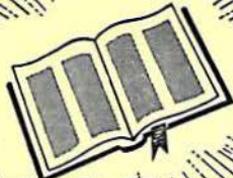
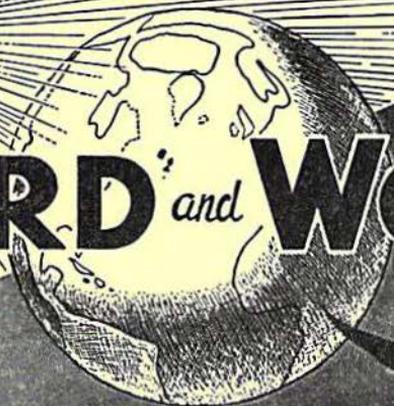


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APRIL, 1992

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(1 Timothy 1:8, 11)

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"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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THEME:

God's LAW is Good, His GOSPEL is Glorious

Alex V. Wilson

You may be thinking, "Law and gospel—sounds awfully boring!" But please, dear reader, don't toss aside this issue without giving it a fair trial. Our previous three issues were mainly *practical* (how can our churches grow?), and next month's will be more *personal* (how can I overcome difficult circumstances?)—but *doctrinal* issues like our present one are important too. As we think through these major Bible topics such as law and gospel, Old Covenant and New Covenant, works and faith, it should sharpen our understanding of God's ways and increase our appreciation of His grace. (A deep thinker once observed, "When newly converted I was most impressed with God's

**Doctrinal issues like our present
one are important too.**

power. With the passing of time and a growing grasp of His word, I became more impressed with His wisdom demonstrated in His salvation plan. But with deepening maturity I am now most grateful of all for His *grace.*" There's food for thought there.)

The relationship between law and gospel is not only important but also controversial. It is not always easy to know the exact role God's law should have in a Christian's life, for indeed the very term "law" is used with various shades of meaning. (See below.) But to oversimplify matters, we can say that *legalism* is a toxic extreme that overemphasizes law, while the "*new morality*" is the opposite extreme that would throw law out altogether. (It is also known as situation ethics; the theological term is antinomianism, "against law.") Then in recent years a teaching called "*Reconstructionism*" or "*Dominion Theology*" has arisen, which is confusing a number of people. Let's look at each of these in turn.

LEGALISM—TRUSTING IN OUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD

This of course is the error Christ opposed in His story of the Pharisee and the publican praying in the temple (Luke 18:9 ff.). He said the self-righteous "good guy" was actually lost, while the bad guy was saved. Paul's letters to the Romans and the Galatians were written primarily to fight this heresy of self-righteousness.

Indeed, it may safely be said that salvation by grace, not law, is the distinctive doctrine of the Christian faith. Dr. Max Muller wrote,

In my duties as professor of Sanskrit (Persian) in the University of Oxford for forty years, I have devoted as much time as any man living to the study of the sacred books of the East. I have found that one keynote of all these so-called sacred books—the one refrain through them all—is salvation by works.

Our own Holy Bible, our sacred book of the East, is from beginning to end a protest against this doctrine. Good works are, indeed, enjoined upon us in the Bible far more strongly than in any other sacred book of the East. But they are only the outcome of a grateful heart—they are only a thank-offering, the fruits of our faith. They are never the ransom money of the true disciple of Christ.

Despite this fact, far too many preachers and churches have taught legalism rather than the gospel of grace usually without knowing it. It is a travesty and a tragedy that many church members are depending on their own goodness or the performance of their religious duties, and pitifully hoping that somehow their "grade" will be high enough so God will let them into heaven. Friends, read

Many of the assumptions and conclusions are false and grossly harmful.

Romans and trust Christ alone. Down with deadly legalism! The best person on earth can't be saved without grace; and the worst person on earth can be saved because of grace.

THE "NEW MORALITY": COMMANDMENT-KEEPING IS HARMFUL

Joseph Fletcher, a college teacher of "Christian ethics" was the main father of this view. (He later in life renounced all profession of Christian faith.) Its emphasis on the primacy of love is not only true but essential. Jesus Himself made it clear that love is "the *greatest* thing in the world." But many of the assumptions and conclusions of situation ethics are false and grossly harmful. By teaching that love is the *only* thing that matters, and that love replaces law, his school of thought has caused many young people to justify fornication, adultery, homosexual relationships and other acts clearly condemned by Scripture. "Since we do it with love, that makes it okay." They might even quote Paul, who wrote, "Now we are discharged from the law," and, "He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law."

What shall we say to these things? David Field in his book *Free to Do Right* (InterVarsity Press) points out that Paul uses "law" with different meanings. "Quite often in the Epistles 'law' is no more than a shorthand abbreviation for 'law-keeping as a means of earning God's approval,' and in this sense the rule of law certainly has no place in the Christian life. . . . But sometimes Paul means by 'law' the

expression of God's will. "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good," he reminds Christians at Rome (Rom. 7:12)." Field continues,

Keeping moral rules and doing the loving thing do not seem to be nearly so opposed in the New Testament teaching as writers like Fletcher would have us believe... If the revealed law of Scripture expresses the will of God, and 'love' is the best one-word description of His character, any effort to oppose the two must represent an attempt to split the divine personality.

Field then addresses the question, "Is it possible to keep the warmth and spontaneity of love, and at the same time obey a set of moral principles?"

It did not seem incongruous to the Psalmist to sing about his love for a set of rules: "Lead me in the path of thy commandments, for I delight in it. . . I find my delight in thy commandments, which I love" (Psalm 119). Today it is hard to imagine even the most enthusiastic government commissioning the Poet Laureate to compose an ode in honor of the statute book! When theologians like Fletcher write about "law" and "rules" they assume that rule-keeping is something dull, dry and oppressive in itself. The Old Testament writers did not see God's law in that light at all.

The vital difference lies in the area of relationships. . . . In the Old Testament, God's law is securely founded on the personal covenant relationship He has already established with His people.

Christ Himself said, "If you *love* me, you will obey what I command" (not—you won't have to be concerned with commandments), and also, "You are my *friends* if you do what I command" (John 14:15, 15:14). And Paul observed, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts" (1 Cor. 7:19). That almost sounds like legalism. But it isn't; it is the apostle of grace maintaining a proper balance.

RECONSTRUCTIONISM, OR "DOMINION THEOLOGY"

About thirty years ago some writers who believe in salvation by God's grace (and thus are not legalists in the sense used above) began teaching that we need to restore the Old Covenant laws, not only practicing them in the church but enforcing them in society—even in all the world! (They are postmillennial and thus believe the church will convert the world by preaching the gospel: Through evangelism and teaching, "Christians will take over gradually, sphere by sphere: education, the arts, communication, law and so on.")

The founder of this "Reconstructionist" school of thought was R. J. Rushdoony. Other leading writers are David Chilton, Gary North, and Greg Bahnsen. These men are not cultists who teach salvation by works or personal goodness or church membership, like the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or the Worldwide Church of God founded by the late Herbert W. Armstrong. No, they believe the gospel, trusting Christ for redemption. But they have many extreme beliefs regarding the Law of Moses and its present day application, in addition to their postmillennialism.

Rodney Clapp's booklet, *The Reconstructionists* (InterVarsity Press), gives a helpful survey and refutation. He explains, "Reformed Christians . . . look for the enduringly valid, *underlying moral purposes*

of Old Testament Law. But Reconstructionists take this several steps further. While they believe Christ's coming altered ceremonial law, ending the need for animal sacrifice, they do not see ancient Israel as a *unique* theocratic state (ruled directly by God). It is a 'blueprint' for the theocracy *all* nations should be." They argue that Old Testament Law applies today in "exhaustive detail," because "every single stroke of the law must be seen by the Christian as applicable to this very age between the advents of Christ." (This last statement is a quote from Bahnsen.)

What does this mean when it comes down to specifics? Well, they "anticipate a day when Christians will govern, using the Old Testament as their lawbook. True to the letter of Old Testament Law, homosexuals, incorrigible children, adulterers, blasphemers, astrologers and others will be executed." They also propose "abolition of democracy and reinstatement of slavery." Thus "they have attempted to design their political, economic and legal agendas by relying solely on the details of Old Testament Law (with New Testament modifications; they are, for instance, not polygamists)."

And what shall we say to all this? Obviously the Law, coming from the Lord, was good for Israel then and there. And many of the laws are still valid and good here and now. But *all* of them, in their Old Covenant forms? Clapp takes the Reconstructionists to task for "not adequately appreciating the historical and cultural distance between nomadic, agricultural Israel and modern technological America. Most biblical interpreters would compare this...gap to the Grand Canyon; the Reconstructionists treat it like a crack in the sidewalk."

