

## **Cubby's Talks**

How can the church reach men for Christ? Here in the South many men believe that working hard and achieving some level of financial success and security for the family is their primary task. Around that work they want to carve out some space for some fun and relaxation to recharge.

Church, faith commitments and a personal spiritual life are aspects of their heart that are below the radar; low on the priority list. When these men do operate in the spiritual realm they work from a set of assumptions and a lack of personal experience that encourages the belief that spiritual matters just are not relevant.

But a man's interest in spiritual matters can be sparked into active processing when another man they respect invites them to a safe place to pose their questions, test their assumptions, and know that they will not be alone or stand out as a spiritual seeker.

Here in Columbia that looks like men (group size is limited to 15), invited to gather in an office downtown one evening a month and ask any spiritual question they want to some fellow business men and seminary professors. Most months there is a waiting list. Some men want to return for several months to not only pose their questions but also hear how the questions of fellow seekers are answered. After a period of relationship building many of the men are then open to a one to one lunch meeting to make a personal commitment to Christ.

This article is one of several that condense the answers to the questions men frequently pose. Perhaps God wants to use a couple of mature men in the church in your area to begin a similar process. "Cubby" Culbertson, Dr. Bill Jones, and Pastor Det Bowers have been three of the leaders in this outreach in recent years.

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## **Is the Old Testament Law Still Valid?**

The general answer to this question is *yes*. Nevertheless, in order to better understand the import of the question and the gravity of the issues surrounding this matter, you will be well served to remember that the Old Testament provides you with four types of Laws:

1. Dietary Law
2. Ceremonial or Sacrificial Law
3. Civil Law
4. Moral Law

The dietary law was intended for the nation of Israel alone. It was intended to establish their peculiarity within a decadent society. Their dietary regulations assisted their identification during the term of their wandering in the desert, their kingdom years and when the invading armies deported them.

God clearly abolished the dietary requirements in Acts 10 when an object like a great sheet came down out of heaven and a voice declared to Peter, “Arise, Peter, kill and eat!”<sup>1</sup> This confirmed the words of the Lord Jesus in Mark 7:14-23 where “He declared all foods clean.”<sup>2</sup>

The Ceremonial or Sacrificial Law was set aside by the sacrifice of Christ and most plainly set forth is Jesus’ declaration from the cross, “It is finished!”<sup>3</sup> The author of the epistle to the Hebrews confirms the thoroughness of Jesus’ sacrifice and the uselessness of other sacrifices in Chapters 8 and 9.

The Civil Law consisted of those ordinances designed for the theocracy you know as Israel. Many of these regulations are set forth in the book of Leviticus. An example of one of these laws that has been set aside are the regulations concerning adultery. Though the adulterer could have been stoned to death for the offense under the ordinances set forth in Leviticus, Jesus declares that the penalty for adultery is a certificate of divorce.<sup>4</sup>

The fourth area of the law is the Moral Law. This body of law remains valid.<sup>5</sup>

Doing the will of God is the distinguishing characteristic of those practicing Christianity. Obeying His laws, following His statutes and walking in His steps authenticates the true Christian. How does Jesus describe the lifestyles of the non-Christian? He says they “practice lawlessness.”<sup>6</sup> So what is the will of God for Christians? The will of God is for Christians to practice lawfulness.

When Christians practice their Christianity by practicing the lawfulness of the Lord, they receive benefits that this world cannot measure. God designed His law to detoxify Christians from this world’s pollutants and to enculturate Christians to His deity. The law of God is a tutorial vehicle nurturing a Christian’s transformation into God’s image.<sup>7</sup> The more perfectly you obey God’s word, the more perfectly you will resemble your God. Be mindful that the only Man who ever shone with the glory of God was also the only Man who ever perfectly practiced the law.<sup>8</sup>

Another marked benefit of God’s law is that it reveals the heinousness of sin – sin’s breadth, length, height and width.<sup>9</sup> In 1657 Samuel Bolton of Christ College, Cambridge, provided much guidance concerning the Christian’s need for God’s law:

