

LIGHT ON THE LAW

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"I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" - Psalm 40:8.

Jude insists that we "should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" - Jude 3. Therefore, we are bold in defense of the Truth. Frequently, we receive letters concerning grace and everlasting life, which would provoke argument; but we do not answer all of them. Some are not worth answering. Now we are in receipt of an interesting letter containing some reflections and questions about the law. We will examine this letter.

First. Note some general facts on the subject. It is commonly supposed that the word "law," in the Bible, always refers to the "Ten Commandments"; but it does not. At least half a dozen Hebrew words are translated "law" in the Old Testament. The "fiery law" in Deuteronomy 33:2, 4 refers to the Ten Commandments. In my text, it means "direction" or "teaching," and expresses the will of God. In the New Testament, one Greek word "nomos" and its derivatives are used generally. The Greek word "exestin," which means "allowable," "privileged," or "authorized," is translated "law" in I Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23 and in II Corinthians 12:4. Therefore, in every instance, we must discover the meaning of the word "law" by the context and by comparing it with other Scripture citations. For example, in I Corinthians 6:6, it means the law of the land or national law. "The law of Moses" means the Ten Commandments and the typical ritual of the tabernacle - Acts 15:5. Acts 15:10 and Galatians 5:1 term that, an entangling yoke, which none of the fathers were able to bear. In the phrases, "the law of Moses," "the prophets," and "the Psalms," the word "law" refers to the Old Testament from its beginning to Samuel - Luke 24:44. Compare I Samuel 3:20 with Acts 3:24 and 13:20.

Second. It is not generally understood what we mean by the word "legalists." We mean those who trouble the Church by insisting that people must keep the law in order to get saved and keep saved. The legalists in the early Church taught circumcision to be essential to salvation. Today, some teach that water baptism, feet washing, and observing a certain day as the Sabbath, are necessary to keep saved. To observe any ceremony for the purpose of being saved, or saved more, or saved better, or to keep one's salvation, makes one a legalist. Keeping the law and observing ceremonies are works of the flesh, and not the faith of the heart. "NOT BY WORKS of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He (God) saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" - Titus 3:5. If we are saved and kept by grace alone, our fellowship with saints who mix in works or self-effort is seriously marred. Paul exclaims, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you? ... Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" - Galatians 3:1, 3.

Third. The writer remarks, "It is not clear to me how one whom God regards as a saint can be out of harmony with, or not subject to, the law of God - Romans 8:7." Evidently, this brother does not understand that all believers have two natures - the old Adam, and the new Adam or Christ nature. He is not familiar with Romans 7:15-25. Because we are dual creatures after we are saved, we all need the instruction of Romans 8:12-14 - "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." All the corrections, cautions, and warnings of the epistles were written because sin still dwells in our old Adam nature and, if we do not judge it Scripturally, it will reign in our bodies; and the new man, the new Adam life, will be stunted and powerless. But God be praised! "Sin shall NOT have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" - Romans 6:14. Then the brother asks, "Do you mean to suggest that, because Christians are under grace, they are at liberty to do the things prohibited by the law of God - the Ten Commandments?" We answer, "yes" and "no" to this question. The Apostle Paul declares that, "All things are lawful (permissible) unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" - I Corinthians 6:12; 10:23. This quotation expresses what it means to be "not under the law" which very few folk seem to understand - Romans 6:14, 15. "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient ..." - I Timothy 1:9, 10. Why then do saints insist on keeping it? "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully" - I Timothy 1:8; that is, give the law its place as a "schoolmaster until Christ" - Galatians 3:24. But school is out since Christ came. The law is no longer our master. It has no jurisdiction nor dominion over us. We use it lawfully, by regarding it as "the ministration of

condemnation" and "of death"; and by no means a ministration of life and righteousness. See II Corinthians 3:9, 7 and Galatians 3:21.

But what does the Apostle Paul mean by saying, "Being not without law to God, but under (literally, within) the law to Christ"? - I Corinthians 9:21. He means simply, that he was not lawless. By grace, he kept his body under. He judged his own sinful flesh, counting himself under grace, counting Christ his life, and yielded his members as instruments of righteousness unto God. He did not do so in his own strength, but by the enabling of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in him - Romans 8:13. The righteousness of the law was fulfilled in him as he walked in the Spirit; not by trying to keep the law - Romans 8:4. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" - Romans 13:10. Love never operates under the law, but independently of it. Love flows supernaturally and spontaneously from the new, heavenly, divine, and spiritual life imparted in the new birth. That life cannot sin; it can love and do right only, because it is born of God - I John 3:9. Our freedom from law, whether national or religious, is taught in Matthew 17:24-27. Jesus said to Peter, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free." Beloved Reader, do you get that? Do you see your freedom in Christ? We are the children of God, to whom all things belong. But mark what the Lord added: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee." Nevertheless, we are free. We learn also here how easy it is to do the Father's will; for Christ is always ready to enable us to do it, even if He must perform a miracle.

