

◇ Chapter One ◇

We Are NOT "Under the LAW"!

**Perhaps THE Most Familiar Teaching of the Entire New Testament,
At the Same Time, One of the Most Misrepresented and Misunderstood.
What Did the Apostle Paul Actually Mean When He Said, 'Under the Law'?**

If there is a concept that brings greater 'comfort' to New Testament Christianity, it would be difficult to find. That most often cited passage found in the writings of the Apostle Paul, that "**We are not Under the Law**" provides the basis for much of what is represented as "New Covenant" Theology. Nowhere does the theme find fonder embrace than among the segment of Christianity known for being "antinomian"! (**anti-** against, **nomos-** law) Yet among other persuasions, this widely accepted premise is also accepted, though not without a certain degree of discomfort, on account of what so many have casually taken Paul's statement to mean.

Regarded as Involving Applicability.

We live in a world that has been pre-conditioned to the long-established premise, that being, that the Apostle's assertive statement here acknowledges the fact that the Law no longer applies to those who are 'under grace'. That the issue is a matter of 'applicability'. "The Law no longer applies to us", they say. This subliminal premise is not new to theology. In fact, the basic point of view was anticipated and pointedly commented upon by Paul himself. Peter relates that those who really didn't understand would 'wrest' Paul's statements to mean something other than what he intended.¹ Paul himself identifies one of those important areas. In Romans 3:8, he makes reference to this very issue. "*And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come?*"... This in the context of just having just said, "...*But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who takes vengeance?... God forbid: for how then shall God judge the*

world?" Here, Paul is referring to the very same issue that he does in Romans 6: verses 1 and again in verses 14-15.

Some people were prone, and some even eager, to mis-represent Paul's intent. He understood human nature well enough to foresee that some would regard his statement as advocating continuing in sin, even consciously, in order to become more abundant in grace. Seeing this explains why Paul immediately disclaims that possibility of meaning. When he makes the familiar statement in Romans 6:14 & 15: "*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then, shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? **God forbid.***" Up in verse 1, he says, "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? **God forbid.***"

Despite Paul's immediate qualifiers, many still prefer to insist that he meant that the Law no longer applies to us! Injecting the idea of it being about **applicability** presents a distorted platform from which to understand what he was really saying. This has been the case for centuries. This is the world in which we grew up, from which we drew our earliest conceptions. The premise that the Law no longer applies to us is so ingrained in our religious society and in our subconscious, that it can be regarded as heretical to hold a differing view.

Of all Paul's theological statements, this one is the most mis-understood and mis-represented.

To Whom Does the Law Apply?

The very idea of our 'not being under the Law' poses the premise that the Law applies to some but not to others. In other words, that there is some 'selective' applicability with the Law.

¹ 2 Pet. 3:16 "...in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest.."

The New Covenant theologian will readily allow that the Law still applies to the Jew, but not to the Christian. But if the Law doesn't **apply** to us, (we who are under grace), how could we 'continue in sin'? This clear question exposes the flaw in that line of reasoning. The fact that we still can sin, shows that the Law must still apply to us!

Can You Break a Law that Doesn't Apply?

If the issue involves 'applicability', and if "not under the Law" means the Law no longer applies to us, then how does one 'continue in sin' that grace may abound? If the Law doesn't apply, then how can we break it? Paul's very next statement shows that the Law still DOES apply to us, otherwise how could we still break it? If it was Paul's intent to suggest that the Law no longer applies, then he apparently didn't know that, as evident by what he saw need to say in the very next sentence!

The fundamental position of those who hold the non-applicability idea generally allege that the Law came in with the Old Covenant and went out with the Old Covenant.

Ask yourself the questions, "Did you acquire the ability to sin by first having come under the Old Covenant? Does a person lose the ability to sin by coming out from under the Old Covenant? Do those who never were under ANY covenant not have the ability to sin?" See the problem with that position? For that matter, who was Paul referring to when he said, "All have sinned"?² Does this include all people of all time? How does a person break a law that doesn't apply to him? How could all the world sin, who never were under, or even aware of the existence of the Old Covenant? If the answer to these questions is, NO, then the Law must apply to all. For that matter, when were **we** ever under the Old Covenant? The Old Covenant was passé 19 centuries before we were born!

Obviously, there is something very wrong with the idea that Paul's statement is suggesting that the Law no longer applies to us. Our not being "under the Law" has nothing at all to do with the Law having applicability. The Law applies consistently to all people of all time, otherwise, how could **all** have

² Romans 3:23 "For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God."

sinned'? Once and for all, we need to rid our consciousness of the idea that applicability is at issue here! It has nothing to do with applicability! However, this applicability idea is the key element of those who propose that Paul meant that we no longer need to keep it.

If Not That, Then What?

Does our being 'not under the Law' make the Law any less applicable in our lives? Did it become any more difficult to sin when the Old Covenant was superceded? It appears, some have not considered these basic questions. What ever did Paul mean when he said what he did? "We are not under the Law"!

This is not an unimportant question. It is one we must answer if we are to understand Paul's intent, or the New Testament message, or even to grasp the essence of New Covenant Theology.

Knowledge and / or Compliance

Any law that exists, we relate to that law under one of the following basic criteria. First is **knowledge**. We either know the law or we don't. Secondly is the matter of **compliance**. We either keep the law or we don't. If we put these factors together into every possible configuration, we'll come up with only these four.

1. We know the law and don't keep it,
2. We know the law and do keep it,
3. We don't know the law and don't keep it,
4. We don't know the law, yet do keep it.

This is fundamental logic. But is it Biblical?

Actually, the Apostle Paul, in his writings, uses four different terms for a person's relationship to the Law. Do his four Biblical terms correlate to our logical terms? If not, then he must be identifying additional configurations of relationship to Law. But if there aren't any but these four, then there must be direct correlation. Could that be? And, if so, does that tell us anything?

Actually, there are **two** places where Paul uses three of his terms in the same verses! In one place, he uses three terms, and in another, three also, but while incorporating two of the former, he adds one that he doesn't use in the first instance. Can we,

from these, gain any insight into what he meant when he used the term ‘under the law’? Can Paul’s own writings provide us a clear definition of what he meant? Those two places are:

Romans 2:12-15 *“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 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 them witness...”*

Here, we see three distinct situations presented:

- Those having sinned without law,
- Those having sinned **in** the law, and
- Those without the law, but who **keep** it!

Before commenting, let’s look at the other place:

1 Corinthians 9:20-22 *“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”* (end of verse 22). *“And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them that are **under** the law, as **under** the law, that I might gain them that are **under** the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (not being without law to God, but **under*** the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.”* (* **under** in this one place is mis-translated: It should read: **within**) That mis-translation may not be accidental!

Here, we see three distinct situations also, but set in a slightly different mix. Actually, these passages provide us a very revealing set of definitions and considerations. For example, note that he regards the Jew as being distinct from the category of persons he regards as being ‘under the law’! He’s not saying the same thing twice! There’s a distinction!

Also, note the mis-translation in verse 21. The word ‘**under**’ in Paul’s parenthetical disclaimer is clearly a different word than the ‘under’ used elsewhere. Here it should read: **within**. (The Greek was En-nomos) Paul uses distinct terms for the various intra-personal relationships toward God’s Law. In fact, we see him using three Greek words, but involving FOUR different situations. They are:

Under which is Strong’s #5259, “**Hupo**-nomos”

In, (within) which is Strong’s #1772, “**En**-nomos”

Without, (have not) which is #459, “**A**-nomos”

We have the person who is ‘under’ the law, we have the person who is ‘in or within ‘ the law, and the person who is ‘without’ the law who doesn’t keep it as opposed to that rare situation of the person who is ‘without’ the law yet who does keep it! (He does acknowledge existence of that forth, though exceptional, category in Rom. 2:15)

Do They Correlate?

So, we have four categories in Biblical terms also. The question posed earlier, Do Paul’s four Greek terms correspond to the four logical terms? How could they not?

That being the case, we need only to identify which Biblical term corresponds to which common or logical term. Doing so will give us a reasonably clear definition of what Paul MEANT when he used each one.

Let’s go to the easiest one first. The one identified as being ‘without, yet who keeps’. This would have to correspond to the person who doesn’t know the law, yet who keeps it. (#4 on page 2). (There are people like that: People of inherently good character, who wouldn’t steal or lie or kill, rare though they might be.) With that one in place, it makes it easy to identify that person who is ‘without’ the law, who presumably doesn’t keep it in that he doesn’t even know it. This one, then, would correspond to the person who doesn’t know the law and who doesn’t keep it. (#3 on page 2)

This leaves only two terms to positively identify: Under and Within. And in our logical categories there are two we haven’t correlated: the person who knows the law and does keep it, and who knows it and doesn’t keep it. Which is which?

We can see that the person who is ‘within’ must be that person who knows the law and who keeps it.

What Do You Mean “Under”?

That leaves us the final category of person, being that person who knows the law, and doesn’t keep it!

That is the person who is ‘under’ the law. This gives us a clear definition of what Paul meant when he used that term: **“Under the Law”**. **Someone who knows the law and doesn’t keep it!** Is it any wonder then that Paul says, “We are not under the law”. In other words, **we** are not of that category of people who knows the law and who **does not** keep it! (Of course, we didn’t get that way by our incessant and perfect law-keeping. We got out from under (the law’s demand of a penalty) by God’s grace! This was the issue, not at all that the law doesn’t apply to those who are ‘under grace’. It’s the **penalty** we incurred that was ‘abrogated’, not the applicability of the Law to us!

What Paul said makes so much sense, when understood that way, that **we’d say it ourselves** even if he never did!

We are not of that category of people who know the law and who don’t keep it.

Our theologians want us to think the Jew remains under (obligation to keep) the law, while the Christian is exempt.³ That wasn’t what Paul was saying! And notice, Paul identifies the Jew as distinct and separate from that person who is ‘under’ the law. (Review again 1 Cor. 9:20) *“And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them that are **under** the law, as **under** the law, that I might gain them that are **under** the law;...”* These two are not the same.

That being the case, with the Jew being distinct from the category of person who is ‘under the law’, we can here see **all four** of those categories used together in this single passage.

1. One who knows the law and doesn’t keep it, **“Under the Law” (Hupo-nomos)**
2. One who knows the law and keeps it, **“Within the Law” (The Jew) (En-nomos)**
3. Doesn’t know the law and doesn’t keep it, **“Without the Law” (A-nomos)**
4. Doesn’t know the law and yet does keep it. **“Without, yet keeps” (A-nomos)**

³ Rom. 3:9 *“What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved **both** Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.”*

But, We are Under Grace!

Now, we know that in order to not be “under the Law”, we need to have come “under grace”. Many rest in comfort with the idea that they’re not under the law without giving due concern to whether they’re truly ‘under grace’! God cannot extend grace to the willfully disobedient! (Gal. 2:17)

Two other verses explain other prerequisites: Being led of the Spirit: *“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not **under** the law.”* (Gal. 5:16-18) So, why would we need to be led of the Spirit in doing what we are perfectly capable of doing on our own (sinning), if ‘not under the law’ meant free to continue sinning?

Another component is Faith: *“But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept **under** the law, shut up unto the faith that should afterward be revealed.”*

How could anyone conclude that Paul was saying that the law no longer had any applicability to those who have come under grace? Especially considering his next statement, that the suggestion of continuing sinning was “God forbidden”! No, the issue here isn’t applicability, as this concluding verse so plainly shows: *“Now we know that **what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”*** Romans 3:19 It’s not a question of removing the standard, but of removing guilt’s penalty! It isn’t possible for anyone to be guilty before God of having broken a law that isn’t applicable to them.

Paul had no intention of suggesting God’s Law had no further applicability upon God’s True Saints. No, rather, he showed us plainly that the person who is ‘under the law’ is the person who remains ‘guilty’! Under the penalty for their unrepentance!

His point was: **That’s not us!**



◇ Chapter Two ◇

Grace Upon Grace

While we focus primarily on the Grace versus Law issue (and well we should), the more obvious aspect of the Grace of God is given much lesser notice. What Dynamic are we missing in this All-Important Phenomenon?

When considering the subject of God's Grace, our minds invariably gravitate to consider the issue on the basis of "Grace versus Law". That is our typical modern day approach. Where it's the general desire among evangelical types to set aside God's Law, that has become the prism through which most religious people view the matter. While it is true that we can't earn remission of sins by any amount of "lawkeeping", to then go on and consider God's Law irrelevant is another matter entirely.

The purpose of this chapter is NOT to pursue the Law versus Grace approach. There are numerous publications which do that adequately. In this chapter, we'll step back and take a more comprehensive look at the full dynamic of what God has done, is doing, and will continue doing in the lives of those He is calling. Without this full awareness, we can't hope to correctly fathom its overall provision. As other chapters explain, there is a Grace unto Works factor involved in this subject where we'd be sorely remiss if we let it slip by us.

Our Personal Obligation

What are we obligated to do? This is a question rarely asked, and when it is asked, most christian religions prefer we conclude that we need to DO "nothing". "It is ALL done FOR you", they say. While that may be partly true as it regards the forgiveness of our past sins, Paul saw the obvious and emphatically retorted that under grace we are prohibited from even thinking that we are thereafter free to continue sinning, "that grace may abound".⁴ Yet by a convoluted reasoning process modern religion has come full circle to effectively contradict Christ's assurance that He did not come to "do away with" the Law. "Works", as they call it, are interpreted as an attempt only to earn salvation, which is regarded as an offense against the auspices

of Grace! An emotional love toward God is set in place to compensate for any absence of the practical love that Jesus advocated. What's hard to understand about the definition of love that He posed: "If you love me, keep my commandments"⁵; *the love of God is the keeping of the commandments*"⁶?

The Early Church's View

While WE typically envision the operation of Grace as explained to this point, we should remain aware that the early Church did not see Grace as would a modern disciple. Their view of Grace considered a much broader application. We can see that when we consider the many unused verses on the subject. They aren't used mostly because they don't address the Grace versus Law issue. In fact they can create questions of what was meant by using that word in the particular contexts where it was used.

Where we're going with this chapter is to make the case that Grace involves a much greater operation than just forgiveness of sins. We who define Grace as just unmerited pardon (tho' correct in part) can miss and have missed the greater point.

The early Church did not understand or believe that the Law is all done away, so they **would not** have considered the meaning of the term "grace" with that thought subliminally in their mind. That being the case, let's try to understand these many lesser considered verses as they would have understood them, not as we might interpret them.

Grace Upon Grace?

The beloved Apostle John opened his gospel with an enigmatic statement found in John 1:16. "And of his fullness have all we received, and **grace for grace.**" Though continuing the subject from verse 14's reference to grace and truth, the translation we see does not bring out John's intent, that one grace

⁴ Romans 6:2 & 15.

⁵ John 14:15

⁶ 2nd John 6; 1st John 2:3-7; 1st John 5:3

is applied upon another. In other words, Grace is a layered phenomenon, with one superimposed upon another. The Greek word for the translated word 'for' is *ἀντί* (*anti*) which in this place would be better rendered 'upon'⁷ not 'for'.

How THEY Thought of Grace

Aside from the usual series of verses that typically are brought forward when discussing the subject, there are a number of less used verses that are rarely read, because they don't really support the agenda of a "grace vs. law" argument. Those verses speak of grace as what seems to be a totally different item altogether, thus their mentions doesn't square with the common take.

With the realization that the early Church did not have the same false idea that early on of grace supplanting the Laws of God, effectively making them irrelevant, we need to lay aside our perceptions and try to see things as they would have seen them.

But, it's what John reveals in his chapter 1, verse 16 that should make us aware that there is a broader meaning to the term 'Grace' than is generally understood today. That would explain the many verses that don't seem to fit or support the usual argument.

You see, the early Church understood that Grace is a more comprehensive operation than just forgiveness of sins. When we argue from the perspective of it being that alone, we blind ourselves to what otherwise ought to be obvious. By allowing a 'just-the-forgiveness-of-sins' definition alone, we leave off a major area of understanding fully what Grace does mean and should mean to us.

There are two major "layers" of Grace's application. First, the remission of our sins (upon repentance) but more than that, there's the work that God is doing by the Power of His Spirit in us: (The 'heavenly gifts' spoken of in places, or the 'spiritual blessings' spoken of in others.) We are His workmanship,

⁷ The Jamieson Fausset Brown Bible Commentary has this with regard to verse 16. "... *grace for grace* – that is, as we say, grace upon grace, in successive communications and larger measures, as each was able to take it in. ... The word "truth" it will be observed, is dropt here; and "Grace" stands alone, as the chosen New Testament word for "all spiritual blessings" with which believers are enriched out of the fullness of Christ." *JF&B Commentary*, Hendrickson Publishers, Vol. 3, March 1997, page 349. We can see in their admission that the term Grace here is meant to indicate our spiritual blessings, something other than just forgiveness of sins.

after all, as Ephesians 2:10 tells us. That work involves our growth in faith, love, knowledge and righteous character. That is Grace also! Without His involvement and cleansing of our character and conduct, our best efforts are just filthy rags.⁸

A More Comprehensive Awareness

Let's review a sampling of verses that should leave us wondering if WE understand what Grace is as fully as did the early Christians.

[Acts 4:33] "*And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great **grace** was upon them all.*" Now, these hearers were already converted Christians. Their actions showed a dedication unusual in our time. But that grace spoken of here wasn't 'forgiveness' per se.

[Acts 13:43] "*Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the **grace** of God.*" Here also, grace is something that the hearers could "continue in". These were as yet unconverted proselytes. The following verses show that the grace being spoken of was the opportunity to be enlightened in God's Truth and Way.

[Acts 14:26] "*And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the **grace** of God for the work which they fulfilled.*" This recommendation speaks to their being given power and opportunity to preach and make disciples.

[Acts 18:27] "*And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through **grace**:*" Here again, grace provided opportunity to hear and to understand. It wasn't so much personal repentance or forgiveness at this point.

[Acts 20:32] "*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his **grace**, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*" We've now moved beyond the 'forgiveness' stage and into growth in spiritual maturity through the Word, and toward an ultimate 'sanctification' giving them their inclusion into the Family of God.

⁸ See Isaiah 64:6

[Rom.5:2] “By whom also we have access by faith into this **grace** wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Faith provides access into Grace, and Grace provides a sanctuary in which we stand, looking forward to ultimate glorification. It should be abundantly clear that their perspective on Grace was more comprehensive than involving forgiveness of sins only!

[Rom.12:3] “For I say, through the **grace** given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Paul here provides us with definition not commonly presented in religious circles. Notice the next verse; [Rom.12:6] “Having then **gifts** differing according to the **grace** that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;” Paul first refers to the grace extended to him (that of being made a minister of the gospel (see Romans 15:5)) he then reminds the brethren of their individual gifts of grace, going on to list no less than 27 attributes (gifts of the Spirit – see page 12) provided under the auspices of Grace! We are clearly beyond seeing grace as just unmerited pardon of sins.

What Did Grace Provide Paul?

[Rom.15:15] “Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the **grace** that is given to me of God,” Being called in the extraordinary manner as he was and being put into the ministry, of being Apostle to the Gentiles, is what Paul refers to.

[Gal.2:9] “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the **grace** that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”

[1Cor.3:10] “According to the **grace** of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.” Here Paul reaffirms what is alluded to in the above verse. The ability to do what he had been doing is appropriately credited to God’s Grace!

[1Cor.15:10] “But by the **grace** of God I am what I am: and his **grace** which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the **grace** of God which

was with me.” Not only his calling, but Paul credits his labors to the Power given him by Grace. It not only made him what he was, but gave him the ability with which to DO it.

[Eph. 3:8] “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this **grace** given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;” Paul recognized his ministry as being a direct manifestation of Grace.

A Finishing Process:

We are to grow in grace as 2 Peter 3:18 admonishes us to do. Evident in the next few verses, we see Grace as providing an ongoing perfecting process.

[2Pet.3:18] “But grow in **grace**, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” We can easily explain growth in knowledge, but if Grace is merely unmerited pardon of sins, how does one grow in that?

[2Cor. 8:6] “Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same **grace** also.” Grace was known by them to also include its full progression: the finishing of their godly character and faith.

