

LAW AND FAITH

(by Boyce Mouton)

“Wherefore the law 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)

WE HAVE JUST COMPLETED A STUDY ON LAW AND GRACE. NOW LET US CONSIDER LAW AND FAITH. IN THIS BRIEF STUDY WE WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN HOW THE LAW WAS A SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US UNTO CHRIST THAT WE MIGHT BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH!

CHRIST

First let us consider how the Law was designed by God to bring us unto Christ. Jesus Christ, as you know, is a real person. In fact, the birth of Christ has divided time into A.D. and B.C. As Christians, we love Jesus, but we must remember that when Jesus was on the earth a lot of people did not love Him. He was extremely poor and very unpopular. In fact, the Scriptures teach that He was “despised”. The prophet Isaiah wrote these words about Jesus hundreds of years before He was born:

“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (Isa 53:2-3)

Desperate people, however, were attracted to Jesus. People who were blind, or crippled, or lepers sought out Jesus. When they found Him and asked for mercy, He healed them every one. So the Law was designed by God to make us desperate so that we come to Christ and ask for mercy. Praise the Lord, whoever comes to Christ will not be cast out (Jn. 6:37).

We will give more information about this later, but remember! **THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US UNTO CHRIST!**

FAITH

Our text also teaches that the Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to faith. As you know, “faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Faith is the window that enables us to see things that are invisible to the human eye. Faith enables us to worship God whom we cannot see (1 Pet. 1:8). There are, as you know, two worlds. One world is visible, and the other world is invisible (Col. 1:16). The visible world is temporal, and the invisible world is eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). Most people are only concerned about the things they can see. This is a mistake, for the things we see are only temporal! The things we can see will someday be totally destroyed (2 Pet. 3:11-13). All earthly treasures will some day disappear. The invisible world is different. It is eternal! The only way we can “see” the invisible world, however, is by faith. That’s why it is important for the Law to bring us to Christ and also to faith.

Jesus once told the story of the rich man and Lazarus (see Lk. 16:19 - 31). The rich man

invested his life and energy only on things he could see. He wore expensive clothing and lived in luxury every day. Since he only invested in this present world it was a poor investment. He died, left all of his earthly wealth behind, and went to a place of eternal torment. The poor man, by contrast, invested his life on spiritual treasures not seen by human eyes. His treasures were safe and secure. Moths and rust could not corrupt them and thieves could not break through and steal them. As Jesus said, he was laying up treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:20). It was a wise investment! He died and went to a place of eternal reward. Paul said it like this: **“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor 4:18)**

Even though it is not easy to do, Christians are commanded to set their minds on things above and not on things of earth (Col. 3:2). Most people, however, do not focus on things above until they are desperate. We often wait, for example, until the doctor tells us we are dying before we think about heaven and hell. When we finally come to realize the temporal nature of earthly wealth, then it is much easier to “set our minds on things above.” He is no fool who gives up the things he cannot keep to gain the things he cannot lose.

Remember! THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US CHRIST AND ALSO TO FAITH.

JUSTIFICATION

The Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and also to justification by faith. Job asked how a man can be justified before God (Job. 25:4)? This is a good question. The Scriptures teach that:

- All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).
- Our iniquities have separated us from God and our sins have hidden His face so that He will not hear (Is. 59:2).
- So the question of Job is a valid one, how can sinful man be justified before a Righteous God?

The answer, of course, is that justification comes by faith without the deeds of the Law (Rom. 3:28).

Faith, as you know, existed a long time before the Law. The following Scriptures all refer to examples of faith before the Law.

- It is through faith that we “understand” that the things we see in the universe were made by God out of things that we cannot see (Heb. 11:3).
- By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4).
- By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death (Heb. 11:5).
- By faith Noah built an ark and saved his family (Heb. 11:7)
- Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).
- Paul points out that Abraham was justified by faith 430 years before the Law was given (Gal. 3:17).
- These Scriptures can easily be multiplied.

If justification by faith was here before the Law of Moses, then how was the Law a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith?

The answer, of course, is obvious. When God created the heavens and the earth He put laws in place that man would not discover until later. Mankind matures and makes discoveries in much the same way that children mature and make discoveries. Plato, the ancient Greek Philosopher, said that “necessity is the mother of invention”. This is true! Quite frequently the inventions and discoveries we make grow out of desperation.

It is easy to imagine, for example, that man discovered a lever during an emergency when he needed to move an object heavier than he could move by hand. The principle of leverage was always there, but it took some special circumstance for man to discover it. Later man discovered how to harness the power of wind and water. Still later man learned how to make steam engines, and gasoline motors. In each instance, man was only discovering laws that already existed and learning to harness power that was already there.

So Paul makes reference in Rom. 3:27 to the “law of faith”. This law, of course, like all the other laws, was nothing new. It had always been there. Abraham, out of desperation, discovered that law. Remember, Abraham “did” a lot of things before he discovered the law of faith. He left Ur for Haran when he was 75 years old (Gen. 12:4). Then he left Haran for Canaan (Gen. 12:5). Then, because of a famine, he went to Egypt (Gen. 12:10). Then he returned from Egypt and separated from his nephew Lot (Gen. 13:8 - 12). Then he went to war and rescued Lot from the kings of the East (Gen. 14:14 - 16). Then he paid tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18 - 20).

By now, however, Abraham was desperate. He was 86 years old and had no child. He had been promised a son, but now he feared that this promise would never come true. If he had no son, then Eliezer of Damascus (his servant with the greatest seniority) would inherit everything he had.

Then the Word of the Lord came to him again and said: **“This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” (Gen 15:4)** In order to make this promise more credible, God took Abraham outside and showed him the stars of the heavens. On that night Abraham saw the stars in a new and different way. These were the same stars that he had seen all of his life, but now, “by faith”, he saw in them the creative power of God. On that night Abraham came to believe that nothing was impossible to God. If God could create the heavens He could do anything. Then the Scriptures state:

“Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6)

Abraham, in his desperation, had discovered the law of faith. Most others had not yet made that discovery. Most people still felt that the only way you can be acceptable to God is by “doing” something. That’s why God gave the Law. It was to convince mankind once and for all that the only way man could be justified was by believing.

It is difficult for most of us to believe that we can be justified by faith. We have to be desperate to choose faith. The thief on the cross was desperate. His hands and feet were nailed to a cross and he couldn’t “do” anything to earn salvation. He had no choice but faith. When he, in faith, called out to Christ he was promised a place in paradise (Lk. 23:43). The Law was designed to make us so desperate that we also would call out to Christ and be justified by faith.

