

The Inadequacy of Law By Steve Bray

*[To see an explanation of the terms “zoe” and “psuche” used in this message at StudyingGodsWord.com.]

The Pharisees are an example of how it is possible to practice conservative holiness standards without actually being “right” in the heart. They were zealous for God’s laws, gave a tithe on all their income, regularly fasted and prayed, consistently practiced their special standards of dress and became dedicated leaders without ever knowing the righteousness that comes from God by faith. As Paul would say, “They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness {“His” life of holy love}, *and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*” (Rom. 10: 2-3)

We were created as vessels that God could use to display His glory. There is a righteousness in His nature that needs to become a part of our nature. The righteousness that is in Him and was revealed through Jesus can now be revealed through us by faith. Jesus assures us that those who hunger and thirst after this heavenly righteousness will be “filled.” (Matt. 5: 6) And yet, there are many who fall short of this life of promise.

Christians receive the gift of the Spirit at their new birth. But they are still like a seed. There is divine life planted within them, but there is still a covering that prevents it from being revealed. The life of God cannot rise up into a display of the Son’s heavenly righteousness until after the seed has been planted in the ground and the old covering has been lost.

This covering is made up of many things. But it is fundamentally the image that each individual develops through his own works. It includes self-produced righteousness. This old life continues to surround the new divine life and keep it hidden deep within the seed. It is only after the seed has been planted in the ground, and there has

been a breaking down and loss of the old image, that God's life of true righteousness is able to come forth in its full glory. In other words, the Lord cannot display His glory through those who are still living for their own glory.

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone {it cannot share with Christ in the fullness of His divine life}; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his {self-originated "psuche"} life will lose it, and he who hates his {"psuche"} life in this world will keep it {will keep his soul} for eternal {"zoe"} life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me {through this death, burial, and resurrection}; and where I am {in the heavenly "zoe" life}, *there My servant will be also*. If anyone serves Me {through the Spirit}, *him My Father will honor*. (John 12: 24-26)

When Adam separated himself from God, he was separated from the eternal life. It left him with an empty soul. Being separated from the life and identity that He had in God, he experienced an inner sense of nakedness. This feeling of nothingness is what has led to the natural inclination to put on a false covering. Because of the Fall, man now has a self-exalting form of life that naturally seeks to build up its self-image. It is this false image that needs to be removed before God can turn the vessel into a display of His life and glory.

Before God was able to give Adam a new covering, He had to remove the old covering that Adam had been put on. Similarly, it is required that He come to each one of us individually for the purpose of removing our old self-originated image. Only after this false covering has been removed, can He cover us with His life of true righteousness. We are now speaking of the heavenly Kingdom-life of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14: 17) This heavenly life comes directly from God through a supernatural work of His Spirit once there has been a loss of the "psuche" life.

The instructions that tell us to "put off the old man" are referring to this matter of putting off this old self-developed form of life—the "psuche" life. *Only when everything that is self-originated has been removed, can we put on the heavenly life of Jesus Christ*. "Whoever loses his {"psuche"} life will find it." (Matt. 16: 25) That is, we will find His Kingdom-life of perfect love which enables us to fulfill all the

righteous requirements found in His Sermon on the Mount. We can then do by nature what the law requires.

If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off...the old man {with his self-image}...and that you put on the new man {the divine life of Christ in bodily form} which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4: 21-24)

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity {the divine life that is shared within the Triune God} lives in bodily form, and you have been given {access to} fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. (Col. 2: 9-10 NIV)

God gives His Spirit to His children so they may “put to death” the old self-originated form of life that has its source in the works of the flesh. (Rom. 8: 13) And until we come to the place where we can honestly say, “I no longer live,” we cannot expect to have Christ living through us with His heavenly “zoe” life. (Gal. 2: 20) Once there is no longer an “I” to glory in the flesh, Christ will begin manifesting His Kingdom-life of righteousness and peace and joy through the vessel.

King Saul is still living in the hearts of many Christians. They do not believe that everything from their self-life is as bad as God makes it out to be. They recognize the need for doing away with their outward sins, but they insist that King Agag himself has some useful resources. And this is why the bleating of the old carnal nature continues to be heard in the background. Yes, these individuals can work hard through their own efforts to conform to high moral standards, as did the Pharisees, but there is still something within their inner nature that prevents Christ’s life of perfect love from being displayed.

