Grace in the Law

On attaching the head to the body
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Pauline Holmes, PhD

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Introduction

Who needs grace unless they are under the Law?

We’re under grace now, we’re not under the Law.¹ This nonsense statement is spewed out only too often in the Christian church. It is typically accompanied by a recitation of misapplied New Testament verses, particularly ones that appear to contradict or reject the Law God gave Moses. One thing is sure: anyone who makes this statement lacks an understanding of grace, the Law, the New Testament, and Scripture. The truth is that “Law versus grace” is a contradiction in terms. Instead of wanting to think the Law obsolete, we should be comforted by the fact that Jesus said it will remain in effect “…Till heaven and earth pass” (Matthew 5:18).²

Why we cannot do without the Law

Grace is in the Law, not separate from the Law. In fact, the only place where a person can find grace (that is, the promise of unmerited, saving favor from God) is in the Law God gave to Moses. Salvation is a gift from God. There is every reason to cling to the Law because therein is our only hope of escaping the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20; 20:14).³ The fire is the final destination of all who are not pure in thought, word and deed twenty four/seven, i.e., me, you, and everyone else. The truth underlying all religions is that the consequence of human imperfection, i.e., sin, is separation from God, meaning spiritual

¹ Capitalization of the word “law” is used to denote the entire Law God gave to Moses, found in the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch or Torah. The purpose of the present work is to show that the Law God gave to Moses has two aspects: judgment and mercy, or prosecution and defense.

² All quotes are from the King James Bible, standard edition.
death. Only the Bible offers a viable solution: perfection by proxy. God will impute His own purity to humans who claim Jesus, the unblemished blood sacrifice He made to pay the penalty for human sin. The God-given grace contract is our only means of escape from the terrible fate lying ahead.

**Why this fate?**

How can this fate exist? Because 1. God is pure, holy\(^4\) and undefiled; 2. humans are impure, unholy and defiled; and 3. the two cannot mix; purity is an absolute; it does not mix with impurity. This is the dilemma. In our natural state, we impure humans are separated from a pure and holy God. However, only if we become as perfect as God, which is impossible through our own efforts, can we escape the Lake of Fire and have eternal life.

**The good news**

The good news is that God has remedied the situation at great cost to Himself. Grace, found only in the Law, is God’s commitment to accept—and eventually provide—the death of an unblemished substitute that pays the penalty on our behalf, enabling us to connect with Him and escape the Lake of Fire. Humans are saved from damnation and reconciled with God if they take Him up on His offer, which is a free gift stemming from His love for us. All we need do is claim coverage of the death of Christ. God will then impute to us the total purity of His Son. He will look at us through the lens of Christ’s perfection. This is our only hope. In Leviticus 17:11, God says:

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\(^1\) We speak of hell and the Lake of fire interchangeably in this book. The word “hell” here is translated from *Gehenna* in the Hebrew; the place of endless burning, or lake of fire. In some other places in the Bible, “hell” is translated from the Greek *Hades*, or the Hebrew *Sheol*, a temporary place for the dead existing until Judgment Day, said in Rev 20:14 to be destined for destruction in the Lake of Fire.

\(^4\) “Holy” means “separated.” Once people gain salvation, they are no longer separated *from* God, but separated *to* Him, as sheep in a flock with a shepherd. Within that flock, however, they continue to be dumb and errant, but less so over time if they keep looking at Him.
“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

If humans do not take God up on his offer? They will drop into the fire. This does not make God happy; He has no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23). He gives everyone a chance but He lets rebels go. What about those who do not hear the gospel before they leave this world? Is there one last chance on Judgment Day when Christ appears before the woken dead? We are not told. What we do know is that it behooves us to get the gospel message out. That is what loving our neighbor truly means.

What is Scripture?

It is no trivial matter that, for present purposes, “Scripture” refers to what Jesus and Paul mean by the term, which is different from what most contemporary Christians mean. When Jesus refers to “Scripture” (Luke 4:21), it is basic and foundational, the “law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12), in what we now call the “Old Testament.” Jesus’ “law” is the Pentateuch, the same as Judaism’s Torah, the first five books of the Bible known as the Law God gave to Moses. The “prophets” are writers of the prophecies found throughout the Old Testament, from Genesis on. If the Old Testament were irrelevant for Christians, Jesus would not have quoted from it so often (Matthew 5:7; 5:18; 12:5; 22:36; 22:40).

All the epistles in the New Testament are based on the Law and the Old Testament prophecies. Nowhere do the writers express the intention that they take pre-eminence over or be treated as basic, foundational teaching. This is supported by Luke’s commendation of the Berean Jews, who daily checked Paul’s claims against Scripture (Acts 17:11). The tragedy is that most
Christians think Scripture is only the New Testament.5 The church has been knocked off its true foundation, which is the Law. This has paved the way for a damaging heresy that keeps people on the road to damnation: the doctrine of perfectionism. This doctrine is not new, but humans are as easily caught by it now as they were in the Garden of Eden when Satan said:

“ye shall be as gods; knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5)

and:

“ye shall not surely die” (Gen 3:4).

**Grace versus the heretical doctrine of perfectionism**

Sadly, the Christian church is hobbled by this doctrine. As the chart on page 13 shows, perfectionist doctrine has two branches. On the right is merciless legalism, or law with no grace; and on the left is liberalism/antinomianism,6 or grace with no law. The

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5 If “Scripture” is the Word of God through the mouth of man, we are on safest ground when we define it as any segments of the Bible where the words are directly from God. This would have to include not only the Law and Old Testament prophecies but also the four gospels and the book of Revelation, which contain direct quotes from God and are therefore sacred writings that are authoritative and inviolable. Jesus Christ was careful to point to the authority of the Law and prophets, which was also presumably His creation as the Word of God (John 1:1-5, 14). In his book, *The Law and the Gospel* (P and R publishers of Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1996), Ernest C. Reisinger mentions Dr. Zachaeus Ersinius’ statement in the Heidelberg Catechism that agrees with the position that Scripture should include only the Old Testament and the four gospels.

Tradition of the church seems to be the major basis for considering New Testament epistles as sacred writings. However, Jesus castigated certain religious rulers, telling them that they were voiding the Word of God by their traditions. The writers of the epistles clearly make statements consistent with Scripture. However, they do not claim to be rewriting the Law, which is the most important aspect of God’s Word. The epistles are mostly editorialization and commentary on “the law and prophets.”

6 The terms “left” and “right” wing are not used in a political sense in this book. They are used to denote perfectionist deviations from the doctrine of grace. By the way, “liberalism” is a misnomer; superficial tolerance masks the kiss of spiritual death and hell.
first epistle of John was written to repudiate perfectionism, yet this heresy continues to plague Christianity even today.\textsuperscript{7} Few people realize they are caught up in it. Other heresies have entered the picture to shore up perfectionism in the Christian church. Two major ones are dispensationalism (Chapter One) and rejection of the Lake of Fire (Chapter Two). These heresies are tools that Satan uses to undermine the warning and assurance God gave us in His Word.

\textbf{False religions}

There is nothing unusual about a law without grace, or condemnation without mercy. All religions have a law that says sin,\textsuperscript{8} or falling short of perfection, separates humans from the deity, destining them for some form of eternal or recurring punishment. This is a universal, immutable law, central to the Bible, the Koran, traditional Buddhism, Hinduism, and on and on. The very universality of the \textit{sin=death/hell equation}\textsuperscript{9} implies it is inborn, inherent in the human psyche. The stated goal of all religions is to bridge this gap. All aspire to reconcile humans with the deity and end spiritual separation with its black eternal consequence. Christ alone achieves this on our behalf.

\textbf{Grace only in the Bible:}

The Bible is the \textit{only} place where humans are offered grace, or mercy, attached to this universal law. Says Moses, curiously anticipating the right and left wing heresies (Deuteronomy 5:32):

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{7}A 1997 book by Bruce Bawer called \textit{Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity}, Three Rivers Press, points out this schism in the Christian church. However, the writer makes the mistake of not affirming that grace is found in the Law.

\textsuperscript{8}The Hebrew word for sin is “hattath,” a term taken from archery, literally meaning “to miss the mark,” or “fall short.” The term goes beyond moral judgment into every facet of human existence.

\textsuperscript{9}The expression “\textit{sin=death/hell equation}” is used to refer to the indictment in Part One of the Law, unconscious knowledge that is the root cause of existential guilt, the apparently inborn sense of deserving eternal punishment.
\end{flushright}
“Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”

On the right: merciless legalism
Right wing perfectionism has no mercy, no salvation by grace. It says: *we’re under the Law, we must comply with it perfectly to escape eternal punishment, and we can do it if we try hard enough.* It tells humans the lie that they can bridge the gap and reach sinlessness through their own efforts. This is a totally impossible and futile quest. Only God is perfect.

Some religions bring in the notion of reincarnation because they are aware that cleansing by ordinary humans is unobtainable in one lifetime. The problem is that human performance will always fall short of perfection no matter how many of those fabled incarnations might occur.

On the left: liberalism/antinomianism
The left wing of the doctrine of perfectionism also has no mercy. It deceives humans that they are already perfect. Therefore they do not need mercy, nor should they strive to become pure. The issue is to recognize the deity within them: the “you are god” idea. They learn that imperfection is only an illusion, as is the guilt-inducing moral code with which they function. Therefore, they are as gods, certainly not under any law.

“Liberalism” comes from the Latin word *liber* meaning “free.” The liberal movement in the Protestant church advocates an interpretation of the Bible free from authoritarianism. Its cousin, “antinomianism,” comes from the Greek word *antinomia*: “anti” means “against,” and “nomos” means “law,” so it literally means “against any law.” Much of today’s Christian church rejects the notion of being under any kind of law but claims to be under grace, not realizing the contradiction in this.
**Differences between perfectionism and grace**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Doctrine of perfectionism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Doctrine of grace</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thou shalt be as gods</td>
<td>Forgiven sinners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lie, in many forms</td>
<td>The only truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human perfection is possible</td>
<td>Imputed human perfection, only via Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through human efforts (the lie)</td>
<td>God-given Law containing judgment <em>and</em> mercy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either judgment with no mercy</td>
<td>Provides closure, frees from existential guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or denial of law</td>
<td>Good news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No closure, deepens existential guilt</td>
<td>Only to be found in the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad news</td>
<td>Appeals to true sense of doom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underlies all existential belief systems outside the Bible</td>
<td>Offers humans the right to claim the perfection of Christ as genuine defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals to pride</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Offers only massive psychological defense: denial, repression, dissociation, and two major types of **pseudo-atonement:**

1. good deeds, pious rituals
2. suffering, self-punishment

**Left and right wings of the doctrine of perfectionism:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Antinomian left wing</strong></th>
<th><strong>Merciless right wing</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism; no law</td>
<td>Performance-based merciless legalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular humanism,</td>
<td>All non-Christian fundamentalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zen, New Age,</td>
<td>Merciless Christian fundamentalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Christianity</td>
<td>Judgment w/o mercy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No judgment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are perfect now, just recognize it in yourself

You can attain sinlessness through your own efforts
An unbiased reading of the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, shows us there is one consistent theme, one merciful Law, offering a God-given, undeserved rescue from eternal damnation.

**Grace in the Law**

The main features of grace in the Law are shown on the upper right hand side of the chart on page 13. Grace is vastly different from the designations of perfectionism shown on the upper left hand and in the lower half of the chart. Grace is from God; everything else is man-made.

In the Law, all humans are indicted as sinners destined for the lake of fire, but God offers mercy, or grace, i.e., freedom from damnation in the form of God-given “bail.” The bad news is trumped by the good news, i.e., the gospel. Grace is irrelevant without the Law. Who needs bail if there is no sentence? If you abolish the Law, you also abolish any need for grace.

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10 There are various definitions of grace in Webster’s dictionary, some theological and some non-theological. The ones of interest at present are the theological ones. The most profound theological meaning of grace is the first definition given in Webster: “unmerited love and favor of God toward mankind.” The most important sense of that unmerited favor operates on the eternal level. It is the gift of salvation from hell. Other theological meanings of grace concern worldly gifts from God to man only affecting this lifetime. This would include the gift of virtue, or help, or some special favor. However, this theological conclusion is not supported in the writings from which it is extracted. It is at best speculative, possibly derived from the episode where Paul asks to have his thorn in the flesh removed and God says: ‘My grace is sufficient unto thee’ (2 Corinthians 12:9). Theologians may have mistakenly developed this notion of grace as a special anointing to allow Paul to withstand the buffeting of Satan. However, it is evident from a comprehensive reading of Paul’s letters that he was dealing with sin, probably sexual lust and coveting. Only in this context does the true meaning of grace, as unmerited mercy and forgiveness, make sense. This conclusion is supported by Paul’s recognition that this thorn was meant to keep him humble and from exalting himself above others.

11 The word “gospel,” translated from the Greek word *euaggelion*, from which we get the word “evangelize,” means good news.
Toxic religion: merciless legalism versus grace-filled legalism

If you are just skimming down these first few pages you might get the wrong idea. Many think that legalism means condemnation with no mercy, but laws can defend as well as prosecute. In the Law God gave Moses,\(^\text{12}\) mercy trumps condemnation. Few realize that the Law is our ultimate defense.

The world is full of merciless, toxic religion but the Bible is the one place it does not exist. The God of the Bible is unique. Nothing outside of God’s Word makes a total gift of mercy; He alone allows humans to cover themselves with His own perfection in the form of the shed blood of Jesus, sinless like His Father. Jesus is represented by all the sin, trespass and peace offerings in the Law (book of Leviticus). God committed Himself to forgive those who made these offerings.

All other creeds fall under perfectionism, a poisonous doctrine that keeps humans on the road to hell and drives them ever deeper into guilt, anxiety, desperation, hopelessness and rage. They have to employ massive amounts of psychological defense to deceive themselves that they come anywhere near the goal of perfection through their own very limited means. It would mean pure thoughts and actions all the time, even in dreams. Perfectionism forces a person into increasing denial, repression and worsening guilt, leading to pathological patterns of thought and behavior. This is why the doctrine of perfection is bad for mental health—but much worse, it keeps humans on the road to damnation.

Inborn existential guilt

A war is present in the human psyche before toxic religion comes along. Perfectionist doctrine is not to blame for the battle,

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\(^{12}\) By the way, it is the Law God gave to Moses, not something Moses made up himself. This book will show that the wonderful Law is the only place humans can escape eternal damnation.
despite what some popular psychological theorists claim, especially when they want to attack and misconstrue the Bible. False doctrine merely fans flames of coals already burning (in the case of merciless legalism), or tries to cover those coals, a process that actually adds more fuel to the fire (liberalism or antinomianism).

The sin=death/hell equation
Our lot since the Fall has been prosecution by an inborn conscience that has the sin=death/hell equation burned into it. Guilt is a sense of deserving punishment; humans are born with a specific kind we call “existential guilt,” the sense of deserving eternal punishment, not that burning in the fire necessarily lasts forever. Most will probably burn fast, as “chaff” (Matthew 3:12). However, separation from God—and spiritual death—will be permanent.

The world’s accusations and indictments sting us inside because our hearts are born with the message: 1., I must be sinless to be reconciled with or connected to God, and 2., only by being connected to God can I avoid the Lake of Fire. Deep down I know I am not pure and sinless, nor can I ever reach that state by my own efforts. That means I’m doomed.

The mental health profession would have us see this guilt coming from faulty parenting, giving us reason to blame and dishonor our parents. To be sure, there are no perfect parents, but our parents are not the source of existential guilt. Nor is it due to any aspect of childhood programming or a chemical imbalance in the brain. It comes from an inborn sense of unworthiness: the sin=death/hell equation.¹³

¹³ It is highly likely that the sin=death/hell equation entered the human psyche, and even the genetic code, when our forefathers ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, i.e., ingested the Law. The same means was used by certain prophets, who ate scrolls to take in a message from God.
Related heresies: 1. dispensationalism

Notice that liberals who claim they are under grace now and not under law are implying that two different systems have been in place: a time of law and a time of grace. This means they buy both sides of perfectionism, i.e., they accept antinomianism and merciless legalism. How? They see them as having been in force at different times. This means that a third heresy exists: dispensationalism, which says that God made fundamentally different salvation contracts over time, moving from merciless legalism to antinomianism. This is wrong. God made one basic covenant that has not changed from the beginning. It is expressed from Genesis all the way through Christ.

Related heresies: 2. the disappearance of hell

The modern Christian church has managed to do away with the very idea of the Lake of Fire. In fact, the church increasingly denies that anything bad lurks on the other side of death.

Right wingers say: Jesus came to make us better people and save us from committing sins so we can avoid hell, if there is one. Left wingers say: Jesus came to help us see how good we are. A loving God would never let anyone go to hell.

As to Jesus coming to make us better people, well, salvation does initiate a transformation in our hearts, but humans never become sinless. And He certainly did not come to show us how good we are. Sinless Jesus came to be the essential blood atonement spelled out in Leviticus. He died in our place, taking on our punishment in order that God would impute to us his sinlessness. The human race would be damned eternally if it were not for the shed blood of Christ. When we claim Christ as our cover, God imputes, or attributes, to us his perfection, and we become holy, that is, we are separated into his flock. Meanwhile, we remain sinners, but in a state of forgiveness.
Two parts to the Law

Few Christians are aware that the Law has always had two very distinct parts, or functions. For present purposes, let us call these Part One and Part Two, or condemnation versus mercy, prosecution versus defense. The two parts do not correspond to the Old and New Testaments, but run side-by-side all the way through the Bible. The distinction between Parts One and Two is very, very important.

Part One of the Law: the moral code defining sin and punishment

Part One of the Law is an all-encompassing focus on man’s relations with God and other men. It is a code of behavior and emotion that at best can only be partially executed by humans. According to Jesus, the entire Law (Part One and Part Two) will be in effect “till heaven and earth pass” (Matthew 5:18). The Law says all sin, no matter how minor, is punished by death, i.e., spiritual death, total separation from God leading to the Lake of Fire after physical death. Before the Fall, there was only one rule—not eating the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. After the Fall, the mandate went from one statute to more than six hundred, from one prohibition to a locked cage applying to every ungodly act, thought and emotion. However, the good news is that in Christ, God hands us the key that lets us out of the cage.

It has always been utterly impossible for us to keep Part One with its many codes applying to thought and behavior. Even if humans could wipe themselves perfectly clean and purify their minds and actions at any point in life, which is a million miles from being a practical possibility, any previous infringement, even a minor one, would still doom them. The record would have to be clean from start to finish. Says Ezekiel (33:13):
“...If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.”

The New Testament writer, James, picks up on this:

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 1:10).

Nothing short of perfection is acceptable, and yet the Law’s exacting regulation pervades every nook and cranny of human functioning so thoroughly that humans cannot be other than law-breakers, or sinners.\(^\text{14}\)

**The sin=death/hell equation: eternal separation from God**

Should not God excuse us as long as He sees us more-or-less trying? Well, the problem is that the standard is perfection. As we said earlier, God is pure, holy and undefiled but humans are the opposite. Before the Fall, they were undefiled in that they never disobeyed God, they did not listen to any other authority than Him. In the Garden of Eden, the one rule was an ordinance from God that seems easy enough to keep. It was to refrain from eating the fruit of a particular tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God said:

“For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

However, the first humans listened to the serpent, an authority other than God, ate the fruit, and were evicted from the Garden. Now they were defiled, severed from God and cut off from the Tree of Life. They had gone from being under a law they could

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\(^{14}\) The Hebrew word for “sin” is *hattath*, a term taken from archery meaning “to miss the mark” or “fall short.” It is a very broad term with far more than a moral connotation.
keep to a Law nobody but God could keep. They knew what constituted good and evil but were unable to do good and avoid evil. There was no way back through human means.

**Note:** The connection between sin and eternal separation from God is explicit in only a few places in Scripture after the account in Genesis. The following quote is from Ezekiel:

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

Paul makes several references to the sin/death connection he found in Scripture:

“For the wage of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23); “by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Romans 5:18); and “sin hath reigned unto death.” (Romans 5:21).

This death is separation from God, not just physical death. Adam and Eve did not die in body the day they ate the forbidden fruit. They were spiritually naked, meaning their connection with God was broken. The entire Creation was now in a state of defilement awaiting destruction. All humans since then have been under a Law (Part One) that is impossible for us not to break. The tiniest sin, such as a selfish thought, puts us on the wrong side of the Law. Our sin nature has been present since conception, putting us in a state of spiritual death that leads to physical death, barred from the Tree of Life, destined for the Lake of Fire. Only total purity from the moment of conception would keep us out of the fire. A single wicked thought *in utero* or in a dream dams us. Here or there we hit the mark, but those drops in the bucket are not enough to save us.

**Part Two of the Law: mercy**

There would be is no peace of mind under a god who has an impossible standard and forces anyone who does not reach it to suffer eternal damnation. Sadly, a growing number of
misinformed people have the impression the God of the Bible is this way. But He is the only One who is not; He offers mercy in the Law, but anyone who rejects His mercy is in big trouble.

What we call “Part Two” of the Law is God’s gift of a way out for humans. God offers mercy in the substitutionary blood atonement covenant. The good news is that the Law has always given humans a way out of eternal damnation. It states that God will accept a blood sacrifice in lieu of human spiritual death. He commands us to claim His gift of a proxy payment of the penalty for human sin. Part Two speaks of Christ, God in human form, who made the essential blood payment Himself on our behalf. God has given us the payment; all we need do is claim it. The blood of Jesus on the altar of Calvary is necessary and sufficient to atone for the sins of humanity, and it is a total gift.

**Paraphrase of the message of Part Two**

“Since you can’t do everything perfectly, I will give you a way out. Only death pays the penalty, but I will accept the death of a substitute in your place. Not only that, I will provide the death so you are free to claim it. You, yourself, have nothing you can offer to escape eternal darkness. The payment must come from One who is pure and sinless. To pay for infinite amounts of sin, the blood must be infinite and pure. Therefore, it must be my own blood. However, I will allow the blood of sheep and other clean animals to take my place until I send a form of myself to die for you. This substitute death is your only hope and it is a gift. It is yours; all you need do is claim it. Although you still face physical death as part of the cursed Creation, you are spiritually connected to me when you come under the cover of that blood. You will escape eternal punishment and have a bodily resurrection, never facing death again. Moreover, I command you to claim this gift of salvation because I love you.”

15 God commands the Israelites to observe the annual Day of Atonement and to keep the statutes regarding payment for sin (Exodus 30). This shows He wants us saved, He wants us to be justified, to have eternal life in heaven.
Proof of God’s love
What better proof is there of God’s love for humans than that He went to such a great length to save us and that He commands us to be saved? As corrupt as we humans are, God wants us to be with Him forever. Love must be the reason because He certainly does not need us. The pinnacle of His love is provision of the costly blood ransom, the blood of Jesus that buys us back from death into life.

The good news
God worked within the Law to rescue humans. He commits Himself in the Law to forgive sin when humans approach Him offering the blood of a slain substitute for themselves (e.g. Leviticus 4:20; 17:11). Humans are saved through the substitutionary blood atonement covenant. God provides numerous references throughout Scripture—some more veiled than others—to a sacrifice He himself will provide (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 53). This enables us to recognize Christ as the complete, final blood offering to which all the animal sacrifices point. The good news, or gospel, is the announcement of the physical arrival of God’s gift of that total payment. He sent a form of Himself to pay the penalty for human sin, allowing His errant children to claim the death of sinless Christ and gain perfection by proxy.

This is our only hope. All the other doctrines are perfectionist. They tell humans lies, either that they are not sinners or that they can eliminate sin in themselves, a human impossibility. There is no escape unless we come under the imputed purity of Christ,16 God in human form.

If I reject the Law, I lose the pardon. God promises forgiveness in the Law at the existential level. His mercy is the most

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16“Imputed” perfection means God commits himself to look at humans as if they were as perfect as Christ.
important and essential aspect of the Law. Part Two of the Law defends us against the prosecution in Part One, providing a way to escape separation from God.

Reconciliation with God through Christ gives us the thrilling prospect of eternal life in heaven instead of burning in the Lake of Fire. There will be life in a new body that will never die, and we can be sure eternity will not be boring, despite the fears of many. As for the rest of our days in this fallen world, there will be fellowship with the One who forgives, comforts, supports and fights for us. Peace of mind and psychological integrity come out of the assurance of having escaped the Lake of Fire and, although still having to go through physical death, having eternal life with God to look forward to.

**Ease of obtaining forgiveness**

God made it easy for humans to be saved. The act of being sprinkled by the priest with the shed blood of a sacrificed substitute for the sinner in Old Testament times was itself doable and straightforward. The same rule that God gave to Moses applies now. The difference is that now the acceptable payment is the blood of Christ. This is certainly easier than continual physical offerings of lambs from the sinner’s own flock, a form of credit awaiting Christ. There is no way any human has ever kept Part One of the Law. Not so with Part Two. It is something we humans can do: *claim the blood of Christ and be forgiven for falling short of perfection.*

Our depraved nature requires that we continually wash in that blood. God’s Word highlights our unending corruption through the commandment for all Israel to observe the annual Day of Atonement, the occasion on which He forgave all sins for the past year (Leviticus 16). Nobody was expected to stop being a

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17 This is not, however, a license to sin. To think that way means a person has not grasped the essence of grace.
sinner. Other than Christ, God in human form, even the most pure regular human is inherently corrupt, under indictment for sin, facing the hell penalty outside of the God-given means of atonement.

**Summary of Parts One and Two of the Law**

The Law has two parts, or functions. What we call **Part One** is a recipe for good behavior which also specifies punishments. It defines sin and condemns all who fall short to burning in the Lake of Fire. **Part Two** spells out a God-given way for humans to pay the penalty for sin without going to the fire. Part One condemns humans, Part Two frees them from condemnation.

Part One is not optional; all humans are under it whether they like it or not. Outside of knowing and claiming Christ, humans are stuck, born with Part One in their hearts but only having inklings of Part Two. God has put humans in the position of having to go to Him for mercy, and for information about it. This makes sense; only the One who wrote the Law can offer mercy. He wants us to turn to Him. It is essential that humans digest the fact that the Law is ultimately *not* about prosecution but about defense.

**“It’s unfair:” the difference between justice and mercy**

Many think it unfair for humans to suffer. This can lead them to revolt against the concept of a punishing God. So let us consider the natural opposition between justice and mercy. Justice is the administration of the Law. God would be inconsistent if he did not uphold the Law; He would not be just if he let us off the hook without payment. This is where His mercy comes in: since we, ourselves, cannot pay and escape hell, God has given us Christ as our payment. It was a bad trade for Jesus: we got the mercy; he got death, our punishment.¹⁸ He was

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¹⁸ Did Christ also enter hell on our behalf? If so, it was not to burn. As part of the trinity He is God; fire cannot touch Him because God Himself is a “consuming
willing to suffer the ultimate injustice on our behalf—only out of love for us. That knowledge ought to make us stop whining about all the injustices we suffer in this world.

The prophet Isaiah talks of Christ as deliverer of both justice and mercy. Isaiah 63 pictures His return in vengeance; Isaiah 53 describes Him as the suffering servant brought as a lamb to the slaughter. As both judge and savior He is the embodiment of both parts of the Law.

The irony: the law of Paul

There is a huge irony in the fact that many of the very same Christians who claim they are under grace and not under the Law put themselves in bondage to Paul. Out of one side of their mouths the say they are not under the Law. Out of the other side they unwittingly become merciless legalists under the “law of Paul.” If they quote from the Bible at all, it is from Paul. They focus on the things Paul tells his audience to do, as if the accomplishment of such acts is essential to salvation. What is more, they are strangely blind to Paul’s teachings that point out justification by faith in the blood of Christ alone.

The “law of Paul” that we find in his epistles, particularly the letter to the Ephesians, pulls commandments out of Part One of the Law God gave to Moses and adds a few more, such as that wives must submit to husbands (Colossians 3:18, Ephesians 6:22) and fathers must not provoke their children (Colossians 3:21. Also husbands are to love their wives, and women are to keep silent in the church and cover their heads.

However, the “law of Paul” is no more possible to keep perfectly than Part One of the Law God gave to Moses. What man is able to love his wife without ever a trace of rancor, fire” (Deut 4:24; 9:3). Besides, it is blood that pays the penalty for sin, not fire (Lev 17:11).
resentment or selfishness? Nevertheless, today’s Christians delude themselves that they can keep commandments like this. The very same people who say they are under grace and no longer under the Law unconsciously put themselves under another law in which they see no mercy. In other words, they: 1. reject the Old Testament as merciless although it very clearly offers mercy, 2. say they are under grace, and yet 3. delude themselves that they must, can and do keep the law of Paul. Meanwhile, they are blinding themselves to the God-given payment for sin, not appreciating who Christ is.

**Psychological defenses and pseudo-atonement**

A psychological defense is our mind’s way of consciously avoiding truths too painful to face. The sense of deserving damnation leads to massive use of the type of defense mechanisms listed in the chart on page 13, described in Chapter Three. Even many so-called Christians flock into these self-deceits instead of the arms of Christ.

To avoid guilt, people flee the inner knowledge of being damned as sinners. On the surface, they delude themselves that they are either under no law whatsoever (antinomianism), or that they are keeping the law perfectly. Many of the defenses are what we call “pseudo-atonement,” the attempt to reconcile with God by 1. good works and pious rituals, and/or 2. suffering and self-punishment, despite the fact that human works are as ineffective as “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) for gaining salvation. If stress collapses the defense structure, the person will suffer some debilitating form of psychiatric and/or physical illness...yet this may be the necessary brokenness that opens them to grace in the Law.

**Plan of the book**

The idea that “we’re not under the law, we’re under grace” is nonsense and must be seen as such. The head has to be sewn back on the body to make the truth clear. This book shows that
grace, i.e., the unearned provision of mercy from God, is embodied in the Law. In fact, the Law is the only place to find mercy. Let us ring the bell loud and clear that the Bible has one message from start to end. The God of the Bible is consistent. He wants His children to be able to rely on His mercy. He wants us to be sure that the saving blood of Christ pays the penalty for the sins of all humans who claim its coverage.

The following chapters dispute several heresies that blind us to this truth. First, we dispense with dispensationalism (Chapter 1). Next, we look at the danger of the “no hell” heresy, and the reasons to believe in the Lake of Fire (Chapter 2). Then we explore the two branches of perfectionist heresy in terms of: 1. the ultimate Satanic goal of keeping humans lost; and 2. how heresy affects defense mechanisms, mental health and human personality dysfunction. We pay particular attention to “pseudo-atonement,” the attempt to pay the penalty for one’s own sin, a common defense mechanism (Chapter 3).

The following three chapters look at ways the Bible has been misunderstood and misused by perfectionists of both left and right persuasions. First we discredit the right wing merciless view of the Old Testament (Chapter 4). We will clearly see grace in the Law. Then we straighten out right and left wing misinterpretations of the New Testament (Chapters 5 and 6).

