

The Righteousness of Christ Revealed in His Law

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God: not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3).

“The glory that shone on the face of Moses was a reflection of the righteousness of Christ in the law.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 237.

Suggested Reading: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 43–48.

1. MAGNIFYING THE LAW OF GOD

- a. **What did Moses see in beholding God's glory? Exodus 33:18, 19; 34:5-7.**
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"God requires perfection of His children. His law is a transcript of His own character, and it is the standard of all character. This infinite standard is presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom. The life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God's law, and when those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments. Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family of heaven."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 315.

a. **Exodus 33:18-19** (18) And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. (19) And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

Exodus 34:5-7 (5) And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. (6) And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, (7) Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

1. Magnifying the Law of God

- b. What was the mission of Jesus as it related to the law of God?
Psalm 40:8; Isaiah 42:21; 2 Corinthians 4:6.
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“It was to manifest [God’s] glory that [Christ] came to our world. To this sin-darkened earth He came to reveal the light of God’s love—to be ‘God with us.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

b. Psalms 40:8 (8) I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Isaiah 42:21 (21) The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2. The Glory of God's Character

- a. What happens when we come to understand that Christ is the law of God revealed in human flesh? 2 Corinthians 5:17.
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“By beholding we become changed, morally assimilated to the One who is perfect in character. By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him. The image of Christ is cherished, and it captivates the whole being.

“Beholding Christ for the purpose of becoming like Him, the seeker after truth sees the perfection of the principles of God's law, and he becomes dissatisfied with everything but perfection. Hiding his life in the life of Christ, he sees that the holiness of the divine law is revealed in the character of Christ, and more and more earnestly he strives to be like Him. A warfare may be expected at any time, for the tempter sees that he is losing one of his subjects. A battle must be fought with the attributes which Satan has been strengthening for his own use. The human agent sees what he has to contend with—a strange power opposed to the idea of attaining the perfection that Christ holds out. But with Christ there is saving power that will gain for him victory in the conflict.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1098.

“Could all see Christ before the throne, waiting for their prayers, waiting for them to surrender their will, to cease their rebellion and come back to their allegiance to God, in deep penitence they would pray the Father to forgive their transgression of His law, and forgive them for the influence they have exercised in causing others to disregard the law of Jehovah. The confederacies of the enemy's army are triumphing in their delay.”—*Our Father Cares*, p. 266.

- a. **2 Corinthians 5:17** (17) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2. The Glory of God's Character

- b. How is our character changed? Hebrews 12:2. What action is required of us by comparing Numbers 21:8 with John 3:14, 15? John 6:37, 54–56.

“To Moses, the character of God was revealed as His glory. In like manner, we behold the glory of Christ by beholding His character. . . .

“Why, then, is there manifested in the church so great a lack of love, of true, elevated, sanctified, ennobling sympathy, of tender pity and loving forbearance? It is because Christ is not constantly brought before the people. His attributes of character are not brought into the practical life. Men and women are not eating of the Bread that cometh down from heaven.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, pp. 296, 297.

b. Hebrews 12:2 (2) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Numbers 21:8 (8) And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

John 3:14-15 (14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: (15) That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

John 6:37 (37) All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

John 6:54-56 (54) Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (55) For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

(56) He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

3. Two Different Ministries

- a. What is the difference between the “ministration of condemnation” and the “ministration of righteousness”? 2 Corinthians 3:1–3, 6–9.
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“The fallen race of Adam can behold nothing else in the letter of this covenant [of God’s holy law] than the ministration of death; and death will be the reward of everyone who is seeking vainly to fashion a righteousness of his own that will fulfill the claims of the law.”—*The Signs of the Times*, September 5, 1892.

“Not once has Christ stated that His coming destroyed the claims of God’s law. On the contrary, in the very last message to His church, by way of Patmos, He pronounces a benediction upon those who keep His Father’s law: ‘Blessed are they that do his commandments’ (Revelation 22:14).”—*Ibid.*, July 29, 1886.

a. **2 Corinthians 3:1-3** (1) Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? (2) Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: (3) Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

2 Corinthians 3:6-9 (6) Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (7) But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: (8) How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? (9) For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

3. Two Different Ministries

- b. How does Paul describe the veil of ignorance of the Jews who rejected Christ? Romans 9:31, 32; 10:3.
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b. Romans 9:31-32 (31) But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. (32) Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

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. Two Different Ministries

c. Describe how the veil can be taken away. 2 Corinthians 3:13–16.