Jesus requires His disciples to follow Him. It entails being emptied of everything that originates in self. And we need to say again with emphasis, it includes being emptied of self-originated righteousness. The righteousness that man produces is like filthy rags in God’s sight. It will inevitably fall short of the glory He intended to reveal through His children. God created man to be a mere vessel that He could fill with His own glory. But He will not reveal His glory through the

vessel until we have been emptied of the self-originated righteousness that man naturally glories in.

Jesus emptied Himself of His own glory when He came to live as Man. He did not do anything “out from” Himself. (John 5: 30; 8: 28) There was nothing self-originated in Him. He was living as the Last Adam, as God had originally intended for man to live. He lived as a mere vessel that His Father could use to display the righteousness that comes from heaven, through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. And it is in this sense that He asks us to follow Him. Once we have been emptied of our own glory, we will be in a place where He can fill the vessel with His life of true righteousness and holiness.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, *but made himself nothing* {becoming nothing in Himself}...he humbled himself and became obedient to death... *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place...* (Phil. 2: 5-7, 9 NIV)

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time... But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus {to be a vessel of His glory}, after you have suffered a while {in dying out to your old self-originated form of life}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you {in the Kingdom-life}. *To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.* (1 Pet. 5: 6, 10-11)

We are lifted into the life of heaven in direct proportion to how far we have sunk down into our nothingness and permitted God to become “all in all.” God cannot be everything in our life while we are still trying to be something. If He is to receive all the glory, He must be permitted to be the source of everything we do.

Jesus chose to live as a simple instrument in His Father’s hands. It permitted the Father to manifest His life and will through the Son. And we must choose to follow Him along this same course if we also want to be “honored” by the Father and lifted spiritually into the heavenly realms.

The apostle Paul, after learning about Jesus' way of life, decided to follow Him. He wanted to participate with God in the life that comes from heaven. He therefore chose to count "as loss" everything that had once made him great in the eyes of man—those human accomplishments that man naturally glories in. Because he wanted to be lifted by the power of the Spirit into the Presence of God, he fully submitted to the economy of God's kingdom. He knew that "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty...*to bring to nothing the things that are*, that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Cor. 1: 27-29) Once Paul became "nothing" in himself, he was in a position to be lifted into Christ's Kingdom-life and be filled with the righteousness that comes from God by faith.

For we are the circumcision {the ones who have had the self-originated flesh-life removed}, who worship God in the Spirit {live by the Spirit}, rejoice in Christ Jesus {for what "He" is doing}, *and have no confidence in the flesh*, although I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh {in the works that it can do}, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; *concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

But what things were gain to me {the things that could be worked out by my own efforts and look good in the eyes of man}, *these I have counted loss for Christ*. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of *the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord* {for an inward and experiential knowledge of His divine life}, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things {that I used to glory in and find my fulfillment from}, and count them as rubbish, *that I may gain Christ* {His heavenly life}...*not having my own righteousness, which is from the law* {from my self-produced efforts to correct my life and obey God's laws in my own sufficiency}, *but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith*; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection... (Phil. 3: 3-10)

Paul has shown us how to find the righteousness that comes from God by faith. Following the perfect example set by Jesus, he gave up

everything that had once made him great. Once this covering was lost and he had become nothing in himself, he was in a position to be honored by God and raised by the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit into the heavenly life of the Son.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live {the self-originated form of life had died}, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh {in a mortal body} *I live by faith in the Son of God...for if righteousness comes through the law* {by merely trying to keep laws}, *then Christ died in vain.* (Gal. 2: 20-21)

In contrast to following the examples of both Jesus and Paul, Christians in general develop their own reputation through a self-produced form of righteousness. While each denomination ends up with a slightly different set of standards, they still tend to hold up their own standard as the real “righteousness.” And while this self-produced righteousness enables them to receive honor from the people of their denomination, God does not honor them by lifting them spiritually into the reality {the conscious awareness} of His heavenly life. Consequently, they fall short of the true glory of God.

