

The Covenants, Grace and Law (Part 14)

Psalm 19: The Law Is Not Done Away

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What we have seen in the last two messages in this series has been a fairly lengthy listing of the wonderful benefits that accrue to us as a result of Christ's actions to institute the New Covenant through His will—through His testament—and His subsequent death.

What is written in the New Testament regarding the Covenants emphasizes these benefits. When I say "Covenants" I am talking about what is written primarily in the New Testament, and most of all in the writings of the apostle Paul. This is done in order to draw attention to the number of differences between the Old Covenant and the New.

However, at the very beginning of this sermon, I want to remind every one of us that LAW is still a major part of the New Covenant, as Hebrews 8 clearly shows. *The law of God* is going to be written in our hearts! A concern is how this is going to be accomplished. How is it going to be written in our hearts?

What God emphasizes is that the New Covenant, through the work of Jesus Christ, provides the means for those of us making the covenant to have the law written in our hearts. This does not happen by magic; and obedience is still required, as the New Testament clearly shows. Obedience to what? To laws? Rules? What term should we use? How about *an entire way of life* that includes laws? It is through obedience—coupled with forgiveness, the receipt of God's Spirit, Christ's continual intercession, and access to God's presence—that the writing of God's laws on our hearts is accomplished.

Some would lead you to believe that all one has to do is accept Jesus Christ and *presto change-o*, with no exercise of faith, or setting of will, or disciplining of oneself, a person automatically begins to be like Christ, to show the image of God in the way that he lives his life and in the attitudes that he shows.

Consider this: In the light of this approach that some people take, do not you think it is strange that the Bible makes so much of Christ's sinless life? Or of Paul's exclaiming that he beat his body—that he disciplined himself lest he found that he was a castaway? That he urged people to put off the old man, and to put on the new man? Do you not think that there are works involved in doing those things? Does that sound like a *presto change-o* situation, when some of our most respected leaders of the past have written such things?

Answer this: (Maybe you know a positive answer to this; I do not.) Do you know any game on earth that is played without rules? Is business conducted without ethics or procedures? Do governments operate without protocols?

How does one know how to live one's life after accepting Christ unless directions are given somewhere on how to do this? Does He put silent impulses into His begotten children's minds? If that is so, from your own experience, how is it that Christians think so differently on so many

things involving conduct—even in some cases as to whether some action is actually sin? Or whether a certain attitude in a given situation, maybe a pressure situation, is right or wrong?

If God just puts impulses into people's minds, if He whispers into people's ears, why do we not all think exactly the same? Is there supposed to be some mystical connection between the Christian and God, so that the Christian knows God's perspective on all issues of conduct and attitude?

If that is so, why are we then exhorted to *grow in the grace and the knowledge* (not knowledge *about*, but *the* knowledge) *of Jesus Christ*—in other words, Christ's knowledge? Why does the Bible say, "Till we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"? Why does the Bible call us children—implying that we have a lot to learn? Why did Christ tell us to become perfect—that is, mature? And why did Paul, in Philippians, say that he was not yet perfect?

We need guidance as to how to live right now! I am not talking about in the Kingdom of God. We need guidance about how to live right now, and how to be best prepared either for Christ's return or our death, whichever comes first. This is where the law of God comes into the picture of His purpose.

Now that we have spent the time for a number of sermons that we have preceding this, I feel that we are almost in a position to look more closely at some individual laws and their New Covenant application. I said "almost" because I feel that there is one more thing—one more principle, one more very important area—of which we have to take care before doing that.

As a member of the Church of God, our tendency in the past, whenever we have been trying to discover what has been made *obsolete* with the coming of the New Covenant, has been to zero in on a specific verse or context. Though there is value in doing this, it is a very narrow and dangerous way to approach this extremely vital subject.

As we have been seeing, the New Covenant and the laws that are part and parcel of it are not a device designed by God merely to save people. Yes, it is designed by God to save people, but more importantly, it is designed to save people prepared to live and function in God's Kingdom—that is, in God's Family.

