYPES** — typifying the coming of the supreme sacrifice, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. They were but a **TYPE** of the spiritual, and were given to a carnal, fleshly people, to **HELP** them understand. They are **NOT NECESSARY** for salvation.

Anyone who says we teach that one can *earn* salvation by adhering to the rites and ceremonies of the ritual law or

any other works is simply not telling the truth. He is either misinformed, or misrepresenting.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament times could **NEVER** take away sins (Heb. 10:11). "But this man" — Jesus Christ — "after he had offered **ONE SACRIFICE for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God" (verse 12).

Now can you begin to see how cleverly some have **TWISTED** God's Word, how they have misrepresented the Law of God?

For further information on this subject write for the free article "The Sacrificial System in Ancient Israel."

### The CURSE of the LAW

"Now hold on a minute," someone might exclaim. "Didn't Jesus plainly redeem us from the **CURSE** of the law? Explain *that*, if you can."

All right. Read it, in Galatians 3:13 — "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, **Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.**"

Some, taking that scripture alone, claim it means God's Law — which Paul called **HOLY**, and **JUST**, and **GOOD** — is a diabolical, dreadful, abominable **CURSE**. They point to this verse as supposed proof.

Let's understand *this* point.

It is the "curse **OF** the Law" — the **CURSE** which results from the penalty of Law — that is, from **BREAKING** the Law. It is not the Law that is the curse. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law. Exactly what did Christ redeem us *from*? From the penalty of sin: the **DEATH PENALTY**. Sin brings a curse. When you sin you bring upon yourself the penalty of sin — the curse of the Law — the death penalty.

Because of our **SINS**, we were all sentenced to **DEATH** (Rom. 6:23). But Christ paid the penalty **FOR** us, in our stead. He **REDEEMED** us from **DEATH**. Christ **DIED** for us. He took the curse, which we had incurred through disobedience, upon Himself. "For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be *sin* for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

God promised ancient Israel **BLESS-**

INGS for obeying His Law (Deut. 28:1-14). Innumerable blessings! He also promised CURSES would come on them, if they DISOBEYED His Commandments (Deut. 28:15-19, etc.). The punishment which results from breaking God's spiritual Law is DEATH, eternal death. Christ Himself redeemed us from the death penalty by dying FOR us.

Why is it that so many misunderstand? Why can't we see that Christ came to redeem us from the wages of SIN — the DEATH PENALTY? Why can't we see that SIN is what separates us from God — and sin is the transgression of His Law? Why don't we see that Christ came to deliver us from SIN — *from* the way of disobedience — and from its penalty, DEATH?

The curse isn't the LAW — the CURSE is the penalty for disobeying the LAW. Christ bore that curse for us when He was crucified as our sin-bearer.

#### The "END of the Law"

Nevertheless, animosity to God's Law dies hard. When someone's mind is made up, it is made up. It is HARD for a person to be willing to admit truth, and CHANGE when he is wrong.

Those who attempt to do away with God's Law now often turn to Romans 10:4. In the previous verse Paul explains how the Pharisees were going about trying to establish their OWN righteousness, apart from God's righteousness. They ignored the sacrifice of Christ, and thought that mere commandment-keeping would be enough for anyone.

But, as Paul pointed out in verse 4, "CHRIST is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." What does "the end of the law" mean? One definition is the *aim*, or the *purpose*, the *fulfillment* or *outcome* of the Law. Christ IN us gives us the power to KEEP God's Holy, perfect Law, since we lack the spiritual strength, ourselves (Rom. 8:4).

Apart from Christ, NO ONE can manage to KEEP God's Law in the spirit. By his very nature, man falls far short. But through Christ, WE CAN (Phil. 4:13). The aim or end of the Law is to make us like Christ.

Any grade-school pupil should be able to see it.

Christ is the PURPOSE or aim of the Law, for *righteousness*, to EVERY ONE that believes. But what is "righteousness"? David said, "... For ALL THY COMMANDMENTS are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). There is the definition. Clearly, then, God's Law is NOT done away. It is to teach us to be righteous like Christ was — and is.

