

What Is the Truth About --

LAW AND GRACE?

No question excites more controversy among those who profess the name of "Christ"! Are we under the "Law"? or under "grace"? Many are confused! Are the Ten Commandments abolished? Does Grace do away with law? Just because our sins are forgiven, and we are no longer under the death penalty of the Law for our sins -- are we now FREE from the Law -- are we FREE to live however we please, without fear of future consequences if we break God's Law? Here is what Scripture reveals on this very important issue -- the plain teaching of your own Bible!

William F. Dankenbring

Picture the common teaching in your own mind, if you can. A nation of Israelites, sinning, struggling under grievous bondage. Over them a harsh, stern, monstrous law, a terrible yoke of bondage. To redeem them from such miserable bondage, God sent Jesus Christ to do away with law!

Now, does that picture make much sense? Of course NOT!

There is something flagrantly wrong with this concept of God! It pictures God the Father as having made a mistake -- as being a cruel, harsh Monster.

It pictures Jesus Christ as a "smart-alecky" young man who came to do away with His Father's Law. Christ is pictured as having more wisdom and knowledge than His Father, for He saw that the Law was a harsh yoke of bondage. So He came to abolish it -- nail it to the cross!

Such a picture totally distorts the mercy, love, and goodness of God!

IF There Were No Law . . .

Think for a moment! Let's just suppose that God *did* abolish His Law for some inexplicable reason. Suppose He decided to do away with it. What then? Do you realize what this would mean?

This would mean that there would be no law against committing idolatry, worshipping false gods, cursing, swearing, breaking God's Sabbath -- but more, it would mean that murder would be all right; stealing would be acceptable as well; lust, adultery, rape, every sex crime-lying, cheating, bearing false witness -- all these things *would be all right!*

There would be no law against them!

And since there would be no law, there would, of course, be no punishment!

Sin would be impossible, since "sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). If no law, there could be no transgression -- no sin!

You would be living in a world where EVERYTHING GOES! Nothing would be wrong. There would be no definition of right from wrong. Anything you had in mind to do would be acceptable. If you murdered your mother-in-law, you could get away with it! There would be no such thing as a judge, or a cell, a prison, an execution, or any kind of penalty -- and no hellfire!

You could do exactly as you please, regardless of how it affects other people!

You could be a real "devil," as they say. You could be a homicidal maniac, and no one would be able to have you arrested. And, spiritually, God would not be able to punish sinners since sin would not exist!

If the spiritual Law of God were nailed to the cross, then from that time nineteen hundred years ago to the present, today, sin would be nonexistent! And there would be no need of a Savior -- since there would be no need to be saved from sin! Hitler, Mussolini, and all the other arch-criminals -- Dillinger, "Pretty Boy Floyd," Al Capone, and all the rest -- would not be guilty, in God's sight!

Now, does that really make sense?
How does that strike you? Can you believe it?

And if there is no sin, from the time of Christ to the present, then there is no such thing as a sinner, no need for repentance, no need for forgiveness, no need for mercy or pardon -- no need for grace!

Absurd, isn't it!

But if you follow the reasoning of the no-law advocates through to its logical conclusion, that is where you are finally left -- that is where you end up!

But this is not the teaching of Jesus!

Was Christ "at odds" with His Father in heaven, as some say? Was it God's Law that

separated man from God -- or was it sin? Just what is the Law? And what is this thing called Grace? And where does Sin enter the picture? *Why did* Christ have to die? What -- who -- was nailed to the cross?

No subject is more vital, more urgent, more crucial to your Salvation!

What About Faithful Abraham?

To really understand, let's go back to the beginning. Let's get the true picture of God's dealing with man!

Many assume, first of all, that law did not come until Abraham, the "father of the faithful." Notice, now, the fascinating -- and vitally important -- example of the patriarch Abraham, to whom the promises were made!

Was Abraham under grace? Did Abraham obey God's Law?

You have probably read what the apostle Paul wrote about Abraham: "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was *counted unto him for righteousness*" (Romans 4.1-3).

Further: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his FAITH is counted for righteousness" (verses 4-5). Notice! Abraham was a man of faith. *He believed* God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham did not receive the promises, including the promise of salvation, by works. What the apostle Paul means by "works" will be made plain later.

Abraham did not earn salvation -- or the promises! They were given to him by God!

Does this mean, therefore, that Abraham did not have to obey God? Does it mean, more importantly, that we do not have to obey God today?

Turn to the book of James. Let's notice what the apostle James tells us about faithful Abraham. James relates, "Was not Abraham our father *justified by works*, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (*James 2:21*).

Wait a minute! Doesn't that sound like a contradiction? Let's *read on*: "Seest thou how faith" -- now he mentions "faith" -- "*wrought with his works*, and by works was *faith made perfect?*" (Verse 22).

How about that? James shows us that faith works together with works! This is no contradiction!

He continues: "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it

was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that *by works* a man is justified, and not by faith *only*" (James 2:23-24). "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (verse 26).

Abraham did not "earn" the promises. And no Christian can ever "earn" salvation! No one can ever "earn" salvation! It is not something which we receive as a result of all our deeds and works. Yet most people believe *their* faith *earns* them salvation! It isn't *your* faith that gives you eternal life.alone," wrote James (verse 17). How clear! Faith and works, said James under inspiration, go hand-in-hand!

God tested Abraham's faith by his obedience -- his works. Abraham met the test without flinching and dauntless courage. After showing God his willingness to obey, even if it required the life of his own son, Isaac, God confirmed the promises He had made to Abraham. Why? "Because that thou hast **obeyed** my voice" (Gen.22:18).

Abraham not only had faith in God -- but by faith he OBEYED his Creator! His faith went hand in hand with obedience! God later told Isaac why Abraham was blessed: "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, *and my laws*" (Gen.26:5).

How plain! God's spiritual Law was in force in the days of Abraham -- long, long before Moses!

Abraham *obeyed God*. That's what your Bible says! By faith he accepted Gods promises -- as a gift. God did not owe Abraham the promises. He gave the promises to him because Abraham was willing to obey! Abraham did not "earn" them by his works! Nevertheless, unless he had demonstrated his willingness to obey God, through his works, he would not have had the promises given him.

But the fact that Abraham's obedience was involved did not earn him salvation!

The promises came freely through God's grace, "not of works, lest any man should boast" through God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). But works were involved. Does this sound contradictory? Christ's faith in us is a gift. We do not receive it because of all our works. All one's good deeds cannot save anyone. God gives it because of His merciful pardon and grace -- not because of works at all! James said, "Faith without works is dead, being alone." God's grace alone, by itself, will not save us, since God will not give His grace to a person who refuses to obey, who rebels against Him. Do we get the point?

Grace is simply free, undeserved, unmerited, pardon or forgiveness. God gives us grace when He forgives us our sins. But unless we are willing to obey God, and *stop sinning*, we will lose that forgiveness or grace.

But the fact that Abraham's obedience was involved did not earn him salvation! Read the very next verse: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should *walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:10).

There you are! Faith withOUTworks is *dead* -- a dead, useless faith. There *are* works involved! But these works, of themselves, do not earn us salvation -- they merely demonstrate our willingness to obey Him and be submissive to His government!

God will not give salvation to any soul that He cannot govern! Before God will give us His promises, we must prove our willingness to obey Him, even as Abraham did, to the very end! There are conditions involved.

These conditions involve repentance, faith, surrender and submission to God -- as well as the condition of obedience to His authority!

But these conditions do not earn salvation. They are the conditions God sets in order that He can *give* you eternal life.

Could This Be You?

This illustration should help you understand!

You are sitting on murderer's row. You have just killed a man. Lonely, miserable, full of fear and terror, you wait the telltale footsteps clinking down the corridor of the prison, beckoning you to your fate.

The jury found you guilty of murder in the first degree. The stone-faced judge sentenced you to DEATH. Droplets of cold sweat break out on your forehead. You shiver with fright and dreadful anticipation.

Then, as these thoughts race through your mind, you notice footsteps. Soon a key turns in the lock of your cell door. A voice booms, "Come with me." Depressed, hopeless, you follow the guard down the hall, appalled at the sinful deed you committed. A door opens ahead of you, and suddenly you find yourself standing face to face with the warden of the prison. Fear grips you.