We are going to begin the body of this sermon in what I feel is both, at one and the same time, a statement of fact and a command—the most difficult command in all of the Bible to fulfill. As soon as I give you the verse, you are going to know it, but I am going to read it anyway.

Matthew 4:4 But He [Jesus] answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone...'

That is a *statement of fact* and it is implying a *command*.

Matthew 4:4 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [that proceeds out of the mouth of God.]'

There is the hard part! It is going to provide the foundation for the remainder of this sermon. Did you notice? "Man shall live by part of the Word of God." You know that it does NOT say that, but do you know why I said "part"? It is because there are people who tell you that parts of the Bible are done away. How can you live by every word of God if parts are done away, if commandments have been set aside?

You would NEVER fulfill that scripture. That is something that is so obvious. Yet, how do you get around something like that—a plain, clear statement implying a command?

Matthew 4:4 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'

Also implied there—actually, it is stronger than implied—is that the source of the bread is more important than the bread itself. "From where does the bread come?" is what He is saying. Of course, the bread is what feeds our spirit. What are the implications if it comes from God? If it comes from another source? The source of the bread is very important.

So effective has Satan been with his ploy that some parts of the Bible are done away that there are some Protestant groups that pay no attention at all to the Old Testament. There is at least one fairly large Protestant group that has sects, or denominations, within or under its umbrella that believe only the words of Paul. They not only do away with the Old Testament, but they do away with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and they only will follow the words of Paul.

I read one time of another group that would only believe the words that are written in red in some Bibles—that is, the words of Christ. Even such a renowned scholar as Thomas Jefferson took his blue pencil and went through the Bible and scratched out every portion that he thought no longer applied to himself, or other people. He created his own version of the Bible. Such power we men have, to do those things!

We have to be careful about this "done away" thing, because the effect of Satan's campaign against us may not appear immediately, but it WILL have a negative effect on all except those who totally reject this diabolical ploy.

I think you will admit that, even though you know you should live by EVERY WORD of God, there are parts of the Bible in which you have little interest and you have a very difficult time studying into them. How about "the begets"? It is very difficult. I know that I have difficulty with that. Why do I want to read somebody's genealogy? However, it is something that we have to discipline ourselves to do. We may not know it right now, but either that was extremely important at some time in the past, or it is yet going to be extremely important some time in the future—and maybe in sorting things out in regard of the Kingdom of God. It is part of the Book up to which we are to live.

I think the key to this is to not fall prey to this attitude, and to have a different attitude toward God's Word. Therefore, what we are going to do at the beginning of this is to see what God's Word says about itself. We are going to be using some scriptures that are memory scriptures, but we need to look at it in this light in regard to this "done away" approach that has been taken.

II Timothy 3:15-17 And that from a child you have known the holy scriptures, [listen to this:] which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

This is the Bible—the Word of God—talking about itself. Timothy, from a child, has known the Holy Scriptures, and we all know that the Holy Scriptures at the time that this was written was the Old Testament—the very part of the Bible that some people do not want to read at all.

Did you see what Paul said? "They are able to make you, Timothy, wise to salvation." Timothy was an evangelist, a high ranking minister in the Body of Jesus Christ; and even though he was a minister, he needed them as much as anybody.

Even if the New Testament were somehow lost, we could get by on the Old Testament. There would be no problem at all in putting together the things necessary for salvation. *What? You mean to tell me there is grace in the Old Testament?* Oh, you had better believe there is grace in the Old Testament. There is no "trinity" there, though. No, we do not need the "trinity" to be wise to salvation. That is how much God thought of that.

The subject here now includes the New Testament; but when Paul wrote this, his purpose was towards the Old Testament. Scripture's purpose is to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. *You mean that is in the Old Testament? That salvation is by grace through faith in Christ Jesus is in the Old Testament?* You had better believe it.

How do you think those people had their sins forgiven? When they repented, they were forgiven by God *looking forward* to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Those people who asked for forgiveness were *looking forward in faith* to that; it had not yet occurred. Salvation is by grace through faith, and God forgave their sins on the basis of something that had not yet occurred, but it was as good as done in God's eyes. It was as good as done in Abraham's eyes when he repented—and Jacob's and Isaac's whenever they repented, and Joseph's when he repented, and David's when he repented. Oh, yes, there is grace back there; there is faith in Jesus Christ back there, as well.

