

CHAPTER V

THE LAW

The Law entered our discussion of the prescriptions of Paul and Jesus for eternal life, but we must now place our prime focus on this matter of the Law, for Jesus and Paul held widely divergent views. The following texts illustrate the difference, in which it is clear that Paul's view radically contradicts that of Jesus. The quotation from Jesus we have already examined above in the context of the prescription for eternal life.

Jesus: If you would enter into life, keep the commandments (Matthew 19:17).

Paul: . . . the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me (Romans 7:10).

You see the problem. These texts only mention commandments, not the Law or the Prophets, but they are nevertheless vitally related to our discussion. The "Law" as generally conceived is the term used to define the collection of all the commandments of God from the Old Testament, especially from the Pentateuch. It is the collective term, while "commandment" is the specific designation of a single law. Therefore we have "the Ten Commandments of the Law." While either term can be used in the singular or the plural, the general usage distinguishes between them in this way. So we could very well substitute "law" for "commandment" or "commandments" in these verses. Jesus is telling us to keep the law if we would enter into life, whereas Paul is explaining that, for him, though the law promised life, it proved to be death.

Both most certainly had in mind the Leviticus texts that linked life to law or commandments:

Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it (Romans 10:5).

Thus Paul explained his basis for this view, that the commandment promised life. He may have been thinking of Leviticus 18:5: "You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live: I am the Lord." Linking life with the keeping of the commandments and ordinances of God, or with the keeping of the Law, was characteristic of Moses. Deuteronomy 4:1 also stands out:

And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you, and do them; that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you.

By examining the contexts of Matthew 19:17 and Romans 7:10 quoted above, it is evident that, for both Jesus and Paul, "life" means eternal life. A similar examination of the contexts of the quotations from Moses, Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 4:1, will establish that what Moses meant was to live temporally. We cannot go into this difference here, because for present purposes it is sufficient to establish that Jesus and Paul were agreed that the subject is eternal life. Jesus has told us that we will receive eternal life by keeping the commandments (the Law). Paul has told us that, for him, the commandment (Law) failed to keep its promise of eternal life. Not only so, but as presented above, in our discussion of the prescriptions for eternal life, Paul went on to explain his view, how it is impossible for him or any one to receive eternal life through

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the keeping of the commandments of the Law. I can only conclude that the two men held different views as to the Law, its nature and its effects. We here examine the view of Jesus, the view of Paul, and then make a brief comparison.

Jesus and the Law

Jesus often paired the Law with the Prophets. The typical expression is,

On these two hang all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:40).

I understand that the Law here has reference to the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, and the Prophets refer to the balance of Holy Scripture that we call the Old Testament (The Psalms are sometimes distinguished from the Prophets). Both Jesus and Paul would also agree on this distinction. However, Paul's argument focuses primarily on the Law and for that reason this is also our focus here. They will be carried forward together whenever they appear together in the texts, and indeed what can be said of the Law can often be said of the Prophets as well. But to bring the Prophets into our discussion would needlessly complicate it, so you should understand that we are here discussing the Law, exclusive of the Prophets.

We also note the fact that there was another body of "law" developed by the Rabbi's that grew primarily out of their intention to accurately apply the Law to every situation. This was the beginning of a vast body of interpretive material that was later codified as "The Mishna." In the gospels, this body is termed "the traditions of the elders." It was the center of controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees, for it was largely the creation of the latter, and Jesus certainly excluded it from any consideration as valid "law."

The Pharisees and the Scribes once came to Jesus with the complaint, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." Jesus answered, Why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition (Matthew 15:1f)? He closed this transaction by applying to them the prophesy of Isaiah 29:13: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." So Jesus considered this body to come from men, not from God, and he vigorously condemned the men who sought to apply it, teaching it along with the Law. We continue, then, in the confident assertion that when Jesus spoke of the Law, he meant to include only the five books of Moses.

Now, how did Jesus see Moses and the Law? He saw Moses as the man who served as God's spokesman to Israel; and the Law as that which came, through Moses, from the Mouth of God. Reading the Pentateuch we come repeatedly to the expression, ". . . the Lord said to Moses . . ." These expressions are summed nicely in Exodus 33:9f, in the story of the tent of meeting:

When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, every man at his tent door. Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

Later, also from the pillar of cloud at the door to the tent of meeting, the Lord rebuked Miriam and Aaron, saying,

If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why, then, were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses (Numbers 12:6-8)?

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Jesus fully endorsed this evaluation of Moses as God's lawgiver and prophet. Consequently, he held Moses high before the Jews and before his disciples as worthy of great honor, so much so that the very office of Moses, as God's spokesman to the people, was sanctified for all time even when it was occupied by unworthy persons. It is in this light that we hear him saying,

The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practice.

Therefore, Jesus surely accepted Moses as God's chosen spokesman, and the Law as delivered by Moses to be from the mouth of God.

