

The Covenants, Grace, And Law (Part Twenty-Nine)

Summary of Series

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 18-Nov-95; Sermon #208

Imagine a criminal who is brought before the bar of justice. He is given liberty to go his way and he is told he can do as he pleases because law has been done away. Such a thing would be viewed as sheer idiocy anywhere but in religion. That is, anywhere but in relation to God.

This sermon is going to be a summary of the 28 sermons that preceded it. It will give us some principles to which we can refer when we come across a verse, or some context, that appears to do away with our responsibility to keep laws. I feel that it should also help us to determine the extent to which some of God's laws apply in given situations.

Point # 1: Realize the position carnal man is coming from.

We are going to begin in Romans 7. I think it is good to begin at a place in the New Testament with the writings of the man who is most frequently referred to as the one who has "done away" with the law. You are going to notice some simple truths that arise from these verses.

Romans 7:9-14 For I was alive without [or, apart from] the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

The first thing I want you to notice is that it was **not** the law that killed him. It was sin! Plain, simple truth—it was sin that slew him. By contrast, Paul says that the law was ordained to life. It is holy, just, good, and spiritual. That is very clear.

Continuing this thought about the carnal position that man is coming from, turn to Galatians 3.

Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have come by the law.

All that we need to pick up from this verse is that it is **not** law's purpose to give life. God did not create it to give life. Life comes from that which is already living. A law cannot give life. Paul makes it very clear (in that explanation there, which we will get back to later in the sermon) that it is not the purpose of law to give life.

Now, back to Romans 3:20. Contrast this with Galatians 3:21.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

It is the law that reveals what sin is. The law does not give life. If there could have been a law that could give life, then Paul is saying (in Galatians 3) that this is the one that could have done it. But it does not have that purpose within God's operations. The law is intended to reveal what sin is.

By virtue of some weird reasoning, the carnal mind then concludes that the law provokes sin because it makes us aware that what we are doing is wrong. I got out my Webster's Dictionary to double check what the word *provoke* means. It means stimulate, arouse, or excite. The law does no such thing! It does **not** stimulate sin. It does **not** arouse the sin. It does **not** excite the sin. It **reveals** sin!

What the law does do is it provokes us to understand sin more thoroughly. It does **not** inspire us to sin more frequently. But the *carnal solution* is, rather than be corrected, the first thing you do is revile the law by labeling it as a 'yoke of bondage.' Then you shoot the messenger by saying it is "done away."

Still on point one: Realize the position that carnal man is coming from—look at Romans 8: 7. This ought to be in everybody's spiritual memory banks.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The carnal mind is enmity against—it is antagonistic to—the law of God. But the basic line of reasoning is that, if we sin and bring the death penalty upon ourselves, it is the government fault. The government should not have made such dumb and constrictive laws that are designed to inhibit our freedom and keep us from what we want.

But, in this case, the government is **God**. He does not do dumb things. He is a God of love. He is a God of concern. He does not do things that are unkind. He may do things, or legislate things, that are constrictive to human nature. But they are done in love. They are not unkind. His laws are not like men's laws, which are done maybe to put pressure on certain groups of people.

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness ...

What is righteousness? All His commandments are righteousness. So they are ignorant of God's law—of God's standard of what is right.

Romans 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Remember, point # 1 here is to realize the position that carnal man is coming from. Carnal man is almost completely under the sway of Satan. And, with this series of verses, we can begin to understand that they *cannot* help themselves. These people may even mean well, but their **enmity against God** will reveal itself by means of their enmity against the law of God. They may even say that they love God. But the enmity that is there will lead then into breaking God's law—not keeping God's law. And God's law is the means by which He reveals His will for an orderly and safe conduct of life.

So point # 1 is then that the carnal mind (and we all have to remember that we still have elements of it left within us) begins its analysis of this subject from a prejudiced position of *enmity against the laws of God*. The carnal mind does not want to be a whole burnt offering, fully devoted to God. It does not want to be a living sacrifice. It is always going to be seeking how little it must do in order to get by. And the result will be that its analysis is thus colored all along the line. You can thus expect that its conclusions are very likely going to be out of line with the truth.