Without the Old Testament, we will NOT be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. As we are going to see in the next couple verses, it is there that God has given powerful examples to teach you and me—examples of how we ought to live, examples of what our attitude ought to be, examples of obedience, examples of disobedience.

Understand this: There is nothing—absolutely NOTHING—extraneous in God's Word. It is all profitable! We are going to connect Romans 15: 4 with I Corinthians 10: 11.

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

You mean there is hope in the Old Testament? Yes, the Old Testament gives us vision. It gives us reason that our lives should be lifted and we should be motivated to go towards a great, great goal. However, I wonder if you really caught what that verse said. What that verse is telling us is that God specifically, on purpose (thinking about the church) caused these things to be written down! They were written for our—the church's—learning.

God inspired Moses. He inspired Samuel. He inspired David. He inspired Ezra, and He inspired Isaiah, and so forth. He caused them, inspired them to write down the specific things that they did. This thing was not put together in a helter-skelter, haphazard way at all. This thing was designed—from Genesis 1 all the way through Malachi 4: 6—with you and me in mind—and men want to throw it out? Throw out all those examples of Sabbath-keeping; holy day keeping, all of those examples of Israel going into captivity because they broke the Sabbath, and because they committed idolatry? Come on now.

What are these people doing? They are calling God into account that He wrote down things that are useless for the Christian. Oh, no! They were written on purpose—for you and me.

I Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples [or types]...

The "them" were the children of Israel going through the wilderness.

I Corinthians 10:11 ...and they were written for our admonition [or, for our warning], upon whom the ends of the world [or, the end of the ages] are come.

The words are changed a little bit from Romans 15: 4, but the sense is the same. Again, Paul is implying very strongly that they were specific incident that were purposely written down, only this time he changed it a little bit. In Romans 15: 5, the idea is that we might have hope. In I Corinthians 10, he is telling us that these things are written down so that they might be a deterrent to sin.

Wait a minute. A deterrent to sin? What is sin? Sin is the transgression of THE LAW. *You mean God does not want us to disobey that law? I thought it was done away.* Hardly!

In addition to this, the Old Testament shows many of the people's requirements. It shows how God dealt with them. It shows how the Israelites reacted, either as a body or as individuals. The Old Testament is just chock-full of practical instruction for people of all ages, because God Himself never changes.

I am going to show you a real bell ringer here. To me, this almost raises the hair on the back of my head in regard to this subject.

I Corinthians 9: 8-9 Say I these things as a man? Or says not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses...

Wait a minute. The law of Moses is done away. Why is Paul quoting the law of Moses to a Gentile, New Covenant church? Why is he quoting that as his authority if it is done away?

I Corinthians 9:9-10 For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn." Does God take care for oxen? Or says he it altogether for our sakes [Christians' sakes]?

Do you mean to tell me that the law of Moses was written down for Christians' sakes? Yes! Certainly, it benefited them back there, but you put this together with those scriptures we just used—Romans 15: 4, I Corinthians 10: 11—and you put this one right next to them, and we understand that these things were purposefully written down for the Christians! He says, "No doubt this was written for our sakes."

I Corinthians 9:10 For our sakes, no doubt, that is written: that he that plows should plow in hope; and that he that threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.

Here Paul plucks out an individual law *within the law of Moses* to show the New Testament church application—from a law that is "done away"—in order to provide authority and proof to the New Testament Christian that the church is responsible for providing for the ministry. That certainly does not look to me as though Paul thought everything out of the law of Moses was done away.

Let us look at another one. It is the same kind of situation, but it is a little bit broader. We are going to go back to the book of Malachi. The consensus opinion among the scholars is that this was the last book written prior to the birth of Jesus Christ. In Malachi 4: 4 appears a very interesting statement. It is even more interesting within its context, because its context is the end time. Surely, brethren, you believe that we are in the end time.

In Malachi 3: 26, He talks about sparing His people. Sparing them from what?

Malachi 4:1 For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root or branch.