Yet God did not speak all of the Law to Moses and, through him, to the People. We know this because he also said through Moses,

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him (Deuteronomy 18:18).

Why raise up another Moses, unless Moses had not communicated all of the Law to Israel? There would be no need for such a prophet had Moses declared all. Jesus saw himself as fulfilling this prophecy.

This fact is brought forward forcefully as we read through the fourth gospel and see the strong emphasis that Jesus placed on the source of his own words. We have, for example:

For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me (John 12:49,50).

That is precisely how Moses spoke to the people. Jesus is therefore Moses' successor as lawgiver, sent to make up what was lacking in the Law as delivered by Moses. Both delivered the words received from the mouth of God.

Jesus therefore placed the words of Moses – the Law – together with his own words, in the same unique category – that of words having the mouth of God as their common origin. That he viewed them thusly is also demonstrated by the common way that he spoke of them. Of the Law of Moses he said,

For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished (Matthew 5:18).

Then of his own words, he said,

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away (Matthew 24:35).

So, two things will not pass away: the Law as delivered by Moses, and the Word delivered by Jesus. The two stand together while heaven and earth endure. This is what we should expect of words having God as their common origin. The words of the eternal God must themselves be eternal!

Those Jews who believed in a final judgment in which men are to be judged and assigned their eternal destiny usually understood that this judgment would be based on the Law of Moses. The Law would be set beside them to serve as a standard measure of their guilt or innocence. Paul had apparently held this conviction, as expressed in Romans 2:12:

All who sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

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Certainly Jesus would have been aware of this, and by placing his own words in this same function, showed even further how he classified his utterances alongside those of Moses. I am thinking of this utterance in particular:

He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day (John 12:48).

This confirms what I have already established, that Jesus placed his words in the same unique category as those of Moses – words that came from the mouth of God. Both sets of words are to remain though heaven and earth pass away, and both will therefore serve as a basis for eternal judgment.

What was lacking?

What was lacking in the Mosaic code? Why was it necessary that Jesus come after Moses to amend it? We can derive the answer to these questions two ways, and since each yields the same answer, we have confidence that the answer is the correct one.

First, consider the question about divorce as presented to Jesus in Matthew 19:1f. The Pharisees came to Jesus with the question, "Is it lawful to divorce ones wife for any cause? Jesus referred the to Moses' Genesis creation story and concluded,

What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder (v. 6).

The hostile Pharisees responded with another question, referring to the Law: "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" Jesus answer came immediately:

For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, makes her commit adultery.

I conclude that the Law of Moses was qualified, in this case, by limitations in the ability of the primitive Hebrews to obey or to understand. They could never have responded to the Law as it was from the beginning of creation. The generation of Jesus did not receive it either, and Jesus acknowledged the problem. His own disciples were reluctant to receive it, as we realize when we proceed to v. 10: "The disciples said to him, 'If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry.'" Then Jesus responded,

Not all men can receive this concept, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.

Since the time of Jesus there have been some persons who were and are able to receive the Law as amended by Jesus, and so the Father sent Jesus with the fullness of the Law, as it has been from the beginning. This should apply not only to the law of divorce, but also to any other of the many commandments delivered by Moses. The Law of Moses made accommodations due to the inability of men to receive it in its perfect expression. Jesus ended these accommodations and presented the Law as it has been from the beginning.

Second, the Law of Moses was an approximation to the will of God in that it relaxed the rigid norms that have been the perfect will of God from the beginning. Jesus' amendments were required to make up what was lacking and were therefore perfect. The traditions of the elders, with their interpretations of the application of the Law of Moses, tended to relax even this already relaxed code, which is a primary reason for Jesus' harsh condemnation. The Law of Corban

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exemplifies this practice. It seems the Rabbi's needed a relaxation of the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and mother." They had therefore developed an interpretation that allowed this law to be relaxed. One needed only to announce that whatever might have been given toward the support of father and mother was "Corban" (Mark 7:11), which means offered, or to be offered, to God as a sacrifice. Then one need not support father or mother. The Law as delivered by Moses was incomplete in that it allowed for such accommodations by relaxing the perfect will of God.

The Tightening of the Law of Moses

This relaxation, or loosening, of the law was anathema to Jesus who aimed to do the very opposite by tightening or perfecting it and bringing it into accord with what has been the Law of the Father from the beginning. It was doubtless at the heart of Jesus' ongoing controversy with the Pharisees. It also explains the nature of the six "antitheses" of the Sermon on the Mount. In each of the six cases, Jesus takes the Law as expressed through Moses and stiffens it immeasurably. One of his most revealing statements relative to the Law begins with his introduction to the antitheses at Matthew 5:17:

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The Greek for "abolish" and "relaxes" in this quotation come from the verb *lúo* which means literally "to loosen" or, as translated here, to relax. Prefixed with *kata* it means to loosen completely, to dissolve, hence to abolish, destroy, or bring to an end. When Jesus says, "Not an iota, not a dot, shall pass from the law until all is accomplished," he must be understood as meaning that nothing is to be done to the law that would result in a loosening or relaxation of its application. His purpose is to do the very opposite, by tightening it. Then he continues to illustrate the significance of this by the antitheses, in each of which the Law of Moses provided for a relaxed application, whereas the Law of Jesus stiffened it immeasurably. We will not discuss all of them here, but the first one will illustrate this:

You have heard that it was said to the men of old, "You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, "You fool!" shall be liable to the hell of fire (Matthew 5:21,22).