I know that many of you are doing research in books that are written by Protestants. Be careful! Understand where the carnal mind is coming from. It is coming from a prejudiced position that colors its judgment against the law of God, even though they like to seem as if they are very zealous for God.

Point # 2: Always work from clear, unambiguous scriptures.

This is a familiar one, but very important in analyzing this subject. Let us go back to one of the clearest, most unambiguous, scriptures on this subject that you can possibly find. In Matthew 5, who is speaking? The Boss Himself—the Head of the church.

Matthew 5:17-19 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of God: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. "

I do not think we could get a clearer statement anywhere in the Book than we can from the Boss. Always work from this kind, so that you are interpreting the less clear ones—those that are more vague—in the light of what the clear ones say.

In Matthew 5, and of course including chapters 6 and 7, Jesus is laying the foundational principles on which His kingdom does and still continues to operate. And so He makes this clear and unambiguous statement in reference to law.

In His statement "the law and the prophets," at first glance it indicates two whole sections of what we now call the Old Testament. The Old Testament has the law, prophets, and the writings. But His comments, which immediately follow where He makes this statement, are about some of the Ten Commandments—which indicates that, when He said **the law**, He not only had one major section of the Old Testament in mind; but He had also a specific code of laws in mind.

In Romans 6 we run into another foundational scripture on this subject.

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? [Paul writes.] Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. [He is saying, "Do not sin. God forbid."] How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Remember, the Scripture cannot be broken. (That is in John 10:35.) It means that there are **not** going to be contradictions in God's Word. Jesus said that not one jot or tittle would pass from the law. Paul said, "Do not sin." Sin is the transgression of God's law. But Protestants say that the law is done away. So there is some conflict there.

If Jesus' death combined with the New Covenant does away with the law, then, brethren, there is no such thing as sin; and Christ died in vain—especially as far as those who have lived after His death are concerned. Here we have a clear statement, in Romans 6: 1-2, that Christians are not to sin. That is, break God's laws. Therefore sin—and thus God's law, which tells us what sin is—must still exist.

It cannot be both ways. If they say that the law is done away, then in the biblical context it is logical that there can be no sin. It is therefore illogical for them to claim that it is still wrong for one to murder or to commit adultery, because there would be no such thing because there would be no law that says it is illegal to do such things. But you see, brethren, the answer lies elsewhere. Their conclusion that the law is done away is wrong!

Point # 3: Be strengthened by the examples of Christ and His apostles keeping specific laws.

The Sabbath and the holy days seem to be the direct object of the most consistent targets of the "no law" side. Even though the Sabbath is one of the big 10—and is therefore part of God's eternal, spiritual, moral law, and the holy days are part of that Fourth Commandment—they want to reduce the Sabbath to being merely ceremonial. But Exodus 31 contains the recording of the special Sabbath covenant, and we are going to look into it.

Exodus 31:15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord ...

I want you to note that. It is "holy to the Lord." This is not something that men dreamed up. It does not say holy to certain denominations, or certain groups. It is holy to the Lord—set apart to Him, sanctified to Him. He Himself sanctified it, because it says that right in the Commandment.

Exodus 31:15-17 ... whosoever does any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed.

We might speculate that the Fourth Commandment clearly identified; and, therefore, they who are carnal do not want to be identified with those who keep it. But God, here in this covenant, set how long this covenant is to be observed, adhered to—as long as there are generations of Israelites. Are there generations of Israelites continuing? Oh yes, you had better believe it. The generations continue, therefore this covenant continues.

He next says that the Sabbath and its roots go right back to Creation (or, we might say, Re-creation). He goes right back to Genesis 2 here, **not** Exodus 16. Do you get that? God places the beginning of the Sabbath at Creation, not Exodus 16, in order to confirm that their relationship is with the Creator. The relationship through the Sabbath did not begin at Exodus 16. Exodus 16 was only a reminder of what already existed.

From that starting point, let us go back to the New Testament once again. Again, we have a basic scripture on this subject.