The Apostle Paul taught the same truths. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers" - Romans 13:5, 6. "Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" - I Corinthians 10:29. Then Paul makes one sweeping statement that covers everything all the way. "Owe no man any thing, but to LOVE one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this (reason), Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" - Romans 13:14. He amplifies the same principles in Romans fourteen, with reference to weak saints. Nevertheless, we are not under law. Furthermore, the writer asks, "Do you make no distinction between law (the Ten Commandments) and the law that required circumcision?" We answer that circumcision was not a law. It was simply a gracious "sign" and "seal" given to Abraham 430 years before the law was given to Moses. Brother Paul says that Abraham "received the SIGN of circumcision, a SEAL of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised" - Romans 4:11. Abraham was justified by faith, not by being circumcised. Circumcision was to him, what baptism in water is to us. Both symbolized death; and baptism signifies also resurrection. "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit," because in the old creation we were cut off with Christ in His death - Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11. The letter to the Galatians shows that circumcision was not only unnecessary, but it was not essential to salvation and never had been. But that letter also was written to show them that no man is justified by keeping the law; neither is he perfected thereby. They were "fallen from grace," though they were very religious and were trying hard to keep the law of Moses - Galatians 5:4. The law is not a savior.

The brother asks, "Do you know of any instance in which Paul reprov'd anyone for keeping any of the Ten Commandments?" Yes. The entire Epistle to the Galatians is such a reproof. Consider 2:16, 21; 3:2, 5, 10-13, 19, 24. See also II Corinthians three, and I Timothy 1:9, 10. Again he asks, "Do you not know that there is a vast difference between keeping the law of God in order to be saved, and keeping it because he has been saved from transgressing it?" No, Brother, there is no difference. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," whether it be to obtain righteousness, or to retain it - Romans 10:4. The law could not give life; and, of course, it cannot sustain life nor nourish it after it is received. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" - Romans 3:31. Faith brings deliverance to a sinner, whom the law condemned but could not save. Thus, it agrees with the law. But that law, which "was weak through the flesh," has nothing to do with saving him or keeping him or

perfecting his walk - Romans 8:3.

"Walk in the Spirit," not after the law," and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" - Galatians 5:16. I repeat, that Christians are not under law by the will of God; but some believers put themselves under it and are subject to it. Neither the Ten Commandments, nor the law of the land, have any jurisdiction over us. We are subject to the latter, because it is expedient for our comfort and safety, while passing through the world as pilgrims and strangers. We are a heavenly people, seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus where no national law nor Ten Commandments exist - Ephesians 2:6. Hence, Brother Paul asks, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" - Colossians 2:20. We live in heaven by faith, and through the enabling of the Holy Spirit we are to "mortify (make to die) therefore your members which are upon the earth" - Colossians 3:5. Study the several laws cited in Romans 7:21-25 and 8:2, 3. Paul writes of "the law of God," in which the new man delights, whether it be expressed by the Ten Commandments or otherwise. Then there is "the law (or rule) of sin which is in my members." "The law of the Spirit of life" operates in the new man. The Ten Commandments, being weak through the flesh (that is, the flesh cannot keep them), cannot deliver anyone from the law of sin. Therefore, God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (but without sin) and as an offering for sin, and thus condemned sin in the flesh. But all that is by grace absolutely. By believing Christ's death for us, we establish the law; but we are saved and kept independently of it, and entirely without its aid. We are on resurrection ground in Christ, where the Ten Commandments have no dominion.

The Sabbath day was instituted over two thousand years before the law was given to Moses - Genesis 2:2, 3. Israel were instructed to "remember the Sabbath day," because of God's creative work and in hope of a rest (a keeping of a Sabbath) that remaineth to the people of God - Hebrews 4:4-9. To Israel, the Sabbath foreshadowed the Millennial reign of rest and peace. But, it figures also, our spiritual rest in Christ. "For he that is entered into His (God's) rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His" - Hebrews 4:10. Therefore, we read, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" - Colossians 2:16, 17. Saints who observe such things, and make a distinction between days, are considered "weak in the faith" - Romans 14:1-5. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection (or mind) on things above, not on things on the earth" - not on perishable shadows and fulfilled ordinances - Colossians 3:1, 2. Since Christ the Substance has come, we should be done forever with shadows and worship God in the Spirit and not in the letter. into the synagogues on the Sabbath in order to reach the people, and not because it was more holy than other days, though the law was still in vogue. He said, "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath" which "was made for man," by which language He anticipated man's deliverance from the law and all the old covenant ordinances - Mark 2:27, 28. By healing on the Sabbath, He showed that six days were not enough to "work the works" of God. He taught, also, that one day was not enough to provide rest for weary souls - Matthew 11:28-30. The conduct of the apostles confirmed His teaching. After His resurrection, the disciples always met for worship on the first day of the week in His honor, for He arose on that day as the Head of the new creation. We rest IN CHRIST, not on Saturday. In Him we enjoy seven days of rest - real rest of soul and spirit; while the Sabbatarian rests only one day - in body. We are not under law but under grace, which has provided this sweet deep spiritual rest in Him.

