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Is God's Law immutable?

In other words, are the Ten Commandments changeable or alterable? Many declarations have been made to indicate that this is so.

Can Christ, the Son of God, change the Law of His Father? Does He have that authority? Does the Son have the power to overthrow His Father's will? Would He ever do such a thing? Is there even such non-compatibility between the Two that would make an overthrow necessary? And if He had the authority to refute His Father's Law governing Earth, would that affect God's kingdom throughout the rest of the universe?

This may sound like much conjecture, but really it is applicable and spoken of in the scriptures. Of course we know what Christ, Himself, promised, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-19). This was in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honourable." (Isaiah 42:21).

Christ came to put an end to sin, that enemy of His human race, and that which had so crucified His Father. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:3). Jesus proved that sin was not a fact of life, but an aberration of life. His target, upon coming to Earth, was sin; He had sin in His cross-hairs when He stepped down from His throne in heaven. After 33 years, He successfully condemned sin in humanity and showed that Satan would soon be put out of business.

But the Bible's definition of sin is in its relation to righteousness. The two are juxtaposed. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1John 3:4). Since sin and righteousness are polar opposites, by condemning sin, Christ magnified His Father's law of the Ten Commandments, as it was by condemning or diluting the authority of God's law that Satan offered sin to our first parents. Rather than condemning or diluting or even hinting at destroying His Father's law, Jesus magnified the Ten Commandments, not only in letter but in their spirit. Just read His statements following His declaration to not destroy the law or the prophets. He not only reiterated the law, but raised the ceiling on righteousness. Actually there never had been a ceiling on the Law until human philosophy put it there. Originally, the sky was the limit; development had no restrictions, growth in grace was never ending.

Would the Son of God ever overthrow the Law of His Father's government? Jesus said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). So, why would Christ ever work to undermine His Father when a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand?

There is one, however, who does desire to destroy the law of God and cause division in God's kingdom. He is the same wily enemy who said, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" To destroy God and everything He stands for is the devil's one desire. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth." (John 8:44). "And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." (Revelation 13:6).

Lastly, Christ wouldn't remove the bounds of His Father's law here on Earth, and thus make this, as some would like to call it, a privileged planet. God is no respecter of persons. He doesn't play favoritism, not even with planets of His creation. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isaiah 2:22). Why should man think that the eternal King should alter His Law of the Ten Commandments to suit a fallen created being's perverted nature? But, again, there is one who would want Earth to be without obligation to God's law. And he has dark purposes for convincing us of that idea which would give him limitless control over us, to the point of possession. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin....Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John 8:34, 44).

God never changes. "I am the Lord, I change not." (Malachi 3:6). "In the beginning, God." "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 90:2). If He would never change, neither would His Law of the Ten Commandments.

What did John have to say about the Law?

Actually, the apostle John did not say very much about the Ten Commandment Law. Much of his focus was on something else, something he estimated of great worth. We detect in John's language an awe and wonder in Jesus. In so many ways, we see John's close attachment to a divine, ever-faithful Friend. Wrote John, "Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John 13:1). "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, *whom Jesus loved.*" (John 13:23). "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as *I have loved you*, that ye also

love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have *love one to another*." (John 13:35). "I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." (John 10:14).

"As many as *received Him*, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld *His glory*, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father,) *full of grace and truth*." (John 1:12-14). "And of His *fulness* have all we received, and *grace for grace*. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:16-17).

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have *fellowship* with us: and truly our *fellowship* is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." (1John 1:1-4).

Though a very old man at the writing of his epistles, gospel, and revelation, John wrote with the spirit of a child. While in vision, when he heard the familiar voice of Jesus, he turned around with the adeptness and exhilaration of youth. (Rev. 1:12). Embodied in John was the first love of the early church. He was their Moses, their Daniel, their father, and human intercessor. At his passing, the apostolic church soon would have to flee into the wilderness.

Yet, another side of the youthful, aged man becomes apparent as we look deeper into his writings. He believed in law; he stood for justice, discipline, and order. This does not presuppose that John had a dark side. It reveals that he had balance. "Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but *because he was a thief*, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein," (John 12:4-6) written around 100 A.D. "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but *they were not of us*; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that *they were not all of us*." (1John 2:18-19). It's the justice side of love coming out of John's saddened heart, a justice that helps make his deep love complete.

John was also faithful to obedience to God's commandments. "Blessed are they that *do His commandments*, that they may have right to the tree of life." (Revelation 22:14). "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we *keep His commandments*. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, *is a liar*, and the truth is not in him. But whoso *keepeth His word*, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but *an old commandment which ye had from the beginning*. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning." (1John 2:3-7).

Here we see that John is faithful to the commandments of old. From the context, he is saying that love has been God's commandment from the beginning. This corresponds with the words of Jesus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God... Thou shalt love thy neighbour... On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40). Taken from the old covenant, it is evident that what God expected of Christianity He had expected from Old Testament Israel. "God *is love*;" He never changes. His Ten Commandments, the Royal "Law of liberty," is the Law of love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10).

In the middle of all his admonitions to love one another, John finds it necessary to make mention of sin. "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1John 3:5-9).