Then a voice calmly says, "You are free to go. Your crime has been pardoned by the governor. You are free to go."

You stagger back. You can hardly believe 'it -- free -- *Free!* In a state of shock, you can hardly grasp what is happening. *Free!* "Free to go!" You have been given a new lease on life!

Sound like a strange tale? It has happened in the past. But why do I mention it?

Because you, in God's sight, we were just like this murderer. You were in sin, and the death penalty was waiting irrevocably for you (Romans 6.23). You were *doomed!* But Christ set you free by paying your penalty in your stead!

Now is the released murderer free to go out and break the law? Is he free to murder

someone else? Does the gift of life give him license to kill? *Of course not!* Such a thought is preposterous!

The murderer received pardon. Grace. If he murders again, he will go back to prison!

Even so, when a sinner repents, and accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as atonement for his sins, he comes under the grace of God. His *past sins* are forgiven. The death penalty for sin no longer hangs over his head.

Does this mean he can now disobey God? Does this mean he is free to do whatever he wishes? Obviously not!

The grace of God, and faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ to atone for your sins, must be accompanied by law-abiding works! If you willfully turn again to the way of sin, knowingly rejecting God's way, there remains no more sacrifice for your sins, and you will incur the death penalty once again -- this time, without any escape! (Hebrews 10:26; II Peter 2:21.) That's what your Bible says!

Can you see the point?

Salvation is a GIFT! But it is predicated on certain conditions! A sinner cannot *earn* salvation -- for he is already condemned. But through repentance, and the grace of God, he can receive it as a gift. He must, however, meet the twin conditions of *faith and obedience*, even as faithful Abraham did, setting us an example!

What About God's LAW?

Abraham, we have found, obeyed God's Law. His faith was combined with obedience. But, what about Christians?

"Aren't Christians under grace, not law?" you ask.

"Isn't God's Law a harsh monster? -- a yoke of bondage?"

"Wasn't it but a temporary substitute until the coming of Jesus Christ?"

Notice what God's Word has to say!

Abraham kept God's Commandments, His statutes, and His *laws* (Genesis 26:5). Speaking of God's Law, David was inspired to write, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). He added, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart -- the commandment of the Lord is *pure*, enlightening the eyes" (verse 8).

Notice! The law David was speaking about is a good, pure, *perfect law*. There is nothing wrong with it! It is not a harsh yoke of bondage -- a stern, exacting, monstrous, evil thing! David wrote, "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are

sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness" (Psalm 111:7-8).

Can you believe it?

The law of God which David spoke of *endures* FOREVER! It is an EVERLASTING Law! This obviously means it is *in effect*, today

Clearly, then, it has not been done away! Isn't that simple -- easy to understand?

Now notice what the apostle Paul himself had to say about the law of God: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7.12).

Paul went on, "For we know that the law is spiritual. . ." (verse 14). Those things which are spiritual are eternal.

Now I ask you -- would God institute a holy, just, *good* law -- a SPIRITUAL law, and ordain it FOREVER -- and then turn night around, and abolish it? Do you believe in such a fickle, changeable God? Do you believe in a God who doesn't know His own mind?

Utterly absurd, isn't it? Let's be honest!

But WHY Law?

But what is the purpose of God's Law? Why did God institute law in the first place? Was God's Law just a temporary measure for ancient Israel?

Why do we have national laws and state laws today? Why do we have motor vehicles laws, regulating the operation of automobiles and the flow of traffic? Isn't the answer rather obvious?

Men make laws for the well-being of the public. Laws are made to maintain order. Without traffic laws, for instance, city streets would be a scene of sheer chaos. Mayhem would be the common result!

Without penal laws and criminal statutes, crime would go unpunished. The lawless and greedy would be free to ravage society, without fear of punishment. Men's laws are intended to guarantee liberty!

The same great principle applies to God's spiritual Law. God made His laws for our good. They tell us which way to go. They reveal to us the difference *between right and wrong!*

Few people realize it, but every human being has a carnal, defiant, God-rejecting, rebellious human nature. God says, "Because the carnal [natural, normal] mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). Jeremiah wrote, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and *desperately wicked!*" (Jeremiah 17.9).

When born, we know nothing -- absolutely nothing. Everything you know today, or think you know, came into your mind since the time you were a little squalling baby.

You were born into Satan's world. You were born in complete ignorance of the spiritual law of God -- without knowing how you should live and govern your life. But God did not leave the human race without this vital knowledge. He gave mankind His holy law to regulate human conduct. He gave a law which explains how to live, how to be happy, how to have an abundant, joyous and brimful life!

Sadly, most men have ignored that way -- that law. And even most preachers today scoff at it, spurn it, and claim it is done away! When will mankind learn? When will we see?

God's spiritual laws are in motion today. They are eternal, immutable, inexorable -- and binding on every one of us! To break one of them is like breaking the law of gravity. There is always a fearful penalty which automatically follows every infraction!

God not only created physical laws for the control of the Universe -- laws of chemistry, physics, mathematics -- laws like the law of gravity and inertia. But God also created spiritual laws for man's happiness -- laws which automatically regulate man's relationship with God, and with his fellow man!

Just like the physical laws governing matter and energy, these spiritual laws are always binding. You break them, and they break you! You may ignore them, but they never ignore you. They are always present; whenever broken, they always exact a penalty commensurate with the offense.

But they were created for your good!

What is wrong, for example, with a spiritual law which tells you to love your neighbor? What is wrong with a law which says you should love God with your whole being -- your very Creator, who gives you every breath you breathe?

What's wrong with a law which spells out how you should behave, whom you should worship, forbids you to commit murder, or steal, or commit adultery with another's wife, or lie, or commit other things which are bad for you? Is such a law wrong?

What's wrong with it?

Hand-in-hand with the modern "no law" concept is the current plunge into gross immorality and sexual promiscuity, the rising crime rate, and the threat of explosive racial violence! Where ministers teach there is "no law," there is the growing menace of lawlessness among the people!

It is time we learned respect for God's Law! Listen to these words of the apostle John:

"And hereby we do know that we know him, IF *we keep his commandments*" (I John 2:3).

John was so positive of his statement, that he continued, in strong language: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, IS A LIAR, and the truth is *not in him*" (verse 4).

John was inspired to write these words! This scripture was inspired decades after Jesus was nailed to the cross!

It means exactly what it says!

But back to the original question. Since the scriptures do not contradict (John 10:35), and since every scripture is given by divine inspiration (II Timothy 3:16), *how do we explain* those verses which might seem, on the surface, to give the impression God's Law is not binding today?

This is one of the most misunderstood matters in the Bible! This is the rock over which more theologians stumble and fall, than perhaps any other!

They have assumed, falsely -- that the Law of God, the Ten Commandments -- and the "law of sacrifices" -- are one and the same! Nothing could be further from the truth.

Let's understand! There were TWO PARTS to God's Law!

TWO PARTS TO GOD'S LAW -- One Eternal, One Temporary

This is the crux of the matter!

It is so simple, a *child* can understand!

First, then, remember that God's spiritual Law -- the Ten Commandments and all those commandments based on them -- did not start with Moses! The Law of God *long anteceded* the time of Moses! In fact, God's spiritual Law has been in effect since creation!

Hard to believe? Notice!

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's instruction, and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they sinned. What is "sin"?

Very few people know the Bible definition of "sin." Here it is, given by the apostle John: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW**" (I John 3:4). There it is! Sin is breaking God's Law. Adam and Eve sinned. Therefore they broke God's Law! They stole what was not theirs and broke the eighth commandment. God's Law was then in existence! They "transgressed" against God. But, we read in Romans, ". . . where no law is, there is *no transgression*" (Romans 4.15).

Isn't that plain? So there was a Law long before Moses!

Adam and Eve broke God's Commandments. As we have already seen they dishonored

their only Parent -- God -- and thereby broke the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12). They stole something which wasn't theirs (Exodus 20:15). They coveted something which did not belong to them (Exodus 20:17). Three of God's basic Ten Commandments already broken!

