

Discerning God's Will in Every Decision

Appendix on

*The Place of
Old Testament Law
in the Life of
New Testament Believers*

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Institute in Basic Life Principles

Box One • Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3001

Discerning God's Will in Every Decision

The Problem:

The explosion of youth crime, drugs, gangs, domestic violence, broken marriages, unwed mothers, sexually transmitted diseases, and a host of other social tragedies can be traced directly to the removal of an absolute standard of right and wrong. Juvenile judges, shocked at children's lack of understanding about right and wrong after committing heinous crimes, are calling the youth of our day the "morally flat" generation.

Youth violence escalated to epidemic proportions when the Bible was removed from the public school classrooms by secularly influenced court decisions. In its place, schoolchildren were taught that human beings are only higher forms of animals that somehow evolved and that they should learn to think in terms of situational ethics, which meant they must figure out for themselves when it is right to lie, steal, or kill. The governor of one state made the startlingly true observation, "We take the Bible away from children when they enter school and give it back to them when they enter prison."

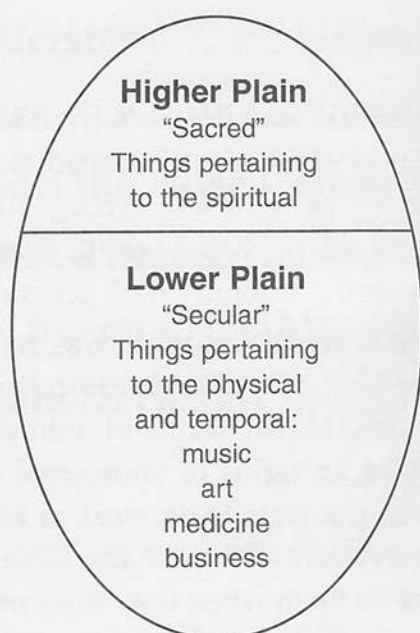
Ill-advised judges, however, are not the only ones who have removed the Ten Commandments from the eyes of schoolchildren. Many modern-day theologians are also removing God's Law by claiming that the Old Testament has no more relevance to our day. One theologian wrote a commentary on Romans 10:4 with the statement, "All interpreters of the Scripture are faced with the clear teaching that the death of Christ brought an end to the Mosaic law. . . ." He finishes his article with the astonishing statement, "Thus, the evidence of the New Testament forces us to the conclusion that the Law—all of it, including the Ten Commandments—has been done away."

A Cause of The Problem:

The Law of God and the Ten Commandments have been replaced with the "realm of the amoral." In this realm, things are neither good nor evil, but neutral. The result is a "gray area" between good and evil in which people must decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong. In the world this realm is secularism. In the church it is "anti (against) nomian (law) rationalism (man's reason)."

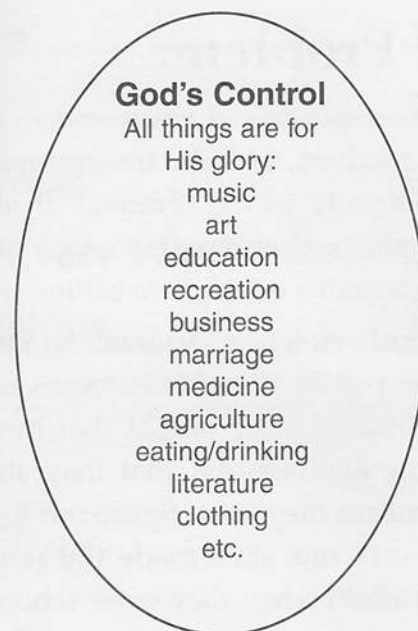
This is not a new doctrine in the Church. Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) defines an antinomian as "One of a sect who maintain, that, under the gospel dispensation, the law is of no use or obligation; or who hold doctrines which supersede the necessity of good works and a virtuous life. This sect originated with John Agricola about the year 1538." The sect of antinomian rationalism actually started before the 1500s. It is a variation of Greek dualism developed by such philosophers as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle before the birth of Christ. They proposed the idea that there are two realms of life: a higher realm of spiritual matters and a lower realm of secular matters.

God was to be in charge of the higher realm; however, man was in control of the lower realm. In the lower realm they placed such things as art, music, vocations, and medicine. When Jesus began to teach the multitudes, He rejected this unbiblical division and declared that all things are under the control and watchful care of the Heavenly Father.



Greek Dualism

By relegating God to an upper realm, people felt free to make up their own rules about the things of this life. Indeed, Socrates taught his students to create their own definitions of character qualities such as justice and truth. They arrived at their conclusions by human reasoning. Socrates was brought before the courts of Greece and condemned to death for corrupting the minds of youth, yet his philosophies have continued to influence generations after his time.



God's Design

In the midst of Greek and Roman cultures, Jesus taught that all things are under the direct authority of His Heavenly Father—even the birds of the air, the flowers of the field, and the hairs of our head. Bringing God into both realms provides a basis for conquering the cares of life and the worries of tomorrow. Paul further emphasized this vital teaching, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31).

How Dualism Is Influencing the Church

Nearly one thousand years after Greek dualism began in the fifth century B.C., Augustine sought to merge the philosophies of Plato and the teachings of Christ. He constructed a distinction between "contemplative life," which included church activities, and "active life," which involved earthly pursuits.

