

Law or Grace

Which Is It?



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By Gerald E. Weston

The question of “law or grace?” has been the proverbial “bad penny” of Christian theology since long before Martin Luther’s time. Did Jesus Christ truly come to “do away” with His own Father’s law, or did His teachings and the inspired words of His apostles work together to paint a bigger picture?

The answer is of eternal importance!

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LG Edition 1.0 | October 2023
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Introduction

Mainstream “Christianity” is in disarray. Mainline Protestant churches are losing members as they stray further away from biblical truths. Major news organizations are publishing articles with titles like “Atheists in the Pulpit: Clergy Who Are Non-Believers” and “Atheist Ministers Struggle with Leading the Faithful.” Major denominations are splintering over issues of abortion, ordaining homosexuals and transsexuals, establishing women as priests and bishops, and in some cases even denying that Jesus was resurrected. It seems that just about “anything goes” in mainstream churches today.

But why should this surprise us when there is so little respect for the Bible as the word of God, and so little recognition that the laws found in it are relevant for today? Without a formal standard of expectations—a law—what can be our guiding moral compass? A nebulous doctrine of “love,” without any instruction on what love *is* from a biblical perspective, removes the rudder we need to direct our way.

The Apostle Paul’s assessment of human nature and the law of God is accurate, even describing attitudes found in many mainstream “Christian” denominations: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:7–8). Answering the question of “law or grace?” is of utmost importance—even eternal importance!

The Ten Commandments were once a standard feature of Sunday School classes for children everywhere. These simple commands were

displayed in government buildings, chiseled on rock monuments, and found on plaques hanging in homes across America and elsewhere. Sadly, their popularity is now in decline.

Militant atheists have waged war against the Ten Commandments in recent decades, forcing monuments off public property wherever they find them. One famous case involved Roy Moore, Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, who placed a monument of the Ten Commandments in the judicial building rotunda at the state capitol in Montgomery. This caused no small controversy. After a lengthy legal battle, the monument was removed from the rotunda and Moore was removed from his judgeship.

In another famous incident, a monument displaying the Ten Commandments at the Arkansas state capitol was destroyed by a man who deliberately crashed his car into it less than 24 hours after it was erected. That same individual had previously destroyed another display by the same method.

Sadly, militant atheists are not the only enemies of this code of law that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. As reported by the *Associated Press*, “The Oklahoma Supreme Court ordered the removal of a Ten Commandments display from its Capitol in 2015, and the state’s voters in 2016 rejected an initiative aimed at allowing the monument to return” (“Arkansas replaces Ten Commandments monument at state Capitol,” *SWTimes.com*, April 26, 2018). Imagine that: Both the court and the voters of a conservative American state rejected the monument!

Some professing Christians are understandably angered by the assault against this code of law that the Bible declares was written by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10). Yet, surprisingly, the greatest enemy to the commandments is not atheists or the courts. One might think it is public opinion—but that is only half the story. The greatest enemy might not be the one you assume.

Memorizing Ten Commandments

I grew up in mainstream Protestantism and was taught the Ten Commandments as a child. I was never very good at memorization, but I somehow managed to quote all ten—in their shortened form—well enough to receive my own personal copy of the New Testament. At ten or eleven years of age, I was not very interested in reading, and

probably never even opened that trophy. Over time, it vanished from my youthful collections.

But imagine how surprised I was a few years later, when I was told that these laws I had put so much effort into memorizing were *no longer in effect*. “They were done away! We do not need to keep them! Jesus kept them in our stead and nailed them to the cross!”

This “revelation” did not come from my atheist uncle George, but from two adults who called themselves Christians! They were overjoyed by their freedom from the law and wanted me to experience the same liberty. They invited me to a Bible study where this was to be discussed, and I know they were disappointed when I declined their offer. They later informed me, “We did away with the law Wednesday evening!” Imagine: All my time wasted with needless memorization! But was it really wasted? I was not convinced at the time by their carefully selected scriptures—taken out of context, of course—but I *was* confused.

One organization sharing its view on the subject puts it this way: “The key to understanding the relationship between the Christian and the Law is knowing that the Old Testament law was given to the nation of Israel, not to Christians.... None of the Old Testament law is binding on Christians today. When Jesus died on the cross, He put an end to the Old Testament law” (“Do Christians have to obey the Old Testament law?,” *GotQuestions.org*, June 23, 2023). The article goes on to quote some of the same “cherry-picked” scriptures that were thrown at me.

Make no mistake: There are formidable arguments that deserve our attention.

Antinomians

Those who claim that the law of God has been done away and replaced by grace are sometimes called *antinomians*, meaning those who believe “that under the gospel dispensation of grace... the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation” (“antinomian,” *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed September 12, 2023). When people speak of the “moral law,” they are specifically referring to the Ten Commandments.

Antinomians turn to the writings of the Apostle Paul, which they say explain away our need to keep the law. Among their favorite scriptures is Romans 6:14: “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

“Not under law” certainly *sounds* as though we are freed from it, but what exactly does the Apostle mean? I will answer that question, and many others—but it is important to understand both what this resource is saying and, just as importantly, what it is not saying.

Paul and James may appear to contradict one another, but they do not! The first law of communication is to know one’s audience. Paul and James each wrote to different audiences and, taken as a whole, their letters provide an important part of the overall picture of law and grace. Paul mostly addressed those influenced by Judaism’s human interpretations of Scripture—people who were trying to convince the Gentiles that they were made righteous by keeping various physical rituals. This explains why Paul wrote that “if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God” (Romans 4:2). This dangerous trap was also what Martin Luther faced with Catholic ritualism. By contrast, James addressed an audience who fell into the opposite trap—that of cheap grace, thinking that behavior, in the light of grace, is unimportant. This is why he said, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (James 2:24).

Much of our Protestant audience today falls into the ditch addressed by James—hence, the greater emphasis that this resource places on law. But make no mistake: Justification and salvation come only through Jesus Christ—His atoning sacrifice and how He lives in and transforms us through the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20). The grace side of the coin is Paul’s great contribution to our understanding.

We will examine Romans 6:14 and many other scriptures to uncover the true relationship between God’s law and His grace. First, we must ask and answer two fundamental questions: Is Jesus or Paul more central to Christianity? Who is it who died for our sins? The answer to these questions is obvious: Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ—the Anointed One, the Messiah—and Paul never was. While Paul’s writings are essential to a proper understanding of this subject, he did not—and, in fact, could not—give His life in exchange for ours. Therefore, we must ask, “What was Jesus’ view regarding God’s law?” Can anyone contradict our Savior? This is where we will begin in our first chapter.

Chapter I

Jesus and the Law

A young man approached Jesus one day and asked a question relevant to each of us: “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). Jesus must have startled him by asking a question of His own: “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God” (v. 17). What did He mean? In effect, Jesus was confirming that He, Jesus Christ, was God in the flesh.

And Christ’s answer was straightforward and unambiguous: “But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (v. 17). After being asked which ones, Jesus left no doubt as to which code of law He meant:

“You shall not murder,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother” (vv. 18–19).

These were five of the Ten Commandments—the Fifth Commandment through the Ninth Commandment. Christ then added the broad command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” I will discuss this command later, but we should note that the young man thought he had been obeying all of these from his youth, but—because he felt something missing in his approach to salvation—he went on to ask, “What do I still lack?” (v. 20). Remember his first question: “what *good thing* shall I do that I may have eternal life?” He was looking to do something

more than he was currently doing. Jesus therefore prescribed for him one great act: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (v. 21).