That certainly looks like the Lake of Fire. In verse 2 the time element shifts back to an earlier time, but not a time earlier than ours. It is after this period of time in which we are living right now, but it is earlier than the time in the first verse.

Malachi 4:2 But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness [Jesus Christ] arise with healing in His wings; and you

shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

He is talking about the return of Christ. We are getting very close to our time. In the context of this end time, look at verse 4. Look at what He says to these people living at the return of Christ.

Malachi 4:4 Remember you the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

That is pretty powerful! Remember *the law of Moses at the time of Christ's return. I thought that was done away. Is He just telling the Jews to remember that?* No, that is something for His people—the Christians—because we just read in Romans 15 and I Corinthians 10 that all of these things were written with the church in mind—those upon whom the ends of the ages are come. God's concern is for you and me.

Malachi wrote this around 430 B.C. About 400 years later, Paul, living under the New Covenant, certainly did not hesitate to use the law of Moses as his authority for proving something to the New Testament church.

Next we will look at Matthew 5. If anybody ought to know about the law of God, it certainly ought to be the Boss. It ought to be the One who gave the law in the first place.

Matthew 5:17-20 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 heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

I have read articles written by Church of God connections attempting to explain their way around this very clear statement. What Jesus is saying, in plain language, is that His teaching does NOT contradict the Old Covenant law; rather, it is the ultimate fulfillment of the spiritual intent of it. Even in the smallest matter, the smallest statement—the jot and the tittle—that law must be fulfilled.

Notice where this statement appears. When Matthew wrote this, he put it immediately after Jesus' exhortation to "let your good works shine before men." Let your light so shine. So what if your works are good? What are you supposed to do? Hide them?

Then comes a statement regarding law. Is there any connection between good works and the keeping of the law? I will tell you, you would have to be pretty obstinate to believe there is no

connection between the two. It is so obvious that He is connecting *good works* with *law-keeping*.

Then, to make it even stronger, in verse 20 He mentions righteousness. What is the Bible's definition of righteousness? Psalm 119:172 says, "All Your commandments are righteousness." Thus, sandwiched right between righteousness and letting your light shine comes an explanation that He did not come to do away with the law; He has come to fill it to the full, to make us understand the ultimate applications of that law—its spiritual intent.

I have a question: Is it possible to keep the law in its spirit without also keeping it in the letter? I have never figured out a way that can be done. Maybe you can tell me. I do not see how you can keep a law *in the spirit* and not also keep it *in the letter*.

We are going to go back to Psalm 119. We are not going to be spending a great deal of time in this, but just to present a concept from it. It is rather interesting that the longest psalm is Psalm 119. It is a giant of 176 verses. Some people have even committed it to memory. (Not this man, though.)

It is interesting because it has no particular theme in the sense of having a plot unfold from beginning to end; there is no real story line that goes through it. Instead, it is, from beginning to end, a paean of praise to the law of God. It is actually a meditation on the law's practical benefits to the godly. When I say "law," I mean law in its broadest sense.

Nobody knows exactly who the author is of this psalm. The three biblical characters that seem to be most commonly suggested are David, Jeremiah, or Joseph. There is a problem, though, because the language does not fit the time when any of those men lived. It fits a time more around that of Ezra, Nehemiah, or Malachi. It really is not all that important, but just an interesting aside.

The psalm is a meditation on the practical benefits of the law of God to the godly. As I said, *law* is used here in its broadest sense. Each of the eight words that are used within it—words like *law*, *commandment*, *testimony*, *decrees*, and *judgments*—are actually synonyms for the Word of God, for Scripture. However, it is still THE LAW that serves as the vehicle, the focus, through which the psalmist offers his praise.

When you read this (at another time), you will notice that he is not just speaking of the Ten Commandments; and that just proves what I just said to you. I want you to listen now to a quote that I am going to give you from Albert Barnes. He was a conservative Protestant of the last century; and he wrote a tremendous commentary, a very long and full commentary, entitled *Barnes' Notes*. It is a very fine commentary, by the way.

I want to give you what he says about this psalm in the tail end of an explanation as to who he felt to be the author or authors of this psalm.

