

## In Him There Is No Sin!

Passover, Sinless Christ

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All of us have certain things we dread and are even traumatized by. An ongoing irrational, intense, persistent fear of certain situations, activities, things, or persons is called a phobia.

The main symptom of this disorder is the excessive, unreasonable desire to avoid the feared subject. When the fear is beyond one's control, or if the fear is interfering with daily life, then it can be diagnosed under one of the anxiety disorders, at least according to the doctors.

There is a phobia list of almost 500 phobias, at the website [www.phobialist.com](http://www.phobialist.com). A few that are listed are:

Agateophobia or Dementophobia - Fear of insanity.

Apeirophobia - Fear of infinity.

Counterphobia - The preference by a phobic for fearful situations. [That is, the fear you will not be afraid of fearful situations.]

A human being can be afraid of anything. For one, it might be something as un-harmful as a public speaking engagement. More severe fears and anxieties may come from such trauma inducing things as the potential loss of a child due to disease or injury, or, for war-time soldiers, it may be the imminent possibility of a violent agonizing death.

Jesus Christ experienced the foreboding personal trauma of a feared and dreadful future event, as you are very well aware of. His trauma was not the result of a phobia or anxiety disorder, because we know that 'perfect love casts out fear.' Jesus exhibited the essence of love.

On the evening before His crucifixion He was meeting with His disciples in the upper room, sharing with them some of the most intimate truths of His entire ministry. As He discussed the love of the Father and His love for His disciples he declared:

**John 15:13** Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for

his friends.

Though they did not realize it at the time, the disciples were only hours from the practical realization of this statement of truth. One of the subtle evidences of the supernatural origin of the biblical text is that astonishing events are often described in extremely brief narratives, in very simple form.

This is perhaps best illustrated in the matter-of-fact way in which the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—the most pivotal event in the history of the universe—is described in the gospel accounts.

After Jesus was examined and declared to be without fault by the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate, he delivered Him to be judged by the assembled crowd. When the opportunity arose to decide the fate of Jesus, the crowd and the Jewish leadership cried out saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." And they were probably saying that with all of the gusto they could build.

The horrifying events of the next six hours were preceded by the simple words, "Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away."

The evening before the crucifixion, as Jesus Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciple and physician Luke noted that Jesus was greatly traumatized by something so horrible that He sweat blood.

**Luke 22:44** "And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly. Then his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Many have thought that the idea that someone could actually sweat blood is ridiculous. But the physician Luke, a well-educated man, and a careful observer wrote this.

Luke is also the only gospel writer to mention the bloody sweat, possibly because of his interest as a physician in this rare physiological phenomenon that resulted from the intense spiritual agony that Jesus felt.

Although this medical condition is relatively rare, it is fairly well understood, and there have been quite a few documented cases of it. The clinical term is, "hematohydrosis." Around the sweat glands, there are multiple blood vessels in a net-like form. Under the pressure of extreme physical or emotional stress the vessels constrict. Then, as the

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anxiety passes the blood vessels dilate to the point of rupture. The blood goes into the sweat glands. As the sweat glands are producing a lot of sweat, it pushes the blood to the surface, which comes out as droplets of blood mixed with sweat.

So, what was the source of Jesus' great stress and anguish? Obviously, He was in intense mental agony. Being the Son of God, He would know the details of everything that was about to happen to Him.

He knew that He was physically facing one of the most horrible forms of capital punishment ever devised by the evil thoughts of men. His body was human, and He would feel everything at least as intensely as any other human would.

Was this the source of his severe stress? Probably there was some anxiety from this because of the natural human dislike of pain. But that was not the primary cause of concern that He was faced with.

Jesus was not sweating blood because He was afraid of the physical pain of the cross. In fact, the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was looking beyond His crucifixion to the pleasure and will of God.

**Hebrews 12:2** Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

So Jesus went into that crucifixion in a very strong mental state.

The really great weight upon Jesus was the knowledge that He would soon bear the terrible trauma of taking the guilt for all of our sins upon Him—my sins and yours.

He knew that under this weight of sin, the Father would forsake Him and as a result He would endure mental, as well as physical anguish for all sinners. His crucifixion would be the first time that He was separated, completely cut off from His Father and God.

As powerful as Jesus is, He could easily have avoided all of this and simply disappeared. He could have brought down a legion of angels to protect Him. He could have made His skin impenetrable. He could have anesthetized His pain so that He felt nothing.

