

The Covenants, Grace and Law (Part 17)

Does a Specific Verse Nullify a Law? (A)

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In last week's sermon, we began by seeing in yet more places where both Jesus and Paul turned to the Old Testament Pentateuch for authority for what they were teaching. It almost seems as though they did not understand that "the law is done away" (and I hope you understand that I am speaking sarcastically here).

There is one verse that we used last week, at the beginning of that sermon, that I want to turn to once again just to reinforce what we talked about last week. If you can recall, Paul was on trial before Felix here. Felix was the governor. At the very beginning of Paul's defense, he said,

Acts 24:14 But this I confess unto you, that after the way which they call heresy...

The "they" is the Jews. Paul says, "I confess." He is giving a testimony. He is giving a witness, as before a court. Indeed, he is on trial, and he is confessing.

Acts 24:14 Unto you [Felix], that after the way which they call heresy...

"The way" is Christianity, but the Jews call it heresy.

Acts 24:14 So worship I the God of my fathers, [Now, here comes this statement.] believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.

That is really an astounding statement in light of what has gone on in Protestantism in the last couple hundred years. The very man that they say wrote most clearly and lucidly that "the law is done away" is the very man who says he believes all things that are written in the law and in the prophets. You had better believe that there is absolutely nothing in the law and the prophets that says anything at all about the doing away with God's law! Paul did NOT have the same position in relation to the law as modern theologians do.

It might come to your mind that, well, maybe there was a time when this was said in which Paul had not written some of those things that he wrote later on. Oh, no. The two books that contain the most from which the Protestants quote as their authority for doing away with the law are the books of Romans and Galatians. This instance in which Paul was on trial before Felix took place in either A.D. 58 or 59. It is very likely that it was in A.D. 59. that it took place.

In either case—A.D. 58 or 59—the book of Romans and the book of Galatians had both already been written. Both were being circulated through the church. All those quotations were written

prior to Paul's statement here, and Paul is still saying, "I believe all things that are written in the law and in the prophets."

In that sermon, about half way through, we once again reviewed that salvation is by grace. I never want to get too far away from this, because I want you to understand that we certainly believe that salvation is by grace, but salvation in no way, of and by itself, does away with any of the law of God.

Salvation is something that **MUST** be given. There are simple reasons why it **MUST** be given. First of all, God's justice demands that there be a penalty for sin. Since His justice demands that the law be satisfied—that His own government be satisfied for crimes against it—it is something, then, on which He has to follow through. He cannot wink at actively expressed disagreements in a person's conduct against His rule of His creation.

The second reason is that, once one of His laws has been broken, there is no way that it can be undone. It has to be accepted according to what was done. I will give you two simple examples of this. Maybe one would suffice, but we will add another to it.

If somebody is murdered, can that be undone? His life is taken away. He is lying on the ground. What is done is done. You cannot resurrect him. You cannot turn the clock back. Nothing can be done to undo that, unless there is a way—a power—that is mightier than what we are able to do. So the law is broken.

Another clear illustration might be in terms of a person's virginity. Once the virginity is taken away through an act, it cannot be undone. The clock cannot be turned back. It is gone, never ever to be recovered.

The same is true with any act that anybody does, even when we are not considering law. However, we *are* considering law here; and, because we are, we have to understand that it is God who has to come to a solution for the breaking of law. What He has determined is to allow the death of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty, and then, in His mercy (called "grace" in the Bible), He will freely give the person relief from the penalty that is hanging over his head. We cannot make up for what has been done in the past. That can only be "made up for" by a perfect sacrifice and God's willingness to accept that sacrifice.

If you are studying the New Testament, and especially the writings of Paul, it is good to examine very carefully the context in which the word *law* appears. Paul uses it very broadly. In fact, 110 times he uses the word *law*. I will give you some of the ways in which he uses it: There are times when he uses it to indicate a single law. There are other times that he uses it to indicate the Mosaic law. There are other times that he uses it to indicate the Pentateuch—the first five books. Other times it refers only to the Ten Commandments.