Introducing his description of sin, John gives an interesting definition. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also *the law*: for sin is the transgression of *the law*." (Vs. 4). This single reference to the Law of God may seem insignificant compared to the volume of references to love throughout his epistle, but that short disclosure reveals that in John's mind and in the mind of the Spirit runs an undercurrent of Law and duty and accountability, which alone leads to true love, honest service, and genuine fellowship. More on that note when we look at the book of Galatians.

What does James say about the Law?

A quick look will reveal that it's obvious we aren't going to get James to give us any fire-power to diminish the Christian's duty to the law. He is unyielding on his stance of loyalty to the Ten Commandments. From his viewpoint, we are all duty-bound to keep every single Commandment, "the whole Law."

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole

law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.” (James 2:8-12).

In fact, he speaks of the law in a very upbeat way. James calls the commandments the Royal Law and the Law of Liberty. Why shouldn't the Law be our glory and joy? We have laws in America. They are obligatory for everyone. Sometimes some lawbreaker is able to avoid the punishment of his misdeed and we all groan when that happens. Equal protection under the law is what our judicial system stands for. And our laws are just; they have been hammered out by a large body of an honest judiciary, legislators, and President, therefore those laws are good for the liberties of all. America has a lot of laws. It is stricter here than many other countries, yet people are flocking to come here. They know our laws are right and fair. Those laws are built from a moral code. They are non-discriminatory. Though civil and non-religious, they represent love. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

James establishes the authority of the Ten Commandments, which at the time of his writing was circa A.D. 90, many years after the death and resurrection of Christ. A relatively modern and popular idea is that Christ abolished the law at His death, yet notice that James writes words oblivious to that notion. He uses the commandments given to Moses to “convince” or convict of immorality and to raise the spiritual atmosphere among the believers “scattered abroad.” He gave no hint that those commandments were ever repealed. Their perpetuity is the grand, underlying assumption of James, and a Spirit-inspired assumption at that.

The apostle understood that faith was the foundation of the new movement of Christ. But evidently there had come in some disturbing views into the church, which eroded the force of God's Law and had a deadening effect on the conscience of the people. So he takes on the issue of faith in its relation to duty and the commandments of God. He is solidly loyal to obedience to the Law. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 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. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” (James 2:17-26).

I realize that the KJV uses old language, and that “works” is almost an undefined word these days. That is why I substitute “duty” and “obedience,” etc. But as you see, the Bible admonishes us to be more than just moral in relation to an abstract, imaginary code, but obedient to that righteousness written by God in stone. To so many atheists God is dead, or a figment of imagination. To Christians, God is the living God, and Christ is alive for ever more. He has flesh and blood, He is tangible. Thus His law is real and tangible, inscribed no more tangibly than in non-effaceable stone. We have an obligation to walk as He walked, in allegiance to His Father's Commandments.

What does Paul say about the Law?

We've seen what Jesus said about His Father's Law. We know how He feels about it. Nothing Jesus ever said or did, worked to weaken man's obligation to the Law of God. He took issue with the human additions to His Father's Law, and He always sought to clear away the rubbish that surrounded it, but He was ever faithful to honor it. “Have ye not read in the law?” “Is it not lawful for Me?” “Thou knowest the commandments...” “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” If He could have changed the Law that man had transgressed, He would not have needed to sacrifice His life for the sins we had committed. A quick abrogation of the Law would have removed all of our stain and guilt. But it was because the great King, the Ancient of Days, could never change the foundation of His divine Government, that Christ's sacrifice was deemed the only remedy. The Law could not be changed. In light of the plan of salvation, the Lamb of God must take our place under the condemnation of an unchangeable, yet transgressed Law of the eternal God.

Bearing that in mind, let's explore just what it was Paul was saying about our relationship to the Law of God. It does sound like Paul was for abrogation. We will cover what Paul said concerning the Law in all of his epistles, with exception of one. His letter to the Galatians I will treat by itself in a section of this essay dedicated only to that epistle.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” (Romans 6:14, 15). “Not under the law” is what Paul just said—that does sound pretty clear—not under the law's condemnation or even damnation. But then later Paul writes, “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” (Romans 7:12). “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” (Romans 3:31). Here is an apparent turnabout in reasoning. Actually, its not a turnabout at all; Paul never meant to demolish God's Ten Commandment Law. If the Law of God is holy, why should it ever be abolished? If the commandments are just and good, we should want them, shouldn't we? If we don't want a righteous Law, does the fault lay in the commandments or in our own rebellious heart? But how can we “establish the law” and not “make void the law through faith,” yet not be “under the law?”

Here's a clue into what the inspired Paul was thinking. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Romans 3:19). Here Paul has grouped the whole world into being in the same status—under the Law. And the point driven home is that we are all guilty before the great Judge. So the first definition of being under the Law, given by Paul to the Roman Christians, is being under its condemnation. Another clue comes from the following statement, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak *through the flesh*..." Romans 8:3. In other words, the Law and us have a history in bad working relations. When we go to obey it, we find we can't. The problem is not with the Law, but with us. Should we then void out the Law, so that we will have an easier time trying to sleep at night? Should we lower the standard in order to please a weakened race of sinners? And how can we "establish the law" if we are "weak through the flesh?" The clues listed in this paragraph deal with two major issues in Paul's writings: our Justification and our Sanctification. These questions will be looked at later, but, at this point, we can't say Paul believed in abolishing the Law.

