

# October 2018

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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER THINGS**

are true  
are noble  
are just  
are pure  
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS  
4:8

are of good report  
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at [christistheway.com](http://christistheway.com).

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*"No worship at all is better than one that rejects the divine honor and insults God with contempt"* (Homer Hailey, **A Commentary on the Minor Prophets**, 409; comment on Malachi 1:10).

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## A Contrast Between Two Men

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

The Book of Proverbs presents to us a contrast between two women. On one hand is an immoral, seductress type who "flatters with her words; ... of a crafty heart," who is loud and rebellious..." (Proverbs 7:5, 10-11). On the other hand is the virtuous type whose worth "is far above rubies" (Proverbs 31:10-29).

Not too long ago, two men in a local congregation presented similar contrast. One brother was absent for the Lord's Day worship and wrote a letter to the elders explaining why he was not present. He was going, according to him, "to sit and mourn along with other family members, the death of a relation who died in the United States of America." And truly, this writer heard over the local radio station under the personal paid announcements (PPA) slot an announcement put up by a family that had lost an illustrious son in the USA in an auto crash. But that was Friday afternoon!

The announcement suggests that the death did not occur on that Friday. Moreover, it was evidently clear that the relationship between the deceased and this young man who claims to be a Christian was nothing more than what we usually describe as a "distant relative." Now, our good brother had that Friday to go and "sit and mourn with the family," but he did not! He had the following day, Saturday, to go and weep with the other relatives. Yet, he did not! The auspicious time as far as he was concerned came on Sunday morning!

Not even Sunday afternoon after the Lord's Day worship was over. No, it just must be Sunday morning and not at any other time!

Would you like to know the reaction of the elders? They decided that the letter be read publicly and not only be publicly rejected, but publicly rebuked! The elders reasoned that the letter was terribly scandalous and put a question mark on the brother's claim to being a faithful Christian. First Timothy 5:20 says, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

In the audience for the Lord's Day worship was another brother whose daughter died just the previous night. Her remains were committed to mother earth just a few hours before that Sunday morning. Precisely, the burial took place at about 10:30 p.m. on that Saturday night. This 25-years-old young lady was already proving to be the brightest star in the horizon of the family. Indeed, she was the only daughter of her father and mother. What a tragedy!

Besides, this brother had the unfortunate lot of watching his only daughter breathing her last breath. Yet, this man was there to worship the Lord of all lords on this particular Lord's Day. What a sharp contrast!

One writer has aptly observed: "Generally, attendance is a faith problem. The weak who looks for an excuse will find one. The strong, who faces the same problems and difficulties as other people, somehow manages always to attend."

There are people who have no faith (Mark 4:40). There are those of little faith (Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31). And there are those with great faith (Matthew 8:10). It is high time we join the apostles in pleading, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

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## **The Other Services**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Two preachers were talking. One said, "The elders where I preach decided to do away with Sunday evening services because only a handful attended." The other preacher asked, "What do the members think about this?" The first preacher replied, "Most of them don't know." Sad. Would you even know it if the church quit meeting Sunday evening or Wednesday night? What about Sunday morning Bible class? If you showed up for work one day out of four, would your boss consider you a faithful worker? Is it because worshipping the Lord, studying His word, and encouraging each other to good works are less important than secular activities? Is your bank account more important than your soul? "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matthew 16:26-27). "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

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## **A Father's Gift**

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Fathers are often clueless about gift-giving for their children. That's Mom's job. But when we think of gifts, we usually think of material gifts—toys for toddlers, clothes, games and sports equipment for teens. Or maybe the ultimate gift for a teen—a car!

Many who are reading these words are prosperous by the world's standards. You may not rank with Bill Gates or Ted Turner, but you are blessed with material prosperity unheard of by most of the world, or even in our own nation a few generations ago. And what do we do with our prosperity? We buy things for our

children as good parents do—TVs, computers, designer clothes.

May I suggest that there are far greater gifts that a father can give his children—a far greater legacy than lands and houses and things.

**1. A father can give his children a place of refuge.** “In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge” (Prov. 14:26).

As our heavenly Father gives us refuge, so should our earthly fathers.

Children look to their parents for safety and refuge when frightened or faced with uncertainty. But what greater refuge could a godly father give than safety from the assaults of Satan and the world?

That refuge comes from a father who has great respect for God, our heavenly Father. This respect is seen in daily living as well as in “Sunday-go-to-meetin’” clothes. A father who is indifferent, lukewarm or not even a believer can give little in the way of solid refuge.

**2. Direction in life.** “Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

This training involves many aspects, including the way of righteousness. Too many times fathers are more concerned about careers and earning power than spiritual matters. Many years ago a young man came from Florida to enter Georgia Tech in Atlanta on a golfing scholarship.

Although his parents were members of the church, Bill had never been baptized. After being with us for a time, Bill was baptized into Christ. It was then that his father wrote me expressing concern that his son’s being a Christian would detract him from more important things. Hmmm. Does getting a “hole-in-one” open the gateway to heaven?

Fathers, what is your focus for your children? To be great athletes; to be successful in business; to have treasures on earth? Or would it be to lay up treasures in heaven?

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).*

**3. Unconditional love.** “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

Many children feel they are on a performance basis. The cleaner the bedroom, the better the grades, the more they are loved. Even if they only “feel” this, they will never be secure. This is really hard for some fathers, especially the sports minded. They may consciously, or subconsciously, give preference to the gifted child. With so many pressures and uncertainties our children face, they don’t need unnecessary pressures at home. Children should be encouraged to do their best, but love and acceptance should not be based on beauty, intelligence, or ability.