It is true that there are things within God's world that are sacred because they are especially dedicated to Him. There are also things in this life that are not technically sacred; however, they are all under God's control and to be used according to His design. Things that are used according to God's design and under the direction of the Holy Spirit are good. The same things, if used contrary to God's design and in conflict with the Holy Spirit, are evil. This in fact is the distinction between good and evil.

Discerning God's Will by Knowing God

The supreme goal of every person should be to know God in a personal and powerful way—not just to know His will. God is eternal and inexhaustible, yet He created us to have fellowship with Him. The purpose in knowing God's will is to cooperate with Him in His eternal purposes for the ultimate praise of His glory and the advancement of His kingdom. Here are a few of the many ways to know God.

1. We Know God by the Meanings of His Names

Throughout history God has made Himself known by the various names He has given of Himself. "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them" (Exodus 6:3). At various points in the development of the Jewish nation God proclaimed Himself as:

Jehovah-jireh: God who provides (See Genesis 22:1-14.); Jehovah-rophe: God Who heals (See Exodus 15:22-27.); Jehovah-nissi: The Lord is my banner (See Exodus 17.); Jehovah-M'Kaddesh: I am the Lord which sanctifies you (See Leviticus 20:7-8.); Jehovah-shalom: The Lord send peace (See Judges 6:1-24.); Jehovah-tsidkenu: The Lord our Righteousness (See Jeremiah 23:1-6.); Jehovah-rohi: The Lord my shepherd (See Psalm 23:1.); Jehovah-shamma: The Lord is there (See Ezekiel 48:35.)

Further attributes connected with the names of God reveal His nature and character. He is a holy God. He is the immortal, invisible, and only wise God. (See I Timothy 1:17.) He is the Lord God of Hosts, He is the Abba Father to all believers who call upon Him, and the merciful God to all who recognize their total need for Him.

2. We Know God by His Associations

God identifies himself as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." As He dealt with them, so He will deal with us. He is the God of Elijah, Daniel, Esther, and Mordecai. The biographies of these heroes of faith provide examples that we can follow as we call upon the living and powerful God to do His work through us.

3. We Know God by His Judgments

Because God is a holy and just God, He must deal with the transgressions of men. Therefore, we know God by His plagues in Egypt, His famines in Israel, and His punishment of rebels in the days of Moses, but also by His mercy and loving-kindness as He spared the city of Ninevah and the life of David. His greatest act of justice and mercy was to send His Son to pay the penalty for our sins and transgressions.

4. We Know God Through His Son Jesus Christ

The most important way to know God is to have a personal relationship with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). God's goal for every person is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This begins by recognizing that we have broken God's Law and are deserving of hell, but then calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. (See Romans 10:9-13.)

Reject the False Concept of "Gray Areas"

Because the philosophy that we live in a "gray area" and deal with amoral things is so pervasive in our day, it is important to consider the following Biblical truths that directly contradict this false reasoning.

1. Any Areas We Consider "Gray" Will Be Revealed as Good or Evil When We Stand Before the Judgment Seat of Christ

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10). It is true that there are many decisions in life that are not clearly right or wrong. Many are not directly spoken of in Scripture and must be left to our own spiritual discernment.

Two Factors That Turn "Gray Areas" Into Good or Evil

There are two important factors that must be considered when dealing with a decision that is not directly spoken of in Scripture. First is the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is His work to confirm with our spirits whether something is right or wrong. As we "walk in the Spirit" we do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

The second factor is whether our motives spring from genuine love or selfish desires. There is certainly nothing that appears to be wrong with giving money to the poor, or sacrificing oneself to serve the Lord. Yet if these actions are not motivated by genuine love, they fail the test of being good. This is the message of I Corinthians 13.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Corinthians 13:1-3).

It is significant that the Old Testament Law is God's blueprint on how to love Him and other people. Jesus explained this in Matthew 22:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

2. God Is Light and in Him Is No Darkness [Gray] at All!

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). Gray is a mixture of darkness and light and therefore would not qualify as a part of God's realm. In fact, God condemns any darkness and exposes the reasons that many are attracted to it.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19-21). "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

3. Spiritual Maturity Is Based on Discerning Good and Evil— Not Reasoning Over “Gray Areas”

“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

This Scripture presupposes the fact that there are many difficult decisions in life. However, each decision is to be based on whether it is good or evil. This is the reason for searching the Scriptures, prayer, meditation on God’s Word, and getting counsel from wise and Godly people. David’s prayer was that God would order his steps in His Word. (See Psalm 119:133.)

In every decision, we are not to lean on our own understanding or human reasoning, but rather to exercise our spiritual senses to discern what is right and what is wrong.

This same instruction to discern between good and evil is given in I Thessalonians 5:21–22, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

4. Fellowship Among Believers Is Based on Walking in Light — Not Compromising in “Gray Areas”

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7).

Those who insist on “gray areas” tend to be offended by those who would question whether something is right or wrong. Accusations of being “holier than thou” and “legalistic” are natural responses, especially if the one evaluating various activities does not exercise extreme gentleness and humility. In the last prayer of Jesus He said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20–21).

