

1. Why This Pamphlet?

God blesses you every day through conversations you have with others crying out for Jesus, yet not knowing it is Jesus they need. Nonetheless, through God's grace, hardened hearts have become tender hearts, the prideful have become humble and the asleep have been awakened. We have witnessed conversions and convictions, and been blessed with scornful "almost Christians" becoming thankful saints.

We have talked with scores of people who have lived years mistaking earth for heaven, making God like them rather than accepting the responsibility to resemble God. Many are of Judas' ilk for they have heard all Christ's sermons with little effect.

How many people have disregarded God or spurned God because their life was not comfortable, or due to financial or health challenges? So many have never been taught that man forfeited his comfort in the Garden of Eden. When Adam chose disobedience rather than obedience God said, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Gen. 3:17-19).

Our desire is to address the questions you have concerning "the mystery of godliness" (I Ti. 3:16). Some of the most asked questions are included in this document. We trust this writing will assist you in your search for and walk with our Lord Jesus Christ. Comfort, peace, cohesiveness, contentment and well-being are noble goals, but those ideals remain elusive and unattainable without Christ being *your* Lord and Savior.

2. Am I truly a Christian?

Many church-goers have, in time of crisis, prayed to God for divine guidance. In the course of their prayer they have promised God, saying, “God, if You will just take care of me this time, I will commit the remainder of my life to You.” After the crisis passes, they go back to living in the same manner they have always lived.

Are they truly Christians or is God just their celestial “sugar daddy?” God’s book of First John is written for the purpose of verifying whether they really are Christians.ⁱ Perhaps today is your day to determine the genuineness of your commitment to God. Examine your own life in the light of the litmus tests of God.

I. **“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.”ⁱⁱ**

Do not mistake morality for grace. Just because you are faithful in your marriage, attend to the needs of your family, are honest in your business practices and give to worthy causes, you are not necessarily a Christian. Christians study their Bibles in order to know God’s commandments so that they can live in the manner He describes.

Every Scriptural prescription is a joy for those belonging to God’s eternal kingdom. God says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”ⁱⁱⁱ Legalism is a charge oftentimes brought by those playing the game of Christianity, yet refusing to enter God’s playing field.

If you are not hungering and thirsting to know God’s word, the likelihood is that you are failing to practice the life set forth in His word. John writes, “No one who is born of God *practices* sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious.”^{iv}

Christians refuse to live in sin. The Christian convert sets his sights upon keeping God’s commandments fully.

II. **“The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.”^v**

The theology in this test is not difficult. Do you love your brothers and sisters in the Lord? When you are gifted with the new birth, your loves and your company shall change. One of the earliest evidences of your new relationship with God will be the new relationships you cherish with others who love Jesus.

A person abiding in the light of Christ is a lover of other abiders. Light reveals the serpents you have never seen before; light directs you away from damaging associations and toward nurturing associations; light provides warmth to the soul and heat to the heart. Caleb and Joshua wanted their brothers to enter the Promised Land. You will want others to know about your Savior and you will sacrifice to the end that they will come to know the Lord Christ.

III. “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”^{vi}

Do not love anything that will not last forever. This world and all it offers is dying. Never mistake earth for heaven because the glories of the world to come are far nobler than the treasures of this world.

A Christian filled with the love of his Father would rather resemble his Father than the world. The Christian will forfeit being the most respected, the most prosperous and the most powerful in order to become the most holy. Tragically, lovers of this world will discover themselves to be eternal inhabitants of Sodom.

True Christians are never indifferent to spiritual matters. Christians delight in conversations filled with God’s word and those concerning God’s new creation. Can any of the things of this world do for you what Christ can do?

IV. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”^{vii}

To “believe” means you have placed all of your trust in Jesus Christ – both for the matters in this life and in the next. You trust in Christ alone for His provisions in this life and in the life to come. And you know that your trust in Jesus does not relieve you of the responsibility of applying yourself to the task of living in the manner God directs.^{viii}

Do you trust only Jesus for your salvation? “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”^{ix}

V. “We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”^x

Christians adopt the Bible’s teachings. One of the fruits of a true conversion is the person’s genuine love for God evidenced by a growing desire to please his Lord, and his willingness for his life to be governed by Scripture.^{xi}

God’s spirit of truth enables a Christian to capture a deep awareness of his own sin, and a deepening awareness of his sinfulness. Christians are zealous in their pursuit of godly teachers, disciplers and associates. They consistently choose God’s word over their own opinions, and are strict in their refusal to live outside biblical bounds.

VI. “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”^{xii}

Spiritual sloth is intolerable to a man gifted with the new birth. He attends to the business of the Lord in every area of his life. He rests in the grace of God to address the trials of life.