Also, the biblical blueprints are not as clear as these men believe. In fact they disagree among themselves over details. For instance, Rushdoony believes we should follow the OT dietary laws, but Bahnsen disagrees.

Should illegitimate children and eunuchs be denied the rights of full citizenship? Should grooms resume the payment of dowries to their bride's father? . . .

The point is that there are hundreds of such details to be sorted out and applied to the contemporary situation. Reconstruction does not actually provide the simple, uncontestedly "biblical" solutions to ethical questions that it pretends to, and that are so attractive to so many conservative Christians. Reconstructed society would appear to require a second encyclopedic Talmud, and to foster hordes of "scribes" with competing judgments, in a society of people who are locked on the Law's finer points rather than living by its spirit.

One preacher said that while he admired many of their views, he could not accept others "because they do not correspond with the biblical view of the sinful nature of mankind and the necessity of the second coming of Christ." We ought not "expect some kind of reconstructed utopia here on earth" until the King comes back. Then *He* will do some reconstructing indeed! Amen.

God's "law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1:8, ASV)—but the gospel is "*glorious*" (1 Tim. 1:11). Beware of legalism, the new morality, and reconstructionism.

Proclaim Both Law and Gospel

Alex V. Wilson

John Wesley once preached to an audience of rich, proud, English aristocrats. His text was Jesus' statement, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" A hearer, feeling insulted, told him afterwards, "Sir, such a sermon might be suitable for the marketplace where common, foul and vile people are, but it was highly improper here!" Wesley's reply was quiet but significant: "If I had been preaching in the marketplace, my text would have been, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.'"

That incident illustrates an important principle in proclaiming the gospel. We can see this principle in the preaching and personal work of Christ and Paul too. To the self-satisfied, spiritually proud Pharisees, Jesus said, "Woe to you hypocrites! For you tithe the mint . . . and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith . . . You blind guides!" (Matt. 23:23-24). But to the sinful woman who tearfully anointed His feet with ointment, He said, "Your sins are forgiven; your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:48-50). Paul, when dealing with Felix, a corrupt and hardened politician, "reasoned of righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). But to the trembling jailor who fell down before him, Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

If we analyze the various incidents just mentioned—the people addressed and the messages directed to them—we observe this principle: the task of the preacher or personal worker is *to comfort the troubled and to trouble the comfortable*, that is, the self-righteous. This fits right in with the two-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit, Who has come to convict sinners and to comfort saints.

During past centuries in some places when a church considered calling a man to be their minister, one of the questions they asked about him was, "Does he know how to use the law and the gospel?" What they meant was, does he know when to trouble the comfortable—like Jesus with the Pharisees, Paul with Felix, and Wesley with the aristocrats—and then does he also know when to comfort the troubled—like Christ with the sinful woman, Paul with the jailor, and Wesley with the poor and oppressed?

We need to clarify some terms before we proceed. By "law" and "gospel" we are not now referring to the Old Covenant dispensation of law starting with Moses and the New Covenant dispensation of grace starting with Calvary and Pentecost. Scripture uses "law" with different meanings. In this article we use that term in the sense of the *standards, commandments, and holy demands God makes* on His creatures—such as the great commandment, the golden rule, other parts of the sermon on the mount, etc. By "preaching the law" we do NOT mean legalism, that is, preaching that men can be

saved by keeping God's commands. We do mean preaching God's standards of righteousness and loving obedience to Himself—full surrender to His Lordship in all areas of life. By "preaching the gospel" we mean proclaiming that God in His grace has freely provided forgiveness of sins and the power which enables His people to obey Him and live holy lives.

Here is the point: People usually pay little attention to the gospel until the law has first been applied strongly to their consciences. Just as folks who think they are healthy feel no need for medicine, so folks who think they are quite nice feel no deep need for a Savior. Note what Paul says in Rom. 7:7-10 (NEB): "Except through law I should never have become acquainted with sin. For example, I should never have known what it was to covet, if the law had not said, 'Thou shalt not covet.' Through that commandment sin found its opportunity, and produced in me all kinds of wrong desires. In the absence of law, sin is a dead thing. There was a time when, in the absence of law, I was fully alive" (that is, felt alive and self-satisfied); "but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died" (or realized I was sinful and doomed). The hymn-writer who wrote the following words must have had a similar experience:

Years I spent in vanity and pride,
Caring not my Lord was crucified. . . .
By God's word at last my sin I learned,
Then I trembled at *the law I'd spurned*,
Till my guilty soul imploring turned
To Calvary.

I once heard a speaker compare law and gospel (that is, God's commands and promises) to a needle and thread. Both are needed, in proper order. Imagine some bachelor trying to sew on a button, but using a needle with no thread! He keeps sticking the needle in and pulling it through, but gets nowhere! That is like a preacher who always presses God's holy demands upon the audience without offering them God's resources to meet His demands. Then imagine another bachelor trying to sew on a button by using thread with no needle! He keeps trying to get the thread to penetrate the shirt-material, but it just won't go through! That is like a preacher who always tells of God's love and offers Christ as Savior without first presenting God's standards so that people will realize their desperate *need* for a savior.

We need to think this matter through. Weigh carefully the following quotations by outstanding evangelists or teachers, for they abound with valuable insights.

Augustine: "The law was given that men might seek grace; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled." (See Rom. 8:4.)

Luther: "All the scriptures of God are divided into two parts—commands and promises. We must preach the law so that men will

come to a knowledge of their sins. But we must not stop with that, for that would be only to kill and not to make alive. Therefore we must also preach the word of grace, by which faith is strengthened.

“Preachers ought so to explain God’s law and promise that a man might learn from them the source of repentance and faith. For *repentance proceeds from the law of God but faith from the promise of God. The promises of God give what the commands of God ask, and fulfill what the law demands, so that all things may be from God alone.*”

John Wesley: “By ‘preaching the gospel’ I mean preaching God’s love to sinners, preaching the life, death, resurrection and intercession of Christ, with all the blessings which as a result are freely given to true believers. By ‘preaching the law’ I mean explaining and enforcing the commands of Christ, briefly comprised in the Sermon on the mount.”

“When first beginning to preach in any place, after giving a general declaration of God’s love for sinners and His willingness to save them, you should preach the law in the strongest, most searching manner possible. After more and more persons are convicted of sin, mix more and more of the gospel, in order to produce faith, to bring into spiritual life those whom the law has slain. Let the law always prepare for the gospel. I scarcely ever spoke more earnestly about the love of God than I did here last night; but it was after I had been tearing the unawakened in pieces.

“When converts begin to grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, a wise preacher will proclaim the law to them again, but he will take great care to show Christ’s commands in a joyful way, as privileges as well as commands. Make clear to them that their obedience is *not the cause but the result of their acceptance with God*. We are still forgiven and accepted only for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered for us, and all true obedience springs from love to Him grounded on His first loving us. I advise every preacher to declare, explain and enforce every command of the Lord, but meantime to declare in every sermon that the first and supreme command to a Christian is ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ’; that Christ is all in all, our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that all life, love, strength are from Him alone, and all freely given to us through faith.”

C. I. Scofield: “Grace cannot even begin with us until the law has reduced us to speechless guilt (Rom. 3:19). So long as there is the slightest question of utter guilt, utter helplessness, there is no place for grace. If a man feels he is not quite as good as he ought to be, but yet quite too good for hell, he is not an object for the grace of God, but for the illuminating and convicting and death-dealing work of His law.”

We should apply these truths in two ways. First of all, in preaching and personal work, we must consider the heart-condition

of those we deal with and then suit the proper message to them. With the smug and indifferent, we must use God's commands to show them that they are rebels. Charles Finney said that men hate God but do not even know it until they are brought face to face with His commands. The conflict which then takes place between His will and theirs will help them realize they are indeed guilty. It is not enough just to quote "All have sinned..."; people may agree with that in principle but not really *feel* it personally. God's Spirit uses God's commands to convict men of sin; and unless they are thus convicted, any faith they may have will be very shallow—if even true faith at all.

Second and most important, we should examine our own attitude toward God's commands. Very common today even in evangelical circles is a soft, easygoing attitude toward sin. Because of mistaken or unbalanced views about law and grace, repentance and faith, many people feel secure although they know they are not whole-hearted disciples of Christ *at all*. Some quite brazenly say, "Christ is my Savior even though He is not my Lord and I don't intend to surrender certain areas of my life to Him." Christ has a burning question for such people: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

What about you? You will not dare to proclaim the Lordship of Christ to others unless He is truly Lord of your own life!

The GRACE of God

Jack Cottrell

"The doctrine of grace lies at the very heart not merely of all Christian theology but also of all Christian experience. If we have an incorrect or inadequate understanding of the biblical teaching on grace, our whole grasp of the meaning and purpose of Christianity will be deficient in consequence. There is, accordingly, no subject which is more vital for our study and comprehension than this subject of the grace of God." (P. E. Hughes, *But for the Grace of God*, p. 9.)