Just being angry with your brother has the same result as killing him! This is a radical change that lifts the law as delivered by Moses to a much higher plane where a man's desire or intent is the same as carrying out the deed, though the brother may not have been touched. This is what I mean when I say that Jesus stiffened the Law. This also would seem to make the keeping of the law much more difficult. This is the same sort of change accomplished by the second antitheses:

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27,28).

This stiffening of the Seventh Commandment again takes the offense out of the category of actual commission of an act and places it in the category of thought or intent. If this commandment seemed hard to keep already, Jesus' stiffening made it much, much more difficult. So it goes throughout the other antitheses, where the Law of Moses presented a relatively relaxed standard regulating divorce, the practice of swearing, retaliation and the

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disposition toward one's enemy. In every case the change advanced by Jesus was extremely radical and – so it would seem – far, far more difficult to keep.

The Law of Moses was lacking, then, both because it fell short of the will of the Father as it has been from the beginning, and because the primitive Hebrews were unable to receive anything more demanding. Jesus brought it to perfection and now calls on all men everywhere to strive for the perfection of the Father.

The Fulfilling of the Law

We are now in a position to draw a conclusion as to what Jesus meant when he said, above, that he came to fulfill the Law. He considered the law as given by Moses, like a cup only half full, to be incomplete and unfinished. He took that cup and filled it to the brim. This is the interpretation of the Greek, *plerosai*, as used here. Thus he literally “fulfilled” or “filled full” the Law. He certainly did not come to destroy it or otherwise to bring it to an end! In the Law of Moses, Jesus took an old and incomplete house, weather worn and lacking a roof then fully refurbished and completed it so that it lacked nothing. I use this metaphor to emphasize that he ended with the same house that was there at the beginning, yet significantly strengthened. The United States Constitution is a good comparison. It has been amended and there have been changes of administrations but the Constitution is still there. Not one dot or comma has passed away from it! Thus, Jesus amended the Law as delivered by Moses.

He also introduced a change of administration. He did this when he said of John,

The Law and the Prophets were until John. Since then the Kingdom of God is preached . . . (Luke 16:16).

Jesus did not mean to indicate with these words that the Law and the Prophets were terminated with the ministry of John the Baptist. Prior to John the whole earth was under a different administration. This administration changed when Jesus introduced the Kingdom. The Law and the Prophets, with Jesus' amendments, continues to be the rule of the Father for men but the administration has changed in that the Kingdom of God has come to earth and Jesus has been exalted and installed as king. The apparent contradiction of this utterance with his other statement that the Law and the Prophets will not pass away is thus seen to be no contradiction whatever. They did not pass away but continue in full force, greatly strengthened and stiffened by the new administration of Jesus the Messiah.

Likewise, when he stated,

It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void (Luke 16:17),

he did not mean that every facet of the Law would continue to be enforced. To the contrary, his radical stiffening of the Law, his raising it to be a matter of will or desire instead of mere action, and the resulting simplification necessarily renders much of its minutiae obsolete. In a similar fashion, many laws in the United States are no longer enforced. Times change, the society changes, and they are not currently needed. Nevertheless, they remain on the books and can be enforced should any administration choose to do so. So it is with much of the law as delivered by Moses.

The Laws that are not Enforced in the Kingdom

The laws regulating both fasting and ceremonial cleanliness are not enforced in the Kingdom of God. The reason for this is the internalization of the Law, as is evident from the utterance of Matthew 15:10-20 (See also Mark 7:14-23):

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And he called the people to him and said to them, Hear and understand: not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. ... But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." And he said, are you still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and so passes on? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.

Similarly, that portion of the Mosaic Code that regulates ritual and sacrifice, the ceremonial law, is no longer enforced. When Jesus quoted the Father, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," he again internalized the law, since mercy comes from the heart. He also placed the temple rituals in storage by making the assertion that God does not desire sacrifice (Matthew 9:11, 12:7). Then he sealed this action by allowing the Romans to utterly destroy the temple in AD 70.

Large portions of the five books of Moses were intended to regulate institutions, such as slavery, that no longer exist. Other ordinances regulated procedures for managing lepers since leprosy was not understood. Modern understanding of these things renders such ordinances obsolete. The genocidal ordinances given when the Israelites invaded Canaan cannot be reconciled with Jesus' "Love your enemy" or "Love your neighbor as yourself." These ordinances are enforced no more. Much of the Mosaic Code was given to regulate a culture of which the prevailing circumstances no longer exist. Obviously, these ordinances can no longer be enforced, although they are still there, jot and tittle, precisely as Jesus indicated.