Christians vigorously engage in their battle against worldliness, never yielding the cause and refusing to lay down their spiritual weaponry of God’s word and prayer. The

Christian grants himself no indulgence, is intolerant of his failures and keeps his eye on the enemies known as the world, the flesh and the devil. Precise living enables victory.

EPILOGUE

The almost saved are totally damned. Partial conversions are non-conversions, for “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”^{xiii} Many professors of Christianity are but shadows. They are civilized and cultured in the ways of the converted, but they shall perish in their false confidences.

The ostrich has wings, but cannot fly. Earlier in your life you may have come under conviction or felt a “spiritual experience,” but if you are not now aware that you are a sinner and your sin has been nailed to the cross at Calvary, you are not a Christian. Christians hunger and thirst for the things of God for they value Christ above all. Christians practice righteousness whereas “the one who practices sin is of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious.”^{xiv}

Jesus says, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’”^{xv} Does living water flow from you?

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

3. If a person is good, why does he have to trust in Jesus in order to go to heaven?

❖ *God says there are no naturally 'good' people:*

- "No one is good except God alone."^{xxvi}
- "There is none righteous, not even one.... There is none who does good, there is not even one."^{xxvii}

Envision a majestic courtroom of gothic design with vaulted ceilings reaching the heavens. God serves as the presiding Judge. Satan, the prosecutor for the case, is positioned before the bar of God, and mankind is the defendant. The charge? "No one is good except God alone."

No one is excused from God's holy indictment because "they have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."^{xxviii} Your name is on this heavenly indictment as a co-defendant with all other sinners.

We have a tendency to reject the view Scripture presents of unconverted people. Our substitute is some form of comparative sinfulness that is ill defined and less well understood. We define sin (if at all) as a measure of how bad I am in comparison to someone else. I actually perceive myself to look pretty good when compared to anyone else. Nonetheless, God's view of my sin is not so charitable. The issue for God is not how bad I am, but how good I am not. God compares me to Him, not to another person.

Our society views its many sins as things of beauty – society is passing its own sentence of judgment upon itself. Even those appearing to be good must be rescued from their own sin. Salvation effects your rescue from sin's guilt, pollution, slavery and punishment. Man is now naturally alienated from God, therefore, he will only know the wrath of God and the pain of everlasting death unless by grace Christ's blood intervenes.^{xix} Every man needs to be brought into a position of righteousness, with the standard for his righteousness being the character of God.^{xx}

❖ *Heaven is not a reward for doing 'good':*

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."^{xxxi}

Your loveableness nor your wisdom nor your strength nor your nobility nor your good works are escorts of God's grace.^{xxiii} If they were, you could boast concerning the contribution you made to your own salvation. God's grace, only conditioned upon His love for you, is effectual, mysterious, sovereign and transforming.

All men are by nature dead.^{xxiii} Though the souls of some men appear good and less dead than others, all men are born dead. They do not naturally have any commerce with God because their spirits are dead to God's Spirit. Men are born living carcasses – breathing, walking, talking tombs.

Tragically, man is no longer taught his spiritual insolvency. Rather, he is pridefully enlightened that all he needs is educating concerning the matters of God, and as he is educated he will naturally gravitate toward God's righteousness (because he is naturally good) thereby enabling him to spend eternity in heaven with God. All of that heresy is from the pit of hell because "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."^{xxiv} Man must experience the new birth.^{xxv}

You were born naturally a *persona non grata*, that is a person neither accepted nor welcome in God's kingdom. Therefore, your salvation must find its genesis in God, neither in your good works nor in yourself, for "salvation belongs to the Lord."^{xxvi}

The grace of God unburdens you of the need to work yourself to God. The truth is that you cannot work your way to God.^{xxvii} Your understanding of the breadth of God's grace alerts you to the spiritual reality that attempting to work your way to God is like making bricks without straw – it is egotistical and futile.

You do not contribute anything to your own salvation. No Christian is born from above by means of the godliness of his family, his personal strength or his will power.^{xxviii} God's grace enables you to believe in Him.^{xxix} "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures."^{xxx}

God's saving grace disallows you taking credit for any jot or tittle of your salvation. His powerful grace is all-sufficient, flourishing in your deadened weakness.^{xxxi} God's grace shuts the mouths of lions (Daniel), rescues men in distress (Jonah) and raises the dead (Lazarus). God alone caused you "to be born again to a living hope" solely by means of His "grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."^{xxxii}

You may protest declaring, "I was brought up in a Christian family. I prayed the sinner's prayer and was baptized in the church. I've always been taught that man is naturally good, and all a person needs to do to get to heaven is to do right." You have been wrongly taught! Oliver Cromwell, former prime minister of Great Britain, said, "I beseech ye brethren, by the bowels of Christ, believe ye may be wrong!"^{xxxiii} When the grace of your God is rightly perceived, your appreciation of the depth of His love, the expanse of Jesus' sacrifice and the benefit of the Holy Spirit's guidance will be magnified in your mind and life.