Finally, we are free to see the beauty of the grace-filled Law for today (Chapter 7). The last chapter (Chapter 8) sings about God’s promises in the Law; there we humans can have blessed assurance of the gift of salvation.
Chapter One:

Dispensationalism separates Law and grace

Dispensationalism—a horrible long word with an equally horrible meaning. This method of biblical interpretation was first devised in the 19th century by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), later to be institutionalized in the Scofield reference Bible.\(^\text{19}\) It makes a clear split between Law and grace, seeing all history divided into separate eras, each of which contains a different order by which God worked out his redemptive plan. This “ism” is a major contributor to the crazy idea that “we’re not under the Law now, we’re under grace.”

What’s wrong with dispensationalism?

Why is this idea crazy? Because the presence of two or more different redemptive plans would make God seem unreliable. When might He change His mind again? To be sure, the New Testament has changed the way humans pay for their sins but God has never altered the underlying structure of salvation. The substitutionary blood atonement covenant, i.e., grace, is spelled out in the Law God gave Moses and it remains in effect.

How is it, then, that we hear preacher after preacher on Christian radio clearly sold on dispensationalism? Why is it that most of the major schools of theology train ministers to have a very limited dispensational perspective on Scripture when they should be equipping ministers to freely search and interpret the entire Bible like the Berean scholars who are commended in the book of Acts (Acts 17:11)? Why is it that most theology students must adhere to dispensationalism if they wish to graduate?

Dispensationalism separates Law and grace

It has caught on because Satan is very active in the heresy business. He certainly does not want us to be like the Bereans, searching Scripture, particularly the Law, for the true basis of our faith. He is afraid we will like what we find in the Law so much we will spit out all the heresies he has fed us. Dispensationalism is a red herring that fragments and distorts God’s word. This method of interpretation tries to turn the Bible into a series of unrelated vignettes rather than one theme that builds precept upon precept.

Does God have Multiple Personality Disorder?
What would be wrong with a god who keeps making new deals? Well, this would be a god with Multiple Personality Disorder rather than the great "I Am." Who could count on such a god? How could we be sure that this god will not come up tomorrow with something that would wipe out what we know now? That may be how the United States Congress works but that is not the way of God. It would feel as if the rug were always about to be pulled from under one’s feet—that is, if one could feel a rug there in the first place. However, thanks to dispensationalism, many Christians do lack the solid foundation freely available to them through the Law.

Basic OT/NT Dispensationalism: the cake is cut in two halves
The common version of dispensationalism is a two slice carve-up. According to this view, Law alone is preceded by grace alone: we’re under grace now, we’re not under the Law. In other words, law and grace are seen as separate means of salvation. The time up to the death of Christ is said to be one specific dispensation or agreement God made with the nation of Israel regarding salvation. In this view, it is assumed that humans were saved only by perfect adherence to the Law, or Torah, given by God to Moses.

The time from the death of Christ on is said to be a different dispensation or agreement God made, in this instance with the Gentiles. This is viewed as an era of no Law at all, i.e., antinomianism, with a non-punishing god who tolerates every kind
of bad behavior. But nobody would need grace, i.e., undeserved, saving forgiveness, if there were no Law defining sin. Nobody would be under condemnation.

The basic false split that is synonymous in the dispensational mind with the Old and New Testaments goes as follows:

*The OT Law was intended only for Israel; NT grace is for "the church." The Old Testament was a time when there was no mercy. Salvation required fulfillment of all points of the Mosaic Law, and there was no forgiveness. After the death of Christ, the Law God gave to Moses was thrown out completely and replaced by grace, a combination of tolerance and forgiveness (as if there were no forgiveness in the Mosaic Law).*

The false message is: *humans had it bad in Old Testament times; now they have it good.* This has led to rejection of the Old Testament and the wonderful assurance it offers, the very foundation of salvation by grace. Christians run away from the Law, thinking it to be the old bad deal instead of a wonderful gift. The Law makes it very clear who Jesus is, providing a solid foundation for our faith. This is about our eternal destiny, no less; to reject the vision of mercy God gives us in the Law is a tragic loss.

**One message: the truth**

The truth is that God’s Word contains one consistent message from Genesis on. God offers salvation to humans through His commandment that we approach Him covered by the blood of a substitute sacrificed in our place. Obedience to this commandment frees the universally sinful and damned human race into fellowship with God and eternal life in heaven instead of burning in the Lake of Fire. This has been true since the Fall.

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20 This mistaken “law versus grace” perspective is found in C.F.W. Walther’s (1929) *Law and Gospel*, Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, Missouri.
In the book of Genesis, God intimates that He, Himself, will provide that shed blood. Genesis 3:15 is the first, albeit veiled, reference to Christ. God told the serpent:

“...and I will put enmity between thee and the woman; and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Who was the seed of the woman destined to bruise the head, i.e., destroy the plan, of the seed of the serpent? It was Jesus Christ. Of course, all humans are seed of the woman, but no normal human could possibly destroy the plan of Satan. It would have to be God in human form.

**Seven slices: a further complication**

To further complicate matters, Darby and his American disciple, C. I. Scofield (1843-1921), identified as many as seven dispensations: 1. a time of innocence up to expulsion from the Garden; 2. a time of conscience or moral responsibility up to the Flood; 3. a time of God's delegation of authority to humans up to the call of Abraham; 4. a time of the promise to Israel up to God's giving of the law to Moses; 5. a time of the Law up to the death of Christ; 6. a time of Grace from Christ’s resurrection until the rapture; and 7. a time of the personal reign of Christ, from His second coming, which is the anticipated millennial kingdom up until the eternal state. 21

Even more than just the basic O.T./N.T. division, seven slices create further confusion of the picture of God's relations with humans. There is an even greater loss of clarity of the most essential feature of God’s Word: grace in the Law.

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Getting rid of the seven dispensations

To negate dispensationalism, we can show the blood atonement covenant to be in effect for all seven time periods. Continuity of this fundamental theme throughout the Bible means dispensations are...well, to be dispensed with, thrown away. With a huge sigh of relief, we humans can rest on the full counsel of God which is packed with evidence of His mercy.

1. “A time of innocence up to expulsion from the Garden.”

There never has been a time of no Law. In the beginning, there was a Law that had only one rule. God told the first humans they would die if they broke that rule, which was the prohibition to eat the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God said:

“...in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:17).

In other words, He was telling them the price, or penalty, for sin is death. This is not just physical death, but eternal separation from Him. Rebellion cuts us off spiritually and destines us for burning “as chaff,” or refuse (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17). Until the Fall, there was no need for salvation. There was only one rule to break and until the first humans broke it, they were in good standing with God. But soon after they rebelled, got separated from Him by their one sin, and came under the sin=death/hell sentence, God gave them the substitutionary blood atonement, the only possible way to re-unite with Him.

The covering: As soon as the first humans broke the one rule, God gave Adam and Eve a covering. The fact that they hid from Him due to their awareness of being naked says they knew they had lost the protection afforded by their former connection with Him. They sensed they were defenseless, facing something horrible, uncovered. Of course, they had no idea of what death entailed because nothing in the Creation had yet died.
The covering God gave them fulfilled the Law before it was ever put in writing. The price for sin is death and God paid the price for human sin with the death of a substitute for the sinner. Right there we have the Gospel in that God killed an animal to provide both a spiritual and a literal covering (clothing of skins) before sending our forefathers out of the Garden, away from the Tree of Life. They would suffer physical death along with the rest of the cursed world, but not spiritual death, as long as they did not refuse the covering. Satan had corrupted them and separated them from God, but he had not taken them out of God’s hands for ever. Through the blood sacrifice they could be reconciled to Him and could look forward to eternal life in His presence after their physical death. One day, humans will once again have access to the Tree of Life (Rev 22:2).

**The lamb slain from the foundation of the world:** Here is interesting point: in Revelation 13:8 Jesus is referred to as “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Clearly, God’s plan included the blood payment for the remission of sin\(^\text{22}\) from the beginning. God had not yet given the blood atonement covenant in writing but that does not mean it was not in effect. The first legitimate blood sacrifice was made by God just like the last one.

2. **“A time of individual conscience or moral authority up until the Flood.”**

The several pre-Flood references to the essentialness of the blood sacrifice for atonement with God can relieve us of any notion that God ever let the human conscience be the moral authority. God never gave humans the right to decide what is right and wrong. We are just too wicked to be trusted in that way. There has been no time when God could be pleased by anything other than a blood sacrifice.

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\(^{22}\) “Remission of sin” is another term for forgiveness. The sin is sent away from God’s mind.
Cain and Abel: Consider the story of Cain and Abel in this time period (Genesis 4:1-15). Both make offerings to God. Why does God accept Abel’s offering and reject Cain’s one? God is fair and just, so He must have provided information about what was acceptable to Him. Maybe He spoke to the brothers’ hearts, but His forgiveness was gained by the same mechanism found in the written Law: the offering had to be a blood sacrifice.

Presumably, Cain knew what to do but rebelled against doing it. This would justify God’s anger towards him. Abel knew what to do and did it: not only offer a blood sacrifice but a “firstling,” the first offspring of an animal that already belonged to God (Exodus 13:12), also a “clean” animal (first specified in writing in the account of Noah in Genesis 7:2, later detailed in Leviticus 11). These features are pictures of Christ, firstborn of God and “clean,” or without sin. God clearly held people accountable for the blood sacrifice before He gave the Law in written form. So there never has been a time when He has let the human conscience be the moral authority.

3. “A time of God’s delegation of authority to humans up till the call of Abraham.”

There is no evidence that God delegated authority to humans between the Flood and Abraham. In fact, when humans tried to appropriate God’s authority by building the Tower of Babel to enable them to reach heaven, He scattered them and forced them to speak different languages (Genesis 11:1-9).

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23 The firstling law is related to the principle of tithing (Deuteronomy 26). The general idea is that everything belongs to God. He wants us to acknowledge that, that we give him the cream off the top, in a sense...a hard thing for us to do, an act that goes against our nature. We humans prize “our” first product and want to take credit. Yet God specified that “all that openeth the matrix” is His (Exodus 34:19). If it is not given back to God, it can only be kept by the person if it is bought back or redeemed from Him. This applies to humans as well as other life forms. Your firstborn son had to be purchased back from God (Exodus 34:20).
Moreover, what was the first thing Noah did when the ark landed on dry ground? He made a sacrifice of one of each of the “clean” animals he had so carefully preserved “by sevens” from the raging flood (Genesis 7:3; unclean animals were only saved in pairs). How did Noah know that he must do this? No information is given, but clearly God had made known that the blood sacrifice was essential.

God’s promise to Abraham of an everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:8) obliquely refers to salvation through Christ, a direct descendant of Abraham. This is one more piece of evidence against dispensationalism’s view of fundamentally different salvation contracts over time.

4. “A time of the promise to Israel up until God’s giving of the Law.”

Clearly, the patriarchs were held to the blood sacrifice covenant and other major aspects of the Law not yet given in writing to Moses. In the account of Abraham and Isaac we find God testing Abraham by demanding the sacrifice of his legitimate firstborn son,24 then providing the substitute for the death of Isaac with the ram caught in the thicket. The ram was the blood offering burnt on the altar in place of Isaac (Genesis 22). In this passage God seems to be highlighting the fact that He would not only accept a ram in place of the human, but that he would also provide the sacrifice. Here we have two “types” or pictures of Christ, both in the command for Abraham to kill his only legitimate son, and in the ram, the sacrifice God provided.25,26

24 Abraham’s actual firstborn son was Ishmael, born to Sarah’s handmaiden, Hagar.

25 Another aspect of the Law is the tithe mandate, which appears to have existed along with the blood covenant from the beginning in some form. When Abraham met God’s messenger, Melchisedek, the high priest of Salem, he gave tithes to this priest.

Interestingly, no actual blood offering is mentioned in this passage in Genesis 14. What we see here presages the New Covenant, the sharing of wine and bread in remembrance of the
The first Passover was just before the Exodus of Jacob’s descendants from Egypt, a journey led by Moses. Here we have the glowing account of the death of the sacrificial lamb substituting for the death of the firstborn male, buying back or redeeming the firstborn from death into life. This is a perfect picture of Jesus. God said that the firstborn son and also the firstborn of cattle would be safe if the house were painted with the blood of the slain Passover lamb. This was how the people could escape having their firstborn killed by God’s death angel. They literally had to smear the blood of the sacrificed lamb over the lintel and doorposts of their house and stay indoors at night after eating all the roast lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It was a blood payment to God, but He commanded them to eat it. His mercy and thoughtfulness is shown by the fact that the feast filled them before a very long journey.

The blood of the Lamb of the Passover redeemed, or bought back, the firstborn from God’s death angel. There is no clearer picture of Christ, who died on the Passover and whose shed blood buys all believers out of eternal separation from God. The unleavened bread

blood and body of Christ. Melchisedek, said by some to be the pre-incarnate Christ, or a type of Christ (Hebrews 7), provides the wine and bread just as Christ did in the Upper Room the night before he became the Passover Lamb, killed to buy back humans from eternal damnation.


27 By the way, many Christians are under the impression that salvation was available only for the Israelites in the Old Testament times. That is not the case. For example, God applied the firstling or firstborn law and the available protection to Egypt as well as to the Israelites. Although God apparently did not give Passover instructions to the Egyptians, they were permitted to participate in the Passover if they learned about it. Many Egyptians obeyed God’s instructions as evidenced by the fact that they protected their cattle during one of the plagues. More on salvation for non-Israelites in Chapter Seven.
Dispensationalism separates Law and grace

represents Christ’s sinless flesh. Leaven is frequently used in the Bible as a metaphor for sin.

5. “A time of law up to the death of Christ.”
This is discussed at length in Chapter Four of this book. The point is that the Law has always been the source of grace. There has never been a merciless “law with no grace” dispensation; grace has always been in the Law.

6. “A time of grace up until the second coming of Christ.”
This is discussed in detail in Chapters Five and Six, which will show the grace-filled Law to be still in effect in New Testament times.

7. “A time of the personal reign of Christ from his second coming through the Millenial Kingdom until the eternal state.”
Prophetic Scriptures are very unclear on these end time events. There are numerous references to the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth during which Satan is imprisoned (Revelation 20). It is curious that the book of Ezekiel (Chapters 43, 45-46) seems to prophesy a future millennial kingdom during which, despite the fact that Christ has replaced the animal sacrifice system, blood sacrifices will continue to be offered in the Temple. This may be for commemorative purposes. One thing that is clear is that even while Satan is bound, the earth will continue to be fallen and in a state of corruption. Humans will be under the curse of sin and death until Judgment Day. Therefore the Law will continue to provide atonement through the shed blood of Christ until then.

Conclusion: The wonderful all-time gift of mercy
This chapter has shown that God is consistent. He has unfolded one continuous salvation path for humans to follow. Although the source of the essential shed blood in the salvation covenant did change with the death of Christ, dispensationalists are wrong to say
that God made fundamentally different contracts with humans regarding salvation at different points in history. In fact, He made only one such contract: the substitutionary blood atonement covenant in the Law. This contract has not changed over time. Introduced in Genesis, it was fulfilled in its total and final form with Christ. It will remain in effect until the time of final judgment.

All in all, it is clear that the Law has been and always will be in effect while heaven and earth remain. Even though there is no record of a written Law before the time of Moses, there is ample evidence that the God-ordained sin=death/hell law and the substitutionary blood atonement covenant have been in effect from the Fall. There are numerous pre-Moses instances of the essentialness of a blood sacrifice. Dispensationalists argue that there were four dispensations (salvation contracts) before the Mosaic Law. The Bible shows this not to be the case. Nor did God make any different “deals” after the Law. God made one single salvation contract for all time.

God spelled out the grace-filled Law to Moses, who wrote it down. No written form is known to have existed up until that time. However, the book of Genesis shows that God had communicated the blood atonement covenant way before He put it in writing. This wonderful covenant is still in place today. Only the formal aspect of it changed after Christ came to pay the penalty for us. The only alteration in the covenant is that God replaced the animal sacrifice system with the one-time shedding of Christ’s blood. This made it easier for humans to enter the forgiveness of God. No longer did they have to provide the sacrificial animals to the priest for a ceremony in the temple, which was an expensive proposition. Claiming the death of Christ as their payment was sufficient. However, God never changed His willingness to accept the blood of a designated substitute as payment of the penalty for human sin.

If it is wrong to cut the cake, who cares how the cake is cut: into two, seven or a thousand pieces? This is not a cake to cut. This is a
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cake to eat whole. It is only nutritious that way. There should be no differentiation between the "Old" and "New" Testaments, or Israel versus church, regarding the means to gain salvation. The world wide "church," the body of believers, has been grafted onto the stump of Israel, not split asunder from it. Mercy has always been freely available to all humans who enter God’s flock through the blood of the lamb/Lamb.
Chapter Two:

The Lake of Fire is real

Many people ridicule the idea of a place of final punishment or destruction. This mockery exists not only in false religions but also in many Christian denominations, particularly the liberal, left wing ones. They reject the Old Testament teachings and ignore the many references Jesus makes to the place of destruction after physical death (Matthew 18:8; 25:41; 25:46). This is very dangerous; it keeps people unsaved if they are unaware of the dreadful situation they are in. They will have no interest in God’s provision of a way to escape it for free.

Even when people admit there could be a Lake of Fire, they typically delude themselves they would never end up there. Many of them are in the Christian church. Imagine this scenario: you go to church all your life, you tithe, you call yourself a Christian, you die, you wake up on Judgment Day, Jesus says He never knew you, and off you go to the fire. Could it happen to you? You thought you had nothing to fear, that you were good enough for heaven. So you ignored the freely available blood of Christ that would bail you out of the Lake of Fire. You lost out because you did not claim Christ’s blood as your redemption “money.”

The Lake of Fire is the real issue

Who needs a savior if there is nothing to be saved from? Burning in the Lake of Fire may not last forever. In fact, it will probably be over quickly for most people. One prevalent picture given in God’s word is that the unsaved are burned “as chaff” (Isaiah 5:24; Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17), the empty husks of wheat rapidly consumed by fire. So the burning may not last long, but it will be final, involving eternal separation from God, with no way back. But if there is no Lake of Fire, who cares
about God’s mercy? Who cares about grace in the Law? In fact, who cares about any law if there is no penalty for law-breaking?

A somewhat analogous situation would be retirement planning. What makes people start planning for their retirement? The realization that they will actually reach that point, and that they had better do something to prepare for it. Another similar situation would be life insurance. People do not buy insurance against something wonderful or neutral. They buy insurance against a disaster, but first they must face the real possibility of such a thing. Hell is a lot worse than poverty at the end of one’s life or some worldly disaster. What is more, humans do not have to spend a penny to avoid hell; God has given us a way out for free.

**Myopia: throwing away the birthright**

Very few people can bear to look at the reality of hell. Even many who consider themselves Christian are in denial about it. As a Christian therapist, I hear evidence of this constantly in the counseling room. People generally come to a counselor because of some dysfunctional emotional state they cannot ignore, or because they have problems in their human relationships. One way or another, this world is all they want to look at. Sadly, this is just as true of Christians as anyone else. Like the rest of the world, they have myopia, the refusal or inability to look into the distance. The matter of death and what lies beyond it is off the map for them. They are derisive about it; they refuse to talk about the issue. Impatience and anger are common when the writer tries to take up the subject with them:

*Eternity? That little thing! Who cares about eternity, what about now? I want my needs met today. Eternity is an abstraction. Eternity is not real. Eternity is just an idea. The Lake of Fire...phooey. Don't bother me with fire and brimstone. Don't even offer me pie in the sky, I want it my pie right now.*
Eternity matters a lot if the Lake of Fire is real. The fact that a person trivializes eternity identifies the source of their psychological problems. The dire existential situation faced by all humans is still unknown and unresolved for them. All humans have a gut sense that the Lake of Fire is real and that they somehow deserve to go there. There is a universal nasty feeling in the pit of the stomach. Attempts to drown out that feeling cannot make it go away. Our defenses torpedo it below the surface of consciousness, but it will only bob up again later.

**Insipid religion**

Those who deny the reality of the Lake of Fire have their priorities all mixed up. They often use the defense mechanism of “living in the now,” an endless present. Sadly, today’s Christians often pay very little attention to anything other than bits and pieces of the New Testament taken out of context. They rely on the epistles of Paul, who talks less about eternal punishment than Jesus does. It is easy to misunderstand Paul when a person does not have a thorough grounding in Scripture.

Every artist knows that shading is what makes a form stand out in a painting. An object starts to disappear if you get rid of the shadows. The form fades, especially when you get rid of the perspective too. It leaves you with a picture that is very superficial, lacking depth. Does not that sound like much of today’s Christianity?

*Get rid of eternity! Get rid of the Lake of Fire! Only deal with what happens here and now. Only give us ideas that are "positive." Give us pastors who keep quiet about the bad stuff.*

The church is full of pastors who are emotionally and spiritually castrated. They cannot nourish anyone with tasteless, insipid baby food. Their “nice” platitudes only serve to keep out the truth. Inoffensive, empty affirmations penetrate no further than water on a duck’s back.
Jacob, Esau and myopia

There is nothing new about myopia. Remember Esau, the one who cared only for the moment? He was the first-born son of Isaac who threw away his birthright for a mess of pottage (Genesis 25:29-34). All he cared about was the next meal. He had no vision for the future. His lack of faith led him to strike a bad bargain with his brother Jacob, swapping the birthright for the pottage. Esau did not care beyond his belly. He threw away his future for the price of a meal. How like us! One can laugh at the absurdity of this once one becomes aware of one’s former blindness.

Jacob was the one who had faith. He knew what that birthright meant. God had made a wonderful promise to his forefathers regarding the birthright and Jacob wanted to be a part of it.

God’s promises to Abraham

A special blessing concerning eternity was promised to the descendants of Abraham, Jacob’s grandfather. Three times God promised Abraham through his descendants great fruitfulness and blessings, including the possession of Canaan (Genesis 17:8). The most significant promise was a covenant of everlasting importance. In Genesis 17:6-7, God tells Abraham he will be:

“...exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.”

Later God adds the promise of blessing to all nations through these descendants:

“...in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the
seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:17-18).

The “everlasting covenant” and blessing through Abraham’s seed for all the nations of the earth refers to salvation through Christ. The human ancestry of Christ goes directly back to Abraham and his son Jacob, to whom God gives the same promises later in Bethel (Genesis 27:13-15). All males who wish to partake of this promise are told to undergo circumcision as a way of signing the contract (Genesis 10-14)\(^2\) The most important aspect of the promise, i.e., salvation for all nations, was to be fulfilled way in the future, although it is true that from the time of Genesis onwards, non-Israelites could be saved along with Israelites by following the mercy contract in the Law (Exodus 12:48-49; Deut 31:12). This was salvation on credit through the animal sacrifices, awaiting the final payment made by Jesus.

Jacob wanted to be a part of the promise. He had enough faith in God to believe in it, yet he did not have faith that God would just hand it to him. He lied and cheated in the attempt to get it. Despite the crooked means he used, posing as his brother and cheating his father, God did not withhold the promise from him. However, Jacob did not escape punishment for the cheating. He reaped exactly what he sowed when God allowed him to get cheated in the same fashion by his crafty uncle, Laban. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his elder daughter, Leah, by dressing

\(^2\) The same verse contains another promise, that “thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies,” a promise which in modern times has been fulfilled, possibly not by ethnic descendants of Abraham via Jacob, but certainly by spiritual descendants. These have been Great Britain, and the United States, nations that had empires with strategic “gates” acting as checkpoints or barriers adjacent to their enemies all over the world. It is noteworthy that these “gates” fell into enemy hands and those empires waned as Britain and the US went into rebellion towards God.
The Lake of Fire is real

her up on the wedding day as the younger Rachel, the object of Jacob’s desire.

God gave Jacob the birthright because Jacob knew what it meant and believed in its importance. Jacob inherited the promises God given Abraham:

“Thou shalt be a father of many nations;” (Genesis 17:4)

“Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;” (Genesis 22:17)

and:

“In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed.” (Genesis 22:18)

The promises concerned not only inheriting material wealth from a human father, or establishing a good family, or other worldly things. The matter went far beyond that. Whatever Jacob got in material gain was considerable by the time he was an old man, but it was not his priority. His main concern, probably one he was not even conscious of, was a promise that extended way beyond his physical life and into eternity. All nations of the earth would be blessed with the gift of salvation in the birthright that God gave through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, forefathers of the human parents of Christ.

**Salvation must be our priority**

The blessings in this world only come to us when the next world is our priority and we grab the life belt God has provided for us. The Lake of Fire is the problem. Even if I accrue huge wealth, wisdom or fame, I cannot enjoy it when I know, even in only a dim way, that I face eternal damnation. For those not saved, there is no peace of mind with which to enjoy anything here for more than a fleeting moment. Jesus said:
“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it into life eternal” (John 12:25).

He was not asking humans to become ego-less martyrs laying down their lives for others. There is no need for that. He has already done it. No, what he was saying is that it is futile to fix on this lifetime. It will be over quickly but eternal life is going to last forever. Forever...! Eternity versus this lifetime? How do you compare an ocean with a rain drop? Or an endless movie with a brief preview to the movie? Staking our claim on eternal life will sometimes put us in the position of having to risk what we hold dear in this world—including life itself. God uses His refiner's fire on us. If we hang on to Him tooth and nail, we can emerge stronger from that fire. It will not consume us, any more than the fire that surrounded Meshach, Shadrack and Abednego when they were persecuted for refusing to bow down before the image of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3.

Wrong ideas people have about the Lake of Fire

“It’s morbid!”
People are wrong to think it morbid to dwell on the reality of hell. Humans need to face the reality of the fire. It is not psychologically harmful to do so as long as we have the assurance that God has given us a ready means of escape. And He has; all we need do is believe God has done this. What is more, God assists our belief. His picture book, the Old Testament, is part of that help. His forgiveness contract is spelled out in the Law. The Law and the prophets point to Christ as the ultimate, God-given fulfillment of that contract. How can anyone appreciate Christ if they do not become familiar with the contract?

Try to tell yourself there is no Lake of Fire. Do all the members of your internal committee agree? What do the different parts of you say? Is there not at least one who is not so
The Lake of Fire is real

sure? How can anyone be sure it does not exist just as the Bible says it does? If there is the slightest possibility of hell, only a fool would refuse to consider it. Reject the concept of hell and you will also reject the one way to stay out.

**Delusions**

Delusions are false ideas about the nature of reality that people cling to in spite of evidence to the contrary. They are lies that people tell themselves without being consciously aware of it. Psychotic people often have laughable delusions such as the notion of thought-broadcasting:

“**Someone put an electrode in my brain to listen in on my thoughts.**”

Obviously, this is crazy, yet few of those who reject hell and the God of the Bible have any inkling of the ridiculousness of their own delusionality.

**Delusions of entitlement**

Entitlement delusions are common among unbelievers, and even among believers. As a child, the writer used to say that if there were a God, then “my kind of god” would not allow such a place or state as hell to exist. But then, did she think very much about anything existential at that time? No. After escaping the performance-based Anglican version of Christianity, she wanted to think about the deeper issues of life. Yet she did not know of a valid framework for things of a spiritual nature, so she just avoided them. Death, heaven, hell, God...these were topics she avoided. She thought she deserved happiness and that she had a right to it irrespective of her anti-godliness. She was mad that life was hard. The anger was towards God, although she did not know it. She did not think about salvation from hell, and if she had, she would have claimed a right to it. If she ever thought about God, it would be in terms of entitlement: **God, you made**
me, now you jolly well have to take good care of me. I deserve it.

Misplaced anger
Before humans appreciate their predicament and the way God has remedied it for them, they seethe with festering anger towards Him. They do not perceive that He is the target of their rage. They think they are angry about child abuse, racism, corporate greed, or some other worldly injustice. They fight social inequity, frustrated by their powerlessness to do anything about it.

However, the battle is spiritual, and the simmering anger towards our Creator is part of the delusion of entitlement. The lie is that humans deserve to have it easy, to not face tribulation, to not have illnesses, to not face death...and, most importantly, to not go to hell, if there is one. Even many who think they are Christians feel this way. They do not see that God uses tribulation for our benefit. We rarely turn to God when things are going well in our lives.

This anger is due to a narrow overview. There is blindness to humans’ thorough wickedness and undeservingness of rewards, and to the fact that this life is not the “main movie.” Even many Christians fail to recognize the brevity of this lifetime. This is just a short preview, or pre-test. David wrote about it:

“As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.” (Psalm 103:15-17).

Hell is here
People often say: If there is a hell, it is here. They even have a little grin as they utter this, as if this is a clever remark instead of a stupid one. It displays an enormous lack of imagination for anyone to believe hell is here...as if this is as bad as it could get. This life can be very painful, but we have plenty of distractions.
Dark as the night gets here, we can look forward to a new morning. In the dead of winter, spring lies ahead. Sorrows can be drowned, temporarily, in drink, in food, in a new romance, or in entertainment on the television. Here we can turn off the pain or, at least, turn down the volume on it, and there is the hope of a way out. In hell there will be no way out, no way to turn, nobody to turn to until eventual extinction. There will be the awareness of having been given a chance to avoid ending up there, and of having thrown it away...hence the “gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12).

**Subconscious knowledge of eternal damnation**

Those who reject the concept of hell do this only on a surface level. Humans are cunningly and wonderfully designed by God. Our minds are extremely complex, yet we have no idea of it. It is hard to accept that a person can be thinking and feeling bland thoughts on the surface and dark, ugly ones underneath.

Sigmund Freud did a brilliant job of pointing out the role of subconscious (or “unconscious”) thought processes. The conscious area is the part of the mind we are aware of. It has been compared in size to the amount of an iceberg above the surface of the water. This part of the mind can be ignorant of what the unconscious knows below the surface. Humans function with a great deal of blindness to what they know at a deeper level. The part below is aware of being a sinner condemned to hell for missing the mark. The part above can function as if ignorant of this. However, telltale signs appear every so often; symptoms of it keep bubbling up. The truth about the universal human dread destiny comes out in dreams, in mythology, in the preoccupations of psychotic people, and also in less severe forms of psychopathology. Neurotic people have intact reality-testing but they experience symptoms that indicate

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a deep, subconscious fear of eternal damnation: panic attacks, obsessions, compulsions, conversion symptoms like seizures and fainting spells, depression, and on and on.

Humans deny a gut sense that the fire is real, that they feel themselves moving towards the abyss like a raft about to go over the edge of a waterfall, continually pulled forward. The worst part of the self-deception is it keeps us from looking at the one way to avoid it. However, the sense of a horrible destiny does not go away, no matter how far people try to distance themselves from it. Until our eyes focus on: 1. the reality of hell; 2. our deservingness to go there simply because we fall short of perfection, and 3. the undeserved God-given reprieve from it through claiming Christ, we have no peace below the surface, and only temporary respite above.

**Blaming the social realm**

When the writer became aware in her teens of a sense of being doomed, she became angry and full of envy. She blamed her childhood for that feeling; she blamed her dad; she blamed society; she blamed the rigid class structure of England. Emigration to the United States did not get rid of that inner feeling. When our focus is only on this world, we see it as an unfair place; its injustices embitter us. We complain that some people seem to get a better deal than we do: a better childhood, more affluence, better health, or better opportunities for success.

