

The Bible Does Not Have All The Answers!

A Book of Instruction for Godly Living

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The Bible does not have all the answers. Did you hear me correctly? The Bible does not have all the answers. Now, I do not think you expected to hear that from a minister in a church service, on a holy day. It is one of those startling statements that all you men who went through Spokesman Club learned how to do (hopefully) to get people's attention. Did I get yours?

On the other hand, even though it is a startling statement, it is not an untrue statement. Let me put that positively. It is a true statement that I just made. The Bible does not have all the answers. Believe it or not, God designed it that way—so that it would not have all the answers. It is for our benefit, because He wants us to develop His mind in ourselves—yet to be independent of His mind in some respects as well. In effect, He wants us to be able to function in a godly manner—according to His character—whether or not He, or His Word, is available at any given time.

Did you catch that? He wants us to be able to function in a godly manner—according to His character—whether He, or His Word, is available at any given time. Indeed, is not character defined by what one does when one is alone. The way Mike [Ford] once put it in an article is that character is what you do in the dark, when no one can see you. The classic Spokesman Club 'Table Topics' question was "If you were going down the street at three o'clock in the morning, and the light in front of you suddenly turned red; would you stop? No police are around. No other cars are around. It's the dead of night. Would you obey that law, to stop and wait for the light to turn green?" That always provoked a lot of lively discussion in Spokesman Club.

Today we are going to delve into the function of the Bible in our lives—and the law; and where its teachings are designed to lead us. We may be "the people of the Book"—the Book being the Bible; but God wants us to be even more than that. Let us begin in Ezekiel 4, because I want to show you (as we begin here) how people can use the Bible and, in one sense, take it far

beyond what it was intended to be—and, in another sense, treat it less than what it is supposed to be. Ezekiel 4 is the chapter where God tells Ezekiel that he must lie on one side for all of this time, and then he has to turn over and lie, again, on the other side. I believe it was his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days—symbolizing the captivities of Israel and Judah.

Ezekiel 4:9-10 Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself. During the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat it. And your food which you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time you shall eat it.

Many of you, I am sure, have eaten "Ezekiel bread." You can get it at health food stores, and it is made from these ingredients. People think that God included this recipe in the Bible to be some sort of great health food and that, because God gave this recipe, this Ezekiel bread is better than all other kinds of bread. I have seen people make that claim. But just because this recipe is found in the Bible does not make it a super, healthful, special kind of 'miracle bread.' Like it has a stamp on the side—"Endorsed by heaven."

Do you understand what this bread is? It is supposed to symbolize (through Ezekiel's actions) the poverty and the lack of nutrition that one can get during the siege of a city, when there is hardly anything to eat. What it is showing here is that they gather anything that is available; they throw it into a pot and mix it together and make bread. That is why it has wheat, and barley, and spelt, and millet, and beans, and lentils in it—because it is what they can find.

Do you understand that 20 shekels worth each day are 9 ounces of bread? That is about half of what it takes to keep a man alive each day. Normally, you would want about 2 pounds of bread a day to maintain pretty good nutrition. So this is actually less than half of your daily requirement of bread. The amount of water that he is told to drink is about the same—half of what it really takes to remain healthy. So there is a further miracle here, that God sustains Ezekiel for more than a year on something that is not going to sustain life at its optimal level.

But what people have done is that they have taken this recipe for "siege bread," and made it into something that it is not—thinking that the Bible is a health food manual. That is not why God designed the Bible. There are health principles in the Bible, and we heard about those in a preceding series of sermon on "eating." There are good, wonderful health principles in the Bible; but that is not its purpose. They are extras that God throws in, to give us an abundant life. But this particular one is even on the other extreme. It is not even there to show health. It is there to show poverty, and lack, and malnutrition. So the Bible is not a health book.

The Bible is not a science book, even though there are rudimentary principles of science in the Bible. Thousands of years before the great astronomers and physicists understood that the earth hangs in space by law, the book of Job says that it does. The Bible says that the earth is round. You can tell that by things like the way the sun went back on the sundial, and other things that are in the Bible. But the Bible is not a science book. It is not a textbook. It is not even a history book, in the most precise sense of the word. It is a book that tells the history of God's dealings with a certain people, but there is a great deal of history that is left out.

As Mr. Armstrong had inscribed on the building there in Pasadena, it is "the foundation of all knowledge." But the Bible does not contain all knowledge. The important word there is **foundation**. It gets it started. It is where we have to leap from. But if we want to find in the Bible every answer to every question—we are going to be sadly disappointed. We need to understand what the Bible really is.

