

This Thursday was Thanksgiving in the United States, a holiday that traces its origins back to the Pilgrims in 1621 in Plymouth Massachusetts.

It is a time where the nation pauses to give thanks for all that God has done for us, and I would like to give thanks,

- For Jesus Christ, who brought us the truth and overcame what we never could.
- For the Holy Spirit who takes all Christ achieves and works constantly to reproduce Christ in us.
- For the Father and his methods of truth, love and freedom.
- For God's angels who minister to us and protect us
- For the freedom and opportunities we have in this country
- I wanted to give thanks to God for you – As Paul wrote to those in Thessalonica, telling them how he always thanked God for them.
- I thank God for you. For your love of this message, for your generosity in supporting the spread of this message, for your attendance, for your volunteer work in set up, broadcast, sharing materials, for sharing with others, for your love and support.
- I want to thank God for Dr. Jim Marcum and his ministry, and all the work he has done and is doing to tell the truth about God.
- I am thankful for all the avenues God is opening to share this message, the speaking opportunities, the broadcast opportunities, the publishing opportunities, and the friends we are making in various organizations to spread this message.

Thank You –

And are there any who would like to express their thanks to God for something this a.m.?

Growing in Christ Lesson 10, 4Q 2012

The Law and the Gospel

What do you think about when you hear this title?

Memory Text: “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (1Jn 2:3,4 NKJV)

Thoughts?

What does the passage mean? What is the relationship between knowing God and keeping his commandments?

Why do you think the NKJV was chosen? Listen to some other versions?

- We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. ⁴The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (NIV)
- If we obey God’s commands, then we are sure that we know him. ⁴Those who say that they know him, but do not obey his commands, are liars and there is no truth in them. (GNT)

Do you think the lesson authors are trying to tie the gospel, not to Christ’s commands, or instructions, or methods, but to the list of 10 Commandments?

Here is my paraphrase:

We can be confident that we have come into unity with him when we practice his methods, live his principles and obey his teachings. The man who says, “I am a Christian,” but does not love others and does not put

Christ's commands into practice misrepresents God and his entire life is a lie. There is no truth in such a person.

Thoughts?

Read first paragraph, "The law and the character of God..." thoughts?

What is the relationship between God's law and God's character?

What do you understand the law of God to be?

There are two general types of law – natural, intrinsic, and imposed, enacted.

Which type is God's? What difference does it make?

Position Statement of our Class:

- God is love and God's law is the law of love, which is the law of life. The law of love cannot be arbitrary, created, enacted, or legislated. God's law of love originates in the heart and character of God and thus has no beginning point and no ending point. It is immutable and can never be changed. God's law of love is the design template for life. All life is constructed to exist only in perfect harmony with this law. Deviations will bring the natural results of pain, suffering, and death, unless remedied by God Himself.

This is a strong position – upon what do we base such a position? I would suggest we should be able to provide evidence that this position is true from inspired sources, such as Scripture, from science and from experience.

Let's start with Scripture – any evidence to support this from Scripture?

Evidence from Scripture that the law of God is the law of love which is the law of life:

- Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.** Romans 13:10
- The **entire law** is summed up in a single command: "**Love** your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14
- If you really keep the **royal law** found in Scripture, "**Love** your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. James 2:8
- Jesus replied: "**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '**Love** your neighbor as yourself.' **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**" Matt 22:37-40
- In the **way of righteousness there is life**; along that path is immortality. Pr 12:28
- He who pursues **righteousness and love finds life**, prosperity and honor. Pr 21:21
- The **law** of the Lord is perfect, **reviving** the soul. Ps 19:7

Evidence from other Christians who have studied God's Word and come to the same conclusion that God's law is the law life is built upon, which is an expression of his character of love:

- In living for self he has rejected that divine love which would have flowed out in mercy to his fellow men. Thus he has rejected life. **For God is love, and love is life.** COL 258
- Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a principle at war with **the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.** GC 493
- **The law of love being the foundation of the government of God**, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. GC 493

- **The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man.** "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). The character of God is righteousness and truth; such is the nature of His law. Says the psalmist: "Thy law is the truth"; "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:142, 172). And the apostle Paul declares: "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). **Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author.** {RC 46.5}
- But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. **And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.** DA 21
- As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, God has ordained laws for the government not only of all living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything, whether great or small, animate or inanimate, is under fixed laws which cannot be disregarded. **There are no exceptions to this rule; for nothing that the divine hand has made has been forgotten by the divine mind.** But while everything in nature is governed by natural law, man alone, as an intelligent being, capable of understanding its requirements, is amenable to moral law. To man alone, the crowning work of his creation, God has given a conscience to realize the sacred claims of the divine law,

and **a heart capable of loving it as holy, just, and good**; and of man prompt and perfect obedience is required. Yet God does not compel him to obey; he is left a free moral agent. {ST, April 15, 1886 par. 2}