It is a serious matter to realize that disharmony among believers will actually hinder the world from believing on Christ. Paul asked how light could have fellowship with darkness. This same principle can also apply to those seeking to walk in the light and having fellowship with those who desire to live in “gray areas.”

5. Even Created Objects Are Good or Evil—Not “Amoral”

When God created the heavens and the earth and all the things that are in them, He declared that they were very good. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Man is able to take that which is good and by wrong use, turn it into something that is evil. A tree, for example, is good. However, when people take a tree and make an idol out of it, then it becomes evil. Paul explains this in I Corinthians.

A fig tree would certainly qualify as an “amoral” object to those seeking to establish such a category. Yet when Jesus came to a fig tree expecting fruit from it, and it had nothing but leaves on it, He cursed it and it withered from the root because it did not fulfill the good function for which it was designed.

6. Iniquity Is Doing Our Own Will Even When It Looks Good

Preaching the Gospel, casting out demons, and doing many wonderful works would certainly seem to be commendable. Yet these good works will one day be condemned if they are not done by believers acting under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Iniquity is doing our own will even when it looks good. Jesus did nothing of His own will, but only what the Heavenly Father directed Him to do. He gives testimony to this in John 5:30, “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

If the Son of God did not decide for Himself what was right or wrong but discerned the will of God in every decision, how much more should we with fallen natures and deceitful hearts do the same?

7. The Realm of “Gray” and “Amoral” Was Actually at the Heart of Satan’s Temptation to Adam and Eve

Satan’s temptation to Eve was that if she would partake of the forbidden fruit, she would be on the same level as God in order to determine what is right and what is wrong. “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). There is something very pleasant and to be desired about making our own decisions about what is right and what is wrong. With such authority, we do not need to consult God for every decision in the way that Jesus Christ did.

8. Scripture Reduces All Things to Good or Evil

Paul spoke of various customs in the Church which had become controversial and certain liberties that believers had in Christ. Yet, he consistently emphasized that a liberty that hindered another would violate the law of love and therefore would not be good. “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). A study of Scripture will reveal how all areas of life are summarized in the classification of good or evil, not gray and amoral. Here are a few of these references.

- **Two classifications of knowledge at creation: good and evil.** In the garden of Eden God placed the tree “. . . of knowledge of **good and evil**” (Genesis 2:9).
- **Two types of childhood behavior: good and evil.** “Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between **good and evil** . . .” (Deuteronomy 1:39).
- **Two choices for life goals: good and evil.** “See, I have set before thee this day life and **good**, and death and **evil**” (Deuteronomy 30:15). “Depart from **evil**, and do **good**; seek peace, and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14). “Beloved, follow not that which is **evil**, but that which is **good**. He that doeth **good** is of God: but he that doeth **evil** hath not seen God” (III John 11).

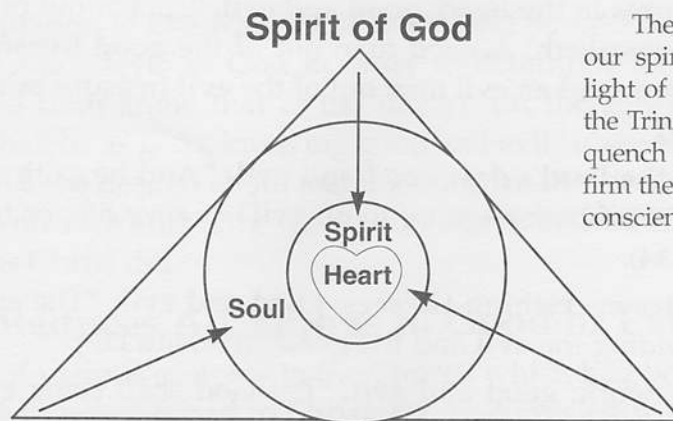
- **Two life patterns of a wife: good or evil.** "She will do him **good** and not **evil** all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:12).
- **Two evaluations that need discernment: good and evil.** "Woe unto them that call **evil good**, and **good evil**; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth **evil is good** in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" (Malachi 2:17). "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both **good and evil**" (Hebrews 5:14).
- **Two types of seeds: good and evil.** "... The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Matthew 13:24-25).
- **Two types of trees and fruits: good and evil.** "Even so every good tree bringeth forth **good** fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth **evil** fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth **evil** fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth **good** fruit" (Matthew 7:17-18). "Either make the tree **good**, and his fruit **good**; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being **evil**, speak **good** things . . ." (Matthew 12:33-34).
- **Two categories of treasures in the heart: good and evil.** "... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the **good** treasure of the heart bringeth forth **good** things: and an evil man out of the **evil** treasure bringeth forth **evil** things" (Matthew 12:34-35).
- **Two options for using the Lord's day: good and evil.** "And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do **good** on the sabbath days, or to do **evil**? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace" (Mark 3:4).
- **Two ways God evaluates everything He sees: good and evil.** "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the **evil** and the **good**" (Proverbs 15:3).
- **Two verdicts for every work: good and evil.** "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be **good**, or whether it be **evil**" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be **good or bad**" (II Corinthians 5:10).
- **Two laws within us: to do good and evil.** "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the **good** that I would I do not: but the **evil** which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:16-19).
- **Two functions of rulers: praise good, punish evil.** "For rulers are not a terror to **good** works, but to the **evil**. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is **good**, and thou shalt have praise of the same" (Romans 13:3).
- **Two results of every action: good or evil.** "Therefore to him that knoweth to do **good**, and doeth it not, to him it is **sin**" (James 4:17). "Be not overcome of **evil**, but overcome evil with **good**" (Romans 12:21).