Our Heavenly Father is our model for giving unconditional love. He loved Israel when Israel was unlovely. In the parable of the talents, the two talent man received the same praise as the five talent servant. When the prodigal son was gone, the father never stopped loving him. When the son returned, it is obvious that the father’s love was unconditional. This does not mean there are no consequences when a child disobeys, but what great security a child has when a mistake is made, yet is still loved.

This also has spiritual implications, for the concept small children have of their Heavenly Father is often

drawn from their relationship with their earthly father.

#### 4. Discipline.

*“For those whom the lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness”* (Hebrews 12:6-11).

God certainly understands the value of proper discipline, and gives the example of earthly fathers who discipline children for their good. Otherwise, it is as if the children were illegitimate, without a caring father. Too often, discipline is left to Mother, for Dad is too busy or too tired from work.

Dad, don't be too busy for your children. We remember the example of a godly man named Eli, who neglected a vital part of parenting.

*“The LORD said to Samuel, ‘Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever”* (1 Sam. 3:11-14).

Another example of a lack of discipline was the case of David's son Adonijah.

*“Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, ‘I will be king.’ So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, ‘Why have you done so?’ And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom”* (1 Kings 1:5-6).

What great sorrow these fathers brought on themselves by failing as fathers. Consider the wise words of Solomon: “Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul” (Proverbs 29:17).

A study by Merton and Irene Strommen shows that “when parents are too passive in setting limits for their children, such permissiveness is interpreted by children as a form of rejection and often leads to hedonistic and antisocial behavior” (**Five Cries of Parents**, Harper & Rowe, 1985. 89-90).

5. **Love for their mother.** “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25).

One of the greatest gifts a father can give is to let his children see him loving their mother. Many teens have a fear of not being loved, and not being able to give love. Often this is because they have never seen love demonstrated. Love is more than a lab or lecture course. We recognize that love is really defined more by showing what love does, as in First Corinthians 13.

Children learn to love by seeing models, and the basic model is through seeing their father love their mother, and vice versa. Without this model, how does a daughter learn to evaluate the love some young man professes toward her, to distinguish between lust and love? “Well, if you truly love me, you will treat me like my father treats my mother.” And the son can see that love honors the woman, rather than treating

her like a sex object.

One reason we have problems with dysfunctional children involved in sexual promiscuity, violence, and drug abuse is that they come from dysfunctional families. When God told husbands to love their wives (a) as Christ loved the church and (b) as they love themselves, he was providing not only for their own relationship but also for the security of their children.

And to show he was serious about husbands honoring their wives, he emphasized the matter in First Peter 3:7:

*“You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”*

That should get a husband's attention! God is so serious about this that he threatens to not hear the prayers of a man who will not honor his wife.

**6. The example of a godly man.** “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

In our culture, mothers often have greater spiritual influence in the home. It is not “macho” for men to be overly religious. Perhaps this is not unique to the 21st Century. Maybe Paul felt the need to address fathers in particular in the church at Ephesus. Did you ever wonder why this was addressed to “fathers” and not “fathers and mothers?” This is only speculation, but is it that God knew fathers needed special encouragement to fulfill the responsibility of being spiritual in the home?

Too often have I seen children follow the example of a father who is not spiritually minded. Even though the father may have been baptized, he may not be really committed to faithful attendance, or to active participation in the life of the church. “If Daddy doesn't have to go to church, why do I have to go?”

In later years, the father looks back with sorrow and regret as he sees his grown children who have no interest in the Lord. I knew a fine, godly couple with five grown children. This couple was very faithful, but during the children's formative years, the church was not a part of their family life. I cannot imagine the pain in their hearts as they saw their children and grandchildren who did not know the Lord. The children needed to see godly parents when they were young, not at age 40.

**7. Knowledge of the Word of God.**

*“Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:1-9).*

We certainly get the impression that God wants parents actively involved in teaching their children. Fathers, don't leave this vital matter up to the preacher or the Bible class teachers. They do what they

can, but they cannot take the place of a father or mother who daily emphasize God's Word. Two or three hours a week should not be the whole instruction a child gets. Deuteronomy 6 teaches that Biblical instruction should be a part of everyday life. We are careful to vaccinate our children against all sorts of diseases. Are we also concerned about protection against the disease of sin—an eternally fatal disease? "Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).

A father would think himself derelict if he didn't see that his children were protected against polio or smallpox. But fathers, it is of much greater importance that you do not neglect your children's spiritual health. If your children are small, do you read Bible stories to them? If they are older, are Bible principles a topic of conversation at the dinner table, or as you ride together in the car? If not, you are missing some golden opportunities.

8. **Himself.** (Christ) "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed..." (Titus 2:14). Christ gave himself completely for our eternal welfare, and set an example of giving for us. Children need fathers who are more than procreators. About 70% of juveniles and young adults who are in long-term correctional facilities did not live with both parents while growing up. Fatherlessness contributes to 75% of teen suicides and 80% of psychiatric admissions. More than 40% of births today are to unmarried women, and most of these children will never live with a father. About 50% of children in the U.S. will have parents who divorce. All of this is a great prescription for tragedy.