Many people imagine that when sinners are saved, they are restored to Adam's condition before he fell, which would put them under law and on probation. Adam and Eve were put under a strict law. They were permitted to eat certain things, but prohibited from eating a certain fruit. The penalty, death, was attached to it. They broke that law, and the penalty immediately set in. They were smitten instantly with conviction, fear, and a sense of shame. They knew they were naked, and thought to hide from God's Presence. But observe that law could not cure them of their malady. What should be done? Grace stepped on the scene and announced redemption through the Seed of that fallen woman - Genesis 3:15. God demonstrated His grace and typified redemption, by slaying an animal and by dressing Adam and Eve in skin coats. Blood was shed and righteousness was bestowed. Wondrous grace! Did that couple need grace? Yes. Could they have helped themselves? They tried to cover their shame by turning tailors; but fig leaf aprons

were too brittle, too weak, too small, too thin. The Holy God could not accept a righteousness made by unholy hands. Garments washed in blood, which He had shed, were the only ones accepted by Him. Oh, the marvels of Divine grace! Did they earn or merit those coats? No. They merited death. Did they help sew the seams of those coats with their man-made needles? Absolutely not. These robes were seamless and a perfect fit. Did they dress themselves, or each other, after the garments were made? Let the record answer - "The Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them" - Genesis 3:21. No human hand helped God provide redemption, and no sinful human hand helps Him to save lost sinners. And no law can keep them saved. "By grace are ye saved (if saved at all) through faith; and that NOT OF YOURSELVES: it is the GIFT OF GOD" - Ephesians 2:8. Never forget that. Those woolen suits were gifts of grace, from the God of love and mercy. We do not read that Adam and Eve even shed tears, did penance, beat the bench, and prayed through, before the Lord dressed them up. I imagine that they were so disgusted with their flimsy aprons, which perhaps tore the first time they wore them, that they hailed with delight the durable raiment of skins. The righteousness of Christ cannot be improved, destroyed, punctured, nor can it wear out. It satisfies the just and holy God. He cannot see through it; hence, He sees us clothed in Christ. His righteousness fits and suits everyone who accepts it - everlasting righteousness. "Where is boasting then?" the apostle exclaims. "It is excluded" - Romans 3:27. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" - I Corinthians 1:31. Where is the law? Its voice is hushed. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" - Romans 10:4. "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless ..." - I Timothy 1:9. Now, if Adam and Eve failed to keep the simple law placed before them when they were sinless, how shall we expect to keep God's law with "sin in the flesh"? We need a new sinless spiritual life, and the Holy Spirit to keep and nourish that life.

The letter we have been considering has a fine ending. It puts before us Paul's pertinent question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" - Romans 6:1, 2. As "sin is the transgression of the law," Jesus Christ came to die and "save His people from their sins" and to deliver them from the curse of the law - I John 3:4; Matthew 1:21. It seems that God's people should be willing and eager to enter into new covenant relations with such a gracious God; and allow Jesus to do for them what He, in grace, came to do and which He is still able to do. We agree with our brother in this; but we must also remember that a number of things militate against a life of victory over sin. Satan is on the job. Sin still remains in our flesh. We dwell in bodies of humiliation. Every believer is a dual creature, having both the old Adam nature and the new Adam or Christ nature, which are contrary to each other. We are all babes in Christ till we learn the Scriptural way of growth and victory. We all need to study the "Word of His grace," found especially in Paul's epistles, that we may grow up into Christ in all things and live in victory.

BASIC FACTS

GRACE was introduced in the beginning - Genesis 3:15. The Ten Commandments were not given to Moses until 2500 years later. See Exodus twenty. The Law was given 430 years after Abraham was justified by grace through faith, wholly independent of works or human effort. He had no law to keep, and was not on probation as was Adam before he fell. In walking by faith, Abraham became "the friend of God," not by keeping any law whatever. "The law is not made for a righteous man (he needs no law), but for the lawless ..." - I Timothy 1:9. In Christ, we "are not under the law, but under grace" - Romans 6:14. Therefore, sin shall not have dominion over us. The Law has no jurisdiction over us in Christ. It spent its strength and finished its work on us, in executing Christ Jesus on the Cross in our behalf. There - "Our old man was crucified with Him" - Romans 6:6. That is, we died with Christ.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS do not express all the will of God. They were the written will of God for a particular people (Israel), for a certain limited period of time. They are not rules of conduct for believers. Paul said, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" - Galatians 6:16. That is, the rule of the new creation, brought forth by the death and resurrection of Christ; not by the rule of circumcision, nor the Law. The Law "was ADDED because of transgressions." It was a "schoolmaster until Christ, that we might be justified by faith" - Galatians 3:19, 24. "The Law entered, that the offence might abound" - Romans 5:20. As a schoolmaster, it whipped the transgressor to obedience; but, he kicked against it, thus proving his inability to keep it. The Law "was weak through the (sinful) flesh" -