Determining the Source of our Righteousness

Self-produced righteousness has its source in the pride of life. It can therefore be offended. This is why people who live in self-produced righteousness inevitably stumble into sin when they are opposed. Something other than perfect love comes out of their mouth because there is still something other than perfect love in their heart. “For a tree is known by its fruit... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matt. 12: 33-34)

It is possible to live by many of God’s laws in a self-produced form of righteousness without having a pure nature of love that can endure “all things” with meekness, humility, and longsuffering patience. It is in this sense that we need to determine if our righteousness has its source in God or if it is something we have developed through our own efforts.

Love {the love that has its source in God} suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up...does

not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil...bears all things...endures all things. *Love never fails.* (1 Cor. 13: 4-8)

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. {In other words, put on Christ's life of righteousness.} (Col. 3: 12-14)

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return...but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Pet. 2: 21, 23)

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.* (Matt. 5: 44-45)

Those who are filled with Christ's Spirit naturally reveal the fruit of His Spirit. His love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control will continue to flow out of their heart like "rivers" of Living Water. (Gal. 5: 22-23) This steady flow of life from heaven makes it possible to consistently manifest His nature of holy love—the righteousness that comes from God by faith. "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all *goodness, righteousness, and truth.*" (Eph. 5: 9)

Jesus said we will find hypocrisy in those who produce their own righteousness. It is exposed by the way they judge others with a critical spirit concerning certain pet beliefs, while they neglect "the weightier matters of the law" such as "love and mercy." (Matt. 23: 23) Yes, they can be very adamant about certain laws, but their basic nature is contrary to perfect love. And we are afraid there is going to be a day when these people discover, to their own horror, how their lack of mercy, along with their critical and overbearing spirit, have put out some flickering wicks in weak Christians. They have actually turned them away from the true Christian faith. "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come {in a fallen world}, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" According to Jesus,

these legalistic offenders would have been better off tying a millstone around their neck and jumping into the ocean before they caused one of His little ones to stumble. (Matt. 18: 6-7)

James has clearly described the wisdom that comes down from heaven. (Jam. 3: 17) It comes from the life of Christ when He has become our “wisdom” and “righteousness.” *“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”* (v. 17) In other words, if these characteristics have not yet become an innate part of our inner nature, then we have to assume that we are still not sharing with Christ in the righteousness that comes from God by faith.

Self-produced righteousness, which has its source in the pride of life, will inevitably result in partiality, contentions and divisions. This form of life is nothing more than human politics. After various individuals and groups determine what they consider to be the right way to live, they then try to press their opinions onto others. It naturally results in the divisions and favoritism we now find in churches and nations. It is how “mere men” naturally act. “For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and *behaving like mere men?*” (1 Cor. 3: 3)

Those who receive the righteousness that comes from God by faith will no longer behave like “mere men.” Having lost their self-life, they are lifted by the power of God into His heavenly life where they become “perfect in one” with each other. (John 17: 22-23) These children of the Father bear His image of holy love in everything they do. They are “peaceable,” “gentle,” “willing to yield” and “full of mercy.” Their whole purpose in life is to lead others into the heavenly Kingdom-life that comes down from above. And they know it has nothing to do with self-produced righteousness.

Those who die to their own righteousness are in a place to live by the Spirit alone. It is by living through the Son, and sharing with Him in His eternal life of love, that we can all remain in harmony with God and with each other. It makes it possible to “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (1 Cor. 1: 10) And while our knowledge will tend to differ depending on our

spiritual growth, when we all die to our own righteousness and opinions, we can then be led by the Spirit into the same truth.

Therefore let us, as many as are mature {spiritually}, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you {when you are dead to your own opinions and give Him sufficient time}. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained {to God's life of heavenly love}, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. (Phil. 3: 15-16 NIV)

The Righteousness that Comes by Faith

Those who have truly received the righteousness that comes from God by faith recognize the heavenly source of their life. Because it becomes an *unfailing* “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” it is clearly recognized as supernatural. All credit therefore goes to God. These children of faith are never in a position to criticize others for falling short of the same heavenly standard of righteousness. Their desire is not to teach law, but to help others find the same supernatural life that comes down from above by faith.

We will never have the kind of childlike faith that is needed to be lifted spiritually into the heavenly realms while we are still living by a self-produced righteousness. This life of heaven can only be received as we live by absolute dependence upon God. “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted {in your thinking too} and become as {dependent} little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18: 3) This Kingdom-life will only be revealed in those who have died to the old self-originated form of life that was fostered on the world by Satan.