HOW DOES THE LAW MAKE MEN DESPERATE?

1

There are many ways that the Law makes men desperate. First, God specifically designed the Law of Moses so that no man could keep it. It was not given to make men feel good, it was designed to make them feel guilty. (Rom. 3:19).

Take, for example, the book of Leviticus. The word “unclean” occurs over 100 times in this book. There were an almost infinite number of ways that the devout Hebrew could become unclean. The Law was designed so that once you touched something unclean you became unclean and guilty, even though you were unaware of it (Lev. 5:2). Once a person was unclean, everything they touched also became unclean (see Lev. 15). Consequently, the Hebrew people were afraid to touch anything for fear that some unclean person had already touched it. Remember, the Law was placed beside the Ark of the Covenant as a testimony AGAINST the people of God (Deut. 31:24 - 27).

#2

In the second place, the Law was designed so that innocent people could be punished for sins committed by their leaders. Take King David, for example. He lived and died under the Law. When David sinned by numbering the people of Israel God gave him three options. (1) 3 years of famine (2) 3 months of fleeing from their enemies (3) 3 days of plague (2 Sam. 24:13). Note that all of these examples involved punishing the people for a sin committed by David. David chose the 3 days of plague and 70,000 innocent people died (2 Sam. 24:15). God designed the Law this way on purpose. He wanted us to be desperate.

The same principle of law is found in Lev. 4:2. This time, however, innocent people became guilty because of sins committed by the priest. Can you not understand how the Law made people desperate? If people become desperate enough they will try anything, even faith!

#3

The Law was specifically designed to show no mercy. It was written on cold, rigid tablets of stone that could not be changed. Here are some examples of judgement without mercy under the Law:

- Levi, the father of the Levites, killed the men of Shechem without mercy (Gen. 34:25 - 29). Even though this happened before the Law, remember that it was the Levites who became the priests under the Law.
- The Levites also killed their brothers, friends, and neighbors without mercy when the Law was given. 3,000 people died on this occasion (Ex. 32:27 - 28).
- The Law required that even your very own brother, son, daughter, or the wife you love must be put to death without pity if they enticed you to worship other gods (Deut. 13:6 - 11).
- The Law required that a woman have her hand cut off without pity if she had touched the private parts of a man other than her husband (Deut. 25:11 - 12).
- **“Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy. . . “ (Heb 10:28)**
- There are obviously many more examples of the way that the Law excluded mercy.
- When students of the Law become desperate enough, they too will come to Christ for mercy.

#4

The Law was also designed so that the people could not escape facing the cruel reality of

punishment demanded by the Law. Note:

- In Numbers 15:32 - 36 we are told of a man who was caught gathering wood on the Sabbath day. They kept him in custody until God revealed what should be done to him. Then the Lord said to Moses: **“The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp” (Num 15:35)**. It was not enough for one man to execute the convicted man, God specifically required “the whole assembly” to stone him. Why? Obviously God wanted the “whole assembly” to face the reality of the punishment required by the Law.
- Those who would entice Israel to worship other gods must be stoned to death upon the testimony of two or three witnesses. Again, however, “all the people” were to be involved in the execution (Deut. 17:7).
- When Achan sinned by stealing things from Jericho, “all the people” were again required to be involved in the execution (Josh. 7:25).
- Even a rebellious son was to be stoned to death (Deut. 21:18 - 21) Again, however, the execution was not to be a private matter, it was to be done by “all the men of the town” (vs. 21).
- Facing the harsh reality of Law is like a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith.

#5

Even Moses, as you know, could not be saved by the very Law he delivered. Remember, for example, God commanded Moses to “speak” to a rock (Nu. 20:8), but he “struck” it (Nu. 20:11). This was an infraction of the Law and no mercy could be given, not even to Moses. Therefore the Lord said: **“Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them (Num 20:12)**. While this may seem insignificant to man, it was considered as rebellion by God (Ps. 106:33). This act of disobedience is mentioned over and over as the reason why Moses could not enter into the Promised Land (see Nu. 27:12 - 14; Deut. 1:37; 3:26; 32:48 - 52, etc.). James wrote that whoever keeps the whole Law and offends in only one point, is guilty of it all (Ja. 2:10).

These are just a few of the many ways that the Law makes men desperate. IF YOU TRULY FACE THE HARSH CONSEQUENCES OF THE LAW OF MOSES, YOU TOO WILL BE DESPERATE ENOUGH TO TURN TO CHRIST AND BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH!

GOOD NEWS - THE LAW DOES NOT REFLECT THE NATURE OF GOD!

- There are many who believe that the Law reflects the nature of God, but it does not!
- The Law is “without mercy”, but God is not. The Bible is filled with many references to the mercy of God. The 136th Psalm, for example, has 26 verses, and EVERY VERSE REMINDS US THAT THE MERCY OF GOD ENDURES FOREVER!
- The Law is only a shadow. **“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-- not the realities themselves” (Heb 10:1)**.
 - You are not a shadow, and God is not a shadow. A shadow is not reality, but God is reality.
 - A shadow is always changing, but God never changes. He is always the same and the Scriptures state specifically that God does not change like shadows do (Ja. 1:17). It is very hard to recognize anyone from their shadow, that’s why the Jews didn’t recognize Jesus.

- The Scriptures teach that it was “necessary” to change the Law (Heb. 7:12), but God never changes (Mal. 3:6).
- We do not understand the nature of God from the Law, we understand the nature of God through Jesus Christ. In Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead in a Body (Col. 2:9)
- God is Light, and in Him there is no shadow (James 1:17) and no darkness at all (1 Jn. 1:5).
- Jesus is also known as the “Light of men” (John 1:4).
- We used words to communicate and Jesus, as you know, is the “Word” of God (Jn. 1:1).
- We learn about the nature of God, not from the Law, but from Jesus. Not from a shadow, but from reality. That’s why God gave us the Law as a Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith.

GOOD NEWS - JESUS IS A MERCIFUL PRIEST

- As we have already pointed out, the Levitical priest was without mercy. His major job was to kill innocent victims. When you took your lamb to the priest you knew what was going to happen to the lamb. Jesus, however, had a different type of priesthood. He could not be a priest under the Law because He came from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14).
- Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4).
 - The priesthood of Melchizedek is much different from the priesthood under law. The Scriptures point out that it was also superior to the Levitical Priesthood (Heb. 7:1 - 22).
 - As we have pointed out, a major function of the Levitical Priesthood was to kill, but as far as the Scriptures are concerned, Melchizedek never offered a blood sacrifice.
 - Jesus was a Priest after the order of Melchizedek. The only blood Jesus shed was His own!
- It is important to remember that Jesus is a merciful and faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:17). He can perfectly understand our problems because He was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:14 -16).

