

The Supreme IMPORTANCE of God's Spiritual Law

Mankind has always wanted to go his *own* way---to live the way that he himself deems fit. "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:2). "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes" (Prov. 16:2).

Yet, in living according to the dictates of his own reasoning, mankind has brought about untold suffering---to himself and to others. God's word says that "There is a way that *seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death"! (Prov. 16:25).

Rather than deciding for ourselves how to live, we are instructed in God's word to "Trust in the Lord with **all** your heart, and lean **not** on your own understanding; in *all* your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall **direct** your paths" (Prov. 3: 5-6). "*Direct* my steps **by Your word**," the Psalmist implores God (Ps. 119: 133). "Your **word** is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (verse 105).

Only God, in His supreme wisdom, knows the **way** of life that *leads* to peace, happiness, and prosperity. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 'For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways **higher** than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isa. 55:8-9).

Yes, God knows the way, and the Bible is God's *revelation* of that way of life. It is the revelation of the way of life that *God Himself*---and Jesus Christ---live. And it's the way that He commands **us** to live! Jesus Christ Himself said that man shall live "**BY** every word of God" (Luke 4:4). "Not My will, but **Yours**, be done," is the attitude that Christ had---and the attitude He expects *us* to have (Luke 22:42). God's desire is that we humble ourselves, and have such *deep respect* for His word that we virtually *tremble* when we read it! "But on this one will I look; on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who **trembles** at My word" (Isa. 66:2)

In telling us how to live, God gives us **laws** that He commands us to live by. The law being referred to is God's *spiritual* law. "The law *is spiritual*," said Paul (Rom. 7:14). But *what* law is Paul referring to as "spiritual"? The answer is found just a few verses earlier, where Paul says this in verse 7: "I would not have *known* sin [i.e., he would not have known 'what sin *was*' (NIV)], except *through* the law. For I would not have known covetousness [i.e., he wouldn't have known that covetousness was sinful] unless the **law** had said, you shall not covet." Which law says that "you shall not covet"? The Ten Commandments! So, the Ten Commandments is the law which Paul says is "spiritual." It is the law through which God tells us *how* to live. It is the law which **defines** sin.

"Sin **is** the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4 KJV). Whenever you transgress God's spiritual law, you have sinned! Yes, "**by** the law is the *knowledge* of sin" (Rom. 3:20) ---the knowledge of the right and wrong **way** of life!

The spiritual law---summarized by the Ten Commandments---is God's revelation of the **way** of life that *leads* to peace, happiness and prosperity. It's the way of life that Jesus Christ instructs us to live (Matt.7:21-23; 19:16-19).

No, we are **not** talking about the laws of rituals and animal sacrifices that God gave **temporarily** to Old Testament Israel. Nor are we speaking of the hundreds of detailed and burdensome laws that **humans**---under the name of Judaism---**added to** God's spiritual law. Rather, we're talking about the spiritual law, as summarized by the Ten Commandments. The law which tells us **how** to live. The law which **defines** sin (I John 3:4).

God's spiritual law *always has*---and *always will*---be in effect!

Consider what Herbert W. Armstrong had to say about God's spiritual law:

Notice how **like** God [the law] is!

The law is **GOOD** (Rom. 7:12). God is good.

The law is **HOLY** (Rom. 7:12). God is holy!

The law is **JUST** (Rom. 7:12) God is just!

The law is **SPIRITUAL** (Rom. 7:14) God is spiritual!

The law is **PERFECT** (Ps. 19:7). God is perfect!

The law---including all his Commandments---is immutable, **ETERNAL**, stands fast **FOREVER AND EVER** (Ps. 111:7-8). And God is eternal!

Of course---for the law is the very **character**, the very **nature**, of God! It is the **WILL** of God.¹

Jesus Christ said that "it is easier for heaven and earth to *pass away* than for one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17).

Yes, God's law is of *extreme* importance: "God **GAVE** His ONLY BEGOTTEN SON rather than compromise one iota with **HIS LAW!**"²

Aside from Christ's sacrifice and His living within us, there is absolutely *nothing* more important than God's spiritual law!!