A couple of interesting ones are in Romans 2, where he uses *law* to indicate the will of God written in the hearts of Gentiles. Why Gentiles? Because they had not been given the law by God, but yet he said they did the things contained within the law by nature. What it amounts to, in modern terminology there, would be that he uses *law* in the sense of *natural law*, that it is something that will come to people's minds as being in force even though they have not been formally instructed by it.

This became an issue, incidentally, in the confirmation of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court of the United States, because he professed to those people who were examining him that he believed in natural law. They did not like that at all, because liberals like to be free of the constraints of natural law; they do not feel responsible then.

Another way Paul used the word *law* was as if God Himself were speaking. He did not use the name, or title, of *God*; he only used the term *law*. You can see this in Romans 3:19. At times, Paul appears to contradict himself when he uses the word *law*. In one place, he says, "Yea, we establish the law." In another place, he says, "Yea, we abolish the law." He uses it in the sense of being both necessary and unnecessary. If you are careful, you will begin to get the hang of the way that he uses it.

There are two general categories in which Paul's use of the word *law* appears. If the subject in the context has to do with justification, then it is very likely that he will use a "no law" approach. That is both logical and right. The reason is that no man can justify himself. All the law keeping in the world will not undo that murder that I talked about, or the loss of virginity that I used as an illustration just a little bit earlier. We cannot justify ourselves by what we do after we have broken a law. We cannot make up for it.

If the subject is sanctification—which has to do with a person's conduct, with right living, with discipline or character building—then Paul will say the law is valuable. It is necessary. It must be kept. If you just keep your eye on the context, it will help you very, very greatly to understand how Paul is going to use it.

Also during that portion of the sermon, we saw that grace is something from which we can fall, of which we can fall short. I then launched into the first of the four principles for beginning to understand the law's application in our lives. That was "Does the law define sin?"

As we began that sermon, I felt that it was necessary to show that the Bible's approach to sin is very broad. Just like Paul's use of the word *law*, the Bible's use of the term *sin* is very broad.

Before I go any further, I want to reemphasize something that I said in that last sermon, so that we will remember it: I said that all four of those principles work together! I do not know of too many incidences in which only one principle will apply. They all have to be worked together.

I also want to confess to you that I am not about to tell you that John Ritenbaugh knows the correct application of every law, because I do not. That is something that we grow into. As we grow into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and as we keep the law of God, God gives further understanding. We understand further refinements and the applications of these things as we grow into them. I do not know all of the applications, and I am sure that you do not know them either.

I John 5:16-17 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

That is a very revealing couple of verses. I am using the King James Version, but if you look in

a modern translation, verse 17 is very likely to say, "All wrong doing is sin." That is very broad. It means that every law defines a duty—either to God or to man—either in the letter and/or the letter and the spirit. It has to be that way. How else, then, can one live by every word of God? Matthew 4: 4; Luke 4: 4; and Deuteronomy 8: 3 demand of us that we live by every word of God.

These people who say that things are "done away" do not know of what they are talking. Remember also that I showed you that the Old Testament is written with the Christian church in mind--not Judaism, and not really even the Old Testament true church. It is written with the New Testament church in mind. That is why Paul said that he believed all things that were written in the law and the prophets, and that is why Jesus said that not one jot or tittle will pass from the law until all be fulfilled.

We also saw that the Bible clearly categorizes sin, because some sin is unto death and some is not. I also made the statement that this ought to be extremely comforting because then we can understand that our salvation is not on the line every time we commit a sin.

One of the clearest examples of this was David's clearly premeditated and arranged death of Uriah the Hittite. We can all pretty easily understand and even excuse somewhat David's sin of adultery because the passions got working in both of them, and the first thing you know they were locked in one another's embrace. The thing with Uriah did not happen that way. David did what he did because he wanted to save face. He was ashamed of what he did and he wanted to get rid of the witness, who could testify against him and shame him before all of Israel. David clearly premeditated that death—plotted it out, planned it out, and made sure that Uriah gave his life.