This will help us understand why Paul spoke of the foolishness of trying to become like Christ in His nature of perfect love through human efforts. The reader should prayerfully examine the following Scriptures to determine if this is not the reason why their own nature has remained separated from the “rivers” of Living Water that can

now well up into a continuous display of Christ's eternal life. (John 4: 14)

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from *the simplicity that is in Christ* {the way of faith}. (2 Cor. 11: 3-4)

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect {in holy love} by the flesh {through your own human efforts to be righteous}? (Gal. 3: 3)

You have become estranged from Christ {you have separated yourselves from the simplicity that is in Christ and the grace that would make you like Him in holy love}, you who attempt to be justified by law {by trying to make yourself right}; you have fallen from grace {the grace that imparts God's divine life of heavenly love}. For we {as Christians in this age of fulfillment} through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness *by faith*. (Gal. 5: 4-5)

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son {that we might live through Him}...that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled {NIV-fully met} in us who do not walk according to {or by} the flesh but according to {or by} the Spirit. (Rom. 8: 3-4)

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. *Against such there is no law* {there is no longer a need for law to produce the right actions}. (Gal. 5: 18, 22-23)

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness {through their own works}, have attained to righteousness, *even the righteousness of faith*; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness {through their own human efforts under law}, has not attained to the law of righteousness. {They have not become like God in holy love.} Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. (Rom. 9: 30-32)

God has explained through His Word the kind of righteousness He requires from His children. This includes fulfilling all the moral requirements revealed by Christ in His Sermon on the Mount. These teachings depict the standard of love that exists in His heavenly kingdom. *But human beings cannot produce this heavenly life.* Those who attempt to conform to these standards through their own efforts, and remain honest with themselves concerning every requirement, will inevitably experience the bondage described in Romans seven. In order to live as God requires, it is necessary to enter into a full participation with Christ in His divine nature.

Some people think that Christ came to do away with the law. Through their own self-deceit, they have set themselves free from the condemnation that would occur if they compared their life to Christ's teachings. But they are only deceiving themselves. Christ came for the very purpose of enabling us to fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law. (Rom. 8: 3-4) His life of holy love filling the soul becomes "the fulfillment of the law." (Rom. 13: 10)

Then there are those who make themselves look good on the outside and often think they are doing quite well. As Jesus described the Pharisees, they are able to clean up the outside of the cup. They make it look quite good. But there is still something wrong within their heart. This is why these human efforts to conform to outward standards are not sufficient for God. They remain like filthy rags in His sight. The Lord requires complete obedience to all of His kingdom teachings. These eternal spiritual laws involve standards that need to be supernaturally established within the heart through a work of grace, by faith. They cannot be established in us by any other means.

We should also note that those who still have a nature that continues to break even one of Christ's spiritual laws {including any law against love –such as partiality} remain guilty of breaking the whole law of His kingdom. In effect, because they have not had the Kingdom-life fully established within their heart, there is still something within their nature that continues to come into conflict with the life of perfect love that exists in Christ's eternal kingdom.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets {God's moral teachings}. I did not come to destroy *but to fulfill*... For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees {people who were fully devoted to making themselves appear righteous}, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5: 17, 20)

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.” (Matt. 5: 38-41)

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; *but if you show partiality* {which is a violation of perfect love}, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.* (Jam. 2: 8-10)

When the Living Word – the Eternal Son – is manifesting His life within our inner being, we can then do by nature what the law requires. For example, a bird does not require a written law to tell it to fly. It simply responds to its inward nature. We can live by the same simplicity when we are fully sharing with Christ in His divine nature. His unfailing love naturally fulfills all the requirements of the law.

Can we begin to see how showing “partiality” is sin and breaks the very essence of the law of the kingdom of God? It comes from a nature that is contrary to the nature of God. And yet, those who are still living according to the spirit of this world naturally show partiality. It inevitably flows out of their self-seeking nature.

The wisdom that comes from above, which is “without partiality,” is implanted within our heart and becomes an innate part of our new divine nature when Christ becomes our righteousness. It is not a matter of trying to conform to the law. The law is inadequate. *We need to be examining ourselves to see if we have permitted Christ to*

establish His undivided Kingdom-life within our heart so that we can do by nature what the law requires.

