

## **THE WORKS OF GRACE AND THE LAW**

Morgan County Correctional Complex Chapel, May 11, 2009

Good morning, my friends.

I want to thank you all for being here today. As Len pointed out last Saturday, we have a somewhat unique service up here on this seventh day of the week. Not only in the regular depth of message and bond of fellowship, but being in the middle of the day, on the weekend, we are somewhat out of step with most other programs.

The camera isn't rolling today. Bill (our sponsor) didn't bring in any pretty girls. There aren't any sympathetic religionists here to give you things; no state employees to see you "in church." ... You're not getting any brownie points for your attendance here, today.

So if you're sitting in one of these pews, chances are you've come to learn something of God, and I thank Him for your being here. I believe we are set apart in this sense. I hear a lot of talk around this chapel about "revival" and "a mighty move of God" on this compound, but I seldom see it in the hearts of the men – and that's where the Spirit of God must reside.

We could draw a crowd here, with a little effort we could pack these seats – but at what cost? Any time the Church has attempted to grow by attracting the world, it has suffered – both in the loss of credibility and in compromising its message. I would rather speak to one man truly seeking God, than a thousand looking for entertainment, looking to fit in. Solomon said, "[O]ne man among a thousand have I found." How many do you think we have among us today?

I know by evidence there are men here, right now, honestly seeking the mind of Christ and others also speaking His words from the heart. This service, God has used over the years to give us spiritual discernment and insight into the motives of men. But the question is, "Are we paying attention?"

Gary Hall told me last week he was having a hard time finding someone to speak today, so I thought I'd put together a message on discernment. But that quickly fizzled out as God moved me back to what I'm going to share with you today ... a message more fundamental to our problems. It's one I've been carrying around since the last time I was asked to cover an unscheduled service. It's a message about law and grace, about submission to authority, and the forgiveness of sins.

As human beings we have a natural problem with authority, with government, with laws – that’s why most of us are here and why some of us stay here. Nobody, naturally, likes being told what to do, even when the command comes from God – Yet God does have commandments, some of which require works. Benjamin Franklin said, “He that cannot obey, cannot command.”

Open your Bible to Matthew 23, and let see what Jesus advised His followers concerning the religious leaders of His time, starting in verse 1:

Then spoke Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, [2] Saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: [They had the authority to teach. Verse 3] All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their *works*: for they say, and do not. [They were hypocrites].

[4] “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. [5] But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, [6] And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, [7] And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’”

They enjoyed the job, the recognition, the perks. They like to be thought of as “leaders,” as “men of God,” but all of it was for their personal ego, their own satisfaction. They had no desire to direct men to God, only to hold their position, retain their authority. Then He turns to us, to give us the key to avoiding this self-deception:

[8] “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. [9] And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. [10] Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. [11] But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”

This is the true position of leadership: to serve. You are what you do and not necessary the title that you hold. You can call yourself whatever you want, you can even get others to call you “Preacher,” “Pastor,” “Master,” “Father,” whatever ... it is your works that determine what you *actually* are. ... And here is your warning, verse 12:

“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” ... And what does humility produce? Obedience; and obedience, works. And works determine what you are – saint or sinner, leader or charlatan.

Yet thousands of professing Christians and many large denominations insist there are no works required in order to receive salvation! Millions of people who profess Christ insist that the law is “done away.” They believe the Bible says “Jesus nailed the law to His cross,” and claim that “under the *New Covenant*” there is no obligation to keep any laws!

Millions believe we are saved by grace alone! They insist there are no works of any kind involved in salvation. But is this true? Will God save us if we do not obey Him? Put another way, will God refuse salvation to us if He finds us trying to keep His laws? Does it make God angry with us when He sees us trying to keep His Ten Commandments?

Judging from the angry rhetoric one hears over radio and television and reads in religious publications, you and I would be in real trouble with God if we were found trying to keep His laws! “That’s legalism!” they say, when asked about Sabbath or feast days, God’s dietary laws, or obeying the Ten Commandments. Is God angry with us if we keep His laws? Will we lose out on His Kingdom if we dare try to obey Him?

The favorite text quoted by thousands of ministers to do away with any works is, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Invariably, they stop quoting with the word “boast,” and never go on to read the rest of the thought! On its face, this oft-quoted verse seems to tell us we need only to have faith to be saved – that we certainly do not need any “works” to present before God.

If this is so, then why did Paul, the writer of this letter to the church at Ephesus, continue to say in the same passage, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”! (Ephesians 2:10). If God has ordained that we should “walk in good works,” meaning live a life of good works, which this verse plainly tells us, then wouldn’t that be a diametric contradiction only a few words apart in the Bible?