[2Cor. 8:7] “Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this **grace** also.” There was yet another expression of grace besides those five mentioned: their ‘liberality’ in giving money for the needs of others. Paul describes this as being within the realm of grace (graciousness)). (see v. 2)

[2Cor. 8:19] “And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this **grace**, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:” That same liberality (financial charity) mentioned above is again referred to as an evident expression of grace on their part.

Grace Produces Good Works

As we saw in Romans 12 above the many faceted expressions where grace provides us with varying gifts, our service to others is made possible in ways that would not otherwise be.

[2Cor.9:8] “And God is able to make all **grace** abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” Imagine that: Grace produces works!

We’re to Extend Grace Toward Others!

[Eph.4:29] “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister **grace** unto the hearers.”

[Phlp. 1:7] “Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my **grace**.” Support effected their partaking of it!

[Col. 4:6] “Let your speech be alway with **grace**, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Replies should be gracious.

[1Pet.4:10] “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold **grace** of God.” [manifold = multi-faceted, as seen in Romans 12]. In being ‘good stewards’, we are to extend grace toward others, as we have received it of God.

Grace’s Essential Qualities: Faith and Love.

[1Tim.1:14] “And the **grace** of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” His qualities extend into us!

[2Tim.1:9] “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and **grace**, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”

[2Tim.2:1] “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the **grace** that is in Christ Jesus.”

[Heb.4:16] “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of **grace**, that we may obtain mercy, and find **grace** to help in time of need.”

With all of these in mind, we need to consider what they really meant when using the term. While Paul strongly affirmed that remission of sins is the initial extension of Grace toward us, it is by no means merely that. The early Church understood that the initial Grace is overlaid with a higher level Grace, that of perfecting our righteousness and extending what we have received toward others.

Ultimate Grace: Receiving Spirit Bodies.

[1Pet.1:10] “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the **grace** that should come unto you:”

[1Pet.1:13] “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the **grace** that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;” There is a grace yet to come!

[1Pet.5:10] “But the God of all **grace**, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

An Ultimate Perversion:

[Jude 1:4] “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the **grace** of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” It was predicted that Grace would become subverted in meaning. Ungodly ‘theologians’ would make grace out to be an excuse to take license with its provision, alleging that we need not obey God’s laws once ‘under grace’. We have had to counter this misconception ever since!

SUMMARY: In all of this it should be evident:

- **Grace is more than just forgiveness of sins’,**
- **It does not support the idea that it nullifies our obligation toward the moral law,**
- **Grace facilitates our perfection in righteousness: humility, faith and love,**
- **Grace is not just an incoming phenomenon,**
- **Grace obligates us to extend graciousness toward others,**
- **Grace legitimizes and facilitates our service toward the family of God,**
- **The ultimate grace will be our flesh to spirit change at Christ’s Return!**

[1Pet.5:10] “But the God of all **grace**, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, **make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.**” This is what Grace IS! This is what it does! 

◇ Chapter Three ◇

Growing in the Grace of Our Lord

The Concluding Verse of the Second Epistle of Peter, Admonishes the Established Christian to “Grow in Grace..” How Many Correctly Understand What This Requirement Involves? If Grace is ONLY the Unmerited Forgiveness of Sins, How Do We Grow In It?

Grace has a long history. We find in Genesis 6:8 that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD”.

Grace also has a long history in Christian theology. Today, it is understood by the majority as being the ‘unmerited pardon of sin’. Grace, however, has not been exempt from an evolving process in its definition. It has emerged through the centuries along differing veins of thought. Some rest comfortably with the fundamental idea that grace negates the need for us to do anything under the New Testament administration. That ‘grace’ presents a counter-alternative to keeping the Law. It’s seen as an antinomian administration, tolerant of a disregard for keeping Biblical Law, particularly any derived from the Old Testament. In other words, that under the New Covenant, Lawkeeping is no longer necessary.

We are Not Under the Law!

A key Scripture to this understanding is Paul’s declaration in Romans 6:14, that ... *“We are not under the Law but under Grace”*... Yet, in his following statement, we see that any idea of our continuing in sin as being a strictly forbidden proposition. He, seeing the obvious in advance, that some would construe his statement as approving or licensing our continuing in the sinful condition, made clear that it wasn’t the case.

Other New Testament believers take serious issue with the ‘no works’ concept that is most prevalent in the religious world today.

What is especially ironic in the dialog and counter-dialog regarding this fundamental issue is that both sides tend to rely on a single narrow definition as to what Grace really is. We’re all poorer as a result.

The clue that suggests we ought to be seeking a more comprehensive definition of Grace is the admonition that we are to ‘Grow in Grace’. How does one do that? The question that ought to be obvious is that IF Grace is only unmerited pardon, how do we grow in it, except by incurring more and more sin? Yet, in many places, continuing in sin is unequivocally forbidden. The Apostle Paul goes on to make that explicitly clear in the very next verse to the one quoted before, .. *“What, shall we sin that grace might abound? God forbid!”*... What do we do with that?

A Grace That Confounds Grace?

Paul saw and addressed this paradoxical situation in the very first verse of Romans 6. He starts with the same question in verse 1 that he comes back to in verse 15. Paul understood man’s natural thought processes, and anticipated the need to clarify in advance this predictable mis-conclusion on the part of so many. Where Romans 6:1 and 15 discuss the confounding phenomenon of abounding in sin, (making necessary an abounding in grace), while declaring the condition “forbidden”, yet, it is not such an abounding that Peter is writing about in 2 Pe.3:18. It is this admonition that we ‘Grow in Grace’ that ought to give rise to the obvious question: Do we have the right definition of what grace is? If it’s just forgiveness of sins, then how do we ‘grow’ in that without doing the very thing which we are prohibited from doing? And, once our sins are forgiven, the application of unmerited pardon in our lives would cease, unless and until we continue committing more sins!

Does the religious world convey to the believer the true definition, the real essence, of what Grace is?

The word is not under-defined in scripture. There are MANY passages which use the word 'grace' in contexts that leave little doubt as to exactly what is meant. But, it's the inescapable proclivity of our 'natural man within', who prefers the easy answers, who would rather embrace the easier-to-digest 'sound bite' passages than to search out substantial answers to the important questions in life. It's those concise and seemingly clear 'sound bites', such as Romans 6:14, that are chosen to provide us the definition, rather than allowing the full range of scriptures easily available to us.

The point here is that we are without excuse. We ought to know what we so easily could know. But our instinctive aversion to that which our 'natural minds' oppose, the Law of God, (the definition of true righteousness), overcomes the desire in many for fundamental honesty with this most important component. (Rom.8:7) Salvation is impossible without grace. Yet grace requires faith, and faith to be effective requires a total reversal of conduct and attitude toward God and His righteous standards.

James uses that dreaded word in his Epistle, (Jas.2:18)... *"Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works"*... What do works have to do with it? He goes on to say, ... *"Faith without works is dead"*!

Under the correct definition of Grace, the answer to this becomes clear.

A Revealing Definition.

In 1st Corinthians, Chapter 15, the Apostle Paul, while explaining his former pre-converted conduct toward Christians, credits the auspices of Grace for the dramatic difference in his life by saying:

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1Cor.15:10)

Here the Apostle Paul uses the word grace three times in the same sentence. Notice that Paul also incorporates 'works' into the picture, actually crediting his labors to the Grace of God! You would think this would be a well-known scripture, that being the case. But, few have ever heard this

passage from the pulpit. Now remember, this was the same author who wrote that well-known disclaimer in Romans 6:14. Why are a few selected passages so popular, while others are rarely ever quoted or allowed to factor into our definition of the meaning of the term: 'Grace'? We can clearly see from this, as well as the verse quoted above, that we have more to consider regarding the application of grace, in its true definition and in its visible and substantial effects.

The Manifold Grace of God.

The Apostle Peter weighs in again, with a most interesting expression in 1st Pe.3:10, in which he refers to the manifold (many-faceted, or many and various forms of the) grace of God. Again, we can see clear evidence that God's grace involves many other aspects than just forgiveness of sins. In the context of Peter's expression, we can see examples of some of those many facets: Having the same suffering-capable mind (v 1), a capability to cease from sin (v 1), able to resist the lusts of the flesh (v.2) such as: licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, reveling, binges, idolatries, (v.3), able to live the will of God (v.2), able to bear man's contempt for resisting the natural pulls (v.6), and to live according to God in the Spirit (v.6), fervent in love (v.8), having genuine hospitality (v.9), able to speak God's Word under inspiration (v.11), serving with God-supplied ability (v.11), tolerant in fiery trials (v.12), rejoicing while enduring sufferings as a Christian (v.13),

Then in verse 17 he goes on to say, *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"*

Not only is the endowed Grace of God multi-faceted, but we're evaluated on what we allow it to produce in our personal character! Judgment now is upon the 'house of God'. (Evaluation, not condemnation!) The rest of that statement above suggests that there is a distinct difference seen in the grace recipient as opposed to those who have not and as a result do not "obey"!

In verse 18, he quotes Proverbs 11:31, *"If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the*

ungodly and sinner appear?” (NKJ version.)

What Do WORKS Have to Do With It?

Back to the question asked earlier. The above explanation of the wide range of manifestations of grace, and in the light of Paul's statement, that credits God's Grace as the real means of his doing the works that he did, once he became converted, how can we come to any conclusion suggesting that Grace does not involve works? Not as A MEANS of salvation, but as its consequence!: An appropriate response to a non-earnable gift.

We Are His Workmanship.

Growing up in the protestant world, a verse was quoted so often regarding salvation that it became one that I could cite by memory. Many can relate to the experience. The verse is found in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9. *“For by grace are you saved thru faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast,”* This was and is one of the old favorites of so many. But what most have failed to notice, is the very NEXT verse, which puts a perspective into the subject that most would rather ignore. The thought continues: *“For, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works which He has before ordained that we should walk in them”!* The oversight is not unintentional or insignificant!

This continuing verse presents the complete picture, where chopping it off after the end of the ever-popular verse 9 does not. You see, there are 'before ordained' works, that an unconverted person would not be doing, but the grace recipient would be found doing: 'walking in them'! When is that 'before-ordained' time period? Is it referring to the Old Testament laws, judgments and statutes? Most people under their "Law-averse mindset" will here begin to take exception. There are years of theological conditioning, and a premise lending some apparent basis for their reaction.

Works Cannot Save!

Those who hold to the 'grace without works' position, do so largely on the correct observation that works do not and can not produce salvation.

Any suggestion of a works-involvement will invariably draw out that re-assertion. That position is technically correct. What fails to enter into the picture is that there are other reasons for doing 'works' than it being the basis of earning ones' salvation! This possibility escapes the majority! Though works are not the MEANS of salvation, why would we conclude they are not its product? That's the point of Ephesians 2:8-10. We're saved by grace thru faith unto good works! And not just any good works, not those of our own proscriptioin, but rather, those specific works which God 'before ordained that we should walk in them'. The implication is very strong that this is referring to long-standing requisites. We should walk in them!

God's Righteousness is Eternal.

Another often overlooked detail is that God's standards of righteousness did not first appear from the summit of Mount Sinai. They have always existed. They always will. Because a nation of stiff-necked unbelievers needed a Ceremonial System **added** to teach and remind them of the fact that they were seriously unconverted, and needed to continually have performed, on their behalf, bloody physical rituals in order to maintain an access to God so that they might be heard, does not negate the definition of Righteousness. God 'before ordained' what right conduct is. He later codified that into a written set of laws and statutes, now familiar to all. The later addition of Ceremonial requirements, on account of the first Covenant being violated continually does not remove or abrogate all moral standards. Galatians 3:19 explains that the law was 'added' because of transgression (of those previously known moral standards.) It goes on to explain the purpose of the Ceremonial Law in verses 23 and 24. The law added was for the purpose of 'guarding' the people of God against the day when faith could take over! The Law was our 'schoolmaster', an educational environment, orienting the unconverted to, and reserving them for, a future personal relationship with Christ.

The Administration of Grace.

Our concept of Grace has been too long limited by a single definitive idea. 1Peter 4:10 explains that

Grace is a many-faceted administration. We need to look at its full scope. It is involved in all of these listed areas. With each, just a few Scriptures are given. There are many more that could be added:

1. Belief is facilitated thru grace;

Acts 18:27 “...and when [Apollos] had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed thru grace”.

Hebrews 13:9 “...For it is good that the heart be established by grace...”

2. Repentance is also a gift!;

Acts 5:31 “Him has God exalted to His right hand to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins

Romans 2:4 “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

3. Forgiveness;

Romans 3:24 & 25 “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, thru faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.”

4. Understanding and Knowledge;

2 Tim.2:1&7 “You therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus....and may the Lord give you understanding in all things”

Ephesians 3:2-3 “..if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery [of Christ]..”

1 Cor.1:4-5 “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge.”

5. Labors (not as a means, but as a response);

1 Cor.15:10 “But by the grace of God I am what I

am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

(Heb. 12:28) “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

6. Inspiration and Service;

Rom.12:1-3 ...”present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service, And do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think...”

Rom.12:6-18 “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given, let us use them:

in prophesy according to faith,
or in ministering,
or in teaching,
or in exhortation,
or giving with liberality,
or in diligent leadership,
or cheerfully being merciful,
or loving without hypocrisy,
or having kind affections,
or exhibiting brotherly love,
or in giving honoring preference,
not lagging in diligence,
and fervent in spirit serving God,
rejoicing in hope,
being patient in tribulation,
continuing steadfast in prayer,
distributing to the needy saints,
given to hospitality,
blessing one’s persecutors’
rejoicing with those who rejoice,
in sorrow with the sorrowful,
exhibiting a same-mindedness,
not aloof,
associating in humility,
not lofty in self-opinion,
not punitive,
regarding proprieties...”

All of these Paul lists under the gifts God gives us according to His grace! (verse 6).

Eph. 3:7-8 ...*”the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the **gift of the grace of God** given to me by the **effective working of His power**. To me who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”*

Rom.15:15-16 ...*”because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God....”*

7. Perfection;

Eph.2:10 ...*”we are His workmanship...”*

Titus 2:11-14 *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might **redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**”*

Acts 20:32 *“And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

Eph.4:7, 13 & 16 *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift ... til we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love”*

8. A Glorified Sonship; The Ultimate Manifestation of Grace!

1 Pe.1:13 *“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

God’s Power Working in Us!

Incredible as it may seem, locating verses that define grace as being forgiveness of sins are the harder verses to find! Rather, the overwhelming majority are seen as referring to grace as being the **power of God working in us**, producing a new way of life in accordance with God’s specific Will, and exhibiting a zeal for God-ordained works!

To recap these definitions we have just seen:

We are saved by grace, but not grace alone, rather by grace thru the gift of living faith, Eph.2:8, (living faith being a faith that produces works! Jas.2:18, 20 & 24.)

We, as a result, should walk in these “God Ordained Works”, Eph.2:10

Grace is multi-faceted, 1Pe.4:10

Belief comes thru grace, Ac.18:27

Grace leads to repentance, Ac.5:31

We are justified thru grace, Rom.3:24

We are strengthened by grace, 2Tim.2:1

We gain understanding by grace, 2Tim.2:7

Grace enriches utterance and knowledge, 1Cor.1:4

Grace produces ‘labors’!, 1Cor.15:10

Grace facilitates our service to others, Heb.12:28

Gifts according to grace differ, (Rom.12:6 lists 27)

Ministries are given by grace, Eph.3:7, Rom.15:15

Grace works in us producing changes, Eph.2:10

Grace brings salvation, Titus.2:11

Grace produces a zeal for good works, Titus.2:14

Grace builds toward our inheritance, Ac.20:32

Grace is administered to individuals in differing measures, Eph.4:7 (Is anyone ever only partly forgiven?) Paul then goes on to list the various

grace-motivated service areas that produce growth and edification within the Church.

Grace molds character perfection, Eph.4:13

An **ultimate grace** is to be revealed at Christ's appearing, 1st Peter 1:13. Also 1st Corinthians 15:49 and Philippians 3:20 & 21

From all of these, and these are only some of the available verses that discuss the administration of grace, we can clearly see that grace is far more than just forgiveness of sins. Those who hold to that narrow definition do themselves a serious disservice. Being averse to the idea that grace produces significant works, in fact, those specific works which God seeks to do in and through us, leaves that 'believer' deficient in the most important area. If that person receives forgiveness only, then what would prevent a quick reversion back to the former state? You see, a vital component is not being dealt with by those who limit grace's definition! A grace that deals **only** with sins already committed fails to address the more important factor.

The ACT and the Tendency.

Sin is not just an act, it is also a tendency. Being forgiven of all past sins, if not accompanied with some means of negating the natural and otherwise inescapable tendency, leaves the individual without any means of escaping a reversion back to his previous state. **We can commit sin but we ARE sinners.** We need not only to be forgiven of past and present sins committed, but we need even more to cease from being sinners! It is this second aspect that is even more important: The very one that so many would rather pointedly disregard because of the implicit suggestion of obedience.

So, we see that some pose a definition of grace that actually FRUSTRATES grace!! A 'no works' definition doesn't allow a complete remission of sin, in that it doesn't adequately deal with our tendency to sin! Grace's true definition involves not only the remission of past actions, but deals with the problem at its source. What good is dealing with the past, if there is nothing allowed that deals with our present state? We need not only to deal with past sinful acts, but also we must

stop being sinners! To do that, we must stop breaking God's Law! 1st John 3:4 explains simply: *"Whoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."* KJV Other translations tend to diminish the pointedness of that, but can't sidestep this fundamental truth.

Not Of Ourselves

"No Works advocates" correctly make the point that we are not saved as a result of our works. Not everyone really understands that. It is verses like Titus 3:5 *"...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..."* that give basis to this position. The conclusion is drawn that since salvation is not the result of our works, then we need not have any. Some even go so far to suggest that it would be WRONG for us to perform any works!!

The failure here is in realizing that even though salvation is not the product of our works, we should not simply conclude that neither are works the product of our salvation. They should be!

The ESSENCE of the Matter.

Here is where so many have succumbed to a fatal flaw in reasoning. The conclusion that, since works are not the means of our salvation, that therefore we need not (some say must not) have any.⁹ In putting this plug into the socket, they've mashed one of the prongs! Missing the essential point of grace, that God Works IN US, producing what we, by ourselves, could not. Titus 2:11-14. *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that **He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**"*

Resist or exclude works, and we risk being excluded from being the product of His Workmanship! **Eph.2:10.** 

⁹ See Chapter 7: "What MUST I Do?"

◇ Chapter Four ◇

TWO Kinds of FAITH!

Christians Everywhere Recognize the Absolute Necessity of Having TRUE and Demonstrable Faith. Faith can find Expression in a Number of Ways. But, What Kind of Faith Must We Have in order to be Acceptable Before God?

Though we are given the fundamental definition of faith, in places such as Hebrews 11:1, we're all too often too casual as to what kind of faith we have and where that faith originated. Religious people nearly always see themselves as having faith but without having explored its true definition and without realizing that there's more than one kind of faith. It's a potent recipe for miscalculation!

We ALL Have faith!

People of every persuasion have faith in something. The evolutionist has faith that chance and the natural selection processes are able to explain interdependent and highly complex life on Earth as we find it. The atheist also believes firmly that his view, using rational sciences to explain apparent realities, for them dispenses with any need for a belief in any Divine Beings' existence. Each of these has a faith of a sort. Religious viewpoints aside, we each have certain faith in the natural world as we see it and the reliability of the laws of nature to continually produce predictable results. We are certain what'll happen if we jump off a cliff. We aren't careless with fire and we handle explosives or poisons with care because we know there are natural laws that impose predictable consequences. And, what person doesn't have faith that we all will die some day?

Each of us has beliefs, some perfectly valid, some not. We tend to believe what we're taught from childhood and what we come to understand from personal life experiences. Some believe in the existence of a God while others don't. But, is belief the same thing as faith? I think we can see from the above that the answer is, **no**, not entirely. But what about belief **in** God? Is belief **in** God the same thing as faith? Is that belief alone sufficient to establish the fact that we have faith?