Luke 4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

This basic scripture states what was the Boss', Christ's, our Lord's and Savior's manner. It was His custom. It was His habitual way of treating the seventh day of the week. The carnal mind will explain that Christ only did this because He was a Jew, or because He was still under the Old Covenant. This is one reason why I went back to Exodus 31, where it plainly says that covenant regarding the Sabbath is to continue as long as there are generations of Israelites. It is something made in addition to the Old Covenant. It is something that supercedes the Old Covenant.

They generally also overlook the fact that Jesus, in Mark 2: 27-28, declared that the Sabbath was made for man. That is, made specifically for man. He also declared that He Himself is the Lord, the Boss, of the Sabbath. He owns it. He is the Boss, the Master. He can do with it as He pleases. And it pleased Him to instruct us that it was made specifically for us. It pleased Him to keep it, and we are to walk in His steps.

This is very serious because, if we can throw out this example of the Head of the church, it destroys all consistency in following Christ, and every other example of what [He did], or the way Christ did things, loses its value. You cannot just pick and choose. If you are going to be a true disciple of Christ, and you truly are going to follow Him, then you are **not** free to just pick and choose. You follow what the Boss does. I Peter 2:21 shows how far we are to go in following what Christ does.

I Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were you called: Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

If we are to follow in His steps in regards to suffering, we are also supposed to follow in His steps in regard to the day of worship. As He set it aside, as His custom was, for Himself—we too are to set it aside as our customary way of living.

The apostle Paul added to this in I Corinthians 11, where he said:

I Corinthians 11:1 "Be you followers [or, imitators] of me, even as I also am of Christ."

There are numerous references following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, primarily in the book of Acts, of the apostles and the New Testament church keeping the Sabbath and the holy days, keeping food laws, and even circumcision, and some of the other ceremonial laws as well. It is very obvious that they were not antagonistic to it, and they did not look upon it as an enemy through which they would be defiled if they did it.

In addition to that, there is no reference in the entire Bible over whether the Sabbath should be kept, even as there is no reference or controversy as to whether the Christian should keep the fifth commandment, sixth commandment, seventh commandment, eighth commandment, ninth commandment, tenth commandment, or the first three commandments. The argument was whether **justification** came from keeping them. And that leads us right to the next point.

Point # 4: The issue, written of by Paul, was about the means of justification.

Let us begin by understanding that justification is **not** salvation. There are a number of ways in which justification can be described.

Romans 4:3 For what said the Scripture? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

Romans 4:6 Even as David also described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputed righteousness without [or, apart from] works.

Justification is the imputing of righteousness. In this case, God accounts righteousness where it does not logically belong. We may describe justification as being aligned with a standard. It is also being legally declared free of guilt. There are probably about a half a dozen ways that justification can be described, but in no case is justification salvation.

Salvation is deliverance. That is what the word means. It means to be delivered. Justification means to be made right. They are two different things altogether. In the biblical sense, salvation does **not** occur until the person is in his inheritance and in the Kingdom of God.

Even though justification does provide a measure of deliverance, it is only the first step towards a person's complete salvation, or deliverance. We are still in the flesh. And, even though there is no good reason why we should fail, we still can fail—even though we are justified.

It is interesting that, while I was shaving today, it was getting close to the hour; and so I turned on the radio to hear the news. The first thing I got was a football game. So I turned it to another station, and I got the religious station there in Charlotte. And guess what the guy was talking about? He was talking about a scripture that we are going to turn to.

By the way, it was Jay Vernon McGee— "Through the Bible" with Jay Vernon McGee. He has a very distinctive voice. And I have to tell you that Mr. Jay Vernon McGee danced all around answering this scripture. I almost think he saved it to the end of the program in order that he would run out of time. He even made an excuse about running out of time.

Hebrews 6:4-6 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

Those verses mean exactly what they plainly say. You read any Protestant commentary, and I guarantee you that they are going to have trouble with this—because, to them, justification and salvation are one and the same thing. But they are **not** ! Their belief flies in the face of the reality given in God's Word. A person who has been justified **can** fall away—just like verse 6 says.

Right in this same book, in Hebrews 10, in what is arguably the strongest language in the entire Bible (I mean, whoever wrote this—whether it was the apostle Paul or whomever) this person is really thundering by this time, trying to put the fear of God into people.

Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.

That is as plain as it can get. It is saying that the sacrifice of Christ will not apply.

Hebrews 10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation [the Lake of Fire], which shall devour the adversaries.

These people, whoever they are, have put themselves into a carnal state again; and their enmity against God is coming out, as evidenced by their law breaking.

Hebrews 10:28-30 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God [That sounds like Hebrews 6: 4-6], and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace? [That is the heavenly gift of chapter 6.] For we know Him that has said, "Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense," said the Lord. And again, "The Lord shall judge His people."

It is not those outside the church, it is those *inside the church* who have been justified but have turned away from God. They are now willfully living their lives in enmity against Him.

Turn with me to Ezekiel 18. As far as I am concerned, this really nails it on the head. But, again, these people like to say, "Well the Old Covenant, the Old Testament, is done away." But remember that Jesus said, "Do not think I have come to destroy the law and the prophets." Here we are in a prophet, and he says:

Ezekiel 18:24 But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity [That is, lawlessness.], And does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die.

Ezekiel 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," said the Lord God. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

God's experience with Israel (recorded from Exodus through Deuteronomy) is very helpful towards understanding this. Slavery in Egypt, where they faced certain ignominious death, represents the world; and Pharaoh represents Satan. Leaving Egypt symbolizes what justification accomplishes in God's spiritual plan. It frees them from bondage.

But God's working with them did not end there. He revealed His law to them, and then commanded them to choose to live by it. They had to endure a forty-year pilgrimage, enduring many trials along the way, before they finally were delivered into their inheritance and the Promised Land. That represented salvation. But many perished along the way, because they did **not** live by faith—as shown by their disobedience to His revealed law.

Hebrews 3:17-19 But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in [They did not get salvation, in its type.] Because of unbelief.

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear ...

Why would he say that to us if everything was just hunky-dory—if once you were justified, that was all you had to be concerned about?

Hebrews 4:1-2 Let us [Christians] therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Justification is not salvation. Justification has a measure of deliverance, but there is a ways to go before we are fully delivered.

Romans 3:20-31 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without [apart from] the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets [In other words, this happened before; and it has been written there.]; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference [meaning no difference between Israelite and Gentile]. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation [payment] through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justify of him which believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without [apart from] the deeds of the law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yes, we establish the law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yes, we establish the law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yes, we establish the law.

This is so clear. I do not see how it could be misunderstood. We are justified through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is He who is the payment for our sins, thus freeing us from sin's penalty; and, at the same time, God accounts—or imputes—Christ's righteousness to us. The righteousness that enabled Him to be the perfect sacrifice is counted as if it is ours! This then makes it possible for us to have access into the presence of the holy God.

But this does **not** do away with law. It establishes it! It establishes the law in its rightful position in our understanding of what God is working out in our lives.

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

This is a very important, and much misunderstood, statement on justification. It is from this verse that the world says we are justified by faith alone. The key word is "alone." They thus conclude that faith and works are mutually exclusive. That is, that works are of no matter or consequence—either towards justification or salvation.

A more correct understanding of this verse does give us clear insight into the flaw of the understanding of these people that Paul was writing against here in the book of Galatians, and this understanding will completely harmonize with Romans 2:13, which says that it is the doers of the law that shall be justified. Remember, the Scripture cannot be broken.

There are verses that seem to imply that law is of no account, or the works of keeping the law are of no account. But this verse, Galatians 2:16, helps us to understand that is not so. That is a wrong conclusion. Romans 2:13 is absolutely correct. The **doers of the law** will be justified!

In Galatians 2:16, the key phrase is that a man is not justified by works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ. I am going to change this to what it says in the J. Green Interlinear, and what it also says in the Emphatic Diaglott: "A man is not justified by works of law except through faith in Christ." In other words, what he is saying is that works **do** play a part in justification.

If you want to double-check me, just get out an interlinear, get out a lexicon, or get out a dictionary. The English word *except*, which is a closer synonym of the Greek word, means exclude, or in any other condition. The English word *but* means outside. It means without. It means except. Look it up in Webster's. The translators used the word "but" as a synonym for the word "except."