This word "end," used in Romans 10:4, is also found in James 5:11. Same word. James writes, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the END of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

Now, did James mean that Christ's END had come? Of course NOT. Christ AROSE from the dead — and lives, today, at God's right hand in heaven. (Heb. 7:26; 9:24.) Rather, James explains it himself. They had seen the purpose or AIM of the Lord — "that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

#### "DEAD to the Law"

What did Paul mean in Romans 7:4, when he said, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become DEAD to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Notice carefully what he said. First, he did NOT say "the LAW is dead;" he clearly said, "YE . . . are become *dead*." The LAW of God did not die, or perish. It was not destroyed or done away. But the PEOPLE became dead to the LAW by *the body of Christ*.

Verse 5 helps explain it. "For when we were in the flesh" — that is, before we were converted, and while we were living according to the pulls of the flesh — "the motions of sins, which were [manifest, revealed for what they were] by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto DEATH." Do you see? When we were yet sinners, we were worthy of DEATH in God's sight. We had transgressed His holy Law, and the DEATH PENALTY hung over our heads.

"But now," Paul explains in verse 6, "we are delivered from the law" — that is, from the inexorable DEATH PENALTY of the LAW. Christ paid it for us — in

our stead. The Law of God NO LONGER CLAIMS OUR LIVES, "that being *dead* wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

While sinners, we were in a state of DOOM. We were worthy of execution. We were, figuratively, sitting on MURDERER'S ROW, awaiting our punishment.

But, NOW, Paul says, we are DEAD to the Law — that is, the penalty of death HAS BEEN PAID BY ANOTHER — Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us — so no longer does the death penalty hang over us. It has been *paid*. So far as the Law is concerned, the penalty is paid — we are dead, in Christ — and there is no further date with death for us, if we continue to live in Christ.

This verse in no way says the Law is done away. It merely shows that Christ paid the penalty of the Law for us, died for us, and our date with DEATH has been kept by Him. We are "dead with him" (Rom. 6:3-4). No longer does condemnation await us (Rom. 8:1), because we are also made spiritually ALIVE WITH HIM through His resurrection from the grave (Rom. 6:4-5, 11).

No longer, then, are we in a sense married to SIN, the way of the flesh — but we are to be "married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead" in NEWNESS of life, "that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4, last part).

No problems with this verse. It is easy to understand, when you can see the background, when you read the context, and grasp *what* the Apostle Paul is talking about.

But far too often careless people will read right over a verse like this, and ASSUME it says something it doesn't. Too often people will just see the expression "dead to the law" and assume it means the LAW is dead.

Let's not be careless with the precious, priceless WORD OF GOD.

Do you love the truth? God says, "... But to THIS man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and TREMBLETH at my word" (Isa. 66:2). We should stand in AWE at the Word of God — and NOT deal with it lightly, carelessly, with impunity.

## Obedience Impossible?

But some say it is impossible for mortal man to keep the perfect LAW of God. They insist that because the Israelites never kept it, we CANNOT keep it.

Is this true?

Would GOD impose a Law on people which CANNOT be kept? Is God some kind of fiendish, sadistic monster who expects MORE than we can give? Does He imperiously DEMAND more than we are able to do?

Let's understand. God is love. But He is also supremely wise. God KNOWS what He is doing.

First, it is true that human beings, of their own ability, are not able to keep God's Law in the spirit, because their human nature is filled with weaknesses and downward pulls of the flesh.

But, this fact alone does NOT mean we should forget it, give up, and QUIT. GOD has made a WAY whereby we CAN keep His Law in spirit. And He commands us to follow it.

But HOW? What is the WAY?

How does a Christian KEEP God's Law?

Here is the answer: "For what the law [by itself] could *not* do, in that it was weak through the flesh [that is, people were too weak to keep it spiritually perfectly], God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh [HE KEPT it, showing us that God's Law COULD be kept by a human individual]: that the *righteousness of the LAW might be FULFILLED IN US*, who walk not after the flesh, but *after the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:3-4). Christ kept the Law through the power of God's Spirit. Of Himself He could not do it. But the Spirit of God in Him did.