In one more place, Paul says this: "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully." (1 Timothy 1:8). In other words, the Law can be bad if misused, or good if properly used for its intended purpose. But at another place: "The strength of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56). Is Paul wishy-washy on the subject of obedience to God? He seems to go back and forth, for and against the Law. This has confused many people. So far, Paul's relationship to the Law almost seems inconclusive.

Let's look at his letter to the Ephesians. "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." (Ephesians 2:14-17).

A slightly different repetition comes from the epistle to the Colossians. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come." (Colossians 2:12-16).

The two statements, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances," and "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us," speak to the same item. Together they say, "the handwriting," "the law of commandments contained in ordinances." These handwritten laws in ordinances pertained to the 613 laws God gave Israel through Moses. They were written by a man's hand (Moses'), as opposed to the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God. (Deuteronomy 10:4). It wasn't the Ten Commandments Paul referred to in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. Those Ten represent eternal principles for the human race, precepts beginning at our creation. That which was abolished was the 613 ceremonial laws written by Moses. They looked forward, representing "a shadow of things to come." (Colossians 2:16).

This voiding of Mosaic laws becomes even clearer when looking at Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah. Daniel wrote, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself.... And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." (Daniel 9:26-27). The sacrificial system, which at first began in Eden (Genesis 3:21; 4:4) and later was developed for Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, all pointed to Christ, the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (John 1:29; 1Peter 1:19, 20). All that which pointed forward to the Messiah, ended at His death on Calvary.

Not only the sacrificial system ended, but the whole Jewish economy was finished, since it all looked forward to the Messiah. It had also become corrupted by selfishness and greed and ambition. The beautiful religion which God had handed down to Israel was bankrupt of the original spirit imbuing it in its beginning. As Paul writes, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people... In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." (Hebrews 8:10-13). The Mosaic laws had also been adulterated with human philosophies. "Wherefore the Lord said, ... this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men." (Isaiah 29:13).

The decayed religion and depravity in Israel, worthy of rejection by God, came at the end, just as Christ had promised in Daniel's prophecy. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." (Daniel 9:24). The Lord God knows, far in advance,

exactly when He will have to reject a nation. Should they continue to rebel against God and be noxious to man, their whole nation would be swept away, as the angel Gabriel prophesied to Daniel. "And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." "Even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (Daniel 9:26-27). Because they refused to obey the principles of God's law, He would do to them as He forewarned them 1,500 years previous. "The land is defiled [by the Canaanites]: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (for all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you." (Leviticus 18:25-28). Not the rough, ancient Baal worship, but a sophisticated, philosophical paganism took root in Judaism. The religion they defiled came to an end at the cross. But Christ gave them another 3 ½ year probation, which ended Daniel's prophetic timeline (Daniel 9:24). Afterward, when the nation wasn't remedied, the Lord cut them off, and the new dispensation went to the Gentiles at the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. The exclusive, proud, and prejudiced religion that created an impasse between the recalcitrant Jews and Gentiles was removed by Christ. By His principles of self-sacrifice, He had "broken down the middle wall of partition" between the believing Jews and the rest of the world, "that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

One statement is interesting. "If that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." (Hebrews 8:7). This fault lay not in the Ten Commandments, but in the stipulations of the first covenant, which we will cover in the epistle to the Galatians.

There is yet another statement that needs to be addressed. Paul sounds to be against more than just the ceremonial law written on scrolls. He speaks against the law written in stone. "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." (2Corinthians 3:2-9). Here, Paul describes the Ten Commandments, "written and engraved in stones," as "the ministration of death," and "the ministration of condemnation."

Does this mean that the Ten Commandments were superseded by the ministration of the Spirit? Was the written word to be ignored for the euphoria of spiritual exercises? For this answer we need to look at the bigger picture. First, Paul speaks of a ministration, a covenanted system of ministry. He compares the old covenant of a theocracy, to the new covenant without a theocracy. In the original theocratic government of Israel existed civil laws, religious laws, a culture, and later, exclusive man-made rules and taboos borrowed from heathen nations—quite a mixture of original and altered, divine laws and human-made substitutions. This conglomeration of God-given and human-invented laws Christ experienced not only when He came in the flesh but even when speaking to the Jews back in Isaiah's day. "Well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:7-9). Again, we see that the corruption of the true religion, being "taught by the precept of men," was key in God's decision to reject the Jews as His honored people.

The original theocracy was strict and harsh, but it was just what the ignorant Israelites needed when they came out of Egyptian slavery. Those civil laws acted as a barrier against crime and corruption, just as modern civil laws do today. The ceremonial laws acted as a barrier against sin, since they explained the exceeding sinfulness of sin and provided an antidote through faith in God. (Hebrews 3:18, 19; 4:2). Above and behind it all stood the great Judge, the Ten Commandments. This religious government worked well for centuries. But there were times that enforcement of laws would lapse and chaos would ensue. Prior to the reign of David, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25). Later, in Isaiah's day, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (Isaiah 5:20-23). Even later, "For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands." (Jeremiah 1:15, 16). Later yet, "In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold

victuals.” (Nehemiah 13:15). Down to the end of the Old Testament, just before the Spirit of God ceased His voice to Israel, He spoke one last time through Malachi, “But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways, but have been partial in the law.” (Malachi 2:8,9).