“It was the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ, who was the foundation of the sacrificial system, that shone in the face of Moses. [2 Corinthians 3:7, 8 quoted.] When the reality, the full blaze of mid-day light, should come, the dim glory which was but an earnest of the latter, should be done away, swallowed up in the greater glory.”—*Ibid.*, August 25, 1887.

“The ritual service was of no value, unless connected with Christ by living faith. Even the moral law fails of its purpose, unless it is understood in its relation to the Saviour. Christ had repeatedly shown that His Father’s law contained something deeper than mere authoritative commands. In the law is embodied the same principle that is revealed in the gospel. The law points out man’s duty and shows him his guilt. To Christ he must look for pardon and for power to do what the law enjoins.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 608.

c. **2 Corinthians 3:13-16** (13) And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: (14) But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. (15) But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. (16) Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

4. From Glory to Greater Glory

- a. How was the character of God as revealed in His law more completely and perfectly manifested through the life of Christ? 2 Corinthians 3:9–11. What should this cause us to consider as we seek to abide by God's law?
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“As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain. We must preach Christ in the law, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God. We must not trust in our own merits at all, but in the merits of Jesus of Nazareth. Our eyes must be anointed with eyesalve. We must draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to us, if we come in His own appointed way.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 11, 1890.

“The law itself would have no glory, only that in it Christ is embodied.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 237.

“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.

- a. **2 Corinthians 3:9-11** (9) For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. (10) For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. (11) For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

4. From Glory to Greater Glory

- b. How does the “epistle of Christ” become more glorious than when God’s moral law was written in tables of stone only? Jeremiah 31:31–33; 2 Corinthians 3:3.
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“Paul desires his brethren to see that the great glory of a sin-pardoning Saviour gave significance to the entire Jewish economy. He desired them to see also that when Christ came to the world, and died as man's sacrifice, type met antitype.

“After Christ died on the cross as a sin offering, the ceremonial law could have no force. Yet it was connected with the moral law, and was glorious. The whole bore the stamp of divinity, and expressed the holiness, justice, and righteousness of God. And if the ministration of the dispensation to be done away was glorious, how much more must the reality be glorious, when Christ was revealed, giving His life-giving, sanctifying Spirit to all who believe?”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 237, 238.

b. Jeremiah 31:31-33 (31) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: (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.

2 Corinthians 3:3 (3) Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

5. Reflecting His Glory

- a. What happens when our attention is focused on the glory of God? 1 Corinthians 15:49; Romans 12:2.
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“In representing Christ we represent God to our world. . . . Are we reflecting in the church and before the world the character of Jesus Christ?”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 170.

a. **1 Corinthians 15:49** (49) And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Romans 12:2 (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

5. Reflecting His Glory

- b. What happens when someone receives the righteousness of the law in Christ? Romans 8:4, 9–13. Describe the power that changes the heart and the affections. Matthew 13:33.
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“[Christ] uses leaven to illustrate the gospel of the kingdom. With this leaven, the word of God, true goodness, righteousness, and peace are introduced. This brings the entire affections into conformity to the mind and will of God. Wherever it goes, the leaven of truth makes a change in mind and heart. The entire character is transformed. All who will receive into the heart the truth as it is in Jesus will reveal its leavening power. When the kingdom of heaven is established in the heart, the whole character is conformed to the character of Christ; for the truth is a life-giving principle. The power of God is working, like the leaven, to subdue the entire being. Even the thoughts are brought into captivity to the will of Christ. ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new’ (2 Corinthians 5:17).”—*The Review and Herald*, September 21, 1897.

b. Romans 8:4 (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8:9-13 (9) But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Matthew 13:33 (33) Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When you look into the law of God, what do you see?
2. What was the mission of Christ in relation to the law of God?
3. How is the greater glory of the work of God to affect us today?
4. What happens when we see Christ in the law of Ten Commandments?
5. What takes place in your heart when you are focused on the glory of God?