Instead, we need to see ourselves undeservingly saved from destruction in the fire, assured of eternal life in heaven. God gives all humans equal access to salvation as a gift. As this truth seeps into the unconscious, God’s mercy will profoundly change our world view. Nobody can truly harm us, nor is there anyone to envy.
Evidence in human functioning for the reality of hell

Certain aspects of human functioning point to innate knowledge of the existence of hell. Such phenomena do not conclusively prove hell exists but certainly support its existence from a “no smoke without fire” point of view. Why would the place of eternal darkness feature so largely in the thinking of humans unless it had a basis in truth?

1. Evidence from psychosis

It is well known that people in a state of psychosis talk of God, heaven, hell, the devil, and demons. Support for this can be found in cross-cultural research. It is less well known that this phenomenon occurs regardless of a person’s religious background. I have found in my clinical practice that people in a psychotic state, despite lack of a Bible background, nevertheless obsess about going to hell. Where does this come from? The most reasonable explanation is that this is inborn, archetypical knowledge that stays hidden below the surface in “normal” people who have well-developed psychological barriers to such threatening information.

2. Evidence from depression

Clinical depression, which affects more than a quarter of the population at some time in life, is a realistic response to the human condition outside of the saving blood of Christ. Hopeless, dark thoughts are appropriate in anticipation of the Lake of Fire. The depressed person’s thought content acknowledges the truth. Without God's reprieve from the hell sentence there is no reason to hope.

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In a state of depression, people are painfully aware of feeling unworthy. They will repeatedly state that they feel this way, and they are right. Indeed, all humans are unworthy. That is, unworthy of what they need the most, which is salvation. So depression can provide an opening to the truth. Through a realization gained during depression, a person might recognize their need for the imputed worthiness of Christ, and appreciate the fact that it is freely given by God. Worthy is the Lamb slain by God to pay for our sin.  

3. Evidence from near-death experiences:

i. A cardiac surgeon’s account.

Glowing accounts of people’s near-death experiences involving loving angels and white light are found in popular books. This appears, however, to reflect a distortion due to incomplete recall. Maurice Rawlings, a Christian cardiac surgeon who had a chance to listen to the near-death experiences of patients whose hearts had stopped on the operating table, has written a book that reports statements of both Bible believers and non-believers.

How is it that Christians can still be depressed, even when they have a grasp of the Gospel, our only basis for hope? The reason is that in this lifetime nobody assimilates the glorious gospel message in every fibre of his or her being. Humans are embedded in a world filled with Satan's lies. Satan wants to get our attention away from the good news by sowing doubts and despair. In addition to the psychiatrically disabling influences of genes and early trauma, this explains why truth-hearers can still succumb to psychopathology of all kinds. On the other hand, as comprehension of the God-given rescue deepens in people, they are decreasingly subject to mental illness. Even people with the most severe mental illness, schizophrenia, become free from many symptoms of the disorder. Although they may not become completely asymptomatic, they have a central core of sanity not present in supposedly “normal, sane” unbelievers.
Rawlings found that when non-believers woke up after surgery, they stated that they had visions of a bright, white passage leading to a dark evil place filled with threatening, evil demonic presences. However, they soon “forgot” the horrible part of those visions and remembered only the pleasant aspects of what they experienced, i.e., loving angels and white light.\(^{32}\)

This is consistent with reports from two people I have known personally. Both were unbelievers who reported similarly horrifying post-surgical near-death visions. Where did these visions come from if not from reality? Such accounts certainly lend credence to the idea that humans have an innate sense of the reality of hell, a place or state in which humans are separated from God and yet aware.

### ii. Fighting against death

In peak moments when humans feel happy and fulfilled, they know that life is very good and want to hang on to it. As death approaches, believers can let go of life knowing there is something much better ahead. Unbelievers tend to cling to life even when it is extremely painful. Doctors and nurses who work with dying people and are in close attendance to them up until their last breath say there is a big difference between the way Bible-believers die and the way everybody else does.\(^{33}\) Believers die peacefully, even joyfully. But non-believers, even those who are terribly ill with cancer and in great pain, fight death. They fight leaving this world because they have no hope of living again in a good state. They dual with death not only because they want life but also because they sense something frightful lies beyond it.

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\(^{33}\) Personal communication from oncology ward staff interviewed by the author.
Do unbelievers really sense the reality of the ugly place? Do they have a hunch about the existence of the Lake of Fire? There are many reasons to believe so but this hunch is mostly unconscious. Dying unbelievers often show a fighting spirit they never displayed before; they never battled anything as much as they fight against death. It is not just a fight against leaving this life; they strive against going into that horrible darkness.

4. Evidence from mythology
The reality of hell is also indicated by the persistent theme of a dark and terrifying underworld in the myths and legends of peoples all over the world. Differences are found between cultures in the circumstances surrounding this underworld, yet the concept remains.

**Greek:** In the Greek pantheon is *Hades*, known as *Pluto* by the Romans. He is the unmerciful god who rules over the underworld and the dead. His name has been used by scholars to translate the Hebrew word *Sheol*, referring to the subterranean world of the dead where they await Judgement Day.

**Persian:** In Persian mythology there is a rendering of hell, albeit one that is ultimately non-threatening. The creator god of truth and light, Ahura Mazda, is opposed by the evil Angra Mainyu, who infused the creation with evil. Humans are to choose sides, either with Ahura, to restore the universe to perfection or with Angra, to do evil and eventually be sent to a hell appropriate to their life. After a final season of catastrophes and tumult, the ultimate savior, Saoshyant, will arrive. The dead will be resurrected in bodies of immaculate light; hell will vanish and its souls, purified, will be released.\(^{34}\) *Thou shalt not surely die.*

\(^{34}\) Campbell, Joseph (1972). *Myths to Live By.* New York: Viking Penguin Inc., p.188.
Norse: In contrast with Persian mythology, where everyone eventually goes to heaven, Norse mythology offers no hope whatsoever. The gods fight heroic battles against evil even though they know they will eventually be destroyed and exist only in some shadowed form in a dark underworld.

The point is this: one can travel the world finding depictions of hell in myths and legends. Where does this come from if not from a universal subconscious awareness of that dark realm? Would there be so much smoke if there were no Lake of Fire?

Examination of hells in false religions
The Bible talks of a Lake of Fire. Unsurprisingly, the other major religions propose something similar. They all have a concept of some sort of hell, a place of punishment for falling short of perfection. What do those false religions say about hell? Let us take a quick tour to see how widespread is the concept of a place of torment after death. In some cases the hell is educative and not final, but it is still a dark place of punishment. It will also be apparent that these religions are false: they offer only the unattainable goal of human perfection as the means to avoid hell.

Hinduism
In Hinduism, you have many lifetimes in which to work your way up to godhood. Whatever your place in this lifetime, you deserve it and that is where you are fated to be. You are here to learn and to work off as much as you can of the karmic debt accrued from sins in previous lives. If you work hard and do enough good, the next incarnation will be better. If you add more negatives to your karmic debt, you will move down the ladder. However, you need not fear. The worst thing that could happen would be to find yourself in a temporary hell. In a lifetime or two you could catch up to where you were on the ladder before that fall. Your destiny is in your hands and there is
nothing much to worry about. *Thou shall not surely die*. Hell is only temporary and you can work your way out.

Serial reincarnation enables you to gradually cleanse yourself through your own efforts. This is pleasing to the ego but gives no comfort to the soul. Under the surface, one is aware that perfection can never be attained this way. *The doctrine of perfection appeals to the part of me that wants to be my own boss, beholden to nobody, in nobody else’s power. However, at a deeper level, the sense of being damned does not go away, nor can it be fully silenced.*

The irony is that Hindus embrace the concept of eternity whereas Christians often do not want to hear about it. Yet Christians alone have the basis to face eternity unafraid, to actually embrace it without the need to exercise enormous self-deception.

**Jainism**

Jainism, an offshoot of Hinduism some 2,500 years ago, views the universe consisting of three realms, the lowest containing no less than eight million hells where humans are punished for their sins. The most wicked are kept in a bottomless abyss forever. Otherwise, good deeds and self-deprivation, even fasting to the death, are the perfectionist tools employed to stay out of the dark, eternal abyss. Such doctrine only leads to inner despair covered by denial and “good works,” part of what we call “pseudo-atonement” (see next chapter).

**Buddhism**

Like Hinduism, classical Buddhism speaks of a multitude of hells as stops on a person’s journey to bliss, or *nirvana*. A more recent form of Buddhism, on the other hand, has no concept of hell but focuses on ending suffering by extinguishment of desire. Unity with the godhead is earned through annihilation of the personal ego, the cause of desire. Eventually even the desire to
exist will disappear, theoretically leading to perfection via total self-extinguishment. The problem is that a person has to desire the elimination of desire, like a dog chasing its own tail. Besides, no human can truly desire extinguishment of life. We want life, but life without pain.

Both these forms of Buddhism are founded on perfectionist doctrine lacking in mercy. Whether there is only one lifetime or many of them, perfect adherence to the moral code (typically the eight-fold path of righteousness) and the elimination of all desire are essential. However, the goals are humanly unattainable. Attempts to reach them send a person, through meditation, into ever deeper states of denial of inborn sinful characteristics that will never go away. There is no bliss through this route; only dissociation and repressed fear and rage, paving the way for insanity.

**Taoism**

In Taoism, a Chinese religion involving the worship of many gods and family ancestors, the dead are sent to one of three places: the Buddhist paradises, the mountain dwelling of the immortals, or one of several hells. It adheres to reincarnation and working off all negative karma.

**Islam**

Adherents of Islam do not have to make themselves perfect to be able to cross the razor sharp bridge over hell that leads to paradise, a lovely place filled with doe-eyed virgins for males to feast upon. Under Islam, a person does not have to be perfect; just very, very good. To cross the bridge they just have to make their good deeds exceed their bad deeds. On the surface this may seem executable but that is only because humans delude themselves about the level of their depravity. Besides, until humans know they are saved by grace, “good” deeds have an ungodly, selfish motive. So this doctrine is another form of perfectionism, setting humans up for the impossible.
Gehenna: The word Gehenna has many ominous connotations. It derives from the Valley of Hinnom, a place outside Jerusalem constantly burning with refuse. II Kings 23:10 describes how King Josiah, one of the God-fearing kings of Judah, destroyed a place called Topheth, a site in the Valley of Hinnom used for sacrificial burnings of children to the god Molech.

The word Gehenna, rather than Hades, is used in the Bible to refer to the Lake of Fire, the final place of unbelievers. Hades is used to describe a temporary place for the dead awaiting final judgment. Also known as “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22-23), Hades has separate locations for the heaven- and hell-bound that are separated by a gulf. It will be destroyed in the lake of fire on Judgment Day, when the sheep are separated from the goats (Revelation 6:8, 20:13-15).

Eternal or temporary?
Gehenna defines a permanent and eternal state of separation from God. Will this involve eternal consciousness and, therefore, eternal pain? Will it consist of punishment followed by extinguishment? Or will it simply be a state of annihilation at the end of this life. What picture do we get from God's Word?

Eternal damnation
Several passages in the Bible describe a state of eternal damnation beyond death. Many verses depict a Lake of Fire that burns eternally. Jude (Jude 7) speaks of “...the vengeance of eternal fire.” However, does everyone in that fire burn forever just as the fire does?

Eternal torment for Satan
It is clear that eternal torment in the fire awaits Satan:
“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

**For false shepherds**
False shepherds are going to suffer in the fire, but not necessarily forever. Jesus directs this ominous statement to them:

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

**Annihilation?**
In fact, Jesus’ use of the expression “everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46) could simply mean that the separation from God is everlasting or final, and the actual burning could be quick. Certain Bible passages simply suggest extinction for unbelievers. The words “destroy” and “destruction” are used by both the prophets and Christ to foretell what happens to those who reject God. Jesus says:

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28).

In line with this, Revelation 20:14 and 21:8 speak of the “second death” on judgment day awaiting those who reject Christ. Old Testament prophets also appear to support annihilation at times. Ezekiel simply says:

“...the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4). And Malachi says:

35 The word for hell in this passage is *Gehenna.*
“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Malachi 4:1).

Burning as stubble suggests not only annihilation but something quick and final. And if there is annihilation, in no way does the Bible suggest that a period of punishment in hell would not take place first for some individuals, perhaps varying lengths of time depending on the degree of sin in a person’s life. There must be punishment if the “books” are opened on Judgment Day and each person who has not claimed the coverage of Christ’s blood must pay for his own sin:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:12-15).

If humans are judged according to their works, punishment must vary with the degree of wickedness. One would be hard put to see the fairness of God if the cruel, unrepentant dictator who commits genocide, leads millions into idolatry, and dies unpunished suffers the same eternal fate after leaving this world as the regular heathen who simply refuses to look at Christ. The Pentateuch certainly metes out punishments depending on the severity of the crime, i.e., an eye for an eye, etc. (Leviticus 24:20).
God is a fire: Here is an interesting thought. God is described as a fire in the Law: “The Lord thy God is a consuming fire” (Deuteronomy 4:24). That is why no human can come to Him without the “asbestos suit” of Jesus Christ. We see a suggestion of this in the account of Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego, seen with a mysterious fourth person (Christ?) as they survive the fiery furnace in Babylon (Daniel 3).

Conclusions

Unsaved “Christians”: People generally have no problem with the idea of heaven. What they often will not accept, even as professing Christians, is that there is a Lake of Fire, a hell, a dark precipice lying beyond the edge of a cliff towards which all humans are moving when they enter this world. Because of this lack of acceptance, many who call themselves Christians are not saved.

Saved from a bad habit? Many in the church think salvation refers to getting rid of a bad habit like drinking or spousal abuse; or recovering from some illness. These things are trivial in comparison to the Lake of Fire. Humans only wake up to Christ when they focus on eternity and perceive the reality of the horror from which His death rescues us.

Eternal reminder?: It could be that one purpose of having the Lake of Fire burning eternally and visible to those in heaven, as suggested in Isaiah 66:23-24, would be as a reminder to those who are saved. Its presence would keep them from complacency, from thoughts of the kind of rebellion that got Satan evicted from heaven. However, it is hard to fathom how God would relieve the pain anyone would feel if they knew that certain loved ones were in that horrible place. Perhaps He will erase them completely from our memory, as it suggests in Revelation 21:4.
**Universal imagery:** Evidence strongly suggests that humans sense a place of darkness and torment looming up ahead. There would not be a universal need for religion if there were no intimation of an evil consequence to being separated from God. It seems that God put seeds of knowledge in our psyche from conception. The sense of deserving eternal damnation seems to be born in us. Unless we are sure of a God-given rescue, our natural reaction is to refuse to believe this consciously.

**Catch 22:** It is a “Catch 22” situation: *It is too scary to accept the reality of the Lake of Fire unless I perceive the rescue, but the rescue will be irrelevant until I think the Lake of Fire is real.*

God alone can cut into our denial and unbelief. Humans can fully face the Lake of Fire when they know they have escaped it and are safe inside God’s arms. As the fire becomes more real to us, so will the gravitational pull that keeps us clinging to God and His provision of Christ, the substitutionary blood atonement that saves us.

**Scripture references:** Some may burn in the Lake of Fire unendingly, possibly with different levels of torment. Some, probably most, may burn quickly. Either way, it is unaffordable to let oneself go there. Plenty of Christians argue their way out of believing a loving God could possibly subject humans to the fire. They should look at all the Scripture references to it and reconsider, especially when God offers us a very easy way of escape.

**The resurrection?** As for the bodily resurrection we hope for, Jesus talks of Exodus 3:6, where God says He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the living, not the dead. From this we can understand that these patriarchs are alive and present with God (Matthew 22:23).
Chapter Three

How does perfectionism harm us?

The sin=death/hell equation exists somewhere in the human mind. It says one is doomed if one is even a tad short of perfection. This equation is the underlying structure of all religions. Humans devise false doctrines to cope with this fearful message when they are either unaware of the Law’s unique offer of a viable way to escape damnation and be forgiven by God, or if they are in rebellion against Him.

The heresies are of two types: 1. that one can attain compliance with an all-encompassing, harsh, unmerciful law lacking forgiveness: i.e., you can make yourself perfect; and 2. there is grace with no law, involving denial of the concept of sin: i.e., you are already perfect and simply need to accept this as fact. These are the two prevalent perfectionist heresies alive in false religions, including phony versions of Christianity.\(^{36}\)

The heresies not only keep people lost to God and doomed, but they have some bad effects on the human personality. Of course, personality flaws pale in importance compared to staying on the road to hell. However, they are worth looking at as symptoms of the subterfuges commonly used to cope with the sin=death/hell equation. The mental health profession can only offer superficial help because it never reaches the correct diagnosis of the underlying conflict. This chapter looks at the short- and long-term harmful outcomes of the heresies and the differing personality styles associated with them.

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Two perfectionist heresies

1. **Law with no grace, or merciless legalism.** A law with no grace is another name for merciless legalism. This heresy puts people in full or partial denial of their sinfulness, deluded that they have atoned or can atone for sin through good works or suffering. In the Christian version, merciless legalists strut around engaging in the deceit that they are “Christ-like” and that they keep the commandments of God. Instead of being the breast-beating repentant publican in the parable told by Jesus, they are the smug, self-satisfied Pharisee (Luke 18). They maintain that if ever there was sin in their lives, now it is gone, or at least almost so. Blind to the mercy of God, they can have no mercy on others.

2. **Antinomian “not under the law” doctrine.** The idea of grace with no Law appeals because if there are no clear rules from God, nothing is a sin. Antinomians see the deity as all-tolerant. They see themselves as righteous because they think there is no Law to condemn them. Sometimes they even renounce the concept of sin.

In both of these situations people are blind to their depravity and the deadly consequence of even one false step. Perfectionist doctrine is keeping them on the road to the Lake of Fire.

**Crippling effects on human personality**

Both heresies have crippling effects on the human personality, breeding psychological symptoms of a profound inner conflict. Sometimes the problems are serious enough to make people seek psychiatric help, but psychiatry does not have the solution. The maladjustment stems from the human psyche’s mostly subconscious attempts to flee from the threat of the Lake of Fire.
How does perfectionism harm us?

Human complexity and Sigmund Freud
Humans have been given an amazing mind. After all, we are made in the image of God. His mind must be more complex than anything we can ever imagine. God can know billions of humans so intimately that He hears every thought and can number the hairs on their heads. This is impossible for us to fully comprehend but thinking about it helps us understand how humans can be capable of operating at more than one level at the same time.

The mind’s intricacy means that humans can appear sane on the surface despite roiling chaos inside. Sigmund Freud and his followers made a brilliant analysis of this. They went exploring in the caves of the human psyche, finding that humans invent self-deceits to enable themselves to hide from threatening truths. He called these lies “defense mechanisms.”

Innate conflict: the sin/hell equation
Based on Freud, the three basic elements of the human psyche are 1., the sin nature (like Freud’s “id”) which conflicts with 2., the sin=death/hell equation derived from Part One of the Law (like Freud’s “superego,” except it is probably inborn), mediated by 3., an umpiring part of the self (Freud’s “ego”) that tries to cope with, if not resolve, the conflict between the other two parts. This model is not inconsistent with the Bible, and it is a useful description of what goes on in humans.


38 For a fuller explanation of this, see the author’s (1992) book Hell and Madness; Grace and Sanity: the true biblical basis for mental health. Berkeley, CA: Ransom Press, a division of Grace and Sanity Ministries (P.O. Box 1172, Crescent City, CA 95531). Free pdf download from www.graceandsanityministries.org.
Existential guilt and psychological defense mechanisms

We call the inborn awareness that humans deserve damnation “existential guilt.” As Sigmund Freud clearly saw, guilt is at the bottom of every form of psychological maladjustment. What Freud did not realize is that the source of this guilt has nothing to do with human sexuality. It is far more serious: the sense of deserving eternal separation from God for falling short of perfection. It is deep and pervasive, accompanied by terror of the blackness ahead.

Due to its apparent universality, there is reason to believe that the damming sin/hell equation (from Part One of the Law) is written into the human heart from conception. It is genetic equipment that has existed since humans disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. One sin was all it took to separate humans eternally from a perfectly holy God.

The problem

The sin nature and the thoughts and behavior that stem from it—fall short of God’s Law. Humans sense this and know deep inside that they deserve separation from God.

This explains how Adam and Eve knew they were naked, or uncovered, after they disobeyed the one rule that God laid down for them. They sensed they were now under indictment. Dreadful knowledge entered them when they ate the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They knew they were doomed, although they had no clear idea what that meant—nobody had died up until then.

“Knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecclesiastes 1:18).

Now the human race came under a Law nobody, that is, no human, could possibly keep in entirety, a Law that damned them for every slight deviation. Yet even as death for the entire
creation would follow this one act of disobedience, God also promised to provide a way humans could escape eternal separation from Him through the “seed of the woman,” a veiled reference to Christ (Genesis 3:15). In the Law, particularly the book of Leviticus, God promised to forgive sins when humans approached Him sprinkled with the blood of a sacrificed Lamb; i.e., substitutionary atonement. This is the part of the Law that is ignored by most of today’s Christendom, the all-important, wonderful grace.

Fracturing of the psyche
Humans are universally aware that imperfection (flaws, sins, shortcomings, missing the mark in any way) dooms them. It is the reason why they invent religion, and why they cling to its promise of reaching perfection through their own efforts, even when an inner voice tells them this is impossible. If they reject the Law God gave Moses, the only source of God’s grace, humans are stuck. They try to find a human route to safety when one does not exist, which leads to a very weird and fractured psyche.

Lack of psychological integrity plus worldly stress and genetic weakness can lead to full-blown madness. Whether conscious of it or not, all of us have a war in the psyche that can only be won by receiving the blood of Christ that pays the penalty for our sin.

Existential guilt and low self-esteem
Existential guilt is a sense of being separated from a holy God, unworthy of connection with Him, and under indictment to be burned in the fire as sinners. This awareness comes up to the surface in disguised ways, such as an inability to relax or feel acceptance towards oneself, often called low self-esteem. Humans cannot like or approve of themselves when their very humanity dooms them; as imperfect beings they are indeed unworthy of salvation and cannot change that. The only valid, non-toxic, honest view of oneself is that of a forgiven sinner,
loved by God despite our flaws. We can never make ourselves one hundred percent pure and sinless, worthy of salvation through our own efforts. That does not mean we stay lost. Salvation is a total, undeserved gift from God. We can regard ourselves with relief as forgiven sinners, to whom God will impute the perfection of Jesus Christ if we lay claim to it.

**Personality arising from a sense of unworthiness**

Until a person claims that gift, their lack of self-acceptance gets projected on other people: *nobody loves me*. This can reach a state of paranoia: *other people are out to harm me*. Furthermore, because humans do not accept themselves and think they are unacceptable to others, they also do not accept others. This leads to poor interpersonal relationships all round. The further humans are from God, the more we find the effects of this: depression, social isolation, a high divorce rate, and on and on.

**Existential guilt and humanism**

Our ears are itchy for unsound doctrine telling us we are good. Humanism, a religious philosophy adopted by the mental health profession, is a left-wing form of perfectionism that rejects the very concept of sin. Humanists think we should like ourselves, and if we do not, it is the fault of the society around us. They invent positive self-affirmations that stick in the craw because the feeling of personal flawedness keeps coming up. The most comforting and true view of oneself is that one is a forgiven sinner, which incorporates both parts of the Law: indictment and mercy.

**Defense mechanisms: why unsaved humans don’t always seem crazy?**

If humans are born knowing they are damned eternally, everyone who has not claimed the blood of Christ should be crazy. How could anyone facing this horror ever come close to seeming sane? The answer lies in our ability to separate our
How does perfectionism harm us?

conscious awareness from what we know at a sub- or unconscious level.

**Overview of common psychological defense mechanisms**

Let us take a look at some of the common types of defense mechanism that humans employ to lie to themselves. We all use them, but less and less so once we have a good grasp on the truth. Until people are safely and firmly inside the “salvation ship,” i.e., God’s loving and forgiving arms, much of their thought process involves creating ways to cope with a sense of impending doom. Either they run from conscious knowledge of it or delude themselves that they are working their way out of it.

A variety of psychological walls, lights and mirrors keep threatening information out of consciousness. Some of the defense mechanisms act completely below the surface. Others can filter up into consciousness so a person is partly aware of them. The defenses enable humans to deceive themselves about the tormenting realities of their existence: prosecution by the Law (Part One), hell, sin, the sin/death equation, human depravity, the Lake of Fire, Satan, and the omniscience of God, who seems unmerciful. Its universality suggests that this knowledge is born into us, programmed into humans from conception, inerasable. The inherent conflict it creates cannot be cured by a cover up, by distortion, or by tampering with it in any way. At best, the defense equipment only softens the sound of the rumbling of the war raging below the surface.

Psychological defenses are smoke screens, simple or complex ways of skewing reality. They are mechanisms to avoid facing truth that is too horrible to comprehend outside of the safety of the “salvation ship.” Even after a person gains the assurance of salvation, the defenses continue to operate until pushed back by the action of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the sin/death=hell equation continues to be hard to face despite a person’s grasp of salvation from the Lake of Fire through the blood of Christ. However, the
deeper the grasp of that assurance, the weaker the defenses become, and the more a person becomes sane.

Perfectionists use many different kinds of psychological defenses to try to run away from reality. Massive denial and repression are ways to hide the truth below the surface of consciousness where there is some secondary type of defense such as dissociation, displacement, and projection. These secondary processes create an alternate, fabricated reality.

Denial of sin
Beside the all-important eternal result of rejecting the need for the sin-bearer who paid the penalty for us, there are far-reaching worldly ramifications to the denial of sin. One is that a person does not learn from mistakes when sin and blame are projected on outside agents. Nothing’s wrong with me. You are the one in the wrong. I make you into a screen showing a movie of my faults, only I am not consciously aware I am doing this. I see only you as being at fault. The next step is blame: You’re the one who’s responsible for my shortcomings. A further step is reaction formation. I attack individuals or groups that manifest my repressed sin. I engage in splitting, going from idealizing you to completely devaluing you after I find the first flaw, with no shades of grey in my thinking.

I float on a raft of self-righteousness in a sea of guilt, doing my best to avoid getting wet. I am still riddled with self-condemnation below the surface. That never-ending inner voice tells me when I sin and that I am doomed by it. Hard as I try, I never manage to completely subdue it. It keeps coming up in my dreams until I can barely sleep any more. The truth gets cut up and stored into different memory banks under the surface, processes known as isolation and compartmentalization. I want to keep the law-breaking parts of myself out of sight, away from moral evaluation.
How does perfectionism harm us?

On a more conscious level, truth can be distorted by processes of justification and intellectualization to ease the conflict between behavior and conscience. I designate wrong things I do as “O.K.” things. Moral defenses are justifications or excuses for sin, arguments concocted by an inner “attorney.” Everybody does it so why shouldn’t I? It wasn’t stealing, it was redistribution of wealth. It wasn’t murder, it was mercy killing.

Pride

Guilt is transformed into its very opposite, pride. Not only do I twist my sin into a “good thing,” I even deceive myself that I am proud of it. I shove down the bubbles of guilt so they are temporarily drowned in the sea of my subconscious mind. Then the guilt goes on some destructive submarine missions, causing pathological symptom patterns, emotional and physical ones ranging from panic attacks to psychosomatic illness with a loss of reality, the absence of spontaneity, and forfeiture of peace.

Satan’s pride led to his eviction from the place he had next to God (Isaiah 14:12-20). Then Satan manipulated Eve through her pride. He tempted her with the ego-bolstering promise that “ye shall be as gods” (Genesis 3:5). Pride factors strongly in perfectionism. It is a basic element of our corrupt human nature, one of the most invisible sins. It leads to the delusion that we are not only good but also omnipotent, an attribute that belongs only to God. Through pride we deceive ourselves about our ability to make ourselves perfect.

Losing touch with reality

As the inner conflict becomes increasingly intense, it needs more defense mechanisms to shore it up. Reality gets pushed even further away. However, a voice somewhere in me says I’m doomed even when I am covered by layers of psychological defense.
Existential guilt and the fear that goes with it cannot be erased by psychological defenses. *Like the fairy tale princess who felt the pea under a huge pile of thick mattresses, I can lie on a mound of defenses and still feel uneasy. The guilt will not let me completely relax.*

The awareness of deserving eternal damnation is constantly being triggered during our journey through this world. Anything will spark it, any transgression, even the most minor one.

**Defensive pseudo-atonement**

“Pseudo-atonement” is a term the writer coined for a different type of defense mechanism than those previously mentioned. This type of defense strives to atone for sin through human suffering or good work. Of course, the Bible makes it very clear that human performance is ineffectual for that purpose. Human works are as “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6); blood alone pays the penalty for sin. However, until humans have confidence in the blood of Christ, God-given salvation, they are subconsciously driven to find a way to avoid the Lake of Fire.

**Pseudo-atonement versus massive repression**

Pseudo-atonement is much more characteristic of merciless legalists than antinomians. Merciless legalists derive a sense of self-acceptance, even pride, from their attainments and/or their suffering. Superficially, they believe this is progress towards attaining salvation through their own efforts.

Antinomians are not without pride, either, but they boast about being “good people” in a more general and less specific way than merciless legalists. They refuse to admit there is even such

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39 “Pseudo-atonement” is a term coined by the author. It receives considerable attention in her books entitled: (1992) *Hell and Madness; Grace and Sanity: the true biblical basis for mental health.* Berkeley, CA: Ransom Press, a division of Grace and Sanity Ministries, P.O. Box 1172, Crescent City CA 95531; and (2010) *The Deadly Perfectionism Trap, same publisher.*
a thing as sin, so they perceive no need for atonement. They are more likely to use massive repression of their true nature.

**False religions and pseudo-atonement**

All false religions are based on the doctrine of perfection rather than grace, thus they all lead humans into deep repression of their sinfulness or attempting to atone for sin through good deeds, religious rituals, self purification, suffering, masochism and/or self-sabotage.

Sigmund Freud referred to Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder as a private religion, an apt description. The compulsive rituals have an unconscious goal of atoning for sin, cleansing oneself from guilt. The guilt is temporarily alleviated through pseudo-atonement, but it soon demands some new act of contrition. Human attempts to atone lead only to despair as they cannot pay for sin and enable a person to avoid eternal darkness.

**Universality of the blood sacrifice**

An important point to note is that peoples all over the world, regardless of whether or not they know of the substitutionary blood covenant in the Bible, use blood sacrifices. The blood is either human (their own or somebody else’s) or animal, but the goal—at least on a subconscious level—is to appease some deity. It suggests that a sense of the essentialness of blood atonement is born into the human psyche. This would explain the presence of the phenomenon in Bible-naive parts of the world or among individuals who have not been exposed to the Bible.

There is a current trend of self-mutilation in this country. Those caught up in the fad for body piercing say they find a sense of relief when they do this. The same relief is expressed

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by the arm-cutters who suffer from severe depression and/or personality disorders. Why? This is a blood sacrifice.