Upon ascending the throne, David immediately established a strong central monarchy and resolved the nation’s lackadaisical attitude toward law and order. Corporal and capital punishment was used in a righteous way, blending mercy and justice. “And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord’s anointed? And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord’s anointed.” (2 Samuel 1:14-16). He also said, “I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.” (Psalms 120:7). David’s reign was the glory of the world, an example on Earth of the kingdom of heaven. Had Solomon remained faithful, his reign would have outshined his father’s. But the seeds of idolatry and the influence of the heathen nations, begun during Solomon’s backsliding reign, supplanted the beauty of holiness given to Israel. After Solomon’s passing, the kingly line was up and down in faithfulness and blessing. Death was all too often experienced—by kings under pagan-influenced law-enforcement trying to subjugate the people, and also by God, in working to inhibit the spread of pagan corruption among His chosen people. After the passing of His last prophet, Malachi, the Lord God of Israel was forced to distance Himself from them. The life which Israel had chosen made it impossible for Him to reach them, their rebellion had become incurable. Thus, the prophetic silence during the final 400 years, B.C.E. In the end, with His Spirit removed far from them, the religious leadership became extreme and abusive in their control of the people.

What glory still resided in the Jewish “ministration of death” was decaying and readying itself to vanish away. To retain that old, worn, and dead system was to retain a useless, good-for-nothing corpse. In one generation following the clearest presentation of love and righteousness Israel had ever witnessed, in her Messiah, the nation would be dismantled and the survivors led away in chains. The Jewish Christians who had remembered Christ’s warning of the destruction of Jerusalem and escaped the terrible siege, were left behind, together with many Christian Jews who lived outside Palestine, and also the Gentile believers. Thus began the new children of Israel, a “holy nation” (1Peter 2:9), children of faith (Deuteronomy 32:20), the true, spiritual Circumcision (Philippians 3:3). Stripped of its service of dead routines, God’s chosen group was circumcised of pretentious, formal religion and left with the sensitive and cleansed service of love that God had desired of His people since bringing Israel out of Egypt. The ministration of the Spirit now shone with a glory and purpose never known except by but few Israelites, during the existence of the nation. Yet, the Ten Commandments were not discounted by the early church. Justification with God allowed them to trust and love Him, while they feared Him and kept His commandments. As we saw in previous sections of this essay, those commandments show up again and again in the New Testament.

Serving the Law

We have firmly nailed down the perpetuity of the God’s Law. Both Old and New Testaments, and Jesus Christ bridging the two, state our duty to obey its requirements. It’s authority over us is from everlasting to everlasting.

Now we turn to Paul’s letter written to the Galatians. In order to understand what he was saying to them, it doesn’t do to just pick out select statements by Paul. To really know what he was communicating, one must read and study and dissect the whole epistle. We must read between the lines and learn what were the actual issues with which he was dealing. To whom was he speaking? What were their hang-ups? Were they dedicated Christians like the Philippians and Ephesians? Were they Jews or Gentiles? What was their background and the background of Paul’s letter to them?

The reason all this is so important is that otherwise we can miss the whole point of the epistle. Not using the context has led to so much misunderstanding of the epistle to the Galatians and of the Bible as a whole, and consequently of God and His plans for us. Not taking the counsel of the whole Bible into account has brought disastrous doctrines into the church—thus the study from the four previous essays concerning the Law.

One overriding issue in Galatians is that Paul’s gospel was not an invention of his own mind. The mysteries he expounded were firmly rooted in the word of God of his day, the ancient Hebrew Scriptures. Paul didn’t make it all up, he understood the scriptures by revelation (Galatians 1:16-18). So even if an angel were to come and convince them otherwise, that glorious being should be considered accursed by God (vs. 8). Thus Paul laid the foundation to the Galatians, that when he spoke of the law and gospel he was speaking by authority of heaven.

On that note, even Peter, James and John didn’t have the authority to dismiss the claims of the gospel Paul preached, though they had attained high acclaim in the church (Galatians 2:9). They were even rebuked by Paul for repudiating the principal precepts of Christ by allowing pretense to displace sincerity because of the fear of offending legalistic leaders of the established religion, a God-forsaken Judaism (vs. 11-14).

Pretense, imitation righteousness, fake service to God, all Paul threw off. It is a yoke of bondage and product of Satan which God hates, and He moved upon Paul to publicly cast it away as refuse. Christ had given the church something

better. After a thousand years of patient waiting since David's wonderful revival of spirituality, and 400 years of dead silence from heaven since the last prophet Malachi, Christ wouldn't wait any longer for the Jewish religion to reform. The captivity that it had brought, the souls it had kept in Satan's snare, the obstacles it constructed to keep the Gentiles from a knowledge of God, must be openly and convincingly rejected, proven alien to God by His word through His servants, and by miracles and providences dismaying the ignorant (Galatians 3:5; 4:15).

At this point in our discussion, let's make it be clear that when Paul spoke of the law, he was referring to Judaism—that mounting conglomeration of doctrines of men mixed with original divine precepts. It is ever and always Satan's best deception to mingle truth with error, for error by itself is too easily detected and avoided, even by blind sinners which we all are. For Paul to speak of the law, he must address all that those people knew to be the law—showy rituals, vengeful human regulations that had assumed the spirit of the Roman Lex Talionis or the Law of Retaliation, thousands of rules beyond the original 613 Mosaic laws, acceptable self-sufficiency which never leads to conversion. All must go. Stripped of all that made the Hebrew religion dead to true holiness and consecration to God, the new product was a religion, circumscribed by God. Free to serve God, the church now stood naked and open, crucified together with Christ (Gal. 2:20).