What this example does is put a premium on our attitude as shown by our entire pattern of life after our calling. This occurred, of course, with God's judgment of David. David was forgiven (even though it was clearly premeditated) on the basis of his repentance, on the basis of his attitude towards life and towards God Himself. God even testified, "This is a man after My own heart."

David did what he did, and God forgave him. He is going to be in God's Kingdom, and he is still going to be king over all Israel. We can understand, then, that David's sin did not qualify as trampling the blood of the Son of God underfoot and doing despite unto the spirit of grace.

Please remember that God wants—it is His will—that each of us goes on to perfection, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. He is looking for honest effort and consistent submission to His truth. If He sees persistent willful failure, then He may have no recourse but to reject such a person on the basis of his own record.

This is, again, a very simple and well-understood principle, I think, for every adult. When we were going through school, there were kids that failed a class or a grade. Maybe you were one of them. Why did the teacher fail the student? Did the teacher do it because he just did not like the student? Or did the student show persistent and consistent unwillingness to do work at that level? Thus the teacher had no recourse but to fail the student, on the basis of the student's record.

That is the same principle by which God judges! If we are making consistent progress—even

though it may not be as much as God would like—but if we are growing, if we are overcoming, and if we have a good attitude, then we are going to make it.

Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 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.

Remember the two general categories. Since the subject is justification, it does not matter what law is followed. It does not matter whether it is the Ten Commandment law, the Mosaic law, or the Ceremonial law. It does not matter what law it is. One is not going to be justified by the deeds of the law, by the keeping of it.

The keeping of the law was never intended either to justify or to provide salvation. These two verses tell us the law's purpose: It defines right and wrong. We are going to spend some time on this verse, because it shows clearly *the law's purpose*. If I can put it into one succinct, short sentence, it would be this: The law shows us our duty. Another way of saying it would be, "It shows us where we have weakness and where we are falling short."

Just knowing the law does not give us the power to keep it, but it does teach us of our sinfulness. (This is further expounded in Romans 7.) It is through being aware of the law that we become aware of the difference between what we do and are, and what we ought to do.

If we have the right attitude, this is going to do something very good for us. Psychologists do not think this is good, but God thinks it is good: It promotes shame and guilt, and from shame and guilt come humility and repentance.

The proper task of the law is to help us to aid the right kind of conscience. It does this by awakening in us a clear conscience of what is right and wrong, and not what our culture teaches us. How often have you heard it said (or have said yourself), "But, Mom, everybody is doing it." "Everybody has one." "Everybody is wearing one."

Culture includes those things that we learn from the around and the about—apart from God. They may be right; they may be wrong. The chances are (in terms of moral and spiritual things) that they are probably going to be wrong.

The right kind of conscience begins to be developed when we know what the right standard or code is. As long as you do not have the right standard or the right code, the right conscience cannot be developed. It is only when a person's conscience is right that the right feelings are developed within him.

There are people who can murder without shame. The mind gets to the place where it will not accept shame as an excuse for what they have done. You have heard of, and maybe even know, people who lie so much that they are not even any longer aware that they are lying. Why? It is because the conscience is not any longer telling them that this is a lie.

Consciences are educated, and you will never have the right conscience until your conscience is being developed from the right source! A major portion of this is having the right standard, and a right standard does NOT come out of the world, which is a mixture of good and evil. That is why we always say, "Everybody is doing it." All of us have done it. That becomes our "justification."

In the case of God's law, it is differentiated from other codes of law (which would be the state's, or what the culture accepts as right). This is a very important factor. I said just a little bit ago that the law is one factor that is necessary for developing a right conscience. Now here comes the second factor; and it is, in this case, something that man's law does not have.

In our life, in whatever culture we are, our duty is pretty much to a faceless bureaucracy. We call it "the government," or we may even call it "the law." If we really want to get personal, it is "the fuzz." It is "the cops," "the guys in blue," or "Smokey the bear." We have a lot of terms.

Our responsibility in regard to God's law is to a living, holy, and powerful Personality whose law gives us just a brief *verbal description of Himself*. If we do have the right attitude toward the law and we recognize that it is His, we can see that we fall lamentably short in coming to understand right from wrong. It is not merely "right from wrong," but sin.

