

The Covenants, Grace, And Law (Part 15)

The Spirit of the Law

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In the last sermon we covered a small portion about what the Bible says about itself—and most specifically what it says about the law of God. I did this in order to cover a very important principle in regard to our relationship with God: that it is very dangerous for the Christian to consider that any part of the Word of God is "done away."

All scripture is inspired of God and is profitable. [That is stated in] New Testament scripture, II Timothy 3:16; and, at the time Paul said that, he was referring to the Old Testament. I do not think that Paul knew what he was writing was going to become Scripture. The "*all scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable*" refers to the Old Testament.

Saying that the law, or any portion of the Bible, is "done away" at its worst might be spiritually suicidal. The least it is going to do is hinder growth, because we will not be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is similar in principle to a student attending school but ignoring certain selected sections of teaching on the basis of his own perception of what he needs.

I can recall from my own school days that I expressed the opinion that I could not see why we had to study ancient Greek or Egyptian or Roman history. I could not see what good I was ever going to get out of that. I could not see what good it was going to do for me; but others, much older and wiser, insisted that the history courses that we took include teaching in these areas. My narrow point of view was that of an immature kid who did not understand what is required to produce a well-rounded citizen of the United States of America.

In like manner, but with far greater accuracy, there is NOTHING extraneous in God's Word. We are to live by **every Word of God**. It leads me to ask a question: If God is all-wise and all-powerful, if everything that He does is in love, and He is working out a purpose that is in our best interest (so that we might live forever with Him), why would God even give a body of laws (that Jesus said would never pass away until all is fulfilled, and that Paul said is spiritual, holy, just, and good) if God did not intend that their letter and/or spirit should be used **for all time**? God does not do things without meaning; and, as we are going to see, that law is in there for the sake of Christians.

In this series, I spent the major part of two sermons teaching about circumcision

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because I want us to understand a very important principle: that the principle of circumcision—the spirit of circumcision—still applies, even though we are no longer required to be physically circumcised. The physical circumcision symbolized a spiritual reality extremely important to those making the New Covenant with God.

Without the cutting away of the foreskin of the heart (through faith in Christ's sacrifice, deep heartfelt repentance, and the receipt of God's Spirit), no one will be saved! The carnal mind of rebellion must go! It must be cut away before conversion can actually take place.

We used Romans 15:4 last time, but I want to begin on a good, solid foundation that shows a principle so important to our understanding.

Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime [What is he talking about? He is talking about the Old Testament] were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Hope of salvation. Hope of eternal life. Hope of a relationship with God. Hope of forgiveness. Hope of receiving God's Holy Spirit. We have to understand that the things written in the Old Testament were specifically written with Christians in mind, and that is where the bulk of God's specific foundational laws are.

God's law—His instruction—covers the entirety of the Bible—the entirety of life! There is nothing that we will ever face in life that is not covered in principle in God's Word. The Old and the New Testaments constitute **one Book** with one continuous unfolding revelation. We need as much of God's Word as we can get! We must understand that the operations of both Covenants overlap, which is what I am going to continue showing today.

People like to put the Covenants into nice, neat boxes with sharp, clear boundaries between them, but the Bible is NOT written in that manner. *Here a little, there a little.* Remember that the Old Testament was written with Christians in mind. Things that we consider "New Testament principles" had their beginnings in the Old Testament. the two of them go together; they overlap. In many ways, it is very, very difficult to separate the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [meaning

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in spiritual realms, spiritual areas] in Christ: [Now, look at this:] according as He has chosen us [Christians] in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us [Christians] unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the beloved.

He had us in mind from the start! That is why Paul could so confidently write what he did in Romans 15:4. That is why I can say to you that the Old Testament was written with the New Testament "signers" (if I can put it that way) in mind. It was written under God's inspiration to provide **a foundation** for those who make the New Covenant with God. That is why Paul said, in I Corinthians 10:11, that all these things were written as examples TO US upon whom the end of the ages [is] come; *the end* not in terms of a finishing, but in terms of goals and purposes.