The most extreme form of blood sacrifice is to kill a human being. Interestingly, there seems to be an innate sense that the sacrificed individual must be without sin. That is why infants and young adult virgin females have historically been the victims. The problem, however, is that children and virgin women are sinners. The sin nature is present in the womb, so the death of a human sinner cannot redeem anyone. Only the blood of a non-sinner, i.e., Christ, is acceptable to holy, pure God. Defiled human blood cannot be in His presence.

Perhaps God gives us a hint of a rescuer in the law that he prints into our hearts. If the sense of a way out is present in us, it is a dim one, in need of the information from His Word to make it real. We need specific knowledge of the substitute blood atonement covenant fulfilled in Christ. Without that information, the sense of a way out can deceive humans into taking things in their own hands. However, pseudo-atonement only provides temporary relief, if any at all.

Differences between merciless legalist and antinomian defenses and the personalities that go along with them

Superficially dissimilar sorts of people are found in the left- and right-wings of the doctrine of perfection (see the chart on page 13). Although both types suffer from the same existential conflict, the merciless legalist copes with it differently than the liberal/antinomian. In the following section we will see two distinct patterns of character pathology.

Two types of perfectionist dissociation

Individuals trapped in the right and left wings of perfectionism reject—or dissociate from—the moral code and the awareness of sin in different ways:
How does perfectionism harm us?

1. Dissociation from the moral code
   Whereas merciless legalists delude themselves they are keeping themselves safe from eternal damnation (or separation from the deity) by their own actions, left-winger liberals (“antinomians”) refuse to believe in a damning moral code.

Liberals (antinomians)
Liberals employ the primitive defense of repression on a massive scale to push the sin=death/hell equation out of consciousness. Any law that defines humans or their behavior as corrupt must be rejected, along with people or events that are reminders of it.

Although the law may be thrust out of consciousness, it is still active below the surface. In the subconscious realm, there is constant conflict because the law is at odds with nearly all human thought, words and deeds. It cannot be erased, but it has a way of pushing itself into consciousness. Defenses can only keep it out of sight temporarily, and they wear out under the strain. This means that new modes of defense must constantly be devised. It is like constantly re-paving the surface of an active landslide. There is no peace of mind under perfectionism.

The definitive characteristic of the antinomian is overall repression and denial of the Part One of the Law, or any law. They will say: I’m not under the law, I’m under grace. Despite this superficial avowal of being under grace, the antinomian has no true concept of it. There’s no law, no punishment, and no sin, so I’m clean. That is not what God says:

“There is none that doeth good, no not one.” (Psalm 14:1, 3).

Liberals do not want to hear this. So they pick verses here and there to assist their self-deception, like:

“All things are lawful for me; but all things are not expedient” (1 Corinthians 10:23).
This verse is used by sin-denying antinomians to say “anything goes.”

Merciless Legalists
Merciless legalists also push large segments of the moral code out of sight. Unlike the global antinomian kind of dissociation, right wing dissociation from the Law is selective and spotty. Right wingers will say: *I keep the law. I don’t cuss, gamble, cheat on my spouse or rob banks.* They may adopt aspects of the “law of Paul” selectively, admitting certain codes into consciousness, applying various types of self-deceit so they can say they keep those codes.

2. Dissociation from the “dark side”
Perfectionism involves not only dissociation from the moral code but also denial of the “dark side,” the sin nature. Outside of grace, nobody can afford to know who he really is. The truth will tell him there is no hope of escaping hell through human efforts. Only inside the “salvation ship,” relaxing in the forgiveness of God, is it safe to know oneself. In that place, all three parts of the human psyche—the sin nature, the Law, and the ego—can become fully integrated.

However, even those truly saved by grace may never fully admit how thoroughly corrupt we humans are in thought, word and deed. Blind spots are plentiful even in mature believers. Although the blind spots decrease in number and strength as the process of sanctification continues, only God sees us accurately. Residual fear can get in the way of our facing the truth about our depravity. We wonder: *Does God really forgive to the uttermost?* Pride also keeps us wanting to think we are good

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41 A discussion of what Paul meant here is found in Chapter Six on the liberal/antinomian misuse of the New Testament.
people but, fortunately, God has His way of puncturing that vanity.

**Merciless legalist case study**

Here is a close-up of a person under the right wing form of perfectionism. Suzie, a forty-year-old woman, had become increasingly overwhelmed in the workplace and at home. At work, the boss was piling on her more than she could handle, yet she felt unable to say anything about it. Her attitude was that she must be a superwoman, always in control, handling everything perfectly. At home, she felt responsible for the welfare of everyone in her family. She blamed herself as an inadequate mother when her daughter had asthma attacks. When her parents divorced and her mother became ill, it was because she was inadequate as a daughter. When her house became a little messy, it meant she was inadequate as a wife.

Suzie became increasingly depressed and began suffering occasional panic attacks over a period of six months. Things came to a head when she made a mistake at work. A fellow employee did not receive her paycheck. Suzie was upset about it to a degree that was out of proportion to the actual event. She felt totally worthless and condemned. A terrible panic attack was accompanied by a strong urge to try to kill herself by jumping out of the window. She only resisted this urge through the intervention of a fellow employee, who suggested that she get professional help.

Alone in the kitchen a few days later on a mental health leave, she turned on the oven fully and did not light it, staying next to it in the kitchen for several minutes until her daughter found her. Fortunately she was unharmed physically. But now the guilt about traumatizing her daughter was added to her bulging burden.

Suzie made reference to Buddhism in her first counseling session, but my probes revealed that her interest was only
shallow, and it evaporated when she saw how its demand for perfection fed into her malady. She later mentioned that although she was not a church member, she had a Protestant background and several strong Christians in her family. Up to this point, her idea of Christianity had been a perfectionist one. However, a new understanding of the reality of the forgiveness of God through Christ made all the difference. She began to heal as she focused on God’s forgiveness.

In the course of therapy, Suzie’s harsh, perfectionist attitude towards herself gradually softened as she realized that God does not demand perfect performance and that He freely offers forgiveness. She saw that God loves her unconditionally, and that by claiming Christ as the payment for all her sin, mistakes, and human weaknesses, she could have peace of mind not only about matters in this world but on the all-important eternal level. She saw she had eternal security.

Six months later Suzie was doing very well, able to cope with being an imperfect human being, facing her errors as forgiven. Now she knew the power of praying to a listening Father Who strengthened and loved her. All her relationships took on a newly peaceful quality. She was more appreciative towards her husband. Her relationship with her mother warmed as she stopped seeing in her only her own failure as a daughter and began to have compassion for her unsaved state. Instead of worrying incessantly about her family, she prayed for them and felt relief. Her house could be messy at times without triggering feelings of inadequacy. At work she was able to tell her boss when she was being over-loaded, and she found that her boss treated her with more consideration. She continued to be highly conscientious but not driven; there was evidence of a balanced overview because she was able to remind herself of the importance of having been rescued from hell and given eternal life to look forward to. One thing she learned to tell herself about adversity and upset was: “This is temporary, God is in
control, Jesus paid the penalty.” This would stop her obsessing over small details.

**Merciless legalist personality foundation**

Here is the thinking of right wing perfectionism: *There is a law, I must and can keep it perfectly, and I am working my way out of eternal damnation. I can make myself pure and good. As I do good deeds and train my mind to think only good thoughts, I can eventually purge all the negativity out of myself. I must work harder and harder to get rid of my flaws and escape from damnation.*

In actuality the person is repressing sinful thoughts or projecting them on outside agents. Plus, a merciless, task-master ego is cracking the whip to enable them to gain the illusion of atonement through good works and other forms of pseudo-atonement. When the psychological defenses snap under pressure, the underlying guilt and terror will break through in the form of panic attacks or other psychopathology. That was what was happening to Suzie. Along with depression, a natural outgrowth of living in a state of no hope, she was experiencing panic coming from the unconscious sense of facing eternal separation from God.

**Driven, controlling merciless legalists**

Merciless legalists tend to be driven, controlling, guilt-riddled, compulsive types like this woman. They repress the existential conflict to a lesser extent than antinomians, meaning it is closer to the surface. The desperate drive for perfection is acted out in any area of life. Suzie had been using her work as a primary tool to strive for perfection. This is a very common site for pseudo-atonement, superficially more innocuous than many others.⁴²

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⁴² For an example of a less common site for pseudo-atonement, consider anorexia nervosa. An anorexic projects the sense of sin onto body fat, deluding herself she can avoid sin and hell by eliminating fat.
Merciless legalists can never feel at rest. The law inside tells them that they can never do enough to atone for sin. There is always one more finishing touch to make on any task they carry out. The result is that they become increasingly compulsive and driven. Their human relationships tend to be cold and demanding, just as we see in the woman’s relations with her mother. They cannot accept flaws in others any more than they can accept their own short-fallings.

Pseudo-atonement, or false atonement, is a tool that is greatly used by right wing perfectionists to try to pay the penalty for sin. It temporarily relieves the inner voice that tells a person they deserve eternal punishment. However, only death pays the penalty for sin. Therefore the effect of pseudo-atonement is brief; it cannot permanently arrest existential guilt. The underlying reason this woman was depressed and panicky was because deep down she knew that all her striving was futile. She could delude herself that this was not so until she was confronted with a blatant error at work. At the time, she was exhausted and her normal defense structure was not functioning properly. This sent her over the edge, which had the wonderful result of leading her to the truth about Christ. She has now reached a level of maturity only possible through salvation.

**Antinomian “not under the law” case study**

Here is a case study of a person with an antinomian personality. Steve, who came to me for marital counseling, liked to cross-dress. He often wore nylons and other items of women’s underwear under his regular clothes and, whenever he had the opportunity, he would present himself to the world fully dressed in women’s clothing. He claimed to be a Christian; his wife was a Seventh Day Adventist who regularly attended church, but he stayed at home. He said he did not go with her because it was a “law” church.
The cross-dressing was not a problem for him, Steve said, but he could not understand why it was a dilemma for his wife, who was quite vocal about the fact that she hated it. My client could not understand his wife’s revulsion to his dressing habit and when the two both came for counseling, he said he felt his wife was the one with the problem. She needed to change her attitude and give him more room to be himself.

By focusing on his wife, Steve was avoiding the truth. The cross-dressing was something he had been doing for years. He was very attached to it and found it gave him a certain relief from tension. He did it more often when he was under stress in his work, not conscious of the fact that it was creating stress in his marriage. The habit had been causing such tension that there was now a huge wall between his wife and himself. However, he refused to take any responsibility for his role in this. His wife should understand him better, that was the whole problem.

However, though there was truth to the idea that Steve’s wife needed to be more understanding and forgiving, that did not mean Steve did not need to change. He liked to believe that the Bible gave God’s blessing to his donning of women’s clothes because he was “under grace now and not under the law.” Therefore he, not God, could be the arbiter of his behavior. His misconceived notion that God in no way disapproved of his female attire was based on certain verses taken from Paul’s letter to the Galatians, especially:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even on this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Galatians 5:14).

He thought he was fulfilling this commandment when that was far from the case. He would not consider any arguments from the Law God gave to Moses to contradict this but he did accept the authority of Paul in I Corinthians 6:9, where the writer defines “effeminate” as a form of unrighteousness. Once he saw this verse, he had to agree that he had no godly basis for insisting
on his cross-dressing habit. His admission that this was a sin led him to focus back on the essentialness and free availability of atonement through Christ. This, in turn, resulted in a deeper sense of grace, which led him to want to please God and his wife.

Consequently, he asked God to remove his cross-dressing habit. This did not lead to any overnight reversal, but a lessening of the habit, a renewal of the marital relationship and a new beginning in the man’s sense of who he was: a forgiven sinner destined for eternal life in heaven instead of eternity in hell. Only a deepening sense of the mercy of God will sustain the motivation to maintain a habit change in more than a superficial way.

Antinomian personality foundation
Long-term disorders of the personality are highly characteristic of people falling under antinomianism. Massive denial and repression of the sense of being a sinner, of the law, and of all elements of the \( \text{sin} = \text{death/hell equation} \) lead to lack of realistic self-awareness and an inability to empathize with others. Here we see self-protective blaming of the other person when things go wrong.

Boundary-less antinomians
Antinomians tend to have boundary-less personalities. They do not accept moral absolutes, outside authorities, or, in this case, the sense of a gender boundary. Their denial of the Law means they have little conscious sense of right or wrong. There is no solid basis for them to say “no” to themselves or others. They are like undisciplined children who have never accepted responsibility for their actions; they lack self-control. In a state of denial regarding Law and sin, they are detached from who they truly are as people and experience a sense of emptiness, a lack of a sense of self.
Ego control develops in humans when they have the appropriate learning experiences, including the right sort of rewards and punishments from loving parent figures. Humans need boundaries, yet they generally have to be imposed on us. This can hurt our prideful egos. Liberal parents make the mistake of being too afraid to crush the child. They think their children will do fine if left to their own devices. Consequently they may not impose even the most basic boundary, such as a regular bed-time. This can have a drastic result. If the sin nature is not restrained, it overpowers the drops of godliness in humans. Undisciplined children become tyrants.

Antinomians are often very angry people, full of rage without knowing why. They have either been raised under too many rules administered in a overbearing and inconsistent way, which leads them to rebel, or they lacked sufficient regulation and it left them feeling unloved. Their parents were either too authoritarian or too permissive, whereas children need a combination of love and tenable rules that are consistently enforced in a reasoning way. Children raised in a permissive environment interpret the lack of chastening as the absence of parental love. Deep down they sense that parental love should involve discipline:

“Chasten thy son while there is hope” (Proverbs 19:18).

Our rebellious nature makes us reject higher authority, particularly when our own parents have been harsh or inconsistent in their use of power over us. As adults, antinomians lack a stable “observing self,” or ego. They have not had the chance to internalize the constellation of coping mechanisms known as ego control. Angry and boundary-less, they may even develop what is known in the clinical psychologist’s world as a “borderline”

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43 This is a different meaning of the word “ego” than the Freudian one. It refers to the prideful and selfish aspect of humans, more like the Freudian concept of the childish “id.”
personality. In this particular disorder, the existential conflict is closer to the surface than is usually the case among antinomian personalities. A borderline is a crazy, needy child inhabiting an adult’s body. Riddled with existential guilt, he copes with it through the use of scape-goating and self-injury, which is the most primitive form of pseudo-atonement—self-punishment that attempts to pay for sin. In reality, he is hungry for knowledge of an unconditionally loving Father who has given him a way out of the desperate situation he senses he is in.

**Antinomianism, narcissism, and humanism in the church**

Our cross-dresser deluded himself that he loved his wife, but true love is sacrificial. It gives in many different ways. This man was making no sacrifice to begin with. He could not empathize with his wife’s desire to be with a real man instead of a man dressed as a woman. His love was narcissistic, it was self-love. As his wife expressed her repugnance towards his dressing habit, he would not even go as far as giving an ear to her. This was a man filled with denial about his callousness towards his wife. He did not see he was far from loving his neighbor, caught up as he was in a narcissistic fantasy world.

Humanistic psychology has made deep inroads into our society, to the point where it is now the national religion, attached to the arm of the popular so-called “liberalism:”

*Do not judge. Tolerate every sin in the name of diversity. Claim that your beliefs follow the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 and 6) because you are against war and you (sometimes) have a warm and fuzzy feeling towards some other person. Love yourself because God loves you. Wrongful actions must not be called “sins.” They are merely “inappropriate.” The rightness or wrongness of something depends on the context. To see ourselves as sinners makes us guilty. It lowers our self-esteem and stops us having nice, healthy pride. Rather, we should see*
How does perfectionism harm us?

ourselves as good people with an occasional tendency to act-out deep unconscious anger derived from bad parenting.

This is not what Jesus was teaching. There is no comparison between genuine forgiveness and superficial tolerance. As for being against war, Jesus says:

“I come not to send peace but a sword” (Matthew 10:24).

He came to heal the rift between man and God, not the chasm between believer and unbeliever.

In essence, moral relativism is one massive defense mechanism. Secular therapies and liberal Christianity try to remove guilt by hacking away at the moral code. Many of today’s Christians will not agree that there are still moral absolutes. They want to replace the Law with something apparently kinder and gentler that appeals to the flesh, and to self-interest, but the God-ordained Law will not be eradicated.

Self-deception about loving the neighbor

Generally, when people say they love their neighbor, they base this self-assessment on a narrow set of specific actions or occasional bursts of emotion, the “good will towards men” reserved for special occasions, especially when under the influence of a couple of glasses of wine.

“As long as I love my neighbor I have fulfilled the law. Forget about the commandments of God, even the Ten Commandments. Forget about anything specific that might define love. Leave things vague and airy fairy. Let me kid myself that I give my

44 In reality, nothing is kinder and gentler than the Law.

45 Some “Christian” antinomians are unwitting right wingers who reject the Old Testament Law with its mercy and adopt a merciless “law of Paul,” discussed in Chapter Six.
neighbor “unconditional love” because I smile at him now and again. Let me delude myself I am being good to my neighbor because I donate my old clothes to a couple of charities and I sometimes give my neighbors a ride in my car if I see them waiting at a bus stop—especially the good looking ones of the opposite sex. I’m a good person because I occasionally give my spare change to panhandlers.

*God will wink when I indulge in my particular vice...like swindling the boss by taking too many coffee breaks, or giving in to road rage and wishing other motorists would have bad accidents, or cheating on my spouse, or robbing siblings of an inheritance. Of course, in my eyes these things will be perfectly justified."

There is nothing new about this. Humans have always used defense mechanisms like denial and justification to permit themselves to do what they like. Did David see he was wrong in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah until God sent Nathan the prophet to show him? No. We are just like David, only God does not send a prophet in the flesh to inform us, He’ll send the Holy Spirit. Also, His Word is available to us. The story of David is in the Old Testament, too often dismissed by today’s church.

**Christ as a mere role model:** The antinomian’s twisted vision of Christ is that He is a mere role model, not our sin-bearer. He looks at Jesus forgiving the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3) as a picture of a tolerant God who no longer punishes such acts. The antinomian will miss out on the fact that Jesus is saying by this act that He is God Who alone has the power to forgive, whose blood alone can pay the penalty for human sin.

Moreover, the continual sense of short-falling adds to an increasing mound of guilt that cannot be assuaged through any human means. One part of the person claims: “Grace, grace, I'm
under grace, I’m not under the law.” At a deeper level outside of consciousness, another part of the person says: “Law, law, I’m under the law and I’m doomed by it.” The unhappy fact is that by rejecting the Law the antinomian also rejects the Savior.

The Law negates antinomianism

Another type of error went with our cross-dresser’s distorted notion of the Law. This was that love for his neighbor, if it were to truly exist, would negate all the other edicts of the Law, even loving God and keeping the Ten Commandments. This was based on his notion of Galatians 5:14, a verse often quoted out of context and misused by antinomians. The verse presents no new law; it is a distillation of the Law, a summary. A summary tells you what a book is about; it is not a substitute for a book. Paul is affirming the words of Christ on the Law.

Love

Indeed, the Law God gave to Moses does boil down to love: Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Take Deuteronomy 30:16:

"Love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply:"

and Deuteronomy 6:5:

“...and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

Leviticus 19:18 states:

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The Ten Commandments display the practical, logical order of love. The first four commands define ways to love God; the second six define how to love the neighbor. Humans are only
going to obey the second six of the Ten Commandments when they are inspired by God to observe the first four. Jesus emphasizes in Mark 12:30-33:

"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like namely this. Thou thou love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Love is the pinnacle of the Law that sits on top of all the individual edicts. All the 633 commandments in the Law specify ways in which God wants us to manifest this love. The commands apply as much to the heart as to outward behavior. Outside of ourselves, only God knows when we are obeying His command to love, and we cannot make ourselves do it. It is inspired by the fact that first He loved us. Paying attention to the Law builds closeness with Him. Ignoring it keeps us in denial about our depravity and deprives us of the opportunity to appreciate the enormity of His mercy towards us.

Respect for Part One of the Law is inspired by the mercy we find in Part Two, which leads us to Love God and love our neighbors in that we at least want them not to go to the Lake of

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46 By the way, the neighbor includes foreigners and enemies. Jesus clarifies that when he is asked who "my neighbor" is and he tells the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10. In the parable, in spite of the fact that Samaritans knew they were detested by the Jews, one of them shows great kindness in helping a robbed and beaten Jew who was ignored by several of his own people. Every statement Jesus made reiterated Scripture. Salvation was always open to non-Israelites. And Israelites were mandated to love them. That is spelled out in Leviticus 19:34 "But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be as one born among you and thou shalt love him as thyself."

47 All codes in the Law are ways to manifest love in thought or action.
How does perfectionism harm us?

Fire. Nobody loves their neighbor without first knowing God loves them, the proof being His gift of salvation.

Antinomian perfectionists like Steve get no ammunition from Galatians 5:14, despite what they think. Outside of God’s grace, a person under perfectionism can at best only appear to love his neighbor, smiling at them through clenched teeth. This doctrine only leads to outer conformity coupled with inner rebellion. Grace is what transforms the heart. Only by being filled with God’s love can humans love each other.

Conclusion: perfectionism is harmful both short-and long-term

This chapter looked at the long-term and short-term outcomes of the right and left wings of perfectionism, which we call merciless legalism and antinomianism.

The long term effect

Let us keep in mind that any psychological harm done by heresy pales in comparison to the long term effect: keeping a person on track for the Lake of Fire.

The short term: personality flaws

Outside of the gift of a rescue from God, humans are forced into the trap of perfectionism with its two self-deceptions: either they can make themselves flawless (right wing) or that they are already perfect, because there is no such thing as sin (left wing). Perfectionism has some drastic effects on the human personality. It causes increasingly deep fractures in the psyche as people develop psychological defense mechanisms to cope with existential guilt.

Left and right wing differences

Two actual cases illustrate differences in personality associated with the right and left wings of perfectionism. Compared to antinomian types, merciless legalists more often try to pay for
their sin using pseudo-atonement. Since their guilt and anxiety are relatively close to the surface, they are more consciously aware of being flawed; they hear that inner voice of condemnation more often.

Antinomians, on the other hand, tend to use massive repression to keep the conflict far from consciousness. Because of this, the merciless legalists are closer to the truth, and are probably more likely to receive the gospel when God sends it to them.

The truth

The truth is, God’s mercy, or grace, is intrinsic to the Law, woven right into it. Only the Law offers humans peace of mind and psychological integrity. Blindness to it means not seeing Christ as the payment for sin but as a perfect role model to follow, or merely a giver of better health and well-being in this world. There can be little peace of mind or appreciation of God unless people see that Christ's death, a gift to humans from God, is the essential and sufficient payment of the penalty for human sin, and humans’ only hope of escaping the fire. Who cares about a rescue if there is no danger?

Heresy makes humans miss the one God-given way out of the Lake of Fire. Blinded by lies or by their own stubbornness, they fail to see the mercy of God. It should be obvious that nothing compares to being saved from the fire. Nevertheless, we humans can be extraordinarily near sighted. We are all a little that way, failing to see beyond the next meal, or the next week, or the next summer. The Lake of Fire has little reality for us but it must sink in if we are to grasp the God-given lifebelt and avoid it. There exists in humans an inner fear of something horrible lying beyond the grave, a concern only assuaged by Christ. Said Paul:

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (I Corinthians 15:19).
Chapter Four:

The gospel in the Law

To say “the gospel in the Law” is the same as saying “grace in the Law.” The Law, or Pentateuch, authorizes the grace, or mercy, of God. He promises in writing to forgive human sinners and save them from the fire into eternal life on condition that they make an offering to Him of the blood of an unblemished animal killed in its prime: a picture of sinless Jesus murdered at the age of thirty three.

What Christ says about the Law and prophets

In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Before his death, Lazarus had been a helpless beggar covered in sores that were licked by dogs. All day he lay on the ground by the rich man’s table, waiting to feed on falling crumbs. After the two men die, their positions reverse. A great gulf separates them in Hades; the rich man is now in a place of burning torment, and Lazarus, who must have availed himself of salvation through the blood atonement, lies in “Abraham’s bosom.” In his misery, the rich man sees Lazarus and cries out to him to come and cool his tongue. Abraham tells him this cannot happen, the gulf between them is impassable. The rich man then asks Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five living family members so they can avoid this place of torment. Abraham replies:

"They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them."

The rich man argues:

"Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."
But Abraham replies:

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Jesus is saying that the Law is essential to our belief in Him as the One who took on our punishment, then rose from the dead. A similar message is found in John 5:46-47, where Jesus says to the Jews who want to kill him:

“For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

After Christ was raised from the dead and His own followers did not recognize Him, Jesus again went to Scripture to show them that Moses and the prophets had spoken of His resurrection:

“...O Fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory: And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:25-27).

Christ also said:

“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

The apostles’ affirmation of the Law and prophets

The followers of Christ who preached to the Jews used the Law and the prophets, too. Acts 17:2 tells us that Paul typically used the Scriptures to show people why they should believe Jesus is Christ; Acts 18 also describes Apollos at Ephesus teaching the Jews in public using the Scriptures. These passages point us towards the importance of the Old Testament, which is full of the
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The gospel, studded with clear references to Jesus. Failure to appreciate this eventually leads to disbelief in the atoning blood and resurrection. If people do not believe Christ rose from the dead, they will not accept that Christ is the Son of God whose blood pays for their sins.

The Law: the foundation of salvation by faith

It is too bad that so many in the church, and in general, are ignorant of the Old Testament when it is full of clear pictures of Christ, that he is our savior. God uses poetic language in the form of similes, metaphors, true stories and tangible events that have profound meaning. The pictures evoke images reaching deep into the human subconscious realm.

The Old Testament is the basis for our belief in salvation as a gift of mercy from God. It lays out the law of the substitutionary blood atonement for sin, i.e., that God will accept the physical death of a substitute in place of the spiritual death of the human sinner. Leviticus 17:11 spells out that law (see page 9). It is a very good verse to remember, particularly the last part:

“...for it is blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

This one verse alone totally refutes perfectionism, i.e., that human works can and must atone for sin. The blood of an unblemished substitute for the sinner is the necessary ingredient, ultimately the blood of Christ. The blood atonement provision for transgression in God's Law allows law-breakers to be forgiven at the existential level. They might suffer worldly punishments or consequences for their misdeeds but they do not lose out on eternal life in heaven, they avoid the Lake of Fire, and they are no longer separated from God. The only requirement under the New Testament is that they “cover” themselves with faith in the perfection of Christ’s shed blood. God will look at us through the lens of perfect Christ and see us as if we were as pure as He is.
The Law repeatedly affirms God's provision of a way out of damnation for lawbreakers. It paves the way for Christ to take the place of the atoning lamb, the substitute acceptable to God as payment for human sin. Before the New Testament, humans were to provide blood payments from their own flock. But when God had His Son die for us on the cross, that one event paid (or atoned) for all human sin, for all time, as long as a person claimed the coverage. Christ’s blood is our bail money, our redemption fee that buys us out of separation from God. To redeem is to buy back something that belonged to you. His blood buys us back to God from Satan’s clutch.

In the most basic way, the Old and New Testaments are united in their message for us. There is no reason to fear the Law. We need it. When Paul and Silas went to preach the gospel in the synagogue of the Greek Jews in Berea, the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to see if Paul was telling the truth (Acts 17:11). They only believed him because what he told them was consistent with the Old Testament.

Today we should do the same as the Bereans. Our faith in Christ rests on the Scripture, i.e., the Law God gave to Moses

48 Since humans are riddled with sin and it would be impossible to kill an animal to pay for every transgression, Levite priests made blanket offerings on behalf of the Israelites twice daily and on certain special days.

49 Money could be used for certain offerings to God. However, it could not be used for a transaction involving sin: the substitutionary blood atonement statute states blood is essential as payment for sin (Lev 17:11). The importance of making offerings to God has been apparent since the Fall. Tithes are mentioned in the account of Abraham’s meeting with Melchizedek. Not only the tithe, but the first fruit of any kind belongs to God. The substitute redemption law is found in the law of the firstborn, which states that the firstborn child in the human family, or the firstborn animal, or first fruit from a fruit tree belong to God and must be given back to God, i.e., killed, or brought back from Him (Exodus 13:2). To redeem, or buy back, the first fruit, you either used money or made a blood sacrifice. For example, you could redeem an ass with a lamb (Exodus 34:19). Abel is noted for giving the firstling to God before there was a written Law (Genesis 4:4).
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and, to a lesser extent, the prophecies. From there we learn that, right from the start, God gave humans a legal and easy way out of eternal separation from Him.

The Law offers salvation by faith in the atoning work of Christ. The prophet Habbakuk anticipated this in 626 B.C., long before Christ came in the flesh:

“The just shall live by his faith” (Habbakuk 2:4).

Saving faith rests on the God of Israel, in the promises He makes. How will we believe in Christ without the foundation of the Law? Why do we not recognize the mercy in the Law? Why do we not see that the Old Testament is full of Christ? Ignorance, rebellion, stubbornness, and deceit...these are the reasons.

Two right wing perfectionist errors:

1. The first error: blindness to the fact that God always expected humans to break the Law

The first of these two perfectionist errors is that God demands a perfect score on all points of the Law.

Ordinances in Part One that humans can stick to

To be sure, humans can keep much of Part One of the Law, particularly codes that are spelled out in behavioral terms, such as lending to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7) and not moving the neighbor’s landmark to increase one’s own territory.
(Deuteronomy 19:14). The behavioral laws are “do-able,” but punishable if broken.

**Codes applying to emotion, impossible for humans to keep perfectly**

The problem is that the Law prescribes not only behavior but also rules applying to emotion. Since human emotional life is not under direct control, it means the standard is absolutely impossible to reach. The codes include perfect love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5); an absence of coveting (Exodus 20:17); and an absence of animosity towards others: “thou must not hate thy brother in thy heart” (Leviticus 19:17). Clearly Part One is impossible for humans to perfectly fulfil. One wicked thought at any time since conception keeps a person separated from God. This is why God provided Part Two of the Law, involving a ready means to be forgiven.

**Misconceptions about the Sermon on the Mount**

Many modern Christians take Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount as a new law that is easier to keep than the edicts in the Law God gave to Moses. This is not so. It is actually a paraphrase of the Mosaic Law that is even more impossible to keep. For example, the Law specifies punishment for stealing, whereas in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states that if somebody steals your coat, you are to give them your cloak, too. In other words, you reward them instead of punishing them.

However, does it matter how high the standard goes beyond a point where nobody can reach it? Jesus was showing us that without Him we cannot avoid the Lake of Fire, we cannot enter into fellowship with God and have eternal life in heaven. He raised the bar to make us grasp the God-given lifebelt. These commands are goals to aim for, not what God demands of humans to gain or maintain salvation. There is no way we can hit the mark all the time. Jesus alone among humans kept the Law perfectly, which has to be the case for one who is our sin-
bearer. In order to be our proxy in death, and Jesus must be totally unblemished, never having committed a single sin, and must therefore be God in human form. If He had sinned in any minuscule way, He would have gone to the Lake of Fire, and He could not have been the unblemished Lamb.