No, not at all. God's Word does not contradict itself. It does not tell you one thing in one verse, and the exact opposite in the next. One need only understand the meaning of the words used in order to grasp the full meaning of the entire passage. One thing is obvious. If only a part of the phrase is quoted, ending with the word “boast,” the person quoting

the verse does not want his listeners or readers to hear or see the remainder, which says we are created in Christ, as newly-begotten “creatures in Christ,” unto good works! It is dishonesty to imply anything else.

Now, since we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, where does the grace of God come in? First, we need to understand that “grace” does not mean a permanent condition of a human being. “Living under grace” is a term often used by those who deny there are any works to be accomplished by Christians. But grace is a quality of the character and nature of God, **not** the state of being of a Christian.

Grace means unmerited pardon. It means undeserved, unearned forgiveness! Because God is gracious, meaning merciful, He is willing to forgive us for our sins when we repent. A plain paraphrasing of the enigmatic verse in Ephesians 2:8 would be, “By God's loving, merciful graciousness and forgiveness, we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and even this faith is a gift from God, it is not something we can produce ourselves, lest we should boast and brag that we had saved ourselves! Nevertheless, we are created in Christ, as Christians, for the purpose of performing good works, which God has before ordained that we should live in them.”

Here is the real meaning of grace: “God’s free and undeserved favor to and love for mankind; influence of God operating in man to improve and strengthen: *but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*” (Romans 5:20).

Never forget the real meaning of the word “grace.” Remember, it is not the life-long condition of a Christian – a “state of being” in which the Christian dwells; it is part of the quality of character of God! When we repent of sin, God is gracious and merciful to forgive us of our sins. Notice, “Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believeth on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputed righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (Romans 4:4-7).

We can never “work” to eradicate sin. Sin is only forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ, not through anything we can accomplish. No amount of well-doing today can erase evil-doing yesterday. But when God “imputes righteousness without works” to us, He does so only through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ; through His righteousness.

How greatly blessed we are, by God's loving and merciful grace, when He forgives and covers our sins! And what is sin? Sin is the breaking of God's Ten Commandments!

No human being can ever earn God's forgiveness. Remember, being forgiven is the very first step toward salvation. We now "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," wrote Paul (Romans. 4:8). Neither you nor I could live one hundred lifetimes of one hundred years each, mightily striving to "be good," or "do good," and earn salvation! We could not keep God's Ten Commandments perfectly for one hundred such lifetimes of one hundred years each, and earn salvation!

Why is this so? Because salvation is the gracious gift of God. A gift is not something we earn, it is something freely given!

Each of us is imbued with human nature. Human nature is, by definition, a nature that is contrary to God. God says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:7-9).

The word "carnal" merely means "fleshly." We are imbued with fleshly, earthy, carnal human nature, which is a collection of vanity, jealousy, lust, and greed. Notice that we are by nature "not subject to the law of God."

This is not God's desire. He wants us to be subject to His laws, which are there for our good. Yet, by our very nature, we tend to be antagonistic toward God's laws. This antagonism shows itself throughout much of nominal, professing Christianity. Millions of people in dozens of denominations and church organizations teach against God's law. How shocked they will be when they learn Who wrote the very law they hate!

The law of God points out what sin is. We could not know that it is wrong to covet, or lust, apart from God's law. Human societies have been able to determine that stealing is wrong; that murder is wrong. Even pagan cultures have devised laws which are necessary to regulate a peaceful society. But no humanly-devised law could ever conclude that it is illegal to lust or covet.

Paul put it this way: "(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

"Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another)" (Romans 2: 14, 15). Many human societies legislate against many of the same proscriptions contained in the Ten Commandments, such as stealing and murder. Yet, they remain oblivious and antagonistic toward God's laws.

Why is there such antagonism against the Lord's Commandments? One would assume one would find hostility toward God's laws in non-Christian society; that the non-Christian and unbeliever would, of course, be antagonistic toward any rules and regulations in the Bible. We see that in the battles over the Commandments in the courthouses and public squares.

But the major source of antagonism toward God's laws is in the very place one would expect to find the opposite view – that of humble, joyous acceptance! Instead, the vast majority of nominal "Christian" ministers evince an impatient, angry hostility toward God's laws!

Please turn with me to Isaiah 29:9. I want us to look at what the Bible says about Biblical understanding. It does not come merely because one understands the English language, and knows how to read. Almighty God has said that a true understanding of His word is not available to everyone.

Just because millions of people believe in Hinduism, no professing Christian believes they are right. The old argument, "the majority is always right," is utterly false. So is the excuse, "surely, all these churches can't be wrong?" Many read the Bible, yet say they cannot understand it. That is because man has rejected God. Carnal human nature is enmity against God and His laws (Romans 8:7). Notice the prophecy of Isaiah:

"Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

“And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he says, I am not learned.