Jesus Condensed the Law

Jesus has confronted all these cultural circumstances and made such ordinances moot by his condensation of the law. In so doing, he has also universalized it so that it is applicable to individuals of all cultures and times. He condensed and universalized it by the following utterances:

So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets (Matthew 7:12).

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 first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37-40).

I emphasize that this radical condensation of the law comes from the law, so that it does not represent a new legal code. It is the same code, differently perceived. Also, by recasting the essence of the law in terms of love and wish, Jesus has further internalized it, called individuals to full responsibility and made each person accountable for wants and desires. The human will was thereby set free, as though it had come to the age of accountability before God.

A Fundamental Distinction

Almighty God spoke to Moses out of fire and smoke on Sinai's peak, commanding what human beings shall and shall not do; the Holy Father spoke through Jesus on the mount of the Sermon commanding what human beings shall or shall not love and desire. In the first case He spoke to servants through a servant ("my servant, Moses"). In the second case, He speaks to children through a son ("This is my beloved son") – to advanced children who can be held fully accountable both for their deeds and desires and whom He expects to make their own enlightened decisions.

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This distinction comes into clear focus when we compare the voices from heaven that identified Moses and Jesus. When the Lord rebuked Miriam and Aaron from a pillar of cloud because of their complaint against Moses he spoke of the latter as “my servant Moses” (Numbers 12:1- 8). But when he rebuked Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, he spoke of Jesus, saying, “This is my beloved son; listen to him” (Mark 9:7)! Jesus is therefore higher than Moses in the house of the Father as a son is higher than a servant in the house of the king. In Moses, the Lord spoke through a servant to servants; in Jesus, the Father speaks through a son to children – to sons and daughters. The law as delivered to Moses was therefore a law for servants; the law as delivered through Jesus is therefore a law for children in the likeness of the Father. It is the same law amended to render it suitable for children.

It follows that, for the children of God, the law and prophecy of Jesus supersede the Law and the Prophets, personified in Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. We note that Peter, James and John wanted to build three tabernacles, one each for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, thus placing Jesus on par with the other two. The voice from heaven was a rebuke to the three frightened disciples who, looking around, suddenly saw no one but Jesus only. Moses and Elijah had passed from view and only Jesus remained! But the servant law is still with us, complete with every jot and tittle, and it yet applies to servants..

When Jesus stiffened the law of divorce by eliminating all grounds, the disciples grumbled and he explained, “Not all men can receive this.” This explains two things. **First, the application of the law of Jesus, the son, is qualified by being restricted to the *children of God*. Second, the jot and tittle does not pass away because the law as delivered by the servant, Moses, continues to be applied to the *servants of God*.**

The Missing Component

When Jesus confronted the scribes, Pharisees and lawyers on this matter of the application of the law, he was most adamant:

They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger (Matthew 23:4, see also Luke 11:46).

This “heavy burden” was the application of the law as interpreted through the “traditions of the elders.” It was not that it was strict, but that there was so much of it that it was weighty. When the apostles later decided that it was not necessary to bind the Gentile converts to the Law of Moses, Peter explained to those Jewish disciples who wanted the Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the law that this was not necessary. He said, “Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” The Law of Moses therefore was generally thought to impose a heavy yoke and burden about the necks of all that were subject to it. Yet Jesus took this heavy yoke and burden, decried those who would relax it in any way, and then amended it in a manner that greatly stiffened it. And then he said to his disciples:

Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

This is not reasonable on the surface. One takes, for example, the Seventh Commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” which was a “burden hard to bear.” Then Jesus stiffened it immeasurably by internalizing it,

Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27).

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This lightens the burden? Or one takes the ordinance of Moses that reads, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” and stiffens it:

Do not resist one who is evil (Matthew 5:38,39).

This eases the yoke? We are surely missing something here, since even Jesus recognized that not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given (Matthew 19:11).

If you will recall our interpretation of the message of Jesus above, you should see clearly that what is missing is the application of his Great Principle: **Whoever loves his life loses it, but whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for life eternal.** We will only be able to make sense of Jesus’ radical stiffening of the Law of Moses after we have applied this Great Principle.

The Law of Moses the servant is applicable to the servants of God among men, who love the life in this world. Its ordinances are therefore rooted in the love of life. Seeing that it is this love that has fueled the evolutionary forces that work for the preservation of life, the law as delivered by Moses is applicable to all men everywhere in principle and, indeed, every nation develops legal codes compatible with it. It is “a life for a life,” in order that life may be protected and preserved compatibly with the love of life. It is the law for servants.

The Law of Jesus is only for those “to whom it is given.” These are those who have committed to the Great Principle and have, through Jesus and his Gospel of the Kingdom, learned to hate the life that we have in this world so as to qualify for eternal life as children with the Father. The Law of Jesus is for children.

