

The Law'S Purpose And Intent

Passover Preparation and the Spirit of the Law

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We live in a world that is smothered by laws. If a crime is committed in a unique way a law is passed to forbid people from doing the same thing again. But, since it treats the effect rather than the cause, people continue to execute self-centered actions toward others.

Sometimes laws are passed merely because a few people do not like something someone else is doing. It doesn't conform to their philosophy. When human beings establish a law, generally they target specific actions. As a result, we end up with detailed laws against specific actions recorded in huge legal books contained in large libraries, rather than principles that cover the causing attitude behind the uncivilized action. Sometimes these detailed laws are ridiculous.

According to 'dumblaws.com', Arizona has some laws that are real winners:

- Any misdemeanor committed while wearing a red mask is considered a felony.
- Donkeys cannot sleep in bathtubs.
- When being attacked by a criminal or burglar, you may only protect yourself with the same weapon that the other person possesses.
- It is unlawful to refuse a person a glass of water.

In Glendale, Arizona:

- Cars may not be driven in reverse.

In Globe, Arizona:

- Cards may not be played in the street with a Native American.

In Mohave County, Arizona:

- A decree declares that anyone caught stealing soap must wash himself with it until it is all used up.

In Nogales, Arizona:

-An ordinance prohibits the wearing of suspenders. [There's a down side to this one—it may cause indecent exposure when your pants are down around your ankles.]

In Prescott, Arizona:

-No one is permitted to ride their horse up the stairs of the county court house.

In Tombstone, Arizona:

-It is illegal for men and women over the age of 18 to have less than one missing tooth visible when smiling.

Although somewhat humorous, I read those laws to illustrate man's humanly reasoned approach to law. That is, he tries to dictate the specific actions of others without regard to motive.

God's written word—the Bible—is one volume containing several very small books. The Bible contains principles of living for every human activity. It instructs us on proper relationships between human beings and our Creator, and appropriate relationships between human beings. It educates us on the causes of suffering and warns ahead of time of the result of mistreating our fellow human beings.

In contrast, many times the world treats bad human behavior as if it were excusable, if the person says he didn't know what he was doing. As a result, people get away with murder because they are declared insane by experts—and we all know what an "expert" is: A has-been drip under pressure [ex-spurt].

Or, the accused claims he had a bad childhood because of incompetent parents. We hear that very often these days. Therefore, he may kill and maim people at will, with little fear of punishment. I find the contradiction ironic that in Australia: "A life sentence is 25 years."

It is not enough to have a law that we are required to follow by the letter. The Pharisees elaborated so extensively on God's laws that they created a monster of slavery—thousands of volumes elaborating on what God supposedly intended to mean and how people should keep it.

The true effectiveness of a law is found in its purpose and intent, not in its letter. In a general sense, the purpose and intent of a biblical instruction is called a 'spiritual principle'. Also, we can say that the purpose and intent of God's written Law is the 'spirit of the law'.

We learn a great deal about God's way of life by keeping the Ten Commandments. Ancient Israel half-heartedly tried to keep them, but without the help of the Holy Spirit they were unable to keep even the letter of the law for very long. Thus we see Israel going the way of the Gentiles even though they had God's law initially.

When we keep the commandments we learn to think like God thinks. We begin to develop the character of God. And, as we learn more of God's plan for humanity, we discover that our own future responsibilities in the future government of God on earth depends to a large extent on our using God's law wisely. With regard to preparation for being worthy to take the Passover, most of the areas we have trouble with are attitudes that deal with the spirit of the law.

For the baptized member of God's Church, the blind spots are mostly in the area of the spirit of the law since adherence to the letter of the law should be obvious in its application. As members of God's church we should already be following God's law as far as obedience to the commandments goes. We don't kill. We don't steal. We don't commit adultery and so on.

The key to keeping God's law properly is to learn to keep the law as Jesus did.

Matthew 12:10-12 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.

What an awesome statement of what we have to look forward to—God's awesome power of healing!

Remember what Jesus said just before this miraculous healing: "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." This was a moment of revelation because here Jesus Christ pointed to

the spirit of the law.

Despite His emphasis of the spirit of the law, Christ continued to uphold the letter as well.

Matthew 5:18-20 "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

The letter of the law that the Pharisees tried to keep was not enough—especially for us. We have to exceed the letter of the law. Here, Jesus was so specific about the continuance of the law from the Old covenant to the New covenant that He referred to the smallest punctuation and pronunciation marks contained in the written law. That is, the "jot and tittle."