Herbert Armstrong called it "the instruction manual for mankind." And that is correct. I agree with that, but only up to a point. If we think of it as only an instructional manual alone, then we may misunderstand something. When you buy a bike for your kid and you get an instruction manual, what does it tell you? It should give you a step by step by step by step instruction on how to put that bike together. Or if you buy a computer and it is made by a reputable company, they are going to include a manual in there that gives you instructions on how to load the software, how to get the thing working, and what to do if there is trouble. So they should give you step by step by step instructions on how these things work—so that you can either fix your problem, or put the thing together and make use of it as it is designed to do.

If you are fixing a car, it is good to have a manual that gives you instructions on how to do this or that—whatever it happens to be that you need to fix on your car. So a manual is invaluable in making sure that you do everything correctly and in the proper order. It usually—either numerically, or by lists—puts down, or lists, the steps that you take in very precise terms and in the proper order that you should do them.

Have you ever gone into the Bible for step by step instruction to "fix" your marriage—or, to "fix" your financial woes? Or, let us say, to "fix" that problem that you have with your ornery boss? Can you flip to II Childrearing 3:14 to find out how to deal with that bratty kid? Or have you ever gone to study Bereavement 5:7-12 on how to cope with the death of a loved one? Have you ever found those in there? Is everything laid out like an instruction manual, where you can just flip to the right page and there it is—verse by verse, just exactly what you must do? It is not there. What does God say? "Here a little, there a little."

The Bible is not put together like an instruction manual. And if we try to treat it like an instruction manual, we are going to be disappointed. Yes, the instructions are there; but they are not put together like an instruction manual. Back in Isaiah 28, he had just talked very extensively about the drunkards of Ephraim, specifically. He talks about how they are intoxicated. Do not think of this just in terms of wine or strong drink, but think of it in terms of the intoxicating and addictive effects of sin—and how one gets further and further into it. He had just told them that they have very poor judgment. They cannot figure out right from wrong; and they are, basically, **unteachable** at this point. Here, in verses 9 and 10, is the drunkard talking back to God.

Isaiah 28:9-10 "Whom will he [meaning Isaiah specifically, but also God is in the background] teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk [mere infants, babies]? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line. Here a little, there a little."

What they are accusing Isaiah (and God behind him) of doing is treating them like children and giving them things to learn in the form of nursery rhymes, and that is how you learn God's way. [Rhythmic repetition.] They are saying, "We are adults. You can speak to us like adults. Just give it to us plain, man." But do you know what God said?

Isaiah 28:11 For with stammering lips and another tongue. . .

The idea behind this is the way that you speak to a baby. "Goo-goo, gaaa-gaa."

Isaiah 28:11 . . . He will speak to this people.

In the New Testament, Paul changes this to talk about using tongues—that is, other languages—to preach the gospel. But, in this case, he is talking about preaching to them as if they were babies.

Isaiah 28:12 To whom He said, "This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest," and "This is the refreshing."

So not only did He speak to them in very simple terms, that even a child would understand; He also gave them a great hope and told them everything that was going to happen. He did not hide anything from them.

Isaiah 28:12-13 Yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little," that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.

Why does He say that He talked to them like He was speaking gibberish to a baby? So that they would not understand, and so that they would go the way of all flesh and turn backward and **not** hear Him. That is interesting. It sounds to me like He made the Bible, and His Word, to be unintelligible gibberish to most people—so that they would not be called, and they would not understand. He is not yet ready to work with them.

Jesus' teaching on the parables is very similar. If you do not have the keys to unlock the parables, you do not understand them. They are plain to us. Their message is very clear. Putting a little bit here together and there with whatever else you can find elsewhere, it becomes very plain. Those things make a lot of sense. They not only have moral and ethical teaching and instruction for us, but they also have a certain amount of prophetic instruction too. They help us to understand where we are in time, and what God is doing. They are as clear as a bell to us.

But to those who are not initiated into that mystery—do not have the keys, have not been given the password to unlock the 'language' of how Jesus put them together—well, they just seem like stories with maybe a little moral at the end. So we can see that, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, this concept is mentioned, and I think we can apply it to the whole Bible. The whole thing is this way.

Have you ever studied a book like Isaiah and seen how he seemingly jumps all over the place? He is all over the place—talking about Edom at one time and Moab at another time, and Babylon here, and suddenly he will throw in Israel and Judah. Then suddenly you are in five chapters on the suffering servant, and then you are off into the Kingdom of God and the Great White Throne Judgment and all of these other places. It is not put together in a very clear and orderly manner, it seems.