Sin and crime may have very many things in common, but they are NOT the same because of this factor of which I am talking. We need to realize far more clearly that our conduct is not measured merely against a written standard, but against the clear light of God's immeasurable holiness.

Do you remember what David said in Psalm 51, that psalm of repentance? He said:

Psalm 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.

When we sin against this God, other people get caught in it; and we get caught in their sins. However, sin is really *against God*—because it is His law; it is His creation. Everything belongs to Him, and it is our relationship with Him that is being damaged by our stepping beyond the limits of His law.

The second factor is that behind the law—the law of God—is the presence of a personal and holy God with whom we have a relationship. Thus, sin is not merely the transgression of a commandment, but disobedience against the Personality whose holiness is far more pure the more we come to know it.

Sin is different from crime because it is the flouting of the righteous will of that Personality. We only begin to become aware of the exceeding sinfulness of sin when we begin to understand the personal holiness and righteousness that confronts us in that God. If we are honest in evaluating ourselves against Him, that should be a very humbling experience.

That is good, because God blesses the humble. It says that three times: in James, in I Peter, and in Proverbs 3. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. That is what we want, is it not? We want God's grace. We want to have a good relationship with Him. We want

to have "the goodies" that He can hand out.

What Paul is explaining, in Romans 3, is that to expect a code of law to transform our lives and to make us upright is to ask or expect something of the law that it cannot do. To choose the right—I mean to be empowered to keep that law, to be empowered to do things differently from how we have before, and to become like that God—we need a *new motive* that is sufficiently compelling to enable us to forsake the wrong that the code teaches us to recognize. We will never overcome sin until we grasp this! We can overcome it to a limited extent, but I mean growing to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We will grow best and most whenever we recognize this Personality behind the law.

God begins to give us this compelling motive by opening our minds. He personally initiates contact with us. He begins to reveal to us the good news of the Kingdom of God, which tells us what the ultimate goal of life is: that we are to be born into His very Family; that we are to be like Him; that our goal is to be like God, to be holy as He is holy. He shows us reconciliation with Him through Jesus Christ, and the sharing of eternal relationships of the highest and greatest order in peace and contentment.

From this comes the awesome awareness of obligation, springing from appreciation for what He has done; and there is the source of motivation. If our motivation for obedience is not directed towards that Personality and His purpose, then our overcoming is going to be on a very low level.

There is another factor that has to be added to this. We are going to pick this up from a scripture that we all know by heart, but we will turn to it anyway.

I John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

From Romans 3, we learn that law tells us our duty, what we are obliged to do. It defines right and wrong. Combined with this is that wonderful Personality. Now we find that the keeping of these commands—His law—also describes God's greatest attribute. The law does two things: It shows negative things, and it shows positive. The positive is love—the love of God. The negative is what sin—wrongdoing—is.

That law is a reflection of His character in words. It points the way toward what we are to become. Answer this simple question: Does God call people to salvation and then throw away the road map? It is ridiculous to think such a thing.

As with sin, the law also has a Personality behind it—in terms of love. The law gives us the basic outline, and then, when combined with the examples of God living and acting in both Testaments, it gives us a full picture of love. God's actions and Christ's example amplify and make practical what the law says in words.

One has to begin somewhere, and that is what the law does, in providing us with its letter. Then there is its spirit, which is the magnification of the letter; but that does NOT do away with it. The law, then, is not only the guideline to what is right and wrong; the law is also the guideline—in words—to what love is.

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law: judgment [or, justice], mercy, and faith.

Justice, mercy, and faith—or fidelity, or faithfulness. The word *faith* might be somewhat misleading because we tend to think of it in terms of "confidence" or "trust." Here it is used in the sense of being faithful, trustworthy, or loyal. Did you ever think of these things in terms of law?

Why are they weightier matters of law? The weightiest matter of law is love, and sin. Yet justice, mercy, and faithfulness are also matters of law, because a person must have a basis—a guide, a standard—from which to judge, to make an evaluation to know whether to be faithful, loyal, or just in his dealing with other people. Why? Because the law is the basis of right and wrong, whether to do or not to do.

