

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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Law and Commandments

by Owen D. Olbricht

Many who argue from Matthew 5:17 that Jesus meant He was not going to abolish the law, but instead was going to explain its true meaning, sometimes state that Christians are not under law. If Jesus did not abolish the law, then Christians are still bound by the law. We cannot have it both ways: either the law was not abolished and we are under law or the law was abolished and we are not under it. The ten commandments is law (Romans 13:8,9), so if we are under it, we are under law.

Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets which contained types and prophecies that applied to Him. When He fulfilled them, they passed away (Matthew 5:18; Romans 7:6; Galatians 3:24, 25; Ephesians 2:14). Paul stated that he was not under the law (1 Corinthians 9:20), a clear implication that Jesus ended the law of Moses.

Are Christians under any law? Some assert that Christians have no laws or commandments to obey. If the Christian is not under any kind of law, the following conclusions would be true. Each conclusion will be shown to be false.

(a) **False** = The Christian can have no knowledge of sin. **True** = [F]or through law is full knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20, LTB, *Literal Translation of the Bible*, Jay P. Green). This translation was chosen because it correctly represents the Greek which has no article before the word "law," which indicates that the reference is to law in general.

(b) **False** = The Christian cannot sin. **True** = [F]or the Law brings about wrath; for where there is no law, there is no transgression (Romans 4:15, NKJV).

(c) **False** = God does not count sin to the Christian. **True** = [S]in is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13 NKJV).

(d) **False** = Sin is dead, therefore, does not have life, so should be of no concern to the Christian. **True** = "[F]or apart from

law sin is dead" (Romans 7:8, LTB). In the Greek no article appears before the word "law."

(e) **False** = Sin has no power in a Christian's life. **True** = "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56, NKJV).

(f) **False** = The Christian does not need grace. Grace is needed only because of sin. **True** = "But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20, NKJV). Paul's point in Romans 6:14, 15 is that the Christian is not under the condemnation of the law because grace has made possible release from condemnation. Is it all right for a Christian to sin (he would not be able to sin if there is not law) because he is under grace? The answer, of course, is "no, never," because he died to sin (Romans 6:1, 2) when he was baptized (Romans 6:3-7).

(g) **False** = The Christian has no standard by which to be judged. **True** = Christians will be judged by "the law of liberty" (James 2:12). A literal translation of Romans 4:12b would read as follows: "[A]s many as sinned in law will be judged by law" (My translation). In the Greek, "law" is not preceded by the article "the."

(h) **False** = The Christian is not able to engage in lawless acts. **True** = "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4 NKJV). If there were no law, then Christians could not commit sinful deeds and would not need to be forgiven (Romans 4:7).

Does the Christian have a law to follow? The New Covenant is a law written on the heart and mind (Hebrews 8:10;16). If it is a law written on the mind, it must be a law! That law is referred to as follows: (a) "law of faith" [Romans 3:15]; (b) "law of God" [Romans 7:22,25]; (c) "law of the Spirit of life" [Romans 8:2]; (d) "law of Christ" [Galatians 6:2]; and (e) "law of liberty" [James 1:25; 2:12].

Paul stated that faith does not nullify

law but rather establishes law. A literal translation of Romans 3:31 would read as follows: "Do we nullify law through faith? No, never! but we establish law" (Romans 3:31, my translation). In the Greek, "law" is not preceded by the article "the." The faith revealed by Jesus is not arbitrary but follows set principles of law.

Are there commandments for Christians to obey? If there are commandments, then there is a law, for commandments make up law. We do not have to read the New Testament very carefully to come to the conclusion that Christians have commandments to keep. For example:

(a) Jesus received and revealed the commandments of the Father (John 12:49, 50).

(b) Jesus stated that love is His new commandment (John 13:34). If we have no commandment to keep, then we have no obligation to love others.

(c) Jesus spoke of the importance, rewards, and benefits of keeping His commandments (John 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12, 14, 17) as an expression of love for Him.

(d) Jesus gave commandments to the apostles (Acts 1:2) who were to teach the followers of Jesus to observe them (Matthew 28:20).

