



THE CHRISTIAN
AND GOD'S LAW

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"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of Yahweh; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For Yahweh knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." -Psalm 1

The Book of Psalms opens by offering the reader two roads from which he can choose: the way of the godly or the way of the ungodly. After reading where each of these two paths leads, the only sane choice is to go the way of the godly.

We Christians have talked a lot about how much we want to become like the fruitful tree mentioned in verse 3. We have also talked about not doing the negative things mentioned in verse 1. Somehow we have overlooked the importance of doing the positive things mentioned in verse 2. One of the conditions of being a fruitful tree is to delight in the law of the Lord and to meditate in His law day and night. Notice, it is not just the Scriptures in general, but the law specifically, which demands our attention.

If a person studies much Church history, he will soon discover that most of the Reformers and other men used by God had some terrible blind spots in their Christianity. Historians explain this by pointing out that these men were, to some degree, products of the time and culture in which they lived. This should cause us to pause for sober reflection. Are we so proud and arrogant to think that we are any different? What areas of our thinking have been molded and shaped more by our Western culture than by the Word of God? What areas of theological blindness does our generation suffer from?

The Reformers began the work of recovery in the Church, but they did not finish it. It is the duty of every generation of believers to continue the work of recovery until the Lord returns. John Robinson, the Pilgrims' pastor, said, "Luther and Calvin were precious shining lights in their times, yet God did not reveal His whole will to them. I am very confident that the Lord hath yet more truth and light to break forth out of His Holy Word."

I am convinced that one important area that demands our attention is the recovery of a proper understanding of how the Christian is to relate to the law and commandments revealed in the Old Testament. Most Christian leaders, if they teach about the law at all, give the impression that New Testament believers need not concern themselves with Old Testament commandments. To embrace this kind of teaching requires three things. First, one must emphasize certain verses from Paul's epistles which appear to make "negative" statements about the law, and ignore the context of these verses. Second, one must ignore the positive statements Paul made about the law, ignore what the other Apostles say about the law, and ignore much of what the Old Testament says about the law. Third, one must ignore what Yeshua/Jesus taught about the law in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets: I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Anyone therefore who breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:17-19).

A close study of the Sermon on the Mount will reveal that its organization is based on Psalm 1. Psalm 1 is a "skeleton outline" for the entire Sermon. The Sermon on the Mount is simply an expansion or enlargement of Psalm 1.

PSALM 1 SERMON ON THE MOUNT

1 Blessed is...	Blessed are...	5:3-16
2 delight in the Law	not to abolish the Law...	5:17...
	...this sums up the Law	...7:12
3 fruitful tree	trees and their fruit	7:13-20
4 ungodly driven away	- I never knew you. Depart from Me,	
5 not stand in the judgment	you who practice lawlessness	7:21-23
6 Yahweh knows the	house on a rock	
way of the righteous	(hear and do Torah)	7:24, 25
but the way of the	house on sand	
ungodly perishes	hear and not do Torah)	7:26, 27

Yeshua/Jesus was a Fruitful Tree. His fruitfulness grew out of walking not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standing in the way of sinners, nor sitting in the seat of the scornful, but His delight was in the Law of Yahweh, and in that Law He meditated day and night. The Sermon on the Mount was an outgrowth of Yeshua's meditation on the Law, and it behooves us to heed His warnings concerning our attitudes to the Law. How a disciple of Jesus should relate to the Law is the theme of the Sermon.

Isaiah said that Yahweh would "magnify the law, and make it honorable" (42:21). Yeshua did this in the Sermon on the Mount. The Phari-sees had made much of the Law of God into a heavy, unbearable yoke by adding thousands of man-made commandments ("the Oral Law") to the Biblical commandments. Yeshua stripped the Law of the burdensome additions. He did not abolish the Law; He "magnified the law, and made it honorable" by clarifying it, restoring it, and teaching us how to obey it in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7).

From Matt. 5:21 to 7:11, Yeshua expounds the Law. He gives examples to show that obeying God's Law involves more than mere external obedience. The Law is to be internalized, "written on the heart." A word of caution is needed: Having God's Law written on our hearts does not give us an excuse to ignore the external keeping of God's laws. On the contrary, it enables us to live by an even higher standard than the Law requires. Yeshua gives us the power to properly keep God's laws; He does not give us a license to break them: "Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments will be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

After He "sums up" the Law and Prophets (7:12), He warns us to "beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (7:15). Outwardly, we have no reason to suspect that they are not real Christians, but inwardly they are wolves with an inherent hatred of God's Law. The fruit these false teachers bear are people who call Jesus "Lord," but do not do the will of the Heavenly Father (7:16-21).

"Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" they ask, "and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Notice, these people are not Hindus or Buddhists or Moslems or agnostics. These are church people who busied themselves with church activities, all of which they did "in the name of Jesus." They are totally stunned to find themselves excluded from God's Kingdom. When the Lord tells them to depart, He says, "I never knew you." What is the evidence the Lord cites to uphold His righteous verdict? "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (7:23).

How the Christian is to relate to God's Law is of vital importance. As we return to the simplicity of obeying the teachings of our Messiah, let us make sure we are not following a "lawless Jesus" who "abolished the Law."

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