People get the idea that mercy is not a matter of law. Oh yes, it is. If the law is done away, there is no basis for mercy, no basis for kindness, no basis for generosity. We begin to gather in these seemingly vague terms, and we begin to find that they are directly attached to the law of God. We have no basis for judging whether it be merciful if the law is not there to provide us with the basis.

God's law—His instruction—that which defines right and wrong—is NOT contained in Ten Commandments. It is NOT contained in five books. It is contained in 66 books. It is all over the place in the Bible, because the law of God is all over the place in the Bible.

We are done with point one, but I want to summarize it. All of our life we have been taught, to a greater or lesser extent, to try to put biblical things into nice, neat little boxes. We say, "This was for the Jews; this was for the Gentiles. This is for the Christians; that was for Judaism. This is for the Old Testament; that is for the New Testament. This is Old Covenant; that is New Covenant." Brethren, it is NOT like that! The Bible is NOT written like other books.

The Old Testament was written primarily with the Christian church and the New Covenant in mind, but it was done within the historical context of ancient Israel. Sometimes we have a bit of trouble relating to archaic situations, but if you begin to meditate on that—asking God for guidance—you are going to see modern applications to the principles that are contained there.

The New Covenant laws, principles, illustrations and examples are all over the place, intertwined with what we ordinarily like to think as being Old Covenant territory. It has to be this way because the New Covenant involves the spirit, or intent, of God's law. Sin, righteousness, and love are stated, defined, illustrated, exemplified all over the Bible.

It is not just in the New Testament; it is in the Old Testament, too. You know very well that many of the examples that you use to illustrate what you think are New Covenant points are from the Old Testament, just like the one I used a little while ago: I used David.

Psalm 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.

That came out of the Old Testament, from the Psalms; but it is a New Covenant, New Testament principle. It is buried right in the middle of the Old Testament. Virtually everything pertaining to life that is of any importance may be in any place in the Book, which means that you have to have a good knowledge of the whole thing and to look all over it.

If we are going to live by every word of God, we are going to have to adjust our narrow way of viewing God's instruction and do what the Bereans did: search the Scriptures to find whether those things are so. Not "not so," but so! That is a positive approach to things that God appreciated so much that He included it in the Bible.

God's law defines right and wrong, sin and righteousness. It shows us what love is. It defines justice, mercy, and fidelity. All of God's law is still in force, even as Jesus said and as I am going to continue to show you in upcoming sermons. However, not every law needs to be physically performed. That leads us to point number two: *Is there a scripture that definitely states that such-and-such no longer needs to be done?* Again, this is a principle that needs very careful examination because this is the area in which we are most prone to have some very serious shortcomings. This is because human nature wants to look for things that it does not have to do, and then stop the search—thinking that it has found the answer. That is dangerous because the law may very well apply in its spirit, even though we do not have to do it physically.

In your study of the Bible, you are going to encounter a fairly large number of words describing law. One of these is *judgments*. A judgment is a binding decision based on God's previously revealed laws. Numbers 27 relates a situation that involves the law of inheritance, most specifically in regard to Zelophehad's daughters.

Zelophehad was an Israelite who died in the wilderness, on the trek to the Promised Land. He must have been among those of the older generation that all died there. When he died, he did not leave his land to any sons because he did not have any; he had five daughters. The law at the time required that the inheritance be passed on to sons; there was no requirement to pass it on to a daughter.

This may, at first, seem to be unkind or illogical, but what is assumed in the older law was that the girls would marry, and then they would inherit along with their husband the property of his father.

This presented a problem because Zelophehad's daughters wanted to inherit the land. Maybe they felt that they had not much hope of getting married; I do not know what all was behind it. They appealed to Moses and said, "We ought to be able to inherit our father's property."

Since Moses did not know what to do, he appealed to God. God said, "The daughters of Zelophehad have spoken rightly. Give them the land."