But He chose to do none of these things. Rather, He willingly chose to genuinely be

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wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities so that He could truly pay for our sins and suffer human death.

**Isaiah 53:5-7** But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

I want to take a moment to do a quick New Testament Passover overview, because there are certain things that I want to be clear in our minds at this time.

Passover reminds us annually in a solemnly formal way that Christ died for our sins—for all have sinned—and His death paid our penalty in our stead. And, we know that Jesus was God as well as man.

God was His only Father. He was begotten in the womb of Mary, not by a male human, but by God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

In this way, He was able, even though He was tempted and tested like all other humans—actually far worse—because He had to meet Satan head on in spiritual combat, to overcome Satan and qualify to restore the government of God on this earth.

Until He had qualified, the assurance of the Kingdom of God to replace Satan's invisible rule over mankind could not be announced.

God begins the systematic, redemptive process of saving humanity with the Passover feast. Its primacy and meaning makes it the most important of all the Feast Days, because if there were no Passover, if Jesus as Passover never died for mankind, then we might as well forget about all of the rest.

The just could not be fulfilled. Every feast that follows the Passover is totally dependent on it. Our Passover is Jesus Christ. For over three decades Jesus lived a sinless life, but He was still tested in every area of life. The hours before His crucifixion, He suffered great physical and mental pain for our healing.

Jesus was nailed to the stake and remained faithful to God, and in a different sense, He

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remained faithful to us to His death. He died when a Roman soldier pierced His side and His life's blood and water poured out on the ground.

Jesus' sinless blood was shed for all mankind in order to save everyone, for our justification and reconciliation. Jesus' shed blood satisfies the holy requirements of God the Father (and God the Son).

God demands holiness. He cannot allow within Himself even the smallest amount of sin or unrighteousness. Mankind is unholy and sins against God and His laws, and these sins keep man separated from God. The Passover brings God and human beings together.

After we were called and repented of our sins, Jesus' blood covered our sins. This justifies us before the Father. In other words, our sins are blotted out, covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, and we are seen as clean before God our Father.

Simultaneous to our being justified (that is, washed clean from our sins), we are also reconciled or restored to the Father, having been made at-one with the Father through Christ.

Jesus' sinless blood began the process of salvation for us, and all mankind. No part of the overall process of our salvation could proceed any further without this vitally important event and glorious gift.

God confirms the primacy of the Passover in the fact that Jesus, as our Passover, begins our journey and passage into life eternal. Secondly, our annual observance of the Passover memorial begins God's annual festivals.

Although this primary gift of justification and reconciliation begins the salvation of human beings, there is another great gift that concludes or finishes it—the vibrant life of a resurrected Christ who now sits at the Father's right hand. Both of these great events are important; one cannot happen without the other. They are interdependent.

The New Covenant was ratified by the shedding of Christ's blood and is symbolized in the Passover service.

Remember what Jesus instructed during the Passover service —we read this last night. Paul restates it in I Corinthians 11:25, "In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

The New Covenant began with the shedding of Christ's blood and becomes operative only through the indwelling Spirit that imparts new life, enabling us to fully meet the righteous requirements of the law.

So, as we think of the blood of Jesus the Son of God we are reminded that nothing less, nothing else could provide salvation.

God gave the law; He sent His prophets and patriarchs. He raised up greatly moral and devoted men and blessed them, and still there was no true salvation. The best men had failed to keep the law perfectly; the whole world was, and is, guilty before God, and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

In the first two chapters of John's first epistle, John writes about our fullness of joy as Christians, about our fellowship with God and how that fellowship is to be maintained. Then, in the third chapter John is dealing with the whole position of the Christian as a child of God.

John emphasizes the importance of righteousness and of holy living. He says, 'You know that Jesus was manifested to take away our sins, and in Jesus there is no sin.'

John says it is an essential part of our whole standing and position as Christians.

**I John 3:4-7** Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

Now as there are heresies that would lead us astray about the person of our Savior and His work, so also are there heresies with regard to sin, especially in mainstream Christianity. That is the subject with which John deals in this section of his letter.

**I John 3:8-9** He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

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It is important to realize that John's method of handling the subject of holiness and righteousness is typical of the way the other New Testament writers were inspired to express the call for holiness, and how it is always in terms of doctrine.