Sometimes it is just getting interesting, and he goes to something else—like "to be continued" at the end of a sitcom or a drama or something, and you have to wait for something else to pop up. Sometimes verses are thrown in there and they seem like they have nothing to do with the context, but they have everything to do with it. However, if we do not have eyes to see, it does not make much sense. That is how the Bible is put together—not just Isaiah, but Ezekiel, the letters of Paul, Revelation. "Oh, this is an inset chapter. I was just getting interested in the story. And now we go back 5,000 years to the beginning of everything." (Sometimes I think modern writers write like that too.) But that is how the Bible is put together.

So, HWA's analogy of the Bible as an instruction book is not as good as his other analogy of the Bible as a jigsaw puzzle. If we can combine the two analogies, then we have a pretty good idea of how the Bible is put together.

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That is—a jigsaw puzzle that, once you finally get it all together, has all the instructions on it. But not step by step. Even though you put it all together, it is not an instruction manual where everything is very plainly laid out; but it is all there nonetheless. Everything that we need for our salvation is in the Book. The answers are there in terms of salvation, in terms of living properly and being godly in this life—to whatever extent we may achieve the life of Christ in this flesh. But other answers are not there—because that is not the design, the function, of the Bible.

So to get the complete picture on any subject, we have to pull together scriptures from here and there. Then turn them about, like a jigsaw puzzle. You know—the little lobe does not fit into the little slot exactly right this way; but if you turn it around, this other one does fit in. And it fits perfectly that way. So, rather than seeming that you are twisting the scripture, you are putting it in its proper perspective and making it fit the rest of the big picture. You are not forcing it into the way that you think it is, or should go.

Only then—once we make the whole picture fit together—do we have God's mind on any one particular subject. And even then, because we are flesh and our brains only use 10% of the gray matter that is up there, we do not really have the entirety of God's mind on it. But we are getting closer, once we put together all that God has revealed to us.

Of course, we have to add God's Holy Spirit into this process, or we will come to just plain 'wrong' or incomplete conclusions on a matter. That is why there are so many denominations out there in Christianity. They are not applying God's Spirit, and they are coming to plain wrong or incomplete understandings of the truth that is revealed in the Bible. And so we have religious confusion. Everybody seems to put the puzzle together just a little bit differently; and only the true church of God has it right—or, as right as we can get it (God willing, by His Spirit).

Let us go to Matthew 13. This is the section that I referred to earlier, about Jesus' use of parables. There is something at the end of this that is very interesting.

Matthew 13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them,

"Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: *'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'* [That is from Isaiah 4.] But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you. . .

When He uses that—"verily" or "assuredly I say to you"—He is adding something that is not generally understood. Usually that is a good clue that He is going to ratchet up our understanding about something. (You will see this all through the Sermon on the Mount.)

Matthew 13:17 "For assuredly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

He is talking about men who were back there in the Old Testament that did not have as complete an understanding of things as we do. Remember Daniel 12, where he pleads, "What does this mean?" And God says, "Shut up the book, Daniel. The time is not yet, for this to be revealed. In the latter days, the righteous will understand." That is now! Jesus is telling us that, with His coming, there are things now that are revealed that even the prophets and righteous men of the Old Testament did not understand. Not just new revelations, necessarily. Not just new things, but a different way of looking at things.

When Christ came, He brought an entirely new perspective—the way His mind (and His Father's mind) deals with things like law. So, is this merely

because we have more of the Bible—that we have another third again, in the New Testament—that we have this understanding? Or is it something else? The beginning of the answer is found here in the Gospels, in John 1.

John 1:14-17 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This is He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. [This is where you need to pay special attention:] For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

When Jesus came, He added *another dimension* to our spiritual understanding. It is called here *grace and truth*. John almost makes "the law" here, brought by Moses (or, given through Moses), sound like it is inferior. He is contrasting the two, and obviously the one that is 'less emphasized' is the law. It is almost like "Well, Moses brought the law down here; but Jesus Christ brought grace and truth way up here." And that, between the two, there is very little in common. But that is not true. It is just a matter of 'Which is more important?'

Do not get confused here, because I am not doing away with the law—not in the least. But I want you to understand the emphasis here. Moses brought the law, and that was good. But Jesus brought grace and truth, which is better. The whole book of Hebrews is, basically, about this subject. What we had before Jesus was fine, for the time. But what Jesus brought, what Jesus did, what He promises is *far superior* to what Moses brought. There is really no comparison. Everything that we get through Christ—and His acts on our behalf—is better!

