

## Chapter 12

### WHEREFORE THEN SERVETH THE LAW?

*Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 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. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:19-29)*

One of the most misunderstood subjects in the realm of Christendom is the purpose of the law of Moses. Given all of the attention Paul gave to the law in twelve of his thirteen epistles of the New Testament, this is a subject which should not be misunderstood, but often is. This is primarily due to improper teaching based upon moralistic presumptions. These have come from *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.* These

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presumptions are a direct result of Adam's sin of eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

These presumptions were seen in Cain's offering, and they are seen in the *broad way* of our Lord's sermon on the mount. The *broad way*, like everything produced by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, does not regard God as He is, but gives lip service to Him through sentimental notions and human works. These promote the human ego, maximizing the feeble efforts of man, while minimizing the Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Paul stated, in the Greek text of I Corinthians 15:56, *The sting of death is the sin; and the strength of the sin is the law*. This means the sin of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil produced the sting of death so that, upon eating of that fruit, Adam and Eve immediately died spiritually, and they began to die physically. This judgment of death was promised when God warned Adam (in the Hebrew text), *The day thou eatest thereof, dying, thou shalt die*. This twofold death was carried over (by the federal headship of Adam) to his race. All are born (spiritually) *dead in trespasses and in sin*, and all have an appointment with death. The Scripture says, ... *it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment* (Hebrews 9:27).

The lie of the serpent promised life, but produced death. It promised Eve she would be like God, but caused both Eve and Adam to fall from the image of God. It produced *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*. Consequently those who promote life by man's corrupted morality, obtained by disobedience to God:

... are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We [true confessors] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of [the] truth, and the spirit of [the] error. (I John 4:5-6)

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The Spirit of the truth is of God and the spirit of the error is of the Devil. This means, in spiritual matters, there is one source for truth and one source for error. The Spirit of the truth has given us the Word of God. This is God's revelation to man of the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, to provide the only solution for man's fallen condition. This has been declared both prophetically and historically. It begins with creation and ends with a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. It reveals God as He is and man as he is. It reveals *Salvation is of the Lord*. This is the key to identifying the fruit of the good tree, the tree of life, which declares:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. (Titus 3:5-6)

The spirit of the error manifests itself in many different religions and human philosophies. These may be vastly different in scope and doctrine, but the fruit that identifies them is from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These two sources provide the basis for determining whether fruit is good or evil. The good tree always produces good fruit. Therefore it declares salvation is by God's grace through faith in the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ and minimizes the efforts of man, because *There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not*. In stark contrast with this is the Devil's lie. It is subtle and deceitful. It promises life (as in the garden of Eden) through a scheme that can only produce death. It is easily identified because it always involves man's knowledge of good and evil as a source of life, and it incorporates the imperfect works of man as a necessary element in man's relationship with God. Thus our Lord declared: *By their fruits ye shall know them*.

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We have stated that the *broad way* does not consider God according to the revelation He has given of Himself in Scripture. Yet for a true understanding, God must be considered in the light of His attributes of Holiness, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Mercy and Grace, to name a few. A proper view of God in the light of these will enable us to see man's failed morality cannot possibly perform the deeds of the law to the infinite standards of the God of the Scriptures. This could be done, and was done, only by our Lord Jesus Christ, in His life, in His vicarious sacrifice and in His resurrection from the dead.

God's Holiness speaks of His purity of character and separation from evil. Everything He does and thinks is right and in Him is no sin at all. God's Holiness demands separation from that which is contrary to His Holiness. The law reflects this Holiness, but it cannot produce it. Therefore when sinful men are confronted with the prospect of a perfect performance of God's holy law, which because of their sin nature is impossible for them to perform perfectly, all that the law can produce in them is condemnation and death. It cannot solve man's sinful condition; it can only magnify it.

When Paul made his defense of the gospel of the grace of God at the counsel in Jerusalem, it was suggested by some who opposed Paul that the Gentiles had to become Jews through the ritual of circumcision and the requirement of law-keeping in order to be saved. This was a blatant lie, which was refuted through the testimony of Peter, James and Paul; the testimony of the Word of God; and the leading of the Spirit of God at the counsel in Jerusalem.

Except for the change of the ritual from circumcision to baptism, there is little difference between the error of the Judaizers and an error expressed by many churches today. Under

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Judaism it was required that a male child be circumcised when he was eight days old. The natural extension of this, under the canopy of Christianity, is infant baptism.

The Jerusalem counsel should have silenced the demand of ritual and law for salvation for all time. Even so, ritual and law continue to be espoused, in one form or another, by the majority of the denominations under the canopy of Christianity. This is indeed a sad state of affairs and falls under Paul's description of *another gospel*.