And there was no going back. The break from the past was determinedly ordered of heaven. (Isaiah 10:23; Daniel 9:27; Matthew 27:51). Any move in that direction would be brought with swift judgment by Paul, if no one else would stand up against the defection. Faith was the new keynote—going it alone, from the world's standpoint; going it with God alone. Let the world, even the religious world, huddle together and try to imbue each other with the sparks of their own fire (Isaiah 50:11). Spoken of the Jews, "They shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness." (Isaiah 8:22).

Out with the dead rituals, and in with the blessedness. Out with empty going through the motions, in with self-sacrifice (Galatians 4:8-10, 15). Out with distancing oneself from God, and in with dying with Christ and living for Him (vs. 2:20). Out with a lackadaisical, lukewarm worshiping the group, in with a religion that accepted personal accountability to God and duty to man (vs. 6:14). No more carelessness toward the duty of uplifting a dying and crying world under the devil's thumb. No more pretense, no more self-pity, no more self-manufactured morality. The cross was raised, the ax laid to the root. God had waited long enough; war on sin and selfishness was declared, beginning with the professed true religion.

How would the massive, well-established formalism be sloughed off? Through the heaven-sent message of grace by faith alone, period. (vs. 3:5-14). Not grace by faith *plus* works, but grace by faith alone, which is the only combination that really does work to uplift humanity. Grace by faith plus our own effort has been at the foundation of every false religion from the very beginning (Genesis 4:3). This unholy mix has allowed self-congratulation to remain imbedded in our sinful race. In Paul's question, "Where is boasting then?" we see how invasive pride has been, it had even invaded the true religion. He explains the solution, "It is excluded." "By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:27, 28). Here must be the ground zero for God's attack on sin.

But doesn't justification by faith alone, "without the deeds of the Law," completely destroy the arguments in favor of God's law in the previous parts of this essay? No, John, James, and even Christ all maintain the gospel and the Law, that they both are equal in weight and importance, and both necessary for our salvation. *This premise becomes wonderfully clear in this absolutely indispensable epistle to the Galatians.*

Many sincere, well-meaning Bible students have concluded that Paul speaks of only the ceremonial law when writing to the churches of Galatia. But this is incorrect. The context indicates that he was also speaking of the Ten Commandment Law of God, the Decalogue. More than the ceremonial laws, God's moral law deals with "righteousness" (Galatians 3:21), "sin" (vs. 22), and "justification by faith" (vs. 24).

This is very important to understand, because the real force of this letter doesn't come through otherwise, and neither does the true liberty of being adopted children of God through the gospel.

We are dealing with some deep issues here. We must translate doctrine to real practical life now. The issues are about sin (separation from the God of love and law,) righteousness (the love and laws that God stands for,) and justification (a removal of our rebellion and a reconciliation with that God who loves His creatures as well as He does laws of righteousness and perfection.) Anybody need peace with God? Anyone been searching for Him and His acceptance? We will find God's love grounded in law; a love so unchangeable He gives us His everlasting covenant carved in tables of stone.

But what we see, in this epistle to the Galatians, is that God didn't just act when this world's need for grace arose. He couldn't; the human bent to presumption wouldn't let Him. Instead He waited. And He waited a long time. We could say that He waited ever since bringing Israel out of Egypt. He spent centuries working out the full gospel message for us.

At that time He declared to Israel His terms of their covenant. If they would be obedient to Him, He would protect and care for them because He loved them. And what was their reply? Was it, "Woe is us, for we are undone and naked

before You; You know how corrupted we are by Egyptian slavery and You choose us to represent You?” Was that their answer to His terms? Not at all. Their reply— “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” (Exodus 19:8.) Did they really know what there were saying? Did they really know their weaknesses? Obviously not. So God met their brazen foolishness with a mercifully small sample of His power. Down came the booming Voice from Mt. Sinai; down went every arrogant man, woman, and child, quivering on the ground. A little later, as if they forgot the lesson at the giving of the Ten thundering Commandments, Christ gave them another opportunity to rethink all that entailed obedience to the all-powerful God of holiness. “[Moses] took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” (Exodus 24:7). Thus, the first covenant was faulty (Hebrews 8:7) because it was based on the self-sufficiency of a nation ignorant of spirituality and surrender to God.

Despite their sincerest promises to be good, not even 50 days later, they got tired of being holy. They decided to have a raging party at the bottom of the holy mount, right in their God’s presence. Did they know what obedience meant? Did they comprehend the holiness of God? Obviously, they did not; and it would take 1500 more years to teach them. At the end of that long period and many ups and downs in loyalty to Jehovah, they might finally appreciate the gift of holiness when God would offer it to them. This came after four centuries of silence from heaven, and six centuries of subjugation and foreign rule. Centuries of pagan influences, moving in and altering the landscape of Hebrew religion and culture. One empire followed another; without let up, one wave of darker idolatry succeeded another.