This is why children need fathers, and it seems that was in God's original plan. Someone has said, "It is easier for a father to have children than for children to have a father." Dads, do you know how your children spell love? They spell it "t-i-m-e." One study asked dads how much time they spent daily with their small children. They estimated it was 15 to 20 minutes a day. Actually, it was 37 seconds!

Fathers, your children need you!

Eight precious and valuable gifts. And all these gifts have the added value of never wearing out or going out of style. And they have the further advantage of having eternal consequences. Fathers, these are all gifts that even the poorest father can give, and must give if you want to give your children the greatest gift of the hope of heaven.

If you have trouble remembering all eight of these gifts, you might combine them all into one—be a man of God, a committed Christian.

On one occasion, a lawyer asked a question of Jesus.

*"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment" (Matthew 22:36-38).*

What greater legacy or inheritance could a father leave his children?

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## The Book Divine

Patrick Farish | Wauyahatchie, Texas, USA

The Bible is the "word of truth" (2 Timothy 3:15). It is "Scripture breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Consider these facts about the Bible.

Consisting of sixty six books, it has two major divisions, the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament is divided into Law (five books, from Genesis to Deuteronomy), History (Joshua to Esther), Poetry (Job to Song of Solomon) Major Prophets (Isaiah to Ezekiel) and Minor Prophets (Daniel to Malachi).

The New Testament is divided into History (Matthew to Acts), Doctrine (Romans to Jude) and Apocalypse (Revelation).

The Bible is the history of man, and God's dealing with him, in three parts. The first part is characterized as the **Patriarchal** age; in this period God reveals His will by speaking directly to the fathers. This age or dispensation remains in effect when the second age, the Mosaic dispensation, is brought in. The **Mosaic** age, with its beginning at Mount Sinai, was especially and exclusively for the children of Israel. When Jehovah spoke to Moses regarding the Sabbath, He said:

*"Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed"* (Exodus 31:15-17).

**Who** shall keep the Sabbath? "the people of Israel." No Gentile has ever been obligated to keep the Sabbath; because God said that it is a sign forever "between me and the people of Israel." The Law of Moses was the second age or dispensation of Jehovah's dealing with man.

Then, on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus, the third, the **Christian** dispensation, had its beginning. As it began, the earlier dispensations were ended. God forgave us "all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14).

It is fundamental to our correct understanding of the Bible's message that we appreciate that the law of Moses was taken out of the way, "nailing it to the cross."

Some appeal to the Old Testament for authority. They demand Sabbath observation, because it was required of those living in those days. They appeal to Psalms to justify introducing mechanical instruments of music to Christians and the church today. In Deuteronomy 18:15-19 Moses made a statement quoted by Peter in Acts 3:22-23, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be, that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people" (Acts 3:22-23).

The law of Moses is not binding on anyone today. It has been taken out of the way, "nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14). The apostle Paul wrote that Christ "is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:14-15).

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## **If There Is A God - Why Does He Let Bad Things Happen? (4)**

Tommy J. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

The root cause of all evil (the bad things that happen to us) can be traced back to the penalty God placed on mankind because of sin (Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 8:20-22). Basically, evil falls into three categories, natural evil, (the calamities and destructive upheavals that occur in our environment), human suffering evil (sicknesses, diseases, accidents, etc. that bring suffering to us), and moral evil (the pain and suffering caused by mankind acting inhumanely toward one another). I concluded the article discussing more fully the first of these evils, natural evil.

There is one other thing I want to notice in the realm of natural evil. Sometimes bad things happen in the natural realm because man violates the laws of nature through carelessness or stupidity. Jumping out of a tree that's too high can be bad for the jumper. He made a bad choice. Man violates the laws of nature by driving too fast for conditions (weather, traffic, etc.) and a bad accident happens. These bad things are not

God's fault. They are the fault of man's carelessness or stupidity, choosing to ignore and violate God's laws of nature. I'm sure you can think of other examples of such accidental circumstances that illustrate that God is not the cause of the bad things.

The second evil, the evil of human suffering, is brought on by sicknesses, diseases, accidents, etc. The penalty for sin cursed mankind, causing them to be cast out of the Garden of Eden, causing them to live in a world filled with natural calamities and destructive upheavals. But, it also brought human suffering to mankind. Job, an ancient patriarch, who lived many years before the time of Abraham, endured much grief in his life, brought on by the evil in humans, natural calamities and diseases. He may not have known that God was allowing Satan to test his faith, but he knew that human suffering was a part of the experiences of life. On one occasion, contemplating the things that had happened to him, and realizing the frailty of life, he remarked, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and flees away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue" (Job.14:1). Yes, Job knew, as we should know, that evil (the bad things that happen) are a part of life. Day after day, year after year, through the centuries, people have been afflicted with the evil of diseases and cancers (sometimes incurable), sicknesses, bodily afflictions, accidents that maim or kill, aging and death. These bad things continually afflict mankind. No one is immune from them. They often come on us unexpectedly, when we are least prepared.

When human suffering occurs, the atheist and unbeliever immediately says, "See God is impotent (powerless) or He doesn't exist. If He is the God you claim to believe in, why doesn't He empty the hospitals, and keep people from suffering death and decay?" Again, I have to admit, I cannot turn to the Bible and find where God has directly revealed to us as to why He doesn't put an end to all human suffering. But, He has revealed enough in His word, so that if I use common sense I can find some reasonable conclusions as to why He allows evil human suffering to work on mankind.