Even if we humans were to become sinless after being saved, which does not happen in reality, our past sin would still define our record as unholy and impure. Even a minuscule sin at any time in life ruins the entire record. “All we like sheep have gone astray...” (Isaiah 53:6). Moreover, although claiming Christ’s covering takes away eternal punishment for our sins and admits us into connection with God so that He looks at them no more, there may be a painful worldly consequence. King David offered a blood sacrifice and repented after his murder of Uriah the Hittite. God forgave him, but told him through Nathan the prophet that, because of his action, his young child would die, and the sword would not depart from his house. (2 Samuel 12:10, 13-14)

**Mistranslation of the Hebrew word for “perfect”**

Mistranslation or misunderstanding of the Hebrew word used for “perfect” has played a part in perfectionist misinterpretation of the Law, where several times humans are commanded to be perfect (Deut 18:13). The Hebrew word most frequently translated into "perfect" in the Old Testament is "tamiym." This word means "complete, without blemish, full, perfect, sincerely, sincerity, sound, without spot, undefiled, upright, whole."\(^{52}\) It does not necessarily connote sinlessness. “Tamiym" comes from a primary root, "tamam" which means "to complete" in either a good or bad sense, i.e., “accomplish, cease, be cleaned, consume, have done, come to an end, fail, come to the full, make perfect, be spent, be upright, be wasted, whole."

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This use of the word "perfect" is found where Noah is described as "a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). Does this mean Noah was without sin? No. How can we be sure? The first thing Noah did when he and his family stepped off the ark onto dry land was offer God a blood sacrifice. In doing this, Noah was signifying that he knew he was a sinner. He knew that as a human he was unclean and could not come to God without this offering. There is no way for humans to approach a holy God without being cleansed, and Noah was aware that God would only accept him if he used this method of cleansing, the blood sacrifice which is a “type,” or picture, of Christ.

So in what sense was Noah perfect? It was in his undivided attention to the God of the Bible. Whenever an Old Testament figure is described as “perfect” it is in terms of his focus on God and avoidance of idolatry. It does not mean he was sinless.

Evidence that God expects all humans to sin continually and that He provides mercy: forgiveness for the priest

If it were possible for any human to completely abstain from sin, who would that human most likely be? Surely that would be a priest. It turns out that the God of the Bible does hold priests to higher standards than others, which makes sense given their work in the temple. Leviticus 21 specifies certain ordinances that limit who can be a priest among the Levites, but the standards are not exactly high. For example, a priest cannot marry a prostitute; prostitution is a picture of idolatry.

However, we can be comforted by the fact that God clearly expects priests to sin. He does not hold them to impossible or unreasonable standards; He gives them mercy. His instructions show that He expects them, like all of us, to fall short of the Law. He forgives them when they offer specific blood sacrifices:
“If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people, then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering” (Lev 4:3).

“...and the priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him” (Lev 4:33).

So even for the priest, there are commands and means to pay for sin. God obviously expects everyone to sin, even those closely serving Him.

**The depravity of human nature**

God’s word says we humans are corrupt:

“ for the imagination of a man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21).

“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

“If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,)...” (Solomon in I Kings 8:46).

God has acknowledged over and over in the Law and prophetic books that human nature is corrupt. He never expected humans not to break the rules. From the moment of conception we miss the mark. Atonement for sin has always been through the death of a substitute for the sinner, a proxy unblemished and in the prime of life.

In no way does the Law God gave Moses require humans to keep all points of the law if they are to escape eternal damnation. This would be an absolutely impossible task. Mercifully, the law defines a system of substitute blood payments that, when enacted by humans, atones for their sin and entitles them to be forgiven by God. It was “on credit” in the Old Testament days awaiting
the complete and final payment made by Christ Himself, a fee nevertheless acceptable to God.

2. The second error: blindness to mercy in the Law
   The second perfectionist error is insistence that the Law God gave Moses is a perfectionist law with no mercy. The opposite is true. God offered a humanly do-able means to be forgiven right from the start.

The Law is not just the Ten Commandments
   One common mistake is to consider the Law to be only the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). The fact that there is no mention of mercy among the “Top Ten” leads to the wrong conclusion. It causes the entire Law to be dismissed as irrelevant for today, along with all the generous clauses offering forgiveness for all types of sin through the blood sacrifice.

It’s not “if” but “when” you break the Law
   The God of the Old Testament is no different from the God of the New Testament. His salvation contract is actually much clearer in the Law than in the New Testament. Mercy is right there in the Torah; among the 633 commandments are directions for atonement (i.e., grace, forgiveness from God). Every person was expected to “mess up” and break the rules.

   God does not say "if" you break the Law but "when" you break it, and He has always forgiven to the uttermost. There is no limitation on the types of sin He forgives: all sin comes under the provision for His mercy.

“IT shall be forgiven them”
   The Law is spelled out in the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and. Deuteronomy). It contains not only a code of behavior and thought but also God’s provision of the blood atonement statutes which, when enacted, gain forgiveness for all violations of that code. Again and again,
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we find the following words from God: "It shall be forgiven them." This promise of mercy is contingent on human obedience to the statutes offering atonement through the blood sacrifice. Examples of God making this promise are many: Leviticus 4:13, 4:20, 4:26, 4:31, 4:35, 5:10, 5:13, 5:16, and 6:7; Numbers 14:19, 15:25, 15:26, 15:28; and Deuteronomy 21:18. Moses repeatedly speaks of the forgiveness and mercy of God, e.g. Exodus 34:6-7.

Forgiveness is not limited to sins of ignorance

One way people try to say there is no mercy in the Law is by stating: If there is forgiveness in the Law, it is limited to sins of ignorance or sins which come to knowledge later; there is no forgiveness for deliberate sins. Others say: There is forgiveness in the Law but it is only partial. Neither statement is true. However, it is possible to get the impression that forgiveness was limited only to certain sins if we look at Leviticus 4 without also noticing Leviticus 6. Leviticus 4 addresses forgiveness for sins of ignorance and sins which come to knowledge later and omits mention of deliberate sins. But Leviticus 6 deals with forgiveness for deliberate "transgressions" such as lies and deception towards one's neighbor.

One can also get the impression that God does not forgive willful sin in Numbers 15:1-31, which offers forgiveness for sins of ignorance, prescribes cutting off the soul of the man who "does aught presumptuously" (Numbers 15:30), and does not mention forgiveness for other types of sin. However, that chapter is referring to a specific situation, the deliberate refusal to make an offering to God when eating the first bread in the Promised Land, a serious rebellion.

In fact, God is very merciful if humans repent. He will even forgive idolatry. We see this in the account of Aaron's making the golden calves and Moses' intercession on behalf of the rebellious Children of Israel (Exodus 32). God promises to forgive humans when they are sprinkled with the shed blood of
clean animals from a group defined by God, all of which are types of Christ.

The point is, God commits Himself to forgive all types of sin. Sins of ignorance, sins which later come to knowledge, and sins committed deliberately: all are covered. God highlights this by using three different words for wrongdoing He forgives: "iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34: 5-7). As to the partial nature of the forgiveness under the old system, it is more accurate to say that the forgiveness was given on credit through the animal sacrifice atonement system, awaiting the final work of Christ on the cross.

**How could David praise the forgiveness of God if there were no mercy in the law?**

Consider this. If there were no forgiveness, or only partial forgiveness, in the Law, why would David, the adulterer and murderer, be inspired to write the following statements:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1, quoted by Paul in Romans 4:6-8).

"Thou has forgiven the iniquity of the people, thou has covered all their sin" (Psalm 85:2).

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Psalm 103:2-3).

"If thou LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?" (Psalm 130-3-4)?

In fact, the longest psalm (Psalm 119) is a song in praise of the Law. How could David have honestly given such praise if the Law merely condemned sin? David would have to be in enormous denial. He had performed some of the most wicked acts humans are capable of. In a prayer for mercy after his
heinous actions towards Uriah and Bathsheba, David asks of God:

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation” (Psalm 51:12).

David knew he had every reason for joy: yes, he would endure worldly punishments but his sins were paid for and forgiven at the existential level. He would not burn in the fire.

Those crooked patriarchs
If you have the impression that the Old Testament patriarchs were models of perfect faith or moral purity who must have kept the law perfectly, take a closer look at them. The writer of Hebrews praises Abraham’s faith. Indeed, when God tells Abraham to get up and go to a strange land that would be given to him and his descendants, he gets up and goes. Yet in Genesis there are at least two instances in which Abraham acts in a manner that suggests a complete lack of faith. One is his disbelief of God’s promise of a child; the other is his self-serving lie about Sarah’s status. He tries to protect himself by calling her his sister so he will not be murdered by anyone who stole her for her beauty. If the Old Testament God demanded perfect faith and morals, these patriarchs would have been abandoned by God and their names erased from history.

God shows us in the Old Testament that people who are dear to Him are by no means free from sin. Bad as we humans are, we have free access to His mercy.

The blood sacrifice before the written Law
Before any written Law that we know of, God indicated that He would provide the blood payment for human sin:

The Serpent: Genesis 3:15 makes an obscure reference to this. Says God to the Serpent:
“...and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and
between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou
shalt bruise his heel.”

Christ was the seed of the woman (not of a man), who bruised
the head of the Serpent, i.e., He destroyed Satan’s plan to send
all humans to hell. We first see this prophecy fulfilled when
God provided animal skins to cover our forefathers, both literally
and figuratively. This was the very first blood sacrifice after the
Fall (Genesis 3:21). Though Scripture does not say so it is
reasonable to assume that our forefathers were saved by this
sacrificial death, a type of Jesus.

**Abraham:** Also before God gave the written Law to Moses,
comes Abraham’s statement to Isaac regarding God’s provision
of the ram:

“God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Genesis
22:8).

Even though Abraham may have thought he was lying when he
said it, this was a prophetic statement both in the short- and long-
terms. God provided Abraham with a ram to take the place of
Isaac, just as He would later provide Christ’s death to take the
place of human spiritual death.

**Cain and Abel:** Another pre-Law instance of blood sacrifice is
found in Abel’s offering of the “firstling” of his cattle. God’s
pleasure at this offering coupled with His rejection of Cain’s
vegetable offering led the envious Cain to murder Abel.

**Noah:** Yet another instance occurs when Noah, upon touching
dry land after the Flood, builds an altar and makes a burnt
sacrifice to God of one of each of the “clean” animals he had so

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53 The concept of a “clean” animal had not yet been given in writing yet
it was known to the patriarchs.
carefully preserved on the ark (Genesis 8:20). If the fact that Noah took extra numbers of clean animals on the Ark is anything to go by, this was a regular practice of his, and would explain why he “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” in the first place (Genesis 6:8).

In Old Testament times, saving faith was manifested in one way only: participation in the blood atonement covenant. This meant bringing one’s own animal to be sacrificed for specific sins and taking part in the sacrifices that covered many sins for all the people on the Day of Atonement. The sacrificed blood of the unblemished individual substituted for the death of the sinner.

**New Testament times:** In New Testament times, participation in the blood sacrifice simply involves believing that Christ’s blood has made our payment. He is the God-given unblemished lamb. His death on Calvary completely fulfils every aspect of the original covenant and replaces the animal sacrifice system. The Christian church now celebrates this in the Eucharist, or communion service.

The *eucharist* has a forerunner in the Law. In Genesis 14:18 we find Melchizedek, both king of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of the “most high God,” a type of Christ (Psalm 110:4), sharing bread and wine with Abraham, blessing him, and receiving tithes from him.

The most important part of the Law for humans is the blood atonement, the means of escaping eternal punishment for law-breaking, and this has been in effect ever since the Fall.

**Christ in the Old Testament**

The fact is, Christ as the sin-bearer, the One whose death paid in full for the sins of humanity, is found in many forms all through the Old Testament. His words in the four gospels refer
back to prophecies throughout the Law and prophets. He provides cross reference to prove He is the Lamb of God, wasting no words to show that He is the fulfillment of prophecies and the Law. Jesus is the embodiment, the point, the target of the Law and the prophecies. We humans will not appreciate this until we begin to pore over Scripture (i.e., the Old Testament). Matthew’s gospel is full of references to Old Testament sources that back it up. Christ is the Lamb of the sacrifice, the suffering servant who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as prophesied by Zechariah (9:9), who was wounded, or pierced, in the hands and feet (Zechariah 13:6, Psalm 22:16), and:

“He was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5); “cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken” (Isaiah 53:8); and “after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself” (Daniel, 9:26).

**Christ as the blood sacrifice**

The Old Testament is filled with laws, metaphors, and symbols that point to Christ. These build a composite picture of the blood sacrifice as the essential substitute atonement for human sin, of God providing the sacrifice Himself, and of Christ’s blood being that atonement. As a picture of God’s provision of the atoning sacrifice, He supplies the animal skins to cover Adam and Eve; He also sends the ram at the last minute so that Abraham need not sacrifice Isaac.

The law of the substitutionary atonement (Part Two of the Law) seems to have been present in some form right from the Fall. This covenant is the most consistent part of God’s dealings with humans, more dependable historically than any other part of the Law. It also happens to be the most important part of the Law sitting above the condemnation in it. The mercy seat in the Holy of Holies sat upon the tablets of the Law in the ark. It is the thing that sets Judaeo-Christianity apart from every other religion. All religions have a deity that does not tolerate sin,
along with a moral code that dooms humans because it is impossible to keep. Only the God of the Bible offers to pay the penalty for human sin so that humans can have perfection by proxy.

The general principle of redemption, buying someone back, permeates the Law. Clearly there was forgiveness for sin before Christ physically provided the blood. If that were not the case, nobody would have been saved before Christ died on the cross. Even the patriarchs would have remained in damnation. However, it is true that before Christ, God’s forgiveness was limited to certain time periods and events. One sin offering did not pay for all sin for all humans for all time as it did in the case of Christ. This is the "on credit" aspect of the animal sacrifice atonement system. The sinner was covered until Christ paid the debt in full. Once Christ paid the sin debt of humanity, animal sacrifices became irrelevant and unnecessary, but the Law (Part Two) did not change in essence. Christ said:

"Think not that I am come destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matthew 5:17).

This statement of His is ignored by modern Christendom, so eager to reject the Law and disconnect from Judaism. Jesus fulfills the law not just in the overall way of paying the price for our sin, but in all the details of the blood sacrifice that the Law spells out. He alone among those who live in a human body actually kept the Law without the slightest deviation: he was/is unblemished. He alone loves God without even one departure; He alone loves his neighbor without ever missing the mark. The more we peer into the Law, the more we see Him there in new ways. 54

The sacrificial sliding scale

Christ takes the place of the various types of sacrifice detailed in the Law. All the sacrifices are a picture of Him: unblemished (i.e., sinless); killed in their prime, as he was at the age of thirty three; and (typically but not always) male. Exodus 12:5 refers to a lamb; 29:1 refers to two rams; Leviticus 1:3 refers to a bullock; 1:4 refers to turtle-doves and young pigeons for those who cannot afford larger animals. God is so merciful that he even provided a “sliding scale” for payment to make it possible for everyone, no matter how rich or poor, to be forgiven. Leviticus 5:11 tells us more about the “sliding scale”: turtle doves and pigeons were the least costly type of blood payment, but if the sinner could not even bring one of these, a handful of fine flour was acceptable as a “widow’s mite.” The flour was, of course, not a blood payment; but it stood in lieu of it, a proxy for a proxy.

The priest offered up “blanket” blood payments at various times for the entire congregation. Daily offerings for the whole congregation were constantly burning in the temple, a new lamb every morning and evening, just as now Christ continually intercedes between humans and God (Leviticus 6:13). Nobody has ever had to go uncovered (without atonement) unless they are foolish enough to reject the covering.

Christ speaking through the Psalmist

In the Psalms, we find Christ speaking in the first person singular, saying things that could not possibly be known to the human writer of most of the psalms, King David, who lived around a thousand years B.C. No human could know those very specific details of Christ’s death on the cross that did not physically happen until much later.

Crucifixion Psalms

Some of the psalms contain clear prophetic verses about actual events that occurred during the few hours before Christ died on
The gospel in the Law

the cross. They typically lead from a distress call from David to God and suddenly turn into Christ talking. It has a very startling ‘red letter’ effect on the reader caught unawares: What? How did that get there? One is transported into another time, another place, forced to ask the question: Where does David end and Christ begin?

Psalm 69 is an entreaty to God from David. He was in the midst of being persecuted unfairly by the followers of the paranoid and jealous King Saul. It is one of the Psalms in which the voice of Jesus speaks of events associated with His death on the cross:

“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 69:21).

This happened to Jesus, not David (Matthew 27:34, 48). Another verse clearly speaks of Christ:

“For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded” (Psalm 69:26).

Psalm 22 starts out seeming to be David crying out to God, but ends with Christ speaking. It begins:

“My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?”

Incidentally, skeptics love to quote this saying as proof that there is no God, and that Jesus was a mere human who made the great sacrifice of dying on the cross for nothing, only to be abandoned by God. They have no idea that Jesus is actually quoting Scripture to prove that He is the One spoken about in prophecy. Also, Jesus must have experienced great pain of separation from God when He took the punishment for humans. Perhaps He felt utterly abandoned. However, this did not mean God abandoned Him. The resurrection awaited.
This was quoted by Jesus on the cross. It forces one to wonder if the first part of the Psalm is all Christ and none of David. The following is more true of the sin-bearing Christ than David:

“...a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him” (Psalm 22:6-8).

This was the mockery by the chief priests, scribes and elders that Jesus experienced on the cross (Matthew 27:41-43). Psalm 22 also contains verses where Christ talks in the first person about specific events during the crucifixion:

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psalm 22:14-18).

These were not events in the life of David; these things were to occur approximately one thousand years later during the crucifixion of Christ.

End times Psalms: the warrior-like judging Christ

There are several psalms in which Christ “cuts into” David to speak of end times. For example, Psalm 2:6-9:

“Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”
Here Christ is talking about his future role as judge of the unrepentant, far from the suffering servant who pays the penalty for the sins of humanity by his death on the cross. The rebellious liberals in the church these days often ignore verses like this that conflict with an image of the gentle Jesus nobody has to fear.\textsuperscript{56} However, this completes the picture of Christ. He is both judge and savior, grace in the Law.

Other prophecies concerning the coming, earthly life, death and resurrection of Christ

Other Old Testament prophets both major and minor provide compelling evidence for God’s having planned the death and resurrection of Christ from the foundation of the earth, or soon after. Genesis 3:15 on “the seed of the woman” has been discussed in Chapter One. There is also the deathbed prophecy of Jacob regarding his son Judah:

“\textit{The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be}” (Genesis 49:10).

This is talking about the earthly kingship coming out of the tribe of Judah, from whom came the human parents of Jesus Christ, who is “Shiloh,” a Hebrew epithet for the Messiah meaning \textit{tranquil}.\textsuperscript{57} At any rate, this verse from Genesis on the

\textsuperscript{56} Numerous other Old Testament prophecies concern Christ not only in his role as the Lamb who dies to reconcile, or make peace, between humans and God, but also as the military Messiah. For example, the prophetic utterances of Balaam in Numbers 24:17 predict the violent role of Christ in end times.

\textsuperscript{57} This true prophesy is most clearly borne out in the years when Israel and Judah had kings. David was the first Judean king, the first real king in the land, replacing the ungodly Benjamite, king Saul. After the kingdom split, the Judean kings were on the throne in the Promised Land until Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, carried nearly all the twelve tribes away, a punishment from God due to the rebellion of Zedekiah, the last Judean king.

What happened to the Judean kingship during the next years until Christ, or “Shiloh” came is not clear. However, I Chronicles 9: 3-4 and Nehemiah 11:1-24 report that
kingship of Judah is evidence that God builds one theme leading to the earthly appearance of Christ, or “Shiloh” as the one who brings tranquility.

Isaiah 9:6-7 predicts the coming of Christ as a king of judgment and peace (i.e., both damnation and mercy):

“For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father; the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

“Types” of Christ in the Old Testament

God often uses types, i.e., events, situations, and personalities of Bible figures, especially patriarchs and prophets, to show us the role of Christ.

Human types of Christ

A human “type” is a quality of a certain person. The typing is generally confined to one or two aspects of the person who, in other respects, is a sinner like all other humans.

princes of the line of Judah remained in Jerusalem after the captivity. The later line of Maccabean kings in the land were apparently not of the line of Judah. The historian, Josephus, records them as having a priestly origin, which would make them Levites. Some historians trace descendants of Judah as kings in other lands, including Europe. One account has Jeremiah the prophet escaping by sea with descendants of the kingly line of Judah by way of Spain (sons of Judah were Phares or “Perez,” a common Spanish name; and Zara, a name lending itself to the Basque town “Zaragossa”), eventually to resurface as the Tara Kings in Ireland. The probable Ethiopian line of Judean kings descended from the union of Sheba and Solomon would be another witness to the truth of the prophecy. A further information source is a series of publications by Raymond Capt which include Stories of Lost Israel in Folklore, The traditions of Glastonbury, Stonehenge and Druidism (1979), Jacob’s Pillar, and others. The address is P.O. Box 1497, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360: Artisan Sales
Christ is pictured in many different human roles in the OT: the high priest (Genesis 14:18; Leviticus 21:10), prince (Isaiah 9:6), king (Isaiah 32:1; Psalm 2:6), judge (Exodus 2:14; Isaiah 2:4; Isaiah 63), suffering servant (Isaiah 53), man (Isaiah 59:16), kinsman redeemer (Ruth 4:8), redeemer (Isaiah 59:20), shepherd (Isaiah 40:11); and bridegroom (Isaiah 62:5; Ruth 4).

Types of Christ are found among several Old Testament figures:

**Forgiveness:** Joseph forgiving the brothers who believed they had killed him.

**Suffering in place of another:** Moses willing to die for the children of Israel so that God would forgive them. Judah willing to remain captive in Egypt in place of his half-brother, Benjamin.

**Redeeming:** Boaz playing the role of the kinsman redeemer who buys back the estate of his family member, Ruth, by marrying her; and Jonah, a picture of the resurrection in his re-emergence after three days in the belly of the fish.

**Unfairly punished:** Here we have both Joseph and David. Joseph was thrown in jail when falsely accused of attacking Potiphar’s wife. David was innocent of any intention to harm Saul, yet Saul pursued him relentlessly. This portrays Christ’s total innocence.

**Christ as firstling**
The Law states that whatever opens the “matrix” belongs to God automatically, and has to be bought back from God (Exodus 58: We are also told that David was an adulterer and murderer who died with vengeance in his heart instead of forgiveness towards his enemies as Christ had done. Although God chose him as “a man after his own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) who was faithful to Him, he was very much a sinner in other ways.

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58 We are also told that David was an adulterer and murderer who died with vengeance in his heart instead of forgiveness towards his enemies as Christ had done. Although God chose him as “a man after his own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) who was faithful to Him, he was very much a sinner in other ways.
34:19). This firstling law is a picture of Christ, the very first Son of God who was God and man. He was also the first to be resurrected from the dead for life eternal. God establishes the utter preciousness of Christ as the firstborn of God so we see the enormity of His mercy. He spared no expense to rescue us. Punishing Christ was like punishing Himself.

**Christ as intercessor**

God specifically mentions the role of Christ as an intercessor (Isaiah 59:16). In Exodus 34:6-7 God shows us Moses as a picture of Christ in both his intercessory and sacrificial roles. Moses is willing to be blotted out of the book of life if God will not forgive the idolatrous Children of Israel for making golden calves to worship. God changes his mind about killing the Children of Israel after Moses’s intercession but declines his sacrificial offer. He listens to Moses’ entreaty, promising not to kill Israelites who repent, and replaces the two broken stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments with new ones. Now the Israelites will have a second chance. God descends in a cloud to Moses and proclaims:

“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” (Exodus 34:7).

**Physical metaphors for Christ**

In addition to human “types,” God uses physical objects as metaphors for Christ. What follows is a sampling of many found in the Old Testament.

**Christ as the tabernacle, the temple, and the contents**

The tabernacle and temple represent Christ as the physical container of God on earth. Christ is also represented by the design and contents of the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 25). He is the Holy of Holies, he is the Ark of the Testimony and the
Mercy Seat above it. He is the contents of the Ark: the Ten Commandments (the only one whose every act embodies the law), Aaron’s rod which budded (life coming out of death), and the manna (bread of life coming down from heaven). He is the Mercy seat: the platform on which God meets in forgiveness with humans. On the outer side of the veil, He is the candlestick (“the light unto men” (John 1:5)), the incense (a covering for human malodor), and the showbread (the unleavened (sinless) bread of life).

**Sweet odor metaphors**

God paints us pictures of Christ in every part of the creation so we perceive Him with all our senses. There are several olfactory metaphors for Jesus. Humans are a malodorous bunch. Even when we bathe regularly the odor of sin does not go away. If we want to smell nice to God, we have to be covered with the wonderful aroma of Christ, Who is represented in the separate roasting of the fat, a part of the sacrifice not to be eaten but simply broiled to make “a sweet savor: all the fat is the LORD’S” (Leviticus 3:16]. Flowers that have a strong perfume are also metaphors for Christ in the Old Testament. He is the “rose of Sharon” and the “lily of the valley” (Song of Solomon 2:1).

**Other physical metaphors**

Christ is life in the midst of death as the “root out of a dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2). He is also a rock, a stone, a corner-stone (of a bridge, the stone carrying the weight, i.e., the burden of punishment for human sin).

**Christ as hiding place**

Christ is a physical protector, pictured as the City of Refuge, a safe place for the “man-slayer” who accidentally killed somebody (Numbers 35). He is also the cleft in a rock, the place where God hid Moses to protect him from being burned up by His glory (Exodus 33:22).
Christ as blood (life)
Leviticus 17 points out the holiness of blood; Lev 17:11 tells us blood is life. The Law forbids human consumption of blood. It must be poured out of meat consumed by humans, and drained from meat offerings. Blood is the actual point of contact between God and humans. It was sprinkled on the altar before the door of the tabernacle as an offering to God. Christ commands humans to symbolically drink His blood:

“...shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

This new covenant is clearly continuous with the Law. The sinless, pure blood of Christ connects and reconciles us with God.

Christ as entrance to God
Christ is the entrance to God, so He is represented as a “door” (John 10:7), a door-keeper (Rev 3:8) and “the way,” as in the following:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.” (John 14:6).

Christ breaks down the barrier, or door, between sinful humans and God. There is an early mention of this door in the Bible. God rejects Cain’s offering because “sin lieth at the door” (Genesis 4:7). Cain’s bloodless offering did not atone for his sin and open the door to God.

Christ as the holy days: the prophetic calendar
Christ is represented by the various holy days mentioned in the Old Testament; these holy days are a prophetic calendar of earthly appearances of Christ in the past and future.

Sabbath
Christ is represented in a general way by the day of rest, the Sabbath or seventh day of the week. Various holy days are also
given that name, including the Passover. As a day of rest, Christ signifies that human works are irrelevant for salvation; His death alone pays the penalty for human sin.

**Passover**

The first holy day in the Law, also the first one in the year, is the Passover. Chris’s death on the Passover could hardly be a clearer indication that He is the Passover lamb, whose death causes the death angel to pass over the homes of those who cover the lintel and door-posts with His blood. Humans are protected from death and hell when covered by Him:

“Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

The Passover rituals represent Christ. The blood of the lamb on the door-posts is Christ’s blood. The unleavened bread to be eaten on the Passover and for the week following it represents the sinless body of Christ. During the Passover Feast, also known as the Last Supper, Jesus instructs His disciples on how to carry out the celebration of the new covenant (or testament) replacing the animal sacrifices defined in the Law (Luke 22:19-20). Now the blood of Christ succeeds the previous sacrificial system. As they keep the Passover every year, and at other times eat the bread and drink the wine, believers remember this symbolizes the blood and body of Christ that paid the penalty for all their sins.

**Feast of Firstfruits**

The next holy Day in the Mosaic calendar is the feast of First Fruits, later called the Feast of Weeks, which consists of two Sabbaths separated by fifty days. The first celebrates the onset of harvest after seeds were sown (Exodus 23:16; Lev 23:9-14; Deut 6:9-12). This is a picture of the resurrection of Christ, the event that took place fifty days before Pentecost. States Paul:
“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (I Corinthians 15:20).

The second Feast Day coming fifty days after the first one was clearly fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when God sent the Holy Spirit down to enable believers to bear fruit.

**Feast of Trumpets**

Leviticus 23:24 commands that on the first day of the seventh month:

“…shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.”

Silver trumpets, representing the voice of God (Exodus 20:18), were used to assemble the Israelites for their journeying in the wilderness (Numbers 10:1-10). Later the trumpets were a reminder of the capture of Jericho. God commanded the trumpet-blowing prior to his destruction of the town and deliverance of it into the hands of the Children of Israel under Joshua, who is a type of Christ. This feast appears to represent the awaited second coming of Christ:

“For the LORD himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” (I Thessalonians 4:16).

**Day of Atonement**

The word “atonement” is used repeatedly in the Mosaic law. Atonement is compensation or making amends for sin, a way to get out of condemnation. God gives humans a way to escape paying for their own sins in the Law by stating that He will accept the blood of a substitute for the sinner. Repetition of the word *atonement* in connection with sacrificial offerings drums into our brain the intrinsic connection between blood and mercy. Blood is necessary and sufficient to release the mercy of God.
Two types of offering: Christ is represented in the two types of sin offering on the annual Day of Atonement coming ten days after the Feast of Trumpets (Exodus 30; Leviticus 16).

The first offering was the blood payment on this one day of the year when the high priest entered the innermost part of the temple. On this day he made the offering for all the sins of all the people for the entire year in the holy of holies, a part of the temple normally closed off. The holy of holies, a picture of the holiness (separateness) of God, contained the mercy seat where God had agreed to meet with the human representative of the Children of Israel. God would come to the mercy seat to accept the blood as payment for human sin.

The second offering on the Day of Atonement was the so-called “scapegoat,” the origin of the expression used today for one who takes the blame for somebody else. The priest confessed all the sins of the people over the head of the scapegoat, then a “fit” man led away the living goat and left it so far in the wilderness that it would not return. This was a picture of God letting all the sins go out of his mind. This is a wonderful picture to dwell on; an experience of the total forgiveness of God.

Mercy above the law: Under the mercy seat were the two tablets of the Law inside the Ark of the Testimony. What clearer indication is there of mercy in the Old Testament than the orders God gave for the placement of the mercy seat on top of the Ark (Exodus 40:20)? This is another picture of Christ: He is the mercy overruling the death sentence in the law for those who claim the payment He made for human sin.

Pictures of Christ and of human depravity: Clearly, the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement are a picture of Christ: one single sacrifice pays for the sins of everyone who participates. It would be impossible to slay a lamb for every sin committed by humans. A person would be kept busy all day long, trotting back and forth to the tabernacle (later replaced by the temple). His
whole herd would be killed off in no time, then he would have to purchase animals to sacrifice until his money ran out. To believe otherwise would be to refuse to acknowledge how depraved we humans are, how corrupt our motives.