Yet most modern theology discards the letter in favor of the spirit. But, one extreme is as bad as the other. The true Christian needs both the written letter of the law as well as the spirit of the law in order to keep it properly.

In order to properly keep God's law, we have to learn to recognize the spirit of the law. The spirit of the law means God's original intent or purpose behind each law.

Take the Sabbath, for example. When God designed the Sabbath, He intended it to be a blessing to human beings. He designed it to be a refreshing rest and an opportunity both to recuperate physically after six days of work, and to draw close to God in love and worship of Him, as well as draw closer in love for the brethren in fellowship and deep concern.

Jesus knew the spirit of the Sabbath commandment. Therefore He knew that the split second of divine effort involved in healing was a valid use of time on the Sabbath. Because of Jesus' insight into the divine purpose behind the Sabbath, the crippled worshipper was freed of his burden. He experienced a wonderful and exciting blessing, because Jesus recognized the spirit of the law. God's law is always a blessing to those who recognize the spirit of the law.

The Law remains as a rule of life for us. It is a standard of righteousness to be lived by. The greatest holiness we can attain under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is still the righteousness that the Law requires. Our new life as members of God's Church is a life of absolute spiritual service. Therefore, we have to look at things from a spiritual perspective.

Romans 13:8-10 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Love is the essence of the spirit of the law of God.

The commandments are prescribed as rules of life. When we love, we have found the true principle of obedience. We have entered into the true spirit of the holy law. Paul sums it all up in love. And we, having received the love of Christ, living in His love, see the Law not as a stern condemning taskmaster but as an appealing bright vision of understanding and blessing.

We see the Law embodied in Christ, and our imitation of Christ involves obedience to the Law, but we fulfill the Law not simply as a standard outside, but as a living principle within. Acting according to the dictates of the way of love, our lives conform to the image of Christ, as we conform to the Law. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

James mentions the "law" 10 times in his epistle, and in each case it is the moral law. He had nothing but good to say about the Law. James, taught by Christ, exalts the Law—he glorifies it, and he identifies it with the gospel.

In James 1, when speaking of the Word and the importance of hearing and doing it, he in the same breath, spoke of looking into "the perfect law of liberty".

James 1:22-25 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. [This is something as we approach Passover that we do not want to do. We do not want to look

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at it and examine it and then just walk away from it, as James mentions here.] But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

James looked at the law as translated in the gospel—the gospel shows the law in its spirituality—as the guide of the true Christian who has entered into the spirit of the law, or is keeping the spirit of the law as well as the letter.

Even in the Old Testament, as Psalms 19 and 119 specifically show, it was possible for spiritually-minded people to see the beauty of the Law and find delight in its precepts.

James 2:8-10 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

That is a tall order for God's people to live up to. And one will be unable to do that unless he has the Holy Spirit.

James spoke of the "royal law," and here he meant the Ten Commandments, since he cited the specific requirement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," in this he parallels Christ and Paul, finding in love of neighbor the sum of the Law and its true fulfillment.

James affirms that respect of persons is a breach of this "royal law," and leads to those indulging in it, being convicted by the law of transgression. He then affirms the solidarity of the law, so that a breach of it in one specific place is a breach of the whole, and makes a person guilty of all.

This is a far reaching principle that Paul had also indicated when quoting Deuteronomy 27:26 in Galatians 3:10: "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."

And, Paul indicated it in Romans 7, when he showed that the conviction that he had broken the 10th commandment, made him realize that he had broken the whole law.

James 2:11-13 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

We see there the importance of mercy being involved in keeping the spirit of the law. James exhorts us to speak and act as those who are to be judged by "a law of liberty", so that he sets no limit to the range of the Law—meaning it covers all aspects of life.

In James 4:11, he warns us by implication against speaking against the Law or judging the Law, that is, to assume the place of judge instead of "doer of the law." So our efforts should not be in judging someone else and whether they are keeping the law or not. But we should be looking inwardly at ourselves to determine whether or not we are doing those things that are required—not only in the letter of the law but especially in the spirit of the law.

James could not have used such language unless he had a profound conviction of the perfection of the Law. And it is the perfection of the Law, as a rule of life for the saints redeemed from its condemnation, that James considers it. And so we can call it the perfect law of liberty—the Royal Law.