Numbers 27:9-11 And if he have no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance unto his brethren [brothers]. And if he have no brethren [brothers], then you shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren. And if his father have no brethren, then you shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he

shall possess it; and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the LORD commanded Moses.

What God did is that He set up a table of progression or priority. If there were no sons, it automatically went to the daughters. If there were no daughters, then the next step, then the third, and then the fourth.

You might wonder why God was so concerned about land. There is a very logical reason why He was concerned about land and why He wanted it to remain in the family. The principle is shown in other parts of the Bible. It is a very simple principle, and that is that land is the source of wealth. If a person (male or female) has land and he is able to work it then he is going to be able to produce some measure of income.

Think what a blessing that would be today—if every family owned land. Do you realize this would solve one of our country's major problems today? There would be almost no welfare, because nobody would need to get welfare from the State except in very small amounts, because every family would be able to produce at least their own food (or something along that line).

It kept a major welfare system from developing. Besides that, there were the psychological benefits of owning land—because then a person has something that is tangible, something to which he can give himself, something he can maintain, develop, use to create wealth, develop a sense of self-worth. Land gives a person a stake in the community, and with that comes a sense of responsibility to the entire community.

Incidentally, the main characters in Numbers 27 were of the tribe of Manasseh. This is where the second problem developed as well.

Numbers 36:1-3 And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel. And they said, "The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel...

Here comes the problem: What if one of Zelophehad's daughters marries a Jew? What if another marries an Asherite; a third one, a Benjaminite; the fourth, a Gadite; and the fifth, a Simeonite? Who inherits the land when couple number one dies, couple number two, and couple number three—because couple number one is not going to be of the same family and the same tribe as the area in which they are living because they are not Manassites. They might be Gadites, or they might be Jews. That is the problem.

Numbers 36:3 And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers...

In other words, land that God gave to Manasseh would pass to the Jews, would pass to the Asherites, would pass to the Simeonites, would pass to the Gadites, would pass to the Benjamites, and the Manassites would not own their own land—all because two young people fell in love and married somebody out of their tribe.

Numbers 36:4 And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of our fathers.

I will not read the whole thing there, but Moses' solution to the problem became a judgment and is now a part of the Bible. In such a case as with Zelophehad's daughters, they were commanded that they had to marry someone who was a Manassite IF they wanted to hang on to the land. IF they did not want the land, it would be given up according to the progression that was given in chapter 27. They had to forfeit it, though, and it passed from their family altogether.

Thus, that became part of the Bible. Why did I go into this? I did it to reinforce something that I said in the first point and also to continue this principle through the second point. Here we have an illustration (within ten chapters) that the Bible *isan unfolding revelation*. In other words, not all the information on a given subject is going to be in one place.

The Bible is revealed progressively; knowledge, wisdom, and understanding are piled layer upon layer throughout all its pages—here a little, and there a little. However, there is a general progress that, as we move chronologically toward Christ—toward the setting up of God's Kingdom—the information that is added becomes more directed toward the spiritual and less to the physical.

To this point, I think all of us have enough understanding to know that the Ten Commandments provide the basic revelation of man's duty to God and to fellow man; thus, they are the basic definition of love and the basic definition of sin, or failure. They are absolutely still in effect, as I will continue to show.

Besides *judgments*, we will run into terms like *statutes* and *ordinances*. *Statutes* and *ordinances* are sometimes intermixed; some practices will be called *statutes* in one place and *ordinances* in another. There seems to be little difference between them. Statutes, though, are things like the holy days, tithing. Tithing is called an ordinance in Malachi 3, however. Clean and unclean foods also have to do with statutes.

What statutes do is magnify some specific area of the Ten Commandments. For instance, the Holy Days—the festivals—are really an aspect of the Fourth Commandment. Tithing is an aspect of the stealing commandment; and, if we do not tithe, we are stealing.

Judgments are binding decisions based on others of God's law that have become part of the Scripture. Sometimes we have an inclination to denigrate something that is not of the stature of one of the Ten Commandments and to think of it as being less important. It is important to understand this because this is what the world has done in relation to the Holy Days. The festivals of God have been denigrated as nothing more than a ceremony, but they are much more than a ceremony. They are part of the Fourth Commandment.