Holiness must never be isolated; it is always deduced from something that has gone before. Holiness is a matter of working out what we claim to believe; therefore failure in practice does suggest a failure to truly understand doctrine and teaching of Jesus Christ, and is an indication that there is something essentially and fundamentally wrong with the failed person's view of the life of a Christian.

The failure with which John is concerned is the failure to really understand the nature of sin. There are many tendencies with regard to this. John dealt with the danger of the inadequate view of sin that allows people to think that they are already perfect. We occasionally run across people just like this, hopefully there are none of us in the church that way.

The apostle Paul made it very clear that he was not perfect even years after his calling, and so he still had to persevere to live righteously. He wrote in Philippians 3:

**Philippians 3:12** Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

I was thinking about this in the way of an analogy, and it struck me in several ways, and those several ways had to do with movies with monster type of things in it. You remember *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*, with Kirk Douglas, also, *Lord of the Rings*, and that sort of thing. I remember seeing a commercial where octopus came out and grabbed one of the individuals by the leg and he was swinging him around. To me, that represented the world and its pulls, Satan and his pulls, and our human nature and its pulls. Just like the octopus having that one leg, and maybe us an individual pushing with our other leg trying to get away, but we are so weak that we cannot, and then Christ reaching out and grabbing our hand and just yanking us away from those pulls as He helps us. And I really think, that in the way of an analogy, that fits because Christ is not going to let us go, and those things will not win over us.

The people that the apostle John was warning against, in his first epistle, only saw the letter of the law and were unable to see the spirit of the law. In other words, they regarded sin in terms of specific actions and so failed to realize its pollution as well as its power within them. This was the error of the Pharisees. We will talk more about the

spirit of the law later.

Here in I John 3, John is pointing out a different danger and heresy with regard to sin. That of regarding it lightly, dismissing it in some inadequate way as if it were something that really does not matter all that much as long as one is a Christian. I think, sad to say, that Christian tendency and belief leaks into God's people at times. Verse 4 shows that John is guarding very carefully against that, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness." He is very clear about that.

In effect, John is saying, 'We must be right about the real nature of sin, because if we are wrong there, we must be wrong on our doctrine of salvation, and then we are wrong everywhere.' So John's emphasis here is that sin is lawlessness, the breaking of God's law, rebellion against God, disobedience, a failure to live our lives as God would have us live them.

That is the very essence of sin. It must not be thought of as just a kind of weakness or failure on our part; it must not be regarded as some kind of inhuman past that we have not yet shrugged off. Sin is the breaking of the law; it is disobedience to God and His holy will with respect to us. It is a very serious thing.

In effect John is saying, 'If we fail to realize this, then it shows that we are mixed-up and confused in our thinking about the whole principle of the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ into this world; then, it seems clear that our whole conception of salvation must be entirely false and erroneous.' This is the state of mainstream Christianity today, and that is one of many reasons why it is so wrong.

People's essential trouble is that they are guilty and condemned by the law of God. Satan introduced sin into this world. And it spread to human beings when he played on their weaknesses at the very beginning, and tempted the man and the woman to disobey God. Man has succumbed to his nature and the influences of Satan ever since.

That is lawlessness: He tempted man to break God's holy law, and man in his folly made the decision to listen to him and do so. That is part of Satan's driving motivation and its effect has been to make us break the law of God and to cause us to be guilty in the sight of God and His holy law.

Of course, human beings bear responsibility in this. We always have a choice whether to keep or break God's law. There we were, under the wrath of God, meriting and awaiting punishment. So if sin is not seen for the despicable thing it is, then we cannot understand anything else because our Savior Jesus Christ was manifested, or

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appeared, in this world because of that.

John makes two statements with regard to the object of the coming of Christ, one in verse 5, "You know that He was manifested to take away our sins", and the other in verse 8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Let us consider the first statement, in verse 5 of I John 3. Why did the Son of God ever come into this world? We know that He was manifested.

**I John 1:1-2** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.

So why was He manifested?

Why did He leave the courts of heaven and come in that way into this world? What is the meaning of His preaching and His teaching and His miracles? What was the purpose of His life here on earth? What was the purpose of His death on the stake? Why this manifestation and demonstration? Why His burial and His resurrection and His appearance and ascension? What is the explanation of it all?

That is the question that John answers in his epistle, especially in chapter 3.