The psalm is so applicable to the people of God at all times, so fitted to strengthen the mind in trial, so adapted to guide, comfort, and support the soul, and so true in regard to the influence and value of the law of God, that it is not needful to know when it was composed, or who its author was. It is sufficient to know that it was composed under the

guidance of the Holy Spirit, and is a repository of truths which will be of inestimable value in all ages of the world.

Did you catch what he said in two places there? It is for the people of God at all times, and it is of inestimable value in all ages. Question, then: If the law of God is done away, why is such a psalm even provided by God, a psalm that will instruct us, guide us, comfort us, and lift our spirits in a time of trial? Why even have such a psalm if such influence and value and instruction no longer apply? It would be nothing but a vanity.

The truth is that it is NOT a vanity, because its instruction regarding the law of God still applies, regardless of the age in which one lives. That is because the law of God is eternal. It is spiritual. It is holy. It does not just pass away. It defines the character of God!

Brethren, it is so dangerous to approach God's Word as if something is done away. It shows an attitude of consciously ignoring the Giver. To me, it shows an underlining attitude of pride that one is above the need of the instruction that our very Creator is giving.

It is interesting that, as I was preparing this, I could see that the same attitude was revealed by Satan in the Garden of Eden. He came to Eve and he said, "You do not need to worry about that. It has been done away. You can ignore that instruction." What were they really ignoring? They were ignoring the Giver of the instruction! Their judgment was that the Giver of that instruction was not trustworthy; they did not believe Him. Thus, it was a rejection of God. They chose to believe Satan because he convinced them that they did not have to worry about that. It was "done away."

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.

We are familiar with that. It is another scripture that we may not have totally committed to memory, yet it is there in our minds and we very quickly recognize it. We are going to concentrate on verses 7 through 14.

Psalm 19:7-14 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse You me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength, and my

redeemer.

There is clearly similarity between Psalm 19 and Psalm 119; there is also dissimilarity. The similarity, again, is that the law of God is the focus for extolling all of the Word of God. The dissimilarity is that Psalm 19 is both more concise (after all, Psalm 119 is 176 verses) and it is more specific, more to the point.

The author of this is clearly David. He uses law, statutes, precepts, commandments, fear, and ordinances as a part of the means by which he is going to teach us something. You might wonder why fear is included. It is because fear represents the specific attitude required to begin making the best use of the law of God. Remember the proverb that says that the fear (that is, the deep and abiding respect tinged with terror) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In addition, remember that wisdom is right application. If fear is not present, we will not even start to build towards faith, hope, and love. It is something to get us jump-started, to get us going. It is a respect tinged with terror, as I said.

The psalm itself is divided into three sections, and the first section—the one that begins with "The heavens declare the glory of God"—concerns the revelation of the Creator God in His Creation. The second part, beginning with verse 7, is the revelation of the Covenant God in His Word, most specifically in His law. The third is the last couple of verses, and it is the response to these first two by the man of faith.

In verse one, "The heavens declare the glory of God," [the word] *God* there is not *Elohim*; *God* there is in the singular. It is *El*. In verse 7, *Lord* is *YHWH*. Thus, we have the same Being—*El* and *YHWH*. However, the author is saying (and here is part of the point) that, though *the creation* reveals the majesty and the power of the One who created, *the law of God* reveals in a much clearer, more comprehensive way the specifics of the nature, character, and purpose of that One. It is, therefore, of far more practical help to the created—us.

Thus, he makes a comparison. He says, "Hey, here is the creation. It is great. It is good. However, it does not even begin to teach you as the law of God does." The specifics that we need about *how to live* are in the law of God. Both are needed, but the revelation of the law takes one far beyond the nature of the creation.

In verse 7, the word *law* is used, and the word here is *torah*. *Torah* appears in the Bible either specifically (to indicate one law, or one body of law) or broadly (to mean instruction, teaching, or even doctrine). In this psalm, it is used broadly to indicate all the teaching of *YHWH* that has been communicated to guide mankind. Here, *torah* means revealed truth. To David, it was everything that had been written up to that point. It refers to revealed truth as contrasted to