Tithing has also been denigrated as being something that is not required of people. To fail to pay tithes is really a renunciation of the sovereignty of God in our lives, because God owns everything—including our lives! When we fail to pay the tithe to Him, then we are stealing from Him. That is exactly what Malachi 3 says.

That attaches it directly to that commandment, does it not? Even though it is called an ordinance, it is a major sin not to tithe. In fact, I will give you an idea of how major it is: It is virtually on the same level as what Satan the devil did when he rebelled against God. He rebelled *against the sovereignty of God!* It is not in the same area as tithing, but the principle is exactly the same. He rebelled and tried to overthrow God because he did not want to recognize God's authority over him.

That is what Malachi wrote in Malachi 3. Let us begin to look into these just a little more closely. Something to remember is that one of the things that differentiates the Ten Commandments is that God Himself spoke them. All by itself, that puts them into a different category. He did not delegate that to anybody. They were so important that He did not give them to a messenger. He spoke them Himself.

Then Moses delivered and declared the civil and religious statutes, and judgments, and ceremonies; but they were still God's and only delivered by Moses. In Exodus 23, we are right in the midst of the terms of the Old Covenant, and it says,

Exodus 23:18 You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until the morning.

What is he talking about here? Do you know what it is? *My sacrifice* is the Passover. It is the only sacrifice within the terms of the Old Covenant. Yet we do it under the New Covenant! We are still keeping the Passover sacrifice. Why? Here it is, right out of the Old Covenant; and yet we keep it.

We can look at sacrifice, if we want to study the subject, and do you know when sacrifice began? It began long before the Old Covenant. In fact, it began at the beginning. The earliest record of a sacrifice is Cain and Abel. Where do you think they learned it? They undoubtedly got it from Adam and Eve. Where do you think they learned it? They learned it from God. They did not just dream up this idea of offering the Deity an animal in sacrifice. They were commanded to do that by God. That is the implication. Cain and Abel knew what God was requiring.

Yet we do not offer sacrifices today, but we do offer the Passover. Those other sacrifices that we do not offer are not even mentioned in the Old Covenant. Yet here is the Passover, which is

mentioned in the Old Covenant; and it we do. Do you see what I mean?

The Bible is *an expanding revelation*. Just because something appears in the Old Covenant does not mean that it is obsolete and done away. You understand from our experience that some aspects of that are no longer required of us, but we still keep Passover, and we do it in its New Covenant, New Testament application.

Let us add a little bit to this and go back to the book of Jeremiah. God is speaking:

Jeremiah 7:22 For I spoke not [He never said a word.] unto your fathers...

Which of the "fathers"? We need to know that, to find out to whom He did not speak.

Jeremiah 7:22 For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt...

Now we know that He is talking about the generation to whom He gave His law and with whom He made the Old Covenant. We understand the time element.

Jeremiah 7:22-23 For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people: and walk you in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."

Now we can see why there are no more sacrifices given in the Old Covenant except for the Passover. There is no mention of them because God did not require them under the terms of the Old Covenant. All He wanted them to do was keep the Ten Commandments, and the statutes and judgments that He had already given to them with one exception—the Passover, the only sacrifice that He required of them!

This is one reason why the New Covenant did not perpetuate those other sacrifices, even though the Old Covenant became obsolete. The sacrifices were never a part of it in the first place. In terms of Passover, the symbols changed to bread and wine, but we still do it.

There are three reasons why we keep Passover even though it is right in the midst of the Old Covenant. I am going to give them to you here, but they are not listed according to priority or importance. First of all, like the Ten Commandments, they superceded the making of the Old Covenant. Passover was commanded in Exodus 12, and put into effect and practiced before they ever got to Mt. Sinai. (That is probably the least important of the three.) Second, it is commanded in the New Testament—and shown by the example of Christ and the apostles. (That is the most important of the three.) Third, Passover is included within the statutes of God. It is a ramification of the Fourth Commandment. It is a festival, and therefore to be kept.