Let us view this from a negative perspective first. Our Savior did not only come to give us a revelation of God, though that is a part of the purpose. In John 14:9, Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." We also read in John 1:18, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."

But that is not all, though He has revealed the Father and has come to do that. In the same way, He has not only come to teach us about God. There is incomparable teaching there, such as the world has never known before and has not known since, but He did not come only to do that.

There is also, of course, the example of His life, an unprecedented and matchless one, but He has not come only to give us an example of how we should live in this world. He

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is not just a teacher, or a moral example and standard. He has not come only to give us some kind of picture as to the nature and being of God. All that is there, but that is not the primary reason.

He has really come because of our sins, because of the predicament and the position of men and women, because of this whole issue of law. He has not come only to instruct us and to give us encouragement in our endeavor, and a great example.

There is a fundamental problem behind it all, and that is our relationship to God in light of God's holy law. Everyone is, or has been, under the penalty of the law because of sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." All sinners are under the penalty of the law! All flagrant, habitual sinners are under the penalty of the law, anyone who sins. We are so thankful that we have that sacrifice to call upon, to forgive us of that as we repent.

We know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him there is no sin. That is the point of this whole sermon, "in His there is no sin." So sin must be understood in terms of the law, if we are to understand why our Savior had to shed His blood, while being crucified on the stake.

Jesus Christ came because He had to come if we were to be delivered. He came because there was no other way for us to be redeemed and rescued. This is an immensely personal act on His part. Luke 19:10 tells us that He came to 'seek and to save that which was lost.'

He came because of this whole issue of what sin has done to us, and the position in which it has landed us with respect to God and His holy law. And in I John 3, John puts all that to us very pointedly.

What has God done with regard to this predicament in which we found ourselves? The first thing that John tells us is that we cannot understand our Savior Jesus Christ properly apart from our sinful condition, apart from this whole issue of the law and ourselves.

So the first statement John makes is that Christ Himself is without sin. There can be no sin without law. So that law was there, and is there, but Christ kept it perfectly. There was no sin in Jesus Christ; He was perfect, spotless, and blameless. He was born without sin. So, you see, it is looking at Him in terms of the law that really shows us that we must not only accept the biblical statement with regard to the virgin birth of Jesus, but also why this is essential.

The Holy Spirit came upon Mary, and He was born. He became man; He took to Himself human nature, and still was without sin. In the miracle that took place there, He received a full measure of the Holy Spirit, which enabled Him to conquer and control His human nature.

'In Him there is no sin.' We have to start with that. There can be no true view of salvation and of the redemption that is possible for us in our Savior Jesus Christ unless we are right about Jesus Christ Himself. That is why John used such strong and pointed language in chapter 2 of his first epistle, when he talked about those people who were leading them astray by denying the Person and teaching of Jesus Christ.

John also warns that those antichrists are liars, and they must be called that openly because they are trying to rob us of our salvation.

If we are wrong about the Person and His teaching, we will be wrong everywhere. So, as we look at Jesus Christ we are reminded again, in this verse, that here is One who has been in this world of ours, with all its sin and its shame, but who was without sin.

**Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

He remains there, unique and separate. He is the Son of God, and none other. He is not just a great moral teacher, nor just a great religious genius. He is not one who has gone a little bit further than all others in His quest for God and for truth. No, He is the Son of God made flesh, and 'in Him is no sin.'

But not only was there no sin in Him and in His birth—He committed no act of sin. He always honored God's holy law; He obeyed it fully and carried it out perfectly. God gave His immutable law to mankind. He intended that that law should be carried out, that it should be honored and obeyed.

No one can ever be with God and spend eternity with Him unless they have honored the law. God's law must be kept, and without fulfilling it there is no fellowship with Him and no hope of spending eternity with Him. And there is One who has kept the law, who lived in this world exactly as you and I have, but lived it perfectly. That is something that is impossible for you and I to do, but how many times do we see people making light of keeping the law? Or, how often we just shrug a sin off, and maybe think that we will get to it later.

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Jesus worked as a carpenter. He had been a child, yet no one was ever able to convict Him of sin. He defied them to do so; He lived in perfect obedience to God and to His holy law. What God has demanded from man and man has failed to do, here is One who in human form did it and He does it now, and will always do it and fulfill it.

'In Him there is no Sin.' He has fulfilled the law of God. He has actively and positively obeyed it, and lived it fully. How has He done this? Very quickly, here are three scriptures that answer this question:

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

**Romans 13:8** Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

**John 15:12-14** "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

Jesus Christ has laid down His life for us. But I will have more about the motivation for this later.