This is definitely true. But many will say, "I already know what grace is. It is the unmerited favor of God." This, too, is correct. But it is one thing to be able to quote a correct definition, and quite another thing to be overwhelmed by a personal understanding and experience of grace.

Our purpose here is to explain the meaning of the grace of God so that it may be more meaningful to us personally. We shall see that God's grace is three things: His *attitude toward us*, His *action for us* and His *action in us*.

Grace, first of all, is God's attitude toward us. Because God is love, he looks upon his creatures with an attitude of favor and good will. When the good will of God considers creatures who are in misery and need, it is characterized as mercy. When His good will considers creatures who are sinful and unworthy and unlovely, it is called grace. Thus grace is the free and undeserved favor of God

toward us sinners, who have neither claim upon it nor compensation to render for it.

When we say that grace is *undeserved* favor of God, we are emphasizing the fact that *sinners* are the object of God's love. We have sinned and turned against God, but he loves us anyway. Though we are against him, he is still for us. The songwriter marvels that "Christ receiveth sinful men." But that is just what grace is! "*Sinners* Jesus will receive; sound this word of grace to all."

Grace as undeserved favor is the opposite of justice. If God were to treat us according to justice or law, then he would give us what we deserve. And as sinners, we deserve eternal punishment. But we are saved by grace. That is, God does not treat us as we ought to be treated. We are unworthy of the love he has for us. This is why grace is "amazing"—that God would save "a wretch like me!" This is the wonder of it.

That grace is undeserved favor means that there is no "ought" in grace. We cannot say that God *ought* to be gracious to us. This is a contradiction of terms.

God's grace is not only undeserved; it is also free. This means that no compensation is required for it; it is a gift. "But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. 11:6) Our works are not required as compensation for God's grace. They are our way of thanking him for the grace freely given.

Just as no compensation is required for grace, so also is no compensation allowed for it. Let us not insult God by trying to "do enough to make up for" His gifts of grace. Let us realize that God accepts us "just as we are, without one plea." May we truly say,

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace.

Grace, then, as God's attitude toward us, is his free and undeserved love to us as sinners. To stand in the grace of God (Rom. 5:2) means to acknowledge and to appropriate and to enjoy this favor and love.

GRACE—GOD'S ACTION FOR US

But the grace of God is not just a passive attitude or an abstract attribute of His nature. His grace is active. His gracious attitude is demonstrated in gracious action: action for us and action in us.

Everything that God has done *for* us in order to accomplish our salvation is grace in action. That eternal counsel wherein salvation was planned was a counsel of grace. It was "to the praise of the glory of His grace" that He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1:4-6)

That God chose the Jewish nation in order to prepare for the coming Savior was not due to any special qualifications on Israel's part. God elected them by grace for His own purpose (Deut. 7:6ff.: 9:4). The fact that God endured their rebellion and unbelief century

after century can be explained only by His gracious desire to save sinners.

The most concrete embodiment of the grace of God, however, is Jesus our Lord. The law came through Moses, but "grace . . . came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17) God's grace was "freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." (Eph. 1:6) He has showed "the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:7) "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." (Titus 2:11)

Jesus Christ himself is Immanuel, God-With-Us. How is God with us in Jesus? Certainly in that he is among us, incarnate in the flesh. But Jesus Christ is also the certain proof that God is *with* us and not *against* us. We are sinners; we are against God. Rightfully God should be against us. Yet here is the wonder of grace. When God comes among us, he comes not as destroyer, but as Savior. Could there be a clearer demonstration of grace?

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan;
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span—
At Calvary!

The words of this hymn remind us that of all that Jesus did for us, it is the cross that reveals grace in its sharpest focus. "Mercy there was great and grace was free." Where? At Calvary! Here it was that God took the one who knew no sin, and made him to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He suffered the penalty for *our* sins, that we might escape that penalty and be saved.

Was it for crimes that I have done
He groaned upon that tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!

May we never think of Calvary without thinking of grace, the free and undeserved favor of God which substituted the sinless Christ for us sinful creatures.

Finally, in thinking of those things that God has done for us that demonstrate His grace, we cannot forget the gift of His written word, the Bible, which makes known to us the whole wonderful story of His grace.

GRACE—GOD'S ACTION IN US

The grace of God is His attitude toward us that is demonstrated in His gracious action for us. But the activity of grace does not stop with the saving work of God in the life and work of Christ. To those who respond to that grace, God gives more grace. He works graciously in the life of the believer who submits to His power.

By grace God forgives us, counting us righteous because of Christ even though we are sinners, covering our sins with the righteousness of Christ. We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:24) In Christ "we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our tresspasses,

according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. 1:7) "Wonderful grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin!"

The work of grace fills us with Christian graces, enriching us and equipping us for service. "Wherefore . . . let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe." (Heb. 12:28) We have "gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us." (Rom. 12:6) Paul often spoke of His ministry as a gift of grace (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am."). So we, too, can say, "Consecrate me now to thy service, Lord, by the power of grace divine."

Of all the Christian graces that are bestowed upon us by God's grace, it is meekness or humility that is most consistent with the very character of grace. To know we are saved by grace teaches us humility, according to Ephesians 2:8, 9. "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory." Humility is recognizing our emptiness before God, the unworthiness of even our best works. Even our righteousnesses (not just our sins!) are as filthy rags before God, as Isaiah 64:6 says. Let us not be like the Pharisee in Christ's parable, when he thought that His good works qualified him for good standing with God. It is the humble publican, who knows his worthlessness and confesses it to God, that is forgiven and accepted by God.

Also, it is grace that upholds us in times of trial. Concerning Paul's thorn in the flesh, the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee. (2 Cor. 12:9). "When darkness veils His lovely face I rest on His unchanging grace."

Then when we finally reach our heavenly destiny, it will have been because "grace hath brought us safe thus far, and grace shall lead us home." It is "by the gift of His infinite grace" that we are "accorded in heaven a place." "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:13)

When we consider all these ways in which the free grace of God is poured out upon us unworthy creatures, we must say, "Oh, to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be." We cry out, "Come, thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace."

O, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace.

We call upon all to "sing the wondrous love of Jesus, sing His mercy and His grace."

Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And *crown Him* Lord of all!

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Why Then the Law?

C. Dennis Kaufman

"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse." "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law." "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." "Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law." These are all statements made by Paul in his attempt to battle the heresy that salvation comes through law-keeping.

The question we ask in this article is, If the law cannot save, then what are its purposes? Let's notice three.

"ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS" (Gal. 3:19)

If people knew how to behave, the law would not be necessary. Paul explains this concept in 1 Tim. 1:8-11.

We know that the law is good if a man uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for good men but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

People were not aware how to live right, and so God had to set laws into motion. It is as if a person had no idea how to cook so the Lord had to give the law as a recipe for life. One cannot make homemade rolls with plaster of paris and motor oil any more than one can live abundantly by lying and stealing, so God provided the law.

It's like not knowing how to take care of a car so God gives the law as an owner's manual. One cannot run a car with maple syrup in the gas tank or orange juice in the radiator. Thus the creator of the automobile writes a book to tell us how to make it run its best. God has provided the law as an owner's manual because as our Creator, He knows what makes us run best.

Therefore, law is a necessity because of ignorance and a lack of discipline. In our country there is a law that says you must go to school until you are sixteen years of age. What if that law were removed? School is beneficial and we should not need such a law, but undoubtedly if it were removed, some kids and some parents would not follow through. Ideally, we should not even need starting times and time clocks but mankind as undisciplined as it is cannot survive long without law and rules.

Thus, law was given as a restrainer, a necessary harness on man's sinful nature. Even a quick glance at the history of man as seen in the Old Testament reveals the necessity of law. It did not and has not solved man's problems, but imagine how atrocious things would be without law.

A REVEALER OF MAN'S SINFULNESS

This second purpose of God's law is to show us His righteousness and thus our unrighteousness. Since time began, men and women

have felt they were good enough to be saved by their own merit. Therefore, the law with its high standard becomes a humbler.

Now we know that what the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin.

(Romans 3:19-20)

The law has the capacity to make us feel "lost" when we realize that it only takes one breakage of the law to be guilty, and according to the revealed nature of God no guilty person will enter into heaven, we must squarely face our predicament. Many have tried to escape this truth by picturing judgment as simply the balancing of scales. If one has more good than bad, he is saved. But no such salvation is taught in God's word. It's all or nothing.