In Christianity, infant baptism has taken the place of the rite of circumcision practiced in Judaism. Likewise confirmation has taken the place of the rite of Bar Mitzvah. Infant baptism is practiced because men have confused the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is necessary for salvation, with water baptism. Confirmation is practiced to bring pubescent children, baptized in infancy, under the law of Moses and the laws of the church.

Since it is absolutely impossible for anyone, other than the Lord Jesus Christ, to keep the law perfectly, the natural extension of placing church members under law is the demand for the confession and absolution of sin. Confession to a priest denies that *there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*. Even so the Roman church requires confession of sin to a priest. Then, for absolution, confession is followed by attendance at mass, where (through the doctrine of transubstantiation) the bread and wine are said to become the literal body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and are offered as a sacrifice for the sins which were confessed to the priest prior to the mass. These doctrines apparently satisfy millions of people who bear the name *Christian*. This is sad because they bear no Scriptural authority and are according to *the commandments and doctrines of men*.

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When these practices are brought to the Scriptures, *rightly divided*, none of them can stand. First, salvation is by grace through faith, apart from the deeds of the law. Second, baptism in water is for the believer: to outwardly declare his belief in the gospel and his judicial standing with God. Through baptism in water, he declares: when Christ died, he died; when Christ was buried, he was buried; and when Christ arose from the dead, he arose with Him *to walk in newness of life*. Third, Christ made *one sacrifice for sin forever*. This sacrifice paid for all sins.

Even so, sins committed after salvation have become a concern for many. They should not be, because the Scripture says, *the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin*. Further it says, *Where remission of these are, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin*, because our Lord *made one sacrifice for sin forever*. This means all of the sins of the believer were put under the blood of Christ at the moment of salvation, when the new believer acknowledged he was a sinner and trusted the Lord as his Savior (by the power of the Word of God and the Spirit of God). This is verified in I John 1:9 by the use of the subjunctive mood for a present tense confession (at the time of one's salvation), which produced a past tense forgiveness of sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness (at the time of the sacrifice of Christ).

In the light of these Scriptural truths and God's attributes of omniscience and immutability, where do all of these false notions practiced in the churches come from? The answer lies in the fact that unsaved men have risen to high places in the churches. This was predicted by our Lord in His parable of the mustard plant. The mustard plant represents the church, which was planted for the healing of the nations. However, with the passage of time, the mustard plant grew from its useful size as an herb into a tree.

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This unparalleled growth made the church an attractive dwelling place, with its size and shade (recognition and wealth), for the birds of the air (the emissaries of Satan). This is verified in the parable of the Sower, where the fowls (which ate up the seed by the wayside) were identified as the Devil. Applying this information to the parable of the mustard plant, the birds, which lodged in the uppermost branches and enjoyed the shade of the mustard tree, are the emissaries of the Devil. They have risen to the highest positions in a church that, because of its growth, no longer serves the purpose for which it was planted. This condition of the church reveals the apostate condition of the church, prophesied for the last days.

In the light of the mustard tree, it is extremely important for us to read carefully Paul's warning to the Corinthian church. He told them of those who were corrupting the church *from the simplicity that is in Christ*, just as *the serpent had beguiled Eve through his subtlety*:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (II Corinthians 11:13-15)

In the ministry of Judas Iscariot, the Devil held the position of *an angel of light*; for Judas, as one of the twelve, was a messenger of Christ, and Christ is *the light of the world*. Further, our Lord referred to Judas as *the Devil*. *He also referred to him as the son of perdition*. Consequently it should not be a marvel to us that the Devil's ministers are referred to as ministers of *righteousness*. The righteousness they minister is not the righteousness of Christ, received by grace through faith; it is self-righteousness, obtained by accusing others and excusing themselves in relationship with the law.

These false prophets rejected the grace of God for the works of their own hands. They

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viewed the justification of sinners by grace through faith to be unfair to those who (in their minds) lived disciplined lives of religious ritual and law. Paul revealed their disrespect for Christ, *the Author and Finisher of the faith*, when he wrote of the judgment that shall come upon all who reject the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness* (Romans 1:18, emphasis mine). And Jude wrote: *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ* (Jude 1:4, emphasis mine).