GOOD NEWS! GOD GAVE THE LAW BECAUSE HE IS SHAPING HISTORY LIKE A POTTER SHAPES CLAY!

The prophet Jeremiah received a vision that helped him to understand what was going on in the world. He wrote: **“Then the word of the LORD came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.”** (Jer 18:5-8)

God knows everything, so before He created the heavens and the earth He knew that Jesus was going to have to die on the cross. Remember! God determined to redeem us with the precious blood of Christ before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18 - 20).

So like a Potter shapes the clay, God has shaped the world and all human history. He did not give us the Law by accident, it was a deliberate part of His plan to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

- Remember! God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever

- believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).
- God not only created the heavens and the earth, He has even given a name to every star (Ps. 147:4). Not one sparrow can fall to the ground without God knowing about it. The Scriptures teach that the very hairs of your head are all numbered (Matt. 10:29 - 30). You are of more value to God than many sparrows
 - The present heavens and earth, will pass away. They are only temporary. God wants you to have an eternal reward in heaven (Matt. 6:19 - 21). God wants you to have a special place of honor in the new heavens, and the new earth (1 Pet 1:3 - 4; 2 Pet. 3:7 - 13).
 - From the very beginning God began teaching the world about Christ and faith. Remember! By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4).

DO YOU HAVE FAITH?

Moses describes the righteousness that is by the Law by stating that “The man who does these things will live by them” (Rom. 10:5). But Christ is the end of the Law so that righteousness is available to all who believe. It is therefore not necessary to ascend into heaven, or descend into the deep, in order to have some physical contact with Christ. By faith, you can contact Christ right where you are! IF YOU CONFESS WITH YOUR MOUTH THAT JESUS IS LORD, AND BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, YOU WILL BE SAVED! FOR IT IS WITH YOUR HEART THAT YOU BELIEVE AND ARE JUSTIFIED, AND IT IS WITH YOUR MOUTH THAT YOU CONFESS AND ARE SAVED! (Rom. 10:9 - 10).

If you study the Law correctly, it will be a schoolmaster to bring you unto Christ that you might be justified by faith!

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LAW AND GRACE

**“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”
(John 1:17)**

How succinct! How clear! How simple! How profound! The law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Don't ever forget the difference!

There were, of course, laws before Moses. Abraham for example, kept all of God's requirements, decrees, commandments, and laws (Gen. 26:5) Yet nothing in the Scriptures is contrary to the clear cut distinction given to us in this text. Don't be distracted! The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The dramatic difference between these two is clearly seen in many passages of Scripture. One obvious example is John 8:1 - 11. In this passage we are told that a woman was brought to Jesus by men who said they caught her in the act of adultery (John 8:4). The law given through Moses was clear. **“You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14)**. The penalty for breaking this law was also clear: **“If a man commits adultery with another man's wife-- with the wife of his neighbor-- both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” (Lev 20:10)**. The woman's accusers stated the case correctly. **“In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” (John 8:5)** Are you ready for the answer? Like new wine it is indescribably sweet. Like new wine the old wine skins cannot contain it! The response of grace and truth is so revolutionary, and so different from the Law, that some will stumble trying to get around it. Let us, however, brace ourselves and face the inescapable reality, that law and grace are poles apart. The good news is that we have a choice between the two!

Before considering what Jesus said, please note that in this text the “law” is distinguished from “truth”. Truth came through Jesus, not the law. In fact, Jesus Who is the Truth, was crucified by law. The law tries to establish truth, but often fails. Even the testimony of two or three witnesses, as you know, does not guarantee truth. Jesus, Himself, was condemned by the testimony of two witnesses, but they were liars (Matt. 26:60).

Again, do not be distracted from the simple dichotomy of our text. The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Moses and the law are on one side, and Jesus, grace, and truth are on the other. The great gulf between these two is not easily comprehended. In fact, you have to be born again in order to see it (John 3:3). Moses and the law said that such a woman should die, but grace and truth let her live.

Initially, as you know, Jesus said nothing. Rather, He stooped down and began to write on the ground with His finger. No one knows what He wrote. Some have suggested that the all knowing Christ wrote the names of the men there who had also committed adultery. Their dishonesty was obvious. The law required “both” guilty people to be put to death in cases of adultery, but these hypocrites only brought the woman.

As these disciples of Moses continued to question Jesus, He straightened up and said: **“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” (John 8:7)** Having said this He stooped down again and continued to write upon the ground. Then, those who heard, began to leave one at a time, the older ones first. Finally, only Jesus and the woman remained. **“Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘woman, where are they? Has no-one condemned you?’ ‘No-one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’ ” (John 8:10-11)**

How beautiful! How different! How wonderful! How gracious! Let us all be thankful that while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

A PROPER USE OF LAW

“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.” (1 Tim 1:8)

Note that while the law was “given through Moses”, it originated with God. Moses prepared the tablets of stone, but the law was written by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18). Since God knows all things, He knew exactly what He was doing when He wrote the Ten Commandments. That’s why there has to be a proper use of law. As you know, God did not write the law to save us, but rather as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24).

Jesus said: **“It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt 4:4)** This is actually a quotation from Moses (Deut. 8:3). Obviously these words are inspired and are profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). Moses was inspired by God to write these words. Certainly they are important for us to study! So, Paul insists that while some have used the law in the wrong way, there is still a proper use of law.