The phrase "by the" —where it says "but by the" —the Greek is "*dia*" which means through or by means of. It is the way one receives something. That is, by means of. Today we might say "via." So let me read you this sentence with those words put in it: "A man is not justified by works of law except by means of Christ."

Paul is not saying that law keeping is of no consequence in regard to faith. He is saying that law keeping is of no consequence towards justification when faith in Christ is left out of the loop. Paul would never tell anybody, "Do not obey laws." But he would tell them that law keeping all by itself—that is, apart from Christ—will neither justify nor save anybody. The two have to be done together!

Paul would tell them that works apart from faith in Christ is useless towards justification or salvation. But now, listen to this—so is faith in Christ without works useless towards justification. Did you hear what I said? Faith in Christ without works is useless towards justification. Do you know where I get my authority for that? James 2: 20-24, where he said, "Faith without works is dead!"

Faith and **works** are not mutually exclusive! They go together like bread and butter. And the works of keeping the law give evidence that the person really does have faith. This is why I told you, when we were going through here, that what Paul is saying is *what you believe in* and *who you believe in* is of extreme importance. You had better believe in the right Savior. And you had better believe what that Savior says. He says the law is **not** done away.

John the Baptist said, "Well, look. If you say that you have faith, and you say you have repented, then let me see your works to prove it." He said, "Bring forth fruits meet (fitting) for repentance. Show me that you have repented. Otherwise," John said, "I am not going to believe it."

So faith without works is not going to justify. Works without faith in Christ is not going to justify either. The two of them go together, and that perfectly harmonizes Romans 2:13 with those scriptures that seem to appear as though works are of no account. *The doers of the law will be justified.* The two go together.

Both justification and salvation come by grace through faith. But that faith is a living faith that works. It is **not** a dead faith that merely intellectually agrees and does nothing. That leads to the next point.

Point # 5: Do not forget God's overall purpose.

This has to be seen within that kind of a context. If somebody starts arguing that law is done away, it is generally because they have ripped the doctrine away from the bigger picture.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."

God is creating us in His image. As Mr. Armstrong put it so succinctly, God is reproducing Himself. Think about that, what that means. God is reproducing Himself. All of God's creation—except for man—gives evidence that God is a law-abiding God. The Creation reflects His mind, and the Creation is orderly in its design. It functions according to unchanging laws. We find, in the book of Malachi, a general principle that fits right in here. Incidentally, Malachi is an end time book. This is said to the end time church.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the Lord, I change not.

This is the image into which we are being created. It is unchanging. In addition to that, we have:

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Our God is not a whimsical egocentric. Laws are always, because they are always laws. That is why Jesus said not to think that He had come to destroy the law, or to do away with it. Laws always act and react in the same way. If this were not so, we could never depend on anything working the way we think it should.

God, as a Personality, can always be relied upon to act in love within the parameters of His purpose. If it were not this way, we could not have faith in Him. But we are commanded to live by faith—trusting that what He says is absolute. This is the image into which we are being created. We are being drawn towards this end. What God has us involved in is **awesome!** It is beyond our ability to conceive it, but we must try.

Deuteronomy 30:15-16 See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the Lord your God shall bless you in the land whither you go to possess it.

Deuteronomy 30:19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live.

God is working to create *His reliability in relationships* in us. In order to do this to the standard He desires, He had to give us free moral agency so that once He revealed His truth to us we could voluntarily choose to go the right way, thus insuring that His character—the character He is creating— would be ours as well, because that is the way that we choose to live. It is good to remember the Potter-clay analogy that is given both in Isaiah and in the book of Romans.

The law gives the basic description of His character, the basic description of His way—the way that He would conduct Himself in relationships if He were a man. When He became a man, He set a sinless example in living that way. He also taught men that they should live that way. We can take just one verse to nail this down, and it is another one of those verses that is just so clear.

Matthew 19:16-18 And, behold, one came and said unto Him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" And He said unto him, "Why call you Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the commandments." He said unto Him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall do no murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness."