God expects us to FULFILL the righteousness of the Law of God, even as Christ did, thereby condemning sin in the flesh — showing there is no excuse for sin. *How?* "... After the Spirit." As verse 2 shows, "For the law of the *Spirit of life* in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The Law of God, the Ten Commandments, expresses the character of the Spirit of God.

Paul explained it more fully in Gala-

tians 2:20. Notice. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Through the POWER of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, we are enabled to KEEP God's spiritual Law! The Spirit of God WITHIN us makes it possible. Through the Spirit of God, we are to mortify — put to DEATH — the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13).

But if a person does not have the Spirit of God residing within him, "he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). How PLAIN!

God commands us to KEEP His Law. But, knowing we are weak of ourselves, He provides a WAY. That WAY is Christ in us. Through Him we CAN keep the Law.

Don't EVER let anyone tell you that keeping God's Law is IMPOSSIBLE. It IS possible, through the power of the SPIRIT of God. Those who deny it are denying the POWER OF GOD! They are blaspheming.

### "Not UNDER the Law"

Some, however, will still turn to Romans 6:14, where we read, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are NOT *under the law*, but under GRACE."

Pointing their thumb at this verse they will likely exclaim, "There, see? Christians are NOT under the law. We DON'T have to keep the law. Paul says we are UNDER GRACE, not law."

But again — could this reasoning possibly be sound? After having read all the verses we have seen so far, could we believe Paul contradicted himself? If he did, then obviously his words are NOT inspired — and if that be true, the Bible is not inspired, and *you have no Saviour*.

Therefore let's *understand*.

Begin with verse one. "What shall we say then?" Paul asks. "Shall we continue in *sin*" — that is, BREAKING God's Law, for sin is law-breaking (I John 3:4) — "that GRACE may abound?" In other words, is it all right for Christians to transgress God's Law, so they can have more grace to cover their sins?

Paul himself answers this shocking question, "GOD FORBID. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2.) There is your thundering answer. God does NOT save us "IN" our sins" — rather, He saves us FROM our sins.

As Christians, we are to reckon ourselves DEAD to sin (verse 11). Paul plainly says, "Let NOT sin [commandment-breaking] therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (verse 12). Lawlessness is NOT to reign over true Christians. We are to be law-ABIDING people. We are commanded NOT to yield ourselves as instruments of evil, sin, or law-breaking (verse 13). Rather, we are to be instruments of RIGHTEOUSNESS (same verse). And, what is righteousness? Remember? Read it again in Psalm 119:172 — "... for ALL THY COMMANDMENTS are *righteousness*!"

Now we come to verse 14, "For SIN" — that is, again, commandment breaking — "shall NOT have dominion," or rule, control, "over you." WHY? Why doesn't sin have POWER over true Christians, as in the case of other people? Paul continues, "For ye are *not UNDER the law*, but under grace."

Notice. This has to do with SIN having POWER over a person. When does sin — or the penalty of sin — have POWER over a person? WHEN HE HAS BROKEN THE LAW. Transgressors of the Law are in a state of condemnation — doom — awaiting DEATH! Sin holds them captive.

True Christians are not UNDER the penalty of Law — in other words, the LAW is not hanging *over* their heads CONDEMNING them. They are *not under* the PENALTY OF THE LAW.

Why NOT?

Because true Christians are "UNDER GRACE" — that is, they have received the grace, the mercy, the unmerited pardon of GOD for their sins, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who DIED FOR them. Their SINS have been pardoned — forgiven — washed away.

A Christian, then, is like a murderer on death row who has received a PARDON from the state governor. He has received GRACE. *He is no longer* in a state of condemnation, under the pen-

alty of the law, the law claiming his life, awaiting his final EXECUTION.

Isn't that plain?

This verse in Romans, then, in NO way does away with God's Law. Rather, this whole CHAPTER shows that Christians are supposed to OBEY God, be righteous, and STOP SINNING.

God's Law STANDS. It is SIN which must be abolished — done away — and nailed to the cross. SIN, *transgression of Law*, is what separates one from GOD.

### True Christian LOVE

Yet, some will tell you that they wish to serve God out of love — not out of a guilt-ridden, fearful terror of the consequences of disobedience to Law.