The significant differences between the Covenants are in regard to justification, access to God, receipt of the Holy Spirit, and the offer of eternal life, not with the "doing away" of the rules of how to live life. Would that not be stupid for God to want people to live a certain way and give rules on how to do it, and then make a new deal that does not have any rules? How in the world could He give people eternal life to live with Him if we have not shown Him that we are willing to live the way that He does? There is so much that is illogical about this concept of law being "done away" that it just boggles the mind.

We are going to look at three scriptures that mention the word *spirit*:

John 4:23-24 But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Romans 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.

Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

What does it mean to **worship God in spirit and in truth**? I think an entire sermon, or

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sermons, could be given on this subject. This is not my main point at this time, but it is an important point. I want to give it at least a brief overview. Part of the truth we can glean from this can be gotten from the historical context that Christ was facing back there in John 4.

If we would read this chapter through, we would find that He was speaking to a Samaritan woman. For what I am concerned about here, the fact that she was a woman is unimportant. The fact that she was a Samaritan, though, is very important.

What I want us to do is, first of all, recognize how much these people, the Samaritans, are like us.

II Kings 17:24 And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

II Kings 17:27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Carry thither one of the priests whom you brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land."

The Jews of Jesus' day considered the Samaritans to be a mongrel people, both racially and religiously. Why? The emphasis is on the word *mongrel*. You know what a mongrel dog is. It is a Heinz 57 variety; the bloodlines are very mixed. Back in the historical setting of II Kings, the Samaritan people became a people as a result of the sin of the Israelites. God became impatient (or whatever you might want to say), and finally His patience reached an end. Israel's sins mounted up to heaven, and God said, "Look you have to get out of this land, out of your inheritance, out of your possession." Therefore, He sent the Assyrian people to conquer the Israelitish people, and conquer them they did. They conquered them to such an extent that the Assyrians cleaned the land of every inhabitant. Every Israelite was taken prisoner and transported OUT of Israel and taken back to Assyria.

When the land was empty, the Assyrians put in a different people; and those are the ones of whom we read in II Kings 17:24. These were Gentile peoples who now came into possession of Israel's inheritance. What occurred was as follows:

II Kings 17:25 And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LOORD; therefore the LOORD sent lions among them, which

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slew some of them.

The incidents, the circumstances are a little bit unclear or vague. I do not fully understand them, but I do know that the people were not well received by the remaining inhabitants of the land. Those "inhabitants" were lions, and they started killing people off. As a result, the people wanted to know how to propitiate the gods of the land, which is what the Gentiles did in their idolatries. They felt that, if they could propitiate the gods of the land, the gods of the land would chase the lions away; and the people would then be able to live in the land. They turned to their pagan religion to get rid of the lions.

They appealed to the king, and the king of Assyria, doing what he could do, sent back an Israelite priest (verse 27). He, in his misunderstanding and deception, decided that a priest from the land would know how to propitiate the god of the land, and the lions would be chased away. All the people needed was to be taught how to worship the god of that area.

Are you beginning to see what is taking place here?

II Kings 17:30-33 And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima [These are idols.], and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. [Now look at this:] So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

If that is not a statement about a syncretized religion, I do not know one.

Let us ponder, then, why the Jews considered the Samaritans to be a mongrelized people. First of all, their bloodlines were mixed together. It was a case of many nations coming together in one area. There were, undoubtedly, marriages between those people of different nations. Therefore, [there were also] the worshipping and the blending of all the different methods of worship by all of those people.

In addition to this, we know (from Ezra and Nehemiah) that intermarriage was going on between Israelites and the people of the land. If you can remember, one of the major

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characters in that book is a man named Manasseh. Manasseh was married to the daughter of one of these Gentile kings. He got booted out of Israel and left. His father-in-law, the king, built Manasseh a place of worship on Mt. Gerizim that was supposed to be a model of, or nearly equal to, the temple in Jerusalem.