- In some sense, God's wrath is **built into the very structure of created reality**. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, we cause our own disintegration. Kaiser, W., et al., *Hard Saying of the Bible*, Intervarsity Press, 1996, P 542
- The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18-32, is not something caused by God. The phrase "revealed from heaven" (where "heaven" is a typical Jewish substitute word for "God") does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the *inevitability of human debasement* which results when God's will, **built into the created order**, is violated. **Since the created order has its origin in God**, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed "from heaven." It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18-20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile thinking (Rom 1:21-22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24-27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28-32). Kaiser, W., et al., *Hard Saying of the Bible*, Intervarsity Press, 1996, P 543

Evidence From Science: As cited above, nature reveals the law of love, giving, as the principle upon which life is built, and violations automatically result in disintegration and death.

- The circle of giving – the sun gives energy to plants, which, through circles internal to the plants (Kalvin Benson cycle), converts the energy to chemical energy and produces the by product of oxygen for us. We eat the plants and the chemical energy is utilized via internal circles (citric acid cycle) and we give back to the plants

CO2 and by-products of digestion. A never-ending circle of giving that life is built to operate upon.

- In Ezekiel 10 God's throne sits upon the rotating wheels within wheels, a fit pictograph of the multiple layers of circles of giving that God built life to operate upon.

Evidence from Experience:

- When you give of yourself for the wellbeing of others what happens within you?
- When you take for yourself at the expense of others what happens in you?
- “Dozens of studies over several decades have examined relationships between volunteer work and health-related outcomes. Most studies have shown positive volunteering-health associations. Among, youth, evidence suggests that volunteer work is associated with a plethora of positive developmental outcomes, such as academic achievement, civic responsibility, and life skills that include leadership and interpersonal self-confidence (Astin & Sax 1998).” (Post, S. *Altruism and Health Perspectives from Empirical Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007: p. 20, 21).
- Four studies between 1996 and 2003 evaluated the effect of volunteerism and longevity in the elderly. Controlling for confounding variables, such as health when entering the study, all four studies “reported that volunteers tended to live statistically longer than those who did not volunteer.” (Ibid p. 22).
- “Several studies have examined the relationship between volunteering and physical functioning. Moen, Dempster-McClain, and Williams (1989) studied 427 women who resided in upstate New York and were both wives and mothers in 1956. Over the next 30 years, compared to non-volunteers, women who did any volunteering had better physical functioning in 1986, after adjusting for baseline health status, level of education, and number of life roles. Similarly, Luoh and Herzog (2002) found that, compared to non-volunteers or those volunteering less

than 100 hours, those who were volunteering 100 hours or more in 1998 were approximately 30% less likely to experience physical functioning limitations, even after adjusting for demographics, socioeconomic status, baseline functioning limitations, health status, paid employment, exercise, smoking and social connections. Morrow-Howell and colleagues (2003) examined data collected between 1986 and 1994 from more than 1,500 U.S. adults, finding that volunteering predicted significantly less functional disability 3 to 5 years later, after adjusting for demographics, socioeconomic status, marital status, and informal social integration.” (Ibid)

Thoughts? Do we find evidence from Scripture, science and experience that confirms God’s law is the law of love, the principle of giving upon which life is built to operate?

How is this tied to the gospel- the good news?

What did Satan say about God and God’s law?

That God’s law is not the law upon which life is built, and that breaking God’s law doesn’t result in death?

- You won’t die if you eat the fruit – there isn’t anything wrong with sin, there is certainly something wrong with God, he might lash out and kill, but you won’t die if you eat the fruit. God’s law is not the principle life is built upon, but God is an arbitrary taskmaster who puts rules on us. God might inflict the punishment of death, but you won’t die from eating the fruit.

And what has Christianity taught? That God is required to kill, that you don’t die from breaking the law you die from the law giver imposing punishment upon you to kill you.

One of the founders of our church said it explicitly:

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761

Notice the type of law that Satan alleged in Eden, what he suggested?

What is taught today?