It is not reasonable for a person who loves life to love the enemy who would hurt or destroy that life. It is not reasonable for a person who loves life to turn the other cheek. It is not reasonable for a person who loves life to give no resistance to one that is evil. It is not reasonable for a person who loves life to reject divorce from a spouse who is ruining that life. And so on it goes. But all these things become reasonable when the attitude to life is reversed in accord with the Great Principle. If I love the Father so much that my only unyielding desire is to go to Him, then I not only can live according to the command of Jesus, I will so live and the enemy is no threat to the things that I hold dear. So it was that Jesus went without resistance to the cross, with the prayer, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!” It is only by compliance with the Great Principle of Jesus that his yoke becomes easy and his burden light. It is simple logic, indeed. If my hearts supreme desire is to leave this life and go to my Father in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt and thieves cannot break in and steal, then nothing threatens me here. The enemy then becomes an enabler.

An Example

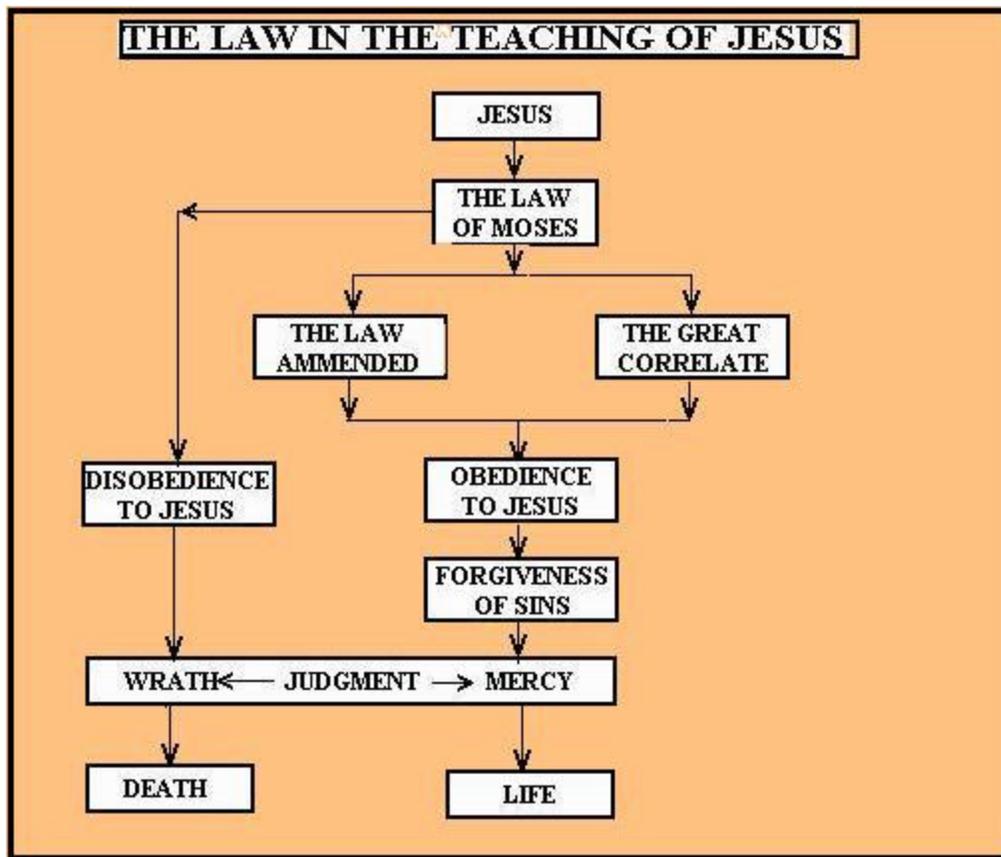
Let me use an example. Air, like the love of life, is ubiquitous on the surface of the earth where we live. Large material objects, metal or fabric, are very heavy. The material in a dirigible weighs several tons, and if provided without voids or hollows would comprise a yoke too difficult and a burden far too heavy for any man to bear. Shape it in a certain way so that it becomes a large hollow vessel, and it still weighs tons. Then carry out one more operation – replace the air within it with hydrogen or helium, and it floats of its own accord. So a seemingly heavy burden becomes light – a yoke easy to bear. Yet it looks the same! One can even add more weight to it – put people on board – and still it goes up, lighter than air! What I mean is that when people are immersed in the love of life, the law as amended by Jesus seems impossibly heavy. But replace the love of life with the love of God and it becomes easy to bear.