Is belief alone sufficient to 'save' us as the Bible speaks of? A prominent religious luminary of the late renaissance era professed belief that "we are saved by faith and **faith alone**", despite the only place in the Bible where the word faith is coupled to the word alone (*only*) it is prefaced by the words "not by"! James 2:24 has: "*You see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only***". That theologian regarded the book of James as "an epistle of straw!" Faith played a major part in his theology, organized around protest, but was it the kind of Faith the Bible stresses? Did the KIND of faith he envisioned satisfy the requirement for the Faith that the Bible calls for? The Apostle James' conclusion as seen above should raise serious questions. He exposes the fact that real and living Faith is a Faith that produces a certain kind of response: that referred to by him as "works"! There is an inter-relationship between Faith and works. It is that relationship, what could be called the **appropriate response**, that provides evidence of a person having true Faith according to James.

The WORKS Trap

Now, it could be interpreted that James was advocating a "works only" formula, where he is not. James saw and explained at length the fallacy of a "faith only" orientation. One quite common in today's religious world. James saw a Faith that was exhibited by works (of a certain kind, not just any set of deeds) not just faith of and by itself. He realized true Faith produces an appropriate response and ultimately is demonstrated by how we live our lives.

The essential question has to be, what is the ultimate **source** of faith? What is the relationship between faith and works? Do works produce faith? Are our works in any way required to bring us into a state

of faith or does it work the other way around? Does James give us any indication? Though the word faith is used only 16 times in the book of James, mostly in chapter 2, nevertheless it is a subliminal theme in much of what he writes.

In chapter 1 we find that we should appreciate the impact on our faith that various trials impress. We can see from this that faith is something that needs to develop into a more perfected state. 2: *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3: Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. 4: But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. 5: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him. 6: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7: For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8: A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”*

First, James refers to ‘our faith’ and that common trials develop patience which has a perfecting effect. He also wraps wisdom into the equation, in that we need a good sense of the process of faith-being-perfected. We see in his exhortation a faith that is not a foregone conclusion from the start. Faith also must become refined with experience, particularly through wisdom in dealing with trials.

But what is also insightful is his mention in verse 6 that the ultimate source of the perfecting process is from a source other than ourselves alone. Catching the sense of what he is saying, we see we are to **have** faith, but that it is to be re-processed into a more perfect state by external provision!

Faith, Repentance, Baptism

It is well known that the process toward conversion involves three key steps: faith, then repentance, followed by baptism. Feat accomplished!? Well, not quite! The interesting thing is to notice that we first must have faith, sufficient faith to truly believe. That belief then produces the confidence to submit and commit to God’s Will for our lives, to begin to **change** our deepest motivations, rejecting all that we ever did or were that violates God’s Righteous Standards. But what we should take note of is the

fact of having a faith that precedes baptism and the subsequent receipt of God’s Spirit through the laying on of hands. There must be a degree of unrefined faith already in place before we can enter into the Faith-building process.

By Grace through Faith

Ephesians 2 adds to our understanding in its well-known verses 8 & 9: *“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.”* Now, does this contradict James? Some people say yes! We’ll consider that further along.

But first, let’s consider what is being stated here. We’re saved by grace, but it is through the efficacy of faith. But then it further clarifies that it is a faith particularly “not of ourselves”! There is a faith that is **not** OF ourselves, it does not originate within ourselves, though it must BE within ourselves. But what about that faith which we must have first in order to believe and to desire to genuinely repent? That faith has to be in place before we receive God’s Spirit, which is key to any further development spiritually. The point here is that there IS a first faith that, to a large degree, IS OF ourselves! It is also true that there is a Faith that is **not** of ourselves. That Faith is developed (perfected) over time, and is what James points us toward.

Paul doesn’t leave the thought in Ephesians 2 without clarifying the matter of how works factor in. He isn’t contradicting James, but he is bringing works into the picture in their proper relationship to faith. Continuing in verse 10, (what most preachers deliberately leave off the sentence): *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* We see in this key part of Paul’s sentence that salvation produces works, not the other way around! Good works: those pre-ordained at some point in the past. Good works as defined by the (before ordained) Laws and Righteousness of God! We might also say, Good works as demonstrated by His Living Example! Effectively, works are the appropriate **result** of conversion, not the means of attaining it, as stated both by James and by Paul.

Religious people everywhere, it seems, are locked-

into the idea that the **only reason** a person would do good works is to earn salvation purely by their own efforts. They, in their anti-law bias, are locked into this limited conceptualization. What they miss by taking that position is that there are **other** reasons for performing works than just the quest to earn salvation. It's also the correct and appropriate response to having been 'justified' and having received the Gift of Salvation.

Dead Faith?

Now, that thought in mind, going back to James' point in his chapter 2, where does it leave those 'people of faith' (and especially of the 'faith alone' persuasion) who don't, won't or can't exhibit their faith through demonstrable works? James says of them, their faith is, in effect, **dead!** (verse 2:20) Of what value is that?

"From faith TO Faith"

A passage that injects some clarification into this subject is found in Romans chapter 1. Verse 17 has: "*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*" A number of important questions are addressed in this potent sentence. It affirms that God's Righteousness is expressed through faith, but also that faith is a development process. There is a preliminary kind of faith that must by practice develop into another kind of Faith, and that the exercise of that perfected Faith is essential to the justification process. We move from one kind of faith (that which **is** of ourselves) into another kind of Faith, that which **is NOT** of ourselves, but is the expressed Faith OF Christ. We are to move from a faith IN Christ into the Faith OF Christ. There are two KINDS of Faith! (Not to diminish the importance of the first faith, it also is necessary initially.) And, it's the Faith of Christ that we must live by, not just by our maintaining a belief in Him! A threshold many have not fully crossed in their religious life's quest.

How DO We Tell?

But how do we know what **quality** of faith we're in possession of? And, is our faith level sufficient for a successful Christian life?

The Apostle Paul saw that there's a faith barometer in operation even in his own life in this regard. In

Romans chapter 7 he puts forth a most astounding self-admission. Starting in verse 5: "*For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.* In other words, our natural conduct leaves us guilty of sin and worthy of death. 6: "*But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* A much mis-interpreted statement. We by grace are released from a consignment to death, but are then by that obligated to adhere to (serve) God's righteous standards as defined by His Commandments. 7: "*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.* Paul is asking, is the law of and by itself our mortal enemy? He then discourages that we think such a thing. (We have people today who advocate that it is actually wrong for us to try and keep the law.) 8: "*But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.* It is the law that creates in us the awareness of the true definition of what sin is! "*For without the law sin was dead.* The bliss of ignorance. 9: "*For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Becoming aware of the law created the awareness in him of his true spiritual condition. 10: "*And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.* Here, an institution intended to reveal the way of life, by his natural violation of it, exposed the fact of his justly deserved death sentence! 11: "*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.* 12: *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.* 13: *Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.* 14: *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*" Referring to his, and our, natural condition apart from grace!

OUR Internal Conflict

It is at this point in his narrative that Paul reveals his innermost struggles with his personal nature. And, it has everything to do with the matter of operational faith. 15: "*For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I*

*hate, that do I. 16: If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17: Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. We see a desperate struggle between his mental commitment and his natural pulls. Who can't relate to that? 19: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20: Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22: For I delight in **the law of God** after the inward man: 23: But I see **another law** in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (That law referred to in Romans 8:7) 24: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." The question is, what is **our** primary motivational force? Which dominates our conduct? The answer is found in the degree of the Faith of God we are given and which we apply.*

Paul in another place addresses this matter further. In Galatians 2:17 he writes: *"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18: For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**" The key to resolve this conflict is found in the Faith OF God.*

Where people lose to such internal struggles in life is when relying only upon that faith which is of ourselves, not moving on, maturing into the aura of Faith which can be supplied from Christ.

Perhaps in that we find the truest answer. Upon what kind of faith is our Christian life based? As Paul so well explained, we're naturally predisposed to a sinful state. Upholding the standards of righteousness in our lives is extremely difficult. Our life struggles are directly related to the kind of faith we are living by. We have personal desires

that can overwhelm our mental commitment to conform to God's standards. That faith which is of ourselves can at times provide us with a degree of compliance, but usually with great personal effort. To the degree we have the faith OF Christ, those carnal desires diminish, and exhibiting His true Righteousness becomes easier. With this we can see why James 1:3-6 exhorts us to "ask in faith" for the perfecting efficacy of the Faith OF Christ and why Paul ultimately committed himself to living by the Faith of the Son of God. That is what works!

Though we must initially possess and maintain a faith that is largely self-generated, we need to ask for and develop it into the Faith of Christ, which creates in us His sinless (law compliant) Nature.

Giving us more on the faith versus works issue, Paul presents this in Galatians 3: *"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22: But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that **the promise by faith of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that believe. 23: But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24: Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be **justified by faith.** There was a ceremonial structure in place to keep worshippers in a right orientation with God, but without absolving their sins at that time. They remained guilty (as Romans 3:19 defines it: 'under the law'). 25: "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Ritual ceremony and the important spiritual lessons contained within them was no longer necessary once faith became available, which says something important regarding the ultimate source of faith: it not being of ourselves, otherwise they too could have generated it! 26: "For ye are all the **children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.**" We can also see from this that the incorporation of the Faith of God engenders us into His Family.*

When we understand the dynamics of True Faith, we realize that it's a collaborative effort. We should be *"Looking unto Jesus the **author and finisher** of our faith;.." (Heb. 12:2). Our faith needs to become enhanced through the perfecting process of doing battle with life as it comes to us with the supply of Faith provided through Christ.* 

What Do You Mean: FREE?

An Old Hymn Expresses a Sentiment Embedded Deep in Christian Theology. Worshippers in the Modern Age Remain Blissfully Unaware that Their Denomination MAY Have Substituted a MisDefined Freedom that Could Have Lethal Consequences!

“Free from the Law, O happy condition, Jesus has bled and there is remission”! The words of this old Protestant hymn, written by Philip Bliss in 1873, generally sums-up where people stand or want to stand with respect to the Laws of God. They feel there is no further need for the Law, thus we’re totally released from any further obligation to keep it. After all, didn’t the Apostle Paul say that we are “not under the Law”?¹⁰ Doesn’t that mean the law is no longer applicable when we come under grace?

We are a nation of laws. That’s widely recognized. Despite that, the United States has been the very definition of ‘freedom’ in the modern world, and for that matter, in all of recorded history! It raises the question, what does the structure of law have to do with freedom?

In the same vein, the Word of God is well known for its inter-dependence upon “the Law” for its moral orientation. Under the Old Covenant, the law was an integral part of religious expression. Even in the New Covenant, that relationship, under which the Saints of God are provided access to redemption, is what implants a law-orientation into the minds of new believers. *“For finding fault with them, (the people) he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because **they continued not in my covenant**, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,*

¹⁰ Chapter 1, “We Are Not “Under the Law” addresses exactly what Paul meant when he used those words. What he actually said and what people today take his words to mean are distinctly different. Romans 3:19 illustrates that difference in rather clear terms!

saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: ¹¹ and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:” (Hebrews 8:8-10 repeating Jeremiah 31:31-33)

The question that should be apparent is, Does the common perception of what is meant by the term ‘free’ match the definition we find in scripture?

Man’s Natural Enmity

There is a kind of thinking, natural to man, that opts for a **kind** of ‘freedom’, and that freedom sets aside any regard for the laws of God. Paul made pointed reference to that condition in Romans 8:7. *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is **not subject to the law of God**, neither indeed can be.”* Here enmity against God is defined as ‘not subject to the laws of God’! Not only not subject to, but without capability of being subject! This in mind, should we consider more carefully those claims from the religious community that the Laws of God are completely abrogated and no longer applicable to the ‘New Covenant Christian’? The majority of believers seem to think that!

If ‘the law being done away (abrogated) is the present situation, then why would people not being subject to that law be a matter worthy of concern?

Considering Sarah vs. Hagar

A place where Paul addressed this ‘bondage versus free’ issue is very revealing. In order to understand ‘free’ as Paul defined it, we should look into

¹¹ One technical exception some attempt to use is the reference to the houses of Israel and Judah, as though it means the Jews only! Would we say that being ‘of a carnal mind’ is strictly limited to Jewish peoples? If being subject to (under) the law is limited to Jews only, then why does Romans 3:9 draw-in all the world into guilty status?

Galatians chapter 4 for an interesting observation. “Now I say, That **the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;** 2: *But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.* 3: *Even so we, when we were children, were **in bondage under the elements of the world:*** 4: *But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,* 5: *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* 6: *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* 7: *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”*

There’s a basic point to note here. Paul addresses the matter of ones’ relationship to structured society by pointing out that the heir of lordship is just as obligated to obey as is the humble servant. However, our redemption, though to sonship in the Family of God, so long as we are children, we’re still regarded as ‘servants’. It is a matter of who we are servants to! This thought will prove important when we consider the Apostle Peter’s understanding of ‘the freewoman’s’ situation.

Peter offers more on this thought in his first Epistle: “*Likewise, ye wives, **be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;*** 2: *While they behold your chaste conversation (conduct) coupled with fear. ... let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.* 5: *For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being **in subjection unto their own husbands:*** 6: *Even as **Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord:** whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”* What Peter points out is the importance of being ‘in subjection’, that condition we saw earlier in Romans 8:7 that the natural man is incapable of being.

Sarah was in subjection to Abraham, obeying him and calling him lord! It wasn’t that he DEMANDED she be submissive, it was her personal choice to be! This is the essential distinction.

It isn’t that one woman had to obey and the other didn’t. Both women DID obey, only under different motivations! That’s what law-rejecting people regularly fail to notice.

Bondage versus Freedom

Continuing in Galatians 4: 21: “*Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?* 22: *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a **bondmaid**, the other by a **freewoman.*** 23: *But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.* 24: *Which things are an allegory: for these are **the two covenants;** the one from the mount Sinai, which genders to bondage, which is Agar. 25: *For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.* 26: *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”* What Paul is telling us here is that there are two approaches to ‘servanthood’. One keeps the law by coercion, the other by choice. The son who obeys only because of his **obligation** isn’t the legitimate heir of the promises. It is the son who obeys by **choice** who is the heir of the New Covenant, having the law implanted in his heart and mind. Keeping it is an expression of his heart’s desire! It achieves the righteousness which is by faith, where reluctant compliance does not.*

This is the key distinction between the Old Covenant relationship and the New. Those who advocate not keeping the law, the terms upon which both Covenants are based, are misleading their followers toward a disastrous conclusion. It’s one thing to be naturally **incapable** of being subject to the laws of God and quite another to deliberately choose to disregard them. This is the orientation of much of the Protestant world. They’ve taken man’s natural orientation **against** ‘the law’ and solidified that state of mind through their theological justifications.

28: “*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.* 29: *But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.* 30: *Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the **bondwoman** and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the **freewoman.*** 31: *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”*

When words like ‘free’ are used, there are different ways to understand what is meant. We’ve already considered that the term ‘free’ as Paul spoke of it in Galatians 4 doesn’t necessarily mean what the unconverted ‘natural man’ would want it to mean.

Free From What?

When we consider the meaning of the word, we should ask ourselves, Free from what? From any obligation to keep the law, or free from the penalty of having broken it? Do we become free **to** sin or free **from** sin? No one is or can be free from sin on his own as all have sinned (which John defines as having broken the law).¹² In that **all have sinned**, we have proof that the law is applicable to all who have ever lived. It isn’t possible to incur guilt on having broken a law that isn’t applicable to you! (Romans 5:13) This is well worth pondering! It establishes that we are not ‘free’ **to** sin either.

When we are removed from being ‘under’ the law, which Romans 3:19 defines as a ‘guilty’ condition, by Christ’s blood sacrifice, and come ‘under’ grace, we become **freed of the penalty** of our sins. But being under that condition, we are forbidden to continue breaking the law. *“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 as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body**, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? **God forbid**.”* (Romans 6:1-4, 12, 14-15.)

When we come under grace, we are released from the penalty of our sin, but we’re never free of the obligation to discontinue sinning. In fact, being under grace, we take on an obligation more substantial in our lives than ever before. **We must not let sin reign** in the conduct of our daily lives!

¹² 1st John 3:4 *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”*

Not Justified BY the Law

A common response to the suggestion that we should keep God’s Laws are those many scriptures where Paul seems to be negative toward the idea of anyone keeping the Law. Places such as Romans 3:20, the verse following the one that defines the term ‘under the law’ as applying to all and is a term meaning **guilty**, says, *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”* In this statement, Paul makes clear his point that law keeping will not bring us to a state of ‘justification’!

Paul’s negative statements regarding the law all bear the common denominator: That it isn’t possible to generate remission of sins by even perfect law-keeping. There is nothing in the law that will roll away past guilt. It takes a perfect blood sacrifice to do that. *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:20) What the law does for the performer is define sin so that we can chart a more sinless life course! We’re to avoid the condition of sin (from which we’re forbidden) when we come under grace! (See Romans 6: in the left column.)

When reading those verses by Paul which seem to be negative toward the idea of keeping the law, please notice, they are always tied into the word or the idea of **‘justification’**: that process of becoming absolved of ones’ guilty past. But as a new way of life, we find Paul’s regard for the law to be overwhelmingly positive! “Free from the law” people typically fail to make that important distinction.

Paul ultimately concludes, *“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good... Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified** by faith without the deeds of the law. Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? **God forbid**: yea, we establish the law.”* (Romans 3:12 & 7:28, 30-31)

No-one is free from the law in the sense of being free to disobey it. What we become free of is the death obligation imposed by our incurred guilt. 

◇ Chapter Six ◇

What Regard Should We Have for Pauline Theology?

A Pharisee of Pharisees, trained at the feet of Gamaliel, a man of profound intellect, called, tried and inspired of God as few men ever were, eventually becoming Apostle to the Gentiles, and writing more New Testament Scripture than any other person, yet Paul's theology was fundamentally misconstrued even in his own day.

When seeking clear definition of important New Testament questions, we are drawn to the writings of the Apostle Paul. This Apostle, ‘born out of due time,’¹³ whose writings were wide ranging in content and possessing an uncommon depth of understanding, soon became the definitive authority in what is known as New Covenant Theology! Paul’s imprint there is inescapable. Being so prolific and having such extraordinary insight, especially with regard to issues having to do with Old Testament Ritual, a distinct school of thought soon emerged which is today identified by the term: “Pauline Theology”.

It is the general perception among modern disciples that after the New Testament Church had become established, and the gospels had been written, that subsequent writings of the Apostle Paul changed many fundamental positions, particularly with regard to that orientation which came to be known as ‘legalism’. Few were in a position to articulate this important and controversial subject as Paul.

Did Paul Fundamentally Differ?

It is commonly believed that Paul’s writings were ‘revisionist’, that after most other New Testament writers had completed their writings, Paul’s superseded theirs, re-defining the positions held by the Early New Testament Church. Adding to this misperception are the dates placed in the upper center columns of many Bibles, particularly the gospels, which indicate dates of the events then being written about, without regard to the fact that these narratives were written in retrospect, some three decades after the events they relate. These added

dates reinforce the common understanding that Paul wrote later, and thus presented the final say.

Putting Pauline Theology into its proper time setting can modify somewhat that perception that he superseded and redefined earlier Church views.

It was the Apostle Peter, writing towards the end of Paul’s ministry, who injected a precaution that few realize the full extent of, that even in his own day, Paul’s teachings were being drastically mis-represented: “...even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him has written unto you: As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are **some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.**” (2nd Pet. 3:15-16) Reading the context of this passage shows that it was important salvational issues that Paul had written about that were being dangerously misconstrued.

The very existence of the term “Pauline Theology” suggests a separate and distinct order of beliefs, set in contrast with the theological position that would otherwise emerge, if one were to limit himself to New Testament writers other than Paul. It is this contrast, or the allegation of a contrast, which gives many basis and comfort when disregarding those doctrinal elements with which they disagree.

There is no doubt that Paul’s writings were more explicit than most others. The essential question is, were his beliefs substantially different than those of his contemporaries? Modern theologians would like us to think so.