An interesting difference between God's people and mainstream Christianity is that they do not look at the law of God as being perfect. They pick and choose which part of the law they are going to obey, the ones they feel more comfortable with, and they ignore the rest. Yet James says right here if you break one you break them all.

All sin is "lawlessness" as 1 John 3:4 states, and the sum of all law-keeping is love of God and love of the brethren, and so the summary of the old Law is echoed and endorsed. It is continued—because Christ did not come to destroy the law but to magnify it.

Ignoring the spirit of the law can have devastating results, as the Pharisees experienced. They only had eyes for the so-called letter of the law, that is, the exact wording human servants of God had used in writing down God's divine instructions. They were therefore more concerned with a doctrinal technicality than with ending the misery of a suffering human being.

Matthew 23:1-4 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

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saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Matthew 23:23-24 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Part of Jesus' divine commission was to point out that God's laws were more than mere rituals.

Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."

Jesus wanted to fulfill, or magnify, the essential element in the comprehension of the law. He showed there was a weightier aspect to the law than superficial guidelines of conduct based upon analysis of precise spelling, wording and phrasing. He pointed to the spirit of the law.

Christ emphasized the importance of the spirit of the law to His disciples. Paul later wrote this in II Corinthians.

II Corinthians 3:4-6 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

He is referring to the Holy Spirit. It gives us the help that we need, very encouraging help to perform, carry out, and internalize the spirit of the law.

In verse 6, there follows a contrast between two basic characteristics of the old and new covenants. The basis of the Old Covenant was a fixed written code, whereas the basis

of the New Covenant is an energizing Spirit.

The apostles decided matters of doctrine as well as questions regarding Christian conduct, only after carefully considering the spirit of the law. This was mainly necessary in cases such as the question of circumcision, where there was no letter of the law applying directly to the case.

Some people have wondered when they read Genesis 17:10 whether circumcision is necessary today:

Genesis 17:10 "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;"

The ordinance of circumcision was an outward physical sign of one's willingness to obey God and be one of His chosen people.

Under the new covenant, God is calling a spiritual nation composed of individuals converted and regenerated by His Holy Spirit. God's people now are all to be "circumcised" spiritually. Physical circumcision is no longer necessary for religious purposes. It was a forerunner or type of what God really wanted—circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4). Paul told the congregation in Rome that circumcision is of no benefit.

Romans 2:25-29 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Spiritual circumcision is a process of conversion. That Christ circumcises us spiritually is made plain in Colossians 2:10-11.

Colossians 2:10-11 In Him [Jesus Christ] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.

That is why the assembled apostles and elders of the New Testament Church declared circumcision to be one of the physical requirements of the Old Covenant that is not necessary for Christians (Acts 15:24, 28).

It is for entirely non-religious reasons that one may decide to be circumcised or have his son circumcised. There is some evidence that circumcision promotes cleanliness and health, depending on the male's overall cleanliness, morality and health.

When there is no letter of the law applying directly to a doctrine as well as questions regarding Christian conduct, true ministers of Jesus Christ today base decisions, regarding doctrine and conduct, on the spirit of the law not just the letter of the law.

The basis of the Old Covenant between God and Israel was a fixed and static written code.

In contrast, the basis of the New Covenant between God and the Church is a dynamic and energizing Spirit. The written code (or, "letter") pronounced a sentence of death, but the Spirit brings a transformation of life.

Romans 7:1-12 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the

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commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

The New Covenant was ratified by the shedding of Christ's blood and is symbolized in the Passover service. Remember what Jesus instructed during the Passover service. Paul reiterates it in:

I Corinthians 11:25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

The New Covenant becomes operative only through the indwelling Spirit that imparts new life, enabling us to fully meet the righteous requirements of the law. Paul wrote of being free from indwelling sin.

Romans 8:1-11 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Verse 10 says Jesus actually lives His life in us. We strive to follow Jesus' example as revealed in God's written word.

By obeying God's law with the help of God's Holy Spirit and by submitting to God's government, we actually begin to take on God's nature. We gradually overcome sin and sin no longer has power over us. We are God's servants rather than servants of sin.

We have embarked upon a new way of life that leads to every blessing and joy for eternity.