Was this advice—to sell all he had and give it to the poor—an eleventh commandment? Is it a command for you? That depends on whether you have the same problem this young man had. What Jesus did was to point him back to the First and Tenth Commandments. Jesus discerned that the young man was putting his riches ahead of the one and only true God, and that he was covetous of wealth. The proof of this is found in his reaction: “But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (v. 22).

And that broad commandment Jesus mentioned—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”—wasn’t something new. In fact, He was quoting Leviticus 19:18, giving a summation of the last six of the Ten Commandments. We see this again clearly in Christ’s later encounter with a lawyer who sought to test Him by asking, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” (Matthew 22:36). Jesus answered, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*” (vv. 37–40).

The first four of the Ten Commandments show, in detail, the foundations of sincere love towards our Creator: Don’t put another god before Him, don’t limit Him to something made of wood or stone, don’t use His name frivolously, and do respect the day He set aside. The last six tell us to honor our parents and show specifically how to express love toward our neighbor: Don’t murder him, don’t commit adultery with his wife, don’t steal from him, don’t lie to him, and don’t covet his possessions.

Magnifying the Law

Jesus’ instructions about law began earlier with His Sermon on the Mount, found in chapters 5–7 of Matthew. Here we find Jesus making a direct statement—difficult to misinterpret—about the permanence of the law: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). But anti-

nomians *do* misinterpret! Fulfill, they say, means that Jesus “fulfilled” it for us, and we therefore do not need to do so. Have you not heard someone say, “It has all been done for you”? But is this what Jesus meant? How can we know for sure?

The verse that follows sheds light on the statement. “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (v. 18). So, whatever Jesus meant, He told us that not one jot or tittle—not a perfect parallel, but “not a dotting of an *i* or crossing of a *t*”—would pass away as long as heaven and earth stood. Jesus fulfilled His mission in flesh and blood in 31 AD, and the last time I looked, the heaven and earth are still here. Thus, the law is still here. So, what did He mean by the word *fulfill*?

God, through His prophet Isaiah, predicted that the coming Christ would “*magnify* the law, and make it honorable” (Isaiah 42:21, *KJV*). The *New King James Version* says, “He will exalt the law and make it honorable.” Is this not exactly what Jesus did—*magnify* and *exalt* the law? Don’t take my word for it—believe what you read in your Bible! What do the verses following Jesus’ dogmatic statement about the permanency of the law tell us?

Jesus went on to show that unless His followers’ righteousness exceeds that of the religious elites of His day, they cannot be in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20). He then began to magnify the law, explaining that His followers are held to a higher standard, by giving these two examples:

You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ [in essence, whoever perceives a fellow human as worthless] shall be in danger of hell fire (Matthew 5:21–22).

You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27–28).

That is about as clear as one can make it. Jesus expected a *higher* standard of obedience to God's law. He exalted—magnified—the law. We must not only keep the letter of the law, but also the spirit or intent of the law, which exists to help us become more like our Creator. Indeed, “the law was given through Moses,” and later, to magnify the law and enable us to keep it, “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

There are many professing Christians who reason around the law despite such clear statements and examples. And they even attempt to explain away another clear statement from our Savior.

What About After the Crucifixion?

Some contend that the command to the young rich man to “keep the commandments” applied to him because Christ had not yet paid the penalty for sin, but that Jesus' command was no longer valid after His crucifixion. This is the kind of human rationalization that brought this rebuke from our Savior: “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Did this statement only apply when He made it—to the time before His crucifixion? Did the law die on the cross with Him? And are people today more responsive than those living during His time—before or after His resurrection? These are questions with easy answers, and we will provide these answers in upcoming chapters. In our next chapter, we will see how the very organization of the New Testament is vital for understanding our topic, and is quite different from what most today understand.

Chapter 2

The Correct New Testament Order

We all take many things for granted in this life. If we have only seen something one way, it is normal to accept it as “the way things are.” If we know our ABCs, we know that A comes at the beginning and Z comes at the end. That is the way most of us learned the alphabet—but is that the way it must be? Could the alphabet begin with T and end with K, with all the other letters scrambled between? Or perhaps all the vowels could come first with the consonants following? Most have probably never considered this. So, what is the point?

If you open almost any popular English-language Bible and look at what is known as the New Testament, you find that it begins with the book of Matthew and ends with the book of Revelation—and that is pretty much the way it has always been. But between those two books, it is *not* the way it has always been.

Part of the challenge in settling the “law or grace” question stems from something few people have any knowledge of—something that happened nearly 1,700 years ago. To keep things simple, I will refer to Bullinger’s *The Companion Bible* to explain:

Our English Bibles follow the order as given in the Latin Vulgate. This order, therefore, depends on the arbitrary judgment of one man, Jerome (A.D. 382–405). All theories based on this order rest on human authority, and are thus without any true foundations.

The original Greek manuscripts do not agree among themselves as to any particular order of the separate books, and a few of them have most remarkable differences.

We are, however, on safe ground in stating that the books are generally divided into FIVE WELL-DEFINED GROUPS (Appendix 95, “The New Testament and the Order of Its Books”).

As for individual books within each of the five groups, Bullinger observes that only the Pauline Epistles are always found in the same order in the most ancient manuscripts. But all five groups are always found in the same order, with only the rarest of exceptions, before Jerome’s reorganization:

1. The Four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
2. The Acts of the Apostles (the single book best known as Acts)
3. The General Epistles (letters written by James, Peter, John, and Jude)
4. The Pauline Epistles (Paul’s letters)
5. The Apocalypse (book of Revelation)

Bullinger points out that although even the four gospels are not always in the same order, Acts *always* follows the four, *always* followed by the General Epistles. For more on this important topic, see the *Tomorrow’s World Bible Study Course*, Lesson One. The course is free for the asking.

Readers familiar with modern English-language Bibles might be surprised to see the General Epistles coming before Paul’s letters, but here is why this is important: Peter and John were two of Christ’s most prominent apostles. Peter was leader among them, and John was the last living of the original twelve. John, along with writing three general epistles, also authored one of the four gospel accounts and the book of Revelation. It is generally recognized that James and Jude were Jesus’ half-brothers. While they were not early followers (John 7:5), they were convinced by the resurrection and had intimate knowledge of how their older Brother thought and lived.

By comparison, the Apostle Paul was what we might think of as a “Johnny-come-lately.” Even Paul confirms this by declaring, “I am

the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9). Later, he described himself as “less than the least of all the saints” (Ephesians 3:8). Although most scholars identify him as author of some of the earliest epistles, he was the “apostle to the Gentiles” and often presented his material in a manner that even Peter, his fellow apostle, described as “hard to understand” (2 Peter 3:16).

As a result, those reading the New Testament in Jerome’s order are much more likely to become confused about Christian doctrine—including the relationship of law and grace. And this brings us to a vital key to opening our understanding to this subject of law and grace: We understand the New Testament most clearly when we read it in the order in which it was found *before* Jerome’s reorganization.

Consider this: Two of these “general epistles” were written by Peter, three by John. Peter and John were two of the three apostles (along with James the son of Zebedee) who witnessed the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–2), saw the resurrection of a child (Mark 5:37–42), and were near Jesus in the garden on the night when He was betrayed (Matthew 26:36–37). His half-brothers James (not to be confused with the son of Zebedee by the same name) and Jude each wrote single letters. This is significant. The original New Testament order placed the seven letters from these four men immediately following the gospels and Acts. They preceded what Peter described as Paul’s “hard to understand” epistles (2 Peter 3:16). It was the church at Rome that later changed the order to put the book of Romans first after Acts.