For where envy and self-seeking exist {along with its natural tendency toward partiality}, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, *without partiality* and without hypocrisy. (Jam. 3: 16-17)

The Way Up is Down

Enoch set the first example of how to be exalted into the heavenly realms. He is another Old Testament spiritual type recorded in the Scriptures to reveal a spiritual lesson to Christians in this age of fulfillment. We are told that Enoch “walked with God” and was taken up because “he was not.” (Gen. 5: 24) This was the same example set by Jesus. (Phil. 2: 5-8) Enoch was in a place to be lifted by the power of God once he had laid down his “psuche” life and had become nothing in himself. When there was nothing self-originated in him – nothing coming out from himself – he could be raptured up into the heavenly realms with God. Those who enter into this raptured state within the heavenly realms, enjoy His conscious presence as they share with Him in the spiritual blessings found in His spiritual life. (Eph. 1: 3)

Those who are still trying to be someone special through their own activities need to recognize this as the reason why they are not yet sharing with Christ in His heavenly life. God never permits this flesh-life to come into His Presence. Like Paul, you will need to count as loss your heredity, your schooling, your titles and all other accomplishments, your zeal, your righteousness, and everything else that you have used to create an image for yourself. Only then will you be in the place where you can come to “know {Christ} and the power of His resurrection.” (Phil. 3: 3-10) It brings you to the place where you too can be raptured spiritually into the heavenly realms. (1 Pet. 5: 6, Col. 3: 1-3)

We should also note that God cannot be deceived. He can see into the heart. And He will only reveal His eternal “zoe” life in those who have become nothing in themselves. You will need to come to the place

where you can honestly say, “I do nothing of Myself” (John 8: 28) and “I do not receive honor from men” (John 5: 41), before you can expect God to lift you spiritually into the heavenly realms with Him, where you can share with Him in His glory.

The self-originated form of life is what keeps people bound to the earth. It was when Jesus had reached the lowest place of nothingness that He could be exalted into the highest place in the heavenly realms. Similarly, it was because Enoch “was not” that God “took him.” God lifts us with His power into higher levels of spiritual life in direct proportion to how far we have sunk down into our nothingness. “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” (1 Pet. 5: 6)

God chastens and scourges His called-out children for the purpose of removing their independence and self-sufficiency. He needs to prepare them to die to their self-originated form of life. Those who learn from these lessons will have an opportunity to enter into the “walk of faith” that enables them to consistently receive the righteousness that comes from God.

For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives {into the heavenly realms}...that we may be partakers of *His* holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward *it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness* to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12: 6, 10-11)

Three Levels of Christian Experience

We do not want earnest believers to question their current relationship with the Lord. Paul wrote his epistles to Christians who were living far below their privilege. But they were still “brothers” in Christ. For example, he prayed that the Ephesian Christians would receive the “Spirit of wisdom and revelation” that would enable them to know Christ better. (Eph. 1: 17) The “riches” and the “power” that was available to them was far beyond what they had come to know. With this thought in mind, it may be helpful to point out three different levels of Christian experience. The apostle John describes these three different states in his first epistle. (1 John 1: 12-14)

We begin with the first level. He said, “I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.” This is a reference to new believers who have begun to look to the shed blood while still captive in Egypt. They are in a new state of credited righteousness that enables them to avoid the “death” that was still resting on the Egyptians. Believers in this state have been referred to as “servants” by John Wesley. Jesus, using a similar term, refers to them as slaves who have entered the household. But He also points out that they cannot remain captives to sin, as Paul depicts in Romans seven, and expect to go on living in the house of God forever. In effect, it is an Old Testament form of salvation, and they will need to receive the New Testament gift of the Holy Spirit that supplies power over sin if they hope to avoid falling away. It is not possible to find “life” while remaining in Egypt, which represents the world.

Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house {of God} forever, but a son {those who have overcome sin} abides forever. Therefore if the son makes you free {from sin}, you shall be free indeed. (John 8: 34-36)

The apostle John refers to the next level of Christian experience as a place where the believer overcomes both the temptations of the devil and sin. “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.” John Wesley refers to these overcoming Christians as “sons.” They represent the believers who have miraculously crossed the Red Sea and have gained a real victory over the devil and the world. While they came out of Egypt in fear, they find a deep inward peace with God after experiencing this miracle. They receive the gift of the Holy Spirit the moment they fully surrender to a Spirit-directed way of life. *Everyone who is born of the Spirit experiences a new hunger and thirst after righteousness.* It is representative of entering the wilderness testing period. They are no longer driven by a fear of the law, but are moved forward with a new desire to share with God in His life of righteousness. And these are the only ones who have the promise of being “filled” with God’s life of true righteousness. (Matt. 5: 6)

The apostle John refers to the final group of Christians as those who have come to know the eternal life of God. *“I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning.”* These are the believers who have counted “all things as loss” and have received an inward revelation of the heavenly “zoe” life. Once the wilderness testing period has had its opportunity to take the self-life out of them, they come to the place where they can be spiritually raptured into Christ’s heavenly presence. His “rivers” of Living Water begin to rise out of their inner being into a display of His everlasting life. (John 4: 14) They have truly come to know Him who is from the beginning—the Eternal Life.

We do not criticize those who are still at the earlier stages of grace. God is working in their lives. But, as the “young men” typically express to the “little children,” everyone in these first stages of grace need to press into the full salvation that is now available to everyone who believes. We can now become like God in His nature of holy love by sharing with Him in His eternal life.

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. (1 John 5: 11)

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called... (1 Tim. 6: 12)

Therefore you shall be perfect {in love}, as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5: 48)

Human Governments and God’s Government

The fallen world needs a system of laws to maintain some degree of order. People who still live by their own will {self-will – the essence of all sin} need something to restrain their selfish nature. God has therefore provided law, along with human governments, to restrain the evil that naturally rises out of people who live for themselves. “Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person {those who walk by the Spirit in holy love}, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners.” (1 Tim 1: 9) In other words, the law is needed to restrain people who are still living by the flesh.

Written laws are needed until Christ is able to establish His heavenly Kingdom-life of perfect love within the heart. Once the heart has become “one” with God in His life of love, there is a new divine nature that naturally fulfills His spiritual and moral laws. (Rom. 13: 10) The anointing with the Holy Spirit teaches the believer everything he needs to know to remain in an abiding relationship with Christ’s heavenly life. (1 John 2: 27) It is the Presence of Christ that actually produces the new life of “true righteousness and holiness.” (Eph. 4: 24) *“But if you are led by the Spirit {and living under His anointing}, you are not under law.”* (Gal. 5: 18) “He will guide you into all truth.” (John 16: 13) “For the fruit of the Spirit is in *all goodness, righteousness, and truth.*”

God will one day do away with the human governments He has used to maintain order in a carnal world. These human means are incapable of producing the perfect order that is required in God’s heavenly kingdom. The only governmental system that can produce perfect order is Christ’s Kingdom-life, which needs to be established within the heart. (John 17: 22-23) Once He is reigning without rival on His throne within the heart, His “rivers” of heavenly life will flow from under the throne and well up into a constant supply of “righteousness {perfect love} and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.
(Rev. 22: 1)

Many Christians, because they are still living by law, have a natural tendency to place their hope in human governments. They assume that better laws will make sinners into better people. And while these laws can be used to help restrain some forms of sin, these efforts do not change the inner nature of man. Turning people away from certain sinful actions and even leading them to live by high moral standards, does not produce the eternal Kingdom-life within the heart. It actually misleads them into thinking they are righteous. And yet, because they are not walking by the Spirit, they remain “sinners” on their way to hell. (Rom. 8: 13-14) As we have previously said, even if there is a tendency to still show partiality, it reveals a fallen nature that will continue to break the foundational laws of

the kingdom of God. (Jam. 2: 8-10) Full salvation entails changing the inward nature.

Because the people of the world are spiritually dead and laws themselves are unable to change their inner nature, Jesus specifically sent His disciples into the world to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. *Only when His Kingdom-life has been fully established within the heart can a person live as God truly requires.*

Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." (Mark 1: 14-15)

The law and the prophets {the means for constraining sin by written laws} were until John {the Baptist}. Since that time {since the end of the Old Testament dispensation} the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. (Luke 16: 16)

Let the dead {those who follow the systems of this world} bury their own dead, *but you go and preach the kingdom of God.* (Luke 9: 60)

There arises another Priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life... For on the one hand *there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect* {in holy love}... (Heb. 7: 15-19)

Therefore you shall be perfect {in holy love}, just as your Father is perfect. (Matt. 5: 48)

And the glory {the life of perfect love} which You {the Father} gave Me {the Son} I have given them, that they may be one {living as one in the Kingdom-life of holy love} just as We are one {in life and nature}: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one...that the love with which You loved me {perfect love} may be in them, and I in them. (John 17: 22-23, 26)

Even the American government, which did incorporate some godly principles within its constitution, is totally incapable of spreading the true kingdom of God. Even if it had adopted every moral law of the Old Testament, it would still need to be destroyed when Christ comes to establish His kingdom in the world. Its foundation, and the resulting structure, has been wrong from the very beginning.