In summary, we see that Jesus maintains the Law of Moses without loss of jot or tittle as the law for servants under the administration of the Kingdom of God. Then he *condensed* it to its essence, the First Commandment and the Second Commandment, and this he applied to all men

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who would enter into life. If you would enter into life, keep the commandments! Then he *stiffened* the law as required to make it compatible with the Great Principle and the Love of God, and this he applied to the children, to those who are “born of God.” He also *internalized* the law by making it a matter of the thoughts and attitudes of the heart rather than the deeds of the hands. This was necessary to make it compatible with the divine spirit indwelling the hearts of the children of God, and to make every individual accountable for its interpretation. Finally, he *universalized* it, not in the sense of application, for it is not given to all men, but in the sense of applicability. By extracting it from a distinctive Jewish culture and circumstance he rendered it applicable to all cultures and circumstances. He definitely did not destroy the Law of Moses and he did not bring it to an end. He took the imperfect law as given through a servant to servants and perfected it. Then he gave it, not to the Jews and not to all men, but to the children of God, and made it the medium through which men and women may receive eternal life. This he did when he said, If you would enter into life, keep the commandments. Keeping all these considerations in mind, Jesus’ view of the law can be illustrated by the chart entitled:

The Law in the Teaching of Jesus



2. Paul and the Law

We have already given some consideration to Paul’s view of the law in the discussion of his prescription for eternal life. There is more to be said here which will tend to build on the above.

First, his explanation of why the law was given and the purpose it serves indicates fuzzy thinking

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with an apparent contradiction. He explained that one mans trespass (Adams), led to condemnation for all men, and likewise, one mans act of righteousness (Jesus') leads to acquittal and life for all men. Then he states that "law came in to increase the trespass." (Romans 5:20) The resulting increase of sin only causes grace to abound all the more.

But in the Galatian letter he asks: "Why then the law?" Then he explains that it was added because of transgressions. He states:

Before faith came, we were confined by the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed, so that the law was our custodian until Christ came (Galatians 3:23).

The law, keeping the Jews under restraint like a custodian restrains and disciplines children can only reduce the transgressions. But he has told us in Romans that it came in to increase the trespass. And in Romans he was careful to explain that this is indeed the case, for "through the law comes the knowledge of sin," (Romans 3:20) and "sin is not counted where there is no law" (Romans 5:13). Describing his own experience as typical, he stated:

Apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died (Romans 7:9).

If the coming of the law brought sin to life in Paul's experience, then it must certainly have resulted in an increase in transgressions. But he asserted,

Where there is no law, there is no transgression (Romans 4:14).

So, does the law increase the trespass, or, like a custodian over children, does it restrain and therefore reduce the transgressions?

You see the contradiction, I am sure. I ask, can this be resolved by examining the two words, trespass and transgression, together with sin? I do not see how this is possible. A trespass is an offense, and an offense to God must be categorized as a sin, and Paul used these two words (trespass and sin) interchangeably (Romans 5:20). Presumably, one can trespass against or offend God in the absence of law. Transgression is different, if "where there is no law, there is no transgression." Therefore, a transgression must be a special case of offense to God, resulting from disobeying his law. But this also is sin. So if both are sub categories of sin, the contradiction must stand. It cannot be resolved by resort to splitting hairs as to the definition of words. In addition, if we think of a trespass as some type of offense to God apart from the law, as we must if we accept Paul's assertion that "law came in to increase the trespass" then it cannot be true that "apart from the law, sin lies dead" (Romans 7:8).

So, the more we think of it, the fuzzier Paul's thinking becomes. While it is true that he shows himself adept at the application of logic in many instances, sometimes he goes beyond his ability so as to reveal to us, when our eyes are open, that he is, after all, just another man speaking his thoughts.

Another Contradiction

We have yet another problem with his contrast of Christ and Adam. He summarized this contrast in writing,

Than as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men (Romans 5:18).

According to this Paul is a Universalist, believing that all men will receive life through Christ. He certainly believes that all men are condemned in Adam, writing to the Romans