It ought to be very clear that entering into eternal life involves keeping the commandments. What Jesus said agrees perfectly with Deuteronomy 30: 15-20, a few verses of which we just read. He capped this interview off, with that young man, by showing him. But the young man did not understand the full implications of keeping that law. The young man thought he was free and clear. Jesus said, "Oh, no. You have not even begun to see. You are lusting like crazy after the security, and so forth, that money gives you." So the young man went away. Apparently he decided it was too big a deal, at least at that time.

Psalm 119:1-3 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity [lawlessness]: they walk in His ways.

Psalm 119:5 O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!

Psalm 119:9-10 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Your word. With my whole heart have I sought You. O let me not wander from Your commandments.

Psalm 119:14 I have joined in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.

It goes on and on.

Psalm 119:33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.

Psalm 119:35 Make me to go in the path of Your commandments; for therein do I delight.

I will not go any further. I think you get the point. This Psalm is devoted to helping us understand the value of God's law. Nine different synonyms are used for the term *law* : commandment, precept,

testimony, ordinance, judgments, and so forth. To deny the law of God is to deny God Himself, because it is through the law of God that God reveals much about Himself. The law is the basic outline of the way God expects those who are going to be in His image to live.

It is either out of sheer ignorance or a perverse carnality to think that God would call His people into this great purpose, tell them that He is reproducing Himself in them, and then throw away the roadmap that reveals a major portion of the instructions as to what their part is in what He is creating. I think that such thoughts reveal their enmity, and thus their carnality, and thus their unconversion against God's law.

Point # 6: Remember God's revealed purpose for the Old Covenant.

Galatians 3:17-19 And this I say [Paul writes], that the covenant [There is the subject.], That was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law [In this case, "the law" is synonymous with "the covenant."], which was four hundred and thirty years after [After what? After the covenant God made with Abraham. So we are talking here about the Old Covenant, called "the law."], Cannot disannul [the covenant God made with Abraham and the promises], that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Galatians 3:21 Is the law [still the Old Covenant] then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The Old Covenant was added, and it was to lead them to Christ. That is an overview, but it is that simple. I want to add some more though, because I want you to have plenty ammunition here.

Hebrews 9:8-10 The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure [symbol] for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers [different] washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of restitution [reformation].

Hebrews 10 3-4 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

What was the Old Covenant added to? It was added to **a relationship** that already existed. The relationship was established by an earlier covenant—the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed. You will find that covenant between Genesis 12 and 17. God gave promises to Abraham and his seed, and made a covenant with him. That established the relationship. At that time, there was only Abraham and Sarah.

But by the time we get to the book of Exodus, Abraham's family—his seed—had become large enough in numbers to be a nation. But they were in slavery. And even worse, they were transgressing the covenant's terms with impunity.

Now, if you think that covenant had no terms, all you have to do is go back to Genesis 17: 1 where God told Abraham, "Walk before Me [live your life before Me], and be perfect." Perfect measured against what? We find the answer in Genesis 26: 5, where God speaking to Isaac said:

Genesis 26:5 Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statute, and My laws.

Those things were the terms of the covenant. One of the things God said about Abraham was, "I have known him that he will teach his children." And he did! He taught Isaac, and he taught Esau, and he taught Jacob. Of course, some of that came upon Isaac. But by the time we get to Israel in Egypt, they are transgressing the terms of that covenant left and right.

What did God add the Old Covenant for? We just read it. It was added because of transgressions. How long was it to last? Until the Seed would come. The Seed was Jesus Christ. We just read in Hebrews, "until the time of reformation." We also read in Hebrews that there was no forgiveness of sin under the Old Covenant, and that opens the door up to a great deal of understanding.

God released them from their bondage, entered into the additional covenant—which was to be a bridge, carrying Israel until the time of the appearance of the Christ. Its purpose was to establish them as a nation, to remind them of sin, and to guide them to understand their need for a spiritual and living Savior. Why is this *living Savior* needed?

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

It takes our Deliverer to deliver us into our eternal inheritance.