What do the Samaritans show the Jews? (1) Their bloodlines were mongrelized. (2) Their religion was also mongrelized. It was syncretized, a blending of all of those different pagan religions, plus a bit of the Old Testament. The Samaritans believed in the first five books—the Pentateuch.

Did you hear what I said? The first five books! This is in the time of Jesus, and already the Old Testament was complete. What happened to the Writings? What happened to the Prophets? Do you see what they did? How similar is this to modern Christianity? Is modern Christianity **a mongrelized mix** of paganism together with the Bible? And parts of the Bible, they say, are "done away," and we do not have to be concerned about those things.

The Samaritans were very much like modern "false Christianity." They want to worship God with only part of the truth. At the same time, they claim that they have risen above it and that they are spiritually superior to others.

How can a person worship God **in truth** when he willfully rejects portions of His Word? You cannot even begin to worship Him in truth if portions are rejected. God wants us to go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1). This Word—all of it—is truth. This is what sanctifies us, converts us, purifies us, enlightens us, and makes us wise (as we learned from Psalms 19 and 119 a couple of weeks ago).

In John 4, Jesus is speaking to someone with a mongrelized, syncretized religion: part pagan, and part from God's Word. Are they like us, or are they not? That is, [in] that from which they have come. *From which WE have come* would be even closer to being correct.

That is the situation that Jesus finds Himself confronting. He tells this woman—the representative of this mongrelized religion—that they are to worship God **in spirit and in truth**. To worship God in spirit is also best understood in its context in John 4, which also includes a brief discussion of places of worship.

John 4:20 [The woman says,] Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and You say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus Himself did not actually say that, but she was speaking to a representative of the Jews, and the Jews certainly said that Jerusalem was the place to worship.

John 4:21 Jesus says unto her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour comes, when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Then He goes on to say that we are to worship in spirit and in truth. A place of worship is also part of the context, as is the statement of Christ that God is spirit. In saying that, He is drawing attention to the limitless extent and capacity of God's nature. Remember again, just a few weeks ago, I spent a bit of time in Psalm 139. Do you remember what Psalm 139 is? The psalmist says, "Where can I go from Your Spirit?"

What Jesus is saying [in John 4] is that, as God the Father is, He is totally free in all of His creation. Those who worship Him are to understand that He is seeking those who will worship Him anywhere, at all times, by and through the same Spirit that emanates from Him and permeates the whole creation.

To help understand that, we need to understand *worship*. If we are going to worship God in the way that He wants—in spirit—we have to throw off the shackles in understanding what worship means, because there is a very strong tendency to think of it in narrow terms of a reverential awe that is given the Father in the midst of a church service.

But God wants His children to understand that the worship of the Father involves giving the same **reverential awe** in EVERY AREA OF LIFE, wherever we might be, in whatever circumstance that we might find ourselves. It is not something confined to one particular place (like Jerusalem or Mt. Gerizim). Can God be worshipped in Jerusalem? Of course, He can. Can the worship of God be limited to Jerusalem? Of course not! God's Spirit goes everywhere!

Surely, the God who is aware of the falling of even an insignificant sparrow can be accessed anywhere, any time, under any circumstance by somebody who is exceedingly more important than a sparrow. We do not need to be in Jerusalem to worship God in spirit.

To worship God in spirit is to truly be in communion, fellowship, sharing, participating (they are all synonyms for one another) in every aspect of life: in marriage, in childrearing, in government, work and play, education, science, business, industry, agriculture. It includes not merely being sincere but enthusiastically zealous in doing so.

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We are contrasting the words *letter* and *spirit* in order to understand more about worshipping God in spirit. According to my Webster's *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, the word *letter* (when it is used in a "letter of the law" sense) means "the obvious meaning, the sense or significance of a thing." The key there is "obvious, precise, or specific sense or significance of a thing."