In the book the Cross of Christ, by George Knight we read:

- “The dual facts of the necessity of cosmic moral stability and the **divinely decreed death penalty** for rebellion against the divine government placed God in a predicament, because His nature consisted of mercy as well as justice.

“The same God.’ Loraine Boettner writes, ‘who is a God of mercy and who **in virtue of His justice must punish sinners...For Him to fail to punish sin would be for Him to remove the penalty against it,** to consent to it or to become partaker in it, and therefore to violate His own nature and to destroy the moral order of the universe....’

“In that context, Satan set off a new barrage of charges against the God who would like to forgive, but was ‘stuck’ with enforcing the penalty of the broken law.”
(p. 20,21)

Thoughts?

What is the underlying assumption, which these authors have accepted that take them down this line of thinking? God’s law is imposed – having accepted this lie, then they are stuck in Satan’s view of God’s character.

What kind of God is God if he must use his power to inflict punishment, i.e. kill his children? Who made this argument? Satan – this is Satan’s view of God and it is rife in Christianity.

One of the founders of our church said something quite profound:

In seeking to cast contempt upon the divine statutes, Satan has **perverted the doctrines of the Bible, and errors have thus become incorporated into the faith of thousands** who profess to believe the Scriptures. **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.** Upon this battle we are now entering--**a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.** {GC 582.2}

Do we believe God’s kingdom, government, law is an expression of His character of love, or do we believe God is like a Roman emperor, who uses power to impose laws upon his subjects? It is “a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.”

Derek Flood in his book, *Healing the Gospel: A Radical Vision for Grace, Justice and The Cross* he writes:

Love is not in conflict with justice, love is how justice comes about because the New Testament understanding of justice is ultimately not about punishment, but about *making things right again.* (p 8)

Paul then goes on to explain how God’s **restorative justice** in Christ comes about: God acts in Christ to make us good. A key concept here is “justification” which normally refers to legal acquittal, i.e., declaring a person innocent in court, and has often been **mistranslated** as such in Romans. But if that were the case then Paul’s

entire argument would fall apart. **He is arguing that it was just for God not to punish sinners** as his audience wished. If his only reason was that God had declared these sinners innocent, this would have been seen by his audience as a profound injustice – the acquittal of the guilty... **God brings about true justice, Paul tells us, by making sinners into saints.** This act of redemptive transformation is nothing short a miracle and happens through relationship – through being loved by God, and God’s goodness making us good. Paul goes on to explain in Romans 7-8 that as God’s Spirit indwells us, as we experience Christ’s indwelling love, we are relationally transformed into his likeness. This way of the Spirit brings life, Paul says, but the way of law (i.e. the way of retributive justice) brings death. (p.12)

Thoughts?

When we believe the lie that God’s law is imposed, we believe Satan’s lie that God much punish sinners. When we believe the truth that God’s law is the design protocol upon which life is built, then we recognize death is inevitable for all out of harmony with the law, and God’s justice is restorative, healing, putting his creation back into harmony with himself and his design for life.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to differentiate the various types of laws in Scripture – any thoughts?

What are the different and types of law and what are their purposes?

- Ceremonial
 - Deals with the script for the play, drama, to reenact the plan of salvation
 - A teaching tool

- Civil
 - Social order
- Health
 - To minimize disease
- Moral
 - Diagnose our defect of character
 - Set a hedge of protection

Ways Satan has used the laws that God has given to cause confusion and harm?

- Law as a remedy – i.e. we can keep it and be right with God
- No difference between the types of law, God said it, therefore we must do it all
- All law has been done away with at the cross, including the laws of health therefore we eating anything is okay
- The law is a codification of behaviors, which we must adhere to, lest we get punished
- God's love for us is dependent upon our keeping the law
- If I break the law, I need Jesus to protect me from God's just punishment
- God's law is impossible to obey, therefore God sent Christ to pay the penalty, and today we can't keep the law, we continue to live in sin, breaking the law of God, until Christ comes
- People who don't keep the law, the way we keep the law, are not saved
 - When I was stationed at Fort Stewart, Georgia there was not a church within 50 miles for me to attend. On base a small group of SDAs would meet in the military chapel. About 20-30 people would meet, 5-10 were military the rest were local people from the community. There were no musicians amongst the group, so one of the radiology technicians from the hospital, who was a lovely Baptist lady, volunteered her time to play the piano for song service and special music every week.