So, if we wanted to use one phrase to define what Christ brought, in this context, that is so much better—I would have to use the phrase "the spirit of the law." He took the law, and He filled it up to the full. Do you remember my analogy a couple summers ago? I talked about the jar with just a little bit of candy at the bottom. That is the law. But when Christ came, He filled the whole jar up—and now we have a greater understanding of the way things are, and should be.

Now, let us look at these two words—*grace* and *truth*. We should not think of grace here as merely unmerited pardon. That is very narrow, to look at it that way. Think of it more in terms of gifts. That is very broad. "Unmerited pardon"—which definitely we do not deserve. We do not deserve to have our sins forgiven and to be brought into God's presence. But by His Son's sacrifice and God's free gift, that has been given to us.

But we have been given so much more. We have been given His Spirit. Because we have that Spirit, God conveys to us so many other things as gifts. Faith is a gift. Love is a gift. We have gifts of this, and gifts of that. The twelfth chapter of I Corinthians talks about the gifts that God has given. Other places show us other gifts that God has given to us. Among them are things like the ministry, which is a gift to the church. Of course, there are physical blessings that also come as a result of our use of the spiritual gifts that He gives.

So it is far more than just "unmerited pardon." That is just the beginning of the process. There is so much more. And then we use these gifts for doing good, for growing. But, of course, the Holy Spirit may be among the most important of those things—because it gives us the mind of Christ. It gives us the ability to *think* as He does. And if we can think like He does, we will then *act* like He does; and we will grow, and we will show love toward our neighbor, and we will do those things that Christ does. We will, therefore, be in His Kingdom—because we are just like Him.

Now, what is *truth* here? I gave a sermon on truth several years ago, where I defined it as *what is real*. The sermon was called "Let's Get Real." And that is the literal meaning for this word "truth"—what is real. It can also mean what is genuine, as opposed to what is counterfeit. Anything that Satan does is counterfeit to what God does. So, what Satan produces is falsehood. What God produces is true. What God gives us to understand is true. What Satan twists is false—falsehood.

But, again, this is very broad; and truth is a much broader term than even what we normally consider it. In this case, it is not necessarily true to say that the law equals the truth. The law is part of the truth. In this case, we have to look at the law in terms of what Moses brought and the

understanding that the people had of the law—which is merely in its *letter*, basically. The law, even the letter of it, is still part of the truth; but it is not the whole truth. There is more! The law is the fundamental part of the truth, but someone with God's Spirit should be able to see so much more of the truth than just what is defined by the law.

The law in the Bible is very simple. Have you ever thought of the commandments in terms of "simple"? "You shall have no other gods before Me." Simple. Simply stated. "You shall not make any graven image." Easy to understand. "You shall not take My name in vain (in a worthless manner)." Easy. "Keep the Sabbath day." Pretty simple. "Honor your father and mother." Mr. Armstrong used to say that a child of 6 (or 7, or 8) should be able to understand that. And we can go on to the other five. "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness (or, lie). You shall not covet." Very simple laws—but there is so much more that those things encompass than just the simple statement that is there.

"You shall not kill," means so much more than "you shall not kill." Let us look at this. We are not going to specifically be looking at "You shall not kill." Rather, we are going to be looking at "You shall not bear false witness." Turn to Matthew 5. Jesus saw something far more in that simple statement—"You shall not bear false witness."—than other people did; and He explains it here. In my Bible, "Jesus Forbids Oaths" is the title of this section.

Matthew 5:33-34 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely [which is from Leviticus 19:12, where it says that specifically], but shall perform your oaths to the Lord,' [He got that from Deuteronomy 23:23. He stuck these two together.] But I say to you [What did I say that meant? That He is going to ratchet up our understanding about this. He is dealing with the ninth commandment.], do not swear at all."

Matthew 5:37 "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" [from Satan. Is he not "the father of lies"?.]

Now, what did Jesus do? He took the Ninth Commandment and these two corollaries (from Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 23)... As a matter of fact, you could put the ninth commandment as your big heading; and then you could put Leviticus 19:12 and Deuteronomy 23:23 as parts of it. All law comes off the Ten Commandments like branches on a tree. You can trace all moral law back to the Ten Commandments, in some form or another.