Since it was impracticable to make a blood sacrifice for every single sin, God instituted certain forms of blanket payment in the law. Observation of the Day of Atonement, a Sabbath, or day of rest, was all that was required for a person’s sins to be covered for a whole year. So here we get a blanket pardon, like Christ, one death paying for many sins of many people, for only a year in this case.

What better proof is there that God has acknowledged the unending and thorough depravity of humans than His putting that annual blanket in the Law? And what better proof is there of God’s love than the fact that He commands humans to observe the Day of Atonement? He actually wants us to be saved, He made it easy for us, not because we are essential to Him in any way, but simply because He loves us despite our uselessness and corruption.

This certainly negates the doctrine of perfection. If God expected a single one, just one, of the Israelites to be able to avoid breaking any of the 633 statutes, why did He command them all to observe the annual Day of Atonement? Nobody was excused. The commandment to observe that day every year highlights the fact that God knows that humans will sin continually; he does not expect otherwise. The fact that it is a Sabbath acknowledges that human works or performance cannot cleanse humans. The only option available to us is to rest in God’s provision of forgiveness by claiming the blood of the Lamb.
The Day of Atonement and End Times

This is one day in the Mosaic calendar that has not yet been covered by an earthly appearance of Christ. Nor is there a clear indication of what importance this occasion will have in the future. One day the Jews will recognize Jesus:

“And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10).

They will see Christ as their Messiah. Will this be on the final Day of Atonement? Leviticus 25 describes a special Day of Atonement every fiftieth year, the year of the Jubilee, to be announced by the sound of a trumpet throughout the land. A proclamation is to accompany this:

“...liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession and ye shall return every man unto his family” (Lev 25: 10).

This homecoming looks very much like Christ’s prophesied return to reign on earth (Rev 20:2-6).

Feast of Tabernacles

This is also known as the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the harvest. Tabernacles is a portentous occasion representing the awaited final harvesting of souls for judgment (Rev 20:11-15). To observe this holy festival, believers are commanded to spend a week camping outside the house in a tent or tabernacle covered with pitch. It is a remembrance of God’s deliverance of the Children of Israel in the wilderness. God kept them safe in their tents, an event which is itself a picture of Christ. The tabernacle is a covering for the believer just as Christ is a covering for the believer’s sin (Lev 23:33-36, 39-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15).
Where does the merciless interpretation of the Law come from?

All heresies originate from Satan, the father of lies. Therefore, the merciless, perfectionist interpretation of the Old Testament is ultimately his work. Let us trace the pathway he has taken us on.

Perfectionism in the Jewish sects at the time of Christ

The Jewish sects at the time of Jesus were off base, blind to the mercy in the Law, unaware of the true role of the blood sacrifice as no mere ritual but an actual payment for sin. This led to a slavish and superficial devotion to keeping the edicts of Part One of the Law. The Pharisees were a sect criticized at length by Christ for their hypocrisy and outward show of piety (Matthew 23). They had moved in a merciless, perfectionist direction.

By the time of Christ, the Jews relied on other writings such as the Talmud, containing Jewish traditions, more than the Law God gave Moses, or Torah. Christ criticized them for “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:7). This arose in connection with criticisms that His disciples did not wash their hands before eating. God had not commanded this in the Law, so the disciples were right in not following this custom. The book of the Law had been lost for a long time prior to this. It was briefly retrieved for a period before Judah went into captivity in Babylon. II Kings 22:11 gives an account of King Josiah wringing his hands after the discovery of the book of the Law in the Temple in Jerusalem way back in 621 B.C. For a while the Law was re-instituted, but it was soon lost again.

Was anyone paying attention to the Law at the time of Christ? If so, the Pharisees were not “getting it.” Even worse were sects like the supposedly more conservative Sadducees, officers in the Temple, who did not believe in the resurrection.

The term “pharisee” has come to be used for a merciless legalist in Christendom. However, as superficial, unmerciful and
judgmental as the Pharisees were, they were closer to the truth in the Torah than many other sects present at the time of Christ. At least they did believe in the resurrection of the body and eternal life.

**No blood sacrifice for the Jews**

In fact, ever since the 70 A.D. destruction of the Jerusalem temple, the one place where God stated He would accept sin offerings, Jews who do not accept Christ have had no sacrificial offering for sin. They have no blood payment. By getting away from the written word of the Torah and relying on other man-made texts that marginalize the substitutionary blood atonement covenant, they went seriously off track and have stayed there ever since. They miss out on the importance of Isaiah 53, with its picture of the suffering servant “bruised for our iniquities.” Who else fits that picture but Jesus? The verse offers a very clear picture of the coming Messiah as the servant upon whom God would lay “the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6), but who would be rejected by his own people:

“...we hid as it were our faces from him” (Isaiah 53:3).

Jews are still looking for a Messiah who appeals to the flesh, a military rescuer who will liberate the nation of Israel politically in accordance with certain prophesies of Christ’s Second Coming. This type of belief is present today in the Christian church. There is a great deal of interest in the Rapture and an outward, worldly type of salvation from sin rather than hell.

**The blinding of the Jews**

For His own reasons, God chose to blind the Jews to the truth. Paul pointed out several Old Testament references to this in Romans 11:7-10, particularly Psalm 69 in which David asks God to punish his enemies:
“Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake” (Psalm 69:23).

The blinding (physical and spiritual) was one of the punishments for rebellion towards God defined in the Law:

“The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart” (Deuteronomy 28:28).

The stiff-neckedness of the Jews forced the apostles to preach the gospel outside of the Jewish population. However, this is an example of how God uses evil in order to ultimately do good. The blindness of one nation is a blessing to all the others, who, in turn, will eventually lead the Jews to Christ.

**Conclusion: grace is intrinsic to the Law**

The New Testament is the fulfilment of the Law, not a new age of grace following an era of a law with no mercy. Says Paul:

“...so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14).
Chapter Five:

Is the New Testament God unforgiving?
The right wing problem: merciless legalism

A couple of listeners to our weekly radio program attempted to correct me about what they considered a doctrinal error. They said that although they enjoy the program, we are wrong to say that Christ does not enable humans to reach a state of indwelling sinless perfection after they are saved. They think that, based on statements in the New Testament, humans are saved from being sinners, not from the consequence of being sinners. This is wrong. These callers are in the right wing of the perfectionism trap.

The problem is, when “converts” with that false expectation find they are still riddled in sin after “salvation,” there is a backlash against God. They rebel against Him and enter a state of stubborn backsliding, filled with rage against a God who either seems to demand the impossible (i.e., sinlessness through human efforts) or does not deliver it (i.e., does not make us inherently sinless).

Danger of backlash
We have seen earlier that the Old Testament is often wrongly seen as a law with no grace inflicted by a God with no mercy. This also goes for New Testament. Merciless misinterpretations lead people astray into perfectionism, asserting one or the other of two falsehoods. The first is that a state of indwelling sinlessness is essential to gain salvation. Not true. The second is that salvation produces indwelling sinless perfection. Also not true. Such ideas

59 New Testament perfectionism has two wings, as seen in the chart on page 13 of the Introduction. This chapter deals with the merciless right wing; the following chapter deals with the liberal left wing.
are a tool of Satan. The truth is that Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, not to remove our sin nature.

The truth
It is true that salvation instigates a change in us. Once we feel secure as forgiven sinners, the Holy Spirit opens us up to our ugly nature, leads us to love God and our neighbor, enables us to exercise restraint, and leads us to want to please God with our thoughts and actions. However, we continue to be sinners in need of the constant coverage of Jesus’ blood in this lifetime.

Perfectionism in the Christian church
Satan has been busy in the church. He wants us to be blind to God’s gift of the payment for human sin. He wants us to have "I" trouble, focusing on the illusion of our own progress towards sinlessness, not on the fact that the penalty for sin has been paid for all participating humans, for all sin, for all time, by Christ. Satan is happy when we keep our eyes off the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, off the heavenly Father who presents us with it, operating out of pride and fear.

Perfectionism and pride
Christian perfectionists ignore everything in Scripture that does not agree with their contention that they can become, or already are, just as sinless within themselves as Christ. Why do people in the church get so attached to the doctrine of perfection even when the truth is right in front of them? One factor is pride. The ego wants to pride itself on being sinless, or at least better than others. A perfect example is the Pharisee who thanks God for having made him unlike other men (Luke 18:10).

No human is sinless, nor can we come close to it. We are part of a cursed Creation. The good news is that Christ completely takes away our sin from God’s eyes, just like the scapegoat on the annual Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).
**Perfectionism and fear**

Fear of hell is a stronger motive for perfectionism than pride. People are unconsciously desperate to hit the mark when they know, deep down, that only one who is totally sinless can escape the Lake of Fire and have eternal life with God. Riddled with guilt and anxiety, people flee into defense mechanisms. This only changes when they know they are free to claim the gift of salvation through the shed blood of sinless Christ.60

**Skewing the New Testament**

How does it happen that the New Testament gets twisted and skewed to fit perfectionist doctrine? Either by accident or design, verses are taken out of context. Words and phrases are mistranslated or misunderstood. As the previous chapter of this book showed, if a person is not familiar with the Law God gave to Moses, it is easy to get the wrong idea about Christ. People do not seem him as the essential and sufficient payment for sin, but only as a good man who is a role model for them. Whether they hold to a false interpretation of the Bible or to the tenets of some other religious belief system, they are walking dead destined for the Lake of Fire, cut off from the God Who offers mercy as a gift.

**Christian fundamentalism**

There is a huge societal bias against Christian fundamentalists. The liberal media like to portray all Christians negatively and, unfortunately, some of them do fit a stereotype of judgmental, punitive unreasonableness. Christians have a basis in the Law for loving God and their neighbors but this goes by the wayside if they rest on the merciless right wing version of perfectionism.

**Finger pointing**

Perfectionists defensively insist on their own virtue while pointing the finger at others, projecting their sin outwards. At a

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60 See *The Deadly Perfectionism Trap* by the author, published in 2010 by Ransom Press, a Division of Grace and Sanity Ministries, P.O. Box 1172, Crescent City, CA 93551
subconscious level, the voice of the conscience, representing the condemning aspect of God’s Law (or Part One), harangues them for falling short. As a defense mechanism, they attack other people to distract themselves from seeing the beam in their own eye (Luke 6:41-42).

Their God is a merciless, perfection-demanding tyrant who never gives them an inkling of mercy or a tad of forgiveness. They judge others just as they feel judged. Lacking the internal experience of the forgiveness of God spelled out in the substitutionary blood atonement covenant (Part Two of the Law), they are unable to forgive. In attempting to “evangelize,” all they can do is to preach against sin rather than pointing others towards the God-given payment of the penalty for it: Christ’s death on the cross.

Words/verses misused by “Christian” merciless legalists

Several “pitfall” words and verses in the Bible are misused over and over again by right wing perfectionists to make their case that humans must and can attain sinlessness. On the surface, such gyrations may appear to support the doctrine of perfection. However, this occurs with a lot of twisting, turning and ignoring of context. Perfectionists distort the meanings of the original Greek words and pull out a verse here or a phrase there to build up a lie.

New Testament misuse of the word “perfect”

Let us start with misuse of the word translated as “perfect.” Just as we saw in the case of the Old Testament, this word is a semantic pitfall in the New Testament. The word "perfect" or "perfected" is repeated a great deal in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, and it is nearly always mistranslated or misunderstood. Merciless perfectionists love to beat up on each other with the following verse from the Sermon on the Mount:

“Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).
They assume this commands humans to be sinless. However, the Greek word used here is "teleioo." This word does not mean "sinless," for which the Greek word “anamartitos” would have been used. Although translated into "perfect" in English, “teleioo” also means "finished, completed, mature, reaching a goal.” Our goal is the full recognition of Christ so we are sure of salvation as a gift. Another translation subject to the same error is in Hebrews 10:14, which states:

“For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

This is saying that one offering alone does the job that the multiple sin offerings could not achieve. Christ’s blood is the complete and final sin offering. The verse does not mean that believers become inherently perfect and without sin while they are in this world.

**Perfect faith is not necessary**

God does not demand perfect faith in the atoning blood of Christ in order for us to be saved. Jesus said that humans could move mountains if their faith were as big as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20). Since no human has ever moved a mountain, God clearly does not expect our faith to be more than minuscule.

God has given a simple but exact means for us to avoid eternal separation from Him. Our faith is what makes us use it. This is not some type of self-defined faith that has no basis in fact; it is not faith that must lack even one iota of doubt. It is just enough faith in the very specific promise from God, leading us to enter salvation by claiming coverage of the God-given blood sacrifice, Jesus.

**Misuse of “repent”**

A serious doctrinal error comes out of a misunderstanding of the word “repent” as it is used in the New Testament. Most theologians think it always talks of repentance from sin, when it simply means “turning.” The word comes from the Greek *metanoia*, which means
“a change of heart.” Despite what many think, most of the numerous New Testament verses exhorting repentance are speaking about the basic turning towards God which must precede any type of repentance from sin, as in:

“They Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38)

In other words: turn towards God after being turned away from Him. We can only make this turn when we know His arms are wide open and nothing is in the way. This can only happen after we lay claim to the blood of Christ that opens the door for us. If humans were required to repent of all their sin before they could come to Christ, this would put up an impossible barrier to salvation. We do not see the half of our sin until God begins to work on our hearts. This process of sanctification only happens after salvation, as the Holy Spirit begins its prompting. Only when safe in God’s arms, or what we call the “salvation ship,” and the gospel message has sunk down into our hearts, do we dare to see ourselves realistically. Only then do we begin to have our eyes opened to our depravity and find ourselves led to repent sin.

Misuse of “redeem”

The word "redeem" is widely misunderstood and misused. Humans talk about their "one redeeming virtue" as if redemption were based on their own progress towards purity. That one redeeming virtue such as a nice smile, occasional bursts of generosity, whatever, is going to make God like me enough to decide not to send me to hell.

However, to redeem something does not mean to change or improve it in any way. It simply means to buy it back. You sell something of yours to a pawn shop when you need money. You return later to buy it back. The human race was essentially sold into Satan’s hands in the Garden of Eden when the first rebellion
occurred. God bought us back with the blood of Christ. Paul’s epistles often contribute to this misunderstanding. A verse that is often misunderstood is Galations 3:13:

“Our Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

It might appear that the word “redeem” here refers to the process of sanctification, or cleansing from sin, rather than what it does mean, which is justification, or paying the penalty for sin.

**Only a blood payment suffices to redeem humans**

The Bible tells us that only death pays the penalty, or atones, for sin (Lev 17:11). Only a blood payment keeps a person out of hell, but it has to be from a sacrifice deemed “clean” and unblemished. No deed of my own, nor even my death, will redeem me. Only the death of a non-sinner will buy me back so I avoid the horrible penalty. I have nothing to bring to the table other than the payment God has given me. If I have good qualities, they came from God in the first place. Those little drops of goodness will not pay the penalty for sin.

However, a very clear view of “redeem” can be had from the Law. Exodus 13:13 describes how the Children of Israel can buy back their firstborn, who would otherwise belong to God, both human and beast:

“And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou will not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.”

We humans are purchased out of hell with the blood of Jesus Christ. The Law shows us this; it is much clearer on the meaning of “redeem” than New Testament teachings.
**Indwelling worthiness?**

The following is a widely misunderstood passage appropriated by perfectionists. The word “unworthily” is often understood to mean “undeservedly.” Paul states in I Corinthians 11:27-29:

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”

People think this is saying that one could eat and drink *deservedly* after earning one’s salvation, or after forgiving anyone to whom one has resentment. The opposite is true. If humans deserve anything it is to go to hell. The *eucharist* is certainly not to be engaged in out of a sense of deserving it. The mistake here is to look at only one of the translations of the Greek word *anaxios*, meaning “undeservedly, irreverently or unsuitably.” The appropriate translation of *anaxios* in this context is “irreverently,” an adverb referring to the manner of the partaking, not the virtue of the partaker.

The partaker is to eat and drink recognizing the meal is the remembrance of the body and blood of Christ. It is not to be engaged in out of physical need for food and drink (I Corinthians 11:34), or any other superficial motive. Paul is making this point because people were treating the meal, which was often more than just a wafer, only as food for the body. Reverence for the substitutionary atonement in the eucharist is all-important. It means that as the partaker examines himself, he sees his very undeservingness, or unworthiness, of salvation. He is then reminded of the wonderfulness of the gift of the blood of Christ that saved him.
Misunderstanding the Sermon on the Mount

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is also known as the Beatitudes (Matthew 5, 6, and 7; Luke 6). Some think this is a new law but that is not the case. The sermon presents nothing not found in the Law. It is a clarification of the Part One of the Law that focuses on sins of the heart and interpersonal relations. Because of that, the Sermon on the Mount is, in a sense, raising the bar.

All sin has the same eternal consequence

Jesus tells us that all sin sends humans to hell, not just serious sins:

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:21-22).

Calling someone a fool seems pretty trivial, does it not? Who has not called someone “stupid,” or an idiot, or a fool at some point in their lives? Most of us have done it many times, feeling perfectly justified in saying so regardless of whether or not there was a basis for it. To anyone unknowledgeable about mercy in the Law, this severe punishment of one accusing a brother of being a fool makes God seem tyrannical. It can seem shocking that God would let us burn for something that minor. The fact is that any slight departure from perfection has always doomed humans. The standard is absolute perfection. No human can attain this. Any and all sin qualifies us for hell. Jesus is showing that there is no way to make it out of hell other than by claiming His atoning blood. He wants humans saved, to be driven towards Himself.

Sin is in the heart

Many ignorantly suppose they can keep the Beatitude commandments perfectly, whereas the Mosaic Law would be
impossible to keep. In fact, both are impossible for humans. If anything, more of the Law God gave to Moses (Part One) is possible for humans to fulfil. Why? Because a higher percentage of the Mosaic Law concerns outward behavior. Humans can, in theory, obey God in simple actions like not stealing, or teaching our children the commandments God has given us:

“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deuteronomy 6: 7-9).

However, humans can neither conform to the Beatitudes nor any commands applying to the heart. We come unstuck because God is a mind-reader:

“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts” (Proverbs 21:2).

God commands in the Old Testament that:

“Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

“Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:17).

“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart” (Leviticus 19:17).

In Matthew 5:27-30, Jesus uses the example of adulterous thoughts to highlight the fact that sin applies to the heart:

“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).
Is the New Testament God merciless?

He also says:

“Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44).

Nobody but God has a totally pure mind. One shade of acrimony in a person’s heart is a sin. No honest student of the human psyche would believe it possible to obey the Law when it prescribes absolute and total love for God and neighbor...including enemies. Our nature is corrupt. Jesus wants us to be sure of our depravity so as to drive us towards Him for refuge.

So Jesus hammers home the painful news in this sermon. Humans are utterly incapable of keeping any law that applies to the heart. Sin of all kinds has always been punishable by death and hell. One sin is all it takes to separate humans from the holiness of God forever. The outlook would be horrifying if God had given us no remedy. Humans would inevitably be outlaws if God had not provided within the Law for them to be forgiven. Only when we humans claim the coverage of Christ’s blood do we stop being outlaws and become in-laws. However, that does not mean we are not law-breakers still, but forgiven law-breakers.

Jesus would not have needed to give the Sermon on the Mount if the Jews had kept up their study of Scripture. He was in the midst of a society dominated by Pharisees who had reached a level of hypocrisy where they deluded themselves that they kept the Law. For them, sin involved only outward behavior. In that sense, they were “semi-antinomians,” believing only in a partial law. Full of pride about their own goodness, they thought they had no need for a sin-bearer.

Sin is on the inside, primarily, and God can see it. Humans, on the other hand, delude themselves that this is not so. They deny who they are as sinners, deny that the Law applies to emotions, look only at outward behavior, and deceive themselves they are close to perfection. God, and Jesus, want humans to be saved. Only by
realizing we cannot make it out of eternal damnation in our own strength will we be driven towards Christ. There is no hope for us without His death on the cross.

More on loving your enemies
Jesus explains what it truly means to love your neighbor, commanded in the Law (Leviticus 19:18):

“Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:48).

It means to love even your enemies, as he shows in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). Despite what many believe, this commandment is not new to the New Testament. It is in the Law, albeit in a veiled way. In Exodus 23:4 God commands you to rescue your enemy’s ox or ass if you find it going astray. You are not breaking the Law if you do this on the Sabbath. This speaks of concern for your enemy, so it is a manifestation of love for him.

However, outward actions like this are under our voluntary control but the heart is not, at least in one’s first reaction. For us to be willing to experience love in our hearts for our enemies, it takes more than our own volition. Loving an enemy goes completely against our instincts...our pride, our egotism, and our vengefulness. Jesus goes into some of the specifics of loving the enemy. For example He commands that we not retaliate towards someone who has harmed us:

“...whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 6:39).

Nobody who has not comprehended that salvation is a totally undeserved gift from God to a miserable, rotten sinner will be able to even look at this one. Self-righteousness makes us want to dismiss this command. We humans can be “magnanimous” towards an enemy with a “holier-than-thou” attitude. One might return the enemies’ ox, as commanded by God (Exodus 23:4), and
use this as an excuse to belittle the enemy. *Here, idiot, here’s your stupid old ox.* What Christ is asking is totally different; he says this is to be done in love. An honest examination of ourselves would lead us to find this particular commandment highly convicting. Again, Jesus wants us to see there is no hope without Him. However, this commandment to not retaliate is not new. In Lamentations 3:26-30, the prophet Jeremiah states:

“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord...He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him.”

The knowledge of being undeservedly saved makes us increasingly willing to do things that go against our nature. Jonah, the prophet, tried to disobey God’s command that he go and preach repentance and salvation to the people of Nineveh, who had been his enemies and also the foes of God. God forced him to go there. After being vomited onshore after his three-day stay in the belly of the fish, a rescue that is a picture of salvation, Jonah was a lot more willing to talk to the Ninevites. Whereas we humans cannot force ourselves to experience love for our enemies, the more we appreciate the undeserved gift of salvation, the more we can move in that direction, particularly to pray that they, too, be saved.

**About righteousness**

Jesus has this to say in the Beatitudes about human righteousness:

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

This is very scary for anyone depending on their own efforts to escape the Lake of Fire. They have no peace of mind if they are relying on their own righteousness. However, this is the very point that Christ is making, and we have to read between the lines to get it. He is not advising us that it is humanly possible to keep all the
Law. He is saying that humans can only make it under the imputed righteousness of His own shed blood that pays the penalty for sin. This verse screams out to us that there is no hope without Christ.

**Mistaken focus on works**

Merciless right wingers depend on works as the route to salvation. However, there is ample evidence in the New Testament that God does not save according to human performance, and that works are no proof of salvation. Consider this passage from the book of Revelation:

“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel...” (Rev 2:19).

It is evident here that God is more concerned with idolatry than good deeds. Idolatry cancels out any works that humans perform. “God is not mocked” (Galatians 6:7). He looks into our hearts, not just at our deeds, as evidence for loving Him. What follows are examples of verses misused by right wing “Christian” perfectionists to support their false doctrine of good works.

**The parable of the sheep and the goats: Matthew 25:31-46**

If misinterpreted, many of Jesus’ parables can make us doubt our salvation. One that is typically misunderstood is the account of the separation of the sheep from the goats, the saved from the unsaved. Several of the author’s psychotherapy clients have expressed extreme disturbance at this narrative. They feared that salvation comes from works, looked at themselves with some honesty, and concluded that they had not done enough to be saved. One woman with bipolar disorder entered a manic state and had to be hospitalized on the Sunday this parable was preached in her church. In the account, Christ talks about the final separation of the saved from the unsaved. The problem is that the criterion for salvation can appear to be human works:
“Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungered, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matthew 25:34-36).

Jesus explains that to do these things to other people is to do them to Him:

“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

First of all, all these human kindnesses are a metaphor for giving the gospel, which is the spiritual food and drink of the hungry soul, the creation of kinship with God’s family, the clothing (or covering for sin), the visiting of the sick (or sinful), and the alleviation of imprisonment (on “hell row”).

Secondly, the impetus to give out the gospel comes from perceiving oneself to be undeservedly saved by the gift of the blood of Christ. Love for others must be preceded by love for God, and love for God is preceded by our perceiving the gift of salvation that cost Him dearly. Christ repeatedly told His apostles to feed the sheep if they loved Him (John 21). The feeding is the outcome of salvation, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This teaching follows hard on the heels of the parable of the talents, which people also often misinterpret as meaning salvation is contingent on our profitability as servants to God. This is not the case, it is the other way around: being undeservedly saved by grace gives us room to care about others. When I am saved by grace, I want this for others.

Again, in no way does the act of spreading the good news save the person doing it. The concern for others only happens after salvation. There is simply no way anybody will be impelled to
spread the gospel purely out of love for God and humans unless until its meaning has reached deep inside to a transforming level.

Too often we look at works or fruits instead of our having claimed the blood of Christ as evidence for salvation. Inevitably, we find ourselves falling short. This can make us panic and “go underground” into deeper defense. On the other hand, it is true that a person who has absolutely no desire for the good news to reach anyone else just has not “got it.” The criterion in the parable is not high: only a single performance.

“How can we be sure that a saved person will want to warn others. If I receive the gospel, understand it, take it in, accept it, and cling to it, it should make me want to tell others, particularly anyone I care about. If I realize how easy God made it to evade the Lake of Fire and how undeserving of being rescued I am, I should want others to escape those flames just as I have done.

To be confident that no type of performance saves, we can go to Old Testament assurances of God’s commitment to accept us through the blood sacrifice. Leviticus 17:11 tells us that blood alone atones for the soul. Many other Old Testament assurances are documented in the preceding chapter of this book. The thief on the cross next to Christ was saved by his belief that Jesus is the payment for sin. He made no converts. Performance does not save; but if that thief really “got” it, he could not help but desperately want his loved ones to escape eternal damnation. The lack of any impetus to warn other people is not irrelevant. It says that the heart has not thawed one iota; it means a person is not saved. The salvation message propels its listener to spread it around, not to bury it.
Fruits and gifts pitfall
Many who say they are saved fall into the trap of looking for spiritual fruits or gifts as a sign of salvation. Only too often one hears in the church an accusing voice that says: *If you are saved, where are your fruits?* To be sure, the New Testament writer, James, says:

“...faith without works is dead” (James 2:20).

It is true that faith in salvation as a gift initiates a transformation in our hearts that makes us begin to thaw out emotionally and morally. God’s sacrificial love inspires us to begin to love Him and our fellow men. However, it may be a long time before this faith translates into any noticeable aspect of behavior. It is only too easy to fall into the trap of seeing some vice in ourselves and deducing from this that we are not saved. Focusing on fruits or gifts as a sign of salvation can lead to falling away from faith.

Tongues
Certain charismatic denominations fix their attention on some essential behavior they define as evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person. If a person is saved, they must display some particular gift. An example is glossolalia, or speaking in an “unknown tongue” (I Corinthians 14:2) said by some to be “tongues of...angels” (I Corinthians 13:1). However, this phenomenon may not be a manifestation of the Holy Spirit at all. The practice of glossolalia has been widespread among pagans for centuries. The true fruits of the Spirit, often ignored by charismatics, are love for God and our fellow men such that we will want them saved from hell.

Seeking evidence for salvation in the form of one’s own fruits and gifts is a red herring that plays into the hands of Satan.\(^61\) He knows

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\(^{61}\) Many Calvinists search their own behavior and their degree of faith for evidence that they are among the “elect.”
that as long as I am focusing on myself rather than God, all I will see is that I come up short. I will give in to doubt about my salvation status, which can lead to despair. In reality, all I need do is look at the saving blood of Christ and ask God to deepen my faith in it. Jesus is the “author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). God does not abandon us for imperfect faith. There is forgiveness for doubts. As faith deepens, humans get less wicked but nobody ever comes anywhere near moral perfection. The Holy Spirit begins its mysterious transformation of us when we claim Christ’s blood, but the sin nature remains. It is good to keep in mind that the thief on the cross was saved by faith alone. Leviticus 17:11 says it all: “...for it is blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

**Misunderstandings from I John**

There was a time when the author visited churches of various denominations wanting to learn about their doctrinal statements and to see what impression she would come away with. Her question was whether or not the Christian church was as far gone into heresy as she suspected.

On one occasion she walked into a church and got into a heated debate with the young pastor and his wife over the role of perfectionism in Christianity. These people were stuck in error. The pastor reeled off a number of verses from I John to try to prove that indwelling sinlessness is possible for Christians. When she asked him if he had reached that state of sinlessness himself, he could not give a straight answer. All he could do was hem and haw. When she pointed out verses in the same epistle that flatly contradicted his ideas, he was speechless.

It is ironic that the writer of I John was attacking the twin heresies of perfectionism and antinomianism. However, the first epistle of John has been used, more than any other, to support the doctrine of perfection. Why? To be sure, it lends itself to misinterpretation.
Here is an example of the harmful effect of giving this epistle a perfectionist spin. The author received a phone call from a radio listener, a depressed woman who had gone to a counseling session with her pastor. She had come away with the impression that since she was still a sinner, she must be unsaved. The pastor had used verses from I John to condemn her for sin, leaving her even more depressed than she had been when she walked in. She represents many who are crushed in this way.

Later, she heard our program explaining how and why salvation is through grace alone. Reassured by this, she asked the author to do a program contradicting the perfectionist interpretation of I John. The material in this following section comes out of that radio broadcast.

**The imputed righteousness of Christ is taken to mean indwelling human righteousness**

I John is used by merciless legalists who want to think themselves sinless, using such verses as the following:

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7).

Is this saying that Christ eliminates all sin in us? No. Christ takes away our sins *from the eyes of God* just as the scapegoat took away the sins of the whole year from the eyes of God on behalf of the children of Israel on the Day of Atonement (Exodus 30:30; Leviticus 16; Leviticus 26:27-31). God expects people to sin continually. A lamb was to be burning all day and night in the Temple to cover human sin and there was to be annual observance of the Day of Atonement to cover sins for the whole year. A goat and a bullock were sacrificed to make the blood payment, then the

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62 The same error is made on the basis of Hebrews 10:26.
people’s sins were confessed over another goat’s head and the animal was led away into the wilderness, never to return, just as God would let the sin disappear from His mind. He agreed to "forget" about those sins if the people observed this ceremony. This did not remove the tendency to sin, nor the sin nature.

