

Satan's Lies About The Law

Charles Whitaker (1944-2021)
Given 30-Apr-11; Sermon #1045B

Satan, it appears, has pulled all the stops out when it comes to attacking God's law. He spreads lie after lie—he broadcasts half-truth after half-truth—all in an effort to move people to at least marginalize law or to minimize its importance, or to reject law outright as something that is not valuable, or at worse, to abuse law, misuse it, all for their own, often nefarious, purposes.

Satan of course has aimed his efforts at the secular world, rendering it increasingly lawless. He especially aims his barbs at the so-called Christian community, corrupting peoples' respect for God's law. It is not difficult to figure out why: He hates that law since it is an expression of God's character—the codification of His love. In a real sense, God's law is God's love in action.

More to the point though, Satan also aims his fiery darts at us since we are of God's law, committed as we are to obeying it. He would be pleased—even ecstatic—if he could subvert our view of God's law, undermine our respect for it, prompting us to reject it in any way.

Today, I want to take a look at just two of the lies Satan tells about law, two of the many tools in his toolbox.

First, we will look at a lie Satan promulgates about the nature of law in general. Then, we will turn to a more specific lie about the scope or audience of God's law—to whom does that law pertain?

Charles Darwin perhaps best states the first lie in a letter written to a foremost American botanist, Asa Gray. Gray was a good friend and a supporter of Darwin. He also was a worldly Christian who interpreted Darwin's *Origin of the Species* the way many Christians of his day did, as an argument for theistic evolution. That is, Gray saw evolution as a description of the means by which God brought about His creation. He saw behind

evolution an intelligent designer, that Designer being God. God, in his mind, drove evolutionary processes as the means of creation.

Darwin, however, would have none of that idea at all. Notice his amazing reply to Gray in an 1860 letter. Darwin's biographers believe this to be one of his most important letters. Darwin writes:

With respect to the theological view of the question [that is, is there a designer behind evolution?], this is always painful to me. I am bewildered. I had no intention to write atheistically [in *Origin of the Species*]. But I own that I cannot see, as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created . . . [wasp larvae] with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars . . .

I have never really been much concerned about that, but it must have bothered Darwin. Continuing:

. . . or that a cat should play with mice. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the [human] eye was expressly designed.

So, Darwin fixes his gaze on the evil in the world, on its violence at the human and at the animal levels. Seeing nature as "red in tooth and claw," as the poet Tennyson would put it, he denies that a purposefully beneficent God could have been the world's creator. Darwin does not believe in a Designer; yet, notice how he continues:

On the other hand I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force.

Darwin is referring to nature red in tooth and claw. He says that the universe is too "wonderful" to be the child of survival of the fittest—that is, brute force.

Now, listen to this: Darwin drops a bomb and, at the same time, falls into the logical pit the bomb creates.

I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws

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Is that not something? Darwin does not believe in a designer, but he leans toward a belief in "designed laws." He never tells us who designed them. Logically, he has fallen into a pit of his own making. But, there is a whole lot more. How does Darwin see these "designed laws" as working? Well, get a load of this:

I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance.

Darwin believes in "designed laws," but came to the conclusion that the "details"—I am not sure what he meant by that word—were worked out by the operation of chance. I understand his use of the noun "chance" to refer to a degree of randomness, or probability. Hence, Darwin sees law as operating with some unspecified degree of randomness or unpredictability.

Let us look at Darwin's purported connection of law with chance. As a simple example—and yes, I understand this is simplistic, consider what we know about water. It boils at 212° F at standard atmospheric pressure. Now, it is not that water did that yesterday, and might do it today, and possibly will do it tomorrow. It does it all the time. Count on it. As long as we are heating water, and not a substance with a different specific gravity, and as long as we are at standard pressure, it will boil when its temperature reaches 212° F.