But Christ takes these two specific laws, and what does He do? He develops an overall *principle* that goes beyond the mere statement of "You shall not bear false witness." And what does He say? "Don't swear at all! But make sure that whenever you say something—when you make a decision or tell somebody something—that your "Yes" is a definite "Yes." and that your "No" is a definite "No" because, if you are fudging, you are acting like Satan. That middle ground is where Satan plays ball.

And so He expands it from, let us say, a courtroom (where someone would come up as a witness and make a false statement in court) to a larger application of this principle in our lives—so that, when we say something, our word is our bond. If someone asks you to do something and you say "Yes."—then you will be there and you will do it. So we should not need to swear an oath. We should not even need to make promises, necessarily—because, if we say that we are going to do something, we are going to do it.

One using God's Spirit will be decisive, and honest, and trustworthy at all times—just like who? God! God is not a man that He should lie. God fulfills all of His promises. If God says something, His word shall not return to Him empty. So, what did Jesus do? He took the specific law—or, two laws—and He expanded it to cover all of life. If we just *remember the principle* ("Swear not at all" and "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes.' and your 'No' be 'No.'"), boy, does that give you ammo in your daily life.

But what does it do also? It is so much harder than "Do not swear falsely." Jesus did not liberalize the law. He made it stricter. But what makes it almost funny is that He freed us to do this. He freed us to *live it* even more strictly than He wrote it, in the first place—which the Israelites proved, over how many hundreds of years, that they could not do. But we can, because we have grace—the gifts of God—that allows us to do it. Of course, because He died and lives again, we have Him living in us. And He has already

accomplished all that. So He adds His help, and we can do it too. Simple as that! (I have to chuckle though. It just sounds simple.)

Now, there were some in the Old Testament that understood this. Let us go back to I Samuel 21. David was one of those people who did that; and I think that the priest here, Ahimelech, also understood this. Ahimelech certainly had a great amount of authority here. I do not know if he was the high priest or not; but he was the one in charge.

I Samuel 21:1-4 Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one is with you?" ["Why do you have such a small band of men, David. What's going on?"] So David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has ordered me on some business, and said to me, 'Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded you.' And I have directed my young men to such and such a place. [Meaning that he had sent most of his army somewhere else. They were actually hiding, or getting out of Saul's way.] Now therefore [he continued], what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found." [He needed something to eat, for they had not eaten in a while.] And the priest answered David and said, "There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread [the shewbread, as the term is in the *King James*], if the young men have at least kept themselves from women."

He made, at least, the stipulation that they could not eat the holy bread unless they had not had sexual intercourse lately. It does not give a time here, it just says that they were to be clean.

I Samuel 21:5-6 Then David answered the priest, and said to him, "Truly women have been kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common, even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day." So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away.

What David did here was that he *employed the spirit of the law*. We know from Psalms 51 that David was one of those people who had God's Holy Spirit. (He said, "Don't take Your Spirit from me.") So he was able to think like God in this situation. Like his ultimate "Son" [descendant] Jesus Christ, David could discern between laws. What he did here was that he decided that *a moral law* (which was keeping them from starving—giving to those who are "poor" and do not have food) was more important than *the ritual law* (that only the priest's family could eat the showbread). And Ahimelech agreed that it was more important that David and his men be given the holy bread than it was for him to be strict about that particular ritual law.

David and Ahimelech used their reasoning and prioritized these two laws—weighed them in the balance, and came up a decision that was godly. This is a foretaste in the life of David foreshadowing Jesus, and what He did in His life. There is no "Thus saith the Lord" in the law about anybody (even the king, which David was at this point. He had already been anointed king.) being able to eat the showbread. Also more amazing is comparing Uzziah the king—when trying to perform a priestly duty by carrying the incense of the temple; and he was struck with leprosy. Yet David here was commended by God Himself (Christ in the flesh) for doing what he did.

What David did was that he determined that, even though this was the shewbread (and it had been before God in the Tabernacle that day) but because it was the old bread and not the new stuff, it was truly common bread. And so, though it may appear as if he was breaking the law—which in effect he was, because that common bread was supposed to be eaten by the priests—it was more important, at this time, that it be eaten by the king.

Maybe this thought did not run through their minds, but why was that more important? Who was David? He was the king, and he was also a prophet; and he was also doing God's work, was he not? He *was* the work of God at that time! The decision was that God's work—in bringing David's house to the kingship, to create the dynasty that would later result in Jesus Christ—was more important than keeping that ritual law. You had to keep the man whose line would end in Christ alive. And so, although Ahimelech lost his life for aiding and abetting the king (You will find that in the next chapter.), he did the right thing. He gave David not only this bread, but he also gave him the

sword of Goliath—which allowed David to fight another day; and the work of God went on.