Discerning God's Will by the Witnesses of His Spirit, the Word, and a Good Conscience

Since God's Word is described as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and since we are to walk in the light as God is in the light, we must learn how to find direction for daily decisions through Scripture.

It is easy, however, for people to find a verse that agrees with what they have already decided to do, and then claim they received direction from the Lord. Therefore, Scripture instructs that every word of God should be confirmed by two or three witnesses. ". . . In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (II Corinthians 13:1). There is a significant passage in I John that combines three important witnesses in finding God's will for a particular matter.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. . . . For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (I John 5:2-8).



The Holy Spirit communicates with our spirit that we are walking in the light of God's truth. He is a person of the Trinity. If we do not grieve Him or quench His power, His peace will confirm the witnesses of the Word and our conscience that a decision is God's will.

Water of the Word

As we memorize and meditate on the Word of God it cleanses our mind, will, and emotions (soul) and allows us to see life's decisions from God's point of view. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

Blood of Christ

The blood of Christ cleanses our heart from sin. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14).

God is more ready to reveal His will to us than we may be to receive it. It has been said, "If we are committed to following God's will, He will move Heaven and earth to show it to us." Jesus said if any man wills to know God's will, it shall be revealed to him. (See John 7:17.) The problem comes when we are not sure we want to follow God's will on a particular matter, and we are only mildly interested to know what He has to say about it. Such instability is sure to produce the confusion predicted in James 1:6.

How to Use Biblical Principles to Discern God's Will in Daily Decisions

If we are to determine God's will in every decision, does this also apply to something as routine as choosing the clothes we wear each day? The answer is yes. Far from being insignificant, the choice of clothing can profoundly affect a person's outlook and others' responses to him or her. The following seven principles can be used as a guide to discern God's will in matters such as this.

1. The Principle of Design

God designed clothing for four basic purposes: modesty, protection, gender distinction, and occupation. In making choices for clothing, the following question should be asked: **"Will my choice of clothing violate any of these purposes?"**

2. The Principle of Authority

God has ordained four jurisdictions of authority, each with a particular sphere of responsibility: parental jurisdiction, church jurisdiction, government jurisdiction, and employer jurisdiction. When selecting clothing for a particular day or occasion, the question should be asked, **"Whose jurisdiction am I under?"** and **"Will my dress in one area violate principles in any other jurisdiction?"**

3. The Principle of a Clear Conscience

The Holy Spirit is given to every believer in order to help him or her discern what is right and what is wrong. When choosing dress, a person will often have a caution from the Holy Spirit that this clothing would not be appropriate or would be offensive to others. To override this caution would be to fail the test of acting in faith. "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:22-23). We should therefore ask, **"Do I have any cautions in my conscience that this is not appropriate to wear?"**

4. The Principle of Suffering

Social pressure can be very strong to follow fads and wear symbolic clothing that communicates inappropriate messages. To stand alone in wearing modest and classic clothing which never goes out of style may bring ridicule and rejection. Yet this has always been the cost of doing what is right. Therefore, to pass this test we must ask, **"Am I committed to pleasing the Lord and being an example of appropriate dress, rather than surrendering to the pressures of the world?"**

5. The Principle of Ownership

The mature believer is to view himself as a steward of all he owns—including his clothing. As such, proper care should be given to keep clothing clean and protected from damage. Finding the best price for quality clothing would also be an exercise of this principle. Therefore, the question to ask is, **"Am I making the best use of the resources God has given me for clothing?"**

6. The Principle of Moral Purity

Each of us is responsible to wear clothing that will not stir up lustful desires in other people. Nor should we ever wear clothing that communicates immoral messages or sensual symbols. Such clothing would be defrauding and would receive the judgment of the Lord. "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified" (I Thessalonians 4:6). The question to ask at this point is, "**Will my clothing stir up lustful desires in others, or cause them to commit mental adultery?**"

7. The Principle of Life Calling

Our choice of clothing should be consistent with the fulfillment of the life calling God has given to each one of us. When people see us, they should not be shocked or surprised at what we are wearing because it is out of character. Foolish fads can be especially damaging as the Scripture states, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour" (Ecclesiastes 10:1). The question is, "**Will this clothing be in harmony with the calling God has placed upon my life?**"

Relating God's Will to God's Callings

God has a specific calling for each person. By understanding that calling and purposing to carry it out, many decisions in life suddenly become very clear. A life calling relates to serving a particular group of people. The goal is to benefit the lives of these individuals so that they in turn will discover God through Christ, and His callings for their lives. There are general callings and specific callings.

General Callings

God calls all believers to do their part in fulfilling the Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

A further calling to all believers is to pray for all those in positions of authority. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Timothy 2:1-2).