The apostle Paul said, "Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin. . ." (Romans 5:12). Death is the penalty of sin (Romans 6:23). Adam *sinned*. And yet, Paul added, ". . . sin is not imputed where there is no law" (Romans 5:13). But sin was imputed. Adam therefore broke God's Law! And he died -- and so have his children. "Nevertheless, death reigned from *Adam* to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression [Adam knew better], who is the figure of him [Christ] that was to come" (verse 14).

Sin was now in the world.

Sin is the transgression of God's law! Death is the penalty of sin, and death reigned from Adam to Moses -- for sin is not imputed where there is no law. That's Paul's teaching. Those are the plain words of the New Testament.

Gods law was in effect from Adam to Moses! Nothing could be clearer!

But then, exactly what did Moses bring?

Another LAW Added

The Bible does, very plainly, speak of a law which came with Moses. The Law which the legalistic Pharisees tried to bind on the brethren was called "the Law of Moses." We read that a great controversy arose in the New Testament Church which involved the "law of Moses" and the matter of "circumcision." Luke wrote in Acts, chapter 15, "But there rose up certain of the *sect of the Pharisees*, which believed" -- these were Pharisees who believed Jesus was the Messiah -- "saying, That it was needful to *circumcize them [Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses*" (Acts 15:5). What was the real "problem" here?

In verse 6 we read, "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter." After much discussion, the apostles ruled that God had given the Holy Spirit to Gentiles who believed on Christ, "and put no difference between us and them [Jews and Gentiles], purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a YOKE upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:5-11).

Let's understand this! These Pharisees were arguing that Gentiles, in order to be saved, had to be physically circumcized, and to "*convert*" to *Judaism*! They claimed that Gentiles had to become "physical Jews" by undergoing the rite of circumcision, as well as baptism, and come under the obligation to obey all Jewish religious law -- the whole "law of Moses," which, in that day, included the observation of all the Jewish "halachah" -- the rules and restrictions added by generations of Rabbis from the time of Ezra down to the very day of the apostles! This included all the minutiae, and detailed 39 laws of "Sabbath" restrictions, and washings and the "traditions

of the elders" -- things which were a "YOKE," in the words of the apostle Peter! (Acts 15:10). Paul speaks of it as a "yoke of bondage" in Galatians 5:1.

In other words, the Pharisee believers were teaching that Gentiles had to become "Jews" first, before they could become "Christians"! They had to *first convert to Judaism*, and only then could they become acknowledged as believers in Christ! They had to obey ALL the Jewish legal requirements established by generations of Rabbis, and their interpretations of the fine points of the Torah, and Jewish tradition!

But Christ Himself had already ruled on these points, in actuality. He told the Pharisees, who accused His disciples of breaking the law of Moses by transgressing the "traditions of the elders" (Matt.15:1-2). However, Jesus hurled their accusation back into their own teeth, saying, "Why do ye also transgress the law of God *by your tradition?*" (verse 3). He went on to say, "Thus have ye made the law of God of none effect *by your tradition*" (v.6). In other words, the Jews over time had added so many "halachic" principles and rules, in their legislation, in interpreting the Law of Moses, that they had strayed from the very Law itself and had developed a legal system which, in reality, was contrary to and in violation of the spirit of the original Torah, or law of God!

The argument, then, was not over the law of God itself -- called the "law of Moses" in the Scriptures, because it was first codified and laid out in full during the time of Moses, and through the revelation God gave to His servant Moses (see Ezra 7:6, 10). It was over the "traditions" the Pharisees added to the Law, and their perversions of the Law!

Now, let us continue the story in Acts 15. After considering this matter fully, the apostles decided that the Pharisaical believers were *dead wrong!* Conversion to Judaism, indicated by requiring Gentile believers to be circumcised and keep the entire law of Moses (including the traditions of the elders, by direct implication), was NOT necessary for salvation!

But notice. After making this fundamental, paramount decision, the apostles then decided to write a general letter to the Gentile believers throughout the Roman Empire, a very pointed epistle. James, the brother of Christ, and the apostle over the Jerusalem church, declared, "Wherefore my sentence is . . . that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. *For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, BEING READ IN THE SYNAGOGUES EVERY SABBATH DAY*" (Acts 15:19-21).

What is this? Why did James stress only these commandments? Was he ignoring or neglecting the laws against murder, stealing, taking God's name in vain, coveting, bearing false witness, Sabbath breaking -- many of the very Ten Commandments? Of course not! When we read this entire passage IN CONTEXT, we see that first of all, James is singling out *specific issues which Gentile brethren would be confronted with in their local communities!* In Gentile society, in those days, idolatrous pollutions were rampant, sexual immorality and promiscuity were also very commonplace, and meats containing blood -- improperly killed -- were the norm. God forbids His people to get involved in any sort of idol worship, sexual promiscuity, and His dietary laws were the first thing He stressed to ancient Israel as to how they were to be

"different" from Gentile nations -- how they were to be "holy" and set apart as a holy nation unto God (Lev.7:27; 11:1-47). Since these things were so common in Gentile society, James felt it advisable to give special prominence to warning the Gentile brethren to avoid these sorts of contaminations and spiritual pollutions.

But notice, now! James went on to explain WHY it was unnecessary to mention all the other laws of God, which also should be observed, because, as he said, *these other laws were already being preached EVERY SABBATH DAY, in the synagogues throughout the Empires, which both converted Jews and Gentiles were then attending!*

James literally said that the law of Moses -- that is, the law of God -- was being "read in the synagogue every sabbath day" (Acts 15:21). Why would he even bring this up, unless the point he is making is that the Gentile brethren would be HEARING this instruction from the rest of the law of God *every Sabbath day, in the synagogue?*

The Galatians Problem

This same problem of some believers insisting Gentiles had to be circumcized and keep all the requirements of Judaism, surfaced also in the province of Galatia. The apostle Paul was deeply concerned about this "Judaizing" problem, this "yoke of bondage" being forced upon Gentile believers by false brethren from the Pharisee party (Gal.5:1). He lamented to the Galatians, saying "there be some that trouble you, and would *pervert* the gospel of Christ" (Gal.1:7).

What was Paul talking about?

Notice! Paul points out to them that 14 years after his own conversion and calling (Gal.2:1), he had to go up to Jerusalem, as Paul put it, "because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily [secretly] to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, *that they might bring us into bondage*" -- that is, to be circumcized, and to keep all the halachic principles of Rabbinic teaching, and their legalistic interpretations of the Law of God! (Gal.2:4). Paul did not put up with this nonsense for one minute (verse 5).

The Galatians, unfortunately, had been subjected to this false teaching of salvation through physical circumcision and the keeping of the law, and were in danger of falling away from the truth of God. Therefore, Paul felt constrained to write to them about the problem, and in doing so, he explained the TRUTH about the "law" and its place in our lives. Notice!

The apostle Paul wrote: "And this I say, that the covenant [of promise] that was confirmed before of God in Christ, *the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul*, that it could make the promise of none effect" (Gal.3:17).

Paul was here speaking clearly of some aspect of the law of Moses. What was this which was "added"?

The Law of Sacrifices and Rituals

Let's go back into the days of Moses, for a moment, and see.

Moses, you will remember, was the one whom God used to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. He was a type of Christ, who delivered us from sin. After crossing the Red Sea in awesome glory, the Israelites came to the Arabian desert, and the hot sweltering sun. They began to murmur and complain, bellyache and grumble. It was not long before men openly began complaining and plotting rebellion against Moses, and against God (Exo.16:2-8). They were riled up, and in a flagrantly sinful attitude of mind!

What does God say? Notice!

"And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" (verse 28).

Notice! This was weeks before they came to Mount Sinai! This was almost immediately after they crossed the Red Sea! Yet, already, plainly, God's laws were in force -- and the Israelites were found disobedient and rebellious.