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who sees us? and who knows us?

"Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: or shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

"Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness" (Isaiah 29:9-18). This is referring to spiritual deafness and blindness.

Now please turn to Matthew 13:10. We're going to see how Jesus Christ quoted from this prophecy. His disciples wondered why He continually spoke to the people in puzzles, called "parables." Some seem to believe He did so to make His meaning clearer. He did the exact opposite!

Verse 10: "And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speaks thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which said, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them,

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matthew 13:10-17).

Jesus Christ clearly said He spoke to the masses in puzzles and conundrums lest they should understand; lest they should be converted; lest He should heal them! Yet, millions assume Jesus Christ tried valiantly to convert every person He saw; to heal all who came to Him; to teach everyone all He could about God's Word! He did no such thing. He thanked His Father that He had revealed His truth unto "babes," instead of the intellectually proud of this world (Luke 10:21). But Christ said "Many are called and few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

Only a humble, contrite, sincere person with whom God is working; one who is being called to repentance, can clearly understand His word! He said so! He said, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6:44). Because the natural state of human beings is carnality, which is hostility toward God's laws, the immediate tendency when encountering scriptures about obedience is to attempt to reason around them.

Many things are needed to understand God's truth. First, one must believe that God is, and that the Bible is His inspired word to man. Next, one must approach the Word of God in a spirit of humble fear, trembling before it in awe. "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: [YHVH, or "the Eternal"] but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:1, 2). Few truly tremble before the sacred Word of God. Few are afraid to put their own interpretation into it; to scornfully



reject some scriptures, and cling to others. The Bible plainly tells us that not every point of truth is found in anyone place:

“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

“For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

“But the Word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken” (Isaiah 28:9-13). As Jesus Christ said, this is precisely why so many are deceived about so much of the truth in God's Word.

God inspired John to warn against attempting to put our own ideas into Scripture: "For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Are you one with whom God is working? Is your mind and your heart truly open to understand God's Word? If it is, you will be able to completely understand that God's loving, merciful grace, which is extended to us when we repent, does not mean we may break God's Ten Commandments!

When thoughts of tradition; of family and friends; thoughts like "Surely all these big churches – all these millions of people – can't be wrong?" come into your mind, you will admit to yourself, "Yes, they can, and they usually are!"

There is no church that advocates sin. Yet, most do not teach their members what sin really is.

Please turn over to 1 John, chapter 3, verse 4. With spirit of awe and Godly fear in mind let's look at the Bible definition of sin. There is only one scripture in the Bible which says, "Sin is" and then gives us the exact definition of sin. Notice 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever

commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” That is what sin is. It is the breaking of anyone of God's Commandments.

Remember, James wrote, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law” (James 2:8-11).

To break any point of the Ten Commandments is the same as breaking all of them! Burn this down inside your mind, and never forget it: *sin is the breaking of God's law!*

When we repent, what is it we must repent of? We must repent of sin! And what *is sin*? It is the breaking of God's laws; God's holy, righteous, perfect Ten Commandments! If only this simple truth were etched into the minds of millions of nominal Christians, they would see clearly that God's law is not done away!

When John the Baptist preached, he continually cried out, “Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Jesus Christ said, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Repent of what? Repent of sin! And what *is sin*?

On the Day of Pentecost, when thousands were stricken over Peter's powerful indictment of their blood guiltiness over Christ's death, they were “... pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37, 38).

Again, repent of what? Repent of sin. And what is sin? It is the breaking of any point of God's Ten Commandments. Remember, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), and “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Notice how Paul wanted to avoid any misunderstanding among the Roman converts about “grace.” He did not want them to assume that, because we are under God's grace, we can revert right back to the life of sin from which we repented. He wrote, “What shall

we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk [live] in newness of life” (Romans 6:1-4).

We are to live a new and a different way of life; the way of God's Ten Commandments. David said, “ O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalms 119:97). David was a man after God's own heart, who will be the king over all Israel in the millennial reign of Christ (Jeremiah 30:9).

Now, you know what sin really is. If you never forget this, and always apply it when you read about sin in the Bible, you will have a far greater understanding than many of your peers.

Let's talk for a minute about “justification.” The dictionary says the word “justify” means: “To show to be just or right ... to clear of blame or guilt; to vindicate.” The World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary even has a biblical meaning: “Justification by faith: freedom from the *penalty* of sin through faith in Christ.” The newspaper computer has a feature on the word processing program that justifies the text to the margins of the page columns. When I set it to “full justify” it will force the text of a paragraph to be exactly square; perpendicular. The word “rectified,” or the expression “made right” means the same thing as “justified.”