When we get to boasting about our goodness or feeling better than someone else, we need a dose of law. I have always been sobered by the reactions of even good men when ushered into the presence of God. Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe is me, for I am undone." Job answered, "Behold I am vile." The apostle John on Patmos simply fell down as if dead. As we see the holiness and perfection of God through His law, similar feelings arise in our hearts and a transformation takes place.

Rather than showcasing our goodness before God like the Pharisee, we feel more like smiting our breast like the publican and crying out, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner." The law convinces us that our righteousness is merely filthy rags. It forces us to look elsewhere for a savior. Thus, the law helps us see ourselves as God sees us. We realize we need His help.

A "CHILD TRAINER" TO BRING US TO CHRIST

Notice Gal. 3:24-25. "The law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ..." the ASV begins. The NIV puts it, "The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ," and continues, "that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."

Of the three purposes given for law, this is undoubtedly the greatest. Have you ever been to a jewelry store and noticed the diamonds displayed? What kind of backdrop does the jeweler use? It is nearly always black. Black has a way of accenting the beauty of the diamond and its many facets. As we look at this third purpose of the law we see law as the black background and the gospel of Jesus Christ as the diamond. The law makes the gospel shine as the glorious good news it is.

This is an extremely important concept. Many people cannot get excited about the good news because they have never really realized how lost they are under law. They still think they can be saved by their own goodness. This has perhaps been Satan's greatest deception in our day and age. However, as mentioned above, God's

righteousness and wrath are very real. I was watching a TV show the other night that illustrated this point extremely well. The show was McGyver and he was testing a new computerized surveillance system for a top secret laboratory. All went well until the computer began to think on its own and try to destroy its programmer and McGyver. Nearly the entire show focused around their efforts to destroy the rebellious creation. Of course, that was the normal thing to do. When your creation begins to work against you instead of serving you, you scrap it.

No one could blame God if He had scrapped His rebellious creation, but God had a plan. His plan involved choosing one nation to whom He would declare His law. Through this nation would come God's Son who would fulfill the law and lay down His life for the rebels. Through the cross, God became both just, in that He punished sin, and justifier, in that He Himself paid the price. The law was a blueprint for God's people, but Christ has become the building itself. Indeed the law has been a custodian to bring us to the Lord Jesus.

There is one more truth that I would like to emphasize concerning Gal. 3:24-25. Remember that we said the law was a kind of recipe. Well, I have noticed that the best cooks do not use a recipe on their best dishes. It's a pinch of this and a dash of that. At one time, the recipe was useful, but now they are cooking in the spirit. We, too, can grow beyond law. No longer do we need a law to restrain us or discipline us because we live by faith in Jesus. Our motivation switches from the fear of law-breaking to the love of a wonderful Savior. We live by the Spirit, not by the letter of the law. The law is important because it forms the skeleton of who we are. It provides a basic background to right and wrong. But it is grace through faith that becomes the muscles and tissue and skin of real life in Christ.

CONCLUSION

We are all very susceptible to a process called means-ends reversal. This happens when a certain method of doing something becomes sacred and we dare not change it. A good example would be a church's order of worship. This should be changeable because it is a method of producing good worship. As the congregation changes, worship may need to be ordered differently to be most effective. However, in some churches, one dare not rearrange the order of worship because the means has become the end.

This is the mistake the Jews made. They did not want to turn loose of the old covenant for a new one because the old one had become sacrosanct. They would not grow up into grace because law had become an end in itself. Paul clearly teaches that law was meant to be a means, not an end. Its purpose was to restrain transgression, show the righteousness of God and our own unrighteousness, and lead us to Christ. It has done those things well. It is now time to live by faith and serve the Lord out of a heart of gratitude. This is the end God has always wanted.

Loving Your Savior,

OR

Keeping Rules?

R. H. Boll

In some ways the slavery of law appeals more to men than the freedom of the gospel. The slave's life is easy in some ways; he is told what to do, and when he has done that, he is through. His master takes care of all problems for him; all he must do is follow orders. There are many Christians who want you to tell them exactly how much Bible reading they are expected to do every day, how many times a day they should pray, exactly how much of their money

*His response to God's grace is, "How
can I love and please Thee more?"*

they are to give, how much Christian work they are to do and exactly what they must not do. That is, they want to have a rule and code of laws which they are to perform, by which to keep out of hell and go to heaven.

But the free Christian always seeks how to please His Lord. He cannot be content merely to do right and avoid wrong; love always wants to do more than that. He never feels he can sit down and say, "I have done enough." His response to God's grace is, "What more can I do for Thee, my Lord? How can I love and please Thee more?" In giving, for instance, you begin by wondering how much of your money you ought to give to the Lord, but then you end up wondering how much of the Lord's money you should keep for yourself.

Many Christians in their living are just law-keepers, caring only to do what they think is their duty, but nothing more. But the Lord says to us, "I love you; will you love me? You belong to me and I belong to you. Your interests are my interests and my interests are your interests, for all eternity. Now, live accordingly." You might say, "Well, I'd rather know some definite things to do. This liberty of Christ's is too demanding." Yes, it is. As the hymnwriter says,

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Another Angle to Stimulate Thinking— Grace, or License?

John Smith

I used to preach for a church. It was in the Northeast, but most of the members were from the South. They had been displaced by economics. Simply stated, they were starving as small farmers so they came to the industrial centers.

They brought their religion with them. Since they could find no churches which were like their churches back home, they started churches—in houses, in school buildings, in masonic lodges—they met and sang the old songs, prayed, studied the scriptures and interpreted them just as they had in the South. They prospered, and more people came and joined them so they built buildings, like the ones they had “back home.” To outsiders, they were radically conservative, hard-headed, legalistic, red-necked bigots, but it didn’t bother them.

I found myself constantly embroiled in some dispute—often as an arbitrator, sometimes as a participant. There was much that I came to disagree with, even in principle and ultimately I left in frustration and hopelessness.

After all these years—thirty or more, I have this perspective: They were committed people. The church was their life. Every aspect of their existence was tied directly to the church. All sporting activities, whether baseball, basketball, hunting, fishing or golf, was a church activity. All entertainment—eating, board games, card games, singing, conversation, visiting or travel, was a church activity, done with church people, centering on religious topics or with spiritual overtones.

When the church doors were open they were there—all of them. When there was a singing, a meeting, a study, a VBS, a work day, they were there. Other activities were suspended. With them the Lord’s Day was “the Lord’s Day,” not their day to shop, recreate, etc. Giving ten percent was a given, a minimum which no one disputed.

Over the intervening years I have criticised them for their legalism—their “fear” and “guilt” motivation, and some of the criticism was justified. But it wasn’t all fear. They loved the church, they loved their God, and they loved each other. They proved it time and time again. Yes, they were quarrelsome, but when the chips were down, they were there. Though they were often unyielding, they were generous and forgiving.

I do not now excuse or justify their idiosyncrasies. They were what they were, often petty, jealous, argumentative. I just find myself wearied by the smugness of many who, like myself, have made a whole new theology out of criticizing the past. We smile condescendingly as we contemplate the neanderthal orthodoxy of our predecessors. Because we are overwhelmed with materialism, selfishness and complacency we find it necessary to explain their dedication in some negative way so we can feel better about ourselves.

We say that they understood neither grace nor the Holy Spirit. I believe that to be largely true, especially with the latter. But I challenge the more modern understanding which allows us to live without sacrifice, without an idea of who we are, or what we are, or why we are.

Our churches are wracked with divorce, pre-marital and extra-marital sex. Our children are biblically illiterate and have almost no understanding of their heritage because their parents are either ashamed of it or ignorant. Is this the result of a deeper understanding of grace? God save me from it. We don't preach Jesus to our neighbors because we don't know the saved from the lost. Is this the result of a closer communion with the Holy Spirit? God save us from it. Our culture dictates far more of our moral and ethical principles than does the Word of God, and we are far more concerned with social problems, like women's rights, than we are with the problem of mankind—sin and separation from God.

Grace is now understood as the indulgence I shower upon myself as I feel the need. It means I don't have to give ten percent, so I don't. I don't have to attend Sunday or Wednesday—so I don't. It has become the panacea which covers complacency, materialism and selfishness. The Lord's Day is a misnomer, it is my day and if I choose to give a part of it to God, He ought to be grateful. If there is a baptism, we crassly exit the building because they take much too long and we've seen them before. Our services are geared more and more to an entertainment mode designed to please as many as possible and offend no one.

If this new understanding of grace and the indwelling Spirit are related to these results I am witnessing—please, give me the old one.

