

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55: 1 0 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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WE ESTABLISH THE LAW

It should be the desire of all who profess relationship with God to establish the law in regard to the true place and purpose for which it was given to the people of Israel. Anyone who says or thinks that the precepts expounded by Moses were set forth as a means of salvation misunderstands the law altogether. Our salvation is by grace through faith, and the law given by Moses plays no part in it. Redemption, forgiveness, justification, and all that is subsumed under the word salvation, is the result of the work that God does for man, and it is not the result of what man does for God. And while it is necessary for every believer to have clear and fixed Biblical rules of life, these must never be regarded as laws which by keeping he hopes to be saved, but rules that he follows because he is saved.

We should ever keep in mind the admonition of Paul to Titus: **"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed God might be careful to maintain good works"** (Titus 3:8). But, even so, we should never for a moment think that "good works" is simply making a selection of certain things from the laws of Moses and keeping these in whatever fashion we choose; such as those do who think that to go to church on Saturday is the fulfillment of God's law to Israel concerning the Sabbath day.

It is in Romans 3:31 we find Paul both asking and answering a very important question concerning the law. Having said: **"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,"** he asks, **"Do we then make void the law through faith,"** and answers, saying: **"God forbid: yea, we establish the law."**

No matter what the word "faith" may relate to in any of its occurrences in the New Testament, it always has to do with taking God at His Word and responding accordingly. In the very first occurrence of the word "faith" (**pistis**) our Lord used it in commendation of a Roman Centurion of whom he said: **"I have not found so great**

faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt. 8:10). It is from such actions as this man set forth that we find what faith is in reality and practice. What this man did was to take God at His word and respond in harmony with what He had said. "I Will come down and heal him" was God's word to him.. "You do not need to come under my roof, just speak the word and my servant will be healed," was the Centurion's response. A faith as this was far greater than any the Lord had found in Israel.

In order to have faith even "as a grain of mustard seed" one must have some direct word from God that concerns the matter. Since this is the time of God's silence, we must find His word. to. us within the pages of His book. However, in handling God's truth we must not take words spoken directly to others and treat them as if spoken to us; Words such as: "**If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it**" (John 14:14) were spoken to eleven specially commissioned men (apostles) as the context will clearly show. This promise is God's Word, but it is not God's Word to you and me except as it tells of the great and positive privileges that He gave to His apostles.

Concerning the law, God has spoken, and what he has said concerning it should be received and believed by us. It will be credited as an act of faith upon our part if we take God at His word and then think and speak accordingly. Let us consider some of the things He has said.

To Moses, God said: "**Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel**" (Exo. 19:3); then at the second giving of the law, Moses, as God's spokesman asked the people of Israel this question: "**And what nation is there so great, that has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law (torah) which I set before you this day?**" (Deu. 4:8). This question being clearly rhetorical, can have only one answer. No nation on earth had then or has now divine statutes and judgments except Israel.

Can you take God at His word in regard to the law, then believe, think, speak, and teach accordingly? If you can, then by faith you will be establishing the law in regard to the people to whom it was given.

Consider also the many words concerning the law spoken by the Apostle Paul such as: "**Now we know that what things the law saith, it saith unto them that are under the law**" (Rom. 3:19); "**Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight**" (Rom. 3:20); "**but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested**" (Rom. 3:22); "**therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law**" (Rom. 3:28); "**do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid, yea, we establish the law**" (Rom. 3:31); "**therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**" (Rom. 5:1); "**for sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the**

law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!" (Rom. 6:14,15).

Again I ask: Can you take God at His word in regard to all these statements concerning the law? Can you believe, think, speak, and teach in full accord with these divine declarations? If so, you will be living by faith and walking in truth so far as the law is concerned.

The truth set forth in the passages cited above are a major part of my own faith. Along with Paul, I can truly say: **"I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain"** (Gal. 2:21)."

The constant contrast that is set forth in Paul's Roman and Galatian epistles is between living by faith and living according to the law; between getting forgiveness, redemption, and justification by keeping the law or getting these precious possessions by exercising faith. It is in the prophecy of Habakkuk (2:4) that we find the significant declaration: **"The just shall live by his faith."** This is then quoted by Paul in Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, and Heb. 10:38. Thus, it is by faith that we obtain the gift of righteousness and are numbered, among the "just", and having obtained this status, we are to live by faith.

Far too many suppose that "living by faith" is to live without any visible source of income. They think that if one has a settled source of income or some marketable skill by which he can earn enough to provide for himself and his family, he cannot be living by faith. Such a concept is utter foolishness. Living by faith is not living dependently on the charity of others. It is living by constantly taking God at His word and responding accordingly.

There is something that is positively refreshing and spiritually invigorating about doing this, but it is one that will never be enjoyed by those who seldom if ever open God's book. The constant search for God's truth within the pages of His Word will always provide something for us to believe, even though at times the truth we find may negate something we have fervently believed before.

In regard to the law, as said before, the first and most important fact revealed concerning it is that as originally given it was the terms of a covenant or agreement entered into between God and Israel. It was not given as rules of life, neither was it intended to be a full revelation of the mind of God concerning things that are right and wrong. In fact, the ten terms of the covenant were not regarded as law until after the covenant was broken and its terms were reimposed upon Israel as commandments and laws.

Strictly speaking, a law must lay down a rule of conduct, either demanding or prohibiting, and these rules must be made obligatory by certain sanctions that will be imposed if these rules are violated. This being true, the ten commandments as originally given were not "laws" in the strict meaning of this term.

If someone should come to us offering a rich reward for doing certain things, and if we accept the offer, the terms of this agreement or covenant cannot be rightly described as "law." Obviously, this is what God did when He proposed the covenant to Israel, as a reading of His words in Exodus 19:3-6 will clearly show.

It should be noted that law never promises a reward to those who keep it, and it always contains a penalty for those who break it. In the offer of a covenant in Exodus 19 a rich reward is definitely promised if the terms are kept, but no penalty is mentioned if they are broken. Therefore, as originally given, the ten commandments were not "laws" at all. They were the terms of a covenant, but they became law when they were given the second time.

The full significance of the fact that the tables of stone were given the second time is not comprehended by most students of the word. The record of this is found in Exodus 34: 1: **"And the LORD said unto Moses, hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon the tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. "**

The second tables contained the same words as the first. However, the words on the first tables were the terms of a covenant, but the words on the second tables were "law" in the strongest meaning of this term.

The full significance of all this can be found by a careful reading of the book of Deuteronomy. This book records a new relationship of Israel to the law in view of her great sin. The terms of the covenant are now imposed upon the nation as an absolute law.

Before Sinai the people of Israel had been greatly blessed. The covenant proposed there promised a continuation of these blessings with still greater benefits to come. They accepted the terms of the covenant and observed them for forty-seven days, but in a moment of panic over the absence of Moses the terms were tragically broken. These terms were then reimposed upon them as laws, and they were to be blessed or cursed according to what they did. It was to be a blessing if they did, a curse if they did not (Deu. 28).

These were the conditions under which they entered into and possessed the land of Palestine. Here the seed of Abraham remained for about 860 years, until because of their persistent sins God dispossessed them and drove them out of it. Now they cannot repossess it until God gives it back to them. He will do this in the day when He assumes sovereignty and governs the nations upon the earth.

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