Here we have Jeremiah speaking and saying that God never commanded offerings and sacrifices when the Old Covenant was made. Now we are going to look back into the book of Galatians to another scripture with which most of us are familiar.

Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serves the law?

That is, to what purpose is it? Remember that the major subject in the book of Galatians is *justification*—right standing with God, being aligned with God, being declared righteous.

Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions.

This goes with Jeremiah 7: 22-23 right there in the Book where God Himself said, "I did not speak to you about sacrifices and offerings." Then we can go back to the book of Exodus and we can find that those things were added later on, after the Old Covenant had been made. They were attached to it, like an appendage. Now we find the reason: "because of transgressions"; that is, because they were sinning. They were breaking the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, and they were sinning against God. Now he tells us how long this added law was to last:

Galatians 3:19 ...until the seed should come to whom the promise was made [Christ]; and it [the law] was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

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

The law—the sacrificial ceremonial law that was added—had a purpose and that purpose was to teach. It did not define sin, unless the law itself (that is, the sacrificial law) was being broken; and then it would have been a wrongdoing; it would have been a sin.

That happened in the case of Aaron's sons, when God struck them dead. In Leviticus 10, He struck them dead because they did not follow His rules concerning the making of an offering, and it became sin to them.

It might be good to mention something, at this point, concerning Numbers 28 and 29: Numbers 28 and 29 contain the national laws of offerings that were commanded. These had to be done. This included the evening and morning sacrifices. It included all the sacrifices and offerings that were to be made on the first Day of Unleavened Bread, the last Day of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day. Those things were done at the temple, and they were done in behalf of—for the benefit of—the whole nation.

This may surprise you—I hope it does not—but the individual Israelite was NEVER required to make any sacrifice at all except for Passover. All of those sacrifices and offerings that are given in the book of Leviticus were not required of the Israelites. They were completely voluntary. If

he wanted to do them, he could, and it was good for him if he did, if he understood what he was doing. However, he did not have to do them; they were completely voluntary, and that is why they did not define sin. They were NOT something required by God.

Even in this case—whether they were the national offerings made at the temple and tabernacle or the voluntary ones—they were to last only until the Seed came.

Hebrews 10:1-3 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices [That identifies the body of laws being talked of here—it is the sacrifices, of which the law is just a shadow.] which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshipper once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

There is the reason that it was considered to be a schoolmaster. There is the reason that God told them to do these things: They were to remind people of sin. They did not define sin. They were made because people were sinning. They were to remind them that they were sinning!

Hebrews 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

That is why they had to be done over and over and over again. Not one sin has ever been forgiven in the history of mankind—from Adam and Eve on—because an animal shed its blood. All the sacrifices did was give people a consciousness that they were breaking the Ten Commandments or that they were breaking the statutes and judgments.

Hebrews 10:18 Now where remission of these is [that is, remission of sin], there is no more offering for sin.

Christ's sacrifice had to be made only one time. It was sufficient to pay the penalty for all of man's sins for all time. All the sacrificial law did was foreshadow Christ's sacrifice, and that is why it was a reminder. That is why it was a schoolteacher. It did not define sin, as I said before, unless the offerings themselves were done wrong.

Those temporary laws did not pertain to murder, stealing, Sabbath breaking, idolatry, lying, or any of the Ten Commandments. They are now, therefore, set aside because sin has been effectively covered in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

If you remember anything at all about the book of Hebrews—about its theme—you understand that the theme is *better*. Christ is better than angels. The gospel that has been give to us is better than what was given to the Old Covenant. Christ is greater, better than Moses. Christ is greater, better than Aaron. Finally, when the author gets on the subject of the Covenants, then we find out that the New Covenant is better, greater, superior to the Old Covenant. When he

starts talking about the sacrifices, then the sacrifice of Christ is greater, better, superior to the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

The theme, then, through much of chapter 9 and here through chapter 10 is that you replace the old with the new. You replace the inferior with a better one. You replace the temporary with the permanent.