When we read the New Testament with the accounts of Christ’s life and teachings first, then the account of the growth of the New Testament Church, and then the easy-to-understand epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, all before Paul’s “hard to understand” letters, we come to a better overview of this subject. Notice the unambiguous statements by these four writers, beginning with James, where he calls the Ten Commandments “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25) and says that we “will be judged by the law of liberty” (2:10–12). That law is clearly the Ten Commandments, as shown in v. 11.

Martin Luther disrespectfully called James’ letter an epistle of straw, saying it had nothing to do with the Gospel—that is, nothing of the “faith alone” thesis Luther championed! But what does James

himself—the half-brother of Christ—say? “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” (James 2:20–22). Now, who are we going to listen to—Christ’s half-brother, or a confused Roman Catholic priest gone rogue?

Luther was correct that the excesses of indulgences and other works of the Catholic Church were in error, but his solution of grace *apart from* law was absolutely *not* correct!

“Do You Know the Lord?”

This does not apply to James alone. Each of the general epistles has much to say about the law of God. You have probably heard someone ask, “Do you know the Lord?” That’s a fair enough question, even though it is rather personal and may not be very polite to ask. But how are we to answer it? How do *you* answer it? More importantly, how does *God* answer the question? John, the Apostle of love, tells us that “by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him” (1 John 2:3–5).

This is so clear that it needs no explanation. But antinomians rationalize around John’s words by claiming that there is a difference between Jesus’ commandments and what they view as the “harsh” Old Testament law—a topic we will address later. John’s statement should be sufficient by itself, but I will quote here from a highly respected modern Bible commentary on these verses to show that we at *Tomorrow’s World* and the Living Church of God are not the only ones who understand John’s straightforward statement:

Next comes a test by which men can know whether, in spite of their failures, they are in right relationship with God, and walking in fellowship with Him. The test is whether they *keep his commandments*. It is impossible for men who really know God to be unaffected in their daily living by this knowledge.... For John the knowledge of God is not some mystic vision or

intellectual insight. It is shown *if we keep his commandments*. Obedience is not a spectacular virtue, but it is at the basis of all true Christian service. The man who claims to have this knowledge but *disobeys his commandments*, John says forthrightly, *is a liar*. He underlines this with the addition, *the truth is not in him* (*The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, eds. Donald Guthrie et al., 1970, p. 1263).

John continues in this passage with this statement, which absolutely must *not* be overlooked: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6). How many professing Christians “walk just as He walked”?

Two other quotes from John contribute to a right understanding of this subject. The first reveals something of great importance that is often lost by antinomians—*the biblical definition of sin*. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, *KJV*).

Now, if we are to repent of sin, does that not mean we must turn away from breaking the law? Exactly! Yet antinomians—again, those against law—claim that keeping the law of God is burdensome and that all we need is love. But is that what the Bible says? Not according to the Apostle John! “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And *His commandments are not burdensome*” (1 John 5:3).

A young man came up to me after one of our *Tomorrow’s World* presentations near Vancouver, British Columbia, after hearing me quote 1 John 5:3, and asked, “My minister says the commandments *are* burdensome—what do you think I should do?” My reply was the same as what I give to you now: “You can believe John, one of Christ’s original apostles who wrote two books and three letters in the Bible, or you can believe your minister. It is that simple.” So, who will *you* believe?

And we need to ask, *What do people consider so burdensome about the Ten Commandments?*

The Faith Once Delivered

Toward the end of the first century AD, Jesus’ half-brother Jude wrote one of the shorter letters in the Bible. In it, he felt compelled

to address lawless behavior, as people were already corrupting true doctrine:

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, *who turn the grace of our God into lewdness* and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 1:3–4).

The “faith once delivered” is not eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Christianity. It is the Christianity of Christ and the apostles. And, even in the first century, that faith was already being corrupted. Ungodly men were turning God’s grace—His unmerited pardon for our breaking of His laws—into license to live a life contrary to Jesus’ example.

Jude (as does Peter) has advice for modern churches that support the LGBTQIA+ movement and even ordain priests and ministers of those persuasions into their corrupt organizations:

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:6–7; cf. 2 Peter 2:5–6).

If people reading the New Testament were to read these four short and easy-to-understand letters—written by two original apostles and two of Jesus’ half-brothers—before they read Paul’s letters, they could put into proper context Paul’s statements, which even the Apostle Peter said were hard to understand.

Breaking into a thought, we read Peter’s explanation that “as also our beloved brother Paul... has written to you, as also in all his epis-

tles, speaking in them of these things, *in which are some things hard to understand*, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, *since you know this beforehand*, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked” (2 Peter 3:15–17).

Read that passage again with these points in mind: Peter calls Paul’s writings “scripture.” Therefore, they are not to be neglected. Indeed, they give us much understanding of this subject. But Peter also said that some things Paul wrote were difficult to understand, and gave us a warning to “beware” lest we be “led away with the error of the wicked.” Some translations say, “wicked men.” The *Revised Standard Version*, the *New International Version*, and others have “lawless men” or “the lawless.” It should be evident that the “untaught and unstable people” who “twist” Paul’s writings have a problem with law!

Now that we understand what Jesus, James, Peter, John, and Jude taught, we can turn to Paul’s writings in the next chapter, where we begin to see how it is law *and* grace, not one or the other. While Jude and the other writers of the General Epistles saw ungodly men turning “the grace of God into lewdness,” Paul had to deal with Judaizers who were attempting to impose circumcision and other Israelite regulations upon the Gentiles. All the apostles and writers of the New Testament, including Paul, understood that behavior matters, but no amount of current or future law-keeping can cover our many sins—only the shed blood of the Son of God can do that. That is what we call *grace*, and nothing in this resource is meant to minimize or undermine that supreme gift of God. (For more information, you can request another of our free booklets, *John 3:16: Hidden Truths of the Golden Verse*, or read it online at TomorrowsWorld.org.) Read further to see how law and grace come together in a complete picture.

Chapter 3

Paul to the Romans

Let me give you a modern parable. A certain man went into a bar one evening. After spending too much time at the bottle, he got into his car and headed home. Along the way, he missed a stop light, crashed into another car, and severely injured its occupant. Six months later, he appeared before the judge, who asked him, “How do you plead?”

Feeling very remorseful, he pleaded, “Guilty as charged, your honor.”

The judge then told the man to choose his sentence: either a \$1,000,000 fine or one year in prison.

The man thought to himself, *I don’t have a million dollars—but if I go to jail, who will care for my wife and children?* So, he pleaded with the judge, expressing his deep regrets about what he had done, and proposed the following: “Your honor, I promise to never drink and drive again. I will obey all traffic laws, pay every penny I owe in taxes, and keep all laws as perfectly as I am able from this day forward.”

“That is what we expect all people to do,” the judge responded, “but you broke the law and severely injured a man. Your keeping the law from this day forward will not undo what you did six months ago. Choose: one year in prison or \$1,000,000.”

Now, there was a man in the back of the courtroom who reasoned, “This man is truly sorry for what he did. I believe he will do his best to obey the law from this day forward. I’ll pay the fine for him.”

This man’s payment, in our parable, is what Jesus did for you and for me if we repent of our sins and accept His payment for us. But do

you think the kind gentleman would pay the fine if he thought the guilty man would disregard the law that caused him to be brought before the judge? Why do people think that of Jesus?

Did the fact that the penalty was satisfied somehow do away with the law? Could the man leave the courtroom thinking that, because grace had been granted to him by the generous gentleman who stepped up on his behalf, all laws had somehow been abrogated? Yet that is exactly what the “do away with the law” antinomians teach—not only that the penalty has been paid, but that the law was nailed to the cross and we no longer need to keep it!

Regarding some of Paul’s epistles, we have seen that Peter rightfully said they contain “some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). But if you read the general epistles before you read Paul’s writings, you will see them through the lens of how law, grace, and justification work together rather than against each other, as the courtroom story above shows us.