- One week, the Bible Study portion the lesson was going over Matthew 5 and Jesus comments about not coming to change the law but to fulfill it. The local person who was leading the lesson began speaking about the Sabbath and the Sabbath commandment. He then began berating this volunteer for being a Sabbath breaker and not loving God because she was breaking the commandments.
- Who was actually keeping the commandments – the woman who sacrificed her time to help others or the Sabbath keeper who condemned her? It smacked so much of the parable of the Good Samaritan who helped the beaten man while the Sabbath keepers walked by.

MONDAY

The Moral Law – refers to what? The 10 Commandments – when did the 10 Commandments come into existence?

Were they always in existence? Or were they added because of sin?

Did angels need a commandment to honor mother and father, to not commit adultery?

How do we measure the Sabbath? By the rotation of earth around a sun that didn't exist until day 4 of creation of this solar system.

For whom did Jesus say Sabbath was created? It was created for man – then did it exist prior to creation of this world? No Biblical evidence it existed before earth was created. One of the founders of our church didn't think it did:

- If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of

circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}

- But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. {MB 109.2}

Paul taught in Galatians that the law was added, which law?

- I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments... "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. {1SM 233, 234}

Then why was the law added?

- The law was added so that the trespass might increase. Romans 5:20

Why was this necessary?

Then for whom was the law given?

- We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. ⁹ We also know that the **law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels**, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹ that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. 1Tim 1:8-11

Who is the written law, moral law, 10 Commandments for?
The wicked, the sinner, the trespasser –why?

Who is the MRI for? Those who are sick? Why? To diagnose, for what purpose? To condemn so we can punish? No to convict so the person will go to the doctor for healing.

The commandments were given to expose sin and lead us to a Savior, to convince us how terrible our condition is, how we can do nothing to fix it ourselves, so we will stop trying and surrender to the One who has the remedy!

Did God take risks in the use of law? What risks? What does it say about God that he would take such risks?

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, “The law...”

The lesson agrees that the law was only to diagnose and not cure.

Other thoughts?

Read first paragraph, “Though many...” thoughts?

What does it mean the law remains binding? How would you explain it?

How is it good news that the law remains binding?

Because God built his universe to operate on very reliable, predictable, and unchanging principles. This brings security and peace to our lives. Think how awful and terrifying life would be if the laws of nature suddenly were inconsistent, changing from moment to moment?

But what about the idea that the 10 Commandments remain binding? That the law of love is the design principle for life and deviations are destructive and harmful. But could such a statement connote an erroneous idea?

What if one believes that the Commandments are imposed, and therefore keeps them because they are obligated to what might happen? Here is one description, do you agree or disagree? Why?

- The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a **sense of obligation merely--because he is required to do so--will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey.** When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}
- **A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel.** By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. {ST, July 22, 1897}

What happens in a relationship if your spouse smokes, and you condemn it, and they quit, not because they agree it is harmful, or want to, but only because they feel obligated to? Will love grow in that relationship? Or does resentment grow, and ultimately rebellion?

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, “Yet, as we know...” thoughts?

What do you think about obeying because we are “obligated?”

Why should we obey?

Would the people who wrote this paragraph, tell a woman in the church, whose husband steals from her to get money for gambling, drugs, alcohol – that because he is violating the commandment in one place he is violating it everywhere, including the adultery commandment and she has Biblical grounds for divorce?

What do you think? If they can make their argument to condemn Sabbath breaking, then doesn't their argument hold true for adultery? If they wouldn't make the second argument, but promote the first what does this reveal? Perhaps a legalistic, arbitrary view of God's law?

Do we render obedience to a commandment, or do we render obedience to God?

What is the difference?

What about healing on Sabbath? The Jews didn't like Jesus healing on Sabbath, because they were being obedient to the commandment. Jesus, on the other hand was being obedient to God and healed on the Sabbath. But, please take special note of what Jesus did – did He heal only emergency cases on Sabbath?

One person was paralyzed for decades, could it not have waited one day? What does it tell us Jesus wouldn't wait one day to heal on the Sabbath?

It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, and in fact it is a violation of the law of love to avoid doing good in order to keep the Sabbath – this is rendering obedience to the Sabbath and disobedience to God.

Has Satan ever succeeded in using the Sabbath to promote disobedience to God, to obstructing the truth about God, to creating a barrier to fulfilling God's will on earth? How?

So, what does genuine Sabbath keeping look like?

Does it not look like Jesus? We live the truth in love and leave others free?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "Since the divine law..." thoughts?

What does this mean, how would you explain it?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-3