¹³ 1Cor. 15:8

A second question is, are those elements of belief purported to originate solely with the Apostle Paul an accurate representation of his theological position, or is there some degree of “wresting” involved, as Peter suggests? And third, did Paul’s writings in fact supersede those of the other New Testament writers?

Paul took specific issue with many of the common religious views of his day. Those views were heavily influenced by the Jewish religion, itself infected by Hellenistic philosophy, and affected by ever present and easily adaptable Gnostic elements. Modern theologians allege and base their take on Paul’s writings under the basic premise that his writings took serious issue with the Old Testament religion rather than his refuting the common views of his day which, though posing as being of Mosaic origin,¹⁴ bore only certain resemblance to the True Old Testament religion.¹⁵

It is this third question that is here considered: Did Paul actually write **after** the other writers? The general presumption is that he did.

Which Commandments?

Just prior to His ascension, Christ gave what we recognize as the Great Commission, in which He instructed His disciples to “*teach all nations...to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*”¹⁶ One of those teachings was the fact that He was not intending to in any way repudiate Old Testament Law!¹⁷ Paul, as the others did, correctly understood that the Old Testament Lawgiver, was in fact, the same Jesus Christ of the New Testament!¹⁸ That being the case, our understanding of what was intended by the final instruction to... “*teach all things...which I have commanded you*”, should not exclude the fundamental Old Testament Law and Prophecy. (You will find this exclusion is the underlying objective of those who tout Pauline Theology as representing their major position.)

We should consider why they didn’t ask, “which commandments?” In light of what had transpired

just days before, at the Passover, where He said, “...*as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.*”¹⁹ “...*for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*”²⁰ Much earlier He said, “*The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*”²¹ Toward the end of His ministry, He repeated the theme, “*Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father;... the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in me, He does the works.*”²²

From these we can understand why the Disciples didn’t ask, “Which Commandments?” Why would they have thought of asking such a question, one that had such an obvious answer? Theologians who have sought ways to disregard Christ’s clear admonition to “*think not that I am come to destroy the Law*”...²³ have provided themselves a means to do that very thing by alleging that there exists another Law, that which Jesus gave, as opposed to the Old Testament Law given in the time of Moses. More than one problem arises as a result of that premise. First, that One who thundered from Mount Sinai was the same individual we now know as Jesus Christ, and as a result, by their suggestion, puts Him in a position of contradicting Himself. Secondly, Christ repeatedly assures His Disciples that what He conveyed to them was IDENTICAL to what the Father would have said and done, had He instead been the One to deliver it!

We can see why they had no question as to which Commandments were being talked about!

But beyond that question, there is another affirmation. And, here is where the relative timing comes into play. The suggestion on the part of many is that Paul wrote later, after the others. The plain fact is that it was the other way around. That it was the others who wrote later! Particularly John! The Apostle Paul died in about 66 AD, thus all of his Epistles were written before that time.

¹⁴ Matthew 23:2

¹⁵ Matthew 15: 8 & 9

¹⁶ Matthew 28: 19 & 20

¹⁷ Matthew 5: 17 & 18

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 10: 4

¹⁹ John 14: 31

²⁰ John 15:15

²¹ John 5: 19

²² John 14: 9-11

²³ Matthew 5: 17 & 18

The Book of Mark was written in the early 60's, written to a Roman audience, by someone who was not a personal eyewitness. Mark's source likely was Peter, who served as his translator / interpreter before serving with Paul.

The first Book by Luke was written in the early-to-mid '60's, also by a non-eyewitness, generally to a Greek audience. Luke was a companion of Paul, (who may have been converted under Paul's ministry), who was also a companion of Peter.

Matthew was written in the late 60's, to a Jewish audience, like the others, some 30 to 35 years AFTER the events they relate took place.

The second book by Luke, called The Acts of the Apostles, was written in the mid to late 60's, to the Church.

But it was John who wrote latest of all! Some suggest that the Gospel of John was written as late as the early 80's, or even later! John's Gospel was written to Christians. John filled-in doctrinal gaps in the earlier narratives, adding direct personal information. We can see from John's timing and reiteration of the Law as being fundamental to our conduct, in imitation of Jesus, an answer to a growing question. The Gospel of John is written around Holy Day settings, giving scenes from one Holy Day season, then the next. The Epistles of John were written even later than his gospel, just prior to the Book of Revelation, in the 90's AD.

What we need to consider is whether or not the Gospel writers were familiar with the writings of Paul? The comment by Peter in 2 Peter 3:16 suggests they were. Being that they wrote **later** than Paul did, if they saw any area in which their theology differed from his, wouldn't they have offered some form of explanation, or clarification? The point being, that they did not see themselves differing in any significant way. The 'difference' is in the eye of the beholder, revisionist theologians, not the Apostle Paul. **That** was the phenomenon Peter was referring to, underway even in his day!

We need to remember that the Apostle John was the one who had final custody of all pre-canon Scriptures into the mid-90's AD. He could have reviewed and annotated Paul's Epistles at any time if he saw need to! He didn't! The Gospel writers apparently didn't see what modern theologians see.

Modern Theology wants to create confusion where none should be. By creating 'doctrinal division', where there really isn't any, between the Gospel writers and the writings of the Apostle Paul, alleging that he wrote **after** they did, thus explaining away the otherwise obvious question as to why none of them ever took specific issue with Paul on any doctrinal subject.

The easily provable Truth is that Paul actually wrote **first**. The Synoptic Gospels, Acts, Peter, James and John, were written later. There was adequate exposure and ample time to refute or clarify any point of difference. Especially by John who 'in-filled' the other Gospel writers with detail their Gospels lacked. That 'Pauline Theology' was in some way 'revisionist' would have been news to Peter, Matthew Mark, Luke, James and John, many of whom knew and worked with Paul.

The Epistles of Paul circulated first. The others later. Premises based on it being the other way around should be powerfully refuted!

The 'revisionist' concept resulted more from mis-application of what Paul had to say regarding the changing format of worship, away from a Temple and Ceremonial focus, which served as an aid to those who didn't have God's Spirit (an essential for True Conversion). Who better than Paul to address those issues? (Paul was the trained theologian, many of the others were fishermen!) However, matters of substance were not being changed! Remember, it was Paul himself who admonished the Churches to "*..all speak the same thing..*" ²⁴ That would be an odd thing for him to ask, if he was saying things that were in fact different from what others were saying!

The New Testament must be considered as a homogenous whole, not two sharply divided theological camps, as some allege. This is the fundamental misconception put forth by so many. Paul wrote before the others, not after them. The absence of contradiction on the part of the later writers of anything Paul wrote or said is proof that they didn't see a need to take issue or set the record straight on any doctrinal difference. 

²⁴ 1st Corinthians 1:10

What MUST I Do? Is Performance Required of a Christian?

The Typical Christian, Understanding that We are not Saved BY Works, is then Disinclined to Accept ANY Suggestion that Works are in any way Required under the New Covenant. A Number of Scriptures Address the Subject Directly. Many, it seems, Would Prefer they be Left Unmentioned.

An instinctive aversion exists among Christians of nearly every persuasion. To the suggestion of there being a need to perform certain ‘works’ pursuant to one’s salvation, it is met with near instant rejection. In regard to the matter of being ‘subject to’ the law, the first chapter addresses this, “*We Are Not Under the Law*” issue, which focuses more on the issue of Old Testament Law. It isn’t bypassed here with intent to minimize the relevance of the Law, as law is shown to be fundamental to the New Covenant in places such as Hebrews 8:10.²⁵ This chapter, instead, considers a more insidious component imbedded in the thought structure of religious people nearly everywhere: One that, if not well clarified, could ultimately threaten their salvation in this age.

Two friends lived across the street from each other, neither professing any religious inclination, and freely engaging in every form of ‘worldly conduct’ typical of modern society. Until one day, one of the two happened to attend a religious meeting. Becoming convicted, he responded to the well-known altar call. Having uttered the ‘believer’s prayer’ and ‘confessing Jesus as personal Savior’, he left there confident that his eternal destiny was sure and secure from that day forward. After all, that’s what he was assured.

The interesting thing being, that neither of these two, afterward, lived any differently than before, except that one was certain of salvation, while the other never gave it a thought. Just for a moment of

contrition, and uttering those particular phrases, one became heir of the most blessed eternity, while the other was consigned to an eternal torment, though both lived out their lives in generally the same life styles as ever!

This is how it works in the opinions of many. A momentary confession and profession makes all the difference. Any modification in their personal conduct thereafter being irrelevant! Irrelevant on account of ‘works’ being totally unnecessary! We are saved by Faith and Faith ALONE, as many are taught. Some even go so far as to suggest that doing any works is tantamount to disrespecting the efficacy of Christ’s Sacrifice on our behalf.

Few are aware that the Protestant, Martin Luther’s real intent, when promoting his “by faith alone” premise, was primarily to ‘protest’ various church proscribed formulations, such as ‘absolutions, indulgences and other religious mis-creations, NOT the moral Laws of God. That other application came to be in more recent times, due to its perfect adaptability to our basic human spiritual orientation. (Some enjoy reminding their counterparts on the broader pathway that the only place the word ‘alone’ is coupled to the word ‘faith’ in the Bible, it’s immediately prefixed by the words: ‘not by’!)

Our Natural Enmity

We have a natural disposition. We were born with it. It’s very natural for us to react negatively to being told, ‘no’. We first experienced the emotional responses to any prohibition (of what we wanted at the time to do), as infants, with disappointment, sadness and even rage, depending on how much we wanted to do what we were being told to *not do!* It’s the way we were made. Only with loving

²⁵ Hebrews 8:8-10 “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers...For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days.’ Says the LORD. ‘I will put My law in their mind and write them on their hearts; ...’”

discipline could we gain the ability to counter this natural state and function acceptably within society.

Few, it seems, perceive the parallel! Because we never completely lose the characteristic! It is central to what we are, morally. God represents Himself as the loving parent in so many contexts. Also, the potter with clay; the good shepherd; but in other contexts, as a gate into the fold, (both an avenue and a barrier to entrance) and as 'Lord and King'. These comparisons are not contradictory.

A Non-Negotiable Gospel?

But, to address the question of just what we are called upon to do in our Christian experience, we'll examine a little booklet, put out by The Berean Call, Bend, Oregon, titled "***The Nonnegotiable Gospel***". This booklet offers some pertinent observations on this subject, their position being that 'works' pervert true Christian faith.

It's interesting that their very first comment, before their Table of Contents, is a quote from Romans 8:38-39. "*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor **angels**, nor **principalities**, nor **powers**, nor things **present**, nor things **to come**, Nor **height**, nor **depth**, nor any other **created thing**, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (NKJ) This passage, as my article on "*Gnosticism and the New Testament Church*" explains, is often used to dismiss 'works' as though it was referring to Jewish religious practices, when in fact, it's referring to Gnostic ideas, which were even by then beginning to contaminate New Testament doctrines! Those ideas included a 'licentious grace' and disbelief in Christ having truly become flesh. (We do need to be careful in our selection of supporting scriptures.) (see Jude 4 on that!)

We need also to be reminded that the 'love of God' referred to by Paul, in this selected verse is defined in the gospel and epistles of John as being 'the keeping of the commandments'! (1st John 5:2-3, etc.)

Reviewing their booklet, we find a number of statements that illustrate the common understanding held by many, that grace supplants any requirement that we keep the moral laws of God. At the bottom of page 2 is the quote, "*Forgiveness of sins and eternal life would be theirs as a free gift of His*

grace." We need to consider what about the interval between the forgiveness of sins and the entrance into eternal life. That's somewhat alluded to in the previous sentence. "*He would rise from the dead to live in those who would believe in and receive Him as their Lord and Savior.*" Many draw great comfort in the idea that both forgiveness and eternal life are granted together at once. This is the central premise of so many modern theologies. Whether or not eternal life is granted at the start with initial forgiveness of sins, there are many who once were forgiven, who don't end up in receipt of eternal life: Those who repent and receive God's Spirit, then later fade back. (1st Cor.9:27)

What most do not consider, and do not adequately understand, is the picture God gave His people thru the illustration of the days of unleavened bread. (As kept by the Gentile Corinthian Church.) Before the days of unleavened bread can be celebrated, the true Paschal Sacrifice must have been offered. That sacrifice makes possible the forgiveness of sin. But that isn't all there is to it. Once forgiven, there is still a problem! We must **stay** forgiven. We must continually put sin out of our lives. When forgiven of past sins, we are still practical sinners, and remain so throughout our entire lives. Grace isn't permission to continue in sin. That is stated emphatically in a number of places. "***What, shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid!***"²⁶

This is the illustration: We become forgiven, we then put sin and sinfulness away, (thus becoming unleavened), but in that state, we are only forgiven. We must at the same time take in and put on the unleavenedness that is Jesus Christ. **Forgiveness by itself is not enough.** We can be as thoroughly forgiven as it's possible to be, but if we don't have within ourselves the unleavened sinless nature of Christ, we remain mere clean empty vessels. It isn't what God absolves us of only, but what He puts into this earthen vessel after that! (2nd Cor. 4:7)

Saved By His Life.

Thus the statement from their booklet: "*He would rise from the dead to live in those who would believe in and receive Him as their Lord and Savior.*" He must live in us! Consider Paul's statement in Romans 5:10 "***For if when we were***

²⁶ Not the least of which is Romans 6:1 & 15

enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Most rest easy with the conclusion that being forgiven is all there is to it. That salvation is the same thing as initial forgiveness. No, first our accumulated sin must be taken care of, then our habitual sinfulness, then the receipt of and the internalization of His sinless life. Here is where most religions miss the point. They might have a better chance of understanding the process if they observed a God given exercise that illustrates this. An annual practice that the gentile Corinthian Church observed. (1st Cor. 5: 7&8) The Feast of Unleavened Bread: God’s prime tool to illustrate this essential point of Truth. Paul there advocated they continue keeping it! Do you?

None of us has the capability to **earn** forgiveness or salvation by any means. But even if it were possible, we would still be only clean empty vessels. That is all we could do for ourselves. We can’t self-generate life. Not even physically, which is the easier achievement! If we don’t possess and live His life, we aren’t saved, only forgiven. (Presuming we never sin again. Yeah right!)

That’s the perfect illustration God gave us in the experience of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: We accept the only effective sacrifice, (Our Passover) then we with God’s help remove the leaven, and we allow installation of His truly unleavened Nature, which abhors and forbids sin. Forgiveness is only step one. Those who have gone only that far have two essential steps yet to go.

His Life Factors-In

Interesting comment in 1st Corinthians 15:17, where it says, *“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”* (NKJ) (It’s rare that the scriptures use an exclamation point.) Note the extraordinary affirmation. If Christ was not raised, our faith is vain (KJV) and we are yet in our sins!!! How could that be? What this is saying is that Christ’s Sacrificial act **alone** is insufficient to absolve our sinfulness. He must also be alive to make that sacrifice effective. **What are we missing here?** Do we know this? It has to involve His constant intercession for us before the Throne of God because we remain sinners and our salvation has to involve His Life, being in us. That Life can not cohabit with God-Forbidden continual sin! This

point is so well illustrated in the symbolism in the God-ordained Days of Unleavened Bread.

At the top half of page 3, they make a point, that it was not a new gospel... That: *the Old Testament declares witness of His eternal plan of salvation.* Not only that, but the righteousness which is by faith is also affirmed in the Old Testament! ²⁷

What their booklet could better do is to expand its numerous short quotes. There are many. One that always gets me is the old favorite: Ephesians 2:8-9. (The top of page 6.) They never seem to want to continue on into verse 10, the next verse. Let me expand verse 10 here for clarity: *“For we are His workmanship, created in the character likeness of Christ Jesus unto those specific good works which God has before ordained in the Old Testament that we should walk in them.”* This verse is rarely presented, but it is the concluding part of that sentence begun in verse 8. It is HE who creates in us His sinless Character, we are His workmanship. It isn’t what we do ourselves, but what He does in us. The problem is, those who are not yet being molded and shaped into His Righteous Character imagine or perceive that those who **are**, are doing it of and by themselves, only with intent of earning something. Granted there are fakers, some of whom do an excellent imitation job, but their ‘product’ is not that of God in us through His Spirit. *“...unto those good works which God has before ordained...”* we should walk in those before ordained good works!

This is a tough concept among those who’ve grown up in the environment which regards any ‘performance’ as being an attempt to **EARN** salvation, as opposed to it being the reasonable and appropriate **response** to having already been awarded it! There is the unattainable salvation **BY** works, and there is salvation **UNTO** good works. It can be rather hard to tell the difference from a distance. Ephesians 2:10 explains **UNTO** good works, and not just any newly-made-up actions, but those pre-ordained of God in the past! Not as the **means** of salvation, but

²⁷ Romans 3:19 thru 31 This essential passage establishes many important considerations: 1) Those ‘under the law’ are those guilty of having broken it, 2) Lawkeeping can’t reverse the process of guilt, 3) That the righteousness of God which is by faith is attested to in the Old Testament (the law and the prophets) 4) That the Law applies to both Jew and Gentile alike, 5) Christ’s blood is applicable to remission of sins that are past, 6) That He is our justifier (implying an ongoing process), and 7) That faith establishes the Law!

the appropriate **response** to having been given it! This is what so many just don't get.

Upper middle of page 8: *"The gospel contains nothing about baptism, church...attendance, tithing...If we add anything to the gospel, we have perverted it..."* We need to realize, that to leave anything out, we also pervert it.²⁸ But in fact, there is much said about **baptism**: It is an essential step in the salvational process. One that can not be omitted. *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved..."* (Mark 16:16) *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37) The answer: *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you..."* The 'every one of you' shows that it isn't optional in any case. *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* (Gal. 3:27) This one refers to that act of internalizing the sinless nature of Christ. He instructed His disciples to *"Baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."* We should hope this isn't one of the points that's considered 'non-negotiable'. Baptism cannot be minimized. How anyone could suggest that to include the requirement for baptism is perverting the gospel is beyond belief!

Nor can **attendance**: *"Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together..."* (Heb. 10:25)

If **tithing** is irrelevant, then why did God devote an entire chapter to the reversion of tithing from the Levitical Order back to the Melchizedek Order (which He was and His New Testament ministry is of), **if** the practice was to be discontinued after the cross? Again, Hebrews 7 references the Old Testament to legitimize that reversion.

The top of page 9 gives another repetition of Ephesians 2: 8-9. (Again, they avoid verse 10.) Then, just below that, they say, *"Instead of works, the gospel requires faith."* Yes, it requires faith, but a specific kind of faith, a living faith. A faith illustrated by evidence of works. *"Faith without works is dead."* (Jas. 2:26) *"What does it profit...if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"* (Jas. 2:14) The answer to this rhetorical is no! It's NOT a faith instead of works, it's a faith that establishes works. Paul says that it is by faith that the Law is established!²⁹

²⁸ Revelation 22:18-19 pronounces a curse on anyone who adds to or takes away from the words written.

²⁹ Romans 3:31 *"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the Law."*

The Cross, Not the Throne?

The middle of page 9 is a sentence that bears close focus. It says, *"The gospel is all about what Christ has done. It says nothing about what Christ must yet do, because the work of our redemption is finished."* **This is perhaps the most egregious error in all of Christendom!** As to His paying the penalty, that's what's 'finished', but as to the suggestion that the gospel says nothing about Christ doing anything further is incredibly deficient. What is 'overcoming' all about? If overcoming wasn't an ongoing **doing** of God, then it would require that it be 'of ourselves' alone! Right? Much is made of the absolute need to overcome to the end. What is Christ's ongoing representation on our behalf before the Throne of God in Heaven all about?³⁰ It is because we continue to remain sinners needing intercessory representation to the ends of our lives. To disregard this incessant activity is to minimize His official "High Priest" function, which is **essential**. That's the primary consideration in the statement that *"...if Christ is not risen, our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins."* (1st Cor. 15:17) Because, without a continuing application of His Atoning Act, we revert to the sinful state that we originally were in! What does it mean, *"We are His workmanship"*, if His work was 'all finished' at the cross? This is the major problem area. People are becoming forgiven, (they think), but aren't amenable to becoming fully converted!