Does Paul Overrule Jesus?

As we have already noted, we are to walk in the steps of Jesus. He is the Rock, the Chief Cornerstone, the standard to imitate, and He commands us to keep the law—the Ten Commandments. He declared that the law will not pass away for as long as heaven and earth remain. His two half-brothers (James and Jude), along with two of the most prominent of the Twelve Apostles (Peter and John), wrote a combined seven letters upholding the law of God.

So, why do people think Paul came along to undo what Jesus (and those closest to Him) taught? Does God have a different standard for Jews than He does for Gentiles? Were the commandments “nailed to the cross”? Does God have one weekly Sabbath day and one set of annual Festivals for Jews and another for the Gentiles? Clearly not. That would not square with Paul’s emphasis on maintaining the unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:4–6; Galatians 3:26–29). Are the laws against murder, adultery, and thievery truly done away? If the Sabbaths and Holy Days that Jesus and His Apostles kept are relegated to the trash heap, what is the alternative? Is it to replace them with observances found in heathen and pagan prac-

tice, as mainstream “Christianity” has done? Think about it—does that make sense? And is that what Paul tells us?

As mentioned earlier, Romans 6:14 is a pet verse for antinomians. “For sin shall not have dominion over you, *for you are not under law but under grace.*” If taken by itself and out of context, one might make the case that this does away with the law—but is that what Paul meant

Is Christ “the End of the Law”?

Many are confused about Paul’s statement in Romans 10:4: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Does this mean that the law of God comes to an “end” with Christ?

The word “end” here is often misunderstood. It certainly can mean the cessation of something—but it also means the *purpose* or *goal* of something. The Greek word *telos*, translated here as “end,” is used by Paul this way in 1 Timothy 1:5: “Now the purpose [*telos*] of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.” Peter also uses it this way in 1 Peter 1:8–9: “Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end [*telos*] of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” Was Peter speaking of the *ceasing* of their faith? Of course not. Rather, he was speaking of the *purpose* or *goal* of their faith.

Which meaning of “end” applies in Romans 10:4? The answer is clarified by other Scriptures. In Romans 6:12, Paul says plainly, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.” He also says that “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). And, as John explains, “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, *KJV*).

No, the law does not stop at Christ and exist no longer. Murder is still sin. Adultery is still sin. If anything, Jesus made the law more binding in the Sermon on the Mount, telling us to keep those commandments even in our minds and hearts (Matthew 5:21–30).

Rather, Jesus Christ is the *purpose* or *goal* of the law. God’s law both highlights our need for His sacrifice and points us to His character and righteousness. As Paul explains elsewhere, the goal of our faith is that “Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19)—that His character and love is built in us as we allow Him to live in us through His Spirit (Galatians 2:20).

—Wallace G. Smith

when he wrote this verse? What does the context tell us? Consider the verses that follow. “What then?” Paul asks. “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” (Romans 6:15).

Remember that, according to 1 John 3:4, sin is the breaking of the law. Paul is therefore asking whether we should break God’s law because we are under grace. His answer? Open your Bible and read it for yourself:

Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin [breaking the law] leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from [not *to*, but *from*] sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:15–18).

Another favorite antinomian verse is Romans 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds [the Greek word *ergon*, meaning works] of the law.” This verse strikes at the core of the controversy. Much of the difficulty with Paul’s letters revolves around one word: *justification*.

It is easy for the casual reader to confuse justification with salvation. These two words are related, but are not the same. We often hear people say that we are saved by Christ’s death, but is that biblical? Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). It separates us from God, creating a breach that must be healed (Isaiah 59:1–2). Christ’s death, His shed blood, pays the penalty of sin (death) on our behalf and wipes the slate clean from our past sins, thus reconciling us to God. This puts us back in line with God. Justification is the forgiveness of past sins.

Paul explains these terms and how they are different. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, *having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, *much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*” (Romans 5:8–10).

Saved by His Life?

Salvation is a process. Steps toward salvation include:

- Faith in Christ (Hebrews 6:1; 11:6).
- Repentance from sin, and believing Christ's Gospel message (Mark 1:15).
- Baptism by immersion and receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:35–39; 8:1–18).
- Having Christ indwelling through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).
- Overcoming and remaining faithful to the end (Matthew 24:13; Revelation 17:14).

Salvation is Christ's gift to us, but we must not think that we have no part in the process of salvation—that it is all “done for us”—as so many erroneously preach. We must grow and develop the very character of our Savior. Paul explains, “I am crucified with Christ [that process begins at baptism]: nevertheless I live [we come up from the water “grave” of baptism]; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, *KJV*).

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ works in us to change us from what we once were to what we need to be—yet we also have a part in that process. Notice that *we* are to put to death our carnal ways. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13). Paul confirms this with his command to the Colossians: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). The result is that we are to be very different from our pre-baptism self. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

While discussing the baptism ceremony, Paul explains this process of change. Knowing that some would misunderstand his statements about grace, he seeks to clarify by asking, “What shall we say

then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Romans 6:1). His answer is decisive: “Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (v. 2). He then goes on to explain what it means to die to sin: water baptism accompanied by sincere repentance of our sins and acceptance of Christ as Savior.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection (vv. 3–5).

Reconciled to God

Most people who have used a computer have come to understand the meaning of *justification* in a secular context. When all the lines on a page are lined up on the left side, as in this booklet, it is called “left justification.” Sometimes we see “right justification” where the writing is lined up on the right margin. This can be done with a stroke of a computer key. Then there is “full justification” where both right and left sides are straight.

In a spiritual sense, our sins take us out of alignment with God. We are out of sync—not in harmony—with Him because we have violated His law. There is a penalty for breaking that law, and that penalty is death (Romans 6:23). We must therefore be justified, brought back in line, to be reconciled to Him. All our future law-keeping can do nothing to justify our past sins, the penalty for which is death. Only the death of our Creator, whose life is worth all our lives combined, can pay that penalty on our behalf. I’ll explain this further in the next chapter, and it is a fundamental truth not to be missed. But first, consider the irrationality of claiming that the law has been eradicated.

Lay aside for a moment what others have told you about the law being done away, and consider the whole context of Paul’s words. Do you realize that if you do away with God’s law, you do away with the need for God’s forgiveness? This is so fundamental that even a child can understand. If there is no law, there can be no breaking of it. That is pure logic, and was written by the apostle whom some say cast

aside the law: “For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath [the death penalty]; *for where there is no law there is no transgression*” (Romans 4:14–15).

Sin is the breaking of the law according to the Bible (1 John 3:4). So, if you do away with the law, you of necessity do away with sin. If there is no sin, there can be no penalty. And if there is no penalty, there is no need for forgiveness—no need for grace, no need for a Savior!

In effect, grace—unearned pardon of our sins—*requires* the law to be in effect. Is this not what Paul tells us? “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! *On the contrary, we establish the law*” (Romans 3:31).

In the next chapter, we will look at Paul’s letter to the Galatians—a letter that has confused many.

Chapter 4

Paul to the Galatians

When you are 17 years old and someone cherry-picks a few passages from Paul's writings, you might conclude that we are free from law. After all, Paul said that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Galatians 3:13). How could anyone desire to keep the law if the Bible describes it as a curse? I was told that if I tried to keep the law, I would lose out on salvation. And the scornful accusation followed: *You are trying to save yourself by your works!*

Of course, if the law itself is a curse, this brings up many questions. If the commandments are done away, doesn't that mean it is okay to murder, commit adultery, steal, dishonor parents, and have other gods before the true God? Can I do whatever I want? These are no small questions!

