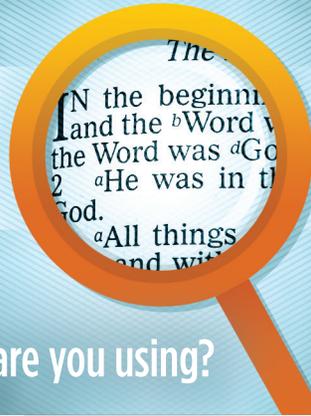


BIBLE OPTICS



What lens are you using?

The WORD or the world?

This issue:

A New Perspective on the Law – by Elijah Ramjattan

Perfect Christian or Perfectly Loved? – by Sara Scarpino

Q&A – Did Jesus Abolish the Law

God of Love and Law – John Cloud

God's Law: A Burden? Or a Delight? – By Shenalyn Page



From the Editor

Did you know that since World War II (the earliest we have data), the United States Congress has typically enacted 4-6 million words of new law in each two-year Congress (govtrack.us). That translates to 150-200 new laws every single year.

God has ten written laws. They've been the same since forever.

Why the difference?

Human laws attempt to change people from the outside. God's law works from the inside. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts," He promises (Jeremiah 31:33).

Yet we often see God's law as a burden instead of rejoicing in its profound simplicity.

In this issue of Bible Optics, we'd like to help you gain a new perspective on God's law. Read each article with an open and prayerful heart, meditate on the Bible verses mentioned, and ask God for a new perspective. I believe you'll be blessed!

A New Perspective on God's Law

A burden rested on my shoulders that promised to crush me. I felt like Atlas, the strong man of Greek mythology who carried the world on his shoulders. My burden was not the world, but the law of God. Apparently, this was the way He wanted me to live. But His rules for life were sucking the life out of me.

I had spent my life in the church; I knew all the spoken and unspoken rules. I could walk like a Christian and talk like a Christian, yet I was miserable. The law was simply a list of dos and don'ts to follow—my checklist to heaven. Like a bully, it pushed me around and forced me to obey. I felt I had no other choice then to work harder to live up to God's standard.

The children of Israel had a similar experience when they marched through the wilderness. God had shown his wonders to them, handed His law to them on Mount Sinai, and dwelt with them in the tabernacle. Yet they had no idea how to have a healthy relationship with God or His law.

Just weeks after hearing God's voice thunder the law into their hearts and minds, the children of Israel built an idol. They broke the law they had promised so recently to keep. The greatest disappointment for me was that I failed so often. Instead of standing tall on God's law, I kept tripping over it.



Marshall McKenzie | Editor
Church Growth Director, KTYN Conference

The Israelites did the same thing, constantly swinging between God and idols. They worshipped God through their sacrifices yet were far from God in their actions and attitudes.

Perhaps you too live with silent sorrow over your failure at keeping God's law. You've tried to keep God's law but failed miserably. Is this the way God meant for us to relate to His law? Or does He have something better in mind?

What if the way we perceive the law is inaccurate? When we think of the laws of the land, we think of them being above us. What if the law of God was not meant to be above us, as some sort of impending doom, but rather within us?

A Better Way

I have discovered that the reason for my constant failure was that I saw the law as a dark cloud above me rather than a sunshine of hope. There are two major steps God has shown me that have changed my perspective on His law.

The first step to developing a healthy relationship with the law is to allow God to write it in your heart and mind. "For this is the covenant that I will make with them... I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts..."

(Hebrews 8:10). God does not want the law to hang over you like a noose. Instead, He wants to make it a part of your DNA, your very identity. This is how He makes you, His child.

When I sought God first and surrendered my will to Him, He wrote His law in my heart and I no longer felt burdened by its weight. When like David, we pray, "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands" (Psalm 119:10), God transforms our desires and keeping His commands becomes a joy. Our Father is our desire, and His commands our delight.

The second step to developing a stronger relationship with the Law is giving the Spirit permission to change you completely. The Spirit and the law come together within you and cause you to bear the fruit of righteousness. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Allowing God to write His law in my heart and change me through the Spirit has been pivotal for me. Before, I could not conquer my sins. Whether it was the

desire to overcome lust, or the over-consumption of media, or even simply trying to have a consistent devotional life, I was not successful. I wanted to overcome but could not do it.

How can a tree bear fruit if it is not first planted in good soil? I had to first be planted in the Spirit, and wholly transformed in order to be able to keep the law without it being a burden.

Jesus and the Law

When Jesus came, He radically changed our perception of the law. He showed that the law is not a list of dos and don'ts, but rather a way of life. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17).