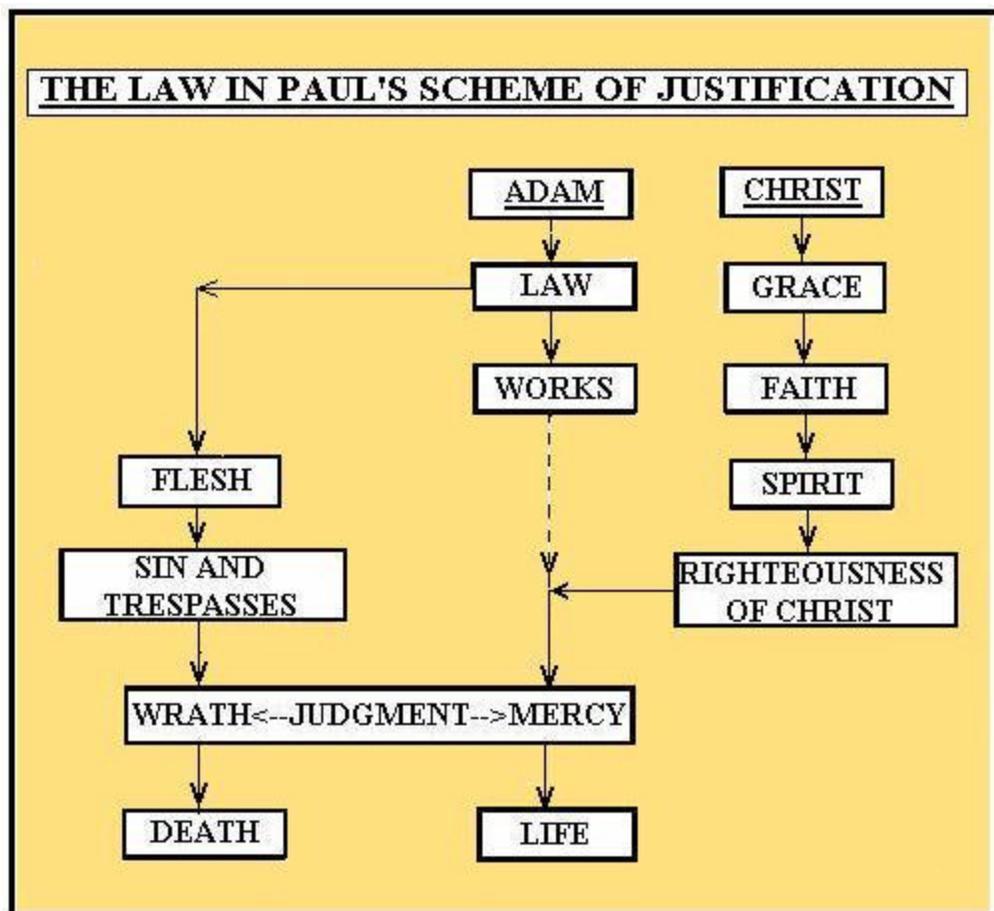
THE LAW

All men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin (Romans 3:9).

Therefore he must be saying that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are acquitted by the work of Christ. Otherwise the contrast is not appropriate. But we do not find this to be the case, for he believes that there is a judgment of wrath waiting for all that have not turned to God (I Thessalonians 1:10).

Overall, of course, he tends to make a lot of sense, otherwise his logical indiscretions would have revealed him to all for what he is. As it is, his asserted universalism goes unnoticed by his disciples, who prefer to believe that he only intends to be saying that life in Christ is available to all men. Perhaps that was his intent, but then his contrast with Adam falls flat.

His positions on many theological themes tend to a kind of dualism, in which he pairs contrasting ideas. A diagram can best show this. He pairs Adam with Christ.



As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive (I Corinthians 15:22).

He pairs law with grace,

Yea are not under law, but under grace (Romans 6:14,15).

He pairs works with faith,

For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law (Romans 3:28).

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Coming down one step further on the chart, he pairs flesh with spirit,

Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh (Galatians 3:2)?

Then, of course, he pairs sin and/or trespasses with righteousness and/or justification,

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5: 19).

God's wrath is paired with his mercy in the act of judgment,

What if God, . . . endured with much patience the vessels of wrath . . . in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy . . . (Romans 9:22,23).

Life is paired with death,

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive (I Corinthians 15:22).

The central column of the chart illustrates what might have been, or what is true in principle as set forth in Chapter 2 of Romans. The law came in under Adam and, in principle, should have resulted in good works as men responded through obedience to the law. They would have received God's mercy at the judgment and would have been rewarded with eternal life (Romans 2:7). But because of the flesh, the good works were not forthcoming, so the arrows below the LAW are shown in dotted lines. This indicates that this is intentional only, showing an intent that is never realized. Instead the action shifts to the left hand column where sin, aroused in the flesh by the law (Romans 7:5), comes to life. This results, of course, in the outpouring of God's wrath at the judgment, and death that is eternal separation from God. For all these, says Paul, there will be "wrath and fury" (Romans 2:8). There are no exceptions. Death spread to all men because all men sinned (Romans 12:12). I can find no evidence that Paul credits any man with a degree of righteousness apart from Christ. It seems to require only one transgression of the law to shift the action from the center column to the left hand column. In Adam, all die!

But then Christ entered the scene and opened up a new avenue to LIFE, as illustrated by the right hand column. As the perfectly free gift of God's grace, everyone who places faith in Jesus will receive the Spirit and the righteousness of Christ. I emphasize that it is a perfectly free gift. The perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer, who then is judged through the mercy of God to be worthy of eternal life, as though perfect in all his deeds and thought. The action switches back to the center column where it should have been but was not. This wonderful free gift is possible, writes Paul, because the sacrificial death of Jesus has expiated our sins. Each individual, by his faith in Jesus, has died with Jesus so as to live with him in newness of life. This life comes when the Spirit restores the life to our mortal bodies, which were crucified with Jesus. In the embrace of this faith and the life of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to produce the works that are acceptable to God – namely, the works equivalent to the works of the law, but only through Christ.