The problem of human beings with respect to God is not only the problem of the guilt of sin. Merely to be forgiven is not enough; we have to keep the law of God. Notice how Paul puts it here in Romans 8:

**Romans 8:3-4** For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

We have to keep the law, but prior to our conversion we have not kept it; we cannot do it on our own. We can only keep it if Christ dwells in us through His Spirit. Without God's Holy Spirit to empower us to keep the law, we cannot keep it properly in the spirit of the law.

In addition to that, He has dealt with the problem of the guilt of sin, because He has

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provided a perfect sacrifice and offering for our sins. In the Old Testament all the burnt offerings and sacrifices, those types and shadows God gave the ancient Israelites in order to show them how sacrifice must be made for sin.

Hebrews 9:22 tells us that without shedding of blood is no remission of sin, and the sacrifice and offering had to be perfect. It had to be without blemish. That was all a type and a shadow of the perfect offering. It must be human, it must be a man, and here is the perfect sacrifice for sin, for 'in Him there is no sin.'

It is all in terms of law. While the law demands perfection, it cannot admit blemish; we cannot offer a perfect sacrifice for sin if there is any defect.

If Christ had sinned even once, He could no longer have been the perfect offering for our sins; but 'in Him there is no sin,' and therefore He is the perfect sacrifice.

There was no one else good enough to pay the price for sin. He came in the flesh, He was born of a human being, and yet He was without sin; therefore the Father could offer His Son and, in a sense, the Son could offer Himself, and it is a perfect offering.

By doing that, Christ has taken away our sins when we repent. John the Baptist looked at Jesus at the beginning and said as recorded in John 1:29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.' It is amazing how many verses talk about this very thing, and how sin is the pivotal cause of why Jesus had to be crucified, so that our sins could be forgiven.

John says, 'Let no one deceive you.' People who do not see that if they are wrong in their outlook on sin, it just means they have never seen its enormity. They have never seen the problem it has created for mankind, and, in a sense, for God Himself. In other words, in a manner of speaking, sin limits God.

This holy law, this expression of God's being and character, totally condemns sin. The condemnation is death, and without the sacrificial atonement there is no forgiveness. But God provided and found the way.

So those who truly understand that cannot regard sin lightly. They cannot say that a righteous life is a matter of indifference. A righteous life is required for unity with God and His church. It is an absolute necessity.

Those who really believe this, and are governed by it, and who are truly living righteously, are not righteous just because they believe it is a 'good life.' They see it all

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in the light of the law of God and of the life and teachings and death and resurrection of the Christ who came as the Lamb of God. As we keep the law of God, and the longer we keep it, the happier we are to keep it, and the more joyful we are.

We are growing in the grace and in the knowledge of God; we are increasingly being made to conform to the image of His Son. We are in the process of being delivered. The glorification is coming when we go through the whole process of salvation, so that we will be blameless and faultless and perfect in His holy presence.

In Titus 2:14, the apostle Paul says to Timothy, "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." The blood of Christ purifies us of our sins. But it is only through Jesus Christ, because we cannot, in and of ourselves, do that.

It is a matter of this law that condemns us and from which God delivers us through His Son Jesus Christ and by the gift of eternal life. Christ went to that cruel death on the stake not only so we could have forgiveness, which does come out of it. But He also did it to separate out a people for Himself as a special treasure and possession, who Paul says should be zealous for good works and would live a righteous, holy life—a people who would be a demonstration, manifestation, and witness to the whole world, and to the principalities and powers in heavenly places of this wondrous Son of God who has been able to do so much.

It is not enough to have a law that we are required to follow by the letter. The Pharisees elaborated so extensively on God's laws that they created a monster of slavery, thousands of volumes elaborating on what God supposedly intended. All of their additions were details regarding the letter of the law.

The true effectiveness of a law is found in its purpose and intent, not in its letter. In a general sense, the purpose and intent of a biblical instruction is called a spiritual principle. Also, we can say that the purpose and intent of God's written Law is the spirit of the law.

We learn a great deal about God's way of life by keeping the Ten Commandments. It has to be practiced, and it has to be experienced to see its true value. Ancient Israel half-heartedly tried to keep them, but without the help of the Holy Spirit they were unable to keep even the letter of the law for very long.

