

Our Need for God's Law

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

“The glory of Christ is revealed in the law, which is a transcript of His character, and His transforming efficacy is felt upon the soul until men become changed to His likeness.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 22, 1902.

Suggested Reading: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 57–65.

1. The Knowledge of Sin

- a. Who is the law of God made for, and for what purpose? How many have come under its condemnation? 1 Timothy 1:8-10; Romans 3:19, 23.
-
-

a. **1 Timothy 1:8-10** (8) But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; (9) 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, (10) 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;

Romans 3:19 (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Romans 3:23 (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

1. The Knowledge of Sin

- b. Why are our own efforts in keeping God's law not enough to justify us before God? How only can we keep the law? Romans 3:20; 7:7; Philippians 4:13.
-
-

“He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. If a man could save himself by his own works, he might have something in himself in which to rejoice. The effort that man makes in his own strength to obtain salvation is represented by the offering of Cain. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin; but that which is wrought through faith is acceptable to God. When we seek to gain heaven through the merits of Christ, the soul makes progress. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we may go on from strength to strength, from victory to victory; for through Christ the grace of God has worked out our complete salvation.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 364.

b. Romans 3:20 (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:7 (7) What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Philippians 4:13 (13) I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

2. The Law As Our Schoolmaster

- a. What is the schoolmaster referred to in Galatians? Galatians 3:21–25.
-

“What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 233.

a. **Galatians 3:21-25** (21) 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. (22) But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. (23) But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

2. The Law As Our Schoolmaster

- b. What work does the law as a schoolmaster do, and for what purpose? Romans 10:4. Compare the way the word “end” (Greek, telos, purpose, or goal, or end in view) is used in James 5:11 and 1 Peter 1:9.
-
-

“As the sinner looks into the great moral looking glass, he sees his defects of character. He sees himself just as he is, spotted, defiled, and condemned. But he knows that the law cannot in any way remove the guilt or pardon the transgressor. He must go farther than this. The law is but the schoolmaster to bring him to Christ. He must look to his sin-bearing Saviour.”—Ibid., p. 213.

b. Romans 10:4 (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

James 5:11 (11) 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.

1 Peter 1:9 (9) Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

2. The Law As Our Schoolmaster

- c. What relationship exists between the “schoolmaster” and faith in Jesus? Romans 5:1; 3:31; 8:3, 4.
-
-

“The law reveals sin to us and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”—*Ibid.*, p. 234.

“Only by faith in Christ can the sinner be cleansed from guilt and be enabled to render obedience to the law of his Maker.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 425.

“The law and the gospel are in perfect harmony. Each upholds the other. In all its majesty the law confronts the conscience, causing the sinner to feel his need of Christ as the propitiation for sin. The gospel recognizes the power and immutability of the law. ‘I had not known sin, but by the law,’ Paul declares (Romans 7:7). The sense of sin, urged home by the law, drives the sinner to the Saviour. In his need man may present the mighty arguments furnished by the cross of Calvary. He may claim the righteousness of Christ; for it is imparted to every repentant sinner.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 22, 1902.

- c. **Romans 5:1** (1) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Romans 3:31

(31) Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Romans 8:3-4 (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

(4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

3. The Old and the New Covenant

- a. What was God's purpose in giving His law to Israel at Sinai, and what is the condition for life under this law? Exodus 20:20; Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5.
-
-

“When the law was proclaimed from Sinai, God made known to men the holiness of His character, that by contrast they might see the sinfulness of their own. The law was given to convict them of sin and reveal their need of a Saviour. It would do this as its principles were applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. This work it is still to do. In the life of Christ the principles of the law are made plain; and as the Holy Spirit of God touches the heart, as the light of Christ reveals to men their need of His cleansing blood and His justifying righteousness, the law is still an agent in bringing us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.”—*The Signs of the Times*, March 29, 1910.

a. **Exodus 20:20** (20) And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

Leviticus 18:5 (5) Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.