When I look at the cross I can know He still loves mankind, even though all of us are sinners (some are saved, some are not). He loves us enough that He sent His Son into the world to die on that "old rugged cross" so that we who choose to be saved by obeying the gospel might one day regain the Paradise He had prepared for man at the beginning. His Son came to this earth and suffered on our behalf (1 Peter 3:21-24), leaving us an example, showing us how to endure suffering on this imperfect planet to prepare us to live in the perfect Paradise, Heaven, a place where there will be no suffering, heartache, tears, or pain, a place where no bad things will ever happen.

I can also know from the word of God that God can take bad that happens to someone and turn it for good. There are several examples in the Bible in which He allowed bad things to happen to someone, then used it to bless the person suffering through it and also benefit future mankind. Joseph is a prime example. As a young man, he was sold by his brothers into slavery. He was carried to Egypt, and, after experiencing several more bad things, rose to prominence and became second to Pharaoh. Because of his strong faith in God, he endured these things, but in the end, he was able to save his family, bringing them into Egypt to survive a famine. After his father's death, when his brothers feared he was going to seek revenge against them, Joseph, called them to him, and referring to the things that had happened to him in the past, said, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:19-20).

Another thing we can know, is that often the bad things that happen to a person will make one's faith stronger. Adversity often makes a person stronger. The trials and tribulations we have gone through brings us to the realization we need the help of God above. Paul and his "thorn in the flesh" is an example of adversity used by God to make Paul stronger (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Suffering is not always punishment for our sins, sometimes it is discipline, to get us to change our behavior (Hebrews 12:9-11). What we endure on earth can be a training ground to prepare us for eternity. That is, if we don't give up our faith because God allows us to suffer in this life. If we are so selfish, wanting perfection in this world, that we overlook the purposes of God for our lives, then we lose it all.

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# "Save Yourself"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

"And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation'" (Acts 2:40, **English Standard Version**).

There are a good number of translations of the Bible which point out we are to "save ourselves" (**KJV, ASV, RSV, NRSV, NCV, Mace N.T., GW, ISV, TEV, Wesley N.T., TLB, NAB, ETRV**, Moffatt, Goodspeed, **NIV**, etc.). There are several lessons in this verse which are needful for us and the religious world as well. Let me suggest just a few.

**Save** – Man has something which needs saving. The word "save" is defined as, "Specifically of salvation from eternal death, sin, and the punishment and misery consequent to sin" (**The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament**). He has a soul in need of salvation (Matthew 16:26), a soul marred by sin (Romans 3:10, 23). Because of those sins, he has become separated from his Creator (Isaiah 59:1-2). Far too many are more concerned about satisfying the desire of the flesh, rather than following the Spirit which can lead to eternal life (Romans 8:12-14). Your soul is the most valuable thing you possess and is worth saving.

**Yourself** – This tells us that man has a responsibility in obtaining his salvation. If one is ever saved it will be by the grace and mercy of God (Ephesians 2:4-5). Yet access to His grace is through man's faith (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:1-2). I remember reading an article several years ago which stated, "there is nothing for you to do in obtaining salvation, Jesus did it all for you almost 2,000 years ago." This is one of Satan's most famous lies! Jesus did His part in dying on the cross and shedding His blood for the sins of the world (1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2). So did the Father in sending His Son to die so that all might live (Acts 2:23; 1 John 4:10). Likewise, the Spirit made it possible for all to know about this great sacrifice and the plan to redeem from sin (1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:21). All are not going to be saved (Matthew 7:13-14). Why? Did God fail in some way? Was the blood of Christ insufficient? Did the Spirit not give us the proper instructions on how to be forgiven? You know the answer to these questions! Absolutely not! If one is not saved it is his fault. He has failed in submitting to God's plan of redemption.

**Crooked Generation** – When Luke records what the apostle Peter says by the inspiration of the Spirit on this occasion, there was a generation of people among whom these Jews dwelled, that were very wicked. Were they any different from the people whom the apostle said was a crooked generation? No! They were guilty of putting the Son of God to death (Acts 2:36). They needed forgiveness. If God was willing to forgive those who put His Son to death, will He not be willing to forgive any person of any sin if they will only turn and seek His forgiveness? Yes! We live in a very corrupt world as well. Yet we too can be forgiven and live as Christ instructs regardless of how others around us live. All can become God's elect, His chosen people (1 Peter 1:1-2).

**Words** – Peter tells them words, when obeyed, they could be saved. His sermon was about Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22). He told them they had crucified Jesus, whom God made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). They believed this and asked what they needed to do to be saved (Acts 2:37). The words spoken to them? "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Their response? "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41).

Let me exhort you if you have not been saved by the blood of Christ, "Save yourself from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40, **ESV**).

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**Oh My God!**

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

It amazes me that there are those in our society who are quick to remove God's name from everything except defamatory language. God's name is not welcomed in our public schools or court houses, but no one is upset when His name is associated with cursing or angry outbursts. "G-D" is a common phrase when someone is upset, and "Oh my God" is a typical response to surprise, but mention God's name in a public ceremony and someone's religious rights are infringed upon. That is truly insane.