Stop and consider: As we just saw, Paul said that "where there is no law there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). And, as we saw earlier, the Apostle John defined sin as the violation of God's law: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, *KJV*).

What was Paul telling the people of Galatia in Galatians 3:13? Did he really say that the law *itself* is a curse? Far from doing away with what many think of as the Old Testament law, Paul quotes from it! Let us begin with Galatians 3:10: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do

them.” Now let us get the context. This quote is from Deuteronomy 27, where half of Israel was to stand on Mount Gerizim to pronounce blessings for obedience. The other half were to stand on Mount Ebal and pronounce curses for disobedience. Notice the behaviors that would bring curses on the people:

- Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret (Deuteronomy 27:15).
- Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt (v. 16).
- Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor’s landmark (v. 17).
- Cursed is the one who makes the blind to wander off the road (v. 18).
- Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow (v. 19).
- Cursed is the one who lies [sexually] with his father’s wife (v. 20).
- Cursed is the one who lies with any kind of animal (v. 21).
- Cursed is the one who lies with his sister (v. 22).
- Cursed is the one who lies with his mother-in-law (v. 23).
- Cursed is the one who attacks his neighbor secretly (v. 24).
- Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person (v. 25).

All the people were to confirm these curses with “Amen.” It is with this context that Paul quotes in Galatians 3:10, “Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law” from Deuteronomy 27:26. A better translation of Paul’s Greek puts it slightly differently: “Cursed is everyone who does not *continue* in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

Paul points out that if even one law is violated, the guilty party is under a curse—ultimately, the death penalty. So, when heretics

claimed that the way to justification—to having past sins forgiven—was through law-keeping, they were under a curse, as no one except Christ has kept the law perfectly. We must look to another method for the forgiveness of sins. In this regard, Paul’s words are accurate: “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Galatians 3:11). Apart from faith and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, there is no justification.

Now review again those sins listed in Deuteronomy 27: Is there even one behavior that you think would please God? On the contrary, any right-minded Christian ought to recognize that every behavior listed is a sin to be avoided. Paul goes on to say, “Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘The man who does them shall live by them’” (Galatians 3:12). It was not only the Ten Commandments that Paul was discussing. Those confusing the Galatians were concerned with circumcision and all that went along with it, as if a legalistic, ritualistic ladder could be crafted for us to escape from sin and the death penalty we’ve earned, apart from faith in Christ. Physical circumcision, washing one’s hands in a special way, and a host of other physical regulations—none of these require faith.

Circumcision

As he did in Romans, Paul in Galatians focuses on how people may be justified from past sins—how they may be forgiven and have the death penalty removed. Justification is at the heart of this letter because heresies brought from Judaism were beginning to infiltrate Christian congregations in that region. Even a casual reading of this epistle makes clear the claim by certain Jews that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep various other Judaic regulations. It is important to note that the religion known as Judaism, with its many humanly invented practices, is not the religion of the Bible. We see this in the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees about their many added regulations (requirements found nowhere in Scripture), which they thought of as keeping the law—even raising these regulations to be more important than the laws of God (Matthew 15:3–9, 20).

Circumcision was so controversial that Acts 15 is devoted entirely to the apostles and elders coming together to settle the question once and for all. And that circumcision played a large part in the Galatian heresy is evident. “As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may

not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh” (Galatians 6:12–13). “Yet not even Titus who was with me [in Jerusalem], being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised” (2:3). The words *circumcised*, *circumcision*, and *uncircumcised* are found 14 times in Galatians. Paul was so exasperated that he exclaimed, “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!” (5:11–12). Or, as verse 12 is translated in *The Jerusalem Bible*, “Tell those who are disturbing you I would like to see the knife slip.”

We should understand that the Jews thought of physical circumcision as much more than a one-time cutting of a man’s flesh. It was seen as the very symbol of a Jewish man’s identity, committing him to keeping the Jews’ many non-biblical traditions and their burdensome rules added to God’s law. Many of those rules involved *how* to observe the Sabbath, as we see in the many encounters Jesus had with the Pharisees. Jesus, of course, did not violate the Sabbath command given by God—if He had, He could not be our sinless Savior. But He did violate Pharisaical interpretations of what could and could not be done on the Sabbath. Neither did He follow the man-made ritualistic purity laws, such as washing hands, pitchers, cups, etc., which were never given by God (Matthew 15:1–20). That Jesus contradicted Pharisaical regulations is found in His strong denunciations of them in Matthew 23.

To put it simply, these men who were destabilizing the congregations were promoting justification through the physical practices of Judaism. Yet they neglected the spiritual aspect made possible by Jesus Christ. For followers of Christ, the physical circumcision given to Abraham is replaced by a circumcision of the heart—a cutting away of carnal attitudes. Paul wrote, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11–12).

At stake here was a whole package of regulations. And the key is this: The Judaizers were saying that for the Gentiles to be justified of their sins, they had to observe the same traditions as the Pharisees, which were often characterized by physical works such as

Did Jesus Break the Sabbath?

Rabbinical laws were rabbis' oral traditions and their interpretations of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. These traditions, often called the "oral law," are regarded in Judaism as definitive commentary on the Torah, explaining how its commandments are to be carried out in practical situations. These commentaries and regulations were codified in the Mishnah and, eventually, the Talmud—the textual record of generations of ancient rabbinic debates about law, biblical interpretations, and additional rules. These oral traditions and regulations were observed by the Jews long before the first century and are recognized as underlying the "Thirteen Principles of Faith" by Maimonides (1138–1204), a renowned medieval Jewish scholar.

Within the Talmud are a set of laws pertaining to the Sabbath, which are called the 39 *melachot*. Most observant Jews consider the Talmud to be as important as the Torah, and orthodox Jews go to great lengths to meet the technical requirements and prohibitions of the 39 *melachot*. These are extra-biblical regulations, many of which Jewish authorities enforced before Jesus Christ arrived on the earth.

Why did the Jewish teachers and rabbis add these extra prohibitions regarding the Sabbath? No doubt they wanted to safeguard the Torah commandments by building a "fence" around them. But, as is evident in the gospel accounts, human reasoning got out of hand. While most observant Jews would deny that these oral laws and the 39 *melachot* are an unnecessary burden, Jesus Christ understood otherwise, saying that "they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:4).

Had Jesus violated God's commandments, we would not have a Savior, and the Apostle Paul stated that "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Numerous times, Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees and others in response to something He or His disciples did on the Sabbath. Yet He never violated God's Sabbath command, nor did He ever endorse doing so. He *did* break several of the oral traditions and extra-biblical prohibitions—human-made laws—that we find today as the 39 *melachot* in the Talmud. However, doing so did not constitute sin, which is the violation of *God's* laws (1 John 3:4).

—Wayne Tlumak

washing hands in a special way (Mark 7:3–5)—hence the emphasis on *works of the law*.

The Curse of the Law

Paul writes in Galatians 3 something that is grossly misrepresented by those seeking to abrogate the law. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” (v. 13). What does this mean? Note that it does *not* say, as so many wish it to say, that the *law* is a curse. Rather, it speaks of the curse *of* the law—or, to put it another way, the law’s curse. Antinomians fail to understand, or don’t want to understand, the context of this passage. Where does it come from? And what is its intended meaning?

Paul is again quoting from the law—in this case, from Deuteronomy 21. There we read that there is a penalty for sin, and some sins are so serious as to exact the civil death penalty. “If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; *for he who is hanged is accursed of God*” (vv. 22–23). The law is not called a curse; the curse of the law is the *penalty* exacted as a result of breaking the law. We can see that Paul told the Galatians the *exact opposite* of what antinomians would have us believe!