Then Paul continued: **“We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers-- and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine” (1 Tim 1:9-10)** God made the law for unconverted people. They have hearts that are deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Christian people, however, have been made “righteous” by the blood of Jesus, and consequently the law was not made for them. They are new creations! They have new minds and new hearts (2 Cor. 5:17). God has taken away their heart of stone and given them a heart of flesh (Ez. 36:26). He has put His Spirit within them to cause them to walk in His way. Christians are therefore not “conformed” by outward pressure from the law, but are “transformed” by the power of His Spirit within (Rom. 12:2). That’s why Paul states unequivocally, that the law was not made for the righteous, but for sinners. The Bible word translated as “transformed” is “metamorphosis” from which we get the word “metamorphosis”. Just as caterpillars become butterflies, Christians also become new creations. Caterpillars are ugly and destructive, but butterflies are not. This is a beautiful illustration of conversion. Paul said it like this: **“Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” (Rom 10:4).**

THE REGULATIONS OF LAW HAVE ONLY AN APPEARANCE OF WISDOM

“Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.” (Col 2:23)

“Regulations” have an appearance of wisdom. On the surface, they “seem” to be the solution to sinful behavior, but they are not. They only have an “appearance of wisdom”. The regulations referred to in the above text are: **“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” (Col 2:21)**. The law provided an almost infinite number of ways to become unclean. Please consider these warnings from Moses: **“... if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean--whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground-- even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty. Or if he touches human uncleanness-- anything that would make him unclean-- even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty.” (Lev 5:2-3)**

The word “unclean” occurs over 100 times in the book of Leviticus and the devastating nature of the problem is compounded by the fact that, by law, you could innocently become unclean without even being aware of it. That’s why the command to not touch, taste, or handle, made

sense to the disciples of Moses. Paul said, however, that these regulations were of “no value in restraining sensual indulgence”. Paul is right! Suppose, for example, I command you not to taste chocolate cake. Does that help you to not taste chocolate cake or not? You probably were not thinking about chocolate cake before, but now you are. This command has caused you to think about the very thing it forbids. The more I preach against chocolate cake, the more you think about it. Paul went so far as to say: **“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.” (Rom 7:7-8)**

Don’t you see how seductive law is? It appears to be a powerful way to control men’s lives, but it actually has no power to restrain sensual indulgence (Rom. 8:3). In fact, the law even stirs up our sinful nature. Please prayerfully consider these Scriptures about the way that law empowers sin!

- **“The law was added so that the transgression might increase” (Rom. 5:20).**
- **“For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.” (Rom 7:5)**
- **“For apart from the law sin is dead” (Rom. 7:8)**
- **“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” (1 Cor 15:56)**
- Please remember that the law was not given to save anyone, but was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24).

Even Moses, through whom God gave the law, knew that it wouldn’t work to make men holy. He had seen the failure of law during his own life, and knew that the failures would grow worse after his death. Please consider these words of Moses: **“Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you have been rebellious against the LORD while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!” (Deut 31:26-27)**

Praise God! What the law could not do because of its weakness, God has accomplished through the grace and truth brought to us by Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:1 - 4). Rational people obviously prefer grace and truth to the law of Moses! That’s why the Apostle Paul accused the Galatians of being irrational.

THE FOOLISH GALATIANS **“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” (Gal 3:1)**

There are at least two things that distinguish Paul’s letter to the Galatians from his other writings. First, it is his only letter written specifically to a group of churches. His other letters were written to individuals like Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, etc., or to individual churches like the ones in Corinth or Philippi. This letter, however, is addressed “to the churches of Galatia”, that is, to all the churches in the whole country. It is his only letter written specifically to a group of churches. In the second place, it is Paul’s only letter that does not have something good to say to those who received it. Even the troubled congregation at Corinth was praised because they were enriched and did not lack in any spiritual gift (1 Cor. 1:4 - 9). To the Galatians, however, he had not one good word to say!

Paul began the letter with a standard greeting, and then immediately accused them of accepting another gospel. He wrote: **“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the**

one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—” (Gal 1:6)
From reading the Galatian letter it is obvious what their problem was. They had begun with grace and truth, and then returned to law. How foolish! Paul wrote: **“I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing-- if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?” (Gal 3:2-5)**

The problem was indeed serious. Those who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ and have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).

EVEN MOSES WAS CONDEMNED BY THE VERY LAW HE GAVE

“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10)

Some have sarcastically said: “Which of the Ten Commandments do you intend to break?” Behind this question is the sincere belief that anyone who really wants to can keep the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, this is not true! Even Moses, through whom these commandments came, did not keep them. That’s why he was forbidden to enter into the Promised Land.

Remember! Moses had a unique relationship with God. When Miriam and Aaron criticized him God immediately came to his defense and said: **“Listen to my words: When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” (Num 12:6-8)**

As we have already said, however, even Moses did not perfectly keep the law, and was condemned by the very law he delivered. Here is the story:

- Early in their wilderness wanderings God commanded Moses to “strike” a rock so that it would bring forth water (Ex. 17:6).
- Thirty eight years later God commanded Moses to “speak” to a rock so that it would bring forth water (Nu. 20:8).
- Moses disobeyed God and “struck” the rock (Nu 20:11).
- Moses was therefore condemned for his disobedience and forbidden to enter into the Promised Land.

Note this Scripture!: **“Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.” (Num 20:12)** The consequences of this act of disobedience were so serious that they are repeated over and over in the Scriptures. (See Nu. 27:12 - 14; Deut. 1:37; 3:26; 32:48 - 52; etc.) While the disobedience of Moses may seem insignificant to you, it was not insignificant to God. Remember, the very nature of law excludes grace. Here are some examples of punishment by law that provided for no grace:

- When the law was given the Levites were charged to kill brothers, neighbors, and friends and 3,000 died (Ex. 32:27 - 28).
- The inhabitants of Canaan were to be shown no mercy (Deut. 7:2, 16)
- The man who encouraged the worship of other gods was to be put to death without pity (Deut. 13:6 - 9).
- Murderers were to be put to death without pity (Deut. 19:11 -13).

- If a woman touches the private parts of someone other than her husband her hand was to be cut off without pity (Deut. 25:11,12).
- **“Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.” (Heb 10:28)**
- Etc.

Law without mercy may “seem” strong, but the Scriptures say it is “weak” and “useless”. (Heb 7:18). We still have reason to believe, however, that Moses was saved. Remember, he appeared with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Lk. 9:28 - 31). Remember, in heaven we will be singing the “song of Moses” (Rev. 15:3). Moses, however, was not saved by law. Nobody can be saved by law. **“Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.” (Gal 3:21)**

Moses was not saved by law, but like the rest of us he was saved by grace and truth! Remember, Jesus also died for the sins committed under the Old Covenant (Heb. 9:15).

THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE CHURCH

“Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.” (Acts 18:7-8)

The dramatic difference between law and grace is also seen by comparing the synagogue with the church. Jewish people worshiped in synagogues, and Christian people worshiped in churches. When the Jews at Corinth opposed Paul and became abusive, he went next door and started a church in the house of Titius Justus. Thus we have another illustration straight from the Bible about the dramatic difference between law and grace. The synagogue and the church were right next door to each other. The Jewish synagogue emphasized law, the church emphasized grace. The synagogue emphasized threats, the church emphasized promises. The synagogue emphasized fear, the church emphasized love. The synagogue emphasized “conformation” and the church emphasized “transformation.”