One of the Ten Commandments God gave the Jews was to have respect for His name. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). If you and I were to list the top 10 things we expect of people in living a righteous life, I doubt any of us would include a caution about how we use the Lord's name. It is not as offensive to us as the other things in the Ten Commandments: lying, murder, adultery, and so on. But to God, it is just as wicked to use His name in a disrespectful manner as it is to murder someone. Both are acts of irreverence and disregard. And even though we are not under the Law of Moses, we are just as accountable to Him for how we use His name. Paul said he rebuked "Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:20). Thus, it is still wrong to use God's name in a disrespectful manner.

If I got mad and cursed your mother's name, would you be upset? If I used your name in association with evil, would it bother you? "Oh my God" is no different to God. It is taking His name in vain by using it in a common and disrespectful manner. Our Creator deserves a better response from us. Correction. Our Creator **demands** a better response from us!

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## A Response to "THE BIBLE VERSUS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST" (8)

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

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Someone recently pointed me to an article claiming to expose the falsehood of the Church of Christ. We will be responding to the content of the article over a period of several months. The original article, by James L. Melton, can be found at [www.av1611.org/jmelton/chchurch.html](http://www.av1611.org/jmelton/chchurch.html)  
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### Water Baptism, Acts 2:38

Acts 2:38 reads, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Those who teach salvation by faith only say the word "for" in Acts 2:38 means "because of." Mr. Melton cites a Delton Haun tract which states "for" is rendered "in order to" or "unto" in some translations. Melton very quickly notes "...how the Church of Christ must refer to OTHER TRANSLATIONS in order to find support for their false teachings!" Melton, a staunch KJV only advocate, affirms, "We will stick with the Book that God uses, the King James Bible." The KJV came over 1,500 years after the original transmission of God's word. It was not the first translation of Scripture into another language, nor is it the first English translation of the Bible. I know that King James authorized the King James Version, but where has God ever stated that the KJV exclusively is His word in the English language? Since it is a side issue, we'll not take the time to address the fallacy of the KJV only position here, but I am happy to sit down and study with anyone who wants to dig into it further.

Returning to the discussion of Acts 2:38, Melton says, "...the term 'for' does not always mean 'in order to'..." He gives Luke 5:14 as an example, where Jesus healed a leper and told him to go offer a sacrifice "for your cleansing." From this, Melton concludes: "*the word 'for' sometimes means 'because of,'*" since the man had already been cleansed of his leprosy. While it is true he'd been healed, he had not yet been

cleansed. Jesus commanded him to go make sacrifice according to the Law (Leviticus 14:4, 20-21). According to the Law, he would not be clean until after the sacrifices were made. When Jesus sent him to make sacrifice "*for your cleansing,*" it was not because he was already cleansed; it was in order to be cleansed.

There is another problem with using Luke 5:14 to demonstrate "for" can mean "because of" in Acts 2:38. The texts don't use the same Greek word for "for." The word in Luke 5:14 is *peri*; the word in Acts 2:38 is *eis*. Allow me to give an example that uses the same word; in fact, not just the same word, but the exact same phrase in the Greek. Matthew 26:28 reads, "*For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*" The Lord's blood was shed "for the remission of sins" (*eis aphasis hamartia*). Will Melton or anyone else affirm Jesus' blood was shed BECAUSE we already had the remission of sins? Everyone understands His blood was shed UNTO the remission of sins. Peter says we are baptized "for the remission of sins" (*eis aphasis hamartia*). There is no valid reason to make the phrase mean something different in Acts 2:38 than what it means in Matthew 26:28.

Melton tells us "At the time of Acts 2:38, Peter didn't fully understand Salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9)." I'm not sure what to make of that statement. Is Melton conceding that Acts 2:38 teaches baptism for the forgiveness of sins, but saying Peter was wrong? Jesus promised Peter and the other apostles that the Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). That being the case, it's hard to believe that Peter would teach something erroneous in Acts 2:38, as Melton suggests. He points to Acts 15:11 as evidence that Peter spoke something very different, that he no longer taught baptism for the forgiveness of sins. He quotes Peter as saying, "...through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved..." Friend, that is the epitome of dishonesty. Melton uses an ellipsis (...) to change the meaning of Peter's statement. Here is the entire sentence: "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ **we shall be saved in the same manner as they.**" Who are "they"? A look at the context of Acts 15 shows it is a discussion about whether the Gentiles were subject to Moses' Law. Peter said that "we" (the Jews) shall be saved in the same manner as "they" (the Gentiles). Neither Jew nor Gentile were subject to Moses' Law; both were to obey the gospel of Christ. That is - there is only one gospel, and one plan to save people, whether Jew or Gentile. and it had nothing to do with adherence to the Mosaic Law. Peter's statement in Acts 15:11 does not negate the necessity of baptism which he taught in Acts 2:38. In fact, this same apostle would eventually write 1 Peter 3:21 (go take a peek).

Melton correctly states "there are NO GENTILES in Acts 2:38." Somehow, this leads him to believe that Acts 2 was "a NATIONAL situation concerning Israel, not an individual situation dealing with lost sinners." Yet, in the same paragraph, he tells us they were told how to be saved in verse 21, "...whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." The "whoever" of verse 21 makes this an INDIVIDUAL, not a NATIONAL thing. How does one call on the name of the Lord? Mr. Melton didn't tell us. In Acts 22:16, Ananias urged Saul of Tarsus to become a Christian. Notice what he said: "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Ananias, who was commissioned by the Lord to teach Saul (Acts 9:10-18), associated baptism with calling on the name of the Lord.