The scapegoat is a picture of Christ, just as the blood sacrifices are. He cleanses us from the eternal penalty by taking our sin on Himself like the scapegoat and dying like the sacrificial lamb or bullock. The following verses from I John 3:5-6 are also used by perfectionists to buttress their argument that Christ makes them sinless:

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”

The point is, to “take away our sins” in the first part of the verse means to remove them from God’s eyes. The last part of the verse can be misunderstood in its reference to the specific sin of idolatry. It does not refer to general sin. In fact, the entire epistle is a warning against the sin of idolatry. The last verse is a summary:


It is not a treatise against generic sin. It cautions against the specific sin of idolatry. This is why I John 3 states in verse 6:

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not;”

and in verse 9:

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”
If some pastor says this verse speaks of general sin, not merely the sin of idolatry, any honest would-be believer in Christ has to get thrust into a panic state. It is no wonder that my listener felt beaten up by her pastor. How many of us find that we “cannot sin,” when generic sin is implied? Not one. The problem is that we cannot not sin. If I believe I should be unable to sin, not even a single wicked thought, when I abide in Him, then I will have to conclude I am not saved. That is, if I am honest with myself. Of course, I am likely to lie to myself and go deeper into denial. There is further evidence that this epistle addresses the specific sin of idolatry, the refusal of Christ, in I John 3:10. This verse says:

“...whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

If “doeth not righteousness” in this context referred to generic sin, there would be no need for a separate reference to the person not loving his brother. The Law (Part One) boils down to two commandments: love God and love your neighbor. The ultimate unrighteousness is to not love Christ, Who is God. I John 3:23 is a positive restatement of 1 John 3:10:

“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”

Refusal to believe in Christ is the unrighteousness that this epistle speaks to.

**Perfect love?**

John exhorts the followers of Christ to love one another, and to look at the ability to do this as an indication of being saved:

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (I John 4:8).
“If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).

However, these passages have been interpreted to mean either that love is an essential work of humans to gain salvation, or that perfect human love is a fruit of salvation. Neither is true. John is saying here that faith leads to transformation of the heart so a person will love others. He is not saying that human love will ever be perfect. Nor does he mean that human love earns salvation.

In the first verse, John reassuringly uses negatives rather than positives. A complete absence of love for others means a person does not know God. If there is not even a tiny iota of love in a person, he just has not “got it.” The standard here is certainly not perfection.

The second verse is talking about God’s love, not human love. The passive mode of the Greek verb teleioo used here is teleiomai, meaning “to be made perfect or complete in the sense of reaching a prescribed goal.” So “his love is perfected in us” means it reaches its prescribed goal. He fills our cup so it can spill over onto others.

However, there is a way in which our heart does become perfect (complete) in relation to God. That is when we claim salvation solely through the blood of the figurative Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. This is what is meant when it is said of King Asa of Judah:

“...his heart was perfect with the LORD all his days” (I Kings 15:14).

It does not mean that his mind and heart were on God at every moment of time. Such a total focus would mean he was not human. No, it means he was not an idolater, he never put his faith in other gods.
Love and fear
People get guilt-tripped by some pastor or counselor who pummels them with the following:

“...perfect love casteth out fear” (I John 4:18).

They are told fear is a terrible sin, and if they have it, they need to go and get themselves “a better heart for the Lord.” Taken out of context, the verse is confusing. Who among humans is without fear? Nobody. Fear is useful, an essential part of our functioning, enabling us to recognize danger. However, the fact that the verse is not referring to any type of worldly fear, but to the fear of hell on Judgment Day is proven by the preceding verse:

“Therein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment” (I John 4:17).

In fact, numerous verses in the Law and Prophets tell us fear is appropriate and desirable for believers in the God of the Bible, especially fear of God:

“Thou shalt fear thy God” (Leviticus 19:14).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7).

The truth is that our love for God increases in relation to our surety about His gift of salvation from hell. There is no need to worry about Judgment Day.

John shows that God expects men to sin
Several statements in 1 John refute perfectionism and show that the writer expects humans to fall short. Anyone who wants to believe otherwise is ignoring some very clear verses in 1 John, such as:
“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 8).

Also:

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2).

This is the good news that feeds our hungry hearts; the apostle John is no merciless perfectionist.

Misuse of “overcomer:” a worldly perspective instead of the eternal one

One of the callers to the radio program was a woman who, in an unnaturally calm and beatific voice, recounted the many "overcomings" of worldly bad habits that the Holy Spirit had performed in her. She went on to say that Christ will give us total victory over sin; she even supported this contention with the verse from Matthew discussed earlier:

“...be ye now perfect just as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

This woman was deep into perfectionist self-deception. The term “overcomer,” used liberally in 1 John, is a source of much misunderstanding. In this epistle, there are several references to believers having overcome “the wicked one" (I John 2:13, 14) and “spirits that are of antichrist” (I John 4:4). In what way have believers overcome the wicked one? For too many, this means resisting temptation to give in to certain sinful impulses in the flesh. It is an absolute trivialization of what the verse means. The true meaning is that Satan's plan for us to spend eternity separated from God has been overcome as we cling to Christ Who paid for our sins.
There has been popular movement within the church with this “overcomer” name. Its focus is on the elimination of sinful habits. Although there is nothing wrong with habit control, “overcoming” should have a much deeper focus. Instead of a worldly focus, there needs to be an eternal one. Group support should have a goal of learning to lean on God for salvation. Instead of looking at the self, attention should be on the finished work of Christ.

Indeed, during her conversation with me, the woman spoke almost entirely of herself and her dealings with this life, never mentioning eternity. Her focus was on the battles God had won for her in this world and her progress towards moral purity through Jesus Christ. She did not want to see herself as a sinner, but as a sinless “new creature.”

Believers are said to have overcome "the world" in I John (I John 5:4, 5:5). What does this mean, to overcome the world, if not to look beyond the immediate concerns of this physical realm and focus on things eternal? Christ came to give us life eternal in place of what we deserve: death eternal ending in the lake of fire. Clearly, that is what John teaches in I John 2:15-17:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

This is the very opposite of what the woman on the telephone was doing, focusing on overcoming the flesh while we are in this world. Our concern has to be about escaping eternal torment, no less.

"Overcoming" idolatry
The truth is that the “overcomer” term is used in every case to refer to idolatry, and not some lesser sin. In the book of
Revelation, John uses the word "overcometh" several times, always in reference to resisting the temptation to reject Christ. The warnings given to the seven churches have that strong thrust. “Works” are mentioned in the context of holding on to Christ, and not worldly deeds aimed to gain or maintain salvation (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Exhortations are to "hold fast," and "hold fast my name."

The Old Testament makes this issue much clearer. David, the adulterer and murderer, is nevertheless described as one whose heart was perfect with the Lord because unlike his son, Solomon, and many of his other descendants, David never went into idolatry. The Psalms show David’s faith in God seeming to waiver at times, but the important thing is that he never went elsewhere for sustenance. He knew God alone would redeem his soul.

**Merciless misuse of Paul’s epistle to the Romans**

For the most part, it is pretty clear that Paul knows he is a sinner, and will always be a sinner while in this world. His epistle to the Romans lays out the truth about salvation through the blood of Christ:

“Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:18).

**Are “doers” of the law justified by their own actions?**

Nevertheless, Paul’s epistle to the Romans is often interpreted in a perfectionist manner. As verses are taken out of context and misapplied, ignorant congregations are led into a state of panic, horror and psychological defense.

In Romans 2:13 Paul states:

“For not the hearers of the law are just before God but the doers of the law shall be justified.”
The verse can seem to make Paul a perfectionist who states that (Part One of) the Law can be kept by humans, and that men can be justified (saved) by their own actions. This is a mistake that is easy to make for anyone ignorant of Part Two of the Law, the substitutionary blood atonement covenant. The new version of this part of the Law tells us to claim the blood of Christ and be saved.

In a sense, for us to claim Christ is to be a “doer” of Part Two of the Law which commands us to gain God’s forgiveness through a blood sacrifice. Since Christ became the sacrifice, this has been an internal action of the believing in the heart. Little of that opening of the heart may be voluntary on the part of the believer. A first step is “cessation of againstness,” recognizing one’s ignorance and becoming open as a child, dropping preconceptions.

In no way can Paul be saying humans are justified by keeping the Law in any other way than claiming Christ. This would be inconsistent with what he says in Romans 3:9-31, where he quotes Psalms 14 and 5 on the unrighteousness of man, stating that all humans are sinners. Our only righteousness is through faith in Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the more deeply we humans “hear” the gospel, the more we find ourselves freely desiring to please God by obeying Part One of the Law. However, human works are as “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) that are unacceptable for salvation.

Paul is no right wing perfectionist. If Paul truly meant that human works save, he would not say the following:

“Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).
Are only the past sins forgiven?

The author once visited a Bible study at a Christian camp where the students were being beaten down by a merciless interpretation of the following verses:

“Christ Jesus; Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Romans 3: 24-25).

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26).

The youthful Bible study leader was haranguing the agonized group at the camp: Your past sins are forgiven but once you become a Christian, watch out! No more lying, no more drinking. You’d better toe the line or you’ll go to hell! Nobody argued with him except me, which led to my being attacked by the whole group. I was “of the devil” for daring to suggest that Christ does not stop humans from being sinners. Nobody wanted to admit that he or she still sinned.

This kind of teaching breeds dishonesty and drives people crazy. No wonder so many put off the whole issue of salvation, hoping for that four-minute warning just before they die to make their peace with God! The verse in this group was taken to mean that any type of wilful sin committed after a person has been saved sends them to hell.

The big error here is that a very specific sin was taken to mean sin in general. The verses actually speak of the specific sin of rejecting Christ, as testified to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. By definition, if one were to reject Christ, one would be unsaved. In fact, the verses

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63 The same mistake is found in interpretations of I John, discussed later in this chapter.
are addressed to Jews, telling them they cannot go back to the animal sacrifices. Soon after the second of these two verses comes:

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:29).

If they reject Christ, they have no payment for sin. The blood of Christ replaced the animal sacrifice system prescribed by Part Two of the Law.

**Walking in the Spirit: Romans 8**

Romans 8 might seem to offer some ammunition for perfectionists. Paul talks of those who:

“Walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1); “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4); “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6); “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body; ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).

The last of these statements can be particularly alarming: “...if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live” (Romans 8:13). This seems to be saying that restraint of the flesh is necessary to gain or maintain salvation.

The abstract references to walking in the spirit and being spiritually-minded are also a source of confusion. What is meant by “walking in the spirit”? The mistake is to see this as an either/or. *Either you are in the flesh or you are in the Spirit* (i.e., the Holy Spirit). *Any time you find yourself responding in the flesh, it means you do not have the Spirit.* Paul surely does not intend this interpretation. If that were
so, he would not elsewhere make references to his own inner battles with sin (Romans 7:14-25). As long as we note that Paul has just got through admitting his own conflict between the flesh and the spirit, we need not be dismayed:

“...who shall deliver me from the body of this death?: 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” (Romans 7:24-25).

Exactly what Paul means when he says he serves the law of God with his mind is unclear, because the worst and most insidious sins are those of the mind. Perhaps he means he has good intentions. In reality, no human keeps the Law with either mind or body. The mind can philosophically desire to serve the law of God, yet the devil is in the details. Our mind is a general directing a war with an army of thoughts given to rebelliousness and lack of discipline. Moreover, sometimes the general sleeps on the battlefield or worse, lets the soldiers loose. However, as the perception of grace deepens, the general stays awake longer and increasing numbers of soldiers fall into line.

What is walking in the Spirit?
What does “walking in the Spirit” mean? It sounds like an “either-or,” i.e., flesh vs Spirit, but it is not. The believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but this is in the midst of the flesh with its corrupt and selfish heart. The Spirit wakes up the conscience, the sense of right and wrong, which is an inborn version of the essentials of Part One of the Law. God’s law is in the heart (and mind) alongside the sin nature, and the two come into conflict. Besides waking up the conscience, the other work of the Spirit is to comfort us with assurance that the flesh is forgiven. This is why Jesus gives the name “Comforter” to the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

In other words, forgiveness in Part Two of the Law enters the heart and gets added to Part One. The antidote is poured on the poison.
The Spirit points us both to our weakness and towards the mercy of God. It strengthens us to exercise restraint, but this is a gradual process and it is never perfected in this world. Sin will lessen but continue.

Nobody can get out of the flesh. Ascetics and anorexics literally try to do this and often die in the attempt. Mortification of the flesh is a goal that cannot be attained for humans in this world. Humans commune with God through the blood of Christ but exist in this world in the flesh. To be aware of our weakness is a good thing. It makes us humble. This will keep us looking at God with a sense of total dependence and thankfulness.

Walking in the Spirit means sinners can be open with God about their rottenness. They find comfort in His forgiveness as they claim coverage of the death of Christ. They can expect to get less bad but know they will always be far from perfect righteousness in themselves. The most any human can do is aim to please God while living in corrupt flesh that will always keep them from fully reaching that goal. Christ’s blood allows the sinner to freely approach God in their dialogue with Him. A number of benefits flow out of this: a soothing sense of being saved, forgiven and accepted; a constant calling on God for help; continual thankfulness towards Him for His mercy; and the growth of love towards God and others. Even more important, there will be the anticipation of eternal life in a sinless body when what all humans deserve is the Lake of Fire.

Let us be reassured by the truth that, even as the sinners we will always be while in this flesh, we have access to the Holy Spirit through the blood of Christ. The Spirit will comfort us with the knowledge of being saved only by clinging to that blood, particularly as He guides and deepens our understanding of Scripture.
What’s the truth about Romans?
The truth about the book of Romans is that Paul knows he has not transcended the flesh. In fact, he addresses the impossibility of doing so in Romans 7:14-25, where he describes the internal conflict between the Spirit and his own flesh.

“For we know that the law is spiritual but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:14-17).

That last conclusion, a separation of “sin” from “me” is considered by some to represent the Pauline dualism typical of Eastern religions and philosophies.64 This is pride in the human ego attempting to deny responsibility for sin by treating the self as separate from it: the devil made me do it. However, the issue here is not whether or not Paul engages in dualism but that he admits to continuing sin. The most important thing to get out of Romans is the simple message of salvation by grace:

“...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).

How merciless perfectionists misuse I Corinthians 6:9
I Corinthians is another of Paul’s epistles often misused to give a bad scare to a congregation and ruin a nice Sunday morning. Consider this verse:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor

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64 Dualism is a common mind/body or spirit/flesh split found in many religions, all of which are perfectionist.
adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind; nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you…” (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

The use of the past tense here can make this seem to be setting an impossible standard of human performance for getting saved or for staying saved. The expression “And such were some of you” certainly can raise alarm. This suggests an absolutist “before and after:”

*Once I was bad but now I am good. And if I find anything that is not good in myself, it means I’m still lost, I’m not going to heaven.*

Again, it is impossible for all traces of evil to disappear in humans once they are saved. The more extreme forms of sin mentioned in this passage gradually diminish but our ugly nature persists. Our corrupt tendencies will continue to operate on the more subtle level of thoughts, dreams or occasional cravings. Murderous impulses, envy, coveting, adulterous thoughts and inappropriate lusts are a part of the ugly human nature.

On the one hand it is true that a person who becomes cognizant of the Law after accepting Christ will not be able to give himself license to continue in sin, and will engage in less and less of it out of fear and love for God who saved him from hell. Yet the transformation of the sinner is gradual and never complete in this world. Suppose a person slips up after claiming the blood of Christ? Perhaps he or she fantasizes about one of these forbidden activities? Suppose a person goes beyond fantasizing to act out one of these things? What then? Well, Paul goes on immediately to state:

“But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 6:11).
The King James translates the Greek word *apolouo* into the appropriate present continuous tense (“ye are washed”), rather than the past tense used in some other translations. The present continuous is fitting here because humans require constant cleansing. Salvation does not wipe out our sin nature.

**Comfort from the Pentateuch (or Law)**

Much comfort is to be had on this subject from the Pentateuch. If drunkards are not saved, that must include Noah, yet the account in Genesis 9 in no way suggests this. In Genesis 9 we see a drunken Noah during the time after the flood, when he is a grape farmer and vintner. In the passage, Noah is humiliated by his son, Ham. God is very angry, but not with Noah; there is not even a mention of Noah’s inebriation being offensive to God. This is one of those many cases where the Old Testament offers clarity. God’s chosen vessels among the Israelites are people like us in that they had serious failings. Yet God forgave them and used them to do His work. He does the same with us. The only sin of real importance to God is idolatry, because implies rejection of Him.

God clearly expects humans to sin all their lives. Evidence for this in the Law is that the Day of Atonement was to be observed by all of God’s people every year. The command was for “when” you sin, not “if” you sin, because God knows humans cannot *not* sin. Humans will continue to sin and the good news is that He freely gives us a way out of its terrible eternal consequence.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter we looked at New Testament verses misused by right wing perfectionists. We saw that when these verses are put into their true context, they do not support perfectionism at all. They support the reality of mercy in the New Testament, which is consistent with the Law. We need to do our own homework. Familiarity with the Law would enable us to avoid being led astray by pitfall verses that are easy to misinterpret. Humans will stay on the road to hell if they allow perfectionists to interpret the Bible for them. This is true of
Is the New Testament God merciless?

both the Old Testament, the subject of the last chapter, and the New Testament. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of merciless perfectionism these days in the Christian church. People are unable to have any peace of mind as they are beaten over the head and guilt-tripped with a fraudulent version of the Law, much of it consisting of misinterpreted teachings by Paul.

The New Testament is not perfectionist. On the contrary, it points out the grace of God in His willingness to impute, or attribute, to us the perfection of Christ, who, as God in human form, is alone among us in fulfilling the entire Law God gave to Moses. To bring “into captivity every thought” (2 Corinthians 10:5) is a fine goal, but it is one that can never be attained by humans in this lifetime. All humans would be damned if God had not put the substitutionary blood atonement covenant in the law. Proof of His love for us is that He commands to observe this covenant so we can avoid the Lake of Fire and have eternal life.
Chapter Six:

Is the New Testament God all-tolerant?
The left wing problem: liberalism

We’re under grace now, we’re not under the law. The idea of not being under the Law but under grace is the liberal “Christian” notion of the gospel. To fool themselves, “no-law” antinomians reject the Old Testament Law as an obsolete code lacking mercy. Then they pick, choose and distort parts of the New Testament to make their case that, other than criminal wrongdoing, now almost “anything goes” with God.

“No law” antinomianism in the Christian church

It is absurd for Christians to think they are not under the Law. If the Law were not still in force there would be no need for Christ. Who needs to be rescued from damnation when there is no damnation?

However, antinomianism has made a huge inroad into the Christian church. According to antinomians, the modern God has become permissive. He doesn’t damn anybody and send them to hell like mean old Yahweh did. Now God is a softie. This is one massive defense mechanism. Its deception that nothing is illegal now is just a superficial cover for deep, inner existential guilt. Guilt is not the only reason for antinomianism, however. Rebellion is an even bigger reason. The rebellious child inside all of us wants to do what it likes and not get punished.

The author’s personal experience with anarchism (i.e., liberalism or antinomianism)

What is the appeal of antinomianism? The author can speak from her own experience during a tour of “-isms” in the search for
“relevance” during her undergraduate days at a very left-leaning experimental college in the Mid-West.

**Marxism:** First our instructor introduced us to Marxism, which soon palled. There was too much weird, indigestible terminology, such as “alienated labor,” a term referring to what Marx saw as the big problem: workers did not control the means of production. Karl Marx was right in one way. Our problem does stem from alienation but it is a sense of separation from God. Atheist Marx did not go far enough to see this spiritual disconnect. His materialist, worldly analysis was far from the dreadful reality of physical death ending in the Lake of Fire. It was an anti-God theory that did not satisfy on the level of the \( \text{sin}= \text{death/hell equation} \).

**Anarchism:** Exit Marx. Next our instructor “pied-pipered” the class on to a new set of deceptions. We dived into the study of Russian theories on anarchism. This new “-ism” was a real winner. Our instructor had certainly hit on something that everyone in the class liked; it had self(ish) appeal. This was the time of sex, dope and rock’n roll. Everybody could “do their own thing” as long as it did not harm anyone else. One thing I had liked about Marx was the humanism, and this was an extension of that. Anarchism offered freedom with a bit of humanism thrown in. *Humans are basically good, says the humanist. They are not sinners. Leave them alone, give them freedom and they will be good to each other.*

**The Bible:** The problem is that it is just is not so. The Bible says the very opposite of this. Here is what two of the prophets say:

“There is none that doeth good, no not one” (Psalm 14:1).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

**Humans are not good:** There is no evidence for the claims of the anarchists and humanists that all humans need in order to blossom
is freedom from constraint. Humans have a wicked nature. If there were no laws, humans would find some way to justify even murder. That is exactly the road our nation is going on right now. What next after abortion and euthanasia? Even when humans do adhere to some set of standards, if they do not come from God, they are full of loopholes, inconsistencies and fuzziness.

Selfish personal mores put the self above God or the neighbor. Semantics distort sin to make it acceptable. Abortion becomes “choice.” Dependent clinging to another person becomes “caring.” Sexual predation becomes “love.” Just as the Bible says, good becomes evil and evil becomes good.

No escape outside of the Law
Under the guise of the so-called liberal, “no-law” form of Christianity, the rebellious child rejects the Law that God gave to Moses. Throwing rocks at the Law, it shoots its own foot. It spits on mercy and rejects the only source of hope. Racing towards ecumenicalism, it does away with Jesus Christ, the “stumbling-stone” and “rock of offense” standing in the way of religious unity. However, there is no way to escape the Law’s indictment, and no way to avoid eternal punishment outside of the Law. The Law alone gives us Christ.

Is the Law obsolete now?
Earlier in the book we defined the Law as having two distinct parts. Part One defines moral and behavioral codes that apply to outward actions and the heart. Falling short of it to the tiniest degree separates humans from God eternally, meaning that all humans would be damned without Christ. Part Two offers grace, a viable way for humans to pay, or atone, for their sin by proxy, gaining God’s forgiveness for the inevitable breaches of Part One. Mercy lies in God’s commandment to approach Him via a blood sacrifice, eventually Jesus, the lamb of God.
It is Part One of the Law that antinomians want to negate or make obsolete. Why? They are running from the sting of existential guilt. The guilt comes from inborn awareness of the horrible fate resulting from human inability to adhere perfectly to Part One, which defines sin and punishment. Until we perceive the forgiveness in Part Two of the Law, we try to invent some way of our own to eradicate that guilt. Antinomians use various forms of denial, saying the rules do not apply or even exist. They treat sin as a myth. Chapter Three of this book discussed the defense mechanisms typical of people trying to reject the inner conviction that they are sinners, and the damning moral code in Part One of the Law.

The problem is, if you throw out the Law, you not only rid yourself of Part One, you also lose Part Two, the freely available God-given atonement, His forgiveness for breaking Part One. You throw out the baby with the bath water.

**Psychoanalysis tries to erase the Law**

It is a common practice to try to erase the moral code. That is what Sigmund Freud was busy trying to do five days a week with his psychoanalysis patients. *Get rid of the overly harsh moral code your repressed parents put into you and replace it with something nice and permissive.*

The reason psychoanalysis does not work is that the Law cannot be erased. God put an indelible moral law into us and our sense of falling short of it tells us we are doomed. Psychoanalysis never cured anybody of the need for psychological defenses against existential guilt and the anxiety that arises from the unconscious sense of deserving the Lake of Fire. There is no way humans can gain psychological integrity outside of the eternal defense, Jesus Christ.
**Stuck with the jots and titles**

The problem for antinomians is that there is no basis in God’s Word for nullifying either Part One or Part Two of the Law. Disclaiming Part One denies what humans know deep down inside. There is a sense of a horrible fate awaiting, a situation that is irremediable outside of what God promises in Part Two of the Law. Disclaiming Part Two would be the worst thing people could do to themselves. It would mean rejecting their only means of avoiding eternal damnation.

Jesus kept and affirmed every “jot and tittle” of the Law (Matthew 5:18). His exacting terminology is a thorough endorsement of it. A *jot*, translated from the Greek iota, is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet; a *tittle* is the tiniest punctuation mark. This means every part of the Law still applies. So what if much of it is not humanly enforced or has been modified among “adherents”? In God’s eyes, the detailed ordinances are binding just as they were in the days of Moses. He has not changed his mind about what is good for humans.

The Law has always specified that only holy, or unblemished, blood atones for the human soul. So humans can neither keep Part One of the Law nor escape the deadly consequence of breaking it by paying for sin with their own blood or “good” deeds. There is no way to erase our debt through personal effort. The standard is too high for us to reach. Our only refuge is the lifebelt God has thrown to us.

God wants us to search Scripture and see the beauty of the entire Law. Nobody can truly embrace Part One until they are safe inside the “salvation ship” of Part Two. The Law is between man and God; God wants us to “observe to do” His commandments (Deut 5:32), not out of guilt or social pressure, but out of love for Him.
Is the New Testament God all-tolerant?

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Misapplication of Paul’s teachings

How can it be that both merciless legalists and antinomians support their opposing positions from the same set of New Testament teachings? They do it by tweaking and spinning them in different ways, selecting out different verses, putting their own slant on them. Both lean heavily on the writings of Paul but distort them in opposing ways. Paul says:

"Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:18).

For liberal/antinomian “Christians,” that is just the point. No Law means no sin. However, they seem oblivious to the fact that no Law would also mean no Christ. This is why antinomian faith is lukewarm. Antinomians think they can do without Christ because they think they are not sinners. Is this rejection of Christ, our sin bearer, the “abomination of desolation,” the removal of the daily sacrifice (i.e., Christ) Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24:15? It would certainly fit today’s church, where Jesus is largely a figure-head or role model.

However, Paul cannot mean the Law is obsolete if he says things like:

“For all have sinned and come short of the law” (Romans 3:23).

In Galatians 2:19, Paul makes it clear that the Law is his defense from condemnation:

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.”

Where “law” means only Part One of the Law

There are several instances where Paul and others refer to “law” but mean only Part One, which does not contain the substitutionary blood atonement covenant. This has given rise to enormous
confusion and doctrinal error. Let us look at some places where the word “law” is only talking of Part One. Take Galatians 2:21:

“I do not frustrate the grace of God: For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Liberals/antinomians use this verse to say the entire Law is obsolete. They say Christ replaces the Law when in fact He fulfils it. The verse simply means that Christ’s death, the new form of Part Two, would be inessential if humans could perfectly fulfil Part One and avoid all sin for their entire lives.

In fact, righteousness *does* come by the Law, and *only* by the Law, when you include Part Two. The only righteousness to be had by humans is the imputed kind under the coverage of Christ’s blood.

Galatians 5:16 is also often misused in a similar manner:

“If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”

This verse is misunderstood by antinomians as saying that those who are led by the Holy Spirit can forget about the Law. However, a Scripturally consistent interpretation would be that those led by the Spirit to cover themselves with Christ are no longer *under the indictment* of Part One of the Law. It is Part Two of the Law that provides for our indictment to be lifted. The Spirit works within the Law to keep us looking at Christ.

In theory, if I were to be led by the Spirit one hundred percent of the time from conception on, I would never sin, and therefore not be under indictment. However, our fallen nature makes perfect obedience to the Law impossible. Even if I managed to be led by the Spirit one hundred percent from a certain point in my life after I

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64 One difficulty in this interpretation is that a person is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit until after they have claimed Christ.
am saved (this is only hypothetical and can never be actual), I am still under indictment for any single sin I ever committed in my life up to this point. One single sin would separate me from God forever if Christ were not my sin-bearer. There is no way for humans to avoid indictment in Part One of the Law.

Who wants to escape a Law that provides mercy for lawbreakers? Only a person who is ignorant of the Law, or deeply in denial, or in rebellion, or all these things. Ignorance is often the willful kind, by the way.

**Is the law itself a “curse”?**

Another verse that liberals/antinomians often misuse is Galations 3:13:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"?

What is meant by “the curse of the law”? Many assume this means that the Law itself is a curse, and that Christ has removed us completely from any part of that curse. This is not true. Says Paul elsewhere:

“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” (Romans 7:7).

In a later verse, Paul states:

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12).

This is certainly not calling the Law a curse. On the contrary, Paul is commending Old Testament Law. So what is this “curse of the law”? It is the curse within Part One of the Law that says the price
for any sin whatsoever is death, meaning eternal separation from God leading to the Lake of Fire. However, the antidote to the curse is also in the Law. Part One of the Law condemns us. Part Two of the Law frees us from condemnation. Christ hung on the cross to take the curse off our backs. Deuteronomy 12:22 says:

"...for he that is hanged is accursed of God."

Christ came to fulfil the Law, not to wipe it away. God worked within the Law to save us from the penalty for not being able to conform with all the edicts. We humans are cursed if we do not take the God-given, freeing provision within the Law. Christ's death by hanging on the tree of Calvary redeems or buys us back to God.

Clearly Paul is agreeing that we are under the Law. The Law has a curse and a blessing. If there were no Part Two of the Law we would have to pay the terrible penalty for our sin. Any individual who does not avail himself or herself of the redemption fee that God paid on our behalf is still under the curse. God stayed within his Law to provide redemption for us.

No longer under the schoolmaster? Who is the schoolmaster?
Galatians 3:24-25 states:

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

This verse is often misused to bolster the “not under the law” argument. For this verse to be consistent with the rest of Paul’s teachings, the words of Jesus, and the Law itself, the word “law” here has to be referring to Part One of the Law, coupled with the old version of Part Two. The old system of blood sacrifices is the schoolmaster. It teaches us to have faith in the shed blood of Christ that saves us from the result of our inability to adhere to Part One.
Research on human concept formation can help us to understand what Paul is getting at. Humans develop abstract concepts though concrete experiences and visual images. The unblemished lamb, the physical blood, the altar, the high priest, the temple, the holy days and all the other tangibles help to build a picture of the concept of salvation through the God-given blood of Christ. Salvation by faith in what Christ did for us makes sense as we look at the pictures God gives us in the Law.

**Expedient versus legal**

Another of Paul’s statements seems to support antinomianism:

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient” (I Corinthians 6:12).

Does this mean Paul is saying nothing is illegal? Considering his other statements on the validity of the Law, Paul cannot be saying that “anything goes.” He has just finished a lengthy warning against several different kinds of sin. So what does he mean here? Unless Paul has bought into antinomianism, or he is referring to the apostles’ rescindment of the dietary laws for Gentile converts, he probably means that because Christ’s death pays for all sin, no sin sends humans to hell. The Law provides for all sins to be forgiven; our sin debt can be canceled only through the blood of Christ. Even murder will not stop humans from escaping hell as long as they claim the provision of God’s payment for sin, the blood of Christ. However, sin is never legal.

Here we have to remember what is meant by the term “sin.” It is not merely moral failure. It is to fall short of perfection in *any* way.

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66 Acts 15 describes a man-made temporary rescinding of most of the dietary laws, an introductory offer made to Gentiles.
The Law presents clear pictures of this. Humans were tainted by failing to perform hygiene and dietary codes, or by menstrual bleeding. A host of such things required them to be separated until evening or for longer time periods from the congregation, only to be cleansed by a blood sacrifice.

These pictures show that all imperfection, not merely moral failure, separates humans from God. Humans can see from this that they are thoroughly unacceptable to God unless they come to Him under the blood of Christ. We are tainted through and through. Today, although non-observance of such aspects of Part One are not punished on a human level, failure to observe these non-moral parts of the Law still makes us miss the mark. We cannot do without our Savior. If all things were truly lawful to us, we humans would not need Christ.

**A person who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the entire law**

Some of Paul’s statements have been used to support the idea that the entire Law has been replaced with a vague law to love:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Galatians 5:14).