There are also religions such as the Muslim religion which have incorporated laws from God's word. But because they are also mixed with other beliefs that are in conflict with God's perfect law of love, they remain in conflict with God. Even the best system of laws cannot produce the way of life in God's kingdom. While there is nothing wrong with the godly laws these various systems incorporate to correct human behavior, they do not result in a manifestation of Christ's eternal Kingdom-life.

The American government *has never* emphasized the "gospel of the kingdom of God." It knows nothing of the righteousness that comes from God by faith. Instead of teaching people to deny themselves and lose their "psuche" life so they may find Christ's "zoe" life in the heavenly realms, it encourages people to pursue happiness by developing a worldly form of life. *It is therefore in direct conflict with God's truth.* It also promotes universalism by giving approval to many different religions. Jesus clearly spoke of being the only way into eternal life with the Father. But the American government has never insisted that Christ is the only way. Like the government that Paul confronted in Athens, the American government has legalized the worship of many different gods.

At this point we should also note that God requires His children to remain submissive to government leaders. That is, they are to remain submissive up to the point where it would lead to a separation from the "light of life" found in God's kingdom. We have a duty to obey the laws of the land wherever God has placed us. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matt. 22: 21)

We also need to come to grips with the fact that God places some of His children in lands that have governments that are quite different than the democracy found in America. And if our form of Christianity

only fits in America, it is not real Christianity. The teachings of Christ fit in with every government, even if they are as wrong as the Roman government in the time of Christ or the Japanese government of World War Two. Of course, while we remain submissive, we never attach our loyalty to these corrupt human governments.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (Rom. 13: 1-2)

Some Christians can expect to be placed under governments that are much more corrupt than others. But it is irrelevant. As we live as pilgrims and strangers in this world, we can still show forth the glory of God wherever we live. If we are placed within a country that is very corrupt, there is still a need to show forth the light of God and draw poor lost sinners into His eternal Kingdom-life before it is too late. In fact, the more severe the circumstances and the greater the persecution, the more clearly Christ's eternal Kingdom-life can be revealed in our daily walk. It was after the Centurion had witnessed all that Christ went through on His way to the cross that this member of the Roman government began to recognize the light of eternal life in Him. Similarly, the first century church was most effective in the work of spreading the true gospel of the kingdom of God when persecution was the greatest.

While submitting to the laws of this world, let us also remember that we cannot "serve" two masters. (Matt. 6: 24) Jesus was very specific about this truth. There are only two basic systems of government. Since the governments of this world are in basic conflict with life in the kingdom of God, Christ will soon destroy them. We therefore need to choose today which one we will serve. Since God expects to receive "all" glory, we must avoid becoming involved in an idolatrous worship of human governments.

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight... But now My kingdom is not from here. (John 18: 36)

And in the days of these kings {these human governments} the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; *and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms*, and it shall stand forever. (Dan. 2: 44)

Christ comes to “break in pieces and consume” every other loyalty when He truly establishes His undivided kingdom within the heart. God becomes “all in all” wherever He reigns without rival. This is the true “heart purity” that makes it possible to consistently know the conscious presence of Christ’s Kingdom-life within the soul. “Blessed are the pure in heart {who have allowed Christ to “break in pieces and consume” every other loyalty}, for they shall see God {as an inner revelation of holy love}.” (Matt. 5: 8)

Most Christians have not yet come to personally “know” this inward kingdom of God within the heart. That is why they still become so emotionally excited over human governments. We can even find them exalting these governments in the very worship services that should be exclusively devoted to God, who is the “all in all.” (1 Cor. 15:28)

Much to God’s displeasure, His called-out people have always had a desire to have some other king over them. He has granted their requests because there is a need for some form of government to control their self-willed and self-originated way of life. But we are now living in the age of fulfillment when we need to permit Him to establish His undivided kingdom within our heart before it is too late. His reigning Presence will make the heart pure. And true “heart purity” does away with all other loyalties.