It is very interesting—all of the things that come into play in these various situations, that just seem like interesting points in history, but from this we get a great principle of God's Word. Let us go to Matthew 12, because Jesus uses this; and this is the place where He commends David for what he did. Christ uses David an example for the Pharisees, in a way denouncing them for using the law improperly.

Matthew 12:1-2 At that time Jesus went though the grainfields on the Sabbath. [He was there in the grainfields too; but He was not necessarily doing any of the work.] And His disciples were hungry [Remember Jesus did not get hungry, necessarily, when He did God's work. Remember John 4—His meat was to do the work of God; but His disciples were hungry.], and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"

"Ah, they're breaking the law. Look at 'em. And you're letting 'em do it."

Matthew 12:3-4 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God. . .

Jesus adds a very interesting point here. Now, we do not know how far into the house of God David actually went. It does not say that he went into the sanctuary; but it is interesting that he went in.

Matthew 12:4 . . . and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat.

Now, this is an interesting point. The priests were supposed to eat the shewbread before the Lord in the holy place (not the most holy place, but in the holy place). I just have a question: I do not know the answer, but did David, and his men, go into the holy place and eat the showbread before the

Lord—where only the priests were supposed to go? I do not know. But it does say here that he entered the house of God. I do not know how far he went. So I am not saying that he did. But it is an interesting point *if* he did do that.

Matthew 12:4-5 "And ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"

The priests "break the Sabbath" by doing all their work—heaving animals, lighting this, cooking that. But God does not hold them guilty for the work that they do for Him. It is His work, and so they are guiltless. And He says here that David was blameless because he, too, was doing God's work. So that work superseded the ritual law that had been given to the Levites.

Matthew 12:6 "Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple [meaning Himself]."

Who was the work at that time? Jesus Christ! And it was certainly okay with God that those who were supporting the work—meaning the disciples—go ahead and pluck ears of grain out in the fields and eat them on the Sabbath day. They were aiding Him in doing the work of God.

Matthew 12:7-8 "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

They did not understand whom they were dealing with here. If they would have understood that God desires. . . He calls it "mercy" here. Maybe a good way of looking at it would be *lovingkindness* (or doing what is right and helpful and good) over sacrifice—which is sort of a "catch all" phrase for all of those things that are required. Just because something is *required* doesn't mean that, at some point, it cannot be *superseded* by something that is more important at the time. And so there is a prioritizing here of the importance of various laws.

So we get the principle from such things like this that if somebody's house (let us say, your next door neighbor's) burns down on the Sabbath, it is okay to help them. You are not going to break the Sabbath—because *mercy* is greater than sacrifice. The strict observance of the law—for that period in which you are helping your neighbor—goes out the window in favor of *doing good* and *saving life*. But, once that is over, the law returns, and you keep the Sabbath.

But someone with the Spirit of God must be the one to make that determination, because one without the Spirit of God will go one of two ways. Either (1) he will not keep the Sabbath at all or (2) he will keep it strictly, and let the other guy burn. Without the Spirit of God, they do not have the ability to discern godly right and wrong.

Now, we can see the Pharisees here looking at the law in a very rigid manner. They saw it as rigid, unbending, unyielding—a finished work. "Thus saith the law," and it is done—there is no more. But Jesus saw it in another perspective. Jesus saw it as the basic, primary yet living, and beneficial guide to godly living. That is a whole different ballgame. Let us look at it another way. The Pharisees saw it as the very "end" of instruction. Jesus saw it as the "beginning." To them it was a completed work. To Him it was the foundation on which to build, and grow, and learn.

If you come at it from the Pharisee's way, it is very *negative*. It becomes a religion of "dos and don'ts." If you look at it from Jesus' perspective, it is very *positive*. It is a religion based on principles. These are the fundamental laws, and you learn to apply them to every situation of life. One is positive (Jesus' way), and the other (the way of the Pharisees) is negative. One is wide open (Jesus' way), and one is closed (which is the Pharisee's way). One opens up opportunities to serve. The other one is rigid and confining. And you can only work within the confines of that rigid system, to the point where (in one of these sections) people were trying hard not to keep the fifth commandment—in honoring their father and mother—but instead were giving their inheritance to the Temple. Using the law the way the Pharisees did was actually a killer. It brought death, and not life (which is kind of the way that Paul addresses this problem in Galatians and other places).