“[The Law] will reveal to you more nakedness in one sin than all the world can cover; more indigency in one sin than all the treasures of created righteousness are able to supply; more obliquity and injustice in one sin, in a wandering thought, than all the deaths of men and annihilations of angels are able to expiate. Search into the Law and you shall discover thousands of sins that fall under any one Law of God.”<sup>10</sup>

Practicing Christians quickly discover the benefit of the genuine and constant freedom that always accompanies the practice of the law. **Christians have been freed from disobedience to the law.** They can now obey with their whole hearts for they know that authentic liberty is attained when they thoroughly obey every jot and tittle of God's law.

Samuel Bolton wrote, "The booke of the Law was placed betweene the Cherubims, and upon the Mercy-seat, to tell us under the Gospel that every Law comes now to the Saints from the Mercy-seat."<sup>11</sup>

Most of the Christian teaching today centers upon one's feelings and personal experiences. Modern Christianity gives little emphasis to God's holiness and His command to "be holy, for I am holy."<sup>12</sup> Hollow phrases, poverty-stricken sound bites and a doctrinally thin, warmed over Christian varnish are developing Christian dwarves.

In good faith evangelicals are attempting to communicate Christianity so that it is more acceptable and less offensive to the masses of people. Although their intentions are most honorable, their methodology is outside the balance of Scripture.<sup>13</sup> They have hidden the offense of the cross, and when the offensiveness of the cross is removed, the cross of Christ is made void.<sup>14</sup>

Remember, Christ Jesus "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from **every lawless deed** and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."<sup>15</sup> His crucifixion was not for the sole purpose of saving us from our sin, but to deliver up to Himself His bride who would live like a saved people. Jesus came to save and to sanctify; and though the law will not save us, we cannot be purified without practicing the law.

God is the "Lawgiver."<sup>16</sup> Our good God would never give a law that is not for our benefit. The Christian's principal interest should be in what God says about His law rather than what man says.

- God says, "The Law is good, if one uses it lawfully."<sup>17</sup>
- God says, "The Law is spiritual."<sup>18</sup>
- Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."<sup>19</sup>
- Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."<sup>20</sup>

Your love for your God makes practicing the law of your God the desire of your heart. When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in a man's heart He increases that man's capacity to do and desire to do all that his God commands. Never forget the words of Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892): "The heaviest end of the Cross lies ever on [Jesus'] shoulders."<sup>21</sup>

We live in a world that is fallen (therefore hurricanes and earthquakes), with a people who are fallen (therefore pride and prejudice). The fallenness of this world is not due to a lack of knowledge concerning God's holy law, but a lack of will. The Prince of

Preachers said, “The core and marrow of damnation is reserved for men who hear the truth, and feel it too, but yet reject it, and are lost.”<sup>22</sup>

Practicing Christianity by living lawfully has never been nor shall it ever be attractive even to most of those claiming to be Christian. We know that among the Hebrews the majority was apostate and idolatrous.<sup>23</sup> Too many professors of our faith only possess a surface religion evidencing civility and morality though devoid of any spiritual pulse. The Christ of God is not their Christ. Perhaps they are not blatantly lawless, nevertheless they are a tribe of spiritual amphibians with an inflated sense of self-worth and plagued with the misguided loves naturally accompanying estranged hearts.<sup>24</sup>

### **Malpractice in any Christian practice is malpractice in all.**<sup>25</sup>

Beware of a man who draws a distinction between actions in the secular world and actions in religious settings. Rev. Spurgeon said, “The line between things secular and sacred is imaginary and mischievous. We believe God for time as well as for eternity, for earth as well as for heaven, for the body as well as for the soul.”<sup>26</sup>

Never underestimate the influence the ungodly have upon the godly. The ungodly want to unlord the Lord, but they must first unlord the law.<sup>27</sup> God’s law is evangelical, and the churchman who is yet an unbeliever knows that the pure practice of Christianity is not friendly to his cause. He cannot look at God’s law with “Gospel-Spectacles” because he is not gospel friendly.<sup>28</sup>