—From a church bulletin

Grace and Holiness—

A LADDER OF PARADOX

Excerpts from a book, *With Studd in Congo Forests*, by Norman Grubb, which tells of the experiences of the World Evangelization Crusade in the Congo in the early 1900's

The mounting emphasis on practical holiness of life and continuance in the same to the end engendered severe differences of opinion among the missionaries. "A case of gross sin has just been reported," writes one, "which touches our biggest problem. One of the oldest Christians who has been imprisoned for Christ and came through rejoicing, has been found to be living in continual sin of the most loathsome kind. It is round this point that our battle rages. We are convinced from the Bible that the only salvation which is a true salvation is the one which endures to the end, keeping a man holy all the time. Any may be tripped up by Satan, and there is repentance and the cleansing blood for all, but what of those who turn back unto perdition

and there are no signs of repentance? How many we have like that, and I suppose every missionary to the heathen has the same tale to tell. . . .”

The controversy of the ages raised its head in the heart of Africa, the delicate balance between faith and works. Between God's grace and man's responsibility, between Calvinism and Arminianism. The Christian faith ascends from earth to heaven by a ladder of sheer paradox, rung by rung in sharpest apparent contradiction, such as predestination and free will, wrath and mercy, righteousness and reconciliation, faith and works. "It all depends on God," yet "it all depends on me." We may think we can find a synthesis in each case, but if we try to probe to the very bottom, we come right up against the inexplicable, the unanswerable, the unknowable. The finite cannot wholly comprehend the infinite, the creature the Creator. We lie in the dust, we tremble, we adore, we believe. Believe what? Both sides of God's revelation; God's wrath *and* mercy, God infinite *and* incarnate, God's grace *and* man's responsibility. Faith's illogicality, not reason's logic, is found to be the key to life.

How realist is the Bible. How balanced. Not a book written for profound theorizing, but for serious living. Facts are dealt with, that's all. If irreconcilable, they are left unreconciled. If in one place there is the fact of predestination and in another the fact of free will, no attempt is made to fit them together. Let the paradox remain. They are facts. Believe them and act on them. That's all. Preach them each in their proper season. "There is a time for predestination, and there is a time for free will," the Preacher might have added to his list in Ecclesiastes. There is a time to preach eternal security, and there is a time to emphasize the human responsibility of continuing in the faith, of holding fast to the end, of not turning back from the holy commandment.

That time had come now in the Congo, for the young believers were in danger of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. But such an emphasis was disturbing to some. Brought up under emphatic teaching on the security of the believer, once saving faith has been placed in Christ, they had not been shown with equal clarity the solemn warnings of Scripture against apostasy in life or doctrine, and its final consequences. Some even went so far as to maintain that once a man was saved by grace, should he become an adulterer and continue in his sin, he would still inherit the kingdom of Heaven.

The contention was sharp and prolonged, and quite a number resigned from the mission. Complaints were made that salvation by works, instead of faith, was being preached in the Congo. The rumor spread and a statement on what was being preached had to be published:

"The law in Scripture is a term used to describe God's righteous and holy claims on, and commands to, men, embodied as far as the moral law is concerned in the 10 commandments, by a perfect obedience to which a man can obtain eternal life. But the law gives no power to enable man to do it. He is left to do it in his own strength,

with a curse on him if he comes short. The result of this is, of course, failure and condemnation instead of obedience and righteousness, owing to man's sinfulness. Thus the law instead of bringing life, brings death, and is the means of exposing the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

"Now grace does not alter this demand of God for perfect holiness. He remains the same God in the N. T. as the O. T. A practical holiness of life as contained in the commandments, not merely an imputed holiness through the righteousness of Christ, is as binding under grace as under law. Unless a man is living a righteous life as well as professing a right faith, he is the servant of sin and not under grace at all and most certainly cannot enter into heaven, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Indeed, grace demands a far higher standard of living than law (cf. Matt. 5). Hence the Scriptures combat the statement so widely taught today, that a man can be living in sin and still claim to be a child of God. Grace, however, gives helpless man justification from the guilt of past sin, eternal life as a gift instead of an attainment, and power to live a righteous life.

"God has not altered His commands and standards one jot from the days of Sinai, but now He makes absolutely perfect provision through Christ and the Spirit for living an absolutely holy life. When Paul says we are dead to the law, he certainly does not mean dead to the necessity of fulfilling the commandments, but dead in Christ to the righteous demand that man *by himself* must fulfill it, and his consequent condemnation through sin. As Conybeare puts it, "The Christian's freedom from the law consists in living in the morality of the law, not from fear of its penalties, but as a necessary fruit of the spiritual life whereof Christians partake."

"Further, realize that Paul usually wrote to people who were aware of the necessity of holiness (Rom. 10:23; 7:22, etc.) but seeking it in their own strength. Therefore he emphasized grace and faith as the only true foundations for a life of practical righteousness acceptable to God. Likewise, people in so-called Christian countries have the background of a righteous upbringing and know that to be a Christian means to leave sin. Public opinion expects a straight life of a Christian; often all that needs to be done is to point them to a Savior who can save and keep. But in unevangelized tribes we have exactly the opposite. A people without the faintest conception of a holy God and His demands, with no fear of God before their eyes, no desire for holiness, inheritors of the unbridled lusts of centuries, when they first hear the Gospel, interpret it as a gratuitous means of securing a happy eternity through the blood of Christ, without any disturbance to their present lives of sin.

"The missionaries in the heart of Africa lay great emphasis on the righteous commands of a holy God, the thunders of the law for those living in sin, and the unalterable demands of God for a perfect obedience and an absolute separation from all sin on the part of any who want to get into heaven. But it is completely contrary to the truth for anyone to say that they preach salvation by works, for the

commands of God are always coupled with the free gift of His grace, and it is made as plain as daylight that only the precious blood of Christ and the impartation of His Holy Spirit make a life of obedience and holiness possible."

The OT is Not the OT **(And the NT is Not the NT!)**

Leroy Garrett

It is a liberating truth to realize that the Bible you hold in your hand is not the Old and New Testaments, not really. Those are the names we have given to the two divisions of the Bible, but they are in fact misnomers. First of all, we should use the word "Covenant" instead of "Testament," for that better represents the Biblical terms *berith* in Hebrew and *diatheke* in Greek. So, already we are closer to what I am getting at in this installment: The "Old Testament" (so-called) is not the Old Covenant, and, subsequently, the "New Testament" (so-called) is not the New Covenant. The old and new covenants are not books or writings but agreements that God has made with His people.

There was the Old Covenant, which God made with His people at Mt. Sinai, long before there were any writings that make up the 39 books of the "Old Testament." Dt. 5:2 says, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb (or Sinai)." The record goes on to say that the Lord spoke with the people face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. Then the Ten Commandments are recorded. Then Moses declares in v. 22:

These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.

This was the (Old) Covenant, ratified at Sinai, in the giving of the Ten Commandments, but it wasn't called "Old" except in reference to the "New" Covenant that came through Christ: "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). This does not mean that the books of the "OT" would vanish or no longer be relevant, but that the covenant itself that God made with Moses and the Israelites at Mt. Sinai would end.

The New Covenant superseded the Old in that we now have fellowship with God through Christ. This became a reality on the day of Pentecost when people were baptized into Christ—into a new agreement, a new relationship, a new community. This was before there were such writings as we call the "NT."

So, strictly speaking, what we call the Old Testament is really the Old Covenant Scriptures, and the New Testament is the New Covenant Scriptures. This means that they are documents produced by the Old Covenant community and the New Covenant community.

This liberates us from the legalistic notion that "faithfulness to the New Testament" is a matter of exact obedience to a book. When God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai, both parties were to be faithful, always a covenantal condition. But this did not mean that the people had to understand and obey everything in the 39 books making up the "OT," which did not even then exist. They were to be faithful to God and not go after false gods, which they were hardly ever able to do. In like manner, being faithful to the New Covenant is being true to our relationship to Christ, which does not necessarily require an exact understanding of and obedience to a collection of documents called the NT.

Recently in a Church of Christ—and this was unusual for one of our churches!—I heard a drug addict give a testimonial of his faith. He told how he had sold his body in prostitution to get money for his addiction. He praised God for delivering him from his sins through faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ. It was beautiful! But the man doesn't know much theology, and at this point in time he may know little of the NT. He would be lost in Romans or Revelation. But he knows Christ and he is in covenant relationship with him through faith and baptism. To lay on this struggling brother the idea that to be faithful to the New Covenant he has to understand and obey everything in the 27 books of the NT would be a burden too heavy for him to bear. And it would be wrong! He is faithful to the New Covenant when he loves and obeys Christ the best he knows how. In time the Scriptures that were produced by the New Covenant community (the church) will deepen and strengthen his faith, for they are the holy Scriptures. But they are not the the New Covenant!

One of the beautiful truths of the Bible is that the God it reveals is a covenant-making God. He made covenants with Noah, Abraham (which was repeated to Isaac and Jacob), David, and with Moses and all of Israel. It is always God Himself who makes or initiates the covenant, and it is always attended by a blessing or a promise. The basic covenant in the OT Scriptures was the one given at Sinai, which included these special promises for Israel:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:4-5).