Such people do not even understand WHAT the *love of God IS!*

Do you?

They seem to think love is but a sentimental emotion welling up in the heart — a "sticky" kind of sentiment.

But what is the the love of God?

Here's the BIBLE answer. The Apostle John explains it: "For THIS is the love of God, *that we keep HIS COMMANDMENTS*: and his commandments are NOT grievous" (I John 5:3). Plain and simple. Love is manifested through OBEDIENCE to God's Law. Love flows through the channels of the Law of God, as waters flow down a riverbed and into the ocean.

Paul expressed the same truth. He wrote, "LOVE worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW" (Rom. 13:10). In the preceding verse, Paul lists a few of the Ten Commandments, and shows how they are BASED ON LOVE — love for God and love for neighbor. Love KEEPS those commandments. Love does NOT abolish, but FULFILLS — that is, fills *full*, up to the brim — God's Law. God's Law defines the kind of love we should have.

Ministers or teachers who ignore and attempt to do away with God's Law, then, do NOT have the love of God. The very love they profess, they REJECT because they reject the Commandments of God which EXPRESS that very love.

What deception. What self-contradiction.

### "Law OR Grace"?

Let's set it straight, once and for all. The truth is plain. It does not require a genius to understand the Word of God. It is SIMPLE, easy to understand. But sometimes previous false conceptions and erroneous ideas stand in the way and effectively block truth from entering a person's mind.

The LAW of God defines RIGHT from WRONG. It tells us what to do and what not to do. It defines SIN for us, so we can know how to live.

On the other hand, the grace of God is His unmerited pardon for our many past sins. Grace is forgiveness for the sins we have committed and repented of. When God bestows His GRACE on us, He forgives us for our past transgressions of His Law. He blots out our sins and removes the death penalty from us. CHRIST died in our stead, paying the penalty FOR us.

We are, therefore, FORGIVEN. We come under God's loving pardon or grace.

But does this mean, therefore, that the Law of God is suddenly done away? Just because we are no longer under the penalty of the law, for sin, are we now free to live however we please, without fear of future consequence if we break God's Law?

Of course NOT.

Grace is NOT license to do evil — to SIN. God gives us grace to remove our PAST sins. But now He expects us to surrender to His authority, and OBEY the spiritual Law which He ordained from the beginning for our GOOD.

God's grace removes the death penalty from us. But we are NOT free to go out and SIN, commit idolatry, steal, murder, profane the time God made holy, or break any of the other commandments of God!

Isn't this clear?

Grace is NOT contrary to Law. Rather, grace is the interposition of the mercy of God in regard to the death penalty which we WERE under. Grace merely removes the DOOM of condemnation which we were under. Now, to remain in God's grace, we must OBEY God's Law through the help and power of His Holy Spirit.

There is NO CONFLICT WHATSOEVER

between God's Law and the grace of God. It is not a question of "law or grace." Without law there would be no need of grace. Law and grace go together like hand in glove. One is DEAD without the other. One is useless without the other.

Law, apart from God's grace, is impossible for men to keep perfectly.

But grace, apart from God's Law, is not grace but license to do evil.

The Law of God works WITH grace; grace makes it COMPLETE. For, it is through the GRACE of God that we can have our sins forgiven, and can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, so we can in the future have strength to KEEP God's holy, eternal, spiritual LAW.

Now do you see?

It is not a matter of "law OR grace." It is a matter of LAW AND GRACE. It was a temporary law of physical works which pointed to Christ. But God's eternal, spiritual LAW, in force from Creation, ENDURES FOREVER, and is mightily in force, TODAY.

Even as *faith without works* is dead (James 2:20), so GRACE WITHOUT LAW is dead. And dead grace will not save a single soul. It is USELESS — worthless — empty.

May God help YOU to understand. May God give you the WISDOM to comprehend the truth, and eyes to see clearly how vital BOTH law and grace are to a true Christian. And may He help you to find your way OUT of the chaos of confusion created by those who twist, distort, and reject the truth of God, so YOU can reap the rewards of saving faith and loving obedience.

God wants YOU to enter His eternal Kingdom. He wants YOU to receive the glorious GIFT of salvation and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Will you? □

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