Recognize who you are without the Lord Jesus. "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"^{xxxiv} "Like the face of the mythical Medusa, our true condition away from God would turn us to stone if we ever fully confronted it."^{xxxv}

4. Why Pray?

❖ **When you pray, you find yourself becoming licensed to know God.**

It was not uncommon for Jesus to “slip away to the wilderness and pray” (Lk. 5:16). Our Lord was keenly aware of His need to establish margins in His life so that He could listen to His Father. We must strive for a lifestyle with freeing inner space so that we have time to listen. Through our spiritual disciplines we should make sure we do not allow the world to so fill our lives that there is no space remaining to listen to our Father (Mt. 6:6).

Prayer should begin in the silent preparation of one’s heart. One does not need to rush into the presence of the King (Esth. 5). An effective way of initiating a richer prayer life is to make a written list of God’s attributes that have made a marked difference in your life. These would include His holiness, righteousness, omnipotence, omnipresence and love. Engage yourself in specific acknowledgment of God’s characteristics to God Himself in prayer.

The unbeliever perceives prayer to be a waste of time. The believer views prayer as the occasion when the prayer participant finds himself nestled in the Holy of Holies. Your prayer should be vigorous, urgent and pleasing. You must never doubt that God has heard you when you are contrite and transparent in your petition (Hab. 2:1).

It is not the Christian’s prerogative to prescribe to God the measure, manner, time or place of God’s response to his prayer. The petitioner is to so garrison his heart and mind with God’s word that he is alert to God’s answer. All of the believer’s faculties are to be placed before the Lord’s face (I Ki. 8:22ff.).

❖ **Prayer exposes your inadequacy while acknowledging God’s immeasurable wealth.**

Though God knows your weaknesses, you may be able to hide them from yourself (I Jn. 1:8). Prayer allows you to wound your own heart in order that the Lord Christ may heal you. You break your own heart with your own hand so that you have the joy of watching God apply His Son’s balming life to your life. Prayer facilitates your quietness, godliness and dignity (I Ti. 2:2).

Folks failing to pray regularly discover that their faith is occasional, partial, ineffective and non-influential in their own lives. You may observe the affect that the world’s smiles, the devil’s defilements and the society’s imbibings have upon them. In their hearts, they seldom come before God so God becomes a stranger to them.

Do not allow your prayers to be confined to extraordinary occasions. Seek the transformation of your character so that your very nature will propel you to pray rather than your circumstances being the impetus. Make every moment of your life an epistle of prayer to God through His Holy Spirit. Prayer is man’s footstool before God’s throne, for God will only deny you in love.

When you pray, you enter into God's presence solely on the righteousness of His beloved Son. Your desires, if granted, should be fitting you for eternal service. You do not want anything that will not serve to bless your Lord's kingdom-building work.

Ask God to make His mind your mind. Prize your time with Him. Meditate upon His unsearchable riches: "While [Jesus] was praying, heaven was opened" (Lk. 3:21).

Prayer ushers the saint into the nearness of eternity – it is a time warp from the immediate to the eternal. It escorts Christians out of the broad way into the narrow way. Entreaty enables Jesus' co-heirs to go on from strength to strength. Be in a hurry to enter His presence.

❖ **Prayer provisions power.**

Prayer enables the Christian to access the weaponry of God that is "divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses" (II Cor. 10:4). Prayer is the saint's spiritual highway. As your judgment becomes more sound and your spirit more sober, you will search for opportunities to enter God's grace-filled presence via prayer.

Peter experienced the expensiveness of failing to exercise sound judgment and a sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Jesus told Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane to "keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"(Mt. 26:41). Peter chose to sleep.

Prayer opens the gates of heaven and releases the power the world is dying to possess (Lk. 3:21). Just as objects do not fall without gravity, the matters of this world are not brought into concert with God's will without prayer. God embraces the prayers of Christians to bring about His purposes. Prayer parts seas, stills storms and brings water out of rocks.

Never be duped into thinking that prayer changes God's mind (I Sam. 15:29). It does not, and you do not want your prayers to change His mind. Why? His will is perfect, and what you desire most is His perfect will. You do not want God to change – you want people, circumstances, conditions and attitudes to change (Mal. 3:6).