So, using the law, Jesus could plainly see how things like the sixth commandment would cover things like hatred and anger—whereas to the Pharisees it was simply murder. He could see how the seventh commandment would cover looking at a woman to lust after her—but the Pharisees saw it only in terms of the physical act of adultery. And we could go on and on with examples like that.

Jesus expanded on the law. The Pharisees sat on it. Is that not one of the things that the Messiah was prophesied to do? To magnify the law and make it honorable. What did the Pharisees do? They went in the other direction, and they made minutia. Jesus blew it up—not in the sense of destruction, but of making it bigger and broader in its coverage. The Pharisees went in the other direction and made it more particular and detailed in its coverage. And they did not do a great job in that either. They had so many hundred laws about the Sabbath—in making stupid things like an observant Jew, at the time, could only carry what equaled the weight of three barley grains. Otherwise, you were breaking the Sabbath—you were carrying a "burden." Three barley grains!

If you carried a needle on the Sabbath day, you were working. But you could carry thread. They made all these different, minute, detailed—and, in many cases, stupid—judgments on the law because they did not have God's Spirit to help them to discern what is really important. Paul had to deal with this in Galatians, because the people there were beginning to go back to this Pharisaic way of dealing with the law. He had to stop it, as soon as possible; because they were forgetting the grace and truth that Jesus brought. In Galatians 3:21-25, Paul gives us an understanding of the purpose of the law.

Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God?
Certainly not! [The law and the promises of God work together.]
For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Basically, what he is saying here is that this is the best law that ever has been. And if ever there has been any law that could have given abundant life, it would be this law. So there is nothing wrong with the law. It is *an approach to the law* that is wrong.

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin . . .

Remember that a purpose of the law is to define sin. Paul says in another place (in Romans) that he would have not known sin unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." So that is what the law does. It defines what is right and wrong.

Galatians 3:22-25 . . . that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Paul answers this question very clearly. What is the purpose of the law? He says that it in no way contradicts, or nullifies, God promises—but complements them! As we said before, God's law is certainly good and just and holy—as Paul says in Romans 7. But he says that what the law does is confine people. This word "confine" has the sense of imprison. It is a very interesting word. It's like being in the dungeon of a castle. The law is *a confining force*, so that we are kept for the faith. The law is a way to hedge us in, so that we are kept (guarded, protected) for what Jesus came bringing—the true doctrine, the gospel, the way of life of God.

Once we have *the faith*, then the confining bands of the law are removed. But does that remove the law? No! All that happens is that the confining aspect of the law is removed. The law is no longer supposed to confine us. What does Jesus say in John 8:32? If you have the truth, the truth shall make you *free*. That does not nullify the law. It just means that the law has a different purpose under the faith.

You see, *the faith* here in this section is not talking about faith as it is talked about in Hebrews 11. It is more talking about *the body of teachings*, the truth that we have been given. It is more like it is used in Jude 3, of the faith once delivered to the saints. The faith is the body of doctrines, the body of teaching. We could almost say that it is synonymous with the gospel, or the truth, or God's way of life. It is a rather all-encompassing term.

So, when Jesus came and brought the faith, then the law's job of confining us (to prepare us for that faith) is done. Now the law takes on a different purpose. In a way, it is still designed to hedge us in. It gives us the boundaries of right and wrong. But it is no longer confining us to the mere *letter of the law*. Now we have the broad expanse of principles found in the *spirit of the law*. So, in a way, it is scary to have this freedom. Before, we were confined by law to a very narrow way. But now that way has been opened up, and we have so many more choices. But we have the gifts of God to make sure—if they are used properly—that we do make the right choices.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that the way is still narrow and broad is the way that leads to destruction. But that is part of the freedom that we have. Now we are free to go the broad way—but we should not. What it is, is that now we have the same approach to law as Christ—because we have been given the mind of Christ. It is an attitude change! Basically, it is a way that we look at the law. It is no longer confining. It is freeing. And that opens up a whole bunch of possibilities, which Paul recognizes.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

He recognizes that might be scary to some people; and they want to run back into the confines of *the letter of the law*, because they felt safe there. There was a list of "dos and don'ts;" and, if you just followed those "dos and don'ts" and you did the works that are prescribed there, then you felt like you had done something. You had accomplished something. You had "fulfilled" the law. Of course, all you have done is fulfilled the *letter of the law*.