Why do we move so quickly to abort the lawful practice and adopt the lawless practice? Henry Scougal (1650-1678), Professor of Divinity at King’s College, Aberdeen, Scotland, wrote, “Interest and self-love so strongly blind the minds of men that they can hardly be stopped from believing that which they would have be true. They hug the disease, [and] shun the medicine as poison. Can a man approach too near to God? Can he be too like his Maker? Is it possible to be over-perfect or over-happy?”<sup>29</sup>

Distance yourself from those unbelievers and believers who refuse to fully practice God’s law. Christians practicing lawfulness must enjoy no partnership with lawlessness.<sup>30</sup> Do not allow Satan’s influence to smuggle its way into your life via the words and examples of those closest to you.<sup>31</sup>

Your unmortified flesh leads you to live checkered lives. You must avoid a daily feeding on the foods poisoning your will. Your natural spiritual sloth possesses your souls for you fail to sit loose to the world. You are not exact in your spiritual practices, and you imitate the practices of those whom all of Scripture warns you against.

Man’s tendency is to cascade toward the least difficult practice. We all know that less energy is required (at least initially!) to practice lawlessness than is required to practice consistent lawfulness. Many Christians have been taught and are of the opinion that Jesus’ coming from heaven to earth did away with the necessity that we practice the law of God. That is a satanic lie.

Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.”<sup>32</sup> Jesus gifts us with His life’s purpose in this passage, and His purpose should be ours.<sup>33</sup> Clarity of purpose always facilitates intentional living allowing its confessor to live by design rather than default. Jesus never drifted from His declared purpose of fulfilling all God commanded through the Old Testament writings.

Jesus came from heaven to earth, from life eternal to life ephemeral, purposed and resolved to fulfill God’s law.<sup>34</sup> Every Old Testament law that remains unqualified or unmodified by the teachings of the New Testament, is as effective today as it was the day God gave it to man.

Jesus’ appreciation for God’s law is most exalted. Why? God’s perfect law is Jesus’ perfect law! Every Scriptural command comes to us as equally from our sinless Jesus as it does from our holy God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ applied His appreciation for Scripture’s commands to His life. Jesus perfectly obeyed every Scriptural mandate.<sup>35</sup> Are not we “to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth?”<sup>36</sup>

Jesus never grumbled, murmured or complained about the strictness of the law. We do not find Him reminding His Father of His Sonship in order to convince God to remove the applicability of certain laws to Him. Jesus is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Because God has written the law upon the two tablets of stone and upon the tablets of human hearts, it must be obeyed – not negotiated or bartered.

God Almighty has not called us to debate; He has called us to obedience. As Moses told the Hebrews and Jesus told the devil, “Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”<sup>37</sup>

David, the king after God’s own heart, makes public the heart we are to have for our God’s law:

“The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

“Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall observe it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, and keep it with all my heart. Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in it.

“Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold.”<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps you would be helped in your practice of Christianity if you possessed a fuller understanding of God’s view of lawlessness. God says, “Everyone who practices sin also

practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”<sup>39</sup> You know that “sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”<sup>40</sup>

Lawlessness is Satan’s vomit costumed to resemble Bathsheba’s beauty. Lawlessness is treasonous unholiness seducing man to dine upon a disordered love. Lawlessness turns “justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.”<sup>41</sup>

Professor Scougal wrote, “We have arrived at such a height of impiety that virtue and vice seem to have shifted places; evil and good seem to have changed their names.”<sup>42</sup> God loves righteousness and hates lawlessness.<sup>43</sup> Jesus says, “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”<sup>44</sup>

Augustine defined evil/sin/lawlessness as disordered love. Your prayer that God will deliver you from lawless practices should be your morning prayer every day of your life.<sup>45</sup> You are tempted daily with your own lusts.<sup>46</sup> You must rely upon “the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.”<sup>47</sup>

God hates lawlessness and is tireless in His desire to dissuade man from his fascination with lawlessness. Our hearts are lions’ dens of devouring lusts. Lawlessness torments righteous souls every day.<sup>48</sup>