God promises that His word shall accomplish what He desires (Isa. 55:11). His will is your axis (Eph. 1:11; I Jn. 5:14). Effective prayer assaults your independence. Prayer brings God near (II Chron. 7:1). The prayer of the righteous man is effective accomplishing much because he prays for the heart of God, and then he prays God's heart (Js. 4:2f.).

❖ **You are commanded to pray.**

"Pray without ceasing. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit" (I Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18). Prayer enables you to capture present mercies and prepares you for future grace. Every command of God is for the benefit of His people.

❖ **Prayer effectuates God's will.**

“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (Js. 5:16). God desires for His name to be holy and for His kingdom to come in your life. In a way not fully comprehended by us, prayer brings into existence God's will (Dt. 29:29). Remembering that God is as interested in the process as in the result, prayer is a means for receiving God's blessings.

❖ **Prayer gifts you with wisdom.**

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God” (Js. 1:5,6). Do you need wisdom?

“If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (I Jn. 5:14).

An excellent resource for further insight is: Douglas F. Kelly, *If God Already Knows – Why Pray?* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2001).

5. If God is sovereign, and the result is known, why must we make the journey?

God knows the result, but you do not, nor do those around you. Much mystery surrounds your life for you only see life through a mirror dimly (I Cor. 13:12). Confessed ignorance is your threshold to greater wisdom and understanding. Acknowledged personal unknowingness fruits your life with the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit.

You are described as a mere vapor (Js. 4:14). You are but a breath away from death; your existence is moving rapidly toward a non-earthly existence. The environment of eternity is closer than you imagine, and it shall last longer than your mind can comprehend. What difference will your life make to God, to you and to others?

You have appeared in this world for a little while. You are frail and fragile, transient and insubstantial. Death will come as a thief in the night. Believe it or not, this world does not revolve around you, but around God. So, why must you make the journey?

❖ To bring Him glory

“Now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Pe. 1:6f.). Peter says that when the world’s fires test you, the outworking of your trust has the transforming influence of bringing praise, glory and honor to your Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter was tested, and he failed (Mk. 14:66-72). Nonetheless, “a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again” (Prov. 24:16). Peter recovered from his failure declaring, “We cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard. We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 4:20; 5:29).

If the Lord of glory has taken up residence in your heart, you have been equipped to effectively manage every trial and testing you encounter. When your trust is proven, Jesus Christ Himself receives the triumphant blessings of praise, glory and honor (Mt. 5:16). King Jesus has no greater pleasure than to be trusted by those for whom He sacrificed His precious, unblemished and spotless blood (I Pe. 1:19).

❖ To prove God’s worthiness

“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you’” (Gen. 12:1). God commanded Abraham to journey. Nonetheless, Abraham could not journey until he first disengaged. Journeying and disengagement require courage, the willingness to make decisions and the consistency to remain obedient regardless of the consequences.

God commanded Abraham to leave 3 inhibitors: his country, his relatives and his father’s house. People called to leave their comforts face a taxing decision. Most will not leave.

Others are like Lot's wife whose heart remained in Sodom though her body had vacated the city (Lk. 17:32).

Most Christians never know all their Lord can do through them because they refuse to allow themselves to be fully challenged. Their unwillingness to address God-given challenges results in their denial to themselves of the victories and joy they would receive if they exercised their giftedness to the extent that their Holy Spirit has provisioned. Human inertia keeps them where they are, and though they are secure and comfortable, they are languishing.

Remaining on the field of inaction denies you the experience of God's power working in your life. If Abraham stayed in the home of his moon-worshipping father, the ceaseless temptation would be to return to the ways of his father. Family traditions can be hazardous to one's growth in the Lord (Col. 2:8). In like manner, experiencing God necessitated James and John leaving their nets and the boat of their father (Mk. 1:18ff.).

❖ *To be an example for others*

If Christian conduct resembled the conduct of other religious and non-religious folks, there would be no attractiveness. Though God's apostle is in prison, he declares that his circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel (Phil. 1:12). So much so that the elite palace regiment has come to know Jesus!

Rather than lamenting his circumstances, Paul discerns God's orchestration of the events that lend themselves to the promotion of the gospel thereby bringing salvation to the lost. The prisoner rejoices in his imprisonment (Phil. 1:18). How about that for an example!

Your associations, dress, facial expressions, habits, speech, verbiage, etc. should be credentials of your Christianity. Inconsistent lifestyles assault Christianity whereas lives adorning Christ's gospel are Christianity's foremost commendation. Peter exhorts all Christians throughout the ages declaring, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the things in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation" (I Pe. 2:11f.).