Melton confidently affirms, "No one in the chapter asks how to be saved." He is careful to note the question in verse 37 was "what shall we do?" not "What must I do to be saved?" Semantics! In response to their inquiry, Peter said they needed to repent and be baptized. Since he doesn't like the answer, Melton refuses to believe the question had anything to do with salvation. However, he does point us to Acts 16:31 for "the answer to THAT question." OK, let's go check it out. In Acts 16, there is a jailer in Philippi who is charged with keeping Paul and Silas secure. He fell asleep on the job, an earthquake happened which opened the doors and loosed their chains. When he woke, he figured the prisoners had fled and drew his sword to kill himself. Paul called out to stop him, for all the prisoners were accounted for. It is at this point the man asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). In verse 31, he was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Melton wants you to stop there. May I encourage you to keep reading? Verse 32, "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who

were in his house." This man didn't know who Jesus was - he was a Gentile jailer in Philippi. He needed to be taught. Verse 33, "And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized." Having learned about who Jesus was, the jailer did two things: 1) he washed their stripes (repentance, he was sorry for the role he had in their suffering), and 2) he was baptized. He did the same thing that Peter told the crowd in Acts 2 to do, repent and be baptized. Could it be that he heard the same message from Paul and Silas that the Jerusalem crowd heard from Peter?

Mr. Melton says "WE were told to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost in Matthew 28:19," and sets that against the baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" in Acts 2:38. His conclusion? The latter is "obviously a special baptism for the first century Jews who had rejected Christ. They were told to be baptized in His name to show that they now RECEIVED Him." Melton's argument is nothing more than posturing. It is wild, baseless speculation to mislead the reader. Perhaps it would be helpful to acknowledge what "in the name of" means. It's not that difficult. A police officer cries out, "Stop in the name of the law." He just cited his authority. James 5:10 speaks about the prophets "who spoke in the name of the Lord." Colossians 3:17 reads, "...whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." It is a statement of authority. For more examples, look at Acts 4:7; 5:40; 1 Corinthians 5:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:6. Melton tries to make a WE (Gentiles) vs THEY (Jews) contrast between Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38. No such contrast exists. Whether one is baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19) or "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38) or "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48) or "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5) doesn't matter. The key is the acknowledgment of the authority of God. It is not about a baptismal formula to be recited but an authority to be acknowledged.

Again, Melton sets God's word against itself. This time, Acts 2:38 and Acts 10:44. He acknowledges in Acts 2 the Jews received the Holy Spirit AFTER they were baptized. He then jubilantly explains why the Spirit came upon the believing Gentiles BEFORE baptism in Acts 10. Melton poses the question: "Why didn't Peter tell the Gentiles in Acts 10:44 the same thing that he told the Jews in Acts 2:38? Answer: GOD DIDN'T GIVE HIM A CHANCE! God went ahead and sent the Holy Spirit before anything was said about baptism because He didn't want anyone confusion baptism with Salvation." It's sad that Melton wants us to believe that Peter, who was under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was actually working against God, and that God had to thwart the preacher before he said anything about baptism. What a sad and absolutely inaccurate explanation of what occurred in Acts 10.

The conversion of Cornelius and his family was special. This was the first time the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. Some miraculous things took place in order to bring it to fruition. Had the angel not appeared to Cornelius (Acts 10:3-6), he would never have known he wasn't serving God faithfully, nor would he have known to send for Peter. Had Peter not fallen into a trance and received the vision of the sheet let down from heaven (Acts 10:10-16), he'd not have learned at that time the Gentiles were not unclean (Acts 10:28, 34-35), and would not have gone to Cornelius' house. Had the Spirit not spoken to Peter and told him to go with the men at the door (Acts 10:19-20), his doubts may have caused him to refuse. The vision dealt with animals, not people, and Peter was still mulling over the meaning of it in his mind (Acts 10:17, 28). And had the Spirit not fallen upon the Gentiles, those who went with Peter (Acts 10:23, 45), who did not see the angel that appeared to Cornelius, nor the vision of the sheet seen by Peter, nor heard the voice of the Spirit which commanded Peter, may have remained in doubt whether the Gentiles truly could receive the gospel or not. The Spirit falling upon the Gentiles "astonished" those of the circumcision who believed, and now, they would be witnesses to the fact that God had received the Gentiles. It wasn't just Peter's word. Take any of these miraculous events away from Acts 10, and the gospel either doesn't go to the Gentiles, or there is a huge cloud of doubt concerning it.

Melton would like us to believe that the Spirit coming upon the Gentiles in Acts 10 is evidence they were saved before being baptized. Again, the text reveals the purpose of the outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius' household. It was not given to confirm that the Gentiles were already saved, it was given to

convict the mind of the Jews who were present, so they would not stand in the way of the Gentiles receiving salvation. What the Gentiles received in Acts 10 was a miraculous measure of the Spirit, not the indwelling of the Spirit. The indwelling of the Spirit is given to those who have obeyed the gospel (Acts 5:32; Ephesians 1:13-14). Speaking in tongues is not evidence of salvation, as some assume. That is a common charismatic doctrine. Will Melton join the Pentecostals in affirming we must speak in tongues to demonstrate we are saved? In Numbers 22:28, "...the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she..." spoke. God's Spirit fell upon Balaam's donkey, and it spoke in tongues! Does that mean she was a Christian donkey? Speaking in tongues is not necessarily proof of salvation.