We are not implying that it would be disloyal to Christ to have employment within a human government or to even make use of these human governments. We are to live and work in the world, and we are to show due respect to the employers and the governments that have authority over us. Again, we are expected to pray for these leaders, even when they are evil, and be submissive to their laws that do not cause us to sin.

What we need to realize is that we are ambassadors of Christ in a foreign land. While we must honor the laws of the land, our one true citizenship is in the eternal kingdom of God. *Our only purpose for remaining here is to represent Christ and to turn individual souls from the kingdoms of this world to His eternal kingdom before their souls are lost forever.* It is because these governments are functioning “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air” that they will eventually need to be destroyed. (Eph. 2: 2) While they have been appointed by God as a means to restrain the worst outbreaks of human selfishness, they still remain under the sway of the devil. Let us therefore choose to die to the world and find our life from Christ alone.

We know that we are of God {because we have overcome this world}, and *the whole world* lies under the sway of the wicked one. (1 John 5: 19)

Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern {example}. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ {because they refuse to die to the world and its self-originated form of life}...who set their mind on earthly things. *For our citizenship is in heaven...* (Phil. 3: 17-19)

If then you were raised with Christ {had your citizenship changed}, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, at the right hand of God {on His throne in His heavenly Kingdom}. Set your mind on things above {where Christ reigns}, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3: 1-3)

Where is your citizenship? Worldly governments are for the spiritually dead. That is why we need to overcome the world and find the eternal Kingdom-life before leaving this world. The spiritually dead, who still have their loyalty to the governments of a foreign {this} world, cannot enter into the eternal kingdom of God.

Christ’s governmental system is far above the systems of this world. In fact, it is so strange to earthly thought processes that no one could

understand what Jesus was speaking about when He first came to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. Even His first disciples remained confused during their three years of intensive instruction. We also find them still confused after His resurrection and an additional forty days of instruction with the Spirit dwelling within them. (John 20: 21-22; Acts 1: 3, 6) It was not until He had established His Kingdom-life within their hearts on the Day of Pentecost that they could begin to understand what it was all about. And it is for this same reason that people of the world will not fully understand us when we begin telling them about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him {since we have our citizenship in another world}... And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, *just as He is pure.* (1 John 3: 1, 3)

All human governments naturally create division. It is not possible for all Christians to be “perfect in one” while loyalties to human governments exist within their heart. (John 17: 22-23) The people of various countries will have their differing opinions about who has the best government. These various opinions and earthly loyalties naturally lead to “envy, strife and divisions.” And because it results in “partiality,” it also results in a breaking of the fundamental laws of the kingdom of God. (Jam. 2: 9-10) It reveals how the people are still living like “mere men” under the power of a carnal nature. (1 Cor. 3:3) “For there is no partiality with God.” (Rom. 2: 11)

We also acknowledge that Christ Himself has come to cause a division between light and darkness. He intends to separate people from this world system and draw them into His eternal kingdom where everyone becomes perfect in one. But He cannot do this while people remain attached to the ways of this world.

Nothing reveals this carnality more than patriotism. If a member of another government finds himself in the middle of a lustful call to patriotism, which is a gross display of “partiality,” he will inevitably sense that he is no longer “one” with the group—even if it takes place in a church setting! May God help everyone to see how feeding the

“psuche” life on the evil food of partiality strengthens the “pride of life.”

The God-given truth that has been incorporated into laws will never pass away. However, the way of living by law, including the Old Testament governmental system must pass away before it is possible to find the heavenly life that makes everyone “perfect in one.” *The presence of this Kingdom-life within our eternal soul is our only hope for revealing the true glory of God, and proving to the world that Christ is the one and only true Savior.*

For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect. (Heb. 7: 18-19)

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one {sharing in the same Kingdom-life of holy love}, and that the world may know that You have sent Me {as the true Messiah who has the power to set people free from the world – with all of its self-sufficient and independent ways, the flesh – with all of its opinions and self-seeking ways, and the devil – and all of his lies}... (John 17: 22-23)