How did it come to be this way? Everything written begins with a single letter, whether it is a word, a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter, an entire book, or a whole encyclopaedia. Everything begins with a letter. Thus, *letter of the law* indicates a starting point.

The same dictionary defines *spirit* as "the activating or essential principle influencing a person." It has many applications, many usages; I have simply picked out the definition or the usage that applies in the contrast between *letter of the law* and *spirit of the law*. It is defined as "the activating or essential principle influencing a person. "

Let me make a statement: Neither one of those usages does away with law. The spirit reveals the activating or essential principle, the intent or the direction. In this case, it is the activating or essential principle—the intent or direction—of God's law, which is what? Love! The direction, the intent, of every law of God is **love**. That is its essential element. Therefore, John says that love is the keeping of God's law.

Thus, the temple illustration. Worshipping God is not confined to a specific place. However, just because worship is not confined to a place of worship does not do away with the place of worship; it simply is not confined there. The place of worship can be a starting point for application of the full intent—the essential principle—learned in the place of worship.

The same principle applies to God's law. The *letter* is the starting point, and the *spirit* reveals its essential principle, which is love towards God (with all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul) and love towards fellowman (equal to love for ourselves). The *spirit of the law* does not automatically do away with the letter.

Last week, John Reid quoted Adam Clarke, and this week I am going to quote Adam Clarke, as well. This is taken from the volume that contains John 4, and it is an expounding of John 4:24.

As all creatures were made by [H]im [God, the Father], so all owe [H]im obedience and reverence; but, to be acceptable to this infinite Spirit, the worship must be of a spiritual nature—[It] must spring from the heart,

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through the influence of the Holy Spirit: and it must be in TRUTH, not only in sincerity, but performed according to that divine revelation which [H]e has given men of [H]imself. A man worships God in spirit, when, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he brings all his affections, appetites, and desires to the throne of God; and he worships [H]im in truth, when every purpose and passion of his heart, and when every act of his religious worship, is guided and regulated by the word of God.

Boy, he said a ton there! Did anything in that statement do away with law? No, what he said, in summary, was that to worship in spirit is to worship in the full intent of God's law with all of our being, whether at home, play, marriage, work, or you name it.

Now let us go back to Philippians 3 again, where Paul says

Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

When Paul says that we are the true circumcision who worship God in spirit, he is focusing on two words with which we are familiar because we study the Bible, but many times we do not think of them in this context. The first of the two is *flesh*, and that is the easiest one to understand. In most cases (and I will say at any time it is in a context like this, where it is contrasted to *spirit*), it stands for what we call *human nature*. It includes the whole bundle of natural desires, plus human reason, which makes up our self-centered personality.

The other word is *circumcision*. Most of the time, *circumcision* stands for the act of circumcision (especially in the Old Testament). In the New Testament, though, it very frequently refers to a body of people. Sometimes it is used collectively to mean all of the external acts associated with the worship of God.

I have read that some commentators think that Paul is saying here that all of the external acts are "done away" in that simple statement in verse 3, but it does not say that. It is something that must be read into the verse.

Paul is using *circumcision* here in the sense of a body of people. He is comparing two bodies of people. The one body contains people who are circumcised in the flesh. The other people may be circumcised in the flesh, but most assuredly they are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, that is, the circumcision of the heart.

This agrees absolutely with Romans 2:29, where Paul wrote

Romans 2:29 He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

In Philippians 3:3, Paul is not saying that worshipping in spirit does away with all external acts; rather, he is saying that the true worshippers—those who are circumcised in the heart—worship God in spirit, that is, to the fullest of God's intention. Its practical ramification is that it puts the worship of God, liberty in Christ, and the law of God into their proper relationship with one another.

Protestantism claims that what Paul says here does away with keeping the Sabbath because it is external to worship. They lump the Sabbath together with circumcision, all of the washings, clean and unclean, quarantine, all of the holiness laws of the book of Leviticus. The Sabbath gets lumped together with those, and they speak in a derogatory manner towards "the law of Moses." I will tell you something about "the law of Moses" next week.