Though there are some unique things in the conversion account in Acts 10, it still fits the pattern found elsewhere in the book of Acts. The gospel was preached to them, they believed it, and they responded in faithful obedience. In Acts 10:6, the angel told Cornelius that Peter "will tell you what you must do." What did Peter tell Cornelius to do? The same thing he told the Jewish crowd at Pentecost, "...he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).

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## Halloween

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

*Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in).... By the 9th century the influence of Christianity (Catholicism - KS) had spread into Celtic lands, where it gradually blended with and supplanted the older Celtic rites. In 1000 A.D., the church would make November 2 All Souls' Day, a day to honor the dead. It's widely believed today that the church was attempting to replace the Celtic festival of the dead with a related church-sanctioned holiday.... All Souls Day was celebrated similarly to Samhain, with big bonfires, parades, and dressing up in costumes as saints, angels and devils. The All Saints Day celebration was also called All-hallows or All-hallowmas (from Middle English Alholowmesse meaning All Saints' Day) and the night before it, the traditional night of Samhain in the Celtic religion, began to be called All-Hallows Eve and, eventually, Halloween (www.history.com/topics/halloween/history-of-halloween; If you're interested, you can read more at this web site.).*

Many fundamentalist denominations teach that Halloween is connected to devil worship. Halloween, as Christmas, had its origins in paganism, but not in the worship of Satan. These denominations observe Christmas as a religious holy day but will not celebrate Halloween.

## Holy Days

We must not keep special holy days. Religious festivals and holy days belonged to the Law of Moses (Colossians 2:14-17). The observance of such religious holy days is evidence of falling away from Christ (Galatians 4:9-11).

The only day special religiously to Christians is the first day of the week. As Jesus rose from the dead on this day (Mark 16:9), we remember His death each first day of the week by partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7).

## Customary Holiday

But does this mean it is sinful to keep traditional holidays socially? The apostle Paul dealt with this question in principle in First Corinthians. The Corinthians, primarily Gentiles, had questions about keeping customs left over from their pagan heritage.

One question was in regard to eating meat that had been offered in sacrifice to an idol (1 Corinthians 8:1).

Some thought that by eating the meat, even though they were not worshipping the idol, they were defiled (1 Corinthians 8:7). Paul identified this as a liberty, a practice that is allowed but not required (1 Corinthians 8:8-9).

But this did not mean they could engage in idolatrous worship (1 Corinthians 10:14)? No, this would be to fellowship demons and sin (1 Corinthians 14:20-21).

Finally, sometimes they could not know whether the meat had been sacrificed to an idol or just slaughtered for sale in the meat market (1 Corinthians 11:25). Eating this meat socially was also a liberty (1 Corinthians 11:23, 25, 27). These three passages (1 Corinthians 8; 10:14-22; and 10:23-33) apply important principles of the doctrine of Christ to three situations which we also face in principle. We may observe social customs, even though they are rooted in false religion (1 Corinthians 8). We must not participate in false religion (1 Corinthians 10:14-22). We may keep social customs even if we don't know their background (1 Corinthians 10:23-33).

These principles specifically apply to remembering special days (Romans 14:5-6). This does not justify congregational observance of holy days for worship (Galatians 4:10-11), but it does authorize individual observance of holidays, including days based on religious beliefs, in keeping with social customs.

Does this necessarily mean all should observe these social holidays? No, it is a matter of liberty, and we must be willing to give up a liberty for the spiritual good of others (1 Corinthians 8:8-9; 10:23-24, 31-33; Romans 14:14-15; 15:1-2). Thus, if my observance of Halloween leads a weak brother to violate his conscience by following my example against his convictions, I must give up the exercise of my liberty to keep him from sin (1 Corinthians 8:10-13; Romans 14:20-21). If an unbeliever is led to think I am participating in false worship by the practice I must sacrifice the liberty (1 Corinthians 10:27-29). However, I am not obligated to try to read the minds of others but am to react to what they say (1 Corinthians 10:28). If exercising a liberty is disruptive to the peace of the church, I should give it up (Romans 14:14-19). I must not participate in any matter of liberty that I am not fully persuaded is right (Romans 14:23).

### **Conclusion**

Is the observance of Halloween pleasing to God? Not as a religious holy day nor as a congregational function, for it is both unauthorized and violates principles of the doctrine of Christ. But we may individually observe Halloween and other holidays based in the customs of our people as a matter of liberty. "Let each be fully convinced in his own mind."

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## **The Law of Christ**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Most denominations teach that the divine moral law has been the same in every age. I believe the law of Christ is the only divine law in effect in this age. The phrase "law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2) denotes the body of teaching also called the "gospel" (cf. Romans 8:2; 1:16-17), "the faith" (cf. Galatians 1:6-12, 23), the doctrine (teaching) of Christ (cf. 1 Timothy 1:8-11), or the New Testament (Covenant; Hebrews 8:6-13). "This age" refers to the time that began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus and that shall last until the end of this world (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11). If this is true, the single, exclusive rule of action from God for all mankind, from Pentecost until the return of Christ, is the law God has given through His Son Christ Jesus in the New Testament.

### **God Formerly Spoke in Various Ways**

The Hebrew writer affirmed, "God ... at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1).

## **Adam**

Genesis 2:15-17 records the only laws God gave Adam before his first sin. Adam and Eve were then in a state of childlike innocence, not having had the difference between good and evil revealed to them (Genesis 2:17; 3:5-6, 22). By eating the forbidden fruit, the knowledge of good and evil was miraculously revealed to them (Ibid).