(e) Paul stated that what is of great value is not circumcision but keeping the commandments of God (1 Corinthians 7:19), a clear indication we are to keep God's commandments, but not the commandments of the law of Moses which included circumcision (Leviticus 12:3).

(f) Paul expected the Corinthians to keep the commandments of Jesus which he wrote (1 Corinthians 14:37).

(g) Timothy was to strictly keep the commandment Paul sent to him (1 Timothy 6:14), which included giving many instructions to others (1 Timothy 1:3; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13, 17).

(h) Peter mentioned the dire situation of those who turned from the "holy commandment" (2 Peter 2:21) and stated that the readers should remember the

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commandment of the Lord which the apostles had spoken (2 Peter 3:2).

(i) John repeatedly stressed the importance of keeping the commandments of Jesus (1 John 2:3, 4; 3:22, 23, 24; 5:2, 3; 2 John 6). In the book of Revelation he again emphasized the value of keeping God's commandments (Revelation 12:17; 14:12).

Christians have the commandments of Jesus to keep. His word is to be obeyed as their guide.

The conclusion seems apparent. Christians must keep Jesus' commandments and obey His law in order to be saved (Hebrews 5:9). The same Jesus that commanded love also commanded baptism (Acts 2:38; 10:48; Matthew 18:18). He said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21, NKJV). No one can improve on such a statement by Jesus.

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Many a person has wished at harvest time that he had sown a different crop, but it was too late. Sow now what you want to reap later.

Humility on display is hypocrisy.

THE BIBLE'S GREATEST WORD

Part One

by Allen Webster

The Bible contains 773,746 words. Which *one* is the most important? It has 31,102 verses. Which *one* is the greatest? How could the 1,189 chapters of the Bible be summarized? If you were asked to write a dust cover statement for the Book of books, what two sentences would describe it? What command is the greatest?

Jesus was asked: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him *Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God* with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

The most important word in the Bible is a "four-letter word" ...love. "Love God and your neighbor" is a summary of every command to be found therein. It is the foundation of Christianity.

HOW DOES LOVE BEHAVE?

Love affects people in funny ways. When a boy "gets bit by the love bug" for some girl, he is liable to embarrass himself. This is probably more infatuation than love. But when infatuation has time to grow, he still will act differently toward her than toward any other. Parents treat their own children differently than other children. Why? Because they love them.

The best description of love in the Bible (or anywhere) is in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. (The word *charity* means "Christian love.")

LOVE IS PATIENT (13:4a). When a person is filled with love, it takes a lot to make him come "unglued." One who has a quick temper and a short fuse lacks the love described here. God is patient. He waited 120 years to destroy the rebels of Noah's day (1 Peter 3:20). He hoped they would repent, but they did not.

Christians are supposed to "forebear" one another (Ephesians 4:2). In simple terms this means to "put up with" those things we do not like about others. Love is slow to become irritated at others shortcomings.

LOVE IS KIND (13:4b). Long suffering and kindness are opposite banks of the same river. Patience means that we *hold back* from doing something that is

unloving. Kindness means that we do what is needed (Ephesians 4:32). *Kindness* literally means "to show oneself useful" (Strong). This is what Jesus did (Acts 10:38).

It is better to do a kindness near at home than to walk a thousand miles to burn incense. A kind person will find it easier to convert his/her friends to Christ for "people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care." Which one do you think would have been more likely to convert the man who had been robbed in Jesus' parable—the passing priest, the looking Levite, or the helping Samaritan (Luke 10)? Obviously, people will listen to someone who they know loves them.

LOVE IS GENEROUS (13:4c) or "envyeth not." *Envy* means one is "discontent with the fortune of others" (Webster). Joseph's brothers "moved with envy sold him" into slavery (Acts 7:9). Pilate recognized that envy was the reason for Jesus' delivery to be crucified (Matthew 27:18). Love is not in competition with others and does not look with an evil eye when others are successful (cf. John 3:25-30; Psalms 73:2,3).