Not until “in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full,” (Daniel 8:23) when outright demon-possession was rampant, and Satan’s not-so-obvious control of hypocritical morality even more pervaded the world, did God send forth His Son (Galatians 4:4, 5). Not only were the Jews under the curse of the law, but, through disease and death, the whole world reeled from its disobedience (Romans 3:19; 5:13-14). This is why Paul can speak to both Jews and Gentiles as one group (Galatians 4:8-10). Both groups were in trouble and didn’t know it; both were Law-breakers. Both had adopted idolatry and rebellion toward God and His requirements. Both were the pawns of the devil. Satan just approached each prey from different angles, that’s all. He’s wily and voracious, and eventually gets the whole world to worship him (Revelation 13:3-4).

Christ’s adversary knows he must get us to distrust God before he can lead us to serve himself. One proven method by Satan is to move us into unbelief by getting us involved in pleasing God but keeping us ignorant of God’s love for us. This brought the whole Gentile world to appease God, and that through the most grotesque self-inflictions (1Kings 18:28). Instead of trusting in a loving God, it descended into a never-ending attempt to please a perceived tyrant in heaven. And we are prone to this anyway since Eden, when the Father banished us from His presences and we came under the new careless and abusive management of Lucifer.

This same relationship to God happened in Israel; they just tried to “appease” the Deity from a different approach. If they weren’t allowed to appease Him by human sacrifice or self-flagellation, they would try to do so by being “good enough.” One way or the other, our proud human nature will work hard to prove that we don’t need help or blessings, especially from God. We’re children of wrath, and we like our misery (kind of.) We will ignorantly assume that God hates us and we’ll build an evil straw-man of Divinity; then we have all the fire-power to feed our angry selves in self-improvement and still remain comfortably at arm’s length from God.

Thus *both* Gentiles and Jews “did service unto them which by nature are no gods” and “observe[d] days, and months, and times, and years.” Both ended up worshipping gods; Tammuz, Jupiter, Caesar, Abraham, Moses, David. Both claimed the most ancient religion and history, both had their sacred calendars they prided in, both considered the other vulgar and unclean. Pride controlled both nemeses. Both limited their thoughts to this miserable world. All felt the bitterly painful separation from God and free reign of the demonic hosts; all were “driven to darkness.” (Isaiah 6:12; Romans 1:20-22).

Now God could act. He had promised, “Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him.” (Isaiah 30:18). Now the human race was ready to listen. To many, this world offered only slavery by men and possession by devils.

“But before faith came, we were kept under the law, *shut up* unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:23,24).

Here we see the crux of the matter. In keeping the commandments, in trying to be moral, the children of Noah had not served God. *They had served the law.* Even the Jews, the holiest people that this world could produce, were not serving God. They thought they were, but they didn’t know Him, or they would not have killed the Son of God. They had only known the law, and they served *it*, thus they could not *obey* it. (Romans 9:31, 32). This was the issue. Obedience can only come by serving a Person and receiving the appreciation in return, creating a bond. They chose to serve the Law over the Person behind the Law. Thus, surrender to God’s love and heart conversion never happened, a work God had wanted to do for them all along (Isaiah 6:9-12). Legalism and workaholicism is the natural human inclination. Paganism stays busy outside of religion; papal religion works real hard within it. Often when we start our journey of following Christ, we naturally do so legalistically and self-sufficiently, because that is all we know. Legalistic obedience comes

from the devil's training while we were under his control. That is the spirit of the world, the devil's world. We come to God ignorant of our true condition, not realizing what real trust and obedience are, and He works with us to bring us to faith, and then to Christ for reconciliation, reunion, and restoration with heaven.

If we are truly determined to know the unknown God, we will eventually get to Him. The road back will be full of difficulty, serving a distant, impersonal God of our devising, a God we define by His laws, His Bible. But we can get to Him, in spite of all that Satan contrives to hinder us. He offers two paths of equal deception. And either path—that of the modern religious person (like the Jews of old) or the atheist/agnostic (the Gentiles of the Bible)—the devil fills with trouble, stress, loneliness, and disease. But if we persevere the long, arduous, and circuitous route from sin to peace with God, we will find Jesus joyfully ready with open arms, and we will recognize heaven's ceaseless work to lead us all the way out of legalism into full trust in love and righteousness.

We can learn much about God's methods today from the way He dealt with the human race in the past. Until heaven's greatest demonstration of its love for us at the cross, God's offer of grace we would have quickly transformed into presumption, as seen in the Israelite picnic below Sinai. The hold Satan had upon the fallen race was so unrelenting, that the death of the heavenly Son of God alone could inspire faith in us; only the love pouring from the broken body and spirit of Jesus could reconcile us to His Father, and teach us responsible, accountable love; only the truth streaming from the cross could rivet our attention away from the bewitching spell sin had upon us.

Without that spell broken, faith could not happen. The best response we had to offer was selfish. Compassion was self-pitiful, faith was only make-believe, and love only infatuation and presumptuous self-indulgence. The wisdom of God worked out our salvation by keeping law in place, in spite of its eventual decline into Lex Talionis. Even despite the absence of grace in the world to balance the violent power of uncontrolled law (because humanity had brought itself to completely lose the ability to be gracious,) the human race was safer with violent law than without any law at all. Thus the heaven-ordained need for world empires until Christ should come to establish better laws, laws of the coming kingdom where "mercy and truth are met together." (Psalms 85:10). And we still experience this whole process today.