But doing *the letter of the law* is quite definable. "I've done six or eight good works this week. I've given five, seven, twelve pounds of meal to my neighbor—because she didn't have any for this week." Or, "I pitched in and moved the widow's grass." Those are all fine things to do, but they are not going to get God's attention. What does Jesus say? If you do what is required of you, so what? You have to go above and beyond. And you cannot go above and beyond merely by keeping the letter of the law. You have done merely *what is required* of you.

So, going back into the letter of the law and doing the works of the law as an end in themselves is certainly very visible and quantifiable, and very psychologically fulfilling (because you "feel" like you've accomplish something); but, like I said, it is not what gets God's attention.

Galatians 5:4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Is that not interesting? Jesus has brought grace and truth; and, if we fall back into just going by the letter of the law, we have fallen from grace. Does that tell you something about just following the letter of the law? It is [sin] *hamartia*. It is "missing the mark"—if we try to be justified, try to get something from God, just by doing the law. No, our stakes are far higher than that these days, because we have accepted the blood of Jesus Christ. The mark that we have to aim for is living like Jesus Christ—applying the grace and the truth to our lives; and that is tough.

Galatians 5:5-6 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. [There is that word again.] For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision [These are the works of the law.] avails anything, but faith working through love [is everything].

What really gets God's attention is if you use your faith to do good works in love for one another—and not out of obligation, which "the letter of the law" does. It puts us under obligation. But what gets God's attention is if you *in faith* do what is right and helpful and good *in love* for others. That is using grace and truth on top of the letter of the law.

Galatians 5:7-8 You ran well [Paul says.] Who hindered you from obeying the truth? [What made you stop?] This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.

This is not the way God lives. This is not the way that God wants us to behave. And now, our tie-in with the Days of Unleavened Bread:

Galatians 5:9-10 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind [meaning, except the mind of God. You will want to come back to doing what is right.]; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

Paul may be thinking here of the leaven of the Pharisees. Do you remember what Jesus said the leaven of the Pharisees was? Their doctrine! It was the way that they approached the law that He was so concerned about and that He warned His disciples against. "Watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees." Now, why did He caution them so much? Because the way of religion that they taught was very persuasive—it could make you do things while you still *felt* you were doing good. It could make you do things that were **not** *the standard*, let us say—while you still *feel* like you are doing good.

That is the way of the Pharisees. They were "fulfilling" the law—as far as they were concerned—and it made them *feel good*; but Jesus says, "That's not the goal." They were trying to justify themselves by works. So, what can happen if this starts getting into a person (this approaching the law like the Pharisees) is that it can take over his whole life. That is why he says that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. If we are not careful, it can take over an entire congregation—as one person tries to trump another in doing "good works" and yet having an entirely wrong attitude and approach to keeping the law.

So this is another area in which we can look for leaven in our lives. Are we approaching the law in a physical way—as a way to justify ourselves before God? Like we have a ledger there, and we check off "I did this right, and I did this wrong; but I did this right—so God owes me." That is the way the Pharisees approached things. They approached the law as a way to get on God's good side—rather than to show *love* through *faith*, to one another.

Paul also understands here, in verses 13 and 14, that (because we have been given this freedom) we have the propensity to go the entire other direction. That is, that we might use the freedom that we have to be licentious—to

satisfy our own flesh. We now have been given freedom to make certain decisions, and we need to make sure that we stay in that "straight and narrow path" that leads to the Kingdom.

Galatians 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this:
"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

If you want to read I Corinthians 7:10-13 and down in verses 39-40, there is an example there of Paul coming to some conclusions that are not specifically stated in the Old Testament or in the Gospels. What he does is that he reasons from the seventh commandment and what Jesus says about divorce, and he comes up with some conclusions. And he specifically says, "I say this, and not the Lord." But, because it was put in the Bible, it was a correct decision! He made the correct judgment, and so it is proper teaching.

What Paul did was just exactly what I have been talking about this whole sermon. He took the basic part of the law, and he expanded it to cover specific situations. We can do this too! It may not be easy—but we have been given the tools, and the knowledge, and the freedom to *make godly decisions* by the Spirit of God. We have what it takes. We can do it! Many of us have been in the church for years and years and years and years. We should now be teachers, as Paul says in Hebrews 5. We should be able to make these decisions—so that we can solve the problems of our lives, using the basics of the law and God's Holy Spirit.

The Bible may not spell out every answer in a step by step manner. But all of the answers that we need are there. We just have to put them together. Paul writes:

I Corinthians 2:12-16 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges [or, discerns] all things [This is what we can do.], yet he himself is

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rightly judged by no one. For "*who has know the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?*" But we have the mind of Christ.