No forgiveness, right? That covenant had no provision for justification. In order for there to be justification, there has to be forgiveness. There has to be repentance. Without forgiveness, there is no justification. That covenant had no provision for access to God. The way into the other tabernacle—the new one—was not made manifest. There was no provision for receiving the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance, the down payment of eternal life.

The Old Covenant had been made obsolete by the coming of the New Covenant. But what about the Old Covenant laws? Do they still apply? Remember the analogy that I made regarding automobiles. Compared to a 1995 because, in 1910 model is obsolete. However, the 1995 still uses many elements of the 1910 model. It is still an automobile.

The New Covenant is still a covenant, and it has its terms. Hebrews 8:10 makes very clear that there are laws in the New Covenant. "I will write My **law**s into their heart and into their mind." So the New Covenant has laws, just like the covenant that is obsolete. We will pick out one scripture that is very clear.

I Corinthians 7:19 [Paul says:] Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but [what is important is] the keeping of the commandments of God.

That tells you right there that we are to keep the Ten Commandments under the New Covenant. That it so clear, it cannot be refuted. The Ten Commandments were part of the Old Covenant too. That part is not obsolete. We are still using it in the brand new model. The moral law is still in force and effect. To break them is sin. To do them is righteousness.

That includes all ten—not just nine. Remember Jesus' declaration that not even one jot or tittle would pass from that law. Yet these people say that the Fourth Commandment is done away. They directly refute their Savior. It really gets silly.

Most of the rest of the law, that is part of the terms of the Old Covenant, still directly apply. How about tithing? That is part of the Old Covenant. Tithing supersedes the Old Covenant. How about the food laws? That is part of the Old Covenant, yet we find evidence in the New Testament that those laws were still being kept—by people who should have know better if they were done away. They supersede the Old Covenant too, and they directly apply. And so there are many of those laws that directly apply.

Even those that may only indirectly apply, they are still applicable in their spirit—in their intention. Jesus said that not one jot or tittle was going to be done away. Remember that **intention** means the stretching out. What those things do, is they define sin and righteousness in specific situations. Their positive intention is always to bring us to holiness—to the image of God.

We need to discipline ourselves to never look at a law of God—whether it is civil or ceremonial—and assume it has no application for us, because God just intended it for those people back there then. Far from it! God's law (and their intention) is always love, and is eternal. That is why Jesus said that none of it would pass until all is fulfilled.

Obedience to those laws can neither justify nor save us, but they are the wisdom and the love of God—given to guide us. We should be studying them, to understand how to make our lives holier than they ever were before. Now, the final point:

Point # 7: Understand the way Paul and others used some terms important to this doctrine.

Terms like "yoke," "yoke of bondage," "circumcision," "law," or "the law" should be understood in the light of the way they would be used in the framework of their world, not ours. Doing this is not unusual in biblical interpretation. For example, the word "spirit" is used seven different ways in the Scriptures. The Greek word *cosmos*, translated "world," is also used in seven different ways. And we have to train ourselves to look carefully within each context to understand how it is being used in order to get the most correct interpretation.

Paul, for instance, uses **circumcision**, four different ways. It means the rite itself. It means the Jews as a race of people. It means the Old Covenant. Or it may be used to indicate the Old Covenant plus the traditions of the fathers. The **"yoke of bondage"** is not God's laws. It is a way of attempting to gain justification that included ritual obedience to Old Covenant testimonies and the traditions of the fathers, while at the same time ignoring faith in Jesus Christ.

The law can mean a specific law, a body of laws, or it can mean the entire Old Covenant. So be careful. Do not allow yourself to get sucked into wrong reasoning by misunderstanding the terminology.

These *seven points* should give us a pretty good leg up into not being deceived that God's law is done away:

- # 1: Realize the position carnal man is coming from.
- # 2: Always work from clear unambiguous scriptures.
- # 3: Be strengthened by the examples of Christ and His apostles keeping specific laws.
- # 4: The issue, written of by Paul, was about the means of justification.
- # 5: Do not forget God's overall purpose.
- # 6: Remember God's revealed purpose for the Old Covenant.
- # 7: Understand the way Paul and others used some terms important to this doctrine.