Take your own spiritual pulse. Do you “joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man?”<sup>49</sup> Are you with your mind “serving the law of God?”<sup>50</sup> Would the angels describe your practice of Christianity as the habit of one “being poured out as a drink offering?”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 10:13

<sup>2</sup> Mk. 7:19

<sup>3</sup> Jn. 19:30

<sup>4</sup> Lev. 20:10; Mt. 19:3-9

<sup>5</sup> Mt. 5:17-19

<sup>6</sup> Mt. 7:23

<sup>7</sup> II Cor. 3:18

<sup>8</sup> Jn. 1:14,18; II Cor. 5:21

<sup>9</sup> Ro. 7:7

<sup>10</sup> *The Puritans on Conversion*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1990), p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (London, 1645), pp. 52,53, as quoted: Ernest F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1999), p. 123.

<sup>12</sup> I Pe. 1:15; Lev. 11:44f.; 19:2; 20:7

<sup>13</sup> I Cor. 2:2

<sup>14</sup> I Cor. 1:17

<sup>15</sup> Tit. 2:14, emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup> Js. 4:12

<sup>17</sup> I Ti. 1:8

<sup>18</sup> Ro. 7:14. “This means that it is of divine origin and character, and more specifically, that it is derived from the Holy Spirit, is validated by his authority, and bespeaks his character. Thus every lack of conformity to the law of God is lack of conformity to God’s likeness, and all conformity to the law is but conformity to that pattern which is the primary and ultimate pattern of sanctification.” John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray, Volume Two, Select Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), p. 307.

<sup>19</sup> Jn. 14:15

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- <sup>20</sup> Mt. 7:21
- <sup>21</sup> The last words of Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon from the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1891 as quoted: J. I. Packer, *Puritan Papers: Volume 3, 1963-1964* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2001), p. 82.
- <sup>22</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. 6* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), p. 88.
- <sup>23</sup> I Ki. 19:18; Heb. 3:19-4:2
- <sup>24</sup> Isa. 29:13
- <sup>25</sup> Js. 2:10
- <sup>26</sup> J. I. Packer, *Puritan Papers: Volume 3, 1963-1964* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2001), p. 70.
- <sup>27</sup> William Strong, *A discourse of the two covenants: Wherein the nature, differences, and effects of the covenant of works and of grace are... discussed* (London, 1678), pp. 40,43,45, as quoted: Kevan, p. 49.
- <sup>28</sup> Francis Roberts, *Of God's Covenants... The Myserie and Marrow of the Bible: viz. Gods-Covenants with man* (London, 1657), p. 789 as quoted: Kevan, p. 126.
- <sup>29</sup> Henry Scougal, *The Works of the Rev. Henry Scougal (1650-1678)*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), pp. 145,239,20.
- <sup>30</sup> II Cor. 6:14
- <sup>31</sup> Mt. 6:23
- <sup>32</sup> Mt. 5:17f.
- <sup>33</sup> Ro. 8:29
- <sup>34</sup> Jn. 6:38
- <sup>35</sup> Heb. 4:15
- <sup>36</sup> I Pe. 2:21f.
- <sup>37</sup> Dt. 8:3; Mt. 4:4
- <sup>38</sup> Ps. 19:7f.; 119:33-35,127
- <sup>39</sup> I Jn. 3:4
- <sup>40</sup> Shorter Catechism, Q. 14; see also Gal. 3:10-12.
- <sup>41</sup> Am. 6:12
- <sup>42</sup> Scougal, p. 158.
- <sup>43</sup> Heb. 1:9
- <sup>44</sup> Mt. 24:12
- <sup>45</sup> Mt. 6:13
- <sup>46</sup> Js. 1:13f.
- <sup>47</sup> Js. 1:17
- <sup>48</sup> II Pe. 2:8
- <sup>49</sup> Ro. 7:22
- <sup>50</sup> Ro. 7:24
- <sup>51</sup> Phil. 2:17; II Ti. 4:6

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Lord Jesus Christ to receive all the honor, glory and blessing for He alone is worthy"  
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