Christ taught that the law makes our lives whole. When He was asked what the greatest commandment in the Law was, He responded, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Today, Jesus offers you and I a new perspective on the law. He invites us to start by being wholly in love with Him first. When the love we have for God has completely taken over our hearts, then the law will no longer burden us, but become a part of us. The Holy Spirit will help us crucify our own will, desires,

and selfishness, so that we can be completely converted and able to follow the Law without it being a burden.

Do you want to see the law in a new light, as a beautiful gift from your Father? If so, please pray this prayer with me:

Father, I want to see the beauty of your law. Please write your law within my heart and change my desires. And put your Spirit within me so that I will bear the good fruit of righteousness. Thank you, Father! In Jesus' name, Amen.

By: Elijah Ramjattan

**GOD'S LAW:
A BURDEN?
OR A
DELIGHT?**



Perfect Christian or Perfectly Loved?

I used to think that for God to love me, I had to be perfect. No mistakes. No mess ups. No bad moments. No breakdowns. None of it.

During my last two years of high school, I transferred to an Adventist Academy and discovered a community who believed in Jesus like I did. The school leaders sought to inspire us to seek God's will and live according to the Bible. They wanted us to build a relationship with God, but it often felt like they enforced the school rules more than emphasizing Jesus' love for us. I began to believe that for God to love me, I had to be perfect. No one shared their personal struggles, so I felt alone in my temptations.

Looking back, I realize that although I was learning what God's laws said, I wasn't learning what they meant. I had no idea that His laws are a beautiful painting of His heart.

A Revelation of Father's Love

My perspective on God's law began to change when I fell in love with Him. He led me to Jeremiah 31:33 which says, "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel... declares the Lord: I will put My law *within* them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be *their* God, and they shall be *My* people..." When something is written on the heart, isn't that the closest and most meaningful place for something to reside? Instead of the goal being perfectionism from sin through following of the law, God is saying, *this law is something that will be meaningful to your heart because I will put it there.*

The commandments reveal His perfect acts of selflessness. Each one has to do with putting another person's heart before our own selfish desires. We can't write these laws on our own hearts. It is something that comes by being with Him. The Father is saying, the deeper you fall in love with Me, the more you will desire to keep My law of love.

In every commandment, God is trying to help us understand *His* heart. He says, *I want to give you the deepest parts of Me. I want you to know Me and the things that I care most deeply about. I want you to know that I selflessly love you.*

When I gave Jesus my heart, He was able to give me His. As I have spent daily time with Him, I have found the belonging and love I desired my whole life. In His glorious presence, He wrote His laws on my heart.

Today, Jesus is inviting you and I to let Him write His law on our hearts so we can love like He does. When we do, our lives will become a beautiful demonstration of His love.

By: Sara Scarpino

Bible Q&A



Did Jesus Abolish the Law?

Yes and No.

The “law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Ephesians 2:15) and “the handwriting of requirements” (Colossians 2:14) are spoken of as being done away with by Christ at the cross. These are references to the ceremonial laws that were added in the wilderness and were “a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:17). These laws were designed to end with the crucifixion of Christ.

On the other hand, the Ten Commandments (also called the moral law) were in force before sin and continue to exist today. Jesus spoke clearly, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law... I did not come to destroy but to fulfill... Till

heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17, 18). He did not come to abolish or alter God’s great moral standards.

The new covenant promise is that God will write His law on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10). Would this make sense if the moral law had been done away with? No, because God would no longer have a law to write on our hearts.

Paul asks, “Do we then make void the law through faith?” His response? “Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31). God’s law hasn’t been abolished and it never will be. By faith it is written on the heart of every believer and will live on throughout eternity!



GOT A QUESTION ABOUT THE BIBLE? PRAYER?
FAITH? WITNESSING?

We’d love to help you find the answers you are seeking. Send us your questions at: godled@kytn.net.

God of Love and Law

1
I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me

2
You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the iniquity of the children on the fathers, who keep My commandments

3
You shall not take the name of the LORD your

4
God in vain, for the Lord will not hold anyone who takes His name in vain.

5
Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you

6
You shall not murder

7
You shall not commit adultery

8
You shall not steal

9
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

Darkness consumed Mount Sinai as Yahweh descended in a cloud of smoke. Lightning crashed. Thunder roared. Moses exclaimed, “I exceedingly fear and quake,” as a powerful trumpet blast summoned the children of Israel to a meeting with their King. God’s voice resounded, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exodus 19:16–20; 20:2; 24:17; Hebrews 12:21).

Thus began our Savior’s first Sermon on the Mount. Yes! It was Jesus that spoke the Ten Commandments at Sinai (John 8:58; 1 Corinthians 10:4).