How does the law come? It comes through Moses and is passed down from generation to generation, I would assume. This seems to be how it came to Paul. He wrote, "I was alive once, apart from the law, but when the law came, sin came to life and I died." He indicates that this is the only avenue for the law when he wrote, "I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet" (Romans 7:7). Yet he knew perfectly well that there were multitudes of Gentiles who lived as though they had received the law, even though they may never have heard of Moses. He accounted for these by saying,

When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law (Romans 2:14).

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Was the law not available to Paul on the same basis, before he was taught the Law of Moses? Presumably not – by his own rationale, he must have been morally and spiritually dense when compared with the Gentiles.

More Confusion

Paul is very ambivalent with regard to the law. On one hand, we have these statements:

The law worketh wrath (Romans 4:15).

Through the law comes the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20); and

It is the law of “sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

Yet his commitment to Judaism would not permit a negative attitude toward it.

The law is holy (Romans 7:12).

The law is spiritual (Romans 4:14).

The law is good (Romans 7:16).

He works his way around this ambivalence by incorporating “sin” and “sinful flesh” into his doctrine in such a manner as to personify sin and to credit this “sin” with all transgressions because of the weakness of the flesh (Romans 8:3). And, as I showed earlier, he managed to exempt himself from any responsibility for his sins by hiding behind “Sin” and the weakness of his flesh.

If I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwelleth within me (Romans 7:20).

3. Comparing Jesus and Paul

We can best make this comparison by comparing the two charts provided above. Paul found the law impossible to keep (see Romans 7) even though the scriptures testified that it was not too hard (Deuteronomy 30:11). When the law came to him, sin came to life through the weakness of his flesh, and Paul died. Referring to the chart above, we see that Jesus also provided for disobedience to the law of Moses such that disobedience leads to wrath and death much the same as Paul.

But how does one find salvation from this wrath? The answer to this question discloses the vast difference that distinguishes the doctrines of the two. Paul, cowering under his wrathful deity, could find no forgiveness for his sin, and no grounds for righteousness. This was because he repeatedly sinned due to the weakness of his flesh. Dedicating himself to the strictest clan in Judaism, the Pharisees, he struggled to achieve righteousness but all to no avail. His conclusion?

Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death (Romans 7:24)?

Then, in his despair, he had his personal encounter with Jesus and, caught up to the third heaven, heard things impossible to utter. Out of that came his doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, with a new life in Christ arising through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. By this means he found his way back to the mercy of God, and claimed the promise of eternal life.

But Jesus presented a radically different way of salvation. Accepting the law as the basic standard, one that was not too hard to keep, he held all men accountable for keeping it. He then

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extracted its essence, thus distilling, stiffening, universalizing, internalizing and clarifying it. This did indeed make it too hard to keep by itself, but he made it possible for the children of God by his introduction of the Great Principle and the Great Correlate as defined above. The children of God, focussed on the love of God and the hatred of life, can become obedient to the standard of righteousness taught and exemplified by Jesus.

The Critical Difference

Now comes the vast difference between Jesus and Paul. In the cases where God's children fall into disobedience and sin, they need only repent and God who always loves his children will forgive them so that they have confidence of receiving the mercy of the Father and the inheritance of eternal life on the Day of Judgment. The love and forgiveness of the Father does not require the expiation of sin as Paul taught. A sin forgiven does not require punishment as Paul imagined. The righteousness of Christ is realized, not by imputation according to Paul, but by following Jesus in the way of the cross, which is the way of the love of the Father and the hatred of life in this world. The Prodigal Son stands before us as the metaphorical example. The chart illustrates this.

In Paul, the terrible wrath of God cannot be satisfied apart from the shedding of blood and atonement. In Jesus, the wonderful forgiveness of God requires only repentance and following Jesus in the Way. The difference is critical. In Christendom, where multitudes of churchmen around the world have followed the way of Paul, history shows that they are as bound to sin as if they had never heard of Jesus. They still fear death and strive to postpone it as long as possible. They continue to sin by going to war and by doing selfish deeds because they are yet in love with life. So, when at last death overtakes them they cannot go to God. It is solely because they do not want to go – never having embraced the Great Correlate as set forth by Jesus. The way of Paul is therefore literally a dead end because it ends in death. The way of Jesus, which is the way of the Cross, is the living way because it leads to life eternal.

The Differences Explained

The differences seem to arise primarily from the contrasting views of God held by Jesus and Paul. For Jesus, God is first of all the loving Father who only wants his children to repent of their waywardness and come home. He is the Father who forgives his children when they repent (provided only that they likewise forgive others) and who sent his son to show the way. For Paul, he is the terrible deity whose wrath hovers over all men and that cannot be satisfied by anything other than the shedding of blood – the terrible suffering of Jesus who shed his blood for our sins on the cross, provided only that we put our faith in him. For Paul, the law is only a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ and thereafter has no relevance; for Jesus, it is the standard of righteousness that leads us to the Father.