Romans 10:5 (5) For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

3. The Old and the New Covenant

- b. Why did Israel fail to keep God's law even though they professed great zeal for it? Romans 10:3.
-

“Israel had not perceived the spiritual nature of the law, and too often their professed obedience was but an observance of forms and ceremonies, rather than a surrender of the heart to the sovereignty of love.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 67.

b. Romans 10:3

(3) 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.

3. The Old and the New Covenant

- c. What are the “better promises” upon which the New Covenant was established? Hebrews 8:6; Jeremiah 31:33, 34.
-

“The ‘new covenant’ was established upon ‘better promises’—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God’s law. . . .

“The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.

c. **Hebrews 8:6** (6) But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 (33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

4. The Law - The Measurement of Character

a. What is the only genuine measurement of character? James 2:8–12.

“The law of God is the only genuine standard for the measurement of character. Christ displayed to the world by His life and teaching, by His divine character, what obedience to the law means. He was man’s example; but man cannot set up a standard for himself. Man is ignorant of the infinite purity of God, and without divine enlightenment he cannot appreciate the holy exactions of the law of God. While he is ignorant of the uncompromising character of God’s law, he is unconcerned about his defective, sinful character. He fears nothing, he has no disquietude, because he measures himself by a false standard.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 18, 1890.

a. James 2:8-12 (8) If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: (9) But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. (10) For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (11) For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. (12) So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

4. The Law - The Measurement of Character

- b. What will determine whether God's character is revealed in our thoughts and actions? Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:10.
-
-

“Only he whose heart is filled with compassion for fallen man, who loves to a purpose, revealing that love by the performance of Christlike deeds, will be able to endure the seeing of Him who is invisible. He who loves not those for whom the Father has done so much knows not God. Theology is valueless unless it is saturated with the love of Christ. True Christianity diffuses love through the whole being. It touches every vital part—the brain, the heart, the helping hands, the feet—enabling men to stand firmly where God requires them to stand, lest the lame be turned out of the way. The burning, consuming love of Christ for perishing souls is the life of the whole system of Christianity.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1910.

b. Matthew 22:36-40 (36) Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

(37) 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. (38) This is the first and great commandment.

(39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

(40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Romans 13:10 (10) Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

4. The Law - The Measurement of Character

- c. What will be seen in the life of those who have genuine faith in Christ? James 1:22–27.
-
-

“Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. Where faith is, good works appear. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 398.

c. **James 1:22-27** (22) But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (23) For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: (24) For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. (25) But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (26) If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. (27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

5. Jesus Christ, the Law in Real Life

- a. What attitude did Christ manifest towards the law of God?
Matthew 5:17–20.
-

“Jesus was a living illustration of the fulfillment of the law, but His fulfilling it did not mean its abolition and annihilation. In fulfilling the law, He carried out every specification of its claims.”—*The Signs of the Times*, March 14, 1895.

“In His teachings, Christ showed how far-reaching are the principles of the law spoken from Sinai. He made a living application of that law whose principles remain forever the great standard of righteousness—the standard by which all shall be judged in that great day when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 141.

- a. **Matthew 5:17-20** (17) Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) 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. (19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (20) For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

5. Jesus Christ, the Law in Real Life

- b. What shows that Christ was a living demonstration to humanity of the law of God? 1 Peter 2:21, 22; John 15:10; 1 John 2:6.
-
-

“The glory of Christ is His character, and His character is an expression of the law of God. He fulfilled the law in its every specification, and gave to the world in His life a perfect pattern of what it is possible for humanity to attain unto by cooperation with divinity. In His humanity Christ was dependent upon the Father, even as humanity is now dependent upon God for divine power in attaining unto perfection of character.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 12, 1895.

b. 1 Peter 2:21-22 (21) For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

John 15:10 (10) If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

1 John 2:6 (6) He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. On whose promises was the Old Covenant founded?**
- 2. On whose promises was the New Covenant founded?**
- 3. Who is it that makes us obedient to God?**
- 4. Are we operating under the Old Covenant today if we depend on our own promises rather than on God's promises?**
- 5. What led the heroes of the Bible to see their need of Jesus?**