What About the Resurrection?

Bottom of page 9. *"...the most difficult part of the gospel to accept..."* This admitted difficulty, of accepting the fact that those who are not saved now in this age are hopelessly doomed, is because they don't accept or understand the purposes of the Biblical resurrections from the dead. Non-believers are not all eternally lost, just because they are not called in this age. Those who truly are called and who reject their calling is another matter. (Several articles and a booklet addressing the subject of the resurrections are available from this author.)

³⁰ Hebrews 4:14 thru 5:11. Here we are introduced to our Eternal High Priest, ever interceding on our behalf before the Throne of God in Heaven. If our redemption were "all finished", as claimed, then what need would there be of this perpetual office? Much of what is called Christianity is totally unaware of this essential ongoing representation, made necessary by our recurring sins!

The middle of page 10 is interesting. He being: *"both just, and the justifier of him which believes..."* This takes us back to the illustration of unleavened bread. A 'justifier' is one who works to justify. It is His workmanship in us that creates the 'justified' state. Justification is a process, not just a one-time dispensation of forgiveness. It is His work to change our characters. We are His workmanship, but, the product of His workmanship is not an attitude callous and indifferent to sin. Rather, it's one that yields willing obedience.

On page 11 there are two "onlys". *"Only accept ...only believe."* And as was commented on above, on page 9, it suggests *only faith*, (not involving works). Page 12 has *'only repentant'*. Watch out for the word 'only'. (Too many 'onlys' isn't only!) The fundamental steps toward conversion are faith, repentance and baptism. But even then, not those only, but also the receipt of God's Spirit, (*which God gives to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:32)*), without which, we are not one of His. (Rom. 8:9-11) Obedience is essential also. (Heb. 5:9) It's not by any one thing, certainly not 'by faith only' as Martin Luther and other Protestants allege.

The top of page 12 makes a point we should pause to consider: *"By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight."* This is very correct, but it is apparent that the matter isn't fully understood. The next sentence says, *"Keeping the law perfectly from now on could never make up for having already broken it."* This is a 'bulls-eye', but most blissfully overlook the obvious and go on to draw another erroneous conclusion. What those passages refer to is that our subsequent perfect compliance cannot absolve us of guilt of the past. A good deed done today cannot expunge a bad one of yesterday! No amount of law-keeping can accomplish the remission of sins that are past. There is nothing in the structure of the law that allows the reversal of accumulated guilt. That's the point Paul makes. 'Justification' is the process of removing guilt. Law doesn't facilitate sin's removal, only its prevention. What the law is for is to provide definition, and to set a True Moral Standard we are to use to overcome personal sin. (Not that that overcoming isn't by the power of God working in us.) Disregarding the moral standard God 'ordained before' in a supposed Christian life is ludicrous! Yet, that's the thrust of many religions!

Then there are the advocates of the idea that it isn't even possible to break the law, because the law was abolished, Christ nailing it to His cross!!³¹ Another twilight zone!

We need to consider their statement in the middle of page 12, *"...lest, in our zeal to get people to accept the gospel, we manufacture a gospel acceptable to people and produce 'converts' who aren't saved."* Do we recognize the danger of 'playing loose' with this truth? If a 'saved' person does that, and misleads an unsuspecting believer into an 'inadequate' or ineffectual salvation, do they jeopardize their own salvation? Page 13, *"[Some] preach a gospel that is so diluted or perverted that it deceives many into thinking they are saved. No fraud could be worse, for the consequences are eternal!"* This is potent stuff! *"Religion, not atheism, is Satan's main weapon."* Generally true, it can be!

Now, the next thought. *"To combat 'the gospel of the grace of God', the great deceiver has many false gospels, but they all have **two** subtle rejections of grace in common: ritual and/or self-effort."* Now, there is further definition: *"Ritual makes redemption an ongoing process performed by a special priesthood; and self-effort gives man a part to play in earning his salvation."* In this, the writers have exposed the essence of their condemnation of 'works'! Let me counterbalance their potent suggestion with specific scriptures. *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."* (Phil. 2:12) *"Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman not needing to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (2 Tim. 2:15) *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."* (Titus 1:16) *"Go you therefore into all the world, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you."* (Matt. 28:20) *You yourselves are a Royal Priesthood...* (1 Pet. 2:9), here officiating in our own lives. *"(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.)"*³² (Rom. 2: 13) *"If you were*

³¹ My booklet *"Gnosticism and the New Testament Church"* addresses the mis-application of this statement to the Old Testament religion, when in fact, it's referring to Gnostic elementals, as is clearly evident in the context.

³² Chapter 1: *"We are Not Under the Law"* explains how we are not, as opposed to how religion presents it..

the sons of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham... If ye be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." (John 8:39 / Gal. 3:29) Then there's the easy to understand scriptures: "**Faith without works is dead.**" and "**If you love me, keep my commandments...**" etc. Here, in this chapter, their booklet alleges that the suggestion that 'works' are an appropriate component of the Christian life is **deceit**: Deceit involving the rejection of grace. Alleging that performance of any 'works' at all represents only 'ritualism' and 'salvation by works'.

A Redefined Grace

Now, the scriptures are not silent on the matter of a perverted grace. It explains HOW it is perverted. "**For certain men have crept in unaware, who were of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God unto lasciviousness...**" (Jude 4) When we seek to identify perverted grace, we ought to be looking for a grace that advocates **not** reigning-in our personal lusts, not one that suggests we keep His Commandments, and imitate Christ's sinless example. Eternal life and forgiveness remain gifts, pure and simple, but their receipt is not without appropriate personal response!

Low on page 17 and onto page 18, we see another amazing phenomenon expressed. "*...If man is to come to God, it must be solely by His grace and His provision, not by any human work. On the other hand, we see man's flagrant repudiation of God's prohibition against self-effort, and his arrogant attempt to build a tower that would enable him to climb by steps of his own making into heaven itself.... There must be no illusion that man could contribute anything by his own efforts to his salvation.*" They're not only saying that certain activities are just 'unnecessary', but that obedience in any apparent form is wrong! Even a matter of defiance of God to consider doing anything in attempt to be reconciled to God, and that it is self-righteous to resolve to contribute anything toward salvation. (We need to consider that salvation is seen by some as a momentary event, and by others as a life process.) This line of theology openly advocates disregard of the commands of Christ and God, forgetting God's invitation, "**Turn unto me and I will turn unto**

you..." One thing we need to do in the process of reconciliation is to 'turn' (repent)! There's a blindness to the obvious. What accounts for that?

Salvation is by grace, not by works, but salvation, once received, imposes its responsibility. Obedience is a clear prerequisite to receipt of God's Spirit (also a gift of grace), without which we are none of His! Lascivious grace is more deeply rooted in religious consciousness than we think!

Keep this Temple Holy!

Top of page 21. OK, I guess this self-contradiction is inevitable. "*Your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit ... which is therefore to be kept Holy.*" Isn't this the very point made earlier? Here, the writer is advocating that we **keep** something! Keep the Temple of the Holy Spirit Holy. You don't do that by carelessly sinning! We're saved, not BY works, but UNTO them! This is our contribution to the process, and also our reasonable service. (Rom. 12:1)

Page 22: "*...we are all Eve's children by nature and still prone to follow the ways of Cain and Babel.*" Think this one through. It admits to the point made earlier. That the application of forgiveness is not a one-time thing, it's not all over up-front, but is needed through an ongoing process, a constantly officiating High Priest before God's Throne in Heaven. Otherwise, we are yet in our sins! "**And if Christ is not risen, to serve in this essential capacity, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!**" (NKJ) (1st Cor. 15:17)

In their discourse on faith on page 24 etc., the issue of faith being the basis of our walk (the things we DO by faith) is bypassed. Faith that does not produce appropriate 'works' is a dead faith!

Page 29: in concluding their second chapter, "*The faith for which we must earnestly contend has definite moral and doctrinal content and must be believed for salvation.*" We are at a loss to define the moral aspects without the Commandments. It isn't just 'belief'! "Earnestly contending" suggests a labor intensive activity! Notice that. We should be able to affirm, as did the Apostle Paul, that the 'labors' that he did were by means of the 'empowerment' of God's Grace! "**But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored**

more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1st Cor. 15:10)

Now, to their conclusion, on the bottom of page 31, "...converts begin a new life as Christ's followers, eager to learn of Him and to obey the One to whom they now owe such an infinite debt of gratitude." Explain this without being in agreement with the 'appropriate response' comment made on page 3. If we are to truly 'follow Christ', wouldn't we do what He did? He obeyed the Father, not to earn anything, showing that there IS more reasons than that for DOING things!

As a side comment, their last couple of pages make reference to Jude 3, "*the faith once delivered*". We need to read on to realize that the threat to that faith Jude was referring to was a 'licentious grace' seen in verse 4. Here's a most amazing thing. The verse is pointedly specific, yet everybody wants to make it seem like it's talking about something else! Preachers keep acting as though this was talking about people attempting to bring in a 'works' theology. The opposite was true! It was a 'no works' drift, where the overwhelming majority is aligned today! Continuing that same sentence at the top of page 33, "*teaching them to observe all things...*". So, observance is required, both of the hearer and teacher and that it was to be taught that way! There are things that Christ required His disciples teach all disciples to observe. Observe means **do**, not just think about not doing!

Coming Full Circle

So, even those who advocate what appears to be a non-performance Christianity inevitably come right back around to a contrary admission. There are things that must be done. We must 'put-in' the true 'unleavenedness' of Christ! The process of our conversion is incomplete without it!

On What Foundation?

Before we can correctly understand the matter of the appropriateness of 'works' in the Christian life, we need to understand that works are **not** a means of remission of sin, nor can we self-produce an acceptable righteousness by doing anything. That said, it is abundantly clear that once in receipt of God's Grace, continuing in sin is expressly forbidden of God! (Romans 6:1-2)

We are saved by grace through faith unto good works! That is the full contextual message of Ephesians 2:8-10. Those good works are the same actions exhibited in the life of the 'Author and Finisher' (the producer of) our Faith. (Hebrews 12:2)

We remain in constant need of a full-time 'justifier', an Advocate with the Father, making intercession on our behalf, for the infractions of God's moral Law that we commit continually. A 'no-works' advocate denies the full efficacy of Christ's ministry of grace. "*Who was delivered (to death) for our offences, and was raised again (to life) for our justification.*" (Romans 4: 25) Christianity, for the most part, fails to comprehend or allow this **two-part Administration**. If He was not raised from the dead to serve in the capacity of our True High Priest before the Throne of God, we could NOT become saved, the best we could hope for is to be forgiven (by His death). Forgiven is one thing, but being justified is another!

1st Corinthians 15:17 makes an interesting point: "*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*" Here, acknowledging His death, which supposedly paid the penalty for our sins in full, is ineffective unless He is also raised to officiate! You see, if He is not alive, continually interceding on our behalf, our faith is futile and our justification is ultimately unattainable!

Those who insist that our Christian calling involves 'grace only' are in danger of being unprofitable servants! Those who resist 'works' are likely to not have any. They risk a defiled consciousness. "*They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*" (Titus 1:16)

"*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, **working in you** that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ;*" (Heb.13:20-21) "*Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a **good work** in you will **perform** it until the day of Jesus Christ:* (Philippians 1:6)

Who's ultimately the doer of our works?

Does this answer the question?



◇ Chapter Eight ◇

What's Works Got to Do With It?

Despite this title's poorly worded English, this Chapter considers the Question that seems to Provoke such an Averse Reaction among Evangelicals. Does their position Against our Doing ANY Works reflect a Correct Understanding?

A televangelist on the west coast accepts questions called-in from viewers. On a recent telecast he responded to a question that involved what regard we as Christians ought to have toward doing what are called 'works'. His response to the questioner's premise was quick and unequivocal. Since in his words, "Christ has done it all for you", there are no works involved in salvation. We **must not** regard our doing any works as having any value toward the attainment of salvation. In fact, as he worded his response to the question, he affirmed that any works we might consider doing would pose an offence against the auspices of grace.

His instantly passionate attitude against any performance of works, or toward our works having any contributive relevance to the attainment of salvation was rather startling. It reflected the sentiment of another representative ministry based in the Pacific Northwest in the previous chapter, *The Berean Call*, who hold a similar position in regard to the question of how works factor into the situation. (This isn't a unique position among staunch evangelicals.) In one of their booklets, titled "*The Nonnegotiable Gospel*", we find this same position expressed. Here again are some quotes from their booklet:

"The gospel is all about what Christ has done. It says nothing about what Christ must yet do, because the work of our redemption is finished."

*"To combat 'the gospel of the grace of God', the great deceiver has many false gospels, but they all have two subtle **rejections of grace** in common: ritual and/or self-effort. Ritual makes redemption an ongoing process performed by a special priesthood; and self-effort gives man a part to play in earning his salvation."*

"...If man is to come to God, it must be solely by

His grace and His provision, not by any human work. On the other hand, we see man's flagrant repudiation of God's prohibition against self-effort, and his arrogant attempt to build a tower that would enable him to climb by steps of his own making into heaven itself...

There must be no illusion that man could contribute anything by his own efforts to his salvation."

Of course, the platform scripture for their position is Ephesians 2:8&9. Well known among informed Christians, it reads: "*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.*" This seems to say it all and say it well!

But, it's verse 10 that so many avoid. It might be more understandable if it were found elsewhere, but being the very next verse, and actually being the rest of the sentence, it's one that shouldn't be bypassed. It continues: "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" Not only are works involved (though not as the means of attaining salvation) they are the objective of it! We are His workmanship, which indicates the 'works' we are created to perform are those which He performs in and through us! And, not just any good new ideas, but those specific works which were before ordained to be our walk of life! At the time Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians was written, what were those 'before ordained' works? Most logically, the Laws of God with their statutes and judgments as they have application to modern life.

(It should be clearly pointed out here that this is not advocating any form of salvation BY works, but rather a salvation UNTO good works, which is the

seeming ‘problem area’ in the modern evangelical community. People oriented to that persuasion are pre-programmed to immediately draw that conclusion. There’s a cognitive disconnect with the idea of a salvation that **produces** works. They seemingly can only conceive of works as being an attempt of earning it, which works cannot do.)

A Conclusion Beyond Reason

I think in all fairness, we understand what their position attempts to achieve, but with it, and especially in the minds of those with lesser understanding, there’s a danger in that message. Increasingly, as the religious population becomes theologically ‘dumbed-down’, the message is taken to mean what it originally was never intended to mean. And this is true of the teachers as well as their congregations. Even the evangelical ministry is lulled by their own message. What was originally intended to discourage any notion that salvation could in any way be ‘earned’, the message that folks draw from their nominally correct assertion was over-applied, turning worshippers against the very code of conduct that is the objective of the New Covenant. (Having the law implanted in ones’ mind and heart. (Heb. 8:10)) In so doing, they became the prime advocates of antinomianism, generating a contempt for the Laws of God out of all proportion to common sense!

Not Necessary Morphed into Wrong!

Where originally the intent was to discourage anyone from expecting that the Law could be used as a means of attaining salvation, which it can’t possibly deliver, the position was ramped-up to a level where it was declared ‘wrong’ to have or do any works at all. Especially our keeping those Old Testament Commandments! What began as a ‘we need not’ gradually morphed into ‘we must not’! We **must not** be found keeping any Old Testament Laws, as that would be an offense against God’s Grace by which we are saved. As a degree of the liberal movement crept into Bible colleges, this was the transformation that took place. But, not without first re-defining grace, and in the process, removing all appropriate response from the auspices of faith through which we access grace. James’ pointed co-dependency of works and faith in his Chapter 2 is the bane of such teachers.

James’ position is not contradictory to other New Testament writings, but is at serious odds with theirs. Just for example, he wrote in 2:14: “*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?... 17: Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18: Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works... 20: But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead**? 21: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22: Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?... 24: Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only... 26: For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*”

James presents works as a component of the justification process. The question James leaves us with is, do those who discourage works promote a dead faith? Not works as a means of earning salvation, but an appropriate response to having been given it. That’s a key difference.

Let’s review those four published statements given above in the light of scriptures.

Redemption is All Finished

1). “*The gospel is all about what Christ has done. It says nothing about what Christ must yet do, because the work of our redemption is finished.*”

What Christ has done is to pay the penalty for our sins. The presumption in that is that our being completely forgiven is all there is to it. But as Romans 5:10 explains, “*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*” Being forgiven of our sins, of and by itself, is not full salvation. It is merely reconciliation, which allows us access to the transforming power of Christ’s Life, which He must live in us. Notice, with reconciliation being spoken of in the past tense, it presents salvation in a future tense! The two are not fully accomplished together at the same time. We are not effectively ‘saved’ with or by forgiveness alone. That’s the sense of being “*His workmanship*” that we read of

in Ephesians 2:10. Being rid of our guilty past is **only one part of the process**, and yes, it is a process. We must thereafter inculcate the sinless nature of our Savior in order to become the converted being we are called to be. (This is one of the lessons evident in the Days of Unleavened Bread). Conversion is not just an ‘identity thing’, it is a change of our core nature. We are called upon to imitate Christ’s living example. *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:”* (1st Peter 2:21-22) Some, it seems, would regard that as a ‘works formula’ and reject the premise.

Deceived into Obedience?

2). *“To combat ‘the gospel of the grace of God’, the great deceiver has many false gospels, but they all have two subtle **rejections of grace** in common: ritual and/or self-effort. Ritual makes redemption an ongoing process performed by a special priesthood; and self-effort gives man a part to play in earning his salvation.”*

It would be interesting to know what the writer here would regard as ‘ritual’. Self-effort is self-evident. But it’s the ‘rejection of grace’ idea that’s especially corrosive of good sense. It functions to intimidate. No one would want to be regarded as rejecting grace. The problem is, grace has been re-defined into something it never was intended to be. Grace is something we’re admonished to ‘grow in’, which confounds the modern definition.

It would be a very curious statement that we’re to *“work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling”* (Philippians 2:12) if our salvation was complete and finalized at the very onset of our accepting Christ and being forgiven of our sins.

The Apostle Peter weighs in with a most interesting expression in 1st Peter 3:10, in which he refers to the manifold (many-faceted, or many and varied aspects of the) grace of God. Again, we can see clear evidence that God’s grace involves many other facets than just forgiveness of sins. In the context of Peter’s expression, we can see examples of some of those many facets: Having the same suffering-capable mind as Christ (v.1), a capability

to cease from sin (v.1), able to resist the pulls of the flesh (v.2) such as: licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, reveling, binges, idolatries, (v.3), able to live the will of God (v.2), able to bear man’s contempt for resisting the natural pulls (v.6), and to live according to God in the Spirit (v.6), fervent in love (v.8), having genuine hospitality (v.9), able to speak God’s Word under inspiration (v.11), serving with God-supplied ability (v.11), tolerant in fiery trials (v.12), rejoicing while enduring sufferings as a Christian (v.13)

Then in verse 17 he goes on to say, *“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*

Not only is the endued Grace of God multi-faceted, but we’re evaluated on what we allow it to produce in our personal character! Judgment now is upon the ‘house of God’, (Evaluation, not condemnation) based on our obedience! The rest of that statement above suggests that there is a distinct difference seen in the grace recipient as opposed to those who have not truly received it and as a result don’t “obey”! (They still being Romans 8:7 types!)

(I excerpt the above three paragraphs from a more comprehensive study under the earlier chapter three: *“Growing in Grace”*.) Modern religion has long labored under an inadequate definition of what grace really is and what it obligates us to! Under grace, we are forbidden to sin. Such well-known scriptures as Romans 6:1-2 clearly establish that we are to cease from sin, which 1st John 3:4 defines as transgressing the law.

Growing in Grace?

3). *“...If man is to come to God, it must be solely by His grace and His provision, not by any human work. On the other hand, we see man’s flagrant repudiation of God’s prohibition against self-effort, and his arrogant attempt to build a tower that would enable him to climb by steps of his own making into heaven itself...”* Does God in fact prohibit self-effort on the part of those He has called? That’s what they allege.