Centuries later, Jesus gave His second Sermon on the Mount. This time His voice was gentle, and He said, “crazy things” like, “blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,” (Matthew 5:5) and “turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:39).

Jesus’ two mountain-top renditions of the law seem like polar opposites, yet both reveal the eternal nature and true import of God’s law of love. The awful demonstration at Sinai was given to impress Israel with the exalted character of God’s law (Psalm 19:7). The Israelites needed to understand that disobedience came with consequences. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount targeted the deeper issues of the law. He showed that keeping the commandments was a matter of the heart and motives, not just external rule keeping.

“All that the Lord has spoken we will do” the Israelites solemnly vowed (Exodus 19:8). Our hearts agree, yet like them, we quickly fall back into sin.

The good news we need to understand is that the mighty God who delivered the Israelites from slavery will also release us from our addiction to sin and cause us to live in harmony with His impossible law.

The Impossible Law

“Therefore, by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

God’s law is the foundation of His government, but it also serves another vitally important purpose. “It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; . . . Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Galatians 3:19, 24–25).

The Ten Commandments and the ceremonial law were meant to show the Israelites their moral bankruptcy and the impossibility of living up to God’s perfect standard. Like a mirror, they reveal our true condition. Paul said, “I would not have known sin except through the law” (Romans 7:7). It reflects our hopeless condition back at us and we cry out “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

The Great Law Keeper

It is Jesus that delivers us! He “condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3–4).

Humanity needed a clearer perception of the law in order to better understand God’s Holy character and standard of judgment. Jesus said, “You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Jesus’ life, lived in perfect obedience to the law, was the revelation of the Father’s character that we needed. His Spirit-powered teaching, preaching, and healing revealed the Father’s heart. Filled with the Spirit and free from the corrupting influence of sin, Jesus lived the “law of liberty” (James 1:25) as He loved His Father and fellow humans freely and without reserve. He could truly say, “I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts” (Psalms 119:45 NIV).

What we see in Jesus is what humanity was always meant to be—individuals living in harmony with God and His principles. God’s law gives us the parameters for all relationships. It is a law of love (Matthew 22:37–40) from a God who is



love (1 John 4:8) and governs by love. He desires to write His law of love on each individual heart so that we may become law-abiding citizens of His kingdom.

Perfect Obedience

God's desire was that the law would show the Israelites their need so that they would come to Him for mercy and help. He longed to write His law on their hearts and transform them so they would be prepared to take the good news of salvation to the world. God not only desired but required a perfect people. It is the same with His church today.

"The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been, —just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents, —perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness" (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 62).

How is this possible?

When we give our hearts to Him, God works in us, "both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13 NASB). We enter into the new covenant experience, obedience becomes a joy, and we naturally delight in His law (Psalm 40:8). We then have a healthy relationship with our God and His law. We are no longer trying to save ourselves but resting in the assurance that His perfect life record has replaced our sinful one.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Hebrews 8:10–11).

Is His law written on your heart? It can be today! Just invite God in with this simple prayer: Father, I give You my heart. Please take up residence in me. May your royal law of love and liberty rule my life. In the precious name of Jesus, Amen.

Jesus beckons, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

"The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 329).

By: John Cloud

NEXT ISSUE: THE SABBATH

IT IS ONE OF GOD'S GREATEST GIFTS TO US, YET WE OFTEN CAN'T WAIT FOR IT TO BE OVER. IN JULY, WE'LL LOOK AT THE BLESSINGS GOD WANTS TO GIVE US THROUGH THE SABBATH AND WHAT IT MEANS TO KEEP IT FROM THE HEART. PLUS: HOW TO ENJOY THE SABBATH WITH CHILDREN.

God's Law: A Burden? Or a Delight?

It all depends on how you look at it.
Five ways to develop a new perspective on God's Law.

1. **Get to know the Lawmaker:** When you know the Father, you will see that His love is also revealed in His written law. "God is love" (1 John 4:8).
2. **Repent: Don't adore God's law?** Ask for forgiveness and a new perspective. "Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Psalm 119: 18).
3. **Choose a new view:** Refuse to listen to Satan's insinuations that God's law is a burden. Instead, think of it as God's guide to joyful, fulfilling relationships. "Love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).
4. **Meditate on the goodness of the law:** Read Psalm 119 and memorize verses that talk about the law as a delight. "I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love" (Psalm 119:47).
5. **Ask for God's law to become a part of you:** Pray for the Holy Spirit to write God's law in your mind and heart. "I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

By: Shenalyn Page



Pastor Marshall McKenzie

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