- ❖ *To become conformed to Jesus (Ro. 8:29f.).*
- ❖ *To comfort others who are suffering affliction (II Cor. 1:4).*
- ❖ *To become cleansed of impurity (I Thess. 4:7).*
- ❖ *To become a people for Christ's own possession (Titus 2:14).*
- ❖ *To learn obedience (Heb. 5:8).*
- ❖ *To silence the agnosticism of foolish men (I Pe. 2:15).*
- ❖ *To shepherd the people God brings within your sphere of influence (I Pe. 5:2).*
- ❖ *To snatch others from the fires of eternal death (Jude 23).*

"I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless" (Gen. 17:1).

The following titles are recommended for more depth:

Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty Of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987).

J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973).

John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1971).

6. Where was God when....?

Many well-intentioned people ask questions such as:

- ❖ Where was God when my son committed suicide?
- ❖ Where was God when my daughter had leukemia, my father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's or my spouse was killed in an automobile collision with a drunken driver?
- ❖ Where was God when my wife ran off with another man?

The answer to the questions is simple though beyond your complete understanding (Dt. 29:29).

Where was God when...? God was in the same place He had been when He gave breath to your little baby boy. God was in the same place He had been when He gifted man with the intelligence to design, build and operate helicopters. God was in the same place He had been when *His* Son died.

God was in heaven at creation. God was in heaven when He gifted your son with birth. God was in heaven when He sacrificed His Son on a shameful cross outside the gates of Jerusalem.

Imagine God being One who already has all the facts, possesses flawless judgment and is not subject to circumstantial variations. Further, suppose Him perfectly balanced in all His ways, and His means and methods are impeccable. In addition, dare to think that He has planned with virtuous purity everything everywhere at all times in all places and that all things do work together precisely according to the counsel of His undefiled will. Finally, disabuse from your mind any possibility for Him to err and entrust to Him unrestricted ability to bring about His desires coupled with superlatively immaculate motives.

God is sovereign and He knows everything. His Spirit is everywhere and nothing is too difficult for Him (Ps. 139). The living and active God is in heaven giving what is good to those who ask Him (Mt. 7:12).

God is immutable without "variation or shifting shadow" (Js. 1:17). He is perfect so He has no need to change. God was not created; He always has been (Isa. 48:12).

God is omnipotent for His power is without measure. His strength is such that when man does wrong, God superintends man's evil so that it accomplishes good (Gen. 50:20).

God possesses no inadequacy – man does. Man refuses to believe that God can do what He says because man makes God too much like man – finite and limited. Man substitutes the omnipotent God for a fallible image of God that is more like man than God.

Perhaps the present conflict is God's provisioning for you to exercise His ministry of mercy. Jesus, your consolation, is positioning you to console those affected by the deeds of evil men.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6f).

7. Is the Old Testament Law Still Valid?

The general answer to this question is *yes*. Nevertheless, in order to better understand the import of the question and the gravity of the issues surrounding this matter, you will be well served to remember that the Old Testament provides you with four types of Laws:

1. Dietary Law
2. Ceremonial or Sacrificial Law
3. Civil Law
4. Moral Law

The dietary law was intended for the nation of Israel alone. It was intended to establish their peculiarity within a decadent society. Their dietary regulations assisted their identification during the term of their wandering in the desert, their kingdom years and when the invading armies deported them.

God clearly abolished the dietary requirements in Acts 10 when an object like a great sheet came down out of heaven and a voice declared to Peter, “Arise, Peter, kill and eat!”^{xxxvi} This confirmed the words of the Lord Jesus in Mark 7:14-23 where “He declared all foods clean.”^{xxxvii}

The Ceremonial or Sacrificial Law was set aside by the sacrifice of Christ and most plainly set forth is Jesus’ declaration from the cross, “It is finished!”^{xxxviii} The author of the epistle to the Hebrews confirms the thoroughness of Jesus’ sacrifice and the uselessness of other sacrifices in Chapters 8 and 9.

The Civil Law consisted of those ordinances designed for the theocracy you know as Israel. Many of these regulations are set forth in the book of Leviticus. An example of one of these laws that has been set aside are the regulations concerning adultery. Though the adulterer could have been stoned to death for the offense under the ordinances set forth in Leviticus, Jesus declares that the penalty for adultery is a certificate of divorce.^{xxxix}

The fourth area of the law is the Moral Law. This body of law remains valid.^{xl}

Doing the will of God is the distinguishing characteristic of those practicing Christianity. Obeying His laws, following His statutes and walking in His steps authenticates the true Christian. How does Jesus describe the lifestyles of the non-Christian? He says they “practice lawlessness.”^{xli} So what is the will of God for Christians? The will of God is for Christians to practice lawfulness.