The operation of chance does not come into play at all in the formula. There is no maybe. There is no perhaps. And, there is no doubt. As Albert Einstein famously averred, countering the notions of quantum mechanics or quantum physics in his famous controversy with the Danish physicist, Niels Bohr, "I . . . am convinced that [God] does not throw dice." Apparently, Darwin was not so convinced.

You can think of tens of other examples. Consider Newton's third law of motion: "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." How difficult would it be to get to the moon if we applied energy to our rockets, but were not sure if the reaction would be opposite—or even if it would be equal? We could not dependably make course corrections. We could find ourselves truly lost in space without any trustworthy thrusters.

One of the blessings of law—physical or spiritual—is that it always works. Gravity does not force an apple down to the ground sometimes, and other times up to the clouds. By knowing a law, we can accurately predict outcomes.

Please turn to Galatians 6, and forgive me as I caricature Darwin's comments. After all, he was talking about God, so shall we.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

It does not read, "God is usually not mocked. Whatever a person sows there is a good chance that he will reap." No. There is nothing in the world like that. Spiritual law, like its physical counterpart, is cut and dry. Remember how Mr. Armstrong used to put it, "If you break the law, it will break you." There is no question about that!

As another example, consider Numbers 32. Moses, warning us to stay away from sin:

Numbers 32:23 But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.

The King James Version has it, "Be sure your sin will find you out." It is almost as if the law is out there, looking ardently for its violators. It will find you. It may take a while, as Ecclesiastes 8:11 says; the sentence is not always immediate. That is one of the differences between physical and spiritual law. When you jump off a building, gravity always kicks in right away. But, if you violate a spiritual law, say the one about stealing, you may not pay the price for many years.

Be sure, through, you will pay the price. You cannot escape. Moses did not say, "If you sin, realize that there is a chance your sin will find you out." Such randomness is not in God's Word. In this sense, the operation of law is predictable. Further, this certainty of the operation of law is not something that is bad at all; it is good. It adds a level of stability to life. In the physical world, that stability has permitted our technology to work. It works because laws work, consistently, the same way, every time. In the spiritual world, that stability is the certain bedrock of God's judgment.

As a third example (and I know all of you could cite dozens of other examples), please turn to Romans 8, and we will take a look at an actual, bona fide, law. Breaking into a thought in verse 2:

Romans 8:2 (HCSB) Because the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Paul mentions two laws here, the law of life, and the law of sin and death. We will just focus for a few minutes on the second law. Paul states the law of sin and death most concisely in Romans 6:23. Here the apostle relates the two elements, sin and death, in terms of cause and effect:

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death . . .

That is, the result or consequence of sin is death, as we all know. This is a restatement of Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sins shall die."

I will not belabor the point; God does not say that the results of sin might be death, or that the soul which sins might die. Death as a consequence of sin is sure—certain. In fact, this is what makes the law of sin and death a law, if you stop to think about it—it works every time. Death as a consequence of sin is inevitable.

So, I have defined the noun, "law," through the back door, have I not? Let us see how Webster defines law: "A statement of an order or relation of phenomena that so far as is known is invariable under the given conditions; the observed regularity of nature."

Well, we could say that this definition does not give chance a chance! The concept of chance is simply not there. Law is marked by regularity, invariability, inevitability, certainty, and predictability. These are the things we think of when we think of law. Yes, we think of the stability that comes with changelessness, not the disorder or the disequilibrium that attends randomness.

Darwin's connection of law with chance is actually a contradiction of terms, almost like comparing apples with oranges. To connect law with chance is oxymoronic.

Where does this type of thinking lead Darwin? Let me read the conclusion of Darwin's letter to Gray.

Not that this notion [of laws operating by chance] at all satisfies me. I feel most deeply that the whole subject is too profound for the human intellect. A dog might as well speculate on the mind of Newton. Let each man hope and believe what he can.

Darwin admits that this "notion" as he terms it, this strange view of law, does not satisfy him "at all." We do not need to wonder at this. It would not satisfy *any* thinking person. There is no assurance here, but rather a deep-seated feeling that he does not know the answers, and cannot know them any more than a dog can plumb the mind of a genius like Isaac Newton.