A third general calling is to meet the needs of widows and the fatherless. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Specific Callings

In the process of fulfilling our general callings, God may direct our concentration to help a specific group of people such as divorced couples, troubled youth, single parent families, business leaders, mothers, fathers, children, handicapped individuals, elderly people, and so on. A believer's fulfillment and joy will result from the fruit of his life calling.

Appendix on

*The Place of
Old Testament Law
in the Life of
New Testament Believers*

The following information has been added to give a fuller perspective of both the limitations and the potential of the Old Testament Law in the life of a believer. It is certainly true that keeping the Law will not produce salvation, nor can a believer fulfill the righteousness of the Law in his own energy. It is the power of God that must accomplish the righteousness of the Law in the believer as he walks in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

- **How Every Believer Has Fulfilled the Law**
- **How Believers Are to Live Above the Law**
- **How the End of the Law Is Love**
- **How the Law Is a Resource on Genuine Love**
- **Ten Benefits of the Old Testament Law**
- **How the Holy Spirit Now Uses the Law**
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- **A View of the Law From the Father of Faith**

Every Believer Has Already Fulfilled God's Law

When any person becomes a believer, he experiences the supernatural work of Christ in His life, including the union with Christ in all He accomplished by perfectly keeping the Law. During His earthly ministry, Jesus fulfilled the Law in three ways. First, He obeyed all its demands. Second, He carried out all of its prophecies. Third, He paid the full price of our penalty for breaking God's Law.

Jesus knew that He would fulfill the Law; He also understood the continuing value of the Law in the lives of believers. Therefore He stated, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). As believers, the Holy Spirit will guide our daily lives by all Scripture, including the Law, and give us the power to obey His Word.

Believers Are to Live Above the Old Testament Law

Those who claim that we are not required to live by the moral standards of the Old Testament law, fail to comprehend the teaching of the New Testament. Over and over again, New Testament believers are instructed to live above the demands of the Law by the power of the Holy Spirit Who operates in them through the work of Christ.

The Mosaic Law

- "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) It is conceivable for a person to have no other gods yet not fully love God.
- "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). Slave masters could severely beat their servants with or without anger. (See Exodus 21:21.)
- "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). The law required two or three witnesses to convict a woman of adultery, or a trial by bitter water. (See Numbers 5:11-31.)
- For a divorce, "let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife" (Deuteronomy 24:1-2).
- "... Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths" (Matthew 5:33; see also Deuteronomy 23:23).
- "And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again" (Leviticus 24:19-20).
- "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy" (Matthew 5:43; see also Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 23:6).

Christ's Law of Love

- Jesus said, "... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37).
- "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment..." (Matthew 5:22).
- "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).
- "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9).
- "But I say unto you, Swear not at all. ... But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:34, 37).
- "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (Matthew 5:39-40).
- "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

The Meaning of "Christ Is the End of the Law"

The passage of Romans 10:4 reads, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." One could assume from this verse that the death of Christ caused the Law of Moses to be finished, destroyed, terminated, concluded, expired, or removed. However, the Greek meaning for "end" and the context for the passage put an entirely different meaning to it, which is confirmed by other Scriptures.

The Greek word for "end" is *telos*. Its primary meaning is "to set out for a definite point or goal." By implication it means the conclusion or completion of an act, or the fulfillment of a purpose. Thayer's lexicon states "[*telos*] always [refers to] the end of some act or state, but not of the end of a period of time." Those who believe that the law is destroyed translate this word to mean the end of a period or dispensation. Thayer's lexicon goes on to explain that the precise meaning of this word "must [be] determine[d] by the context." The context states that "Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4).

The initial goal of the Law is to bring us to Christ for salvation. (See Galatians 3:16–26.) The end of the Law is love. Paul makes the same statement in I Timothy 1:5, "**the end of the commandment is charity [love].**" This conclusion is further emphasized in Romans 13:8–10, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for **he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.**" The passage continues, "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law.**"

The obvious conclusion of this passage is that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law for the righteous enablement of genuine love. "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: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3–4). **Therefore, based on this passage, to throw out the Law is to throw out love.**

How the Law Is a Resource on Love

When Jesus was asked about the Old Testament Law, He summed it up in the following way, ". . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. **On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets**" (Matthew 22:37–40).

This explanation of the Law gives clear direction on how we are to apply it to our lives. We are to ask, "How will this Law guide me in expressing love to the Lord, and how will it give practical instruction on loving others?" It was on this basis that Paul interpreted the Old Testament instruction on not muzzling the ox that treads out the corn in Deuteronomy 25:4.

Notice how Paul expands the meaning of this Law to also apply to people. "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our

sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (I Corinthians 9:9-10).

Paul confirms this application in I Timothy 5:18 so that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, this word [*rhema*] is confirmed. "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward."

Looking at the Law as instruction on love is not grevous

When the Law is a guide to genuine love, its commandments are not grevous as explained by the Apostle John. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:2-3).