What greater obscenity could there be against the Word than to misrepresent Christ’s Message as a prohibition against all self-effort. One can under-

stand that position if it's limited to the scope of earning ones' salvation, but that's not at all the way it comes across. Therein lies the problem, and it may well be that many see it too comprehensively as a full prohibition of any and all 'works', not just those efforts put forth with intent to earn salvation.

4). *There must be no illusion that man could contribute anything by his own efforts to his salvation.*"

Yet, Christians are admonished to "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." There certainly is a component of self-effort involved in true Christianity, and the next verse, consistent with Ephesians 2:10, explains exactly why. "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" Our self-effort must draw upon the working power of Christ in us, we being His workmanship. What would we say of the individual who is resistant against what God intends to build in him?

Gaining Approval?

Another relevant New Testament passage is found in 2nd Timothy 2:15. In the KJV it is worded: "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" The New King James words it a little differently: "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" We are admonished (warned even) to study and exercise diligence in order to be 'approved' of God. IF He had already 'done it all for us', then what would be the basis of our being not approved? Wouldn't we have received full approval already?

Obviously, there is a due diligence on our part which identifies us as a 'worker', which is a part of the basis of our approval status. That situation we must establish by involving so called self-effort.

Zealous for Works

Consistent with the prohibition against continuing in sin, as we read in Romans 6:1 and 6:15, is this passage in Titus. "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the*

present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." (Titus 2:11-14) Titus alludes to the correct definition of grace, not the diluted version common in the present age, one that creates in us an aversion to sin and produces a fervent zeal for good works. This is not your typical evangelicals' definition.

We are also made aware in this passage of the true definition of redemption. It isn't just being forgiven of sin, but it also produces in us a nature which is averse to continued law-breaking, a prime prerequisite of attaining the purified state which God wants to develop in us. Again, if it was 'all done for us' at the onset of our conversion, why would there be any necessity for purification in addition to the redemption He provides us? And, why would 'good works' have any relevance?

Is it reasonable to conclude that those without this mentioned 'zeal for good works' haven't yet attained the valid salvation mentioned here in Titus chapter 2?

So Close and Yet So Far!

It would seem, rather, that the great deceiver has hoodwinked some of the prime candidates for salvation into a mind-set that frustrates the workmanship of our God in us. Defining grace as a prohibition against the responses appropriate to a changed nature (the sum total of what we are and do) and mortifying faith into a belief-only without allowing it to be reflected by appropriate works, results in our denying His workmanship from taking full effect in us. The net effect of that being to give a believer an aloof and false sense of salvation.

While we are not saved BY works, neither are we saved without works. "*For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*" (Rom. 2:13)

While we are cautious of committing an offense against God's Grace, we ought to be equally mindful of alleging that Christ's nature in us could be an example of lawlessness. Believe me, that idea is out there! 

Considering one Evangelical's Position on WORKS (from a treatise by Tony Warren)

Is the doctrine of a greater reward to be the believer's motivation to work? Are we motivated by future rewards (above and beyond the Children's inheritance of Salvation in Christ) in the kingdom of heaven? The answer is **no**. And to have a doctrine which postulates our possible loss of rewards if our works on earth are not up to standards, is downright **bridging on the heretical**.³³

Rather than have the Christian be motivated to persevere, this doctrine actually seems to threaten his future reward at the Bema seat³⁴ based upon good, or not so good works. Despite objections, this is a doctrine which promotes '**merit**' rather than '**grace**,' and it makes a total mockery of the passages (divinely inspired of God) which clearly demonstrate that 'our work' cannot be both by Grace of God, and by our own merit.³⁵ Our labor is gracious only as it is by the work of Christ. For there is agreement in God's Grace and of human responsibility, but there is no agreement in personal merit of reward based upon 'our own' works, apart from Christ. Neither should our responsibility be confused with human merit. But that is exactly what these theologians have done.

Responsibility does not mean that Christians must in any way cooperate in their own perseverance in works. Nor does God motivate us to work through diverse crowns or rewards based on effort. Those who misinterpret the scriptures exhorting work do not truly understand why the Christian wills or does.³⁶ For a scripture out of context, is a pretext.

Hebrews 10:23 *"Let us hold fast the profession of our*

³³ One can only imagine how many believers have been persuaded into inaction by this (itself) heretical premise.

³⁴ A term used in the NT to allude to an awards platform, such as after a sports competition. This representing evaluations and rewards being granted at the Judgment, as opposed to just punishment being meted out. Evangelicals are generally familiar with this term. Some take issue with such an idea!

³⁵ It is correct to observe that the only 'works' that matter are those Christ does in and thru us, by the power of His indwelling Spirit, but we are fully complicit by choosing to make use of those 'talents', to varying degree according to our natural AND God-given abilities.

³⁶ Responsibility is the obligation we have to respond to God's Call, but cooperation (working with the talents God provides us) is the foundation upon which we can excel or mediocritize, depending on our own personal drive. There are varying degrees of 'reward' in God's earthly Kingdom based on what we do with what we're given.

faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"

The exhortation to, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,' is not a proof of our indispensable cooperation, but the illustration of necessary evidence of true Salvation, the compulsory results inevitable when Christ is truly working within us. We are motivated by the Spirit, not by rewards. And we of ourselves merit no rewards, it is Christ's work in us that merits us reward for our labors.³⁷

Why then a Bema seat judgment when we merit nothing of ourselves? It is only by Grace of God we merit the reward. For our own works are unprofitable, and merit us no payment (translated, reward). The only reward we get is for the Work Christ did on our behalf.³⁸

Revelation 22:12 *"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."*

Their belief is that if every man is rewarded according to his own work, then believers shall receive different rewards. The problem with this 'assumption' is that this scripture doesn't say believers. It says every man. In other words, one man will receive reward for Good. And the other the reward for bad. Two different rewards, but for two different men. You see they totally misunderstand and thus misapply this verse. The wicked are rewarded also. What shall their reward be? The word reward [misthos], means payment for work. Thus (as it declares) every man shall be rewarded according to his own work, whether good or bad.³⁹

³⁷ Again, granted, those works that are of value are those we allow Him to do in and thru us. But, we do have a degree of say in how much 'fruit' we are able to bear: that according to our own decisions as to how much we care to put into our service to the Giver. Varying degrees of 'reward' are well illustrated in Scripture. Places such as Rev. 11:18, 2^d John 8, 1st Cor. 3:13-15, Lk. 12:48.

³⁸ This very statement is strongly indicative of a reward in addition to basic salvation. Salvation is not a 'reward', but a gift. A well acknowledged fact. Then, to be using the word 'reward' we must be considering something in addition to basic salvation, which is a relative constant upon all recipients.

³⁹ Here the author commits the same mistake he alleges upon others. Salvation or condemnation is not the reward being discussed. That reward is according to merit, and is well supported by scripture. (The parables of talents / pounds for example) At Christ's return, He will bring His reward with Him, indicating that there is more than just salvation itself at issue, as salvation is received already well before the second coming!

Grace, Works and Reward

Failure on the part of Theologians to Comprehend the Full Auspices of Grace Can Confound the average Worshipper as to What Response is Appropriate on the part of Those who Truly Have Been Brought Under Grace.

One would expect that if there is anything the Christian world would understand well, it would be the matter of God's Grace. So much is said about it, so much depends upon it. God's magnanimous Pardon is a major component of New Testament Theology. Where there's often a breakdown is in the area of whether or not we are called upon to reflect having come under Grace with any kind of responsiveness. The Evangelical world especially has problems comprehending the aspect of our receiving a "reward" after having lived a successful Christian life. Reward suggests Merit! Something earned! This chapter addresses the question of Works, and what bearing they have on the Christian life and how, IF at all, they factor into a Christian's ultimate Reward.

It is the question of what part do **we** individually play in the attainment of ultimate Salvation. Some would raise objections already to the wording of this sentence, in that it suggests we have a certain amount of involvement in what they regard as strictly and solely a matter of applied Grace.

What Do You Mean...?

Key words in this discussion first need to be set forward. We can't understand this matter correctly so long as we confuse or intermingle these terms. A certain amount of intermingling aggravates the problem with certain modern mainstream religions. Let's consider some of the primary subject areas that have bearing on our question: **Is there any merited Reward offered to the Christian, and do our actions have any bearing on the quality of that Reward?**

Remission: Having the accumulated guilt of past sins removed. This is not something that can be earned, though it does involve a personal

commitment. Sin's penalty is not removed (brought into remission) without the conscious plea and the acceptance on the part of the recipient of Christ's shed blood. Also, not without a prior attainment of certain essential milestones in life: Belief and True Repentance which reflects a commitment to cease sinning (breaking God's Law) (1st John 3:4, Hebrews 9:22, 10:18-20, Matt. 26:28, Acts 2:38, Jas. 2:24.)

Justification: The state of being we are brought into once our sins are forgiven. Again, this is not a state that can be attained by any works that we do. No amount of good deeds in the present can atone for a bad deed of the past. Nor is any form of 'penance' effective in the attainment of real Justification. Nor is this reconciled state one we can remain in without a commitment to cease from sin. (Rom. 5:9-11, Rom. 2:13, 3:30-31, Gal. 3:8-9.)

Salvation: The act of God rescuing individuals from a spiritual death sentence, which is our just due on account of our natural sinful state. (Romans 8:7) No effort on our part is sufficient to merit it. Salvation entails the removal of the death penalty, making possible eternal life. (Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 6:23, 2nd Tim. 1:9.)

Grace: The undeserved acts of kindness of God toward us: The initial application of it being the forgiveness of sins. But Grace follows with us thru the entire process of the perfecting of our spiritual lives. We don't just receive Grace, **we come under it!** It involves more than just the forgiveness of sins and the maintenance of a sinless condition. Grace also conveys the obligation to labor on behalf of our Savior and Master. (1st Cor.15:10, 2nd Cor.9:8) This broader aspect of Grace is not commonly understood or

presented in most churches. We will consider also its broader application. (Rom. 12:6-18, Eph. 4:7-16, 1st Pet. 4:10-11.)

Faith: That confidence which expresses belief and dedication toward the precepts and promises of God, seen or unseen. (Heb. 11:1) There are two kinds of Faith: That which is of ourselves, and that which is not! Both have their part to play in the conversion process. See the earlier chapter: “*Two Kinds of Faith*”. (Ephesians 2:8) There are two expressions of Faith: That which is responsive and that which is not! (James 2:14&20.)

Lawkeeping: That state of mind which is oriented to and attempts to keep the precepts of the Laws of God. This is an activity which can operate under two different motivations: self-effort **or** love of God. Law-keeping is generally perceived as defining the things we are not to do. It’s unfortunate that people often seek remission of sins by their own self-effort, a condition referred to as ‘*legalism*’. (Legalism being attempt to self-justify by means of law-keeping, rather than repentance.) The matter is further confused when others mis-identify someone’s motivation as being an attempt to ‘earn’ salvation, when in fact they’re exhibiting the effects of having received it! (Heb. 8:8-10, Ps. 19:7, 1st John 3:4, Rev. 14:12 & 22:14.)

Works: Those things we do as a result of our desire to serve God and keep His Ways. It involves activities beyond just keeping the Law. Again, there are two basic motivations: Desire to earn something **or** an appropriate expression of gratitude for what we have been given. It is religion’s typical reaction to the idea of ‘earning’ anything that unfortunately carries over onto the other more commendable expression of gratitude and service. Their confusing the issue in this area can undermine a Christian’s potential for Reward! (Eph. 2:10, Matt. 16:27, John 6:27, 14:12, 1st Tim. 6:18-19, 2nd Tim. 3:17, Titus 1:16, 2:14, 3:8, Heb. 10:24, Jas. 2:14-17, Rev. 2:26, 14:13.)

Reward: Those additional benefits which are assigned to us, appropriate to what we’ve done with what we have been given. Not forgetting that those Talents given to us are also provided under God’s ongoing Grace. Those Talents or Pounds are meant to be used to produce acceptable results!

(Matt. 25:14-29, Luke 19:12-26, Jas. 2:26, Rev. 22:12.)

Mis-Defined Grace

The unfortunate condition within mainstream Christianity has been the development of an attitude which is actually contrary to the condition of being ‘under Grace’. While salvation is not earnable in any manner, yet there is an **appropriate response** on the part of the recipient of it to repent of sin, not just those of the past, but any which he may presently be committing. Under Grace, we’re forbidden to sin! (Romans 6:1) The Word defines for us exactly what sin is: “*The transgression of the Law*”! (1st John 3:4)

As if a mis-conception of what Grace involves isn’t enough, we also have to deal with the mis-identification of the Christian’s motive. Some see ALL interest in keeping the Laws of God as just an effort to **earn** salvation. Especially if it involves Old Testament precepts! This is in gross disregard of the **fundamental intent of the New Covenant to implant God’s Laws into ones’ heart and mind.** (Hebrews 8:8-10 quoting Jeremiah 31:31-33) It seems the critics just can’t understand the concept of law-keeping expressing our love of God. (What’s hard to understand about John 14:15 and 1st John 2:3-7?) Expressing Love toward God thru keeping His Laws is entirely appropriate. Well-intentioned critics set about to discourage anything resembling that! What do they not understand? Is it the many-faceted application of Grace?

More Than Just Forgiveness!

The sub-title above refers to the ‘Full Auspices of Grace’. What’s meant by that is that Grace involves **more** than just the forgiveness of sins. An earlier paragraph refers to a ‘broader application’. We see in places such as Romans 12:6-18 a lengthy list of attributes we may expect resulting from the Grace of God toward us. “*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given, let us use them: ...*” He then goes on to list no less than twenty-seven attributes which we, according to the gifts given us, can **USE** in our Christian conduct, in service to our fellow man and use in expressing our gratefulness for what we are given.

Zealous Workers

Titus 2:11-14 *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”* We see in this verse a reference to remission (redemption), the maintenance of a pure state (justification) and ‘works’ with zeal as our responsive expression of being made ‘special’ to God thru His Grace toward us.

The **ultimate manifestation of grace** is to be revealed at Christ’s appearing: see 1st Peter 1:13. Also 1st Corinthians 15:49 and Philippians 3:20-21. The investiture upon us of our Immortal Spirit Bodies is also by Grace. A Grace that we won’t ultimately receive unless we remain faithful unto the end. *“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:...”* (Revelation 2:26 & Luke 19:12-26)

None of these things are earnable; Not the forgiveness of sins, not the means to perfect Christian Character, not the means to serve others using the fruits of God’s Spirit and the Gifts (Talents) He provides thru His ongoing Grace, and by all means not the investiture upon us of our Spirit Bodies in His very likeness at His Coming! So, where does that leave us with regard to the question of ‘works’ and any resultant ‘reward’?

Christ Explains this Matter

A clear parable is given to us that should clarify and explain the matter of how and where works come into play, and what rewards are. There IS a reward potential set before each one of God’s called out ones, and that reward is **in addition to** Salvation of and by itself. This isn’t well understood. Consider the **parable of the Talents** found in Matthew 25:

*“14: For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.
15: And unto one he gave five talents, to another*

two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16: Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

17: And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

18: But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19: After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20: And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

*21: His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee **ruler over many things**: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

22: He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

*23: His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee **ruler over many things**: enter thou into the joy of thy lord .*

24: Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

*25: And I was **afraid**, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.*

*26: His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and **slothful servant**, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:*

27: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28: Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

29: For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

*30: And cast ye the unprofitable servant into **outer darkness**: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

There are a number of important things we need to consider in this narrative: First, the servants are not the world in general. Talents were given to just his own 'called' servants. They were made his servants by some prior determination. Secondly, these Talents were not in any way earned, other than perhaps by their having exhibited ability and faithfulness in other ways beforehand. Third, they were expected to **add** their own skills and initiative into employing what they'd been given in order to produce a worthy increase. The first two considerations are acts of grace, but the third involves input on the part of the recipient to add their own efforts toward producing a return pleasing to his master. This is given as **an illustration of the Kingdom of God**, as the lead-in verse explains.

Upon returning, the master calls his servants into account and receives the increase of his servants' personal efforts (and notice, there is a difference between individuals. They didn't all achieve the same return or receive the same reward). This increase was **not** their reward. The Talents were the means to the increase, but the increase itself was not the reward. It was their use of what they graciously were given that **made possible** their 'reward', and that reward was out of all proportion to the nominal value of the original Talents given them. Their Reward was being placed in high positions of rulership over cities (as the text here and in Luke 19:12-27 also suggests.) Their Reward also was in proportion to what they'd achieved, their rewards weren't all the same! If the reward was Salvation alone, there wouldn't be a difference. And in the example of that third servant we're also cautioned against failure to employ our aptitudes, using our God given Talents effectively.

But, what about any other servants? Did he have only these three? The context suggests there may have been others. These three likely were called-out from among others. Consider the others, those who weren't given Talents when these were. Did that mean they were not his servants, or may we assume they **were** servants, but only that. Theirs' was the gift of true servanthood, but without the same gifts and potential for reward. Though these others may possess the gift of grace, being

included among his true servants, they are only that. This corresponds to the condition of just being forgiven of sin, (receiving grace) but not moving up into that echelon of those chosen for the potential of greater reward.

The underlying message in the parable of the talents is that there is a **potential** Reward set before each of us, but that it very much depends on what we do with what we're given. Using these God given 'gifts' can and does increase our Reward when we're brought into the Millennial Kingdom. In this, Works plays a very significant part. This is not that area where, as some suggest, 'Christ has done it all for you'.

As we're also admonished here in Matthew 25, we need to consider the approach taken by the slothful servant. Though in receipt of the grace of being called, (the same as the others in that respect) and beside that, selected for service, he was too faithless to step out and use the Talent given him. The result was that he lost even what he originally did have. Being cast into outer darkness is a vivid illustration of losing ones' salvation! May we conclude that a failure to minimally pursue a potential reward is salvation threatening?

How Much Does it Matter?

When we are given the Grace of being called, of having our sins forgiven, and being made a servant of the living God, in other words, being 'saved', are we safe in our salvation? Does our taking it upon ourselves to perform 'works' in any way put that salvation in jeopardy? The theological positions of many is that our doing so would in fact be an offence against Christ's full and complete salvation!

Laborers Together with God

There's an interesting, even revealing passage by Paul on this question found in 1st Corinthians 3. He reflects on the situation we find ourselves in once we are in receipt of God's Grace, it doesn't stop there. Being forgiven, being cleansed of our guilty past, is a first step. We are then made co-laborers with God. We are made His Servants, expected to use the 'Talents' we're given, the gifts inherent with the indwelling of God's Spirit.

Starting in verse 9: *“For we are **labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.***

10: *According to the **grace** of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

11: *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

12: *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

13: *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall **try every man's work** of what sort it is.*

14: *If any man's work abide which **he** hath built thereupon, **he shall receive a reward.***

15: *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but **he himself shall be saved**; yet so as by fire.*

16: *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

What a profound passage! We, who are the Temple of God's Holy Spirit, His very life Power dwelling within us, are made fellow-laborers with Him. When we shun doing any works, we in effect make Him powerless to work His work in our lives!

But what is most revealing in this passage is the clear picture that a person who has performed appropriate ‘works’, if those works are usable, if they are of value to the returning Master, they will result in the doer being rewarded!

When those works are found to be **not valuable**, proven in part by their endurance thru trials, the laborer may find himself deficient in reward, yet still in possession of the gift of salvation! This clearly makes distinction between the gift of salvation and the building thereupon of our reward in addition to it. Notice verse 15.

Crown Thieves?!

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Revelation 3:11) We are admonished to take heed that no man take our crown. They can't do that by identity

theft, they can't pose as a servant of God if they're not actually one. They'd never slip that one by God! HOW then can someone steal our crown?

They can do so by causing us to shrink back from or to reject making the effort toward obtaining our Crowning achievement by dissuading us from performing appropriate ‘God ordained **works**’, by not employing the Talents God gives us. Napkin people we could call them! (see Luke 19:20)

Whom Do We Disrespect?