Let us read again Galatians 3:13, but this time in the context it was originally given. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law [the ultimate death penalty], having become a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Jesus paid the penalty for our sins—for our transgressions of the law. It was not the commandments, but *Christ*, who was “hanged on a tree.” Peter twice uses this same language when describing the crucifixion. “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by *hanging on a tree*” (Acts 5:30). “And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by *hanging on a tree*” (Acts 10:39).

The Heart of the Controversy

As in the epistle to the Romans, the heart of the epistle to the Galatians is the means by which one can be justified: “We who are Jews by

nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is *not justified* by the *works of the law* but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might *be justified by faith in Christ* and not by *the works of the law*; for by *the works of the law* no flesh shall be *justified*” (Galatians 2:15–16).

Justification—the forgiveness of past sins—comes through faith in Christ, not through *works of the law*. No law, not even the Ten Commandments, can *justify* us from *past* sins, as illustrated by the courtroom story at the start of Chapter 3. Heretics were, in effect, telling the Gentiles in Galatia that they could not become Christians until they first became observant, circumcised Jews—that they had to keep certain physical traditions that came from their elders, not from Scripture.

Paul was well-versed in the man-made traditions of Judaism, having formerly been a Pharisee, and as a Christian he would have none of it. But does this mean that Paul was against the law of God—that it no longer needed to be kept? Notice what he told the Corinthians in his first letter to them: “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters” (1 Corinthians 7:19).

Chapter 5

Times and Seasons

A *BBC Future* report titled, “How liars create the ‘illusion of truth,’” explained, “Repetition makes a fact seem more true, regardless of whether it is or not. Understanding this effect can help you avoid falling for propaganda, says psychologist Tom Stafford.” The report went on to say, “‘Repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth’, is a law of propaganda” (October 26, 2016).

We see this principle at work when we examine another passage in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Even in discussing the things of God, many repeat what others say without proving it for themselves. People have been told again and again that “the law is done away” and that the Sabbath and biblical Holy Days are “bondage.” Yet we must never forget Peter’s warning about Paul’s writings—that there “are some things hard to understand, which *untaught and unstable* people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked” (2 Peter 3:16–17).

With this in mind, let us take a close look at another often-misunderstood passage in Galatians: “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years” (Galatians 4:9–10).

To understand this passage, we must understand the audience Paul is addressing. In verses 1–5 of Galatians 4, he addresses the Jews as *we*. Notice: “Even so we [Jews], when we were children, were in bondage under the *elements of the world*. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (vv. 3–5). Paul was a Jew, educated as a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5–6). Through Christ’s sacrifice the Jews were redeemed from “under the law”—redeemed from the death penalty of breaking God’s spiritual law. The law had a claim over their lives because of their sins (Galatians 4:5).

Paul was writing about Judaism, a set of practices based on worldly customs that the Jews had adopted and accumulated over the centuries—customs that were in *addition* to the laws and commands of God. These became the “traditions of the elders” (Mark 7:5, 9), comprising hundreds of regulations added to God’s laws and statutes. These were the “elements of the world”—not of *God*, but of the *world*—that Paul was referring to. Furthermore, God’s laws are not bondage or burdensome, as antinomians like to paint them. Consider: Which of the commandments brings us into bondage? Is it burdensome not to have another god before the true God, to honor one’s father and mother, or to refrain from killing, committing adultery, stealing, or lying? Hardly. These commands keep us out of trouble—*out of bondage!*

The dirty little secret is that there is one command that people despise the most—the command to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. In effect, they think, “God didn’t do too badly. He got nine out of ten right!” But how is the Sabbath command—instituted at the end of the creation week (Genesis 2:2–3)—more burdensome than the day the Roman emperor Constantine declared “the venerable day of the sun,” Sunday? Not only does the “burdensome” argument not make sense—as we have seen, the Apostle John calls out this lie for what it is: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And *His commandments are not burdensome*” (1 John 5:3).

To the Gentiles

Paul then makes a significant shift, turning his attention to Gentile converts, using *you* instead of *we*. Notice Galatians 4:8: “But then, in-

deed, when *you* [Gentiles] did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.” The Jews knew God from their national history and the Old Testament (John 4:22; Acts 22:14). The Gentiles did not know God until they heard the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 11:1; Ephesians 2:12–13). Before that, they had not remotely understood God’s laws, instead keeping pagan days, serving demons, and worshipping idols.

Paul then asks these Gentiles, “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” (Galatians 4:9). And what were those weak and beggarly elements that brought them into bondage? “You observe days and months and seasons and years” (v. 10).

Were the days God set aside as holy time—days that Jesus, His apostles, and the first-century Church of God kept—bondage? Was Paul even referring to those days? God’s word is plain that Paul himself observed Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, and more. (For a fuller explanation and biblical references, see our booklet *The Holy Days: God’s Master Plan*.) Paul was not referring to the days God had instituted, but rather to “days and months and seasons and years.” So, what were these times associated with bondage?

The Gentiles would not be “turn[ing] again” to God’s Holy Days, since they had never kept them in their pagan past. Rather, false teachers were trying to turn these new Christians back to pagan worship. Interestingly, the *King James Version* translates one of the practices condemned in Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10 as being an “observer of times.” And—as illustrated in the continuing practice of astrology and the many holidays with ties to superstitious beliefs—a focus on “special” days and seasons has long been part of pagan culture. The Gentiles were being urged by some to return to heathen festivals that long predated Christianity. As with their Judaizing brethren, the corrupted ideas of men were supplanting the simple obedience to God’s word that is a part of repentance and faith in Christ.

And if the biblically established Holy Days were bondage, in what way could Christmas, Easter, and other pagan-derived days be any less bondage? Antinomians rail against the seventh-day Sabbath and

biblically instituted annual Sabbaths, yet they have their own set of special days. The difference is that one set of days comes from the Bible and was kept by Christ and His apostles, while the other set comes from pagan practices with Christ's name slapped onto them. How else can you explain Easter (Ishtar), a pagan fertility goddess, along with her fertility symbols of rabbits and eggs?

Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia is a favorite for antinomians who say that the law is done away. Without a doubt, Galatians is one of Paul's writings that can be "hard to understand." We do not fully understand every detail of the heresies affecting the churches of Galatia, but their general nature is not in doubt.

The book of Galatians, like the book of Romans, is about how one may be justified—how people may have their sins forgiven. Outsiders, apparently both Jews and Gentiles, were coming in and destabilizing the brethren. One must consider the context to know which laws Paul refers to in this letter. Oftentimes he speaks of "the works of the law"—non-biblical, man-made regulations and traditions, whether Jewish or Gentile. At other times, Paul seems to be referring to law in a broader sense. Either way, one can never be justified (have past sins forgiven) through law-keeping, since only Christ was without sin: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

The law defines sin (Romans 7:7). Through Christ's perfect sacrifice we are justified and reconciled to God. And, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, God removes our natural hostility to His laws, writing them in our hearts and minds: "Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19–20). Is this not what the New Covenant is about? "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10). God's laws reflect His own character, and He is embedding those laws on our minds and hearts through His own Spirit.

Is the law of God important to Paul? He answered that question as he wrote to the Galatians: "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners [breakers of the law], is

Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor” (Galatians 2:17–18). He went on to say, “For I through the law died to the law [that is, put to death the old sinful self] that I might live to God” (v. 19). Then we come to a summation of what it means to be a true Christian. “I am crucified with Christ [the old man must die]: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me [by the power of the Holy Spirit]: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (v. 20, *KJV*).