I Corinthians 2:9-16 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

In verse 10, the verb Paul uses (Greek, *apokalupto*) translated "revealed", is a strong term, usually used in the New Testament to indicate divine revelation of certain supernatural secrets, or used regarding divine revelation connected with the resurrection and judgment of certain people and events.

These verses in I Corinthians 2 stress the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing the wisdom of God.

In verse 14, the verb *anakrino*, translated "discerned", is the same verb translated "judges" and "judged" in verse 15. The idea in each case is to make intelligent spiritual decisions. *Anakrino*, though meaning "examine," here includes the decision following the examination.

So we, who are members of God's Church having the Holy Spirit, examine all things including our own lives with the help of God's Spirit, and then we make a decision or an evaluation as to what our strengths and weaknesses are. Then we decide what we are

going to do about it. No one in the world has a right to examine and evaluate us on spiritual matters because without the Holy Spirit they can't rightly and justly understand or evaluate. So there is no need to feel slighted or put down by anyone in the world who disagrees with God's truth or with your obedience to God's truth. The same holds true in all judgments and criticisms from the world—that is, those without God's Holy Spirit—that attempt to tell us our doctrines are wrong.

This is one of the major reasons the Worldwide Church of God went into apostasy, because the leaders believed and accepted the criticisms of the worldly churches. They accepted judgment from people without God's Holy Spirit and from organizations without a spiritual foundation of truth.

The mainstream Christian churches are worldly, and are not led by people with the Holy Spirit, and they do not base their doctrines on truth. Two cases in point: neither the Sunday Sabbath nor the being that is called the Holy Spirit of the Trinity, can be proven honestly and truthfully with God's own written word. Don't be fooled by mainstream Christianity's false piety! They are not God's people. They are not baptized members of God's church. They do not have God's Holy Spirit. That is not to say that there are not wonderful people in some of these churches out there in the world. There are always blessings to following any number of God's laws

In Hebrews 8:6-13, the apostle, probably Paul, illustrates and confirms the superior excellence of the priesthood of Christ above that of Aaron.

Hebrews 8:6-7 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

In verses 8-12, Paul quotes from Jeremiah 31:31-34. The writer begins by telling us that God found fault with the men of old. And this leads to the quotation from Jeremiah 31 in Hebrews 8:8.

Hebrews 8:8-9 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

From the failures of the past, Jeremiah turned his vision to the future. There are four significant things prophesied by Jeremiah and quoted by Paul about the new covenant in verses 10-12:

The first significant feature is that the new covenant is inward and dynamic: it is written on the hearts and minds of the people. A shortcoming of the old had been its outwardness. It had divinely given laws, but it was written on tablets of stone. Jeremiah looked for a time when people would not simply obey an external code but would be so transformed that God's own laws would be written in their inmost beings.

The second significant feature in the new covenant is that there is a close relationship between the God who will be "their God" and the people, he says, will be "My people." The change here from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant is that while the formula of the covenant remains the same from age to age, it is capable of being filled with fresh meaning to a point where it can be described as a new covenant. 'I will be your God' acquires fuller meaning with every further revelation of the character of God.

The third significant feature of the new covenant is that all who enter it will have knowledge of God. There will be no need for a person to instruct his neighbor. The word rendered neighbor in verse 11 means citizen, and thus a "fellow-citizen". Jeremiah moves from the wider relationship in the community to the narrower relationship in the family and says that in neither case will there be the need for exhorting anyone to know God because everyone will know who God is.

This does not mean that in the conditions of the new covenant there will be no place for a teacher. There will always be the need for those who have advanced in the Christian way to pass on to others the benefit of their knowledge. Rather, the meaning is that the knowledge of God will not be confined to a privileged few (as with the priesthood of ancient Israel). All those in the new covenant will have their own intimate and personal knowledge of their God.

The fourth significant feature about the new covenant is that in it sins are forgiven. Following repentance of sins and acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, sins are forgiven. The superior sacrifice of Jesus Christ is offered once and for all and pays the penalty of sin for those who repent.

Now lets continue reading Paul's quote of Jeremiah's prophecy where these four significant features are recorded.

Hebrews 8:10-13 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

In themselves words cannot produce righteousness, even though they are the "divine" oracles. There has to be a vitalizing Spirit to charge the words with transforming power. The more of this transforming power we have, the more we are able to see ourselves as we really are and to overcome our problems.

Especially before Passover, God commands us to examine ourselves, so that we don't take the Passover unworthily.