For example, the ceremonial law is quite detailed in the area of personal cleansing. The Law calls for washing or bathing after touching germ-ridden (unclean) objects. Seventeenth-century doctors scoffed at washing their hands after performing autopsies and before examining pregnant women. The result was a shocking mortality rate in their hospitals. God mandated sanitation procedures for His people, especially for armies in wartime. They were to carry paddles to use after elimination. (See Deuteronomy 23:13-14.) The tragic bubonic plague is an indictment to a civilization that disregarded the intent of these laws.

Men are to abstain from physical relations with their wives forty days after the birth of a boy and eighty days after the birth of a girl. Doctors today will affirm the medical wisdom of this instruction. It gives the mother proper time to heal and promotes better spacing of children since she is most fertile directly after the birth of a child, and more so after bearing a girl. (See Leviticus 12:2-5.)

The ceremonial law forbids the eating of pork and other scavenger animals. Today, medical science has traced various cancers to a high fat diet, and we now have laws requiring food companies to state the fat content in their products. God encouraged the eating of beef and lamb, but instructed that the fat belongs to Him and should therefore be cut off and not eaten. It is possible to cut the fat off a steak or lamb chop, but not off a pork chop because the fat is marbled throughout the meat.

The civil law of God is a profoundly wise blueprint for social order and community prosperity. Governments that neglected its practical application have been forced to establish costly social agencies that are comparatively ineffective in dealing with the problems they were designed to solve.

The inheritance law gave the father discretionary power to reward obedient sons. Rebels were to be turned over to the civil government by the father for severe community action.

The gleaning law allowed the poor of the land to earn money with dignity, rather than to be put on welfare rolls without work. (See Leviticus 19:9-10.) Today, the giving of surplus products to the poor for a tax benefit is a partial application of the gleaning law. Where there are no provisions for the poor, theft and prostitution increase, which in turn destroys the profitability of the workforce of companies.

The release of all debts in the year of jubilee and the release of bond servants after seven years, were components of a far better system than our bankruptcy laws today. God's Law was a strong deterrent to both the borrower and the lender. It made provision for the poor by condemning interest, and it was a built-in training program for financially

irresponsible people through the years of being bond servants. (See Leviticus 25.) The application of the laws of God require much study and thought. Therefore, we are told to meditate upon the Law day and night that we might properly learn how to apply its principles to every situation in life.

Ten Benefits of the Old Testament Law

The infinite wisdom, practical instruction, and rich rewards contained in the Law are indicated in the following passages: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts" (Psalm 119:98-100).

1. The Law Reveals the Heart of God

God's New Testament evaluation of David was that he was a man after His own heart. "... I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22). What was it in David's heart that caused God to make such a statement? Many answers could be given, but one fact is clear: David loved the Law of God and meditated on it day and night.

He clearly states this in Psalm 119:97: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." The Psalms begin by praising the Law of God. "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2). In a masterful tribute, David devotes the longest Psalm to God's Law. Each section follows the order of the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse in that section begins with that letter of the alphabet. David's delight in the Law of the Lord and the fact that he is mentioned more than any other person in the Bible, gives strong testimony to the importance of the Law in understanding the heart of God.

2. The Law Explains the Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus, the Risen Savior, joined two of His disciples. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). These disciples had already received three years of personal instruction from Jesus Christ. But now, as He opened up the Old Testament Scriptures in a deeper and clearer way, their eyes were opened. They suddenly realized how the Old Testament was filled with precise and marvelous analogies of the life and work of Christ. They exclaimed, "... Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

3. The Law Brings Conviction of Sin

The Law defines sin as God sees it, not as we view it. "... By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). The Law makes sin become "exceeding sinful." (See Romans 7:13.) The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict of sin. The Holy Spirit inspired men to write the

Law of God, therefore, it is the standard by which the Holy Spirit convicts of "sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (See John 16:8.) Paul affirmed this when he wrote, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7).

4. The Law Is a Schoolmaster to Bring Us to Christ

A schoolmaster in the days of Paul was a trusted slave [*pedagogue*] whose job it was to bring a child of nobility to the master teacher. The schoolmaster was not the teacher, but he was a strict disciplinarian. His disciplines would stay with the child long after his function ended. Similarly, the Law is not our teacher, but brings us to the Master Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is from Him that we learn the true intent of the Law. (See Galatians 3:24.)

Paul was writing to New Testament believers; therefore, he used the past-perfect tense, the Law "was" our schoolmaster. This sequence of the Law preceding salvation was not only true historically, but is applicable today by helping sinners see their need for salvation by first taking them through the holy demands of God's Law.

5. The Law Is a Practical Guide to True Success

A good definition of success is: achieving the purposes for which God created us. The Law is God's infinitely wise and masterful "blueprint" for success in personal living, financial decisions, marriage, family, health, and community life. This wisdom, however, is not always obvious to the casual observer.

Those who want the treasures of God's knowledge must seek them diligently with their whole hearts. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1-5).

It is for this purpose that David meditated on the Law day and night and began the Psalms by giving praise to this practice. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3).

God promised His people that if they would obey His laws and statutes, He would pursue them with blessings and they would be a leader among nations. However, if they rejected His laws, they would be pursued by curses and be in personal and financial bondage. (See Deuteronomy 28.) God's laws are the foundation for a wise and successful government. (See Deuteronomy 4:4-6.) Those who follow God's Law will also avoid the diseases that come upon those who violate His statutes and commandments. (See Exodus 15:26.)

