

The Greatest Story Ever Told

The Honorable Law

I
"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."
II
Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

III
Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

IV
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

V
"Honor thy father and thy mother: this is the first commandment, which is the duty of the first-born; that thou mayest prosper, and it may be long upon thee, and thou shalt do well."
VI
Thou shalt not kill."

VII
Thou shalt not commit adultery."

VIII
Thou shalt not steal."

IX
Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

X
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, nor his wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid, nor his ass, nor anything that is his."

Harold Sykes

*The Greatest Story
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ASCRIBE PUBLICATIONS

— Matt. 13:44-52 —

“BECAUSE I WILL PUBLISH THE NAME OF THE LORD:
ASCRIBE YE GREATNESS UNTO OUR GOD”

“The Honorable Law”



“The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honorable.” (Isaiah 42:21)

The law of God. A burdensome yoke of bondage to those who hate it, but a liberating source of peace to them who love it. Paul speaking boldly of those opposed to the restrictions of God said,

“Because the carnal mind is enmity (hatred) against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Romans 8:7)

However, David in a Psalm of reflection upon God's law wrote,

“Great peace have they which love thy law.. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.” (Psalm 119:165, 44-45)

How is it that Jesus Christ the Beloved Son of God, and the Ten Commandments in the law of God, both cause such a sharp contrast in those exposed to the message they convey. The answer is quite simple, both Christ and the law of God are expressions of the same thing, the character of God. The law is God's character transcribed, His thoughts and feelings written out. Jesus Christ is God's character demonstrated, His thoughts and feelings lived out.

The scripture quoted above from Isaiah 42:21 is what is known as a Messianic prophecy, which simply means a scripture foretelling some aspect of the work that Christ would carry out on earth in the plan of salvation.

“The Lord (The Father) is well pleased for His (Christ) righteousness’ sake; He (Christ) will magnify the law, and make it honorable.” (Isaiah 42:21)

The fact that the Father was well pleased with Christ was plainly stated within the hearing of all who were present at the time of His baptism by John.

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16-17)

Isaiah’s prophecy said the Father would be well pleased with His righteousness, and Christ, the Beloved Son, while on earth stated why the Sovereign Father was pleased with Him.

“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” (John 8:29)

Whereas Isaiah stated the Father would be well pleased with His righteousness, Christ stated the Father was pleased with what He did. And what does the scriptures define as righteousness? In the same division of the Psalms quoted above, where David is giving reflections of the law it states,

“My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.” (Psalm 119:172)

So since we are clearly instructed that the Heavenly Father was well pleased with the righteousness of Christ, and righteousness is defined as the law of His

commandments, and Jesus said the Father was pleased with what He did, we conclude then that the Father was pleased that Christ did His Commandments. And by doing His commandments, Jesus magnified the law and made it honorable.

John the beloved disciple echoes this thought in His first epistle, and in the closing of the book of Revelation.

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He (Christ) is righteous.” (1 John 3:7)

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (Revelation 22:14)

“For I am the Lord, I change not...” (Malachi 3:6)

The idea that a perfect God who “changes not,” who also sees the end from the beginning, established a law that He would later have to change or do away with it because it was too much to ask, should be easily seen for the deception it is. And contrary to the popular belief in many Christians circles, this teaching of the setting aside of the law of God did not begin when Christ supposedly nailed the Ten Commandments to the cross. The setting aside of God’s law has been satan’s work since this conflict began in heaven prior to mankind being created.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4)

“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.” (1 John 3:8)

It is the devil who first “sinned,” which is defined as “transgression of the law,” (to break, disobey, or set aside God’s law). After John defines the Biblical understanding of

sin in verse four, he continues in verse eight by saying, those who commit sin (transgress, break, disobey, or set aside God's law), do so of the devil. Yet how many professed Christians teach by word and action, that it is Christ who by His death for our sins, released us from the obligation to honor God's law?

Christ Himself foreseeing satan's deception afar off is quoted as saying...

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17-18)

It is not my belief that the vast majority of professed Christians dishonor God's law out of a malicious design to serve the cause of satan who is the deceiver of all those who transgress its precepts. Most of the masses who have chosen to follow Christ out of a sincere appreciation for the salvation He offers, have little to no idea of the depth and principles involved in the original conflict between Christ and satan which began before the creation of man, and will continue until the close of earth's history.