Even in the **New** Testament, there are *many* scriptures which speak of God's law in a positive light and show its *vital importance*. Some examples of such scriptures are as follows:

Rom. 7:12, 22; Heb. 8:10; 10:16; Rom. 8:7; I John 3:4; Rom. 7:7; 2:13; 3:31; Matt. 5:17-19; 19:16-19; 7:21-23; 13:41-42; James 1:25; 2:24; Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 22:14-15; II John 6:1; I John 2:3-5; 3:22,24; 5:3; Rom. 8:4; Titus 1:16; I Cor. 7:19; II Peter 2:21; Matt. 15:3-4; 22:36-40; 23:23; Mark 7:8-9; 10:17-19; 12:28-31; Luke 1:6; 10:25-28; 16:17

So, it is obvious--- from these scriptures and others--- that even the **New** Testament places *much* emphasis on God's law!

Furthermore, it seems certain that the writers of the New Testament would have placed **even more** emphasis on God's law, if it weren't for the following facts:

(1) With the emphasis of God's law **already in** the *Old* Testament, the fact that Christians should obey God's spiritual law was a foregone conclusion! Accordingly, the *primary* purpose of the *New* Testament was to emphasize **Christ**---who had just come to earth as the prophesied Savior.

Yes, the *Old* Testament was already *filled* with emphasis on God's spiritual law, and we are certainly still to use the Old Testament *in addition to* the New Testament! For any who doubt that, consider the following:

That which we today call "the Old Testament," the early apostles respectfully referred to as "*the word of God*" (Acts 13:46). They referred to it as "*Scripture*" (II Tim. 3:15-16; II Peter 1:20-21). These "Scriptures" of the Old Testament were **not** considered "old" or "no longer applicable."

"The New Testament refers to the Old Testament about 250 times. You cannot accept the New Testament without recognizing the authority of the Old. The two don't contradict; they *complete* each other. The Bible is one book. It cannot be divided."³

"**ALL** scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine ['teaching,' NAS], for reproof, for correction, for *instruction in righteousness*" (II Tim. 3:16). "In this passage he [Paul] was referring to the **Old** Testament---because the *New* Testament hadn't even been fully written or canonized at that time. In verse 14, Paul instructed Timothy: '...from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings [the Old Testa-

ment] which are able to instruct you *for salvation* through faith in Christ Jesus' (II Tim. 3:14, 15). In Timothy's childhood there *was no* New Testament written---so Paul must have been speaking of the *Old Testament*." ⁴

Paul, at Rome, "explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them **concerning Jesus** from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets [i.e., **from the Old Testament**], from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23).

(2) Let's consider a second reason why God did not inspire the writers of the *New Testament* to emphasize His spiritual law *even more*. If anyone had a reason to **not** emphasize "law," it was the New Testament writers, living in an *overly legalistic society*! By the time of Christ, legalism had become *dominant* in Jewish society. The Jewish leaders had come to the point where they erroneously taught that the physical rituals and animal sacrifices of the law of Moses were a means of justification of past sins. Also, they placed *heavy burdens* on the people by having added hundreds of *man-made* religious laws **to** God's spiritual law. It was these *humanly* devised religious laws and traditions that were attacked by Christ and the apostles. Paul's argument throughout the New Testament was against the teaching of Judaism that salvation could be gained through rituals and sacrifices--and without faith in Christ.

Unlike the legalistic society of Christ's day, we today live in a society that has little concern about God, and whose rally cry is for individual freedom to live whatever "lifestyle" we choose. We today---**much more so** than those of Christ's day---greatly **need** to hear God's spiritual law regularly emphasized! And this is *especially* true, in light of the fact that churches all around us are teaching that God's law has been done away---or that it has nothing whatsoever to do with salvation!

In conclusion, God's spiritual law is of supreme importance to God---and it should, likewise, be of *supreme* importance in **our** lives!!

References:

1. Herbert W. Armstrong, "False Conversion!" *Plain Truth* magazine, Feb. 1982
2. Herbert W. Armstrong, *Plain Truth* magazine, March, 1977, p.34
3. Dibar Apartian, "Is the Old Testament Inspired?" *Good News* magazine, Dec. 1980
4. "Discover Your Bible," pp. 13-14 of article reprint series by Worldwide Church of God