I Corinthians 11:27-29 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

After examining ourselves, when we take the symbols of Christ's sacrifice we rededicate ourselves to overcoming the faults that we have seen are still there.

But what about the flaws we haven't seen? Is it possible we may have sins we can't see?

David was aware that he had them, but he also knew that he had to ask God to reveal them.

Psalms 19:12-14 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

David was one who didn't show hostility toward God, and he tried hard to change whenever he could see that he was wrong. But that was whenever he could see that he was wrong. He couldn't always see it. You know the story. David stole Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah and got her pregnant. After conniving and cheating in an attempt to avoid the consequences, David intentionally arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle after he had gotten Bathsheba pregnant.

But, incredible as it may seem, David did not see how terribly wrong his sexual immorality in both his thoughts and his actions was. He broke both the spirit and letter of the law. It was not until the prophet Nathan brought him to his senses that spiritually blind David realized his sinful behavior.

But we can't judge David too harshly since we too have clouded vision to many of our problems. It's hard enough to recognize and admit the problems we can see, much less the ones we can't. We can actually identify with David rather than judge him.

Psalms 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

We have to ask God to do the same thing in our lives, especially at this time before Passover. Human nature is blind to the problems in our character, so we have to ask God to show us the things that we can't see. A main characteristic of a converted person is willingness to admit when wrong, and then repent. If we justify our faults, we may as well not bother to look for them. For if we do, we will be the person who looked in the mirror, saw their faults, and then walked away doing nothing about them.

We can see many of our own faults by observing the mistakes of others, if we don't have a superior and critical attitude. We have to be humble and esteem others better than ourselves, before we are able to learn from the mistakes of others. It's a matter of being teachable.

Romans 2:1-3 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the

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same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

We can often see our own faults more clearly in other people and we don't usually apply them to ourselves. But because our viewpoint is so often a negative criticism, we usually don't see that we are guilty of the same thing. If there is a certain type of behavior that we find especially irritating in others, we may have that same problem in ourselves.

To illustrate this blindness to our own sins, remember David's sin recorded for all the world to see in II Samuel 12:1-5. When God sent Nathan to show David his sin with Bathsheba, Nathan reported a case in which a rich man who owned many sheep had stolen a poor man's pet lamb and killed it to eat for dinner.

King David was outraged that anyone would be so greedy and selfish. So he pronounced the death penalty on this man. Then Nathan quietly pointed out that this was exactly what David had done when he stole the wife of Uriah and then caused Uriah's death.

David was known as a man who when he recognized his sinned would deeply repent. So how far his heart fell at that time, I can only imagine. He must have been devastated.

Ask yourself, what angers you about others in God's Church? Think carefully about this, since in your answer may be a clue to your own secret sin. "For you who judge practice the same things."

God can also reveal our faults by returning the effect of our actions back on us. Jesus explained this principle.

Matthew 7:1-5 "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye."

God will often see to it that we are treated the same way we treat others.

Jacob was a very talented young man with great ability, but he had a serious fault: He

would lie, connive and scheme to get his own way, without a thought for other people's feelings (as a young man, that is).

Jacob deceived his father Isaac into blessing him, instead of his brother Esau, with the birthright. That incident split the family and caused much suffering and ill will as Genesis 27 records.

God, of course, fully intended Jacob to have the birthright and could have worked it out in a way that nobody got hurt. But this was not the first time that Jacob had used shrewdness to get his own way. As you remember, earlier when Esau was about to collapse from lack of nourishment, Jacob gave Esau bread, stew of lentils and a drink in exchange for his birthright. Jacob had a secret sin and needed to be taught a lesson. Jacob couldn't look at himself and see that he had this sin. He probably looked at himself as many today in business look at themselves. He probably looked at himself and thought he was being clever and wise.

During the next few years Jacob reaped what he sowed. His employer, Laban, tricked him out of his wages and the wife for whom he had labored seven years. And then, toward the end of his life, Jacob was also deceived by the use of a dead goat, just as he had deceived his father Isaac.

You remember how Jacob's sons dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in the blood of a goat to convince Jacob that his favorite son, whom they had sold, was dead. Jacob spent many years of grief, deceived as he had deceived others.

This does happen today. I remember years ago when one person in the Church of the Great God said, "Well, if you are going to Jefferson City for the Feast this year, then I don't even want to go to the Feast with you this year." Do you know what happened? They had an accident right before the Feast and couldn't go.