Historians consider Charles Darwin to be one of the three seminal thinkers of modernity, along with Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. Yet, this "seminal thinker," inclined as he is to illogically connect the operation of "designed laws" with chance, finally admits that he grasps for answers. In the end he claims that the human mind cannot reach a conclusion, that assurance is impossible. Each individual can only hope as he can—believe as he can.

This is just plain pathetic.

How different is Darwin's waffling conclusion from that of the apostle Paul as expressed in II Timothy 1. Notice the level of confidence with which Paul writes.

II Timothy 1:12 (HCSB) That is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.

Turn with me please to I John 2. Here, we will discover the taproot, the source, of Paul's level of assurance. This is really quite interesting.

What is operating behind the scenes that makes Paul so sure?

I John 2:3-6 (HCSB) This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: The one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked.

Just how important is a stable, always-working law? It is obviously too important for God to allow it to function under the principles of chance! Obeying God's law is the fountainhead of our assurance.

We know as a result of obedience to God's law. Keeping God's law assures us that our relationship with God is genuine. This is not a law that bends with the whims of chance, but God's everlasting law, a law which reflects the unchanging mind of a changeless God. Those who are not obeying that law will lack the stability that comes with assurance.

It is here that my comments will make a turn. I promised that we would look at two lies which Satan tells about law. We have been looking at the lie he tells about the nature of law. Now, let us look at a more specific lie. This is about the scope or the audience of God's law.

To whom does that law apply?

Please, turn with me to Exodus 20. I need to delineate or define the issue briefly for you.

Exodus 20:2-3 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.

Some commentators say that the clause, "who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery," limits the application of the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel, or to ancient Israel in general, because it was they whom He brought out of Egyptian slavery, not others. You guessed it. These interpreters use this argument to teach that we are no longer under the law because it pertains only to Israel.

Please turn over to Exodus 31 where we will see another manifestation of this same type of thinking. This is the Sabbath covenant.

Exodus 31:12-13 (HCSB) The LORD said to Moses: "Tell the Israelites: 'You must observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, so that you will know that I am the LORD who sets you apart.'

Exodus 31:16-17 (HCSB) The Israelites must observe the Sabbath, celebrating it throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign forever between Me and the Israelites.

I think you already can guess how the anti-law pundits interpret this passage. They claim that the Sabbath covenant is between God and ancient Israel, and therefore lacks relevance to us today.

Sadly, this type of argument even manifests itself from time to time inside the church of God. I have actually heard members state their belief that it is okay for people outside the church to eat unclean meats, because they are not under the New Covenant, not set apart, not holy to God.

I bring these three matters to the fore simply to define the issue a bit. I certainly cannot in the remaining time discuss Exodus 20 and Exodus 31 and the issue of unclean meats in detail. But I want to approach the issue in general. Does God's law pertain to those outside Israel? Outside the church? And if so, how?

Conceding that God's law pertains to Israel places us in no logical or doctrinal difficulties. Why? Galatians 6:16 tell us that the church of God is Israel—God's Israel today. So, we have no trouble at all understanding that the law applies to us, to God's Israel. But what about those outside the church of God—outside God's Israel?

To answer those questions adequately, I think we need to consider the universality of sin. If sin is universal, applying to all, the law must also be universal. Let us trace that down a bit in the remaining time. If sin is applies to everyone, the law must also apply to everyone.

I will begin by establishing the universality of sin. It affects everyone, not just Israel.

Proverbs 14:34 is a pretty good place to start. There, Solomon tells us that, "Sin is a reproach to any people." This is a pretty clear scripture about the scope of sin; sin is a shame—a disgrace—to everyone, not just to Israel. In Romans 3 Paul makes this absolutely plain.

Romans 3:9-12 (HCSB) What then? Are we [that is, Jews] any better? Not at all! For we have previously charged that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away . . .