The major disconnect in the understanding of what Christ truly came to accomplish, and what many believe and teach He accomplished, is the difference between what key words mean according to the Bible itself, versus what many perceived is meant by those key words.

As described above, the word "sin" in the Bible is a direct reference to the law of God, yet very few of us when we hear the word "sin" think of the law of God. Most people when we hear the word "sin" think of the forbidden object or practice we enjoy, not the God we claim to love whom we have offended by dishonoring His law.

The same is true of the word “righteousness” which was defined above as “all God’s commandments” (Psalms 119:172). When we hear that we are to be clothed in Christ righteousness, many tend to think “Christ obeyed the law for me so I don’t have to worry about it.” Yet as quoted above John says “he that is righteous, does righteousness,” which is “all God’s commandments.”

And then there is the often quoted phrase penned by Paul...

“...ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Romans 6:14)

Does not being “under the law, but under grace” truly mean we have license now to diminish God’s law like satan, while claiming to be the representatives of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Did He who was prophesied to “magnify the law, and make it honorable,” suffer and die to allow those who accepted that salvation to dishonor the law while claiming to be the servants righteousness (all God’s commandments)?

Christ said...

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:19)

Did Paul teach men that grace allows us to break or set aside God’s law? The answer is of course no, for Paul himself wrote...

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly;

righteously, and godly, in this present world..." (Titus 2:11-12)

According to Paul, grace teaches us that we should deny ungodliness, not obedience to God's law. But what does Paul mean when he says "ye are not under the law, but under grace?"

As Christ when speaking in parables, used earthly things in which His hearers were familiar to illustrate the spiritual lessons He desired them to understand, we can draw from the laws that govern citizens in a given land, and the penalties and leniencies that attend the breaking of those laws.

A simple illustration can be drawn from the laws that govern the speed of drivers upon the highway. If the law states the maximum speed one is allowed to accelerate is 70mph, and there are law enforcement officers stationed all along the highway, no one driving 70mph or below has to worry about the law enforcement officers. In fact, so long as they stay within that range, they move up and down the highway as if there is no law.

However when a driver transgressing that law cruises pass an officer at 95mph, the officer pulls out, and pulls him over because he has broken the law. What ever the law states is the penalty for breaking the law can now be inflicted, either by way of a fine, or even being placed "under" arrest. The law enforcement officer may decide to be "gracious" and let the driver go without inflicting the penalty he has the right to administer under the law. Does the fact that the officer doesn't place him "under arrest," but allows him to remain free under his "gracious" leniency, mean that the driver is now free to speed off in front of the officer in disregard the law from that day forward because he is not under arrest, but under grace? Any one with common sense

would say of course not, but why is it with God's law this is not just as easily understood?

We all know that those who break the laws that govern citizens, if they are released from the penalties enforced under the law, are even more so expected to be law abiding citizens going forward. Likewise Paul as he elaborates on the meaning of his words (ye are not under the law, but under grace), conveys the same idea. We who have received grace are the more expected not to transgress the law (serve sin), but to obey all God's commandments (serve righteousness).

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Romans 6:14-18)

Let us analyze closely the words of Paul with the understanding of the Biblical definition of the terms he used.

What then? shall we transgress the law (sin), because we are not under the law (the condemnation of sin), but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of transgression of the law (sin) unto death, or of obedience unto all God's commandments (righteousness)? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin (transgression of the law), but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from the transgression of the law

(sin), ye became the servants of all God's Commandments (righteousness).

Notice how Paul uses the word "servant" in connection with "sin" and "righteousness." He is making an emphatic point that whether we transgress the law (sin), or obey all God's commandments (righteousness), we are a servant to some one. It is written...

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." (Matthew 10:25)

"...to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey..." (Romans 6:16)

"He that committeth sin is of the devil..." (1 John 3:8)

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." (Romans 3:31)

The Greek word translated "establish" in Romans 3:31 quoted above, literally means "to stand" "continue" "to abide". The children of faith do not make void the law, we establish, stand in, continue and abide in the law, as law abiding citizens of heaven. This same word translated "establish" in Romans 3:31, is translated "abode" in John 8:44.