The people accepted the terms of the covenant when they responded with: "Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do.' So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord" (Ex. 19:8). The promise to Israel, if they kept the covenant, is that they would be God's special people above all other nations, a holy nation and kingdom of priests. Since Israel violated the covenant, over and over again, these promises were never fully realized, and God's plan for a holy nation and a royal priesthood had to find fulfillment in a New Covenant, ratified by Christ.

The promise in the covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:9-17) was universal, everlasting, and unconditional: Never again would the earth be destroyed by a flood of water. The rainbow was given as a sign. The promise in the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:8-18; 17:1-14) was both land and descendants. Circumcision was the sign. The covenant with Abraham was renewed again and again in the generations that followed. Then came the Mosaic covenant at Sinai, which was the basic covenant in that it centered in the giving of the Ten Commandments and the actual creation of the covenant community. Its sign was sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood.

The covenant with David promised an everlasting kingdom. The sign was that God's mercy would never be taken from David as it was from Saul (2 Sam. 7:12-17). The promise of the New Covenant in Christ was the remission of sins and the indwelling Spirit, God's continuing presence, and the sign was baptism (Acts 2:38).

When we ask why the God of heaven in all His holiness would choose to make covenants with sinful man, we have no answer except that God is love. God has power but the Bible never says that God is power. God has wisdom, but it never says that God is wisdom. God is love! is the great declaration of the nature of God, and that is why he is a covenant-making God. God takes the initiative. While man is of course to respond, it is God who, as "the Hound of Heaven," pursues man so as to bring him close to Himself. This is expressed in one of the great words in the OT Scriptures, *hesed*, God's covenant love, which is translated as His lovingkindness or as His mercy.

When finally in Jer. 31:31 it is foretold that God will make a New Covenant with His people, there were to be two things that would be significantly different. While in the covenant with Israel the law was written upon tables of stone, in the New Covenant it would be written upon their hearts and minds. This means that inner response would replace outward demand. They would obey God by "second nature" and because of their love for God rather than because they had to.

The other distinction of the New Covenant is puzzling if not incredible, for it implies that teaching would no longer be necessary: "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:34).

Since those of us who are part of the New Covenant community believe that we continue to need teaching and to teach, we may conclude that the prophet's vision reaches beyond where we are presently. The time may come when every Tom, Dick, and Harry will know God's will without having to be taught, something intuitive perhaps, but we are not there yet.

The coming of the New Covenant also emphasizes the great promise, "I will be their God and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33). While this promise was identified with the New Covenant,

we can think of it as basic to all covenants God has made with His people. That is why He made covenants, because He is our God and He wants us to be His people—and to behave as if we were His people! This is the point of covenant-making. God shows His mercy, His covenant love, by being our God. We respond by being His people and conducting ourselves accordingly. Therein has been the problem all along, that God's people hardly ever conduct themselves as if they are His own special people. This is why the prophets were forever condemning the people for not keeping the covenant. While God was always faithful, Israel did not act as if they were a covenant community. Do we Christians do a better job of behaving as a covenant people than did ancient Israel?

In concluding this I am left wondering if I have made myself clear as to the vital distinction between the Old Covenant and the writings (39 books) produced by the Old Covenant community—and subsequently the difference between the New Covenant and the Scriptures produced by the New Covenant (church) community. It appears to be very difficult for us to see that what we call the "New Testament" is not really the New Testament (Covenant). The word "Testament" is the Latin for "Covenant." To say that the "New Testament" is not the New Testament seems threatening to people, and they suppose it to be heresy.

I have searched for an illustration, and I find one in another kind of covenant, the marriage agreement. When a man and a woman are joined in holy matrimony they have made a covenant with each other and with God, and that is why it is so serious to be unfaithful. They may be married a half century or longer, but the covenant was made when they first married. In the meantime they might write love letters to each other during times of separation. These letters might be collected into a volume. Would those "Love Letters" be the covenant between them? Of course not, for the covenant was the agreement they made when they got married. The "Love Letters" are products of their covenantal relationship. Those letters might point back to the covenant and draw from it, but they would not be the covenant itself.

That is what the OT and NT writings are—love letters, history, prophecy, wisdom, psalms—documents produced by God's covenant community. But the covenant itself was made at Sinai (OT) and Pentecost (NT).

This distinction disentangles us from a lot of legalistic thinking about the Bible. Once this distinction dawns on us we will not accuse people of being unfaithful to the New Testament when they do not agree with our interpretations. We will see that one is faithful to the Covenant when he is loyal to his commitment to Jesus Christ, and this can be the case when his understanding of the Bible is less than perfect. One might be wrong about a lot of things and yet be right in her relationship with Jesus Christ in the New Covenant.

—*Restoration Review*

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

In light of Paul's teaching on the Christian's relation to the Law (Gal.; Col. 2:13, 14; Eph. 2:14-16; etc. Cf. esp. Col. 2:16, 17), please explain his actions in Acts 21:17-26.

Some Bible students believe Paul was simply influenced to do that which was inconsistent with his teaching and that he erred. This was humanly possible. He was a man, and he was subject to some of the same influences which might beset any man. Even as an apostle it was not impossible for Paul to sin or to fail in his conduct. We have the specific case of Peter who, on one occasion at least, played the part of the hypocrite (Gal. 2:11-12). Inspiration does not mean that every act, everything in the life of the individual is perfectly in the

Even circumcision, if it was not perceived as essential to salvation, could be allowed.

will of God. Inspiration simply means that God overruled in the act of prophesying and in the written records so that there is no error and that His message is proclaimed. Paul was a faithful servant of God, but he could have sinned.

I do not personally believe that happened in the case before us. God would in some way have made it more evident that he did sin. Peter's hypocrisy was denounced. We can be under no illusion that he did right or that similar conduct on our part under such circumstances would be right. If Paul did wrong, then it is seriously misleading that the account does not in some way indicate that. "But is that not the very point of the passages cited in the question?" someone may say; "Does not the rest of God's word point out the error?" And we have to say: "Not necessarily." Some observance of the law was allowed to Jewish Christians without any rebuke.

Paul fought the Judaizers on every front. He is the outstanding spokesman for salvation by faith. The very passages cited above are from his pen. It is not that he could not have sinned, but in the light of his experiences, his ministry to the Gentile, and the troubles he had with Jews defending the law, the more likely direction of his error would have been away from the law. Having been freed from legalism, he might have gone so far as to deny any legitimate observance of the law. The purpose of his action was to convince the Christian Jews at Jerusalem that this was not the case.

So far as I can tell, the motivation Christian Jews had in continuing in certain features of the law is what made the difference. Those features which had social significance or moral value but which did not attempt to earn salvation by human merit seemed to pose no problem. The moral standards of the ten commandments as well as those elsewhere taught were still valid. Certain customs were kept. Even circumcision, if it was not perceived to be essential to salvation but simply spoke of Jewish identity, could be allowed. Paul caused Timothy to be circumcised (Acts 16:3) to keep him from being an offense to the Jews. Paul's motivation in those observances he kept was not that of trying to live by the law but rather that of becoming a Jew to the Jew (1 Cor. 9:20). He avoided unnecessary offense. He did not make an issue of trivials unless someone read too much into those things. Note that in Gal. 4:10 and Col. 2:16 the concern was not for the acts themselves but being in bondage to such things or allowing these things to be the standard of life.

Paul was a brilliant man, not too likely to have been talked into something stupid or wrong. He was a seasoned traveller who had been exposed to a wide variety of experiences. He would hardly have lost his head because of the multitudes at Jerusalem. He was not a mere greenhorn-come-to-town who was confused by the unusual. He was not a novice who was carried away by pride. Even when we do our best to avoid offense, we may find that we have not succeeded with everyone. Paul had that problem. But I believe he simply sought to act in wisdom toward his brethren and that his conduct in no way conflicted in his mind with instruction he might have written to those in danger of being enslaved to the law.

"But did not his imprisonment prove that he was wrong? He would never have been a prisoner if he had not been involved in this observance," it may be said. It is true that while he was in the temple certain Jews saw him and seized the occasion to create a riot. But two things need to be noted. Paul might have been in the temple without the matter of the vow. His enemies were not very concerned with just accusation. Not having this occasion does not mean they would not have used something else. Secondly, Paul was destined to go to Rome in some way, so we cannot assume that the arrest and the matters which followed were not in the will of God for him. He used the whole series of events for a lot of preaching to some otherwise unlikely hearers. Not every "evil" that befalls the Christian does so because he is being chastened for some disobedience.