Sin affects both Jews and Gentiles. Paul is quoting Psalm 14; he interprets the word 'all' to mean just that—all, everyone. He summarizes a few verses down.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

So, sin is universal. For a further indication of this, consider: If sin is universal, we would expect its consequence—that is, death—to be universal as well. This is exactly what God's Word teaches. The psalmist, writing rhetorically in Psalm 89:48, makes it clear that all die, "What man can live and shall not see death?" Everyone sins and everyone dies.

In Romans 5 Paul strongly connects sin with death.

Romans 5:12 (Amplified Version) Therefore, as sin came into the world through one man [that is, of course, Adam] and death as the result of sin, so death spread to all men, no one being able to stop it or to escape its power, because all men sinned.

So, death, the consequence of sin, is as universal as sin itself. Now, in verse 13, Paul throws another ingredient into the soup. It is the ingredient we are talking about—law.

Romans 5:13 (Amplified Version) To be sure, sin was in the world before ever the Law was given, but sin is not charged to men's account where there is no law to transgress.

So law all of a sudden becomes a key factor in the sin-death relationship; we are talking about a nexus, the linking, the connection, of three things: Sin and death (both of which are universal), and God's law. Is God's law, that third element, you see, also universal? Are all under the law, or just ancient Israel? And, what is the relationship between sin and death, and this third element, God's law? Let us trace that out.

We will start by looking at the relationship between sin and God's law. Now, understand, I am not talking about the relationship between sin and lawbreaking. The act of breaking the law is sin as I John 3:4 tells us, "Sin is the transgression of the law." We know that. I am talking about the relationship between sin and law, itself—not sin and lawbreaking. That is a different question. And, Paul provides the short answer to the question of the relationship between sin and law in I Corinthians 15:56 where he concludes that, "The power of sin is the law."

It follows then that sin lacks power where there is no law. Absent the law, where is sin's power? Well, please turn to Romans 7, where Paul talks more about this enabling relationship between sin and law.

Romans 7:7-9 (HCSB) What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! [Related, but not equated.] On the contrary, I

would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' And sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the law sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life.

I love that translation. It is as though sin were there in the ground. And, once God watered the soil through a knowledge of the law—once He revealed the law—sin just popped up, and with it came death as Romans 3:20 says, "For through the law [comes] the knowledge of sin."

Again, "The power of sin is the law." The law empowers sin. That is the relationship between the law and sin. What does God's law empower sin to do? It empowers sin to kill us. God's law is an enabler; it enables sin to kill. This is the thrust of Paul's comments in Romans 4. Here the apostle writes of God's law and of sin and death—all three, but uses the term wrath to refer to death.

Romans 4:15 (HCSB) For the law produces wrath; it does so by permitting sin to destroy us. For the law produces wrath; but where there is no law, there is no transgression.

In summary, sin is universal; death is universal. Hence, the law that empowers universal sin to produce universal death has universal application. God's law applies to everyone, not just to ancient Israel. To suggest that the law of God is not universal, but confined to ancient Israel, is as preposterous as suggesting that water boils at 212° F in California, but not in Arizona. It is as cockeyed as urging that gravity operates in Europe but not in Asia. God's law is as universal as the sin that it empowers to slay us all.

That power of law is great. But Paul, writing in Galatians 3, adds yet another component to the matter, mentioning a still greater power.

Galatians 3:22 (HCSB) The Scripture has imprisoned everything under sin's power [the law empowers sin], so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Notice, not just *everyone*, but *everything* is under sin's power. The whole creation groans, waiting for redemption, as Paul mentions in Romans 8:22. The entire creation waits for the times of refreshing that are mentioned in Acts 3:19. That is how inclusive the power of God's law really is—it covers *everything*. Nothing is outside its reach—nothing except God's grace. And, about that component, about faith in the power of God's grace, the power that overcomes death through God's gift of salvation—well, that is the topic of another day, is it not?