Consequently, God did two things. He reiterated the basic spiritual Laws He had given mankind -- the Ten Commandments, and statutes and judgments (Gen.26:5). Then He added an entirely NEW Law -- a law involving the Levitical Priesthood, which He brought into service, and laws concerning rituals, sacrifices, washings, and ordinances involving the Sanctuary or Temple. This law was added because of DISOBEDIENCE to God's spiritual Law -- it was added to TEACH them the habit of OBEDIENCE, and LESSONS regarding the enormity of sin, and its forgiveness.

The entire body of Law was called "the Law of Moses," because God used Moses as His mediator with Israel. The whole body or corpus of Law came through Moses. However, it was divided into two distinct parts -- one consisting of statutes and civil laws for the community, based on the Ten Commandments. The other was the ceremonial laws involving the Levitical priesthood, sacrifices offerings, and rituals. Thus there were TWO LAWS given at Mount Sinai -- the Ethical Law, or Moral Law, governing man's relationship with God and his neighbor -- and the Sacrificial Law!

The sacrificial law consisted of ceremonial washings, various laws of offerings and sacrifices, and carnal, physical ordinances enjoined upon the people and the Levitical Priesthood. It was not a spiritual law. It could save no one.

Then why was it given to ancient Israel?

Let the apostle Paul give us the answer! [What purpose did the ritual law serve?] "It was *added because of transgressions*, till the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Galatians 3:19).

Did you catch that? The "law " that was added -- the Levitical Priesthood with all the sacrifices and rituals -- was added -- why? "BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS"!

For one law to be "added" because of "transgressions," then there had to be another Law which was *being transgressed*, broken, by the Israelites! What Law?

Remember, God had said, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" (Exodus 16:28). They had been breaking God's eternal spiritual law, the Ten Commandments -- as well as all those Laws which are based on and derived from the Ten Commandments!

Because Israel had been breaking God's Law, He *added another special law* -- the laws involving the whole Levitical Priesthood, sacrifices and offerings! WHY? -- to teach them the *lesson of repentance and of obedience!* To teach them to acknowledge their sins, He gave them certain ceremonial washings, offerings, and commanded sacrifices, and carnal ordinances, as a *foreshadow* of things to come. What things? The coming of the true sacrifice for our sins, Christ Jesus Himself! And the Holy Spirit which cleans us up spiritually within. These duties, sacrifices, washings, taught them their need for a coming Savior and God's Holy Spirit.

As Paul tells us in Hebrews, this new law "stood only in meats and drinks [meal and drink offerings], and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them UNTIL *THE TIME OF REFORMATION*" (Hebrews 9:10). These rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices were "a FIGURE for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience" (Heb.9:9).

Paul also wrote of this sacrificial law, "For the law having a *shadow* of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not cease to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. *For in those sacrifices there is a REMEMBRANCE again made of SINS every year*" (Hebrews 10:1-3).

The sacrificial law did not atone for sin -- but it REMINDED THE PEOPLE of their sins, and their need for proper, true atonement!

Paul goes on: "*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*" (Heb.10:4). Rather, the sacrifices of the law pointed to the one supreme sacrifice -- the sacrifice of Jesus Christ Himself, the "Lamb of God"! (Heb.10:5-13).

The Sacrificial, Ritual Law -- a "Schoolmaster"

Do you see?

Paul goes on, in Galatians, discussing the sacrificial, ritualistic part of the Law of Moses, saying, "Wherefore the law was our *schoolmaster* to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are *no longer under a schoolmaster*" (Galatians 3:24-25).

That is, we no longer need the "types" and rituals of the Law, which were a GUIDE, and a Lesson Plan, teaching the people the need for forgiveness of sin, the need for a Mediator, and the coming Messiah, who Himself would fulfill many of these "types" and "figures," reconciling us to God through His own sacrifice of Himself as our Passover Lamb an "offering for sin" (I Cor.5:7; II Cor.5:21).

The law of Moses, with its constant round of sacrifices and washings, and the many added Halachic rules and decrees made by the Rabbis, had become a veritable "yoke of bondage" upon the people, by the time of Christ and Paul. Originally these laws had been put upon the ancient Israelites, because they refused to keep God's spiritual laws and commandments! They were to teach the people by physical means the lessons of sin, forgiveness, repentance, and obedience.

But by the time of Christ, the Pharisees had added so many additional Sabbath laws, and washings, and laws affecting every aspect of life, that they had created a Monster in itself of TRADITION and Rabbinic RULINGS, which the people were commanded to obey!

Are Christians, today, required to keep the sacrificial, ritualistic aspects of the "law of Moses"?

Let's understand this matter! No -- clearly, we are not expected to do sacrifices, or rituals, or those things which were "temporary" and not a part of God's eternal spiritual Law. As Paul said, ". . . we are no longer under a schoolmaster." As Peter said, "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10).

Paul also wrote, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). "But in those sacrifices there is a *remembrance* [a recalling, not a forgiving] again *made of sins every year*" (verse 3).

Speaking of the sacrificial and ceremonial aspect of the law of Moses, a law of physical works, Paul wrote: "Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks [that is, meal and drink offerings], and divers washings, and carnal ordinances [Greek, "rites and ceremonies"], *imposed* on them *UNTIL THE TIME OF REFORMATION*" (Hebrews 9:9-10).

These animal sacrifices, washings and such were hard physical work. They were the "works of the law" that couldn't save anyone, as well as the "traditions" and halachic laws and rules handed down by the Pharisees which acted as a "yoke of bondage" to the people (Galatians 2:16).

Those things, of course, are not obligatory on true Christians, today. They clearly were types -- typifying the coming of the supreme sacrifice, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. They were but a type of the spiritual, and were given to a carnal, fleshly people, to help them

understand. They are not necessary for salvation!

The sacrifices of the Old Testament times could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:11). "But this man" -- Jesus Christ -- "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (verse 12).

The "CURSE of the LAW"

Now hold on a minute," someone might exclaim. "Didn't Jesus plainly redeem us from the curse of the law. Explain *that*, if you can!"

All night. Read it, in *Galatians 3:13* -- "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

Some, taking that scripture alone, claim it means God's Law -- which Paul called holy, and just, and good -- is a diabolical, dreadful, abominable curse! They point to this verse as supposed proof.

Let's understand *this* point!

What is the "curse of the Law"? It is simply the curse which results from the *penalty* of Law -- that is, from *breaking* the Law! It is not the Law that is the curse. Christ redeemed US *from* the curse of the Law. Exactly what did Christ redeem us from? From the *penalty of sin*: that is, the *death penalty*! Sin brings a curse. When you sin you bring upon yourself the penalty of sin -- the curse of the Law -- the death penalty!

Because of our sins, we were all sentenced to death (Romans 6:23). But Christ paid the penalty for us, in our stead. He redeemed us from death! Christ DIED for us! He took the curse, which we incurred through disobedience, upon Himself! "For He [God] made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor.5:21).

God promised ancient Israel blessings for obeying His Law (Deut.28:1-14). Innumerable blessings! He also promised curses would come upon them if they disobeyed His commandments (Deut.28:15-68). The punishment which results from breaking God's spiritual law is death -- plain and simple -- destruction of being, soul and body, in the Lake of Gehenna Fire (Matt.25:41). Yeshua -- Jesus Christ -- redeemed us from the penalty of that death, reconciling us to God the Father, by dying for us, in our place, in our stead!

Why is it so many misunderstand? Why can't we see that Christ came to redeem us from the wages of sin -- the death penalty? Why can't we see that it is SIN -- wickedness, disobedience -- that separates us from God -- and SIN IS, by definition, "the transgression of the LAW" of God (I John 3:4)?

The curse isn't the Law of God at all -- the "curse" is the PENALTIES that are incurred from BREAKING God's Law! Christ bore that curse when He was crucified for us, in our stead,

bearing our sins in His own body as our "sin-bearer"!

“The END of the Law”

Nevertheless, animosity toward God's Law dies hard. When someone's mind is made up, it is made up. It is hard for a person to be willing to admit he or she is wrong, and to change their mind, even when faced with clear evidence. It is so easy to make excuses, to rationalize, to "explain away" facts, and to sweep disagreeable truth under the carpet where no one can see it!