*“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always **obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.** For it is **God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.**”* (Philippians 2:12-13)

When we realize that it is God who **works** in us,⁴⁰ that it is He that both **wills** (creates the desire) and **does** His Work in and thru us, that it's not we alone who effectively does it, then we can also see why a rejection of DOING Works is especially disrespectful of **His gracious partnership in our lives.**

Notice also, our Reward is to be **brought** to us with the return of Christ. If we **have** Salvation already, then Salvation itself isn't that Reward referred to, that will be brought **then!** *“...and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and **my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.**”* (Rev. 22:12-13, see also Rev. 11:18) **Reward is predicated upon Works! Salvation is the unmerited gift.** It's the wise servant who recognizes the important distinction.

There is the free unmerited gift of Grace unto Salvation, and there is an appropriate Reward awaiting those who employ their God Given Talents, in addition to Salvation, in proportion to what they accomplish using those Talents. 

⁴⁰ Ephesians 2:10 We are instruments in His hands.

The Faulty Logic of Antinomianism

A Key Premise of ‘Fundamentalist’ Persuasions is that Christ Ended the Law, “Nailing IT to His Cross”. The Logical Ramifications of that idea are a Wonder to Behold. We need to Consider what this idea Requires that We Accept.

Ignoring the obvious, a key verse, one used to justify the belief system that the Law is ‘all done away’, is paraphrased with great regularity without taking note of what it is really saying. That verse is found in Colossians 2:14, which says, “*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*”. Without there being any specific mention of the Laws of God (the Ten Commandments), or any biblical ritual, nevertheless it’s presumed and positively declared that this is in fact exactly what was ‘nailed to the cross’! God’s Laws! Here’s a chapter with numerous mentions of the belief systems created by the minds of men, in fact, with heavy and direct allusion to significant ‘Gnostic’ elements. But that isn’t what religious leaders want to think, so little is made of the content of the rest of this important chapter. In fact, they mis-assign these Gnostic ‘elements’ (referred to as worldly rudiments) speaking of them as though they referred to formerly held Biblical teachings.

But, anyone would be remiss to draw such a conclusion without reading the contextual setting in which this jewel is so eloquently set.

What Colossians 2 Says

8: *Beware lest any man spoil you through **philosophy and vain deceit**, after the **tradition of men**, after the **rudiments of the world**, and not after Christ.* 9: *For in him dwelleth all the **fullness of the Godhead bodily**.*⁴¹ 10: *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and*

⁴¹ This expression: ‘*the fullness of the Godhead bodily*’ is a direct reference to Gnostic thinking, which accounts for the erroneous conclusion that Christ wasn’t God but and IF He was, He never could have been manifest in a body of flesh! This is the same issue that John dealt with in 1st John 4:1-7.

power: 11: *In whom also ye are circumcised with the **circumcision** made without hands, in putting off the body of the **sins of the flesh** by the **circumcision of Christ**:* 12: *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* 13: *And you, being **dead in your sins** and the **uncircumcision** of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having **forgiven you all trespasses**;* 14: *Blotting out the handwriting of **ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;* 15: *And having spoiled **principalities and powers**, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over **them** in it.* 16: *Let no **man** therefore judge you in **meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days**:* 17: *Which are a shadow of things to come;* but the body of Christ. 18: *Let no **man** beguile you of your reward in a **voluntary humility and worshipping of angels**, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his **fleshly mind**,... ”* (KJV throughout, emphasis added.)

A few things to notice: Three mentions are made of the Biblical form of worship: First, circumcision in verse 11, then food practices and Holy Day or Sabbath keeping in verse 16. Each of these are shown in a positive light. Circumcision is not abandoned, but is shown as achieved in a more effective way. Holy Days and Sabbath Days are not abandoned, but are explained as ‘*shadows of things to come*’. In other words, are shown to present in practice an illustration of future realities! The lunar calendar from which to date these Holy Days are referenced in the words *the new moon*, which is irrelevant to worldly holidays. Nor is the Church seen or encouraged to abandon these, but are admonished to let the ‘Church’ judge them in how they were observing them, and not to let ‘*men*’

judge how they were. The saints were here shown observing these days, not as **not** observing them! They wouldn't be under criticism for **how** they were keeping them if they weren't keeping them!

Several code words should illustrate the real intent of this passage. Words such as: *philosophy*, *vain deceit*, *the tradition of men*, and *the rudiments of the world*,⁴² in verse 8, show that the 'issues' are forms of religious belief which originated in the minds of men, not with God. Worldly religious concepts, not Biblical teachings! Verse 15 mentions *principalities* and *powers*, verse 18 refers to *voluntary humility* and *worshipping of angels*, clearly NOT Biblical practices, but elements commonly found in Gnostic forms of worship: Things which originated in their '*vainly puffed up fleshly minds*'! These '*ordinances*'⁴³ which are '*done away in Christ*' are those religious philosophies that originated in the minds of *men*, not from God as recorded in the Old Testament! These '*ordinances*' are philosophical concepts, which, in **their** minds, forever barred the worshipper from escaping this (*evil*) physical dimension and entering into that of the spiritual. Clearly a *Gnostic* prohibition, but **not** a Biblical one.

The idea in verse 13 of our being '*quicken together with him*' allows that our **body can** be brought into an immortal state as was His, which is the point of the statement in verse 9, "*For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*"⁴⁴

Gnostic philosophy represents our pure and holy '*soul*' as being trapped in this vile body, which could never enter into a state of true spirituality, due not only to the inescapable contamination of accumulated sin, but according to the Gnostic, merely by existing in the material dimension!

⁴² Translated in the NRSV as '*elemental spirits*' which would mean more to a Gnostic than to a true Christian. The KJV renders the same phrase as '*the rudiments of the world*', which conveys the sense of something other than of Biblical origin!

⁴³ The word: *Ordinances* is from the Greek: *dogma* (Strong's #1378 / 1379) which is rarely used in the New Testament and refers to a *humanly perceived* decree or 'law'. IF it was Paul's intent to make reference here to 'the Laws of God', he certainly knew the word for that, as he used it frequently in so many other places! (Romans 7 for example.)

⁴⁴ The point here being that Jesus was no less God even while manifest in the flesh!

Obviously, this passage is more potent than is acknowledged by our main stream religions.

What **was** '*nailed to his cross*' is what the verse immediately prior explains: "***all trespasses***"! In other words, all infractions committed against the Laws of God, were eliminated from our personal record, not the elimination of those Laws themselves! (True sin as being **defined by** the Law, as 1st John 3:4 so clearly explains!) But then, that accomplished, we now become heirs of a spiritual existence, as Philippians 3:21 explains, which is fully *realized* at Christ's appearing. "*Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*" This idea would give the Gnostic fits, which was the ultimate objective of Colossians 2.

Another noteworthy phrase is the one in verse 14, "*...the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us,*". To apply this passage as describing God's Laws would be to have the Apostle Paul identify Old Testament laws⁴⁵ as **bad** for us! It also exposes a subliminal attitude of the modern proponent as being hostile to the things of God. This unique phraseology also is indicative of *Gnostic* theology. We should be attentive to this overall phrase, that it identifies some '*handwritten record*' of our individual and personal faults, not that overall moral code of conduct given unilaterally to all humanity by God. Those who represent these '*ordinances*' as being Biblical Law present the method of removing sin as being the removal of the moral code which defines it, not the accumulation of trespasses accrued within each individual! Paul must have sensed this fundamental perversion of reason when he reminded his hearers, "*...for where no law is, there is no transgression.*" (Rom. 4:15) If there **is** no law, on the basis of what are people accounted as 'lawbreakers'?

The Law is Fulfilled

But behind this mis-application of Colossians 2, there is a natural orientation within all peoples, especially the religious un-converted, who subliminally desire to do the very thing Jesus early on in

⁴⁵ Laws, which Paul in other places affirmed as being 'good', "*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.*" Rom. 7:12

His ministry said **not** to do! “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*” (Matt. 5:17) Then, many go on to define ‘**fulfilled**’ as meaning ‘*He did it all for us.*’ Another miscarriage of reason! Consider for example, if you were following behind the county employee who was responsible for putting up a particular STOP sign. When HE, ahead of you, stops at the sign he himself put up, he fulfills the requirement that the sign imposes. Then, would it be logical to say that since the person responsible for putting up the sign ‘fulfilled’ its requirement in full, that no-one thereafter needs to stop at it? Such logic, it seems, is reasonable enough to gain solid purchase in modern religious circles! Thus, the word **fulfilled** is flipped, so as to mean: ‘satisfied to the extent that it no longer needs to be obeyed’, which is a round-about way of reasoning that tacitly concludes the very thing Jesus said NOT to think! He used the words ‘*destroy*’ and ‘*fulfill*’ in extreme opposition to each other. Religion has labored long to provide the two with a semi-synonymous definition.

Abrogation v Application

There are basically two schools of thought in this area: that the Law is ‘all done away’, with another, that alleges it still *exists* but ‘no longer applies to the Christian’. This also involves curious logic.

Earlier, we touched upon the logical ramifications of the Law having been ‘all done away’. Paul states the obvious, that if there is no law, there is no sin! Then, on the basis of what is it concluded with such certainty, that ‘**all have sinned**’? This statement also dovetails itself into the ‘applicability’ question which was discussed in Chapter One. Because, if there is no law, or if ‘the law’ applies only to a limited Jewish minority, then how can the ‘all have sinned’ statement be true?

If the Law was really and truly ‘done away’, it wouldn’t be possible to ever break it anymore! At least, not with any justifiable consequence. How could a Just God hold someone accountable, to the point of **eternal condemnation**, for breaking a Law that no longer was in effect?

If it’s a ‘Jewish’ Law, applicable only to a limited ethnicity, then how do **all** others become ‘sinners’?

If a Gentile should violate Jewish Law, would he become a sinner, or is there some other means by which he attains that condition?

In a world in which the Law doesn’t exist, or has no applicability, what does a person need to do in order to become a sinner? Obviously, there is a fundamental oversight in these anti-law positions. Doing away with the Law would effectively make it impossible to sin! In order for it to BE possible, **another** Law would have to have been put in its place, thus making all of the ‘law’ comments we find in the New Testament applicable to that replacement Law! But, no-one seems to represent THAT position, as no one ever makes the distinction that any **different Law** is the subject of New Testament law-related comments.

But if the Law was in fact ‘done away’, then all would likely agree that it happened ‘*on the cross*’! That would mean it was in effect before the cross, but not after. That being the case, the vast majority were born in an era when it had already become ‘*abolished*’. IF we were born without the law (and naturally adversarial to it⁴⁶) why then do we need to become ‘converted’ in order to have it officially lifted off us, when it was long gone / ‘done away’ (‘*nailed to His cross*’) before we were ever born!?

The fact that religionists need to revert to obscure narratives, particularly one that refers to something else, to draw their conclusion of law-abrogation, suggests their premise is bogus! Colossians 2 refers to ‘humanly derived commandments’, not the Laws of God. See for instance verses 21 thru 23, “*Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21: (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22: Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23: Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying*

⁴⁶ Romans 8:4-7 “*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 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.*”

of the flesh. Had main stream religion honestly sought the true subject context of this chapter, we'd have a very different conclusion on their part!

What we find among anti-law advocates is a rather underdone and poorly reasoned premise. We have on one hand the allegation that 'the law is all done away'. But then, we hear these same people insist that the law remains incumbent, just upon the Jews. Well, how can that be if the law no longer exists? Then the capstone on this unstable pile of rocks is that 'we come out from *under the law*' when we accept Christ's Sacrifice! Well, if Christ truly 'did away with the Law', how could it still be 'over us' until such time as we become 'in Christ'? This area of discussion obviously needs serious re-definition.

We are NOT Under the Law

Another wonderfully mis-represented passage is the one found in Romans 6:14. "*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* 15: *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.* 16: *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* 17: *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* 18: *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*" The essential question here is that IF the Law is 'done away', how is it possible to sin? How could sin continue to have dominion over those **not** 'under grace' if the Law had been abolished?

(This particular passage warrants further explanation, and is addressed specifically in the original chapter titled: "*We Are NOT 'Under the Law'*." In that chapter, that phrase he uses is closely and logically examined. Paul did not say, nor did he mean what he is represented to have meant! What so many fail to recognize and acknowledge is that Romans 6:23 is also a 'law'! It's called the 'law of sin and death'! "*The wages of sin is death*", paraphrased from the Old Testament, which affirms the same, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" Eze. 18:4)

"Keep My Commandments"

Much can be discerned regarding the matter of the

Law from other passages. Not the least of which is Jesus' admonition: "*If you love me, keep my commandments.*" Even more certain is the reiteration of the Old Testament prophecy regarding the New Covenant found in Jeremiah 31 and repeated verbatim in Hebrews 8. "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:*" How could God's Laws be put into our hearts and minds if they were abolished just before the New Covenant was to be instituted?

Paul's True Position

Many note the several places where Paul seems very negative toward the Law, failing to read carefully enough to recognize his ultimate point. Where Paul is negative as to the Law's effectiveness, it is always in the context of 'Justification'. In other words, when a worshipper is of the opinion that he can attain remission of sins by means of 'law-keeping', he refutes that, as he should! Law-keeping isn't the **means** of our salvation, but it is the result of or the proper **response** to it! That's the point of Romans 6 seen in the column to the left. The scriptures given below take us thru a logical progression of justification by faith, but which effects a law-compliant way of life!

Galatians 2:16-17 "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the **faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of ⁴⁷ Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* 17: **But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.**" (The subject is attaining justification!)

Romans 3:28-31 "*Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by faith** without the deeds of the law.* 29: *Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:* 30: *Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.*

⁴⁷ It is important to distinguish between faith IN Christ and the faith OF Christ. See the chapter: "*From faith to Faith*".

31: Do we then **make void the law through faith?** God forbid: yea, **we establish the law.** How could ones' faith establish a thing that's 'all done away'? Romans 7:8-25 "*But sin, taking occasion by the **commandment**, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9: For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Here Paul is making the point that when the Law came to his full awareness, he finally saw his hopeless condition. That awareness came to him as he was becoming converted. It didn't involve throwing off the Law, but more fully internalizing it! 10: "And the **commandment, which was ordained to life**, I found to be unto death. 11: For sin, taking occasion by the **commandment**, deceived me, and by it slew me. 12: Wherefore **the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.** 13: Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the **commandment** might become exceeding sinful. 14: For we know that **the law is spiritual**: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15: For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16: If then I do that which I would not, **I consent unto the law that it is good.** 17: Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19: For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20: Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22: For **I delight in the law of God after the inward man**: 23: But I see **another law** in my members, warring against **the law of my mind**, and bringing me into captivity to **the law of sin** which is in my members. 24: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then **with the mind I myself serve the law of God**; but with the flesh **the law of sin.***

We see another law, referred to elsewhere as 'the law of sin and death', which is basically the fact that the breaking of the commandments warrants the penalty of spiritual death! But, how could Paul

'serve' the law of God if it is abolished? Was it only because he was an ex-religious Jew?

1st John 3:1-3 "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called **the sons of God**: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3: And every man that hath this hope in him **purifieth himself, even as he is pure.***" Using what standard does one 'purify himself'?

Isaiah 8:13-20 describes how **the law** will become applied in the future, in a way the sinful nation had not achieved. "*Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14: And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence⁴⁸ to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15: And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. (Compare Daniel 11:35) 16: Bind up the testimony, **seal⁴⁹ the law among my disciples.** 17: And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. 18: Behold, I and **the children whom the LORD hath given me** are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. 19: And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? 20: **To the law and to the testimony**: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. How do modern religionists speak in regard to the law?*

Romans 3:1-3 "*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2: Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were*

⁴⁸ Romans 9:31-33 This line obviously referring to Christ. The Apostle Paul recognized the application of this prophecy, that it regarded Israel's failure to achieve righteousness by means of their lawkeeping efforts. The Law wasn't created for that purpose!

⁴⁹ *Seal* is Strong's #2856, 'ghah-tham', used in two other places: Est. 8:8 and Dan. 12:4. Seal in the sense of putting a stamp of finality or enduring permanency onto something. Not a dissimilar word to Paul's use of 'establish' in Romans 3:31.

committed **the oracles of God**. 3: For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the **faith of God** without effect? 4: God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. 5: But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? **Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?** (I speak as a man) 6: God forbid: for then **how shall God judge the world?**

This same question was asked earlier. If the standard of definition of righteousness was 'done away', then on the basis of what can God rightfully judge the world? The point in verse 5 is interesting, "*But if our **unrighteousness** commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say?*" In effect, he's asking how could God 'justify' either of two different individuals having identical (law-disregarding) lifestyles, with one being accounted as 'saved' and the other one not, and God remain righteous Himself? If God were to 'justify' one law-breaker while taking vengeance upon another law-breaker, how can that be regarded as 'righteous' on His part? (That's why Paul explained his reasoning by saying, "*I speak as a man*".) The point here being, that a 'justified' person is not a willful law-breaker! (recognizing, of course, that it is Christ living in us which produces effective compliance.) Thus, the Law could not be 'all done away'!

We are His Workmanship

Where they've made their mistake is to assume that since keeping the law doesn't remove sin, it has no practical purpose, and needs to be done away with. The law which originally was 'ordained to life' as Paul admits in Romans 7:10 (above) remains the guideline for conduct. Ephesians 2:8-10 explains it so well. Fundamentalists are extremely familiar with verses 8 & 9, but never seem to find the rest of that sentence particularly noteworthy! It continues: "*For we are **his** workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto** good works, which God hath **before ordained** that we should walk in them.*" That which was 'before ordained' is that code (the commandments) which were 'ordained to life'!

Perhaps we should pause here to make the point that the New Testament speaks of more than one thing when referring to 'the law'. There is the Law of God, there are the things God ADDED because

of unbelief, (ritual practices) and there are the legal additions which **men** created to illustrate or to somehow enhance **their** 'righteousness' as they saw it! Then there is the 'law of sin and death', so clearly stated in Romans 6:23. We should take care to distinguish the differences. The frustrating thing is that fundamentalists, so called, are so eager to discredit and abolish the Law from Christian practice, that they've blinded themselves to these obvious distinctions!

Reviewing briefly those things we've considered here, we see:

- We are justified by faith,
- That Faith is the faith OF Christ,
- Faith establishes the law, (seals it among His disciples),
- If there is no law, there is no transgression!
- The law imparts in us the consciousness of sin,
- The law is holy, (as it's Spiritual),
- The commandment is holy, just and good,
- We are called upon to serve the law of God,
- There is another law which demands our death,
- Sons of God anticipate (hope for) glorification,
- Those who have this hope purify themselves,
- The premise that we can effect remission of sins (justification) by lawkeeping trips some people up,
- The idea that we should still keep the law (as an appropriate response to grace) trips up others,
- The law was ordained of God for Life,
- The law's existence is essential as the basis of God's just and righteous judgment,
- True ministers of God represent both Testaments (the law and the testimony) fully and accurately,

In the very end-time we have a potent witness of the orientation on the part of God's True Saints on this matter. "*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.***" (Rev. 12: 17. The same 'law and testimony' as referred to in Isaiah 8:20) Revelation 22:14 concludes with the invitation of God to Life in His Kingdom with this: "*Blessed are they **that do his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*"

Where does that leave the adamant antinomian? 📖

The REWARD of the Saved

To Those within the Embrace of Orthodox ‘Grace Theology’, the Indication of a Personal Reward associated with Salvation seems oddly Out of Place. What Reward should Christians anticipate receiving at the Second Coming?

“For by Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: **Not of works, lest any man should boast.**”⁵⁰ This being the case, why would anyone consider or suggest that there is any ‘reward’ associated with the Christian experience? (Reward indicates something was earned.) This verse from Ephesians 2 seems clear enough in itself. And, except for other equally clear scriptures, this would put the subject to rest. But, you see, in Revelation 22: the concluding chapter of the Bible, in verse 12, it says, “Behold, I come quickly; and my **reward** is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Earlier, in announcing that same event, in which He returning, will assume full power over all the earth, it says, “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give **reward** unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name small and great;...”

This places more than one very profound question before each believer. If salvation is a gift of grace, and in no way earnable, then what is this reward? Use of a word like ‘reward’ suggests something clearly merited! To further tip this applecart, we find that reward, in verse 22:12, (the concluding chapter) to be predicated upon ones’ **works**!