Paul strongly opposed those who promoted circumcision as justification by works. Again, as Paul writes elsewhere, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters” (1 Corinthians 7:19). What did he tell the Romans? “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans 6:1–2). Paul clearly understands that some will twist his words, so he asks and answers the question that some may be thinking: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

In our next chapter, we will look at Paul’s letter to the Colossians, another of his writings that has been grossly twisted and that is vital for our understanding of God’s law in the lives of Christians today.

Chapter 6

Paul to the Colossians

“**B**ut there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’ And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time” (Acts 8:9–11).

Much has been written about this mysterious man. There is no doubt a reason why the account of Simon is found in Scripture. *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the History of Christianity* states that “early Christian writers unanimously regarded Simon as the fount of all heresies” (ed. Tim Dowley, 1977, p. 100).

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes that Simon has been labeled “the founder of post-Christian Gnosticism, a dualist religious sect advocating salvation through secret knowledge, and as the archetypal heretic of the Christian Church.... Still other sources portray him as the individual responsible for the eclectic fusion of Stoicism and Gnosticism” (“Simon Magus,” *Britannica.com*, February 16, 2023).

Asceticism

Much time can be spent discussing whether the troublemakers Paul addressed in Colossae were Jews or Gentiles, but a third source of discord must also be considered—the Samaritans. The Samaritans were originally from east of Israel. When the northern House of Israel was

taken into captivity, people from Babylon and elsewhere entered its land and brought with them their religion, which became fused with a corrupted form of worship of the true God (2 Kings 17:24–34). This became the Samaritan religion.

While there is much we do not know about the identity of the Colossian troublemakers, we do know the nature of the heresies, which point to Gnostic ideas of asceticism and the minimizing of Jesus Christ. Regarding morality, Gnostics went to two extremes. One was a complete disregard for law, on the premise that man is so corrupt that there is no use trying to be moral. At the other extreme was an approach known as asceticism, which Colossian heretics were adopting.

Asceticism is the practice of excessive self-denial—avoiding all bodily pleasure—as we see in Colossians 2: “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in *self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body*, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (vv. 20–23).

Notice that, in v. 22, Paul writes of “commandments and doctrines of *men*.” This is important for our proper understanding of this letter. The Colossian heresies did not arise from the laws of God, but from *men*.

Minimizing Christ

Along with asceticism, we see in Colossians another element of early Gnostic development. As brought out in *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, “The other problem relates to the supposed allusions in the Epistle to the Gnostic ideas of the 2nd century... but it should here be noted that a distinction needs to be drawn between incipient Gnosticism and fully developed Gnosticism.... There are no doubt points of contact with the former but not with the latter” (p. 1139).

Since fully developed Gnosticism was not found prior to the second century, the term Gnostic is used here in its broadest sense. But, clearly, we see in the letter to Colossae that Paul was addressing the Gnostic approach of minimizing Christ’s sacrifice and His role in our salvation, as explained in *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*:

In view of the great stress that Paul places on Christology in this Epistle, it is reasonable to suppose that the false teaching was defective in this respect. Any view of Christ which denied Him the pre-eminence in everything (*cf.* 1:18) would be inferior to Paul's view of Him. Indeed it is a fair inference that the exalted view of Christ set out in the whole section 1:15–20 was called out by the opposite tendencies of false teachers. Gnosticism in the 2nd century supplies a parallel in which Christ had become so far deteriorated that He had become no more than the last of a long series of intermediaries connecting man with God (p. 1140).

Gnostics taught that we cannot go to God directly, and that Jesus was not sufficient in Himself to reconcile us to God. God is so good, they said—and mankind so defective—that He had to separate Himself from us through various intermediaries (“emanations” or angelic beings). Jesus, they taught, was merely the last emanation in a series of intermediaries.

The term “Gnosticism” comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge.” It required followers to learn special secret “knowledge,” such as the names of the intermediaries between God and man, believing that, in addition to Christ, you also had to know the other emanating powers—a long string of intermediaries. Knowing the names of these spirits was all-important to the Gnostics. Though Gnostics claimed they did not worship angels, they did pray to them, not unlike the way Catholics pray to Mary and other revered figures. This may very well be the “worship of angels” to which Paul referred in Colossians 2:18. Paul vigorously refuted the Gnostics’ unfounded denial of Christ’s sufficiency as mediator between man and God the Father:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:15–20).

In case this is not clear enough, we also read, “For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:9–10). Paul would have nothing to do with these humanly devised ideas that downgraded Christ, and he warned the Colossians of the danger found in such. “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (2:8).

Essenes

Some believe that the troublemakers in Colossae were Essenes—members of a Jewish sect that shared some ideas with Samaritan Gnosticism and practiced an extensive list of man-made additions to God’s laws. The Jewish historian Josephus gave a long discourse on the Essenes, pointing out that they were the most extreme of Jewish sects. An excerpt of Josephus’ comments may be instructive:

The Essenes, who are native Jews, are particularly known for their high-minded discipline, and they are a closer-knit community than the others. They reject the pleasures of the flesh as vice, and see virtue in self-control and immunity to the passions. They disdain marriage.... Wealth is of no interest to them, and they practise communism to a remarkable degree — you will not find any of them better provided than his fellows.... They consider oil a defilement, and anyone accidentally smeared with it wipes his body clean, as their code requires a dry skin and white clothing at all times.... [T]hey assemble in a special room which is closed to anyone outside their sect, and then in their own purified state proceed to the refectory as if to some sacred precinct, and take their seats in silence.... No raised voices or arguments ever contaminate their house, but in conversation all have their turn to speak, and each gives way to his fellow. To outsiders this hushed

internal atmosphere seems like some sinister secret practice: in fact it is simply the result of constant sobriety and the provision of food and drink which stops short of excess (*The Jewish War*, 2:119–33, Oxford University Press, pp. 103–105).

With the limited historical records that have survived to our day, we cannot say for certain whether it was Essene ideas or those of some other Gnostic-influenced sect that were causing problems among the Colossian brethren. But without this general context, many fail to understand the serious issues Paul was addressing. With it, we can understand what Paul was saying—and what he was *not* saying—in Colossians 2. With this background, let us take a closer look at one passage that Peter might have considered “hard to understand.”

“The Substance Is of Christ”

Now we come to one of the antinomians’ favorite passages. “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16–17). Taken out of context, antinomians falsely claim that Paul was negating the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, the annual Sabbaths and Festivals, and the laws of clean and unclean meats—all of which were given by God!

Without doubt, Paul taught the Gentiles of Colossae the same doctrines that he kept and taught others to keep. Paul kept the seventh-day Sabbath with the Gentiles (Acts 13:14, 40–42; 16:13; 18:4). He observed Pentecost (Acts 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8). He taught the Corinthians about Passover and commanded them to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

These biblical Holy Days and Festivals are times of rejoicing (Deuteronomy 14:26; Nehemiah 8:10), but ascetic troublemakers sought to convince the Colossian brethren that their approach to feasting was defective. Instead of rejoicing, and enjoying food and drink, ascetics rejected any kind of celebratory atmosphere on such occasions.

That Paul is not speaking against the laws of God is evident in this warning: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through *philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world*, and not according to Christ... according to the commandments and *doctrines of men*” (Colossians 2:8, 22).

Whatever else might be said about the Sabbath and Holy Days, their origin was with God—not philosophers, not traditions of men, and certainly not according to the principles of this world. Are we to call the Sabbath a commandment and doctrine of men when God sanctified it at the end of the creation week and later wrote it with His own finger (Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 31:18)? Paul warned the Colossians not to let any man (any philosopher, cf. Colossians 2:8) tell them what to eat or what to drink regarding these days, but to look to a different source for instruction (Colossians 2:16–17).