Romans 8:3. It could not give life to nor save a sinner. It is not a savior. "If there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law" - Galatians 3:21. The Law school is out, since Christ came. The schoolmaster, the Law, has been dismissed; and is never hired again except by legalists. "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth" - Romans 10:4. It was a ministration of condemnation and of death, an unendurable sight - II Corinthians 3:6-9. Hence, it was "done away." It was an unbearable yoke to Israel. To lay down a law for others to keep is tempting God - Acts 15:10. It is also witchcraft - Galatians 3:1. With all these Bible facts before us, how dare anyone try to keep the Law of Moses, or teach others to keep it, or make laws and bylaws for folk who have been made free forever by the blood of Christ? "And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" - John 8:32, 36.

SOMEWHAT IN DOUBT

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" - Galatians 5:16. A puzzled inquirer propounds some queer questions. She asks, "What is grace? What is law? What is spirit? What are the lusts of the flesh - television, movies, bowling, swimming? Is doing these things, even seldom, feeding the flesh?" This letter contained many other questions and statements. In reading it, one could hear the voices of the old Adam and of the new Adam. It showed also that the Holy Spirit was answering some of the queries; but perhaps she was not quite ready to acquiesce and say, "Yes." Grace means God's favor, unearned, unmerited, unasked-for, unheard-of, bestowed upon sinners who are sentenced to death. God's great stroke of grace was shown by the sacrificial death of Christ in humanity's stead. The Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit, is meant in our text; which the letter also quoted. The flesh, the carnal mind, self, refer to the old Adam; especially, since Adam sinned in the garden. All unsaved people are in the flesh. They are selfish and sinful, sold under sin, controlled by sin.

The operations of the flesh are named in Galatians 5:19-21. The operations or fruit of the Spirit are named in verses twenty-two and twenty-three. The contrast is plain. In personal experience, we meet many things which are not listed above or elsewhere in the Bible. Such things must be decided by our Spirit-guided judgment, taste, desire, or conviction. Providence, or necessity, may answer the question or make the decision for us. As to places of amusement, we may ask, "Are they run for the glory of God? What profit can you get there? What is the character of the manager and of the majority who attend such places? Can you imagine finding Jesus there? Do you mean to go where He could not be found?" Remember also, that you are influencing others by your conduct, be it wise or unwise.

Others may, you cannot. If you purpose to be a wholehearted Christian, you must learn to conform to the Word of God and walk in the Holy Spirit. If you would be such a Christian, you will have to say "No" many times to the flesh - your own flesh and that of others. Perhaps your hardest task will be to say "No" to your own kinsfolk, or to other saints. Religious traps to entangle and trip young people are many. Their religious tags make them the more subtle and dangerous. I said "No" many times to other Christians, who made fun of my piety. They seemed to enjoy some things of which I was deprived. However, I have a place on God's program of which they never dreamed. I learned to say, if I wanted God's best, "Others may, but I cannot." First, I made such decisions from prudence, profit, and conviction; sometimes against my feelings, which suffered thereby. Today, the same things would be repulsive and obnoxious. I would not have them under any circumstance.

"Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned (condemned) if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" - Romans 14:22, 23. Here are several clear principles expressed. Follow them, and you cannot go far out of the way. It is supposed that you have the Holy Spirit, and really desire to please the Lord rather than your own flesh or others. You may have faith before God to do some things that others cannot do. Be sure it is the faith of God, then push on; but have it to thyself before Him. See that you do not school your conscience into looseness, as many have done. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself." This is pure happiness and pure selfjustification; the conscience has not become an elastic belt. Do the thing several times that you doubt is right, and you will soon have an elastic conscience. If the thing is doubtful, wait; wait on the Lord. If it is only an impression, if only a carnal desire, if an honest but unwise desire or conviction, it will gradually fade away. You may forget it, or not want to move

thus; or providence may inform you of the wisdom of abiding where you are. Consider Solomon's wise words - "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" - Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Hold fast the form of sound words,
which thou hast heard of me,
in faith and love
which is in
Christ Jesus.
II Timothy 1:13.