Those who attempt to do away with God's Law often turn to Romans 10:4. In the previous verse Paul explains how the Pharisees were going about trying to establish their own righteousness, apart from God's righteousness. They ignored the sacrifice of Christ, and thought that mere commandment-keeping would be enough for anyone.

But, as Paul pointed out in verse 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone which that believeth." What does "the end of the law" mean? One definition is the *aim*, or the *purpose, the fullness or outcome of the Law*. Christ in us gives us the power to keep God's Holy, perfect Law, since we lack the spiritual strength, ourselves (Romans 8:4).

Apart from Christ, no one can manage to keep God's Law in the spirit. By his very nature, man falls far short. But through Christ, we can (Phil. 4:13). The aim or end of the Law is to make us like Christ!

Any grade-school pupil should be able to see it.

Christ is the purpose or aim of the Law, for *righteousness*, to every one that believes. But what is "righteousness"? David said, ". . . for all thy commandments *are righteousness*" (Ps. 119:172). There is the definition! Clearly, then, God's Law is not done away. It is to teach us to be righteous like Christ was -- and is.

This word "end," used in Romans 10.4, is also found in James 5:11. Same word. James writes, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, *and have seen the END of the Lord*, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Now, did James mean that Christ's END had come? Of course not! Christ arose from the dead -- and lives, today, at God's right hand in heaven! (Hebrews 7.26, 9:24). Rather, James explains it himself. They had seen the purpose or aim of the Lord -- "*that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*"

“Dead to the Law”

What did Paul mean in Romans 7.-4, when he said, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become DEAD to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Notice carefully what he said. First, he did not say "the law *is dead*," he clearly said, "ye . . . are become *dead*." The law of God did not die, or perish. It was not destroyed or done away. But the people became dead to the law *by the body of Christ*.

Verse 5 helps explain it. "For when we were in the flesh" -- that is, before we were converted, and were living according to the pulls of the flesh -- "the motions of sins, which were [manifest, revealed for what they were] by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Do you see? When we were yet sinners, we were worthy of death in Gods sight. We had transgressed His holy Law, and the death penalty hung over our heads.

"But now," Paul explains in verse 6, "we are delivered from the law" -- that is, from the inexorable death penalty *of the Law*. Christ paid it for us -- in our stead! The Law of God no longer claims our lives, "that being *dead* wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

While sinners, we were in a state of doom. We were worthy of execution. We were figuratively, sitting on murderers row, awaiting our punishment.

But, now, Paul says, we are dead to the Law -- that is, the penalty of death has been paid by another -- Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us -- so no longer does the death penalty hang over us. It has been *paid!* So far as the Law is concerned, the penalty is paid -- we are dead, in Christ -- and there is no further date with death for us, if we continue to live in Christ!

This verse in no way says the Law is done away. It merely shows that Christ paid the penalty of the Law for us, died for us, and our date with death has been kept by Him. We are "dead with Him" (Romans 6.-3-4). No longer does condemnation await us (Romans 8.1), because we are also made spiritually alive with Him through His resurrection from the grave (Romans 6:4-5, 11).

No longer, then, are we in a sense married to sin, the way of the flesh -- but we are to be "married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead" in a newness of life, "that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7.4, last part).

No problems with this verse! It is easy to understand, when you can see the background, when you read the context, and grasp *what* the apostle Paul is talking about!

But far too often careless people will read right over a verse like this, and assume it says something it doesn't! Too often people will just see the expression "dead to the law" and assume it means the law is dead.

Let's not be careless with the precious, priceless Word of God!

Do you love the truth? God says, ". . . but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and TREMBLETH *at my word*" (Isaiah 66:2). We should stand in awe at the Word of God -- and not deal with it lightly, carelessly, with impunity!

Obedience Impossible?

But some say it is impossible for mortal man to keep the perfect law of God. They insist that because the Israelites never kept it, we cannot keep it.

Is this true?

Would God impose a Law on people which cannot be kept? Is God some kind of fiendish, sadistic monster who expects more than we can give? Does He imperiously demand more than we are able to do?

Let's understand this!

God is love. But He is also supremely wise. God knows what He is doing!

First, it is true that human beings, of their own ability, are not able to keep God's Law in the spirit, because their human nature is filled with weaknesses and downward pulls of the flesh.

But, this fact alone does not mean we should forget it, give up, and quit! God has made a way whereby we can keep His Law in spirit! And He commands us to follow it!

But *HOW?* What is the way?

How does a Christian keep God's Law?

Here is the answer: "For what the law [by itself] could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh [that is, people were too weak to keep it spiritually perfect], God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh [He kept it, showing us that God's Law could be kept by a human individual] -- that the *righteousness of the LAW might be fulfilled IN US*, who walk not after the flesh, but *after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:3-4). Christ kept the Law through the power of God's Spirit. Of Himself He could not do it. But the Spirit of God in Him enabled Him to do it!

God expects us to fulfill the righteousness of the Law of God, even as Christ did, thereby condemning sin in the flesh -- showing there is no excuse for sin. *HOW?* ". . . after the Spirit." As verse 2 shows, "For the *law of the Spirit of life* in Christ Jesus *hath made me free* from the law of sin and death." The Law of God, the Ten Commandments, express the character of the Spirit of God.

Paul explained it more fully in Galatians 2:20. Notice! "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; 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."

Through the power of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, we are enabled to keep God's spiritual Law! The Spirit of God within us makes it possible! Through the Spirit of God, we are

to mortify -- put to death -- the deeds of the flesh (Romans 8:13).

But if a person does not have the Spirit of God residing within him, "he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). *How plain!*

God commands us to keep His Law! But, knowing we are weak of ourselves, He provides a way. That way is Christ dwelling in us., through the Holy Spirit Through this process, we are strengthened with spiritual POWER so that we *can* keep the Law!

Don't ever let anyone tell you that keeping God's Law is impossible. *It IS* possible, through the power of the Spirit of God! Those who deny it are denying the power of GOD! They are blaspheming!

But What If We Stumble?

What if we stumble, slip up, and sin, after we have been forgiven our past sins? What happens then? Are we again condemned, with no hope? We are all human. We all have weaknesses of the flesh. None of us is *yet perfect*.

So if we slip up after we are converted, and accept Christ's sacrifice for our past sins, what happens then?

The answer to that depends upon us. God knows as long as we are flesh and blood, we can slip up, stumble into sin, and transgress His law. The apostle John wrote: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:6-7).

That is, if we are truly Christians, we will not deliberately be walking in darkness, contrary to the way of Truth. We will be doing our best to walk in the light. And as we do that, if we slip up, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us [present tense!] from all sin [all the sins we might commit while striving to walk in the light]."

John goes on to make it even plainer: "If we say that we have NO SIN, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (verse 8). As we strive to follow God's law, and obey Him, we will slip up, stumble, from time to time. If we say we don't, if we claim to be perfect, John said, "WE DECEIVE OURSELVES." It just isn't true! All of us can and do make mistakes, even though we may have God's Spirit dwelling within us!

But John goes on to explain the solution to our problem of slipping up and stumbling, even though we have God's Holy Spirit. He says: "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to FORGIVE US OUR SINS, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (I John 1:9).

The solution? As we see our sins, or have them pointed out to us, we are to confess them, admit them, own up to them, and REPENT of them, asking God's forgiveness. Then He promises to forgive us, and apply the blood of Christ to our new sins, as well as the old ones

already buried with Christ!

How plain!

John goes on: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (verse 10).

If you know anybody who says he has not sinned since he became a Christian, then John calls him a LIAR. For none of us is, or has been, perfect, since receiving the Spirit of God, except Jesus Christ Himself! All the rest of us, even though we try to obey God and keep His commandments, do slip up and stumble from time to time. But hopefully we are at least on the right path, striving to do right, and bitterly fighting against the pulls of the flesh, and gradually growing in grace and spiritual strength to overcome sin!

As long as we are flesh and blood, we can still be tempted. The pulls of the flesh exert a mighty downward force toward sin. The pride of the flesh and the human heart is easily swayed into sin. The pulls of the world can tempt us, and get our minds temporarily off of Christ and His Kingdom. We can stumble. We can hurt other people, even after we are converted.