The Body of Christ

Paul wrote of things “which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (v. 17). The Greek word for “shadow” is *skia*, meaning an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object. A better translation, based on the context, is “which foreshadow things to come.”

God’s weekly Sabbath foreshadows the seventh thousand-year period of human history, during which mankind will be ruled by the Kingdom of God. Paul explains that there is a Sabbath rest that man must keep (Hebrews 4:4–9). In like manner, God’s seven annual Festivals (Sabbaths) are memorials foreshadowing His plan for humanity: Passover—Christ’s perfect sacrifice; the Days of Unleavened Bread—our need to respond to Christ’s sacrifice by repenting, putting sin out of our lives; Pentecost—the receiving of God’s Spirit for Christ to live His life in us (Galatians 2:20).

The Colossian brethren were observing the weekly and annual Sabbaths. The problem arose when heretics with Gnostic and ascetic ideas came amongst them and tried to convince them that they were not keeping these festive biblical occasions properly.

Now, notice the last part of Colossians 2:17. Some newer translations, reflecting an anti-law bias, say, “but the substance [or reality] is of Christ.” The *King James Version* translates the Greek more literally, however, and is more contextually correct. It reveals the answer so often obscured by newer translations: “... which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.”

Notice that the *KJV* translators put the word *is* in *italics*, indicating that it does not appear in the original manuscripts. In addition, modern use of the word *substance* rather than *body* is a gross mis-

representation. Nowhere else in Scripture is the original Greek word translated this way. The original word is *soma* and means *body*: “the body [*soma*] of Christ.”

In the first chapter of his letter, Paul defines the body of Christ: “And He [Christ] is the head of the body [*soma*], the church... for the sake of His body [*soma*], which is the church” (Colossians 1:18, 24). The true Church of God is the *body* of Christ, and the Head of the body is Christ. “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body [*soma*]” (Ephesians 1:22–23). Paul is teaching that the Church—not some self-appointed philosopher—determines how these Festivals are to be kept, which foods participants can eat, and how they should conduct themselves. This is the responsibility of the body’s ordained leadership, who are to determine these matters (Ephesians 4:11–16).

The structure of the Greek language requires that the expression “let no one” be completed by an expression to identify who *is* to judge the matter—in this case, it is “the body of Christ,” the Church. A better translation of this greatly misunderstood passage, taken in context, would be, “Therefore let no one judge you in what you eat and what you drink regarding a festival, new moon, or sabbaths, which foreshadow things to come, but [rather let] *the body of Christ* [determine these things].”

Paul goes on to explain that the Colossian troublemakers were promoting the worship of intermediary spirits between God and man (the “angels” of Colossians 2:18). For Christians, of course, Christ is the Head of the Church, and we are to look to Him (v. 19). We are not to look to ascetic philosophies and traditions of men to learn how to observe God’s Sabbaths and Festivals (vv. 20–23). The problem was not God’s laws—clearly spelled out in both Testaments and kept by Christ, Paul, and Christ’s other apostles. Rather, the problem was “commandments and doctrines of men” and “the basic principles of the world.”

When we read Colossians carefully, we see that it does not promote “anti-law” thinking at all. We shall see this even more clearly in the next chapter, as we put together all we have considered in this short treatise.

Chapter 7

Law and Grace

Before closing this discussion of law and grace, we need to remember the big picture. Jesus said He did not come to destroy God's law, but to fulfill—magnify—it (Matthew 5:17–19; Isaiah 42:21). He told the young man seeking eternal life to “keep the commandments.” He soundly corrected the people of His day for not doing what He said to do (Luke 6:46). Furthermore, He kept the seventh-day Sabbath (Luke 4:16). He kept the Feast of Tabernacles even under the threat of death (John 7:1–10).

John tells us that we ought to follow Jesus' example. “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:3–6).

Peter tells us that Paul wrote “some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). He went on to warn, “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked” (v. 17). Several translations have “lawless” or “lawless men” instead of “wicked.” It is the lawless, those who are against law, who are leading and being led astray.

The record is clear that Paul himself kept the seventh-day Sabbath (Acts 13:42–44). He kept the annual Holy Days as well (Acts 20:6, 16; 1

Corinthians 16:8). Furthermore, he commanded the Corinthians that, because Christ is our Passover, they needed to respond to that sacrifice by keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread (1 Corinthians 5:7–8). He taught these same Gentile Christians, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what matters*” (7:19). He extolled the law of God (Romans 7:7, 12). Paul also knew that some would misunderstand what he was writing. His stand on the subject was unambiguous: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?... What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (Romans 6:1–2, 15–16).

Not only did Paul teach that God’s law was still in effect—he rightfully explained that faith cannot make the law unnecessary. “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

Man’s Hostility to God’s Law

Adam and Eve rejected God’s revealed way of life by taking from a tree that did not belong to them, setting themselves up in the place of God to determine right and wrong for themselves. In doing so, they dishonored their Creator—their heavenly Father—and also broke other commandments. Their children followed in those footsteps and brought disaster upon themselves so that the result was a violent world where “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Genesis 6:5, 11). And our world has picked up where that one left off!

Some years after the Noachian Flood, God began working with a man named Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham. To Abraham’s son Isaac, God promised, “I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; *because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws*” (Genesis 26:4–5).

Yes, God's commandments and statutes were known long before Moses' time, when God put them in writing. The sin of idolatry was understood (Genesis 35:1–4). Murder was recognized as a sin (Genesis 4:8–12). God set the seventh day apart at creation (Genesis 2:2–3). He blessed it and made it holy (Exodus 20:11). Adultery was widely known as a sin (Genesis 20:9; 26:10–11; cf. 18:20). And Noah knew the laws of clean and unclean meats before the Flood (Genesis 7:2).

We read that when God put His law in writing at Mount Sinai, the Israelites did not have the heart to obey (Deuteronomy 5:29)—and the history of Israel cements this truth. The Apostle Paul wrote that “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Romans 8:7). From the beginning, mankind has been hostile to God's law, and our generation is no different.

Jesus warned us, “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name [claiming His authority], saying, ‘I [Jesus] am the Christ,’ and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:4–5).

Paul explained that Satan has his own ministers who appear righteous but are, in fact, deceivers. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

Mankind's hostility to God's law knows no bounds. False, satanic ministers are hostile to the law of God. They preach a different Jesus—one who did away with His Father's law. They have a different spirit, and they proclaim a different gospel than the one Jesus proclaimed (v. 4). These modern-day antinomians pit grace and faith against God's law, and they substitute different days and practices for those kept by Jesus, His apostles, and the first-century Church. They tell us that “love” is all that is necessary, but they do not properly understand love, denying what the Apostle John wrote: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

James, half-brother of Christ, wrote that “he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25). He went on to say that “whoever shall keep the whole

law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (2:10–12).

Without law there can be no transgression (Romans 4:15). According to John, to do away with the law of God is to do away with sin (1 John 3:4). To do away with sin brings us to the absurd conclusion that we do not need a Savior. As Paul declared, “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! *On the contrary, we establish the law*” (Romans 3:31). No, dear friends, we have all sinned—broken God’s law—and we *all* need the grace of God through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

I hope this brief treatise has been enlightening and encouraging. One could go on at far greater length discussing the topic in more detail, citing even more verses. Those who are determined to reject God’s law may accuse me of “cherry-picking” verses to prove my point, but I trust you can see that it is, in fact, the antinomians—those who try to pit grace *against* law—who are the actual cherry-pickers. When viewed in light of the whole New Testament record, including Paul’s own “hard to understand” writings that are so often twisted and misunderstood, the picture is clear. The conclusion of the Bible is not law *or* grace; it is law *and* grace.

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