When Christians practice their Christianity by practicing the lawfulness of the Lord, they receive benefits that this world cannot measure. God designed His law to detoxify Christians from this world’s pollutants and to enculturate Christians to His deity. The law of God is a tutorial vehicle nurturing a Christian’s transformation into God’s image.^{xlii}

The more perfectly you obey God's word, the more perfectly you will resemble your God. Be mindful that the only Man who ever shone with the glory of God was also the only Man who ever perfectly practiced the law.^{xliii}

Another marked benefit of God's law is that it reveals the heinousness of sin – sin's breadth, length, height and width.^{xliiv} In 1657 Samuel Bolton of Christ College, Cambridge, provided much guidance concerning the Christian's need for God's law:

“[The Law] will reveal to you more nakedness in one sin than all the world can cover; more indigency in one sin than all the treasures of created righteousness are able to supply; more obliquity and injustice in one sin, in a wandering thought, than all the deaths of men and annihilations of angels are able to expiate. Search into the Law and you shall discover thousands of sins that fall under any one Law of God.”^{xlv}

Practicing Christians quickly discover the benefit of the genuine and constant freedom that always accompanies the practice of the law. **Christians have been freed from disobedience to the law.** They can now obey with their whole hearts for they know that authentic liberty is attained when they thoroughly obey every jot and tittle of God's law.

Samuel Bolton wrote, “The booke of the Law was placed betweene the Cherubims, and upon the Mercy-seat, to tell us under the Gospel that every Law comes now to the Saints from the Mercy-seat.”^{xlvi}

Most of the Christian teaching today centers upon one's feelings and personal experiences. Modern Christianity gives little emphasis to God's holiness and His command to “be holy, for I am holy.”^{xlvii} Hollow phrases, poverty-stricken sound bites and a doctrinally thin, warmed over Christian varnish are developing Christian dwarves.

In good faith evangelicals are attempting to communicate Christianity so that it is more acceptable and less offensive to the masses of people. Although their intentions are most honorable, their methodology is outside the balance of Scripture.^{xlviii} They have hidden the offense of the cross, and when the offensiveness of the cross is removed, the cross of Christ is made void.^{xlix}

Remember, Christ Jesus “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from **every lawless deed** and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”¹ His crucifixion was not for the sole purpose of saving us from our sin, but to deliver up to Himself His bride who would live like a saved people. Jesus came to save and to sanctify; and though the law will not save us, we cannot be purified without practicing the law.

God is the “Lawgiver.”^{li} Our good God would never give a law that is not for our benefit. The Christian's principal interest should be in what God says about His law rather than what man says.

☀️ God says, “The Law is good, if one uses it lawfully.”^{lii}

- ✿ God says, “The Law is spiritual.”^{liii}
- ✿ Jesus says, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”^{liv}
- ✿ Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”^{lv}

Your love for your God makes practicing the law of your God the desire of your heart. When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in a man’s heart He increases that man’s capacity to do and desire to do all that his God commands. Never forget the words of Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892): “The heaviest end of the Cross lies ever on [Jesus’] shoulders.”^{lvi}

We live in a world that is fallen (therefore hurricanes and earthquakes), with a people who are fallen (therefore pride and prejudice). The fallenness of this world is not due to a lack of knowledge concerning God’s holy law, but a lack of will. The Prince of Preachers said, “The core and marrow of damnation is reserved for men who hear the truth, and feel it too, but yet reject it, and are lost.”^{lvii}

Practicing Christianity by living lawfully has never been nor shall it ever be attractive even to most of those claiming to be Christian. We know that among the Hebrews the majority was apostate and idolatrous.^{lviii} Too many professors of our faith only possess a surface religion evidencing civility and morality though devoid of any spiritual pulse. The Christ of God is not their Christ. Perhaps they are not blatantly lawless, nevertheless they are a tribe of spiritual amphibians with an inflated sense of self-worth and plagued with the misguided loves naturally accompanying estranged hearts.^{lix}

Malpractice in any Christian practice is malpractice in all.^{lx}

Beware of a man who draws a distinction between actions in the secular world and actions in religious settings. Rev. Spurgeon said, “The line between things secular and sacred is imaginary and mischievous. We believe God for time as well as for eternity, for earth as well as for heaven, for the body as well as for the soul.”^{lxi}

Never underestimate the influence the ungodly have upon the godly. The ungodly want to unlord the Lord, but they must first unlord the law.^{lxii} God’s law is evangelical, and the churchman who is yet an unbeliever knows that the pure practice of Christianity is not friendly to his cause. He cannot look at God’s law with “Gospel-Spectacles” because he is not gospel friendly.^{lxiii}

Why do we move so quickly to abort the lawful practice and adopt the lawless practice? Henry Scougal (1650-1678), Professor of Divinity at King’s College, Aberdeen, Scotland, wrote, “Interest and self-love so strongly blind the minds of men that they can hardly be stopped from believing that which they would have be true. They hug the disease, [and] shun the medicine as poison. Can a man approach too near to God? Can he be too like his Maker? Is it possible to be over-perfect or over-happy?”^{lxiv}