In Romans 1:18 and Jude 1:4, the word in the Greek text for *ungodliness* and *ungodly* is *asebes*. It is a compound made up of two words: *a* and *sebomai*. *Sebomai* means awe, fear, reverence. With the preceding alpha it means: without awe; without fear; without reverence. Hence the translation: *ungodly*. Paul used the word in his letter to the Romans to identify religious men, whose ungodliness was manifested by disrespect for the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their overt sinfulness was covered by a religious facade of *touch not, taste not, handle not*. Their trust was in *the commandments and doctrines of men*. Thus Paul wrote:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:1-3)

This zeal without knowledge was bold. It was so bold, it equated the grace of God with lasciviousness. The Greek word translated *lasciviousness* seems to have its root in a word which

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means *darkness*. This, in essence, was the lie of the Devil, which said, *Darkness is light*. This lie has been preached in one form or another in all of the religions of the world, except Biblical Christianity, from the deception of Eve to the present day. Despite this, many modern-day expositors say there were those in the first century who preached, *Let us sin that grace may abound*. There is no Scriptural authority anyone ever preached this, but there certainly is ample authority it was a constant accusation against the preaching of the apostle Paul.

The claim of these expositors does not fit the conditions in the churches of that era. The condition that does fit was the preaching of the *other gospel* of the Judaizers. This is verified in almost all of the epistles of the New Testament. The *other gospel* had crept in unawares in the churches because it appealed to the flesh. The letter to the Galatians and several chapters of the book of Acts describe its progress throughout the region of Galatia until it was countered by the sound teaching of the apostle Paul. It was then countered and officially denounced by the council at Jerusalem and was a sub-topic of almost all of Paul's epistles.

The theory of these expositors is overwhelmed by the Scriptural account of the Judaizers and their universal attempts to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. Further, Jude's statement, *turning the grace of God into lasciviousness*, employs the Greek word *metatithemi* for *turning*. This word has several meanings, but the one that fits the context is *one thing is the equivalent of another*. Thus, to the Judaizers, grace was lasciviousness. Not as the expositors have said, to encourage lasciviousness, but that grace itself was lascivious. Additionally, Jude wrote:

... these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. (Jude 1:10)

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It was natural for the Judaizers to speak evil of the grace of God. They were spiritually dead. Thus like animals without reason, it was impossible for them to discern the truth. In their zeal to preach *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, they dogged the steps of the apostle Paul wherever he preached the grace of God.

Finally, during his last days in a Roman prison, Paul wrote to Timothy, by inspiration of the Spirit of God, to declare *the lawful use of the law*:

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith...

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. (I Timothy 1:4-11, emphasis mine)

It was the Judaizers who had *turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law*. To counteract their error, Paul taught Timothy the lawful use of the law. It was not for saved men, but for unsaved men. It was designed to condemn and slay them -- to make them see their need and turn to Christ to be justified by faith, apart from the deeds of the law.

The Scripture says, *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the [full] knowledge of sin*. In our text, Paul posed the question, *Is the law then against the promises of God?* Then, he emphatically said, *God forbid!* or *May it never be: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have*

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*been by the law.* But this could not be! God is Holy, Righteous and Just and it is not possible for unrighteous, unholy and unjust men to perform any kind of moral code to the satisfaction of the very least of the demands of God's Holiness, Righteousness and Justice. Therefore:

... the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 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. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:22-29)

The purpose of the law was to prove to Israel, as well as to the world, it was not, and is not, possible for sinful men to be justified before God by the works of their own hands. Consequently the law established the guilt of Israel for the purpose of pointing them to faith in Jesus Christ. For this to be possible, Christ had to come into this world through the virgin birth, so that, He, as God, could take a human body and live His life as a Man, but not just any man. According to prophecy, He had to be of the seed of Abraham and be born into the nation of Israel of the tribe of Judah and the lineage of David. Thus as a Jew, He was responsible to the covenant relationship God had with the nation of Israel through the law. He said:

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

Our Lord did exactly that. He not only stood in the stead of sinners in death, bearing their judgment, He stood in the stead of sinners in life: fulfilling all righteousness and fulfilling every jot and tittle of the law. This He did to the total satisfaction of God's Holiness and to the securing

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of the blessings (that were promised to Israel for the performance of the law) for those who have put their trust in Him. Thus, by the judicial decree of God, all of the blessings that were promised for the performance of the law are the believers by virtue of the perfect performance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the Jews, who willingly placed themselves under the covenant of the law by their pledge, *All that the Lord our God hath spoken, we will do*, never obtained the blessings of the law by their oath, or by their attempts at law-keeping. Even so God gave them the sacrificial system to point them to faith in Jesus Christ. When a Jew failed under the law it was incumbent upon him to bring the appropriate sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle and there offer it by faith -- believing that one day God would offer *one sacrifice for sin forever*. The animal sacrifices could never take away sin, but faith in God's promise of a Redeemer, which was represented by the animal sacrifice, could. Thus the blessings of the law came to them by God's grace through faith in the promised Redeemer. This prompted Paul to write:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

The individuals in that era who offered their sacrifices by faith were saved by God's grace through faith as surely as those of us of the present era, who have looked back to the cross of Calvary: believing that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and was buried and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.