But there’s another consideration this scripture raises. If Heaven is the true and full reward of the saved, why does this passage indicate that there’s a reward awaiting these servants, the prophets and saints, which is to be given out only when Christ returns, after the time of the first resurrection?

Salvation is clearly of and by grace, not of works, yet we see there is a **reward**, given to God’s Saints

at the time of His second coming, awarded, based upon each individual’s works! What is it that we are to understand from these passages? Clearly then, salvation itself is presented as distinct from this reward being talked about. Salvation isn’t that reward! It’s something in addition to salvation, and it’s awarded later, only at Christ’s return, not before.

This, clearly, is at serious odds with the cherished views of traditional Christianity. Not only as it involves the idea of being accepted into Heaven, eternally, at the moment of one’s death; not only that this ‘reward’ is awarded at and after Christ’s Second Coming to earth to judge the resurrected and to rule over the nations for at least a millennium; but also in the fact that this ‘reward’ is not meted out equally among all His Saints, but is given in proportion to their varying individual **WORKS**! To many, this idea is objectionable!

Salvation itself is a relative constant. Being resurrected is another. Those who experience these do so with the same result. So, this ‘reward’, and seeing it is to be meted out in accordance with the individual’s ‘works’, we clearly must be looking at something other than these! There’s a greater or lesser award in proportion to the individuals unique accomplishment level, not what Christ did for us, (which is applied unilaterally and equally), but what **we** do in response to what He did for us!

To BE With the Lord

For this to actually be true, it means there are obvious problems with modern Christian teachings. Those problems center around a fundamental premise, one which has very little actual Biblical foundation: that of Christians (of all persuasions, apparently) being taken to Heaven at death, where they reportedly are to spend all eternity.

⁵⁰ Ephesians 2:8-9

On the other hand, there is ample Biblical mention of Christ returning to Earth, to rule and judge all nations, co-involving His Saints! How do we square that with the typical ‘accepted’ view? The obvious exclusive character of these contrasting scenarios causes modern theologians to reject the millennial Kingdom of God on Earth. With it, they are compelled also to reject the resurrections from the dead,⁵¹ that fundamental doctrine having no accommodation with their preferred belief system.

Who can adequately explain a need for a resurrection to life, let alone there being more than one resurrection? Who among them can explain why there is to be a thousand years between the ‘first resurrection’ and the next?! (Rev.20:5)

If one ‘goes to be with the Lord’ at death, as most believe, then where will they be when He is returned to Earth for a thousand years, at least?⁵² Either the Saints are **not** to remain in Heaven for all eternity, or else they must remain ‘separated’ from the Lord for the time He is here on Earth! Do our esteemed theologians dare present this question to their congregations, and will they (can they?) provide a logical answer? It can’t be both ways!

To further confound accepted teachings, we see the Saints rising up to meet the returning Christ in the air, as He’s coming toward Earth, in 1st Thessalonians 4:15-17. Why would the ‘dead in Christ’ need to be raised? (Paul says this **MUST** happen **first!**) Does this meeting include those raised, or does that apply only to those changed in that instant referred to in 1st Corinthians 15:52? If their ‘meeting’ occurred at the time of their deaths, why is *their* being raised a pre-requisite to our meeting Him in the air? Verse 53 raises a question of its own: Can the dead be received into the presence of the Lord without first having received their ‘spiritual body’? “*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*”. Christianity puts forth a scenario that effectively says, **Yes!** Having received that body is unnecessary! But, IF the answer truly is ‘yes’, then why must we first **‘put on’** immortality?

(Wait a minute, Aren’t we born with immortality?)

⁵¹ Hebrews 6:1-2

⁵² Zech. 8:3 & 22, 14:4, Dan. 7:27, Rev. 5:8-10, 20:4-6 & 21:2, etc.

This brings us back to the question posed earlier. Why is there any need for a resurrection? Though most Christian religions acknowledge at least one, and many recognize two, (They should, (see Revelation 20:5)) it remains a mystery to many why such a thing is necessary. After all, hasn’t our dear departed loved one ‘gone to be with the Lord’? (His or her soul, at least.) Here, having lost life and body, only that cognizant remnant remains to constitute their continuing existence. The SOUL, as it’s commonly taught, goes to be with the Lord and remains ever-conscious. The dear departed lost two-thirds of his existence, gaining nothing new at this point, as that new spiritual body is not received until the moment of the Last Trump! So, why does Paul say that “...*this mortal **must** put on immortality*”...and only then is “*Death swallowed up in victory*”! Why **MUST** we?

Not to be ‘Unclothed’

In 2nd Corinthians 5:2, Paul suggests that we must first be ‘*clothed upon*’ with that body which is from heaven. In order to be ‘*present with the Lord*’, We must first appear before the judgment seat of Christ, (v.10) then we may receive the things done in our bodies. Yet, in 1st Corinthians 15: we see the resurrected saints invested with their ‘spirit bodies’ at the Last Trumpet, at Christ’s return to Earth! Here’s the ‘interesting’ part: If those Saints went to Heaven, why do they need to have their old physical bodies, still back on earth, raised in order to receive their new spiritual body. Or, why would their new bodies from heaven first appear out from their earthly gravesite? Why wouldn’t they have already ‘received’ it while they were up there where it comes from?

Get the point? Modern ‘christian’ religions are woefully under-informed in some pretty important areas. There is no real place in their theology for the resurrections from the dead, nor do they accommodate Christ’s thousand year Millennial Kingdom on Earth, co-ruled by God’s Spirit-Born ever-living Saints. This is partly why there is no effective cognizance of this ‘reward’ issue.

(IF there were no resurrection from the dead, would it void the basis of beliefs of most of the belief system that is regarded as Christianity?⁵³ If

⁵³ Paul seems to say it would: 1st Cor. 15:14, (Rom. 5:10)

everyone who's going to heaven goes there and if everyone who is going to that other place goes there, and then if no resurrection ever occurs, what real difference would it make, as people understand it?)

Saints Rule under Christ

When we allow our theology to accommodate the clear scriptures, those that show that Christ and His true Saints are to co-rule all nations, in their resurrected state, then this matter of a 'reward' becomes eminently logical. There is more offered than just 'salvation' by itself. There is an ever increasing government. (Isa. 9:6-7) Those Saints who 'overcome', will participate in varying positions within that government. *"And he that overcomes, and **keeps my works** ⁵⁴ unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."* (Re.2:26) *"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."* To His Disciples, He said, *"...you which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His Glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* (Matt. 19:28) Notice, Christ explains that there would be a regeneration (their being brought back to life), as precondition, after which they should expect to be installed into positions of rulership.

Daniel words it well, in his Chapter 7. *"I beheld till the thrones (of this world) were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit...millions ministered unto Him, and 100 millions stood before Him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened. But the Saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."* (vs. 10 & 18) *"And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an*

⁵⁴ We don't need to guess what "**keep my works**" means. Revelation 12:17 says, *"...the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."* Notice the Old Testament and New Testament components in His description of His Saints! 14:12 has, *Here is the patience of the Saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.* These same components again! 19:10 makes clear that the 'testimony of Jesus' is the spirit of prophecy. The one who keeps His works is a spirit-filled commandment keeper!

everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (v. 27) Could it be clearer?

A more general picture is given in Daniel 2:44. *"And in the days of these (latter day) kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom,...and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."*

Early in the Book of Revelation, golden vials are poured-out, which are the prayers of the Saints. Those prayers are, *"You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and has redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."* (5:9-10)

If it isn't well stated enough, Revelation 21 confirms what many Old Testament prophecies say, that God (first Christ, and after the days of salvation end and the judgment is complete, the Father also) will descend to the earth and dwell with men! *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; ...And I John saw the Holy City new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven...And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."*

The throne of Christ and ultimately God is to be relocated to Earth! That's very Biblical! Those expecting to spend eternity in heaven need to think about this! *"Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. (That last enemy being death)... And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."* (1st Cor. 15:24-28)

In this context, the idea of reward being given to God's Spirit-Born Saints makes a lot more sense. Under the 'spending eternity in heaven' context, we can articulate some pretty formidable problems.

Though our eminent preachers do a fabulous job presenting what they envision an eternal heavenly experience to be like, (without substantial or clear scriptures on the subject), it leaves many wondering what will the Saints **do** there for all eternity?

Now, some traditionally hold that heaven itself is the reward of the saved. But, reward implies merit. Our having earned something. That, and the fact that the resurrection has to happen first, before anyone is to be awarded this 'reward' is direct proof that heaven is not it!

Revelation 11 gives an explicit time-line of events leading up to the assignment of God's Reward. Verses 15 thru 18, which enumerate the events occurring within the seventh (last) trump. Christ returns, He assumes power over all nations, the nations react negatively, He deals with those who oppose Him, and the resurrection occurs for the purpose of "... *giving **reward** unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name small and great; ...*" This Trump is the same one Paul refers to in 1st Corinthians 15:50-52. The seventh trump is the 'Last Trump'. "*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump**: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*" The mystery he refers to is the fact that there will be those alive at this event, who will have bypassed the 'experience' of death, being translated directly into that incorruptible state. But the notable thing also revealed here, is that the dead are raised incorruptible at this same moment in time also. Now, does that mean that they've been waiting in heaven all these years, corruptible? These deceased don't receive their incorruptible form until this Last Trumpet!

The statement, "*neither does corruption inherit incorruption*" is revealing in itself. The word inherit is not a word indicating merit! Inheritance comes to us by occasion of birth. It is awarded on account of parental grace as is being named in a will. So a resurrection to life and the receipt of our incorruptible body form isn't that reward either!

Paul's comment in 1st Thessalonians 4:13-17 sheds more light on this subject. "*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep.*"⁵⁵ *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*" (Here, as in the previous quote, Paul refers to the dead in Christ as being 'asleep'! Didn't he know they're 'awake' in heaven?)

Awarded at the Last

So, clearly we can see that this reward is something in addition to salvation. It's not heaven, it's not the resurrection itself, nor is it anything provided to us under the auspices of grace. It has to be something merited! Something awarded 'according to our works'! It is not received until Christ's return, at and with the Last Trump of God.

We have seen those doctrines that obscure things we need to know: the resurrections from the dead and a millennial kingdom of God, with its positions of leadership, awarded to the overcomers. Those doctrines are found wanting in modern religions in the clear light of scripture. We can't begin to correctly understand this matter of our reward under that perceptually deficient theology!

There is in fact a reward, which Christ will bring at His return. "*And, behold, I come quickly; and my **reward is with me**, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" (Rev, 22:12) It is awarded at the time of the first resurrection and it includes the positions of responsibility we will be awarded in Christ's administration on earth! "*To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.*" (Revelation 3:21)

Work for it! Be an Overcomer!!



⁵⁵ If Paul had thought that his readers thought that the dead had gone to be with the Lord already, at death, then why would he see it necessary to clarify that WE won't go to be with the Lord before them? Think about it.

◇ Chapter Twelve ◇

A Story of Grace

These days, events on the internet are known to “go viral”. This message, given at the Feast of Tabernacles in 2002, received considerable acclaim. It was published in ‘the Journal’, ‘Servants News’ and a couple of Church of God magazines, despite receiving a strong negative reaction from the Parent Organization, which was at the time embracing a more ‘main-stream’ view of the matter of Grace.

It was the winter of 1935. The nation was in the throes of the great depression. It’s hard for us to imagine in today’s affluent society just how desperate those days were. Well do I remember as a child, people knocking on our back door begging for food. Mom always fed them. Long lines of hungry people were standing in front of soup kitchens waiting for something to eat. Jobs were virtually none existent, and money was as precious as it was scarce.

There was a man by the name of Fiorello LaGuardia who was the mayor of New York City during those dark days. LaGuardia seemed to have a genuine heartfelt love for the common man, especially the downtrodden.

One time, during a newspaper strike, he spent his Sunday mornings reading the funny papers over the radio, and with all the appropriate inflections. Why? He didn’t want the children of New York to be deprived of that little bit of enjoyment. He was well known for his blustery outbursts against the “bums” that exploited the poor. He was completely unpredictable and full of surprises.

One night he showed up at a night court in one of the poorest wards of the city; and that’s where this phase of our story begins. He dismissed the presiding judge for the evening and sent him home to his family. Then the mayor himself took over the bench.

As it happened on that bitterly cold night, a tattered old woman stood before the bench,

accused of stealing a loaf of bread. You must understand these were desperate times. A lot of people were going hungry.

With quivering lips and tear filled eyes, she admitted to the theft. But, she added, “my daughter’s husband has deserted her, she is sick, and her children are crying because they have nothing to eat.”

Letter of the Law

The shopkeeper, however, refused to drop the charges. “It’s a bad neighborhood your honor, she’s guilty,” he shouted. “The law must be upheld, she’s got to be punished to teach other people a lesson.” LaGuardia knew that her accuser was right. The very office that he swore to uphold required that he enforce the letter of the law.

LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the old woman and said, “I’ve got to punish you; the law makes no exceptions. He then pronounced the sentence. The old woman shuddered when she heard the words; “Ten dollars or ten days in jail” but already the judge was reaching into his pocket. He pulled out a ten-dollar bill and threw it into his hat. “Here’s the ten-dollar fine, which I now remit. Furthermore, I’m fining everyone in this courtroom fifty cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff collect the fines and give them to the defendant.”

Sitting in that courtroom that night were about

seventy petty criminals, a few New York policemen, and her accuser, a fuming, red faced, storekeeper. The bewildered old grandmother left the courtroom with \$47.50. This was enough to buy groceries for several months.

Mercy Doesn't Abrogate Law

That's a very good story and it's a true story, but how is that relevant to us today? Let's review the event and see what really took place that cold winter evening.

1. Was the storekeeper correct in his accusation? Yes. The old woman had committed a crime.

2. Was guilt confessed? Yes. She admitted the theft.

3. Did her reason for stealing make any difference to the law? No. The law can make no exceptions.

4. Was the judgment decreed and sentencing pronounced? Yes. The old grandmother was found guilty and sentenced to a fine she could not pay.

5. Was justice carried through, thus satisfying the law? Yes. The fine was paid in full.

6. Was grace extended? Yes. The guilty party walked out of that courtroom completely free and her penalty paid.

7. Did the guilty party do anything at all to deserve or earn the grace received? Not a thing. It was free, and there for her to accept.

8. Was the law done away? No. The law is still intact; and it's still against the law to steal bread in New York City. The law was neither changed, adjusted, sidestepped nor done-away.

9. Having received grace, is the grandmother now free of the law to go steal again? As Paul would say, "God forbid."

10. Could we therefore conclude, that:

1. The law was fulfilled;
2. Justice was done;
3. Her accuser was silenced;
4. Compassion won out over the law;
5. Yet the law is still intact.

I think we have no other choice. What about you?

Actually, we started this story in the middle. Have you ever walked into the middle of a movie, and then have to set through the beginning in order to understand the ending? You see, our story actually began nearly six thousand years ago, In the Garden of Eden, with the fall of man.

Can you see the parallel? Can't you imagine Satan standing before God's throne shouting, GUILTY, GUILTY? You must enforce the law. There can be no exceptions. And there is mankind, the weight of guilt too heavy to bear; a penalty too horrible to contemplate.

Does it matter how justifiable the reason for our crime, or what excuse we offer. Like Mayor LaGuardia said, "The law can make no exceptions." Just as LaGuardia had to uphold the laws of New York City, God had to uphold his heavenly laws.

Satan had succeeded. it seemed, in forcing God to choose between destroying the law or destroying mankind. It's either or. For God to be true, for God to be righteous, for God to be God, action had to be taken. Otherwise the law is effete and of none effect; and the very foundation of the government of God is challenged. For no government can function without law.

Sin Demands Death

What then must be done? It was man that sinned; therefore man must pay. But if man

pays then man will be no more. Satan will have accomplished his objective; which was then, as it is now, to destroy mankind.

But what if there should come a second Adam? What if another Adam should come who is totally obedient to God? Completely sinless, and qualified in every way to pay the death penalty for all who come to Him in humble submission. Could He, would He, step into man's place and die in his stead?

We read of just such a Man in Revelation 5:5 where it tells us of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David who has qualified to open the Book of Life. As a matter of fact we read of Him from Genesis to Revelation. The scarlet thread of His redeeming blood can be traced throughout the Bible. He is described in Philipians 2:6-8 as being in the form of God, but humbled Himself to the likeness of man. He came to serve, not to be served; and was obedient unto death.

We Are ALL Adam's Seed

Just as Adam's sin sentenced every human to death, so this Man offers eternal life to everyone who believes in Him. And having accepted and believed the works that God has done through His Son; we then become buried with Him in baptism into his death. Paul tells us in Romans 5 that, *"like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also shall be raised in the likeness of His resurrection."*

God's inspired word tells us in Romans 5:19, *"For if by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall all be made righteous."* And in I Corinthians 15:22, *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive."* Also in verse 45, *"And so it is written. The first Adam was made a living soul: the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."*

What would our answers be if we asked the same questions about the grace extended to us

as we did about the grace extended to the old grandmother? Well, let's do that and find out.

1. Is our accuser correct in his accusation? Yes. All mankind has sinned.

2. Was guilt confessed? Yes. We have confessed our sins before God.

3. Did our reason for sinning make any difference to the law? No. The law can make no exceptions.

4. Was judgment decreed and sentencing pronounced? Yes. All mankind was found guilty and sentenced to a penalty we could not pay.

5. Was justice carried out, thus satisfying the law? Yes. The death decree was paid in full.

6. Was grace extended? Yes. The guilty party rose up from the waters of baptism completely free and the penalty was paid in full.

7. Did the guilty party do anything at all to deserve or earn the grace received? Not a thing. It was free, and there for us to accept.

8. Was the law done away? No. The law is still intact; and it's still against the law to disobey God. The law was not destroyed, and not one jot or tittle was changed, adjusted, eliminated, or passed from the law. That includes the Ten Commandments. Review Christ's own words in Mathew 5:17-48 if you have any doubt.

9. Having received grace, are we now free of the law to continue in sin?

As Paul said in Romans 3:31, *"---God forbid; yea we establish the law."*

Also Romans 6:15-16, *"what then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin*

unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Was It the Law That Was Nailed?

But haven't we been told, maybe even read that the law was nailed to the cross? Does it really say that? Well let's go to the source and find out. We read in Col 2:14; "*having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*" NASU.

What is a certificate of debt? The law is not a certificate of debt. It is never referred to in those terms. A certificate of debt is like an I.O.U. or a mortgage; a note that has to be paid. It was our decree of guilt, not the law that was nailed to the cross. The Man who was nailed to the cross paid the penalty that was decreed to us. If the law could have been done away, why would it be necessary for Jesus to Die?

You see it's not really an either or question as Satan thought. It was not necessary to destroy mankind, and grace does not destroy nor replace the law.

Paul tells us in Hebrews 8:10, "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*" KJV. He repeats the same statement in chapter 10 and verse 16.

Paul is quoting Jeremiah.⁵⁶ These are the same

⁵⁶ "*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*" (Jer. 32:31-33)

laws God gave Israel. By **putting them in our mind** God has opened up our knowledge and understanding of them. By **writing them in our heart** we will never forget them, and our heart's desire will be to obey them. In Romans 6:17 Paul tells us we obey from the heart. If God's laws are not in your heart, you will find many logical sounding reasons not to obey them, just like Eve did.

10. Could we therefore conclude, that

1. The law was fulfilled, the penalty paid,
2. Justice was done,
3. Our accuser silenced,
4. Compassion (grace) won out over the law,
5. Yet the law is still intact, and always will be. Isaiah, speaking of Christ, writes, "*He will magnify the law and make it honorable.*" (Isaiah 42:21).

I think we have no other choice but to say yes to all of the above. What about you?

Certainly our salvation is unearned and secure in Jesus Christ, but our blessings come from obedience.

Truly, as it is written, "*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined*" (Isa. 9:2).

This chapter is a transcript of a message in 2002 by Del Leger, Pastor, Christian Church Of God, www.ccofgod.org