But thank God the sacrifice of Christ can apply to those sins, also, so long as we are willing to REPENT of them, and ask

His forgiveness, so long as we are willing to CONFESS them, and cry out for Gods help to overcome their tenacious pull!

“Not UNDER the Law”

Some, however, will still turn to Romans 6:14, where we read, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not *under the law*, but *under grace*."

Pointing their finger at this verse they will likely exclaim, "There, see? Christians are not under the law! We don't have to keep the law. Paul says we are under grace, not law!"

But again -- could this reasoning possibly be sound? After having read all the verses we have seen so far, could we believe Paul contradicted himself? If he did, then obviously his words are not inspired -- and if that be true, the Bible is not inspired, and *you have no Saviour!*

Therefore let's get this right, once and for all!

Begin with verse one. "What shall we say then?" Paul asks. "Shall we continue in sin" - that is, breaking God's Law, for sin IS law-breaking (I John 3:4) -- "that grace may abound?" In other words, is it all right for Christians to transgress God's Law, so they can have more grace to cover their sins?

Paul himself answers this shocking question, "*God forbid*. How shall we, that are dead to sin, *live any longer therein?*" (Romans 6:1-2). There is your thundering answer! God does not

save us "IN our sins" -- rather, He saves us FROM our sins!

As Christians, we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin (verse 11). Paul plainly says, "Let not sin [commandment-breaking] therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (verse 12). Lawlessness is not to reign over true Christians! We are to be law-abiding people! We are commanded not to yield ourselves as instruments of evil, sin, or law-breaking (verse 13).

Rather, we are to be instruments of righteousness (same verse). And, what is righteousness? Remember? Read it again in Psalm 119:172 -- ". . . for ALL THY COMMANDMENTS are *righteousness*"!

Now we come to verse 14, "For sin" -- that is, again, commandment-breaking -- "shall not have dominion," or rule, control, "over you." Why? Why doesn't sin have power over true Christians, as in the case of other people? Paul explains, "for ye are *not under the law*, but under *grace*."

Notice! There are two vital keys in this verse: (1) This has to do with sin having power over a person! When does sin -- or the penalty of sin -- have power over a person? When he has *BROKEN* the law! Transgressors of the Law are in a state of condemnation, doom -- awaiting death! Sin holds them captive!

True Christians are not under the penalty of law -- in other words, the law is not hanging *over* their heads condemning them. They are *not under* the penalty of the law!

Why not?

Because (2) true Christians are "under grace." What does that mean? What is "grace," anyway?

Grace is the free unmerited, mercy and forgiveness of God. It is, in a sense, all the blessings of God. Grace is an expression of God's love. Being under God's grace, then, means **OUR SINS HAVE ALL BEEN FORGIVEN, AND CLEARED OFF THE BOOKS!** In God's eyes, we are sinless -- spotless -- pure and "sinless," because all our sins have been washed away in the blood of the Lamb of God!

A Christian, then, is like a murderer on death's row who has received a pardon from the state governor. He has received grace. *He is no longer* in a state of condemnation, under the penalty of the law, the law claiming his life, awaiting his final execution!

Isn't that plain?

This verse in Romans, then, in no way does away with God's Law. Rather, this whole chapter shows that Christians are supposed to obey God, be righteous, and stop sinning!

God's Law stands! It is sin which must be abolished -- done away -- and nailed to the

cross! *Sin, transgression of Law*, is what separates one from God!

True Godly Love

Yet, some will tell you that they wish to serve God out of love -- not out of guilt-ridden, fearful terror of the consequences of disobedience to Law.

Such people do not even understand what the *love* of God is!

Do you?

They seem to think that love is just a sentimental emotion welling up from the heart. But what is the "love" of God, really? What does Scripture say?

Here's the Bible answer!

The apostle John explains it: "For this IS the love of God, *that we keep HIS COMMANDMENTS*: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3). Love is manifested through obedience to God's Law!

Love flows through the channels of the Law of God, like waters flow down a riverbed and into the ocean. Love, then, in no way does away with God's Law. Nor is love separate from God's Law. Rather, Paul expressed the same truth. He wrote, "LOVE worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF *THE LAW*" (*Romans 13:10*).

Love then is the fulfilling -- the filling FULL -- of God's LAW! Love is the observance and obedience to ALL of God's commandments, statutes, and judgments!

In the preceding verse, Paul lists a few of the Ten Commandments, and shows how they are based on love -- love for God and love for neighbor. Love keeps those commandments. Love does not abolish, but fulfills -- that is, fills up full, fills up to the very brim and running over -- God's Law!

God's Law defines the kind of love we should have!

Ministers or teachers who ignore and attempt to do away with God's Law, then, do not have the love of God! The very love they profess, they reject because they reject the Commandments of God which express that very love!

What deception! What self-contradiction!

A Much Misunderstood Scripture

Many fundamentalist theologians point to Colossians 2:14-17 in an attempt to prove that the entire law of God, sabbath days, and God's annual festivals were done away -- nullified and abrogated at the death of Christ. According to them, these verses say that the Ten

Commandments were "against us," and so Christ took them out of the way, "Nailing them to His cross" when He died.

What do these verses in Colossians 2 really mean? Could you explain them clearly? Do you understand what was actually "nailed to the cross?"

We know that mere men are not our authority. The *opinions* of fallible men cannot be our guide in matters dealing with our salvation. Rather, the *Word of God* must be our guide -- our mainstay -- our bulwark of faith and foundation of belief (II Timothy 3:16).

Before examining Colossians 2:14-17 word by word, let's understand who the Colossians were, and *why* Paul wrote to them.

The City of Colossae

Colossae was a city in Asia Minor near Laodicea, in the province of Phrygia, on the south side of the Maeander river. At one time the city was controlled by the Macedonians. It was later transferred to the Seleucids, and finally became subject to Rome.

The Colossians were Gentiles and pagans. In the apostles' time, the city, like the other cities of Asia Minor, was wholly given over to the worship of false gods and goddesses. Those of the saints who lived in Colossae had formerly been steeped in the same pagan idolatry.

Because pagan teachings and anti-Christian influences were rife in the city, and deceptive teachings of numerous religious philosophies abounded, the Apostle Paul was deeply concerned for the brethren in Colossae. He was actually *alarmed* lest false teachers, propounders of a mixture of Oriental philosophy and Judaistic beliefs, should again deceive them and subvert their faith in Christ.

In chapter 2, verse 8, Paul warned the brethren in Colossae: "*Beware* lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the *tradition of men*, after the *rudiments [elements] of the world*, and not after Christ."

Here Paul clearly outlined the danger. False teachings of philosophy -- pagan philosophical ideas -- as well as traditions of men, and elementary concepts of the world were rife in Colossae and threatened to subvert new believers in Christ, deceiving them, pressuring them into returning to their old pagan practices and beliefs! It is important to note that in that day the word "philosophy" was often used to describe an *ascetic approach* to life.

Notice! This truth is made even clearer if we drop down to verses 20-23: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the *rudiments of the world* [the teachings *of the world* around them, the pagan philosophies] why, as though living in *the world*, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the *commandments and doctrines of MEN*?" (Verses 20-22.)

These "ordinances," or religious customs and decrees, *seemed* to be wise and good to the

human mind (verse 23). They involved "neglecting of the body" and various forms of asceticism -- abstinence from pleasure, strict codes of conduct. These religious customs involved numerous taboos ("Touch not; taste not, handle not," etc.). But they were merely the ideas and teachings of men (verse 22) - *they did not come from the Bible!*

We will see later just what these "ordinances," commandments and doctrines of *men* were. So now let's examine Colossians 2:14-17, and understand it in its proper context.

Is God's Law "AGAINST Us?"

In Colossians 2:13-14 we read: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; *blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*"

Just what do these verses mean? If, as certain fundamentalists assert, the Ten Commandments are "against us," and "contrary to us," then the Bible must contradict itself, because the same Apostle Paul wrote elsewhere of the Law of God: "Wherefore the law is *holy*, and the commandment *holy, and just, and good*" (Romans 7:12). He wrote: "For we know that the law *is spiritual*" (verse 14). How then can God's Law be "against us" or "contrary to us"?