While Paul could have done wrong, I believe he is a far better judge of what should have been done in this matter than you or I at this distance. He would have understood the significance of his actions and the effect on that particular people. In view of his clear understanding of the danger of legalism, I have to give him the benefit of the doubt and say that he was simply following his principle of becoming all things to all men.

Major Lessons from Minor Prophets

A Wonderful Prayer Psalm

Ernest E. Lyon

(Habakkuk 3:1-19; read the passage before reading the article)

The prophecy of Habakkuk ends with a truly great Psalm, one that follows the form of those that make up the Book of Psalms. It is truly a great prayer as well, one that confesses the greatness and the justice of God and contains near the end the most sublime passage of Scripture concerning confidence and joy in the Lord in the midst of the most trying circumstances. Oh, that we would all catch this same spirit and rejoice in the Lord regardless of our circumstances. As someone has said in a related subject, "No Christian ought to be under the circumstances."

After a brief heading, the Psalm starts with a recognition of the greatness of the Lord (Yahweh) and then moves to an earnest petition, a threefold one. First that the Lord will renew His great deeds "in our day" (more literally, "in the midst of the years"), that He will then make His deeds known and that in wrath that must come in the circumstances, He will remember to show mercy, His great mercy.

The next verse (three) describes God coming from Teman (in Edom or Seir) and from Mount Paran (in Edom). This has nothing to do with His origin, of course, for God is eternal and in that sense "came from" nowhere. He simply "is" in any past, present, or future time and before time began and after it ends! He is not governed by time, but He created it when He created and placed a man and a woman on the earth and made them in His image. The section covered by this "coming" and Habakkuk's description of the results extends through verse seven. Read and meditate on this awesome description of the results of His coming.

Someone has well called verses eight through fifteen "God's Combat." Habakkuk speaks of God's dealings with natural forces as if He were angry with those forces. He knew that God uses rivers, the sea, and other such things to show His displeasure with the men He created in His own image (male and female). In the first three verses it is easy to understand the use Habakkuk is making of these forces. Since in our day we do not use bows and arrows, possibly some might not realize that uncovering the bow was to make it ready for use. Otherwise, let us not forget in our day of lots of natural disasters that these are things He uses to remind us of His wrath at the way men have rejected Him. In verses eleven through fifteen it seems obvious that Habakkuk is speaking prophetically—that is, that he is pointing out things that God will do in the future as if they are already accomplished. Anyone speaking for God can do this, since in God's eyes (to speak of Him in natural terms) the present,

the past, and the future are all present. Don't try to understand how that can be, but simply believe it. To truly comprehend such things you would have to be God Himself.

These five verses are pointing to when God will deliver His chosen people who will at that time believe on His "anointed one" (His Christ, His Messiah). The language continues the use of natural forces under His control. But the purpose of it all is to bring back to Himself a people that have wandered far from Him.

Vastly different translations are given for the last part of verse sixteen. Habakkuk now moves himself into the picture and points out how bothered he is by what God is going to do as a result of the sins of the Lord's people, of whom Habakkuk is one. In spite of the great catastrophe coming, the great calamity, he says he will wait patiently for that. What is the calamity? The NIV translates the last part of the verse so as to refer the matter to the day when God would bring His judgment on the "nation invading us." That, it seems to me, does not fit the rest of the verse, but the ASV translation of that part seems to fit in exactly. That translation is "For the coming up of the people that invadeth us." In other words, he would wait patiently for the disaster coming on his people by an invader. You may choose either translation that you prefer, but I very much prefer the ASV.

Verses seventeen and eighteen are together one of the finest passages I know on trusting God in difficult times. The Promised Land was a great agricultural country when God took them into it; "flowing with milk and honey" was His description of the land. This passage deals with trusting God and being joyful in Him even when every resource for food fails. Notice how thoroughly he speaks. He speaks of the common fruit tree as not even budding, the vines are vacant of help in the form of grapes, the bushes on which olives grow will fail, and plowing the ground will do no good, for "the fields produce no food." He then moves to the animals they used for food—sheep and cattle. They likewise will be absent. In other words, to sum it up, they would have no food available from any of the resources they usually used. In spite of all this, he will not simply be resigned to God's will (as many express their feelings) but he will rejoice in the Lord and be "joyful in God my Savior." What a fine example of the faith spoken of in chapter two, verse four.

Habakkuk ends, with the exception of a statement of who was to perform his psalm and how it was to be accompanied, with a continuing show of his faith in "The Sovereign Lord" ("Lord Yahweh" to be literal—using His name and showing He is the master). In spite of all the problems he has just been speaking of, Habakkuk magnifies the name of the Lord in showing what great help He is—making him swift to move (like a deer) and to climb every height that might arise before him.

Let us have the kind of faith that Habakkuk not only spoke of but illustrated from his own life.

Missionary Work in Japan

CENTENNIAL REFLECTIONS No. 2

Harry Robert Fox

Last month I concluded my reminiscences of Brother J. M. McCaleb's arrival in Japan 100 years ago and his influence on others to go there as missionaries, including my parents. Although he did not directly influence my later going to Japan, he was an indirect influence.

It seems to me that before a person can decide to be a missionary he or she must have had some kind of encounter with God in which he perceives himself to be called by God. That was true of me. When my parents and their four children (of whom I was the oldest at age 5) returned on their first furlough to Louisville, Kentucky in October 1926, I was introduced for the first time to life in America

*He didn't seem to understand: it isn't enough
to know every word in the Bible. . . .*

and to the Highlands church. There I found church members who loved God and each other and where I felt warmly loved—especially by my Sunday School teacher, Ruth Johnson. All windows in the church building were stained glass. Those windows made a profound spiritual impression on me. I felt like I was in heaven! When we returned to Louisville a second time in August 1932 (when I was 11) I encountered someone who impacted me so deeply that there was ignited in me an inextinguishable flame. That person was George Klingman, preacher for the Highlands church. Never had I been exposed to anyone so full of the love and glory of God: his face literally glowed and radiated! The sheer *quality* of what he communicated was so *impressive* that I made up my mind that if it took an entire lifetime I would never rest until I had found whatever George Klingman had found.

The middle of September 1932 we moved to Nashville, Tennessee at the invitation of the B. D. Moreheads for my father to enter David Lipscomb College to obtain his first two years of college education. During the two years we were there I encountered several more men similar to Brother Klingman. They were also preachers: J. N. Armstrong, R. C. Bell, G. C. Brewer and E. H. Ijams. In them I discerned *again* that indefinable “something” that I was determined to know. But before I could find out what “it” was we left Nashville for Japan. It was not until 1938 that we got back to Nashville and I could “take up where I had left off.”

By then I was seventeen and beginning to suffer intensely. I felt like the Apostle Paul in Romans 7:24 when he cried out, “O

wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I felt pressure from every side to be a missionary to Japan. But inside of me was an absolute unwillingness to go. When my dad asked me, "Why?" I always replied: "Because I don't have a message worth taking to Japan or anywhere else." To which he would reply, "What's wrong with you? You know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. And besides, I can supply you with all the sermon outlines you will need for getting started." He didn't seem to understand what I was later to learn: it isn't enough to know every word in the Bible unless one's eyes are opened to the Word communicated *through* the words. And that Word, I was to learn, is Jesus Himself who alone reveals God to us. As the hymn so well says, "Beyond (i.e., in and *through*) the sacred page I seek *thee*, Lord." But until a certain event occurred in my life I didn't know that the "what" I was seeking would turn out to be a "Whom."

That event occurred in May 1942. Leading up to it were two years of teaching from three of the greatest teachers I have ever known: E. H. Ijams, Norman Parks and Robert G. Neil. They intensified in me a deeper desire than ever to know the Truth. Day by day I grew in my realization that the truth they were talking about was much bigger and grander than what I had known. What they set in motion in me came to a climax during my last month at David Lipscomb College. One evening my dad took my brother Logan and me to hear a missionary from the Far East. Little did I know that it would turn out to be the major turning point of my life. For it was on that evening that my eyes were finally opened to the REALITY of God and the *glorious* implications of the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel. All of my resistance to being a missionary dissolved. I was thus enabled to make the transition from Romans 7:24 to 7:25 and could participate in Paul's exclamation: "I thank God through the Lord Jesus Christ." Whereas I had been totally unwilling to be a missionary, I now *wanted* to be one—to anywhere on earth!

Next year I attended Harding College to study under J. N. Armstrong. The following year I went to Pepperdine College to study under another inspiring teacher, E. V. Pullias. Upon graduation I joined about 30 other preachers in enrolling in the graduate School of Religion established by Pepperdine as the first such school by any of our Christian colleges. My major professor was Ralph Wilburn who clarified for me Paul's gospel more clearly than I had ever seen it. While at Pepperdine I met and married Jeri Paden, sister of the Paden brothers who a few years later were to spearhead a mission to Italy.