And awhile ago someone said to me, "If that is Church of the Great God's doctrine, then I do not want to be part of Church of the Great God." They said that not fully meaning that, but now they are not part of Church of the Great God. I say this only to express very strongly to you and to myself that we have to be very careful about what we say. Because quite often God uses it to teach us a lesson later, sometimes immediately after and sometimes later on in our lives.

At this time of year, when we think about putting sin out of our lives, it's good to consider what the Bible calls the "leaven" of the Pharisees—hypocrisy.

Christ had a lot to say to the religious leaders of the 1st century. In Matthew 23:16, He called them "blind guides," for, in their self-righteousness, they had become oblivious to the needs of those they should have been serving. Time and again, Christ hit the unrealized faults of these men.

Matthew 23:25-28 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Christ has to be certain that those He is training to be leaders in His kingdom don't make the same mistake. The leaven of hypocrisy did not die with the Pharisees. It is alive and well in human beings today.

It's embarrassing, when we finally see hypocrisy in ourselves, especially when we realize that others have seen it in us for a long time. Maybe we finally begin to understand something that our family and friends have been trying to tell us for years. The natural reaction is to hide it again quickly so it will just disappear.

When David was shown his sin, he told God, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). Although David never forgot that he was capable of such behavior, He never made a mistake like that again.

Before this Passover, don't just be content with a quick review of the faults you know you have. But, ask God for help in seeing your secret faults as well. Thanks to God's efforts in us through the Holy Spirit we have much hope in being successful spiritually.

Elijah the prophet was a man who had the same human nature that we have. Sometimes Elijah showed great faith, but he was also, from time to time, the victim of discouragement. Moses was the meekest of all men. He had moments of stubbornness and even bad temper. Jeremiah the prophet felt like giving up several times. Paul and Barnabas quarreled. Yet all these qualified for the kingdom of God.

II Corinthians 3:12-18 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the

children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Moses took off the physical veil on entering into the presence of the Lord. But God removes the veil from off our minds when our hearts turn to Christ, who is the Spirit of the law. The veil (of which Moses' veil was a type) is taken off our hearts in the presence of Christ: no longer resting on the letter.

Paul said in II Corinthians 3:6, that he was a minister "not of the letter, but of the Spirit;" and he had stated that the Old Testament was not understood by the Jews who adhered to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. In verse 17, he says that the Lord Jesus was "the Spirit" to which he referred, and by which he was enabled to understand the Old Testament so as to speak plainly, and without obscurity.

The sense is that Christ was the Spirit; that is, the sum, the substance of the Old Testament. The figures, types, and prophecies all centered on Him.

The word "liberty" in verse 17, is the Greek word *eleutheria*. It seems to refer to freedom in speaking; the power of speaking openly, and freely, as in II Corinthians 3:12 where Paul says, "Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech." There is also freedom as well as hope.

The word "liberty" states the general truth that the effect of the Spirit of God was to give light and clearness of view, to remove obscurity from a subject, and to enable us to see it plainly.

This was a truth that could not be denied by the Jews, who correctly believed that the Spirit of God revealed truth. Under the influence of that Spirit, therefore, Paul says, that he was able to speak with genuineness and boldness; that he had a clear view of truth, which the multitude of Jews did not have; and that the doctrines that he preached were genuine, plain, and clear.

We can overcome our faults because God promises the help of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to properly fulfill the spirit of the law.

The fulfillment of the spirit of the law is manifested in love. Since love is the POSITIVE essence of fruit of the Spirit, the spirit of the law is a POSITIVE standard by which we should strive to live. The fruit of the spirit are products of the application of spirit of the law.

In Philippians 3, Paul stated that his conversion brought about a new assessment of his goals and gave him the overwhelming desire to know Christ ever more fully. He then explained how his present life was a pursuit in this new direction. But he didn't want to be misunderstood.

He did not claim that his conversion had already brought him to his final goal. He had not already received all he longed for, nor had he been brought to that perfect completeness to which he had aspired. Paul understood clearly that he had a continuing responsibility to pursue the purposes Christ had chosen him for—as we all do. Spiritual progress is always the imperative Christians must follow.

Paul declared that he had not attained perfection and encouraged us to press toward the goal by the same spirit of the law with the same mind—the mind of Christ!

We'll end by reading:

Philippians 3:12-16 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.