But, now, wait a minute. What did the Boss say? What did the Boss do? The Boss is our Lord and Master. He is our Savior. He is the founder of Christianity. He said that the Sabbath was made **for** man. He did not say that it was made for the Jews. He did not even say that it was made for all of the Israelites. He did not say that it was made for all of those who were under the Old Covenant. He said it was made FOR MAN. That includes everybody who has ever been born! Does man still exist?

Did Christ keep the Sabbath? He was accused, by the Jews, of breaking it; and He did break it—according to their uncircumcised-of-heart perception. He was merely keeping it in a manner different from their carnal interpretation. However, He was keeping it in a manner that was FIT for worshipping God in the spirit.

Did He in any place advocate not keeping it? Did He ever say, "You do not have to keep it"? No such word, no such language, no such intimation exists in terms of our Boss. Did He anywhere suggest that it would be okay for a person to work for their living on it? He did not even begin to say anything like that.

When the apostles went through a field and picked some grain, were they working at their employment in so doing? No. Did the apostles keep [the Sabbath]? Yes, they did. Did they advocate not keeping it? No, they did not. Did they ever mention any other day

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of worship? No, they did not.

The record in the Bible shows that they kept it. The reason the Sabbath (like tithing) is not mentioned in the New Testament is that it was never a problem. Everybody knew that they were to keep it or do it. The apostles wrote about problems that were facing the church, and how to resolve those problems. Sabbath keeping was not a problem, and neither was tithing.

Now let us examine another side of this issue. Do the Protestants have "external acts" in their system of worshipping? Is Sunday any less external than the Sabbath? Like the Catholics, they have merely transferred the day of worship to Sunday to set themselves apart from Judaism.

They have Christmas. Is that external? There is no celebration or observance of a day of which I know in these Western countries that is more external than Christmas! Everywhere you turn there are trees and lights and music and shoppers and crowds and traffic jams, people getting angry. All that stuff is right out front. Is it external?

What about Easter? It is not quite as bad as Christmas, but it certainly is external. They take what they will call "the Lord's supper" or "communion" once a day, once a week, once a month, once a quarter, four times a year. Is that external? Is it a rite, a ritual?

What about baptism? Do they baptize? Is that a rite? Is that a ritual? Is that something external? Who are they trying to kid about **external acts**? Are theirs any better than the ones God assigned? It is sheer, rampant HYPOCRISY to say that God did away with all external acts of worship and then turn around and manufacture their own or pick up something from paganism.

What Paul is saying is that a person cannot count on merely going through the routine of doing the external things to put him into good standing with God.

John 8:32 You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

He was talking here to people who were His believers.

John 8:33 They [these Jews, who were believers] answered Him, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How say You, 'You shall be made free?'"

Then Jesus tells them that whoever commits sin is the servant of sin, and that person is not living according to the spirit of God's law—not even according to the letter.

John 8:37 [Christ says:] "I know that you are Abraham's seed; but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you."

Then He goes on to show them that what makes a major difference is who their spiritual father is. We will show the characteristics of our spiritual father. It depends upon who our father is. If our father truly is God, if we truly are born of God, if we truly have His spirit, the chances are very great that we are going to worship Him in spirit. If we do not have His Spirit and our spiritual father is Satan, then we are going to emulate our spiritual father, which is exactly what the Jews were doing.

Let us connect this to what Paul was saying, that you cannot get by just on the keeping of the external acts. What were these people doing? To whom Jesus was talking? These were a people depending upon their ancestry for salvation, and they were just going through the motions in their daily lives, a fact that is reflected in their anger and their desire to kill.

It is the same principle that Paul brought up in Philippians 3:3, only it is in a slightly different context. Let me show you one more. These are memory verses on this topic.