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and "abode" not in the truth (the law), because there is no truth in him." (John 8:44)

"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth." (Psalm 119:142)

"...the devil sinneth (transgressed the law) from the beginning." (1 John 3:8)

That which satan did not abide in, the children of faith who receive Christ are expected to “establish” (abide in), and that is God’s law which is truth, His everlasting “righteousness” or “all God’s commandments.”

But of course when the necessity of obedience to the law of God is stressed, there is a cry of “legalism” from many precious souls who have been indoctrinated into an “obedience free” gospel. It is indisputably true that salvation is a “free gift” which comes by faith, and not by the works of the law. However it is also indisputable that the “gift” of salvation when unwrapped contains in it a promise of Divine power in the person of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all “truth” (thy law is truth - Psalms 119:142).

To state it in simple terms obedience to law does not produce salvation, the gift of salvation is to produce obedience to the law. The fruit does not produce the tree, the tree produces the fruit. Salvation is the tree, obedience to God’s law is the fruit. This is why Christ said...

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth “good” fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth “good” fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matthew 7:15-20)

And what is “good” fruit? Paul says...

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and “good.” (Romans 7:12)

Many sincere followers of Christ who have been drawn to Him by His irresistible love, accept the free gift of salvation while discarding the necessary obedience included in it. And so many seem to overlook that immediately after Christ spoke His warning about knowing the genuine from the false by their “fruits,” He gave this solemn warning.

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

Jesus says that many at the time of reckoning will come expecting to be received by Him with joy because they accepted His name, and did many wonderful “works,” but He refused them because they also did the “work” of iniquity. And what is “iniquity?”

“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” (Psalm 32:5)

Iniquity is another word for sin, which is transgression of the law of God. Salvation is about the redemption of man, but it includes destroying the “work” of the devil. All we who receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, have also enlisted in His mission to overthrow satan’s work of sin (transgression of God’s law).

It has been satan’s work from the beginning to diminish God’s law, first among the angels in heaven, and afterwards on earth among mankind. One third of the angels were deceived by his subtle arguments, and the law being

diminished in their minds led to the disobedience that resulted in their expulsion from heaven. The more diminished the law became in their mind, the more these “fallen angels” were corrupted into the purely evil beings we now know as devils and demons.

But whereas satan’s work on earth among men has been to diminish God’s law in the hearts and minds of mankind, Jesus the Beloved Son would come to “..magnify the law, and make it honorable.” (Isaiah 42:21)

The first, and most famous sermon of Christ, the sermon on the mount, was indeed a “magnification of God’s law.” Christ expanded the scope of the law beyond the visible appearance of righteousness as seen in the outward actions, and taught that its governing authority extends into the private sector of the thoughts and feelings. His magnification of the law was so clear and broad we are told...

“...when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.” (Matthew 7:28)

The outward obedience to the law which was the pride of the scribes and Pharisees was striped away. No more could “right” behavior produced by the “will power” of man be seen as righteousness sufficient enough to meet the approval of God.

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her hath

committed adultery with her already in his heart.” (Matthew 5:20-22, 27-28)

The law as it is magnified by Christ shows us the utter impossibility to meet the approval of God by human efforts alone. The law when it is magnified, amplifies our need of Christ and His Divine power which makes possible all things (Philippians 4:13).

But the most beautiful magnification of the law is seen in its demonstration as witnessed in the compassionate way Jesus treated everyone He met, and the perpetual honor He ascribed to our heavenly Father as He lived in the conscious presence of God everyday. The law as it is written upon tables of stone seems to magnify what we “shall not” do, but the law as it is written upon the life of Christ magnifies all of the mighty acts of love and mercy which it is our privilege to perform. Another Messianic prophecy found in Psalms says of Christ...

“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Psalm 40:8)

“The Lord God of Israel saith...them that honor me, I will honor” (1 Samuel 2:30)

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” (Hebrews 8:10)

When this process takes place, and the law is written in our minds (thoughts), and hearts (feelings), then we will truly understand Paul's words, "Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10)

Will you take the simple step of asking God to give you the Holy Spirit to guide you into all the truth of the Bible, and investigate if the things you have just read are true?

Yes? _____

"These were more noble...in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily; whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11)

Or No? _____

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)



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