## **The Fathers**

From that time forward man has had divine law (Romans 5:13) which passed from generation to generation by teaching (Genesis 18:17-19). Since this was the only law prior to Christ the Gentiles had, by it they will be judged (Romans 2:12-16). The corruption of this tradition was the ruin of the Gentiles (Romans 1:18-25; 1 Peter 1:18).

## **Law of Moses**

God chose the nation of Israel as His own special people (Exodus 19:5-6). The covenant He made with them consisted of the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 4:44 - 5:3; 29:21), the heart of which was the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:4-22). Moses put the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments into the ark of the covenant (Deuteronomy 10:1-5). When King Solomon had finished the Temple, "Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone" (1 Kings 8:9). But the ark contained "the covenant of the Lord which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt"(1 Kings 8:21). Thus, the Ten Commandments were the heart of God's covenant with national Israel.

## **God Now Speaks Through His Son**

Moses prophesied God would raise up a Prophet like him, Who would speak all God commanded, and Whom the people would be required to hear (Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19). This Prophet is Christ (Acts 3:19-23). Although God formerly spoke through Moses and the prophets, He now speaks exclusively through His Son (Matthew 17:1-5; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Jeremiah foretold a "new covenant" for Israel, "not according to the covenant" God made with their fathers (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The author of Hebrews declares that Christ is "the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6), citing Jeremiah 31:31-34 as proof (verses 8-12). He then observes, "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete..." (verse 13).

Isaiah prophesied that "in the latter days" the law of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-3) and would be for "all nations" (verse 2). This was to occur when the apostles received power from on high (Luke 24:44-49). This came about on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-4, 38). This law is the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16-17; 8:2). Beginning from Pentecost, based on the absolute authority of Jesus Christ, it is the divine standard for all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

The law from Sinai was never intended to be a permanent and full revelation of God's mind to man, but rather was given to prepare the way for Christ (Galatians 3:23-25). Furthermore, the law given through Moses was never intended for any people except the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 5:1-3; 6:6-7). Thus, with the death of Christ, this temporary law, the Old Testament, was taken away (Colossians 2:13-17). Now, instead, God "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:2; cf. Matthew 17:1-5).

Not only did Jesus replace Moses as Prophet and lawgiver, His law replaced the traditions handed down to the Gentiles.

*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this*

*to all by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).*

Christ will be the final Judge of all mankind (John 5:22,28-29). The basis of judgment for everyone since His law became effective will be His Word (John 12:48-49). His authority as lawgiver is supreme, absolute, and universal, including, but not limited to, the church (Ephesians 1:18-23).

We are under law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-22). By his death He brought in a new law or covenant (Hebrews 7:12; 9:15). We are saved by this law (Romans 8:1-4), we are obligated to obey it (James 1:25), and we will be judged by it (James 2:12).

### **Ten Commandments Removed**

In Romans 7:1-6 Paul informed Jewish Christians (verse 1) that they were free from the law. The law from which they had been freed includes the command, "You shall not covet" (verse 7). Of course, this is the tenth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). The law to which they were dead includes the Ten Commandments.

Does this mean we can worship idols, use the Lord's name in vain, curse our parents, commit murder and adultery, steal, lie and covet with God's approval? No, the law of Christ forbids all these sins (Acts 14:14-15; 17:22-31; 2 Timothy 3:2; Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 John 3:15; Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 4:28, 25; Colossians 3:5). It is sinful to do them, not because the Ten Commandments forbade them, but because Christ does.

Colossians 2:13-17 teaches uncircumcised Gentiles (verse 13) that God has "wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (verse 14). This "handwriting of requirements" included laws about food, drink, festivals, new moons, and sabbaths (verse 16). The Mosaic covenant imposed regulations concerning foods (Leviticus 11), drink (Numbers 6:1-3), festivals (Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29) and sabbaths (Leviticus 23:1-3). The Sabbath has been removed. Since the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments, this conclusively proves Jesus removed the Ten Commandments as law.

Even when the Old Covenant was still in force, the Master taught that, when it was fulfilled, it would be abrogated (Matthew 5:17-20). The Law, having fulfilled its purpose of preparing Israel for Christ (Galatians 3:23-25), has been abolished.

In 2 Corinthians three Paul argues the superiority of the apostolic ministry of the New Testament over the Old Testament. The apostles are "ministers of the new covenant" (verse 6) in contrast with "the Old Testament" (verse 14). The Old Testament was "engraved on stones" (verse 7). This, of course, refers to the Ten Commandments. As Paul wrote to Corinth, this covenant was "passing away" (verse 11).

In Galatians 4:21-31 the apostle constructs an allegory based on Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah, and Isaac. Hagar represents the Old Testament (verses 24-25), and Ishmael represents fleshly Israel (verses 21-25). Paul concludes, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son" (verse 30). The Old Testament, the Law, including the Ten Commandments, was cast out as a binding law from God.

In Ephesians 2:14-18 the apostle explains that Christ made peace between Jew and Gentile, "having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace" (verse 15). Christ abolished the law that distinguished between Jew and Gentile.

God took away the first covenant in order to establish the second (Hebrews 10:9).

### **Conclusion**



The law given through Christ has superceded all previous divine laws and will continue to be the sole divine law until the end of this world (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). The law of Christ is the only divine law in effect in this age.

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