Distance yourself from those unbelievers and believers who refuse to fully practice God’s law. Christians practicing lawfulness must enjoy no partnership with lawlessness.^{lxv} Do

not allow Satan's influence to smuggle its way into your life via the words and examples of those closest to you.^{lxvi}

Your unmortified flesh leads you to live checkered lives. You must avoid a daily feeding on the foods poisoning your will. Your natural spiritual sloth possesses your souls for you fail to sit loose to the world. You are not exact in your spiritual practices, and you imitate the practices of those whom all of Scripture warns you against.

Man's tendency is to cascade toward the least difficult practice. We all know that less energy is required (at least initially!) to practice lawlessness than is required to practice consistent lawfulness. Many Christians have been taught and are of the opinion that Jesus' coming from heaven to earth did away with the necessity that we practice the law of God. That is a satanic lie.

Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."^{lxvii} Jesus gifts us with His life's purpose in this passage, and His purpose should be ours.^{lxviii} Clarity of purpose always facilitates intentional living allowing its confessor to live by design rather than default. Jesus never drifted from His declared purpose of fulfilling all God commanded through the Old Testament writings.

Jesus came from heaven to earth, from life eternal to life ephemeral, purposed and resolved to fulfill God's law.^{lxix} Every Old Testament law that remains unqualified or unmodified by the teachings of the New Testament, is as effective today as it was the day God gave it to man.

Jesus' appreciation for God's law is most exalted. Why? God's perfect law is Jesus' perfect law! Every Scriptural command comes to us as equally from our sinless Jesus as it does from our holy God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ applied His appreciation for Scripture's commands to His life. Jesus perfectly obeyed every Scriptural mandate.^{lxx} Are not we "to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth?"^{lxxi}

Jesus never grumbled, murmured or complained about the strictness of the law. We do not find Him reminding His Father of His Sonship in order to convince God to remove the applicability of certain laws to Him. Jesus is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Because God has written the law upon the two tablets of stone and upon the tablets of human hearts, it must be obeyed – not negotiated or bartered.

God Almighty has not called us to debate; He has called us to obedience. As Moses told the Hebrews and Jesus told the devil, "Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord."^{lxxii}

David, the king after God's own heart, makes public the heart we are to have for our God's law:

“The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

“Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall observe it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, and keep it with all my heart. Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in it.

“Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold.”^{lxxxiii}

Perhaps you would be helped in your practice of Christianity if you possessed a fuller understanding of God's view of lawlessness. God says, “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”^{lxxxiv} You know that “sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”^{lxxxv}

Lawlessness is Satan's vomit costumed to resemble Bathsheba's beauty. Lawlessness is treasonous unholiness seducing man to dine upon a disordered love. Lawlessness turns “justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.”^{lxxxvi}

Professor Scougal wrote, “We have arrived at such a height of impiety that virtue and vice seem to have shifted places; evil and good seem to have changed their names.”^{lxxxvii} God loves righteousness and hates lawlessness.^{lxxxviii} Jesus says, “Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.”^{lxxxix}

Augustine defined evil/sin/lawlessness as disordered love. Your prayer that God will deliver you from lawless practices should be your morning prayer every day of your life.^{lxxx} You are tempted daily with your own lusts.^{lxxxxi} You must rely upon “the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.”^{lxxxii}

God hates lawlessness and is tireless in His desire to dissuade man from his fascination with lawlessness. Our hearts are lions' dens of devouring lusts. Lawlessness torments righteous souls every day.^{lxxxiii}

Take your own spiritual pulse. Do you “joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man?”^{lxxxiv} Are you with your mind “serving the law of God?”^{lxxxv} Would the angels describe your practice of Christianity as the habit of one “being poured out as a drink offering?”^{lxxxvi}

8. Epilogue

Delay is denial. Delay is disobedience. Delay is sinful. Delay is expensive.

If you want to capture fullness in your life, if you want to become excited about life, you must crucify your desire to have all the answers to all your questions before you proceed. If you had all the answers, you would never need faith and without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). You must become a laborer for God's heart for you.

The titans of Christianity went out not knowing where they were going or how they would get there, but they knew the One with whom they journeyed. God does not allow Christians to choose His means in their lives, the crosses they must bear or the ways they shall walk. Perhaps today's concerns are encumbering you from living for eternity.

Every true heir of Christ is willing and content with separation from all things in order that he might be joined to "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation" (Col. 1:15). Are you willing to be separated from the earthly in order that you might capture eternal joy, contentment, peace, comfort and cohesiveness?