When we keep the commandments we learn to think like God thinks. We begin to develop the character of God. And, as we learn more of God's plan for humanity, we

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discover that our own future responsibilities in the future government of God on earth depend to a large extent on our using God's law wisely.

Christians mostly have trouble with attitudes that deal with the spirit of the law.

For baptized members of God's Church the blind spots are mostly in the area of the spirit of the law, since adherence to the letter of the law should be obvious in its application. We do not kill, steal or break the Sabbath if we are baptized members of the church, ideally speaking.

The key to keeping God's law properly is to learn to keep the law as Jesus did.

**Matthew 12:10-12** And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" —that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? "Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.

Remember what Jesus said just before this miraculous healing, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." He related it directly to law. This was a moment of revelation because here Christ pointed to the spirit of the law.

In order to properly keep God's law we have to learn to recognize and abide by the spirit of the law. The spirit of the law means God's original intent or purpose behind His law.

When God designed the Sabbath, He intended it to be a blessing to all humans. He designed it to be a refreshing rest and an opportunity, both to recuperate physically after six days of work, and to draw close to God in love and worship, as well as to draw closer to the brethren in love.

Jesus knew and understood the spiritual intent of the Sabbath commandment. He also knew that the split second of His own divine effort of performing the miracle of healing was a valid use of time and effort on the Sabbath, and was within its intent and purpose that results in freedom from spiritual slavery, that is called liberty!

Because of Jesus' insight into the divine purpose behind the Sabbath, the crippled

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worshiper was freed of his burden. He experienced a wonderful and exciting blessing, because Jesus recognized the true spirit of the law. God's law is always a blessing to those who recognize its purpose and intent, but to those who only see the letter of the law it is a burden.

The law still remains as the rules of life for all humans. It is the defining law of the standard of righteousness by which to live. The greatest holiness we can attain must be reached with the help and power and influence of the Holy Spirit to keep that law.

It is the only way to produce the righteousness that the law requires. Our new life as members of God's church is a life of absolute spiritual service.

**Romans 13:8-10** Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

This is the motivation that Jesus had. Yes, keeping the law teaches us how to love, but God the Father and Jesus' love, and the sacrifice that They provided for us was motivated from Their very character, which was love.

Love is the essence of the spirit of the law of God. When we love, we fulfill the true principle of obedience. Paul sums it all up in love, 'for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.' We, who have received the love of Christ and live in His love, see the law not as a stern condemning taskmaster, but as an appealing bright vision of understanding and blessing.

We see the law personified in Christ, and our response to Christ involves obedience to God's Law, but we fulfill the law not simply as a standard outside ourselves, but as a living principle within. Acting according to the dictates of the way of love, our lives conform to the image of Christ, as we conform to the law in this way, love is the fulfillment of the law.

James mentions the "law" 10 times in his epistle, and in each case it is the moral law. He had nothing but good to say about the law. As a result of Christ's teaching, James exalts the law—he glorifies it, and he identifies it with the gospel.

In James 1, when James speaks of the Word and the importance of hearing and doing it, in the same breath he spoke of looking into "the perfect law of liberty."

**James 1:22-25** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The gospel shows the law in its spirituality and practical application—as the guide of the true Christian who has entered into the spirit of it.

Even in the Old Testament, as Psalms 119 specifically shows, it was possible for spiritually-minded people to see the beauty of the Law and find delight in its precepts. The psalmist wrote, 'Oh, how I love Your law!' and 'Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble.'

The whole law is the will of God. To break any part of it is to disobey God's will. Even under man's law, a person becomes a criminal when he has broken one law. In contrast regarding Jesus Christ—"in Him there is no sin." He broke not one law.

**James 2:8-10** If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

James spoke of the "royal law," and here he meant the Ten Commandments, since he cited the specific requirement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And we know that the last six commandments primarily deal with that. In other words, love of neighbor is the sum of the law and its true fulfillment, following love of God, which are the first four commandments.

James confirms that favoritism is a breach of this "royal law." He then verifies the solidarity of the law, so that a breaking of it in one specific place is a breach of the whole, and makes a person guilty of all.

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A person may seem to be good in almost all respects, but he may have one sinful fault. He may be moral in what he does, upright in what he says, meticulous in his commitment. But he may be hard and self-righteous, rigid and unsympathetic. If this is the case, his goodness is flawed.