6. The Law Explains the Holiness of God

Holiness is a major teaching of the Scriptures. The word is used over six hundred times in the Bible. Over four hundred of these references are in the Old Testament. God's

entire dealing with His nation Israel gives us an awesome picture of His holiness and lays the foundation for New Testament teaching on this subject. Paul's admonition is "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Peter directly relates the command to be holy to the Old Testament. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:15-16).

7. The Law Allows Us to Demonstrate Our Love for the Lord

Jesus directly relates our love for the Law to our love for Him. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). The Greek word for "keep" is *tereo*. Its immediate meaning is not "obey," but rather, "to guard from loss or injury, or to keep an eye upon."

This meaning is consistent with the Old Testament instruction to place the Ten Commandments on the doorpost so they can be seen by those who come in and go out. (See Deuteronomy 11:20.) The most effective way to keep God's Law before our eyes is to memorize it and meditate on it day and night so that we have immediate access to it.

8. The Law Is Essential to Understand New Testament Teaching

The New Testament is filled with direct references, analogies, prophecies, and illustrations from the Old Testament. It is not possible to grasp the meaning or significance of New Testament teachings without a thorough understanding of the Old Testament Law and the prophets. For example, Jesus explained the new birth by relating it to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness.

Peter explained the wife's relationship to her husband by appealing to the account of Sarah and Abraham. Paul's use of the Old Testament Law was abundant. A clear example is found in his instruction on marriage. "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" (Romans 7:1).

9. The Law Separates God's People From the World

One of the major themes of the Old Testament is God's continual attempts to keep Israel from being corrupted by the evil influences of the heathen nations around them. God chose Israel to be a separate and holy nation. They were not only to bless the world through a Redeemer, but they were to illustrate the rewards of following His ways. Peter emphasizes the importance of being separate from the world when he writes, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:9-11).

10. The Law Establishes a Standard That Requires the Power of Christ

The Law defines the holy standards that God requires of all people. The rewards for keeping them and the consequences for violating them provide strong motivation to follow them. However, the unregenerate person is not able to do this. Only by the power of

Christ through the Holy Spirit can this be accomplished. This makes the conclusion of Galatians significant. “. . . Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. . . . But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Galatians 5:16, 18).

God's Grace Gives Power to Apply God's Law

This entire matter of the place of the Law in a believer's life is directly related to the correct definition of grace. A faulty definition of grace will result in a faulty view of the Law.

Grace Is Free

We cannot earn grace. It is a free gift of God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the **gift of God**: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Grace Is Given to Everyone

Grace is the enabling desire and power that God gives to every person to do His will. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to **all men**, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11–12).

Grace Is Given as Needed

Peter prayed that “grace and peace be **multiplied**” to the believers and that they would “**grow** in grace.” (See II Peter 1:2; 3:18.) God gives enough grace to meet each situation. When Paul asked God to remove his thorn in the flesh, God replied, “. . . My **grace is sufficient** for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness . . .” (II Corinthians 12:9). Enough grace is given to overcome every temptation, “. . . But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). Grace is needed for salvation and Christian living. (See Colossians 2:6.)

Grace Can Be Resisted

Just because God gives us the ability to do His will through His grace, this does not mean that we will automatically do it. Thus, Paul warns, “Looking diligently lest any man **fail of the grace** of God . . .” (Hebrews 12:15). If we resist God's grace, we will experience the conflicts that spring from bitterness, greed, and lust. (See Hebrews 12:15–17.)

Grace Is Given to the Humble

“. . . God resisteth the proud, but **giveth grace unto the humble**” (James 4:6). Thus we are instructed, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10). If we fail to humble ourselves, God will humble us either in this life, or at His judgment. The high and holy standards of God's Law produce humility to those who continue to look into it and do what is written in it. (See James 1:22–25; 2:8–12.)

Grace Is an Active Enabling for Obedience

Paul testified, “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I **laboured** more abundantly than they all: **yet not I, but the grace of God** which was with me” (I Corinthians 15:10). Paul “received grace and apostleship, **for obedience.**” (See Romans 1:5). Spiritual gifts are given to every believer according to grace. (See Romans 12:6.) “And God is able to make **all grace** abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may **abound to every good work**” (II Corinthians 9:8). **Grace is not a license to disregard God's Law, but the desire and power which God freely gives to every person to do His will.**

Understand the Balancing Truths on the Law

The Apostle Paul had the challenge of refuting the false teaching that all believers had to be circumcised and to keep the Law in order to be saved, while at the same time restating the practical purposes of the Old Testament Law. Here are some balancing truths.

Delivered From Law

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6).

Judged Apart From Law

"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law . . ." (Romans 2:12).

The Law Is Inadequate

"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).

The Law Is for Sinners

"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. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:19-20).

The Law Brings Death

"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me" (Romans 10:9-11).

Guided by Law

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7).

Judged by the Law

". . . And as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Romans 2:12).

The Law Is Perfect

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart . . ." (Psalm 19:7-8).

The Law Is for Saints

"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: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-4).

The Law Is Good

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful (Romans 7:12-13).