ⁱ I Jn. 5:13

ⁱⁱ I Jn. 2:3

ⁱⁱⁱ I Jn. 5:3

^{iv} I Jn. 3:9f., italics mine.

^v I Jn. 2:10

^{vi} I Jn. 2:15

^{vii} I Jn. 5:1

^{viii} II Pe. 1:10

^{ix} I Jn. 5:11f.

^x I Jn. 4:6

^{xi} Heb. 8:10

^{xii} I Jn. 5:4

^{xiii} Heb. 2:3

^{xiv} I Jn. 3:8, 9f.

^{xv} Jn. 7:38

Other helpful titles are:

J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973).

John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1971).

^{xvi} Mk. 10:18

^{xvii} Ro. 3:10,12

^{xviii} Ps. 14:3

^{xix} Jn. 14:6

^{xx} Jn. 3:3-8

^{xxi} Eph. 2:8f.

^{xxii} I Cor. 1:26-29

^{xxiii} Eph. 2:1

^{xxiv} I Cor. 2:14

^{xxv} I Pe. 1:3-5

^{xxvi} Ps. 3:8

^{xxvii} Ro. 6:14

^{xxviii} Jn. 1:13

^{xxix} Acts 18:27; Phil. 1:29

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- xxx Js. 1:18
- xxxii II Cor. 12:9
- xxxii I Pe. 1:3; II Ti. 1:9, respectively.
- xxxiii Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), p. 125.
- xxxiv Acts 4:12; Heb. 2:3
- xxxv Ibid., p. 79.
- xxxvi Acts 10:13
- xxxvii Mk. 7:19
- xxxviii Jn. 19:30
- xxxix Lev. 20:10; Mt. 19:3-9
- xl Mt. 5:17-19
- xli Mt. 7:23
- xlii II Cor. 3:18
- xliii Jn. 1:14,18; II Cor. 5:21
- xliv Ro. 7:7
- xlvi *The Puritans on Conversion*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1990), p. 49.
- xlvii Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (London, 1645), pp. 52,53, as quoted: Ernest F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1999), p. 123.
- xlviii I Pe. 1:15; Lev. 11:44f.; 19:2; 20:7
- xlix I Cor. 2:2
- l I Cor. 1:17
- l Tit. 2:14, emphasis added.
- li Js. 4:12
- lii I Ti. 1:8
- liii Ro. 7:14. "This means that it is of divine origin and character, and more specifically, that it is derived from the Holy Spirit, is validated by his authority, and bespeaks his character. Thus every lack of conformity to the law of God is lack of conformity to God's likeness, and all conformity to the law is but conformity to that pattern which is the primary and ultimate pattern of sanctification." John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray, Volume Two, Select Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), p. 307.
- liv Jn. 14:15
- lv Mt. 7:21
- lvi The last words of Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon from the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle on June 7th, 1891 as quoted: J. I. Packer, *Puritan Papers: Volume 3, 1963-1964* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2001), p. 82.
- lvii Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. 6* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), p. 88.
- lviii I Ki. 19:18; Heb. 3:19-4:2
- lix Isa. 29:13
- lx Js. 2:10
- lxi J. I. Packer, *Puritan Papers: Volume 3, 1963-1964* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2001), p. 70.
- lxii William Strong, *A discourse of the two covenants: Wherein the nature, differences, and effects of the covenant of works and of grace are... discussed* (London, 1678), pp. 40,43,45, as quoted: Kevan, p. 49.
- lxiii Francis Roberts, *Of God's Covenants... The Myserie and Marrow of the Bible: viz. Gods-Covenants with man* (London, 1657), p. 789 as quoted: Kevan, p. 126.
- lxiv Henry Scougal, *The Works of the Rev. Henry Scougal (1650-1678)*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), pp. 145,239,20.
- lxv II Cor. 6:14
- lxvi Mt. 6:23
- lxvii Mt. 5:17f.
- lxviii Ro. 8:29
- lxix Jn. 6:38
- lxx Heb. 4:15
- lxxi I Pe. 2:21f.

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- lxxii Dt. 8:3; Mt. 4:4
lxxiii Ps. 19:7f.; 119:33-35,127
lxxiv I Jn. 3:4
lxxv Shorter Catechism, Q. 14; see also Gal. 3:10-12.
lxxvi Am. 6:12
lxxvii Scougal, p. 158.
lxxviii Heb. 1:9
lxxix Mt. 24:12
lxxx Mt. 6:13
lxxxi Js. 1:13f.
lxxxii Js. 1:17
lxxxiii II Pe. 2:8
lxxxiv Ro. 7:22
lxxxv Ro. 7:24
lxxxvi Phil. 2:17; II Ti. 4:6