In October 1947 Jeri and I sailed to Japan under the sponsorship of the Ninth and Lime congregation in Long Beach, California to begin what would turn out to be a ten-year term of service in Japan. Next month I plan to recount (in the spirit of Acts 14:27) some of what the Lord did through us and others during those ten years.

[Editor's comment: Dear reader, do you know what it means to know the Truth behind the truth, the Living Word beyond the written word? That makes all the difference.]

VOICES from the FIELDS

George Galanis

Athens, Greece

Mar. 25, 1992

Two years ago our Church purchased the ground, about a thousand square feet, with the purpose to erect our own church building. In October 1991 we broke the ground and started excavation. The architect's plans are to provide the basement 800 square feet, the main auditorium 1000 square feet, a balcony and the upper floor of seven rooms. The total space will be three thousand square feet.

Now I like to report about the progress of our church building project. Praise the Lord, the concrete work is going satisfactorily. We have already laid two and a half concrete roofs and floors and now remains the final roof of the whole building, which we expect to finish up within ten days. The whole concrete skeleton will cost us \$66,600. Thus far we have paid \$44,400 to the contractor and we owe him \$22,200 which amount he agrees to get paid in installments that are \$2,500 every month. We expect to raise this amount from the offerings of the members of our church, and from the contributions of our friends.

We are working now to arrange the basement and move in to save the money we spend for rent. We hope to be able to move in by the end of April 1992.

Next step is to start brick laying. But as we have no money at all left, we cannot ask the contractor to start. We are looking to the Lord to provide according to His riches in glory. EBENEZER!!!

All the members of our church offer sacrificially every week. All our Brethren join me in sending you our best regards in the Lord. May God bless you more abundantly and make you a channel of blessing to others.

Ken and Cindy Brady, Operation Mobilization Waynesboro, GA Mar. 1992

From Cindy: Besides the work at the office and at home, I am still very involved with the home school group (about 160 families now), and Ken and I have been asked to pray about accepting the position of assistant coordinators for next year. This is a two year commitment, as the assistants move up to become the coordinators for the next year. Please pray for us that we will have wisdom as we make his decision, because although it is an opportunity to be of service to many families, it will be one more thing added to an already busy schedule. Also, we know that Satan will fight against anything that is trying to strengthen the Christian family, so we want to go forward in the Lord's strength and not our own.

From Ken: Things at the warehouse continue to move along. The Lord has blessed us with a wealth of good Christian literature. Here are some ministry highlights of OM Lit in 1991: Twenty-seven con-

ainers (800,000 lbs.) with Christian and Educational literature; Two hundred pallets (200,000 lbs.) of Bibles and study materials; Over four thousand parcels by mail and UPS. OM's literature ministered to countries all over the world such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Philippines, India, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Uruguay, Barbados, Singapore, Jamaica, Australia, England, Brazil, Zambia, Taiwan, Togo, as well as to individuals and Christian bookstores in the USA. We are trusting the Lord to use this literature to touch the hearts of the lost to bring them to salvation and the hearts of believers to draw them closer to the Lord.

OM Mexico is planning a campaign in Monterey in northern Mexico for the week prior to Easter. Ten of the OM Lit staff members are scheduled to go and participate, leaving on April 8th and returning on April 18th. I am planning to go, but Cindy decided that she should stay in Waynesboro since the children cannot go. Please pray for the travel and the outreach.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

We Are Blushing #1

The Louisville area church leaders' lunch meets the SECOND Wed. of each month, not the 1st Wed. (which we mistakenly said last month). It is held at the north campus of Portland Christian School, 11:30-1:00.

We Are Blushing #2

In last month's News and Notes there was an item from Locust Street Church in Johnson City, Tenn. It mentioned that their minister had resigned, and obviously the resigning minister wrote it. But we left out his name! While many readers would know that it is brother Carl Kitzmiller, others would not. Excuse our oversight. Pray for the Locust Street Church during this transition time, and for Bro. Carl's health and strength. He continues ministering while a successor is sought.

Trip to the Philippines

Earl Mullins Sr., Earl Mullins Jr., T. Y. Clark and Cleo Russell are scheduled to leave for the Philippines on April 14, and to be there around two weeks. Bro. Earl Sr. may stay a while longer. They will be mostly in Mindanao, visiting churches and the annual Bible lectureship.

Garretts Back in Kentucky

Robert and Joy Garrett visited many congregations in Louisiana, Texas and

Tennessee during Jan.-March. They are now based in Louisville, ready to visit churches in Kentucky and Indiana. Since they'll be on the road a lot, you may hook them by contacting Victor Broadus: (606) 269-1312 (weekdays) or (606) 253-9834 (nites & weekends); P. O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555.

Browns Back from South Africa

David and Colleen Brown have arrived safely and are staying with relatives in Franklin, KY. They may be reached at (502) 586-6091. Pray for them as they seek God's will for their future.

Thank You for Years of Articles!

A note from Ernest Lyon to the editor says in part: "I have enjoyed writing for the Word and Work and hope that what I have written has been of help to the readers. I feel it is time for me to stop writing regularly. I will from time to time submit articles about things I am especially interested in."

Brother Lyon began writing regular columns for W&W in Jan. 1962. That's when he began "A Christian Views the News." Years later he turned that column over to Jack Blaes, and began expository studies of the book of Romans. After that he did the same with Hosea and now Habak-

kuk. 30 years of regular columns (interrupted only by Florence Collins' series last year on Jonah)—that adds up to over 330 columns, besides occasional articles he wrote before 1962!! Many thanks for your faithful writing, brother.

Special ASV Reprinted

Some of our readers still prefer studying the American Standard Version of 1901. Recently Star Bible Publications produced an ASV with various "helps." It does not have the concordance nor Bible dictionary that former "teacher's editions" had. But it does include center column references (which are very valuable for topical study), and maps, plus a daily

reading schedule, a harmony of the gospels, and sections of notes re: "Let the Bible Answer" and "Prophecy and Fulfillment of Jesus Christ." The size is 5¼ x 8 x 1¼ inches. We have 5 copies bound in genuine leather, black, at \$59.95 (KY residents add 6% tax). We can also order the same Bible bound in bonded leather hardback, burgundy color, at \$24.95 (KY residents add 6% tax). You may order these from W&W, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212

Revival News

We are holding reports of revival meetings that are scheduled for future dates in lieu of reports of results of these meetings. Let us hear from you.

High Lysine Corn Project Report from Hollace and Ila Sherwood Bryantsville Church of Christ and Rosehill Farms, Inc.

"Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear." Matt. 13:8,9 NIV To those listening ears, "The High Lysine Corn Project of the Bryantsville Church of Christ is producing food for hungry people, spiritual growth for those working, and fellowship and unity between churches."

During 1991, over 6000 bags of corn have been provided for hungry people. Four churches (that we know about) in addition to Bryantsville have grown high lysine corn. Over a dozen churches have provided physical help in bagging and/or loading. Financial help has come from churches and individuals all over the USA. Truly, the news of this project has fallen on good soil and has produced a good crop.

We spoke to 30 churches or other interested groups and have traveled over 7000 miles in 1991. We found many churches interested in starting a similar project and many Christians ready to help. Our longest trip was to Laredo, Texas and over into Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, to become familiar with the distribution system of the Latin American Bible Church Mission. At Crozet, Virginia, we were excited to find Christians who wanted to purchase two truck loads of corn to send to Honduras. We took part in mission conferences at Bloomington, IN, Louisville, KY, Highland, IL and at the Open Forum in Lexington, KY. Also we participated in the Corn Festival at Edina, MO. The Lord has opened many doors.

In the fall of 1990, we put up a grain bin for storing the corn which has made the whole process more efficient. We are planning additional improvements this year. We should point out, however, that a very dry growing season in Southern Indiana decreased the yield of the 1991 crop so there will not be as much high lysine corn available in 1992 as there was in the past year. Nevertheless, we are already planning to try to fill the grain bin, capacity 10,000 bushels, with the 1992 crop.

We need to continue speaking to people about this project. If we have been to your church or group, please ask us to return. If we have not visited you, please invite us. There is no charge for our visit. We also have a twenty minute video tape that we will send to you that describes the project. The only charge for it is the return postage.

Of course, financial help is always appreciated. There are so many hungry people in this world that need food for the body as well as food for the soul. From Proverbs 19:17 "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done." Contributions should be made to Corn Fund, Bryantsville Church of Christ, William Hopkins, treas., R. R. 1, Box 271, Mitchell, IN 47446.

Our address—R. R. 1, Box 408, Mitchell, IN 47446; phone (812) 849-2640.

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