Jeremiah 7:1-2 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LOORD, saying, "Stand in the gate of the LOORD's house [yes, right in the Temple], and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the LOORD, all you of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LOORD.'"

You judge: Are these people worshipping God in spirit and truth? Or are they worshipping God according to the external mode—going through the ritual?

Jeremiah 7:3-4 Thus says the LOORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Amend your ways [Oh, no. Right away you know something is wrong] and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust you not in lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LOORD, the temple of the LOORD, the temple of the LOORD, are these.'"

These are the ancestors of the people to whom Jesus spoke in John 8, only in this case

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the context shows that they were depending upon being members of the true church for their salvation. They had made the Old Covenant with God, but, as we are seeing here, they were on just as shaky ground as those people confronting Jesus 600 years later. Again, a slightly different context, but they certainly were not worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Were they keeping the Sabbath in the letter? Maybe.

Jeremiah 7:5-7 "For if you thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever."

True worship involves doing the things of God with all of one's heart, guided by the Holy Spirit, truly repentant, motivated by the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts. The heart of the one who does this is circumcised, and such a person worships God in spirit. He will be very careful in his obedience, enthusiastically putting God first in every area of life.

In Acts 24, the apostle Paul is on trial. In verse 5, we find the Jews making this accusation:

Acts 24:5-6 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; who also has gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

But the Roman captain Lysias intervened, and Paul's life was spared at that point.

Acts 24:10-11 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, "Forasmuch as I know that you have been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: [Pay attention to this defense that he gives:] Because that you may understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship."

Did Paul think it was wrong to go to Jerusalem? In John 4:22-24, when Jesus said, "You

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will not worship in this place," Paul certainly did not understand that to mean that he could not worship there, because God can be worshipped anywhere. It does not do away with the temple; it expands our understanding of the worship of God. Therefore, the converted apostle Paul, having the spirit of God, went to Jerusalem to worship.

Acts 24:12-14 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man [He was there, was he not?], neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. [Pay attention to this:] But this I confess [he did this publicly, before all these people] unto you, that after the way which they call heresy [Christianity], so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.

Can you imagine that? He believed **all things** written in the law and in the prophets—in the Old Testament!

Acts 24:15-16 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead [which is in the Old Testament, as well as the New], both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself...

He is saying, "I live it as a way of life," that is, those things in the Old Testament.

Acts 24:16 ...to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

I will tell you, these verses give Protestant theologians great difficulty. One liberal commentary said, "This cannot possibly be what Paul said." In light of Romans 7 and Galatians 3, it cannot be that the man misunderstood what Paul said. They put the suspicion in your mind that somebody inserted this into the Bible, and that it really was not inspired of God; and then they went no further with the explanation.

Paul was merely saying in words what Jesus practiced in the way He kept the Sabbath: according to the spirit of God's law, which is always love (love towards God, and love towards men). He never advocated anybody working on that day for the purpose of making his living.

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Paul was saying that he did the same thing; that Christians obey the Old Testament in its true understanding; and, if you can see it (and I do not see why you could not possibly see it), Paul was claiming that ***the Old Testament is a Christian book***; and that the Jews did not get it. That is why he wrote what he did in Romans 15:4. **God wrote it with you and me in mind.**

Certainly the Jews through the ages—and other Israelites through the ages—used it to a limited extent, and it was helpful to those who obeyed it; but its real intent is for those of us upon whom the end of the ages is come. It is intended by God to give US the fullness of understanding of how to live His way of life. That is why Paul said what he did.

After reviewing my notes concerning the sermon thus far, I was concerned that we were spending so much time talking about laws that somehow some would be concerned that I was teaching a salvation by works of keeping laws. Therefore, before proceeding any further, I am going to touch once again upon a central, foundational fact: that salvation is by grace. However, we will do that next week because to get into it at this time would take too much time. It will provide, I think, a good foundation for what else I am going to go into next week, when I am going to give you four principles on determining how a law of God is to be used in a Christian's life.