The clear answer is -- *it isn't.*

The Ten Commandments -- which summarize the Law of God -- are good for us. They show us how to love and worship God, and how to love our neighbor. Read the Ten Commandments in *Exodus 20*. Do you see *any one of them* which is "against us"? Of course not! Each one of the Ten Commandments is a good commandment, ordained for our welfare, established for our eternal benefit!

This is why Jesus told a young rich man, ". . . but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17).

Which commandments did Jesus mean?

He went right on to tell us: "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (verses 18-19). He was clearly talking about the Ten Commandments, because He went right on to list several of them, pointing out which law He was talking about!

Now Jesus could have told the young rich man, "Listen! There is nothing you must do to gain eternal life. Just believe on me. The Ten Commandments are (or will be) done away -- abolished!" But He didn't say that. Why? Obviously, because *it is not true*. Because Jesus knew that to inherit eternal life a man must keep the commandments!

If we believe the words of Jesus, our Saviour, then the Ten Commandments -- and ALL

the commandments of God -- are still in effect and in force today!

But this being true, then what "ordinances" was the Apostle Paul talking about in Colossians 2:14.

The "Handwriting of Ordinances"

First, notice that what was blotted out was the "handwriting of ordinances." Why did Paul use this strange-sounding expression if he merely meant the Ten Commandments or the Law of God?

The original Greek word here translated "handwriting" is *cheirographon* and actually means "a (handwritten) document, specif. *a document of indebtedness, bond*" (Arnt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*). The Arndt-Gingrich lexicon translates the expression in Colossians 2:14, "*the bond that stood against us.*"

Thus, the original Greek, according to the most up-to-date scholars and authorities, shows that a "bond" or "note of indebtedness" was against us. What was this particular "bond" or "I.O.U." note?

Again, notice the original Greek. The whole expression is: *cheirographon tois dogmasin*. The whole expression in English should be translated "the note of indebtedness in the decrees." The last word, *dogmasin*, is the dative plural of *dogma*, which actually means "decree, ordinance, decision, command" (Arndt-Gingrich). It is used in Luke 2:1 in reference to a decree from Caesar Augustus. It is also used in Acts 17:7, again referring to the 'decrees of Caesar.' In Acts 16:4 it is used in reference to 'decrees . . . ordained of the apostles' (obviously Paul was not referring to these decrees being blotted out!).

The same Greek word is also found in Ephesians 2:15, where we find that Christ has reconciled Jews and Gentiles: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity [hostility, hatred that existed between Jews and Gentiles], even the law of commandments contained in *ordinances [dogmas]. . .*" (Ephesians 2:14-15).

But here again the question comes up: "What is this law of commandments contained in ordinances?" The original Greek is *ton nomon ton entolon en dogmasin*. Literally, it should be translated "the law of commandments *in decrees*." Some have *assumed* falsely that it refers to God's Law, or the Ten Commandments -- but, as we have already seen, God's Law is spiritual and endures forever (read Psalm 111:7-8; Romans 7:14). Whatever *this* law is -- it is subject to abolition, and one that consists of "commandments or *decrees*" -- the same decrees mentioned in Colossians 2:14!

So this brings us back to Colossians 2. The decrees (or "ordinances") are mentioned both in verse 14 and in verse 20. As we have already seen, verse 20 plainly refers to man-made regulations, restrictions, decrees or ordinances -- not the laws of *God!* Let's notice it once again: Paul wrote, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as

though living *in the world*, are ye subject to ordinances [Greek *dogmatizesthe*, literally "bind yourself with decrees"] . . . *after the commandments and doctrines of men?*"

Isn't that plain?

These particular "ordinances," or decrees, were NOT those of the apostles, or of God, but restrictions, or regulations and taboos imposed by MEN -- human beings, and *NOT* GOD!!

But precisely what restrictions, or regulations? The parenthetical expression in verse 21 explains. These decrees consisted of various ascetic do's and don'ts such as "Touch not, taste not, handle not" -- *human religious injunctions* and teachings of non-Christian philosophers and Rabbis -- both Jewish and Gentile! They were ascetic legalists and spiritual frauds who relished binding yokes of bondage on the disciples and true Christians!

Some of these false teachers, of course, were masquerading AS Christians (compare II Corinthians 11:13-15; Acts 15:1-2), and even entered the Church, professing Christ, but they had substituted their own ideas, laws, decrees, regulations and practices in place of the teachings of Christ!

The Ordinances of God

The word *dogma* is never used in the New Testament to refer to the statutes or Old Testament ordinances of God, or the Ten Commandments. You can check this for yourself in the *Englishman's Greek Concordance of the Bible*. When the Old Testament ordinances of the Levitical priesthood are mentioned in the New Testament, God inspired the Apostle Paul to use other words.

You may notice the word "ordinances" in the King James Version of Hebrews 9:10. Paul wrote of the rites and ceremonies of the Levitical priesthood: "Which stood only in meats and drinks [meat and drink offerings], and divers washings, and carnal [fleshly] ORDINANCES, imposed on them *until* the time of reformation." The Greek word here is *dikaiomasi*, not *dogma*.

The same word is used in Hebrews 9:1 speaking of "ordinances" [*dikaiomatal*] of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary, referring to the Levitical priesthood's ordinances and service of the tabernacle. These are superseded today, since they were only imposed till the coming of the Holy Spirit ("the time of reformation"), which made them unnecessary -- spirit-begotten Christians now being able to worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4.-24). However, nowhere in the New Testament are these ordinances called *dogma*.

The *King James Version* also uses the word "ordinances" in Luke 1:6, speaking of the parents of John the Baptist, Zacharias and Elizabeth: "And they were both *righteous* before God, walking in all the commandments and ORDINANCES [*dikaiomasi*] of the Lord blameless."

"Ordinance" also appears in the *King James Version* in Romans 13:2, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the [governmental] power, resisteth the ordinance of God. . ." But the Greek word here is *diatage*, not *dogma*. I Peter 2:13 reiterates: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance

of man for the Lord's sake. . ." -- Greek *ktisis*.

Finally, "ordinances" is used in I Corinthians 11:2: "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances [paradosis]*, as I delivered them to you.

On the other hand when Paul refers to *dogma* in Ephesians and Colossians, he means RELIGIOUS DECREES, ascetic regulations or at best pseudo-Christian taboos!

The Way of Death

The "ordinances" -- *dogma* -- referred to in Colossians may have *seemed* good to the natural mind -- but there is a way which "seems right" and ends in death (Proverbs 14.12; 16:25).

These religious decrees were perversions of the *truth of God*. They led to death. These "ordinances" and commandments of MEN" caused people to *break* GOD'S commandments -- to SIN. And "the wages of sin is DEATH" (Romans 6.23).

What, then, was the *cheirographon* ("bond of indebtedness") of ordinances?

It was the "debt note" that was incurred as a result of having followed human religious taboos and decrees! What was the "debt" incurred from following those "ordinances"?

The debt of *forfeiting one's life!* The debt of DEATH!

Now note this very carefully. Obedience to the Ten Commandments never led anybody into SIN. Rather, as David said to God, "All thy commandments are *righteousness*" (Psalm 119.172). Rather, as the Apostle John said: "*Sin* is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Sin results from *breaking* the Ten Commandments! Not from *keeping* them.

These *human* religious ordinances caused people to *break* God's commandments, thereby leading then into SIN. And the penalty was death!

So now let's recapitulate:

Obviously, the Ten Commandments are not "against us." Keeping them, through the power of God's indwelling Holy Spirit, is the way to eternal LIFE! What is "against us" is the *debt note* associated with man-devised dogmas, religious decrees, or commandments which take us AWAY from keeping the commandments of God, and cause us to *break God's Law*. These religious decrees were the "ordinances" Paul wrote about. They were the way of DEATH!

Legalistic Asceticism

The Pharisees of Jesus' time had also fallen into the same ascetic spiritual trap as the Gentiles. They had strayed away from properly keeping the Law of God. They added a rigmarole of religious taboos and stringent decrees of asceticism to the law of God.