To show the absence of mercy in the synagogue, we need only to remember that public beatings were a part of Jewish worship. Jesus warned His disciples:

- **“they will flog you in their synagogues” (Matt. 10:17).**
- **“Others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town (Matt. 23:34).**
- **“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues.” (Mark 13:9)**
- **“But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons,” (Luke 21:12)**
- **“They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.” (John 16:2)**

Paul himself tortured Christians in the synagogues. He said:

- **“‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you.’ (Acts 22:19)**
- **“Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme.” (Acts 26:11)**
- Even there in Corinth the Jews beat the ruler of the synagogue: **“Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court.” (Acts 18:17)**

Unfortunately, all the beatings didn't work. In fact, the Bible states that the law was "powerless" to change our lives (Rom. 8:3). The whole concept of law was not designed to make men holy, it was designed to make them "guilty" (Rom. 3:19). Thus, after 1,500 years of law, the people were actually more sinful than when the law was first given. Jesus said: **"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are"** (Matt 23:15). While the law did not make men holy, it did make them hypocritical. When the law was given they took off their clothes and had an orgy before a golden calf. 1,500 years later they had learned to hide their sinful natures behind a thin veneer of self righteousness. Jesus said they were like white sepulchers that looked nice on the outside but inside were full of dead men's bones and everything unclean (Matt. 23:27). Aaron, the first High Priest, was a sinner, but not nearly as hypocritical as Annas and Caiaphas. They were High Priests, you remember, during the days of Jesus. Note what the Scriptures say about these Jewish leaders: **"The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death."** (Matt 26:59)

So, the church at Corinth, with all of its problems, was still much better than the synagogue. In the synagogue they were screaming from the pain of being beaten. In the church they were singing songs about being saved by grace. Please consider these inspired words of Paul to the church at Corinth: **"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way-- in all your speaking and in all your knowledge--because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."** (1 Cor 1:4-9)

HAGAR AND SARAH

"These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants."
(Gal 4:24)

Hagar and Sarah are also used in Scripture to help us understand the difference between law and grace. Hagar was a slave and represented the covenant of law that placed people in bondage. Sarah was free, and represents the freedom provided by the covenant of grace and truth. These two women and their sons are said to be an "allegory" of the two covenants (Gal. 4:24). The Greek word translated as allegory is "allegoreo". "Allos" means "other", and "agoreuo" means to speak in an assembly. An allegory is a teaching tool that describes one thing under the image of another. By understanding the difference between Ishmael and Isaac we gain insight into the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Ishmael and Isaac were half brothers. They had the same father, but different mothers. They were similar in many ways. Abraham begat both in his old age. God spoke to both mothers and prophesied about the future of both sons. Both sons were circumcised. Both became great nations. Both lived in the same part of the world. Both helped bury their father. Since both had the same father, it is quite possible that they were similar in appearance. We may also assume that both wore the same type of clothing, ate the same type of food, and had the same life style. If we saw them from a distance we might easily confuse one with the other.

These brothers may have seemed alike but they were radically different. The word "radical" comes from the Latin "radix," which means, "root." (This is the basis of our English word "radish," which is a root.) So these brothers were radically different, like slavery and freedom.

Judaism and Christianity are also similar in many superficial ways. Both the synagogue and the church were involved in similar activities. Both met each week and studied the Scriptures. Both were evangelistic. Both baptized their converts by immersion. Both sang psalms. Both had nothing to do with pagan idols. Both had high standards of moral conduct. Both emphasized the importance of prayer. Both had elders and deacons.

These two groups, however, like Ishmael and Isaac, were radically different. The Jewish synagogue was based upon the Old Covenant and law, and the church was based upon grace and truth. While one group was giving bad people a beating, the other was giving bad people grace and forgiveness.

Before Ishmael was born, Hagar was told: **“He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers.” (Gen 16:12)**

Every court of law is filled with arguments and hostility. This is the very nature of law. That's why Ishmael would live in hostility toward all his brothers. He and his mother represented the law. Take, for example, the commandment of the law to remember the Sabbath Day and to keep it holy. It sounds very simple, but it is not. This law raises the obvious question “what is work? Some say that to carry a burden on the Sabbath Day is work. But this only raises another question: “what is a burden? Scribal Law defined a burden as “food equal in weight to a dried fig, enough wine for mixing in a goblet, milk enough for one swallow, honey enough to put upon a wound, oil enough to anoint a small member, water enough to moisten an eye-salve, paper enough to write a customs house notice upon, ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet, reed enough to make a pen”—and so on. So the rabbis spent endless hours debating the meaning of the Old Covenant and the people were never quite certain which rabbi to follow. Simple procedures like moving a lamp, stitching a garment, wearing a wig, putting in false teeth, lifting a child, became the focal point of debate, controversy, and division.

That which is written in stone never changes. Our understanding, however, does change. Consequently, our understanding of law is in a constant state of flux. Human beings are seldom at the same level of knowledge and understanding. Sometimes we even learn new information that requires us to abandon previous positions about which we once felt confident. This is one reason why the Old Covenant, written in stone, will always be controversial.

Sarah and Isaac are much different and are an allegory of the New Covenant. Let us briefly review their story. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, God appeared again to Abram and renewed His promises. This time the promises were given in association with the covenant of circumcision, and the changing of names. Abram (exalted father) was given the name Abraham (father of multitudes.) Sarai (Jehovah is Prince) was given the name Sarah (princess.) The very essence of Isaac's birth involved the supernatural. From the human point of view Sarah couldn't have a baby. It had ceased to be with her after the manner of women (Gen. 18:11.) She was “past age” (Heb. 11:11.) She had a dead womb (Rom. 4:19.) She had wanted to have a baby all of her married life, and had failed. The very idea that she could conceive, after menopause, was preposterous. This idea, as you know, did not come from man, it came from God.

The name Isaac means “laughter.” Abraham laughed at the idea of his birth (Gen. 17:17), and so did Sarah (Gen. 18:12). Isaac also must have laughed when he inherited everything Ishmael had hoped for. As we have already pointed out, when Abraham died he left everything he owned to Isaac (Gen. 25:5.) The son of the bondwoman was not an heir with the son of the freewoman (Gal. 4:30.) This, as you know, is like Christianity. Our inheritance is like that of Isaac. It is both miraculous, and undeserved.