The concept of God binding us up with law we find revealed in heaven's messages through Jeremiah. He lived at the time when God was about to do something real big for mankind. "And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, *My servant*, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them." (Jeremiah 43:10). "Babylon hath been a golden cup *in the Lord's hand*, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad." (Jeremiah 51:7). "Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten." (Joel 1:3, 4).

Babylon swept in, conquering civilizations, bringing the rule of law where pagan antinomianism was corrupting the earth. After Babylon, followed a succession of three more empires, each conquering the previous nation. While each conquest brought morality to a new low, some form of law and order compared better than the muck of mysticism and Satan's desire for a world of complete lawlessness. No pagan empire could prevent the decline of morality, but the natural government need of civil control slowed the descent until the Messiah could come to truly fix the problem sin had brought our fallen race.

Israel had been given the opportunity to be placed at the top of the world. "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exodus 19:56) By accepting the offer of "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation," the result would be world domination. "And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them." (Deuteronomy 28:13). This promise was fulfilled for a very short space during the rule of David and Solomon, an example to the world of righteous rule. Unfortunately, it didn't last long.

Disobedience to the covenant of Jehovah prevented that beautiful plan from being executed for the blessing of the world. The faith and beautiful magnanimity that those two kings exemplified never took root in the nation. In keeping with the spirit of the heathen nations, a formal, legalistic approach to God remained in tact, while conversion, true heart bonding, and real consecration were known by only a small remnant among the myriads of Israel. All the profession that formal, distant service to God had to offer could not provide a barrier against the licentious religions around them. Again and again, the whole nation was lured into idolatry. Only the law, unmoved from its original place in their economy, kept the nation from complete desolation at the hand of God and at their own hands. It was legalism that caused Israel to lose their sovereignty and leadership position in the world.

Then Messiah came. The only Son of God corrected all of our misunderstandings and freed us from the hold sin had had on us. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John." (Matthew 11:12, 13). Never before had men known the extent of self-sacrificing love that God brought to bear against the power of sin. Moses' offer to lay down his life for

the people, and all the other demonstrations of unselfish service in the pages of sacred history, had been lost sight of. The Scriptures had been neglected in the pursuit of ostentatious worship copied from pagan nations for almost a thousand years. A personal friendship to God was unknown. When the Gentiles sought Israel for hope and a saving knowledge of God, all that they received were dead rituals and human teachings. The ceremonies were empty of any revelation of God's loving character.

Christ brought all that back to light when He arrived. From the very start of His ministry, He shined forth with unabated glory the grace and power of God in His every word and deed. How could the disciples fast, when it wasn't time to fast? They lived in the presence of an incessant love that made them drink it all in! From His inauguration address on the mount of blessing, "Blessed...Blessed...Blessed," to His parting words, "Lo, I am with you always," "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (Matthew 28:20; John 13:1).

His body nailed down, that rough cross dropped into its deep hole, those crushed feet and mangled hands for the first time held back from blessing the world, that modest body humiliated with nakedness, that sorrowful and earnest brow with thorns cramming it down; that bloody face spewn with Priests' saliva still interceding and praying for us, His mouth, constant to honor His Father and to exalt His Father's Law now stricken with the woe of the world's sin, His arms pinned back by the Father's providence, calling out to the world His Father's message, "Everyone, come to Me!" a heart that only stopped loving when pierced by the blade of a rusty spear: these were all the subjects that the apostles took to the world, and that Paul had brought to the cities of Galatia. He led the people to that cross, the greatest demonstration ever of justice and mercy, together forging responsible love. Their faith took hold of the mighty argument of the cross and they broke from the service to all that had held their attention. All the barriers against sin that the law had weakly provided now love for Christ provided, and much, much more. Deeper than ever was their loyalty to righteousness. All that they could give to God in the way of obedience, before knowing the love of God, was stained by selfishness and a resentment toward Him. They had been separated from God, children of wrath. They hopelessly bristled under that separation until Christ redeemed them back to Himself again, and from Himself to His Father—now their Father. After having tried hard to please God or appease Him, now they found God had been working all along to please them and appease them. Knowing the work of the Almighty in sending His son for their reconciliation, they experienced a blessedness that transported them as if to heaven (Ephesians 2:6; Revelation 5:9, 10). Living in the light of God's love (1 John 1:7), heaven and earth were again reunited (Ephesians 3:15), awaiting the redemption of the purchased possession (Ephesians 1:14).

Without the harsh, but effective rule of violent law, they would never have been prepared to appreciate this precious Gift from heaven. God is merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, yet He would cause centuries of suffering upon the race, if necessary, to properly ready them for His wonderful gift of forgiveness. That entrance of the Anointed One, the Messenger of mercy, that central point in the history of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, *must not be bungled by man's presumption*. Squashing human presumption under the heaviest burden of Satan's falsely-advertised kingdom of fun, and allowing him almost complete freedom with the fallen race that God still had claims on, God must permit for His successful mission to redeem humanity.

Just when Satan thought he had us, heaven slipped us from his grip. Just when sin had almost destroyed us, we were rehabilitated by the loving ministry of the Servant of heaven. What a wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, what a wonderful Savior to me. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, where rivers of pleasure I see.