When we are wrong, we need to be “made right.” When we are sinners, we need to be “justified.” Justification means the forgiveness of sins that are past. It has to do with the removal, through God's grace, of our past sins! When we repent of sin, which is the breaking of God's laws, God says He will forgive us. When He has forgiven us, we are then justified: made right, straightened out, rectified – forgiven!

Then what? Does this mean we are then free to go out and do the very same things we just repented of? Of course not! However, when we have been forgiven, God expects us to live a life of overcoming! Here is a most vital point concerning the “grace versus works” arguments of so many nominal Christians:

Millions have become convinced that there is nothing they must *do* in order to be saved. Instead of understanding that salvation is the result of God's loving grace, and that His grace forgives us from our past sins, they believe there is no obedience toward God required! Some have gone so far as to say once they have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, they cannot sin! How utterly ridiculous!

Because one has believed Jesus Christ died for our sins; believed he or she should accept Him as Savior, does this mean that lying, cheating, stealing, or even murder are completely overlooked? Never forget that repentance and the forgiveness of sins is but the first step in becoming a child of God! Why would Jesus Christ urge us to overcome if there is nothing further we must do once we have accepted Him as Savior?

He said, "And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Revelation 2:26, 27).

Keeping Jesus's works unto the end means holding fast to His teaching and His example. It means not only believing in the mighty works He accomplished here on earth, but continuing in His work during our entire Christian lifetime.

Please turn to Luke 19:12. Over and over again, your Bible says we must live a life of struggling against sin; a life of striving to overcome sin. Some of Christ's most important parables dealt with how we are to overcome. Christ showed that God judges each of us according to our own individual talents and abilities; that each of us is to be rewarded in His Kingdom according to what we do with what we have.

Luke 19:12: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he caned his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

"But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. [Note this carefully! They would not obey. They detested government!]. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

“Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in at very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

“And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

“And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

“And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

“But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me” (Luke 19:12-27). This is a profound parable. Clearly, Christ showed that the man who earned five pounds accomplished just as much as the man who earned the ten pounds. The only difference was in their natural gifts; their natural several abilities.

The attitude of the enemies was one of rebellion against laws. They resented any rulership over them. Christ shows those who rebel against God as their ruler are to be slain.

Notice that each one of the servants was *given* a certain amount. Salvation is *given* of God through Christ's sacrifice. But once God has freely GIVEN us forgiveness and salvation because of His loving grace and mercy, He expects us to live a life of overcoming. The servants were each given a gift of money. They didn't earn it. But after receiving the free gift, they were expected to *produce*; to use the gift they had received.

The parable clearly shows that we are to “Grow in grace and knowledge”; that we are to overcome when we have been converted.

If there is anyone here today who has not accepted the free gift of God – not experienced God’s grace in forgiving our rebellion, our transgressions, our lives of Lawlessness – If, and only IF God is calling you, then I encourage you to dig deep, open your heart and your mind to His Word, to His Will, His Law and His Spirit. You can become a part of God's Family, of God's government, if you will trust Him enough to submit to His Commandments. (Closing prayer, open the floor for questions.)

**Paul said**, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden, but it is forbidden because it is hurtful. Nor is a duty beneficial because it is commanded, but it is commanded because it is beneficial. (Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanack)

**Jesus said**, “Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17, NKJV). By "fulfill," He meant that His teachings would “fill out” or expand the application of the commandments of God. The Greek word *pleroo*, which is translated "fulfill," means "to make full, to fill to the full" (Vines).

To make His point, in the same passage Christ affirms some specific commands and then greatly expands their application (see verse 21-22). Jesus showed that His teachings amplify and explain the required behavior summarized in the Ten Commandments, “... if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, 'Master, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said unto him, 'Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind' This is the first and great commandment And the second is like unto it., 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:35-40). Here, Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, and Leviticus 19:18.

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men ... Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:7-9).

“And why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46).

“If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:17).

**Paul said**, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) (Romans 2:12-15).

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2).

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet'" (Romans 7:7)

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good:" (Romans 7:12) "For we know the law is spiritual ..." (v.14).

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:6-7)

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision in nothing: but obeying the commandments of God is everything" (1 Corinthians 7:19, NRSV).

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet;' and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:8-10; see Leviticus 19:18).

**John said**, "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4).

"Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4).

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:2-3).

"And this is love, that we walk after His commandments .... " (2 John 1:6)

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

**James said**, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty. and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

"If ye fulfil the royal law according, to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all. For He that said, 'Do not commit adultery,' said also, 'Do not kill.' Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:8-12).

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law, but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:11-12).

**The Psalmist said**, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19:7).

"Oh how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

(Portions of this message taken from the booklet "Saved by Grace?" by Garner Ted Armstrong.)