While Ishmael was arguing and complaining, Isaac was laughing. This is indeed a poignant allegory of the two covenants.

GOD FOUND FAULT WITH THE COVENANT OF LAW

“For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.” (Heb 8:7)

As we have already pointed out, laws written in stone did not make men holy. In fact, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the law was the power of sin (1 Cor. 15:56). Consequently, God decided to write a new covenant. This time the covenant would not be written in tablets of stone, nor on pieces of paper, but in the minds and hearts of believers. Please consider: **“The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant "new", he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and ageing will soon disappear.” (Heb 8:8-13)**

THE NEW BIRTH AND THE NEW COVENANT

“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’ ” (John 3:3)

On the third day God created living things that reproduced by means of seeds (Gen. 1:11). Each seed reproduced after its own kind. Apple seeds produced apple trees, pear seeds produced pear trees, etc. Even human life comes from seeds. It is both interesting and significant to note that the first time Jesus is mentioned in Scripture He is described as the “seed” of woman (Gen. 3:15). Every seed has a specific genetic code that produces a specific form of life. That’s why Jesus said to Nicodemus that he had to be born again (John 3:1 - 8). Flesh gives birth to flesh and spirit give birth to spirit (John 3:6). If Nicodemus wanted spiritual life he had to receive it from a spiritual seed. So do we! It is not an option, if we want to enter into the Kingdom of God, we MUST be born again. Our physical birth came from a physical seed that contained the “deoxyribonucleic acid” or DNA of our parents. Our spiritual birth gives us the DNA of our Spiritual Father. Our physical bodies will die, but spiritually we can live forever.

Peter reminded his readers that Christians are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Pet 1:23) This spiritual seed places God’s nature within us. Just as a physical seed gave us the “image” of our earthly father, conversion gives us the “image” of our Heavenly Father (1 Cor. 15:49). The Kingdom of God is spiritual, that’s why it cannot be inherited by flesh and blood. Even though the product of of being born again is spiritual, it is very real. In fact, Christians are even called “new creations” in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

If God has written His laws in your minds and hearts the transformation of your life will be obvious. Here are some of the ways the Apostle John describes those who are “born again”.

- **“If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him” (I Jn 2:29).**
- **“No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God” (I Jn 3:9).**

- **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.” (I Jn 4:7).**
- **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well” (I Jn 5:1).**
- **“for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (I Jn 5:4).**
- **“We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (I Jn 5:18).**

John, the Apostle, who wrote these inspired words is the same man who wrote that the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

A MERCIFUL PRIEST

“For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” (Heb 2:17)

Priests under the law of Moses were forbidden to show mercy. Remember, those who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy (Heb. 10:28). Those who approach the throne of grace, however, obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb. 4:16).

Moses came from the tribe of Levi (Ex. 2:1). Even before the law was given Levi displayed no mercy in killing every man in the village of Shechem (Gen. 34:25). When the law was given, it was the Levites who killed 3,000 brothers, friends, and neighbors (Ex. 32:27, 28). One major role of a priest under the law of Moses was to kill sacrificial animals and birds. The number of daily sacrifices was greatly exceeded on special occasions. For example, when Solomon dedicated the Temple, the Mosaic priests killed 22,000 cattle, and 120,000 sheep and goats (1 Ki. 8:63). It is easy to see how a priest who was constantly killing innocent animals and birds would become calloused and without mercy.

Jesus, however, is a different kind of priest. He is a merciful high priest. As you know, He could not be a priest under the law of Moses, because he came from the wrong tribe (Heb. 7:14). We are repeatedly told in Scripture, however, that Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10: 6:20; 7:11, 15, 17, 21). Please consider:

- There is no record that Melchisedec ever made any blood sacrifices. Jesus didn't make any animal sacrifices either. The only blood He shed was His own.
- Priests under the law of Moses died, but because Jesus lives forever He has a permanent priesthood. (Heb. 7:24).
- Priests under the law of Moses were sinners. Therefore they had to first make sacrifices for themselves, and then for the errors of the people (Heb. 9:7). Jesus was different from these priests because He had no sins (Heb. 7:26).
- Because Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec through his ancestor Abraham, the Scriptures conclude that the priesthood of Melchisedec is superior to that of Levi (Heb. 7:4 - 10).

ONE DAY OF GRACE OR EVERY DAY OF GRACE

As we have said before, under the law of Moses there were many ways a person could become unclean. Please consider:

“Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean-- whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground-- even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty.” (Lev 5:2)

“If anyone touches something unclean-- whether human uncleanness or an unclean

animal or any unclean, detestable thing-- and then eats any of the meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people.” (Lev 7:21)

“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any man has a bodily discharge, the discharge is unclean.’” (Lev 15:2) The following verses teach that anything this unclean man touches, also becomes unclean. This included his bed, chair, saddle, clay pot, etc. Obviously, a devout Jew could touch something unclean, and become unclean, without even being aware of it.

There are many more verses in the law of Moses that describe how a person can inadvertently become unclean. That’s why the devout Jew lived a life of fear and uncertainty.

THERE WAS, HOWEVER, ONE DAY IN THE YEAR WHEN EVERY JEW COULD FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD! THAT WAS THE DAY OF ATONEMENT!

Jewish confidence came on the Day of Atonement, not because of what the person did, but because of what the high priest did. On that day the high priest entered into the presence of God to make atoning sacrifices for himself and for the errors of the people. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was busy ministering all day long.

Here is a brief resume of what the high priest did on the Day of Atonement. The primary source for this information is Lev. 16:

- He bathed.
- He dressed in holy garments of white linen.
- He offered, or presented at the door of the tabernacle a bullock for a sin offering for himself and his house.
- He presented at the same place two goats for a sin offering for the congregation.
- He cast lots on the two goats. One of the goats was to be sacrificed, and the other was to be let go in the wilderness.
- He sacrificed the bullock.
- He passed from the court, through the holy Place, and into the Holy of Holies with a censer and incense, and filled the space with a cloud of smoke.
- He returned to the court for blood from the bullock and passed again within the veil to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and seven times before it.
- He returned to the court and killed the goat upon whom the lot for sacrifice had fallen.
- For the third time he returned to the Holy of Holies and did the same with the goat’s blood as he had done with the blood of the bullock.
- He purified the outer part of the tabernacle by the sprinkling of blood and placed some of it on the horns of the altar of incense (Ex. 30:10).
- He returned to the court and placed the blood of the bullock and goat upon the horns of the altar of burnt offerings and sprinkled it seven times.
- He offered to God the remaining goat, laid his hands upon it, and confessed the sins of the people.
- He consigned the goat to a man who was to take it to the border of the wilderness and release it.
- He bathed and changed his linen garments for the regular high priest’s clothing.
- He sacrificed two rams as burnt offerings for himself and for the people.
- He burnt the fat of the sin offering upon the altar.
- He saw to it that the remainder of the sin offering should be burnt without the camp.