Identify the Balancing Truth in Galatians

The book of Galatians contains the strongest condemnation of the misuse of the Old Testament Law. It was written because certain Pharisees had crept into the Gentile church and were teaching the new believers that unless they were circumcised and obeyed all the Law of Moses, they could not be saved.

"Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment" (Acts 15:24).

Paul vehemently objected to this perversion of the Gospel and harshly rebuked those who taught it. However, in the center of his letter, he writes a phrase that provides balance to his message and reaffirms the practical benefit of the Mosaic Law. The phrase is “. . . **The man that doeth them shall live in them**” (Galatians 3:12). Here is the context:

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: **but, The man that doeth them shall live in them**” (Galatians 3:10–12).

The Meaning of “The man that doeth them shall live in them.”

This statement, “**The man that doeth them shall live in them,**” is a quote from several Old Testament passages. The first reference is Leviticus 18:5, “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: **which if a man do, he shall live in them:** I am the LORD.” The phrase is also used in Nehemiah 9:29 and Ezekiel 20:11. The renowned commentators C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch point out the significance of this phrase.

“By the words, ‘I am Jehovah your God,’ which are placed at the head [Leviticus 18:1] and repeated at the close, (ver[se] 30), the observance of the command [against incest and similar sensual abominations] is enforced upon the people as a covenant obligation, and urged upon them most strongly by the promise, that through the observance of the ordinances and judgments of Jehovah they should live (ver[se] 5)—‘The man who does them (the ordinances of Jehovah), shall live (**gain true life**), through them.’” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, reprinted 1981, Volume I, page 412.)

The encouragement to live by the moral instruction of the Old Testament Law—not for salvation, which is only through the work and blood of Christ, but for the discovery and enjoyment of true life—is further confirmed in both Old and New Testament passages.

- “Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?” (Deuteronomy 4:6–7).
- “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).
- “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [the testimonies of the Old Testament]: and they are written for our admonition . . .” (I Corinthians 10:11).

Know How “The Father of Faith” Viewed the Law

No discussion of the Mosaic Law is complete without reference to the life and work of Abraham. The Apostle Paul used Abraham to explain that neither circumcision nor good works were necessary for salvation, but simply the “hearing of faith.” (See Romans 4.) On the other hand, Jesus, Paul, and James pointed out important facts in the life of

Abraham to confirm the continuing value and benefit of the Mosaic Law. (See Luke 16:24–31; Romans 3:28; Galatians 3:5–9; James 2:21–24.)

The Credentials of Abraham to Speak About the Law

Abraham predates the Law of Moses by four hundred thirty years. Yet his life and work are interwoven throughout the Law. Abraham is an honored member of the “Heroes of Faith” in Hebrews 11:8–19. Abraham is called the “Friend of God” in James 2:23. He is called the “father of circumcision” in Romans 4:12, and the father of all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7).

God identifies Himself as “the God of Abraham.” Jesus pointed out the significance of the present tense of this name. “But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matthew 22:31–32).

Abraham Confirms That Salvation Is by Faith, Not by Works

Paul reasoned that “if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:2–3).

Paul also proved that Abraham’s circumcision did not earn God’s favor since he was acclaimed as righteous before he was circumcised. “How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (Romans 4:10–11). By this reasoning, Paul refuted the doctrinal error of those who taught that believers had to be circumcised and keep the Law in order to be saved.

A Correct View of Faith Gives a Correct View of the Law

Having concluded (based on the testimony of Abraham and others) that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law, Paul affirms that God is not only the God of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles, and that the fact that keeping the Law is not required for salvation does not negate other benefits from it. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

The Greek word for “establish” is *histemi*, which means “to stand, abide, appoint, bring, continue, covenant, hold up.” How does this apply to the Law? Christ, Abraham, Paul, and James all explain important benefits of the Law.

Abraham’s Testimony of the Continuing Value of the Law

Abraham gives a striking confirmation about the value of the Law of Moses to convict of sin and to bring a person to repentance in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In this parable, Abraham answers the rich man who has been sent to hell and is pleading for Lazarus to go to his five brothers and save them from such a place of torment.

“Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:29–31). Paul confirms this benefit of the Law when he wrote, “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

The Promise to Abraham “and His Seed” Transcends the Law

When God called Abraham, He promised to make of him a great nation and to “bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee . . .” (Genesis 12:3). The greatness of the nation was later tied directly to its obedience to the Law of Moses. (See Deuteronomy 4 and 28.) God also promised Abraham that through him, all the families of the earth would be blessed. This was fulfilled by Christ coming through the line of Abraham.

Paul explains that the promise to Abraham also applies to Gentile believers. “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. . . . Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:14, 16). The promise did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. (See Romans 4:13.) Abraham is the father of those who “**walk in the steps of that faith** of our father Abraham” (Romans 4:12).

Abraham’s Faith Was “Made Perfect” by Godly Works

In the same way that Paul used the life of Abraham to confirm that salvation is by faith in the finished work of Christ (not by any works that we could do), James used the life of Abraham to emphasize the need for works once a person is a born-again believer.

“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” (James 2:21–24).

The very context of the works that James talks about is in reference to the Mosaic Law, which he calls the “law of liberty.” “If ye fulfill 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).