LOVE IS HUMBLE (13:4d). The Bible says that love "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." *Vaunt* means "to boast or brag so as to exalt self." *Puff* carries the idea of "blow up or inflate" (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6, 18,19; 5:2; 8:1). Out-of-shape muscles are "blown up with fat." Do you know someone who brags on himself all the time or who has to put on a show for everyone to see? This person is "puffed up" and can be cured only with a dose of love.

Pride is to the soul what poison is to the body (Proverbs 6:16, 17; 11:2; 16:18; 29:23; Daniel 4:37; Obadiah 3,4; Matthew 5:3; 23:12; Romans 12:16; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5,6). In God's view, the way up is down. The hardest instrument to play is not the piano or trumpet, but *second fiddle*. No one likes to go unnoticed, but love puts the other person first (Philippians 2:2-4).

Love keeps one from having too high an estimate of his own importance (Romans 12:3; cf. 2 Corinthians 12:16). Boastful people are empty. They lack self-esteem and try to make up for it by calling attention to themselves. The old-timers used to say, "An empty wagon rattles the loudest." One who has to brag on himself all the time is empty on the inside. "Let another man praise thee, and not

thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips" (Proverbs 27:2). Love is anxious to give another a place of honor, and tries to stay out of the limelight (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). Jesus is the perfect example of this kind of behavior (Philippians 2:8; 1 Peter 2:21).

LOVE IS COURTEOUS (13:5a) Paul says that "love does not behave itself unseemly." This means that it has good manners and is not rude. Young Christians need to be known for their courteous behavior. They need to be taught to say "Yes, sir," and "No, ma'am." All Christians need to speak courteously *all the time*. Sometimes we are kind to strangers and yell at our own families. This should not be. We all need to hold doors open for those who follow us into buildings and rooms. This may seem old-fashioned, but it is love in action.

What the world needs now is love, sweet love. What the church needs now is a big spoonful of charity. Let's all do our part.

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A PERVERTED GOSPEL

by Ron Wilson

There is no more serious statement in the Bible than Galatians 1:6-9. Verse 6 states, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." This seems a bit perplexing at first glance considering the emphasis placed upon one gospel in the New Testament. How could there be another gospel? The apostle adds, "Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (verse 7). Everything called the gospel is not Christ's gospel. Since atheists have no particular reputation for being religious, we must assume that it is self-acclaimed Christians who pervert the gospel.

It is a dangerous philosophy to go about welcoming and encouraging everything that professes to be "Christian." Satan is much involved in deceiving the religious public (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). The seriousness of the issue is enhanced in Galatians 1:8, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Some folks today claim to hear voices from heaven and others claim to be inspired. Such claims are contrary to the Bible, but even if such claims were true, there

still is no authority for teaching anything different than what is contained in the gospel (New Testament). If one chooses to so do, then one will be accursed. Could there possibly be anyone who desires to be accursed?

The issue of false teachers and false prophets is so important that God's Word directs us to "mark them...avoid them" (Romans 16:17), and "receive him not into your house...For he that bideth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 10-11). Why does the Bible take such a firm stand against a perverted gospel?

Romans 1:16 informs us that the gospel is God's power unto salvation. There is no other means of salvation; that excludes miraculous operations and "experiences." James writes, "...receive with meekness the engrafted work, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). When the gospel is perverted (twisted, added to, detracted from, etc.) it is no longer the gospel. There is no power unto salvation in another gospel, for, as Paul says, there is not "another" gospel of the same kind. When men and women hear a perverted gospel they will not know what to do to obtain salvation, even if they mistakenly think they do. Thus, to preach something different than the New Testament deprives them of salvation. This is contrary to the design and purpose of God who is "not willing that any should perish..." (2 Peter 3:9). He put His power unto salvation in the gospel so we won't have to perish. God's power to prevent us from perishing is not contained in a perverted gospel.

Because of so many different (perverted) "gospels," the majority of people do not know how to avoid perishing in sin. It is far too serious to take a man's (or woman's) word that he (or she) is preaching the gospel. There is only one way to know for sure: *investigate for yourself* the pure unadulterated gospel of Christ in the New Testament. After reading the gospel accounts of Christ's life, think about how Jesus taught salvation in Mark 16:15-16, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Have you heard something different? Remember, there are some who "pervert the gospel of Christ." One cannot possibly detect a counterfeit (perverted) dollar if one is not familiar

with the genuine. Neither can one detect a counterfeit (perverted) gospel if one is not familiar with the genuine. "Prove all things..." (2 Thessalonians 5:21).