Obviously, the high priest was busy all day long. Those who knew what he was doing were filled with confidence. Their high priest was ministering in the presence of God on their behalf. Their sins were being forgiven because of what He was doing. On other days they might not be certain of their salvation, but on this day they had reason for confidence.

Unfortunately, this blessed period of grace and confidence only lasted one day. But while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Please consider:

- **“Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives for ever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” (Heb 7:23-25)**
- **“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Heb 9:11-12)**
- This means that we are not just saved by the death of Christ, but we are also saved by His life (Rom. 5:10). Just as the high priest interceded for the people one day of the year, Christ ever lives to make intercession for us every day of the year.
- **“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (I Jn 2:1-2)**

LISTEN TO JESUS

Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration and spoke with Jesus. Peter was there and wanted to build three shelters, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Peter was wrong! God once spoke to His people by the prophets, but now He speaks to them through Jesus (Heb. 1:1). Therefore God interrupted and spoke to Peter with a voice from heaven: **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (Matt 17:5)**

You do have a choice! You can listen to Jesus!

How simple! How profound! How wonderful! How liberating!

How happy we ought to be to listen to Jesus rather than to Moses and the prophets.

Remember, Jesus actually fulfills the law. Jesus actually makes clear the message God gave to Moses and the prophets!

So, when you are confused and don't know what to do, listen to Jesus! When you are trapped by your own sins and do not know which way to turn, listen to Jesus! When you are discouraged and ready to quit, listen to Jesus! **YOU WILL NEVER REGRET LISTENING TO JESUS!**

- Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).
- All judgement has been entrusted to Jesus (John 5:22).
- Furthermore, we will even be judged in the last day by the Word that Jesus has spoken (Jn. 12:48).
- It is because of Jesus that we can come boldly to the throne of God to obtain mercy and help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).
- Jesus is our Great High Priest and ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).
- Jesus has promised that whosoever confesses Him on earth, He will confess before the Father who is in heaven (Matt. 10:32).
- Jesus has promised that anyone the Father gives to Him he will not cast out (John 6:37).
- **LISTEN TO JESUS! HIS GRACIOUS INVITATION COULD NOT BE MORE CLEAR!**

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:28-30)

For further information please contact:

LAW AND LOVE

(by Boyce Mouton)

“One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt 22:35-40)

Nothing could possibly be more clear! The two greatest commandments in the Law involved love. There were Ten Commandments written in stone, and over 600 other commandments in the Mosaic Law. Jesus said, however, that “all the Law and the Prophets” could be suspended on only two commandments.

1 The first commandment is to love God in the proper way. God is a Jealous God and will not be trivialized. We must love Him completely with every aspect of our being.

2 The second commandment is similar. It also involves love. This time, however, we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Jesus continued, **ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS!**

Note! There is no third priority. These two commandments include it all! The significance of these two commandments cannot be overemphasized. We will be reminded of these two commandments when we stand up before God in Judgement for Jesus said that the words He had spoken would judge us in the last day (Jn. 12:48).

In order to see these two commandments in their proper perspective, please consider the following.

FACT # 1 GOD DOES NOT CHANGE

- **“I the LORD do not change.” (Mal 3:6)**
- **“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.” (Num 23:19)**
- **“He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.” (1 Sam 15:29)**
- **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.” (Heb 13:8)**
- **“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” (James 1:17)**

FACT # 2 GOD’S PLANS HAVE NOT CHANGED

- “No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.” (1 Cor 2:7)
- “and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph 3:9-11)
- “. . . This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,” (2 Tim 1:9)
- “a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,” (Titus 1:2)
- “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.” (1 Pet 1:18-20)

CONCLUSION

- Since God doesn't change.
- And since God's plans do not change.
- God has always wanted the same thing.

“This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother” (Jn 3:11-12)

The necessity of love is not just a Christian doctrine. It goes back beyond the Law of Moses to the very beginning of time. Cain tried to love God. At least he brought an offering to the Lord. Obviously, however, he did not love his brother because he murdered him. The Apostle John, by inspiration, said it was impossible to love God without loving your brother. If a man claims to love God, but does not love his brother, he is a liar (1 Jn. 4:20).

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHEN YOU WERE BORN, OR WHERE YOU LIVED, GOD HAS ALWAYS WANTED THE SAME THING! HE WANTS US TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL OF OUR HEART, MIND, SOUL, AND STRENGTH, AND HE ALSO WANTS US TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS IN THE SAME WAY WE LOVE OURSELVES.

This universal standard will be remembered in Judgement. We will not be judged on the basis of a religious technicality, but by the way we have demonstrated love. Love demands that we meet the needs of those who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, sick, cold, and in prison. It is on this basis that we will be judged (Matt. 25:34 - 40). This standard is nothing new. As John wrote - this is the same message we have heard from the beginning. The book of Job is very old. Some think it was written before the books of Moses. Note how Job's love prepared him for the

Judgement. Job rescued the poor, the fatherless, those abandoned, the dying, the widow, the blind, the widow, the crippled and the needy (see Job 29:7 - 17). This was the same message in the Law of Moses (Deut. 6:5, and Lev. 19:18). This is the same message given by the Prophet Isaiah over 700 years before Jesus was born (Is. 58:6 - 7). While the commandments may have been different, the purpose of the commandments has always been the same.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (1 Tim 1:5)

Throughout the course of human history God has given many different commandments to His people. While the commandments were different, the goal of the commandments was always the same. The reason why God gave all of His commandments was to produce love.

For example, if a man defrauded his neighbor he obviously didn't love him. Therefore the Law of Moses required him to do two things. He was to make an offering to God. This would remind him of his need to love God. Next, he had to pay a 20% penalty when he returned what he had stolen from his neighbor. This would remind him to love his neighbor (see Lev. 6:1 - 7). The commandments were to make a sacrifice and pay a debt, but the purpose of these commandments was to produce love.