Folks, in all this epistle to the Galatians can we see a lesson for us today? Paul's message stated in our vernacular: "Is obedience to the Law today antagonistic to the gospel of Christ? God forbid. If obedience could have given life, truly righteousness should have been by the Law. But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those who trust in Him. *But before faith comes, we are kept in legalism and bound down under laws and rules, shut away from the faith which eventually is revealed to us.* Therefore, obedience to stern law has been our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that He might reconcile us to God, and thus to God's Law." "Thus He can be just and the justifier of anyone who has come to Jesus." Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

And now, another equally exciting concept. "Once faith comes in, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For we are now the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Coming from someone as I, who believes in the perpetuity of God's Law, this may sound like I'm very confused. How can I reconcile the authority of God's Law while no longer being under it?

It is simply this: that after centuries of being under stern law, the concept of obedience became deeply ingrained in the world. God showed them mysticism and spiritualism to be what it was, loose and destructive, and He also showed His demand for law and rules. Restraint and supervision was seen as a necessity by those who submitted to it. Those, humbled and meek, who then heard the word of God's grace, now subconsciously incorporated humble submission and obedience to rules into their new understanding of God's love. They saw no problem with God's Law and His claim on them. Thus, religion is still intact; God's Law is still valid. By Christ's infusing law with grace, He drives pretentious legalism away and brings His children to His Father and to His Father's Law.

Even more than that! Now those who served the Law and were driven to look to heaven for grace, and now trust in Jesus, can look away from the Law's condemnation and behold Jesus alone; for there is no discrepancy between Jesus and His Father's Law (John 15:10). In His person the Law of God shines out in new and living luster. From His self-sacrificing life and death, a demonstration and affirmation of the Law of self-sacrificing love brought life into what had appeared cold and personless. His grace is foremost in our thinking, *while His Law remains playing in the background*, "For we are now the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." This is what Abraham and David discovered, but was lost sight of by the succeeding generations.

Thus the perpetual nature of God's Law is retained and we are perfectly happy with it, so long as we look upon Jesus who mirrored that Royal Law of mercy and justice. We surrender up our rebellion through the work of the Holy Spirit, and are reconciled to our Father and His Law because now we are on good terms with Jesus.

Only those who wrestled with obedience to law and accepted the importance of discipline were ready for the gospel when it arrived; thus the stern work of John the Baptist to prepare the people for the work of the Messiah. They could accept Christ's warnings as messages of love, and they recognized in the nudges of His rod and staff His help to keep them true and good. Everyone else, who rejected the importance of discipline and correction, was blinded. Nations who would hear the glorious gospel, but were ignorant of restraint and abstinence, would need to learn it before comprehending the infinite love of God, which has been the work of missionaries throughout the Christian age since. But many who rejected Roman law and the gifts of submission and humility, or who altered the Mosaic laws to suit themselves, rejected the grace of God presented by Jesus and His apostles, and they became the enemies of the gospel.

"He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:33, 36). "And whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matthew 21:44). Those who have refused to come under the rod of iron that Christ has represented (Revelation 19:15) throughout the whole period of departure into sin from Eden until His reign in glory, will never surrender their miserable heart, that "gall of bitterness," and "bond of iniquity." (Acts 8:23).

We need to know bounds, we need limitation. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life." (Matthew 7:14). It is only for our happiness that God gives us His requirements, just as good parents do the same for their children. Otherwise, their children become impossibly unhappy. Today's news is full of stories of misguided children who had no rules at home. History has been marred with the heinous crimes against humanity by those who refused to come to God, and thus became unable to bow their pride, which ate them up until they became murderous. Of these it was written, "the wrath of God abideth on" them.

The divine psychology forever retains the demands of law throughout the realms of the universe, upon the fallen human race, and even upon the redeemed children of God. Through the warning away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God instituted restraint in the garden of Eden before sin ever existed; this, simply to add to the happiness of His innocent, sinless couple by showing His care for their development.

But in our fallen state of rebellion, once we do surrender to law, the gospel finds a special place in our hearts. Justification or reconciliation with God becomes a reality that couldn't happen while we refused law. True reconciliation to God can only be received by those who have accepted His rulership, that is, His Law. *Only the peace and humility experienced by acceptance of the claims of His Law can, from deepest gratitude, receive the promises of the gospel.* Only that humility of a child will bring forth the fruit of childlike simplicity and charity. Fellowship and brotherly love is never so close and genuine than for those who have bowed the pride and submitted to the Father's requirements—the Law and the prophet testimonies.

When we can finally accept correction and reproof and discipline, when the lofty looks of man are finally laid in the dust (Isaiah 2:11, 12), then we will hear the musical voice of Jesus saying to us, "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." (John 5:6, 8).

And then when we hear that majestic invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light," we will truly find rest. We will be reconciled to Christ, and through Him we will be reconciled to His Father—now our Father; and to His Father's Law—our Law. We won't mind the yoke, we won't mind His Law; we will glory in His burden because we finally have Him, *Him* who is "chiefest among ten thousand." (Song 5:10) The Law has transformed itself from stone to flesh, the requirements from legalism to fluid, living tissue. We will carry it yoked with Jesus, He will be carrying it with us; we will be carrying it together. We have His Law in our heart. We are crucified together with Christ (Galatians 2:20).