The apostle Paul expressed this principle using other words when quoting Deuteronomy 27:26 in Galatians 3:10, "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."

**James 2:11-13** For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James exhorts us to speak and act as those who are to be judged by "a law of liberty," so that he sets no limit to the range of the Law.

In James 4:11, he warns us, by implication, against speaking against the law or judging the law, that is, to assume the place of judge instead of "doer of the law."

James could not have used such language unless he had a profound conviction of the perfection of the Law. And it is the perfection of the Law as the rules of life for the saints that James considers it. Therefore, we can call it the perfect law of liberty, the Royal Law.

All sin is "lawlessness" as I John 3:4 states, and in contrast, the purpose of all law-keeping is love of God and love of the brethren. This is the desired result for which Christ kept the law.

**I John 3:10-11** In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

**I John 3:14-16** We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, [I might add that this shows the

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spirit of the law here, that to hate someone is the same as to murder them.] and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

We are children of God and are therefore like (or at least similar to) Jesus Christ the Son of God; and being like Him, we have to live as He lived. He went through this world (which was extremely cruel to Him) without faltering and without failing because of 'the joy that was set before him.'

That fellowship and that knowledge enabled Him, and as a result He always obeyed God. His life was a life full of obedience; as a Son He delivered perfect obedience of God's will and law.

The Father raised Him from the dead and in that way proclaimed that the sacrifice was enough, and that the law was satisfied. We do not begin to know anything about the love of God until we see that if Christ had not died on the stake in that way, God could not forgive sin.

That is God's way of making forgiveness, because without the doctrine of atonement we cannot understand the love of God. The love of God and doctrine can never be put as opposites.

As the result of what Christ has done, God forgives us of our sins; by His death we are reconciled to God in Him; and we have redemption through His blood; and by His resurrection we have hope of eternal life.

That is what God has done for us in His love through Christ—pardon, forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, and new life. We have begun to live in a new world, and we see new possibilities. We know something of His loving work in us, and the power that operates in us. That is how the love of God is manifested, that He sent His Son, and the Son has taken hold of us. Just like I mentioned in that analogy of pulling us away from that horrible monster.

Why has God done all this? Why has God had anything to do with such creatures as men and women, dead in trespasses and sins, rebels—hating Him, and being against Him?

'Not that we loved God, but that He loved us,' moved by nothing but His great attribute

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of love—His own self-generated love. Though we are what we are, 'God is love,' and His great heart of love, in spite of all that is in us, unmoved by anything except itself, is working a great creative work in us.

How can we look at these things and believe them and not feel totally unworthy and ashamed of ourselves and feel that we owe all and everything to Him, and that our whole lives must be given to express our gratitude, our praise, and our thanksgiving?

There is only one way by which human beings can be saved and reconciled to God; there must be a shedding of blood and a perfect offering and sacrifice. There must be someone who is man and yet more than man. He must be perfect.

So the Son of God came and took to Himself human nature, and in this perfectly controlled human nature He shed His blood. And the Lord God is satisfied; the sacrifice and offering are perfect, and in Him God can forgive and pardon—that is the effect of the blood of Jesus His Son.

Consider the love that led to all this. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the One through whom all things were made—the Word that is intimate with the Father—the Word that was God from the beginning—the eternal Son enjoying all the full privileges of a divine being from everlasting to everlasting, humiliating Himself to take the body and mind of a fragile human, so that we could be saved and reconciled to God.

What supreme quality of love would subject itself to such a thing?

Jesus suffered the contempt, the abuse, the jealousy, the envy, the hatred, the malice, and the scourging. The Son of God endured the almost unbearable pain of crucifixion so that you and I might be redeemed.

Why did He subject Himself to such agony? There is only one answer, love!

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The Son of God has come; He has received the antagonism and cruelty of sinners; He has known the humiliation and the suffering; He has known the agony and shame, and He has perfectly fulfilled the law so we might go on to be with Him in glory forever.

What amazing love, to give us so much; when we have so little to offer.

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**I Peter 2:21-22** For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";

Christ left us an example that even in suffering He committed no sin. We are to shoot for that very high standard.

At sunset tonight we will be observing the commanded Night to Be Much Observed which represents the beginning of our coming out of sin—in the process of our conversion—in God's plan of salvation for humanity. Christ committed no sin—that is the standard of righteousness that we must target.

Words cannot express how thankful we should be that, "in Him there is no sin!"