The idea that the eternal purpose of God was merely to see blood run down an altar is preposterous. The prophet Micah pointed this out in Micah 6:6 - 8. Micah reasoned that if God was pleased with one offering, then why not offer a thousand rams and really make Him happy? If pouring out a little oil pleased God, why not pour out a river of oil? This, of course, is ridiculous! The real purpose of God in giving commands was revealed by Micah in verse 8. It is so that men would “act justly, . . . love mercy, . . . and walk humbly with God”. Or as Paul wrote to Timothy: “the goal of this command is love”.

Do you understand this principle? Parents can probably understand it more readily than others. Let us suppose that two brothers have been in a fight and their parents “command” them to stand in the corner. The goal the parents is that the boys will quit fighting and love one another. The command is to “stand in the corner,” but the goal of the commandment is love. So also the commands of God in Scripture are designed to produce love. Jesus said that if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, then leave your gift and first be reconciled to your brother (Matt. 5:23).

THE NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

For thousands of years the world has been plagued with wars and rumors of wars. Some day, however, men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Some day men will study war no more. That day, however, will not come without the Holy Spirit.

Take, for example, the disciples of Jesus. These men knew the message of love given in

the Law and the Prophets, but they lacked the power to put that message into practice in their own lives. They even heard Jesus demonstrate and teach that same message for three years. For example in Matt. 5:43 - 48 and Lk. 6:27 - 36 In these verses Jesus stressed the importance of loving our enemies. If we only love those who love us we do not manifest the true nature of God's love. God loves everybody, and if we are to be like God, then we should love everybody too. The disciples heard that message but didn't put it into practice. **THEY DIDN'T EVEN LOVE ONE ANOTHER, LET ALONE THEIR ENEMIES!**

- The disciples constantly disputed among themselves as to who would be the greatest (Mk. 9:33 - 35).
- The mother of Zebedee's children came to Jesus and asked that her two sons be on the right and left hand of His throne. When the other ten disciples heard this they were indignant with the two brothers (Matt. 20:20 - 24).
- Even on the night before Jesus died there was strife among the disciples as to which of them was the greatest (Lk. 22:24).
- This is when Jesus girded Himself about with a towel and began to wash the feet of His disciples (Jn. 13:1 - 17). John said that on that night Jesus showed the disciples the full extent of His love (Jn. 13:1).
- **IT WAS ON THIS SAME NIGHT THAT JESUS SAID THAT HE WAS GIVING THEM A "NEW COMMAND". THEY WERE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS HE LOVED THEM!**
- Jesus then continued that **ALL MEN WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**
- It was also on this night that Jesus promised to "go away" and then "send" them the Holy Spirit Who would empower them to love (Jn. 14:15 - 22).

Now let's review the facts.

- The disciples had heard true messages about love from Jesus for three years.
- Yet, the disciples still didn't love one another!
- **OBVIOUSLY THEY NEEDED HELP, AND THAT'S PRECISELY WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS TO DO. HE IS OUR HELPER!** Remember! The fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22). When the Holy Spirit came these men were willed with the love of Jesus.
- By the power of the Holy Spirit they would have supernatural love. They would love one another "as Jesus loved them".
- By the power of the Holy Spirit the followers of Jesus, like Stephen, could pray for the men who were killing him, just like Jesus prayed for the men who were killing Him (Lk. 23:34, Acts 7:57 - 60).
- By the power of the Holy Spirit devout men from all over the world would be so united that they shared all of their possessions and there were no needy persons among them (Acts 4:32 - 35).

Since the disciples were unable to achieve this love on their own, Jesus commanded them to "wait for the gift" His Father had promised (Acts 1:4). This gift, as we have already pointed out, was the Holy Spirit. The primary purpose of the Holy Spirit was not to empower them to heal the sick, raise the dead, cure the lepers, or cast out demons. **THEY ALREADY HAD THAT POWER** (See Matt. 10:8). The primary purpose of the Holy Spirit was to empower them to love one another as Jesus loved them.

A LESSON FROM CORINTH

The church at Corinth was blessed with many spiritual gifts. In fact they did not lack any spiritual gift (1 Cor. 1:7). These spiritual gifts are listed in 1 Cor. 12:1 - 11). YET! IN SPITE OF ALL THESE SPIRITUAL GIFTS PAUL COULD NOT WRITE UNTO THEM AS SPIRITUAL PEOPLE.

“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly-- mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” (1 Cor 3:1-3)

Do you see it? The Corinthians were just like the apostles. Even though they could work miracles they were still filled with jealousy and quarreling. People filled with jealousy and quarreling do not reflect the Spirit of Jesus. In fact, because the Corinthians were so worldly and immature Paul had to feed them with milk and not meat.

Remember, all truths are equally true, but not all truths are equally important!. Your success in every area of life depends upon understanding this principle. We must do things in the order of their importance. Let us suppose that you come home and find that a bush is on fire and that your house is also on fire. Or perhaps you discover that your dog is sick, and your son is also sick. Or maybe you have to decide whether to protect your family from the hot sun or from a poisonous snake. In every circumstance of life wise people choose to do things in the order of their importance.

So Paul, guided by inspiration, informed the Corinthians about spiritual gifts but showed them a more excellent way (See 1 Cor. 13). The most important truth in Christianity, and also the most important truth in all the Bible is love. If you speak with the tongues of men and angels but do not have love, your ministry is only meaningless noise. If you have the gift of prophecy and enough faith to move mountains, but do not have love you are nothing. Obviously you cannot be saved without faith (Heb. 11:6). The Scriptures teach this truth in many other places as well. Love, however, is more important than faith. Nothing could be more clear. **“AND NOW THESE THREE REMAIN: FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE. BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE” (1 Cor. 13:13)**

LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law.” (Rom 13:8)

Paul pointed out that love fulfills the law. The commandments to not commit adultery, not murder, not steal, not covet, etc. are all summed up in this one rule “love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom. 13:9). Love does no harm to its neighbor, therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

He wrote the same thing to the Galatians: **“The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal 5:14).**

James wrote: **“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor**

as yourself," you are doing right." (James 2:8)

Jesus said the same thing. Not only in our text of Matt. 22:35 - 40; Mk. 12:28 - 31, and Lk. 10:25 - 38, but also in other passages like Matt. 7:12: **"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."** (Matt 7:12)

**IF YOU MISS LOVE, YOU HAVE MISSED THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT
IN THE LAW**

"But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor 12:31-13:13)

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