Consider Paul's final warning in this passage: "As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:9). Consider also; The preacher of a perverted gospel and the receiver and believer of that false teaching get the same reward. "...They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14). What gospel are you following?

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Sometimes, God Wants Us To Cry

by Neal Pollard

A murderer stands before a judge, having been advised by counsel to turn on the tears at sentencing despite his frightful lack of remorse for his crime. Children often learn that punishment is somewhat moderated by a show of regret and sorrow, even if they are only sorry they were caught. There are individuals who can "turn on the tears" almost automatically, yet who apparently are superficial in so doing. That is deemed hypocritical.

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Yes, there are some who do wrong with out any feeling of guilt. Immoral and unethical people abound, whose consciences are not pricked by their misdeeds. And as it is medically alarming when one's nervous system physically fails him, it is more appalling when one becomes spiritually "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:19).

Twice in the book of Jeremiah, the prophet speaks with astonishment (the reader can imagine his jaw gaping) that children of God could be so unaffected by their own "abomination" that "they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush" (6:15; 8: 12). As Zephaniah was moved to write, "the unjust knoweth no shame" (3:5). A person who can do wrong and be undisturbed about it has severe emotional and spiritual problems. It is against our created nature for anyone to do evil, but act as if they have not (cf. Genesis 3:1-13).

Bible writers, speaking about a "conscience seared" (1 Timothy 4:2), a "conscience [which] is defiled" (Titus 1:15), "an evil conscience" (Hebrew 10:22), and hardened hearts (cf. Psalm 95:8), are revealing a condition of heart which makes one able to sin without restraint or inhibition. Thus, a woman can have shed the innocent blood of her dependent child through the horrific practice of abortion, perhaps without guilt and somehow with feelings of justification (cf. Proverbs 6:17). Dr. Kevorkian's philosophy can be integrated into a person's thinking without violating one's conscience (Galatians 5:21; Revelation 22:15). With "unnatural affection" (cf. Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3), one may live a homosexual, and thus perverse, lifestyle with "pride" rather than shame (1 Corinthians 6:9; Romans 1:26-27). So often society preaches against shame and guilt while promoting the hedonistic philosophy, "To do what feels good."

In response to hard-hearted sinners, God demands, "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness" (James 4:9). Paul teaches us why God wants man to be sorry for his sin. In 2 Corinthians 7:10-11, the Holy Spirit says, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire,

yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

When one can endure a sermon about a sin or shortcoming of which that individual is guilty, yet he leaves unmoved and unchanged, **he is in spiritually critical condition!** It is a giant step away from God one takes who becomes increasingly comfortable in sin. Only the foolish heart is darkened by sin (cf. Romans 1:21), for peacefully co-existing with sin is synonymous with spiritual strangulation. Those at ease with ungodliness are cut off from God, hope, heaven, and peace. **That is why God sometimes wants us to cry!** He knows that if we do not weep over our sins, He will probably lose us for eternity.

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The Truth Hurts...

A noted psychologist was asked to give reasons why so many people fail to make life successful. He gave these. We will be miserable if we are guilty of:

1. Finding fault with others, but never seeing our own.
2. Doing as little as possible and trying to get as much as possible for doing it.
3. Spending much time in showing up the other fellow's weak points, and too little time correcting our own.
4. Slandering those we don't like.
5. Procrastination...putting off until tomorrow what should have been done day before yesterday.
6. Deceit...talking friendly to the other fellow's face and stabbing him in the back as he turns.
7. False belief that we are smart enough to reap a harvest of pay before sowing a crop of service.
8. Disloyalty to those who have trusted us.
9. Egotism...the belief that we know it all, and no man can tell us anything.

-via Northwest Church of Christ
Houston, Texas

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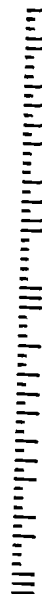
1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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