They developed a whole system of religious regulations and traditions called *Halacha*. In many cases, these *halacha* were designed by men to be "hedges" to "fence in" the laws of God, supposedly keeping the people from breaking the laws themselves -- because to do that they would have to get through the myriad "hedges" and "fences" first! However, as Jesus Christ said, many of these "traditions of men" were contrary to the Laws of God -- they became a human system of do's and don'ts that became a grievous "yoke of bondage" (Acts 15:10). these regulations created self-righteousness and hardship, and were *against* the law of God, but often *appeared* "holy" and "righteous" in the eyes of the common people.

Christ rebuked them for these human-devised laws and decrees. He declared: "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit IN VAIN do they WORSHIP me, *teaching for doctrines the COMMANDMENTS OF MEN. For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of MEN, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do*" (Mark 7.-6-8).

These human inventions and additions were included in the decrees Paul condemned in the epistle to the Colossians. Whether added by Jews, Gentiles, Pharisees, ascetics, philosophers or whoever, such dogmas are wrong and create heavy burdens and lead into SIN!

What Was "Nailed to the Cross"?

That which was "nailed to the cross" was not the Ten Commandments at all! Rather, it was the figurative record of our indebtedness due to *sin* -- which we incurred as a result of *breaking* Gods Laws in order to follow human precepts -- which was "nailed to the cross"!

Before we knew the truth of God, we followed the wrong way of life. We became slaves to *sin* (Romans 6:12-14, 16, 23). Due to false teaching, we broke God's Laws and incurred a "debt" -- we owed God our lives! Because we had sinned, we were "as good as dead" in the sight of God. When we repented of having broken God's Law we acknowledged our *debt*. It is as if we had sent God an I.O.U., a legal certificate, stating:

"Because I have followed wrong teachings, and the traditions of men, I have broken your Law. Therefore, I owe you my life. I have incurred the death penalty for my sins. I admit and confess my sins and transgressions, and acknowledge them in this note."

"Signed:
John Doe."

But when Christ died for our sins, He took that death penalty upon Himself. In His Person, our sins were "nailed to the cross," or stake. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "For he hath made him [Christ] to be *sin for us*, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5.-21).

Jesus Christ -- Yeshua -- ransomed us from the grave. He paid our debt-note due to sin FOR us, in our stead! He DIED for us! Therefore, God tore up the I.O.U. *He nailed IT to the*

cross!

Consequently, when we repent of our sins and accept Christ's payment for them, we are no longer under the death penalty. We have been forgiven. The penalty of death has been REMOVED. We now have peace with God (Romans 5:1).

But What about Verses 16-17?

Those who quote Colossians 2:14 in a vain attempt to prove Gods Law is abolished generally go on to use verses 16 and 17 of this same chapter to argue that the holy days of God are abolished.

Read carefully what Paul wrote, word for word; "Let no man [or, no one] therefore judge you in meat or in drink [Greek: eating or drinking], or in respect [*mereti*, part] of an holy day [i.e., in connection with the observance of a festival], or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow [foreshadowing, or prophetic type] of things to come; but the body ["is" is in italics in the *King James Version*, and was inserted by the translators -- it doesn't belong in the verse] of *Christ*" (Colossians 2:16-17).

In more modern English, we could translate the verses this way: "Let no one judge you regarding eating or drinking, or [other] part of a holy day . . . but [let] the body of Christ."

In other words, Paul was telling the brethren at Colossae not to be worried, anxious, or concerned about Gentile neighbors or other human beings who dared to "sit in judgment" on them for eating, drinking and rejoicing instead of being ascetic, in observing Gods annual Holy Days and Sabbath days. They were not to allow outsiders to "judge" them, but rather to let the "body of Christ," the Church of God, which is in training to "judge" even the angels (I Corinthians 6:2-3).

It should be crystal clear by now, what was really "nailed to the cross." Jesus Christ was nailed there, bearing our sins upon Himself!

None of the laws, statutes, or ordinances of God were nailed to that upright stake. None of the Holy Days of God were nailed there. None of the Ten Commandments, including the fourth, were nailed there.

Rather, Christ Himself was nailed there bearing the "debt-note" of our sins for us -- paying the *penalty* of our sins in our stead when we repent of sin and accept His sacrifice for us -- so that we can inherit eternal life.

Clearly, then, God's Law still stands -- supreme, inexorable, inviolate. It is eternal. God gave it to us for our own welfare. May God help *you* to understand!

Do not be deceived by the devil's bunco squad of sophisticated, clever, professional con men who will insinuate to you that God's law is done away - that it was evil, a temporary experiment, which failed. Do not listen to the lies of these spiritual false prophets and piers

pipers of modern religion who will lure you to your eternal spiritual death if you fall for and follow their clever line. You could lose far more than just a life's savings. You could lose out on your own spiritual salvation! -- *eternal life itself!!!*

“Law OR Grace”?

Let's set it straight, once and for all! The truth is plain. It does not require a genius or rocket scientist to understand the Word of God. It is simple, easy to understand. But sometimes previous false conceptions and erroneous ideas stand in the way and effectively block truth from entering a person's mind.

Those who have MISunderstood the subject of law and grace need to get the spiritual "cobwebs" out of their minds. They need to strive to approach the subject with an open, unprejudiced mind. They need to have the moral and spiritual courage to admit the truth when they see it proven before their very eyes.

Few, sadly, are really willing!

They all too often are willingly deceived. They're adamant. They are firm. They are convinced, and no amount of logic or reasoning or scripture will cause them to change their minds. They are set in their ways. They are confused with error, and their minds are like concrete -- all mixed up, and permanently set.

What about you?

Are you willing to accept, and cling, to God's truth? Do you tremble before the very Word of God, and fear to misinterpret, and misapply Scripture? Are you willing to repent, and obey God, when you see you have been in error?

Let's get this straight!

The Law of God *defines* right from wrong. It tells us what to do and what not to do. It defines sin for us, so we can know how to live!

On the other hand, the grace of God is His unmerited pardon for our many past sins. Grace is forgiveness for the sins we have committed and repented of. When God bestows His grace on us, He forgives us for our past transgressions of His Law! He blots out our sins and removes the death penalty from us. Christ died in our stead, paying the penalty for us.

We are, therefore, forgiven! We come under God's loving pardon or grace.

But -- does this mean, therefore, that the Law of God is suddenly done away? Just because we are no longer under the penalty of the law, for transgressing it and committing sin, are we now free to live however we please, without fear of future consequence if we break God's Law? Of course not!

Grace is not license to do evil -- to sin!

God gives us grace to remove our past sins. But now He expects us to surrender to His authority, and obey the spiritual Law which He ordained from the beginning for our good!

Gods grace removes the death penalty from us. But we are not free to go out and sin, commit idolatry, steal, murder, profane the time God made holy, or break any of the other commandments of God!

Isn't this clear?

Grace is not contrary to Law. Rather, grace is the interposition of the mercy of God in regard to the death penalty which we were under. Grace merely removes the DOOM or condemnation which we were under. Now, to remain *in* Gods grace, we must obey Gods Law through the help and power of His Holy Spirit!

Perhaps this knowledge is new, even strange to you, if you've never heard it before.

There is no conflict whatsoever between God's Law and the grace of God! It is not a question of "Law or grace." Without Law there would be no need of grace. Law and grace go together like hand in glove. One is dead without the other. One is useless without the other.

Law, apart from God's grace, is impossible for men to keep perfectly!

But grace, apart from God's Law, is not grace but license to do evil!

The Law of God works with grace; grace makes it complete. For, it is through the grace of God that we can have our sins forgiven, and can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, so we can in the future have strength to keep God's holy, eternal, spiritual law!

Now do you see?

It is not a matter of "Law OR grace." It is a matter of **LAW AND GRACE!** *It was the sacrificial, ritualistic part of the "law of Moses" -- which was temporary, and pointed to Christ. But God's eternal, spiritual law, in force from Creation, ENDURES FOREVER, and is mightily in force, today!*

Even as *faith without works* is dead (James 2:20), so grace without law *is dead!* And dead grace will not save a single soul! It is useless -- worthless empty!