A similar verse is Romans 13:8:

“Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”

Antinomians take these verses completely out of context and delude themselves that there is only one law they have to keep: loving other people. For them, this is not even a commandment but a general guideline which they interpret however they like, deceiving themselves that they love other people when they are mostly callous towards them. The cross-dresser described in Chapter Three used this verse to make his habit permissible. He “loved” his wife, so his cross-dressing should be O.K.
The Law gives some clear behavioral standards for loving the neighbor, but when you throw out the Law, how do you define love? The answer is: idiosyncratically. By rejecting the *jots* and *tittles* of the Law, antinomians construe “love thy neighbor” in a self-interested way that has nothing to do with love for another.

**Self-deception and humanism**

In deceiving themselves that they keep this commandment, antinomian “Christians” are operating as humanists. Humanists like the idea of love for fellow men. They think they can do it without any help from God. Most people will agree that it is right and, ultimately, prudent to do good to others. Even the most extreme law-rejecting antinomian would agree that loving the neighbor is a universal good. However, they interpret “love” so murkily that its meaning disappears under layer upon layer of denial. This gives plenty of “wiggle room” to allow for exploitation and abuse of others. A person gives loving hugs to people in church on Sunday (for whose benefit?) during the service but spreads ugly rumors about them right afterwards during coffee time. Sure, he loves his neighbors.

The denial of corruption leads humans to be shocked by their dark tendencies and they are unprepared to deal with them when they surface. The inhabitants of Jerusalem probably protested vigorously when God told them through Moses and Jeremiah that they would eat their own children (Deut 28:53, Jeremiah 19:9), yet this happened during a siege of the city.

Nobody can love his neighbor without first knowing that God loves him. In other words, humans cannot truly love others until they have been pierced by an understanding of God’s act of love on behalf of their wicked selves. Proof of God’s love is that He sacrificing Jesus for us. This is why the *jots* and *tittles* are so

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67We can note that treating others well is often inconsistent with the “survival of the fittest” theory of evolution that humanists cling to.
important. Nobody appreciates the mercy of God unless they see themselves thoroughly tainted with sin, which is defined by the Law. We have to compare God’s forgiveness with what we deserve: paradise versus eternal punishment. This knowledge is the only thing that will begin to melt the human heart of stone into a heart of flesh that can love others.

**To express real love for one’s neighbor**

To desire the salvation of others, pray for them, and attempt to reach them with the gospel, regardless of the quality of one’s relationship with them, is to express real love for one’s neighbor.

**Paul is no antinomian; he supports the Law**

In fact, antinomians ignore the fact that Paul frequently makes statements upholding the moral parts of the Law. If Paul wrote Galatians 5:14 and Romans 13:8 to promote a “no-law” position or a “just one rule: love others” position, he would not immediately go on to recite five of the Ten Commandments concerning man’s relations with man:

> “Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet:...” (Romans 13:9).

Nor would Paul spend two verses attacking homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27) and a host of outgrowths of a “reprobate mind” that are not “convenient” (Romans 1:28):

> “...fornication, wickedness, covetousness; maliciousness, (to be) full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful...” (Romans 1:29-31).
The Greek word translated as “convenient” here is *katheko*, also meaning “fit.” Antinomians take this word out of context and try to say that by using it Paul is avoiding moral judgment. However, that interpretation does not fit the whole chapter and the rest of Paul’s writings.

In later chapters of the epistle to the Romans, consistent with the Law, Paul speaks in favor of brotherly love, against sloth, against vengeance, and for heaping coals of fire on one’s enemies by feeding them (Romans 12). Paul is against debt (Romans 13:7-8) and, following the Ten Commandments, against adultery, killing, theft, false witness and coveting (Romans 13:9).

The overall picture is that Paul is no antinomian; there is no evidence he believes in grace without Law. He is in favor of letting people off the hook in terms of certain non-moral laws. This is not because he is against those laws *per se* but he opposes performance of them with the false goal of gaining salvation. It is in that anti-perfectionist context that he advocates against the outer ordinances of “touch not, taste not, handle not” (Colossians 2:21).

**Misuse of what Christ has to say on the Law**

*“The law and the prophets were until John”*

The following statement by Jesus is often taken to imply that the Law is no longer in place:

"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it” (Luke 16:16).

This refers to the ministry of John the Baptist, the messenger proclaiming the advent of the Messiah. At issue is the meaning of the word “until.” Jesus is not saying that the Law became obsolete when John the Baptist arrived. The verse is talking about how people find out about the kingdom of God. It is saying that after
John a different type of evidence existed for the Messiah, the rescuing Lamb of God. Evidence for Christ up to the time He came in the flesh was the Law and the prophecies. Once John the Baptist came on the scene there was first-hand evidence.

If the Law ended with John, Christ would have died in vain. In other words, if the Law no longer damned humans, there would be no need for God to have given Christ as ransom.

Pulled out of context, the verse has been used to support both dispensationalism and antinomianism. The New Testament is falsely viewed as a time of a totally new lawless covenant between God and man regarding salvation. The purpose of this book is to show that there is one basic contract that changed in form but not in essence over time. This contract comes from a God Who is consistent, does not change his mind, and offers us total assurance of salvation. God builds “precept upon precept” (Isaiah 28:10,13), beginning with Genesis.

**Christ affirms the Law: Jots and tittles**

The verse immediately following Luke 16:16 tends to be ignored by antinomians because it clearly opposes their ideas:

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17).

This absolutely affirms the Law for the present in all its aspects. There is certainly no new deal regarding salvation. An even stronger version of this statement is found in Matthew 5:17-18:

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”
Dispensationalists and antinomians ignore the enduring image presented by the phrase: “Till heaven and earth pass.” They also twist the word “all” to fit their skewed theory. They say that “all” has been fulfilled with the death of Christ, for as he died on the cross he said: “It is finished” (John 19:30). However, He was referring to the work of salvation and not the Law itself.

Moreover, it would be very inaccurate to think that “all” had been fulfilled up to the time of John, or with the death of Christ. A great deal of prophecy from the Old Testament describes events to take place after the physical death of Christ. The Great Tribulation, the Second Coming, and the battle of Armageddon have still not arrived. Moreover, there is no way for antinomians to get around the qualification: “Till heaven and earth pass.” Clearly Jesus is saying that the Law will be in effect for all time.

“Keep my commandments”

If the Law were no longer in effect in the time of Christ, how would you explain this statement by Jesus:

“If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Which commandments was he speaking of? Was it the statements of his recorded in the four gospels? Or was it the Law, written by Jesus, for:

“...without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3).

The fact is, it does not matter. Everything Jesus commanded in the New Testament is consistent with the Law God gave to Moses. The major change between the Mosaic system and the New Testament is a move from physical/spiritual to spiritual, a matter between man and God, no longer sanctioned and enforced by humans. Faith in Christ is the new form of Part Two. His shed blood pays for all sin for all claimants for all time on one occasion in place of an endless succession of sacrificed sheep, bulls, and
doves, etc. Part One codes still define sin and humans are still accountable to them. This part of the Law continues to be God’s recipe for well-being, but nobody is punished on a human level for breaking most of it (more on that in Chapter Seven).

“A new commandment I give unto you...”
Is Jesus adding to or replacing the Law with one simple command when he says:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34)?

What is the new aspect of this commandment? If Jesus were replacing the Law, He would not have affirmed all its *jots and tittles* (Luke 16:16). Is he adding something new to the Law here? The most fitting interpretation is that He is amplifying the command to love one’s neighbor, present in the Law God gave to Moses:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22: 37-40).

Jesus is not negating the Law here but affirming it by stating that everything else *hangs on* these two commandments, like leaves on a tree. In pointing out the trunk, Christ in no way denies the branches and leaves. He came to give us salvation; this is how He displays His love for humans

“Feed my sheep”
One command Jesus repeats three times for those who love Him is:

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68 More on that subject in Chapter Seven.
“...feed my sheep” (John 21).

It makes sense that the new aspect of loving the neighbor means spreading the salvation message among the lost sheep, many of them Gentiles by birth, nevertheless written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.\(^{69}\)

Many congregations today have omitted Bible study and busied themselves with hot lunches for the homeless as an attempt to comply with this mandate. Good deeds are fine as long as nobody is trying to get saved by them, but Christ was not referring to physical food. The food He was talking about is the gospel. The mark of one who is saved is that he will feel an urgency for other people to escape. The command is another way of saying:

“Love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:39).

**The Holy Spirit replaces the written Law?**

Law-rejecters argue that there was no Holy Spirit before Christ, but now since we have this “Comforter,” we no longer need the written Law. This is not the case. There are many Old Testament verses where God sends a person His Spirit to manifest a particular gift. One such recipient was Bezaleel, who was given a spirit of workmanship (Exodus 31:3). Another was Balaam (Numbers 24:2), to whom God temporarily gave the gift of prophesy.

To be sure, there was a change in the presence of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. Jesus spoke of the “Comforter” whom His Father would send after His departure from us in the flesh (John 14:26):

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\(^{69}\) Although new in scale, even this was not a completely new commandment. For example, Jonah was commanded by God to go and warn the Ninevites, non-Israelite inhabitants of the capital city of ancient Assyria, to repent, which they did. However, they soon went back into idolatry, and the city of Ninevah was destroyed in 606 B.C.
“But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

However, the presence of the Comforter today does not remove our need for the written Law. Presently, the Holy Spirit works through our knowledge of Scripture, i.e. the Law and the prophets, plus the teachings from the mouth of Christ. The epistle writers founded their statements on Scripture, and for this reason they are useful. In the verse quoted above, Jesus describes the Holy Ghost bringing the words of Christ “to remembrance.” The words have to be read to enter a person’s mind before they can be remembered.

Although humans have an inborn moral code, or conscience, this is not the entire Law, it is not peculiar to believers, and it contains no forgiveness. In Romans 2:14 Paul refers to this inborn code:

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law...”

All humans have an inborn sense of right and wrong, perhaps because they are made in the image of God, or perhaps as a result of our forefathers’ ingestion of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Humans also seem to have a sense of their separation from God, and of facing eternal punishment: the $sin=death/hell$ equation, which seems to be universal and, therefore, probably inborn. This leads them to invent religions, all of which strive to reconcile with a deity. However, it is still the case, at this point, that believers are commanded to tell others the gospel so they might avoid eternal damnation.

This is why Jesus commanded followers to “feed my sheep.” People need to be told the gospel; they need an outside source of information about how to avoid the Lake of Fire. The essential food is the gospel in the Law.
In certain isolated instances, people are reached directly by God. This includes all the Old Testament prophets and the apostle Paul. However, this is far from the norm. Most are reached by a human evangelist, only to gain full knowledge of the mercy of God by studying the Bible, particularly the Law.

Jesus would not have commanded his followers to feed His sheep if God was going to reach them directly. The truth is that as a person reads and becomes familiar with the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will assist in affirming it, making it comprehensible, and bringing it to remembrance, just as Christ says.

**A misunderstanding from John’s gospel**

In John 1:17, the apostle seems to support antinomianism:

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

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70 The writer of Hebrews makes the assumption that the time of the New Covenant in Christ’s blood is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah. Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34, where God speaks through the prophet of a future time. Says Jeremiah:

“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 a 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. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying; Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

However, though there is indeed a new covenant in Christ’s blood, it has continued to be necessary for people to learn about the Law from God’s Word, and from human evangelization. This prophecy looks like an end time forecast. At best it has only been partially fulfilled. Verses preceding and following it link it with the restoration of Israel, the return of Jews to God and the land. It has yet to be fulfilled in the manner expressed. The Jews have not yet returned to God.
This appears to separate law from grace. However, such an interpretation would be inconsistent with John 1:29, which reports John the Baptist as saying:

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

This wonderful statement affirms Part Two of the Law, making the connection between atonement through the sacrifice of a lamb with the atoning Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

Whatever John 1:17 means to say, it is not a rejection of the Law. It would be consistent with other teachings in this gospel to interpret this verse as saying that the Law was given by God to Moses and finalized by Christ.

**The modified law: does it support antinomianism?**

Acts 15 describes how the apostles got together and decided to give a drastically reduced version of the Law to new Gentile converts. Liberal Christians take this as further evidence that the Law is obsolete. However, the Bible gives us no evidence that this was to permanently replace the Law in any way. The modification appears to have been temporary, an “introductory kit.” The focus had to be on the essentialness and sufficiency of claiming the blood of Christ as the route to salvation.

**Pragmatic adaptations to Part One of the law**

The problem was that the customs and practices laid down by God in the Law He gave to Moses penetrated every nook and cranny of life. The apostles were to preach the gospel to people who were not conversant with ordinances outside the moral law. The codes of Israelite custom and etiquette were foreign to Gentiles, who were not living in a theocracy dominated by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Indeed, civil laws of Gentile nations often contradicted the Law. These nations did not live this way; their customs and
practices were different; they had not been exposed to the Scriptures.\footnote{However, as James points out in Acts 15:21, we must note that Gentile converts did have access to the Scriptures in the local synagogues of the various Jewish communities dotted around the Middle East. Acts 14:1 mentions Paul and Barnabas converting both Jews and Greeks in the synagogue at Iconium in Asia Minor. The point is that you and I, right now, have easy access to Scripture. We have no excuse for ignoring the entire Law.}

The main object was to show people Christ, the open doorway to salvation, not to preach against sin. The important thing was that people could be saved from the Lake of Fire by simply claiming coverage of the shed blood of Jesus.

**James’ modification of the Law: Moses lite?**

Things came to a head over the insistence by one sect that Christian converts be circumcised, a procedure very painful for adults. Acts 15 describes a meeting of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. At this meeting, Peter strongly objects to the requirement that Jewish law be laid on the Gentiles. Everyone agrees to James’ suggestion that the Gentile believers be given a limited set of laws:

“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God. But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:19-20).

Obviously these were not the only things expected of new Christians. It did not suddenly become permissible to murder, steal, dishonor parents, give false reports, covet, or commit adultery. Although the apostles omit to mention the moral law, i.e., the Ten Commandments and the many specific moral commands given in the Pentateuch, the epistles show that converts were expected to respect them. This particular meeting seems to concern only the ceremonial and dietary laws.
Why were these codes chosen? Because idolatry is the one thing that most offends God, and all the sins mentioned in these verses in Acts are aspects of it. Adultery is a metaphor for idolatry. Eating with blood is a major rebellion because God identifies blood as sacred to Him. He makes it clear in the Law that blood is holy, it belongs to him, and it signifies life (Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 12:15-16).

The Israelites’ disobedience in exactly these things (idolatry, eating with blood, and adultery) are said by the prophet Ezekiel to be why God allowed Jerusalem to fall (Ezekiel 33:25-26).

It is important to notice that when Ezekiel emphasized these things, he certainly was not changing the Law in any way. He was merely pointing to three major transgressions, all of which boil down to idolatry, the great sin. James seems to have been influenced by Ezekiel in his choice of the codes. Presumably, he adds “things strangled” to emphasize the importance of not eating flesh containing blood.

Was the modification under the direction of God?
Was this modification under the direction of God? It is not clear. The wording of the passage quoted above shows no evidence of this. James states that the modification is his idea.

The later part of the chapter describes how letters about the decision were sent out to the various Gentile groups. It is stated that the decision “seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28). Exactly how the Holy Ghost was involved is not explicit.

Does God suspend laws when humans entreat Him?
For that matter, does God suspend laws when humans entreat Him? The Bible does show some instances in which God tolerates a change in some code. It is always a minor repeal, perhaps local and temporary. He is very gracious and merciful, and there is
ample evidence that He will make a special case when His people cry to Him enough, which they may do either through stupidity or for some apparently practical purpose.

For example, in Deuteronomy 12:15-16 there is a modification of the law regarding animal slaughter. The people could formerly only kill animals in the grounds of the tabernacle while the tribes were traveling together in the wilderness. Now they were settling far from the tabernacle, they were permitted to kill animals for their consumption (not for sacrifice) on their own property. This meant shedding of blood was now occurring far from the location where God said He would meet with them. However, regardless of the distance, the Israelites were still commanded to bring all their blood sacrifices to the tabernacle (later, the temple).

The result of watering down the Law is always a loss to humans. In this case, the increased distance spoilt the image of the blood as holy to God, muddying of the picture of the holiness of the blood sacrifice with its exclusive tie to salvation.

The same loss is true of divorce becoming legal during the days of Moses, “because,” said Jesus, “of the hardness of your hearts.” Then Jesus added: “but from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew 19:8). This practice goes against the spirit of the Law, which is a picture of Christ, who will never divorce us once we join ourselves to him.

The fact is, God does appear to tolerate a few modifications to the Law. However, the further we get from the original, the further we get from Him and the more we lose the assurance of salvation. With each modification, the picture of Christ blurs. There is forfeiture of the specialness of the relationship with God.
This did not affect salvation

It is important to emphasize that performance of the “skeleton law” in Acts 15 was not required for salvation. In Acts 15:11, Peter states:

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

The “skeleton” law was what Gentile converts would be told to adhere to after they were saved.

Converts were encouraged to learn more of the Law

Was anyone discouraged from keeping to other parts of the Old Testament law? On the contrary. In his next statement, James points out that anyone can follow more of the Law if they get acquainted with it by visiting the synagogues:

“For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogue every sabbath day” (Acts 15:21).

What this is saying is that except where local Gentile ordinances, particularly the moral laws, happened to be consistent with Part One of the Law, obedience was now a matter between the believer and God.

The fact is, a person saved by clinging to the blood of Christ will want to know more about God. The more you know Him, the more you love Him and want to do what He asks. You grasp that He wants you to keep the Law because He loves you, that your adherence to it will promote your well-being on this earth, and that he is pleased when you obey Him. He is a Father telling his kids to stay on the trail when they go out into the wilderness. When you know this, you get interested in Part One of the Law.
Modifications to the Law mean there is still a Law

Notice that even here the antinomians get no ammunition. This is a skeleton law, not an absence of the Law. There was no longer insistence on many aspects of Part One. However, if no Law were in effect, the apostles would not argue about aspects of the Law to foist on the Gentiles. The modifications appear to be based on realism and expediency, so as not to turn anyone off what is truly important: salvation through the blood of Christ.

“Political correctness” and the “law of Paul”

It can be both sad and amusing to look at the way today’s so-called liberals put everyone under the absurdity-filled, merciless, man-made laws of “political correctness.” For example, it becomes a punishable offense to use a word that merely sounds like another word that has been used as a racial slur. Women are condemned for wearing fur, which involves the killing of an animal, but given freedom to abort a human infant. Hatred of God, and of man who is made in God’s image, is underneath this. The law of political correctness is the work of Satan. Lacking the mercy of God, it will keep humans damned. This is the heavy price paid by antinomians under the domination of Satan.

“Christian” antinomians are blind to the new law they follow

Secular “liberals” are not alone in creating self-inflicted slavery. A curious phenomenon is found in “liberals” in the Christian church. Out of one side of their mouths, they say they are “not under the Law now,” meaning the Law God gave to Moses. Out of the other side they put themselves in bondage to another set of rules, including attending church every Sunday, not drinking, and not smoking, generally giving lip service to mandates found in the various epistles, particularly those of Paul. However, judging by the size of most of them, they have a blind spot about gluttony, but that is only their most visible departure from the Law.

This self-imposed bondage is strangely inconsistent with their “no Law” stand, a double-minded position indicating a lack of
psychological integrity. Indeed, sanity for humans is only possible through the perception of grace in the Law.

**The role of women**

So many in the Christian church go into bondage over the supposed law of Paul. More than once the author has encountered in the counseling room a woman trapped in a terrible marriage with an unbelieving husband who drank, gambled away all her money, and physically abused her. She stayed because she had been nailed by the statement:

> “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18).

The truth is that women should not let themselves be led by an ungodly husband who is subjecting her and her children to danger or abuse. If we go to the Old Testament, we can find a more reasonable view of this. The book of Samuel shows us God permits a woman to override a decision by an ungodly husband. This is in the story of Abigail, who must have often bitten her lip in front of her stupid bully of a husband, Nabal (1 Samuel 25:3). Had Abigail submitted to her husband in all matters, she would not have overruled him to ensure that David and his men were treated fairly and given provisions to eat, an act which saved her household.

Too broad an interpretation has also been applied to Paul’s statement:

> “Let your women keep silence in the churches...” (I Corinthians 14:34).

In actuality, this order was directed at female congregants in the church in Corinth. Paul was not making a universal law. These women were noisily speaking in tongues, creating a disturbance. When visiting some charismatic churches in the past the author found herself wishing that the many screaming women would pay attention to this verse. However, the problem is that it has led in
certain denominations to total suppression of all female speech in Christian gatherings.

There is a truism behind the verse that perhaps explains its rigidity. Satan enters through the woman, the weaker vessel; one only has to look at Eve. In general, women have more porous boundaries against outside influences than do men. There is a reason why God gave men louder voices; He wants them to do most of the talking in public. Although God clearly favors putting men in leadership roles, the fact is that some women are outstanding in that area. They have a combination of feminine sensitivity and male hard-headedness.

If God gives a person talent, He wants it used. The Old Testament shows that, on occasion, God will use a woman in a leadership role, as in the case of Deborah. She was chosen by God during the time when Israel was ruled by judges (Judges 4). Certainly, women who know the truth cannot afford to keep silent about it. Too many people are sleeping on the job; too few of them are involved in giving out the gospel. This means that women are much in need as evangelists.

“There is a harvest is plenteous but the labourers are few.” (Matthew 9:37).

**Conclusion: no repeal of the Law in the New Testament**

This chapter on left wing perfectionism has shown that antinomians in general, and “no Law” “Christians,” are in great danger, headed unknowingly for the Lake of Fire. They are ignorant of two things: one, that grace is irrelevant without the Law, and two, that grace is intrinsic to the Law.

**Political correctness:** Many “liberals” put on a new, merciless straightjacket that only serves to make their journey to hell all the
more uncomfortable. Humans who reject the Law come up with some other law that is man-made and lacking in forgiveness. They suppose they are under grace and free from any law, yet they speak with the forked tongue of “political correctness” where failure to tolerate certain acts forbidden by God is now considered sin. There is also the “law of Paul” infection in the liberal Christian church.

**The Law is for our well-being:** The Law God gave to Moses is different from all the others. It offers freedom from eternal punishment as a gift from God. The more we appreciate what He has done for us in killing Christ to rescue us from eternal torment, the more we want to get to know Him and to do what pleases Him. Both parts of the Law are for our well-being: Part One is for here, Part Two is for our eternal safety, which also affects our present welfare. It gives us peace of mind. The idea of a happy eternity enables us to go through the tribulation of this world with a cheerful heart. Only a fool would want to reject such a Law. As the following chapter will show more fully, it would benefit society today if the Law’s Part One codes were implemented.

Antinomians do not see the substitutionary blood atonement covenant for what it is because they do not accept either part of the Law. Grace, for them, has become another word for tolerance.
Chapter Seven

What changes with the New Covenant? What stays the same?

Some say, with a thankful shudder, that the Law was only for the nation of Israel before Christ, not for us today. This statement is wrong. We would be doing something worse than shuddering on Judgment Day if the Law really did not apply now.

Its most important features predated the nation of Israel. They went into effect soon after the Fall, long before God spoke the commandments to Moses. Grace is its central feature, God’s gift of the substitutionary atonement covenant that was first acted out in the Garden of Eden. There, God covered our forefathers with skins from slain animals, the first death, and the first blood sacrifice, just as the last blood sacrifice was also made by Him. The first was a picture of Jesus, the last was Jesus.

No sane person would not want the Law to be in effect

Once you know what the Law is all about, you have to be crazy to not want it to be in effect today. The Law is the best thing that has happened to humans since the Fall. It is the only place where God makes a written promise of mercy to the sinner, the only viable means of reconciling with Him and avoiding the Lake of Fire.

When humans discard the Law, it is mostly out of ignorance, something that permeates today’s church. In truth, today’s apostate Christendom is still very much influenced by the early church’s eagerness to separate itself from Judaism. Rejection of the Law comes out of misguided animosity towards the killers of Christ. In fact, his death at the hands of the Levitical priesthood is consistent with the procedure God spelled out in the Law: the priest killed the sacrifice to pay the penalty for human sin (throughout Leviticus).
Judaism is the basis for Christ because the Law is the source of the blood atonement covenant. God promises salvation through one’s claiming coverage of the shed blood of the Lamb of sacrifice, our Jesus.

The Law has two parts: what we call Part One, defining sin and punishment; and Part Two, offering the God-given means to be forgiven and saved from the Lake of Fire.

**Part One of the Law: defining morality, etiquette and punishment**

Despite what many think, the moral laws and other codes involving diet, cleanliness, etc., contained in what we are calling Part One of the Law, were not thrown out after the New Testament. Jesus pointed out that all the codes in Part One boil down to loving God and one’s neighbor in one way or the other (Luke 10:27).

**Moses “light”: baby steps**

In Acts 15:20 we find James establishing a minimum of four ordinances for Gentile converts (no idolatry, no eating with the blood, no eating things strangled, no fornication). However, Acts 15:21 points out that, beyond adhering to these four things, the Law of Moses could be read in the local synagogues. In other words, it was up to the believer to find out more about the Law.

The more one appreciates the gift of salvation, the more one will want to know and keep the Law, i.e., learn what pleases God and aim to do it. The willingness on our part comes from our love for God; we want to please Him and do not want to let Him down. It also comes from our understanding that adherence to the ordinances benefits us.

Rule-breaking does not make us lose our salvation; only rejection of Christ as our atonement would do that. We can expect God’s chastisement but several examples of His behavior show that He is often mild, letting His children off with a small slap on the wrist.
And by respecting the ordinances, a person is better off not only for worldly, utilitarian reasons but because it brings them closer to God.

**Part Two of the Law: defining forgiveness**

In the New Covenant, the forgiveness aspect of the Law changes in form but not in substance. Before Christ died, the sacrifice was a slain animal, unblemished and in its prime. The New Covenant eliminated the requirement of a physical slain animal, replacing the entire sacrifice system with sinless (unblemished, or innocent) Jesus, sacrificed by God on our behalf in his prime. This explains why Jesus is called the “lamb of God” (John 1:29, 1:36), consistent with the Law. Without the Law there would be no grace.

To be sure, Christ’s death on the cross alters the way that the substitutionary blood atonement is implemented, bringing the Law to a new level. In a general way, it can be characterized as moving from physical action based on belief, to belief alone; from external-plus-internal to primarily internal. In other words, physical offerings of sacrifices to pay the penalty for sin are replaced by belief in the free availability of the God-given “done deal” sacrifice of Jesus. His death pays the penalty for all time for all sins for all humans who claim the free coverage.

**Inner process**

Keeping the Law has always been voluntary; it always involved a decision in the heart. Until Christ, the Law was largely confined to the nation of Israel, and it was enforced by God and by the society at large. After Christ’s atoning death replaced the animal sacrifice system and the Jews spread into other cultures, there was less societal enforcement because local laws took precedence or might conflict. Sin was still sin but, outside of families and small communities, no longer was there human enforcement of most ordinances, except in clear cases where a person broke laws identical to local civil and criminal laws.
As a psychologist, the author understands this as a growing-up process, moving from concrete action to abstract, mental action, or from outer to inner. Children acquire formal, abstract concepts by manipulating objects; they understand numbers and amounts by first handling, seeing, measuring and counting physical things. This principle is used in Montessori education.

The accounts of real events and the pictures we find in the Law enable us to understand salvation through the shed blood of Christ. The books of the Law, the prophetic books, and the history of Israel act as a showcase for us. Our minds build up abstract concepts from this material, the most important being the substitutionary atonement, the fact that our sin-debt has been paid in full by Christ.

The Old Testament and Gospels are our “Montessori classroom” experience regarding salvation. From God’s Word, we see the payment for sin taking place in the temple in Jerusalem. We see that God accepts the physical death of a substitute in place of the eternal, spiritual death of the human.

In obedience to Lev 17:11 (quoted on page 9), and the specific sacrificial codes, the priest offers the shed blood on the altar. The blood is derived from the physical death of a “clean,” or unblemished, animal killed in its prime on behalf of the human sinner. The substitute did not suffer the same death as the sinner, i.e., spiritual death, because shed blood was what made the atonement. Thus Jesus did not endure the fate of unsaved humans: eternal separation from God, or burning in the Lake of Fire. The work of atonement on our behalf ended with His death, “for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” (Leviticus 17:11).

His death paid the wage, or price, or fine, for all human sin. He fulfilled the Law in being the sacrificed lamb killed on the

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Passover, the goats and ram sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, and all the other offerings commanded by the Law.

This series of events in the Bible builds the substitutionary atonement concept in the human brain, with Christ as our unblemished surrogate killed in his prime. By claiming His death as our God-given “bail money,” we humans are freed from the “second death” (Revelation 2:11) in the Lake of Fire. Everything that happened to Christ is consistent with the Law.

**Attempt to keep Part One is inspired by Part Two**

The Law boils down to two things: love God and love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31). It seems paradoxical that the most important step in obedience to God turns out to be the selfish, act of claiming the God-given bail. But it has to be that way. God does not expect us to want to be obedient or to feel love for Him or for other humans until after we are saved. We are incapable of unconditional, sacrificial love until the Holy Spirit starts to work inside us. Before that our nagging concern is for ourselves.

**“Feed my sheep”**

What is the greatest way a person can display love for his neighbor? To follow Jesus’ commandment:

“Feed my sheep.” (John 21:16-17).

The food is the gospel. What more urgent need is there in this world than that people hear the good news whereby they can escape the Lake of Fire? Hot lunches for the homeless pale by comparison. The most loving thing one can do for one’s neighbor is to desire that they, too, be saved, and take action based on that desire. One must start and end with prayer, also possibly donating to a truly Bible-based ministry, giving a Bible or tract, or telling the gospel in person, etc. One’s faith in God’s gift of salvation will inspire this. A person who has not the slightest concern for the eternal well-being of his neighbor just has not “got it.”
Faith

Belief occurs in the mind; belief comes from one’s understanding of Scripture; and faith is action based on belief. Faith has always been necessary for salvation. In the time of the Old Covenant it was faith in God’s promise of forgiveness through a surrogate’s death that led a person to make an offering of a blood sacrifice, a “clean” animal from a list defined in the Law.\(^73\)

In the time of the New Covenant in Christ’s blood, faith in the death of Christ on the cross as the payment for sin is sufficient as payment for human sin. Christ’s horrible death saves the person who claims that bloody “bail” money. In both cases, payment was made in the form of a surrogate for the sinner. However, now the sinner does not have to produce the surrogate. God has done it all for humans in the form of Christ. Nobody is barred from partaking in it.

Is it true that faith without works is dead?

What does James mean when he says: “Faith without works is dead.” (James 1:26)? In what sense can this be this true when the Law clearly states that only a blood payment satisfies God? Well, despite what many fear, human works are not required to earn salvation. Did the thief on the cross do any work? No.

Any transformation in the heart of one saved by the blood of Christ happens after he is saved, when the Holy Spirit starts to soften him. The tempering comes from the personal recognition that, despite the fact that one is an undeserving and corrupt sinner, one has been blessed by God with the essential payment for sin. Knowledge of this gift frees a person to admit his individual sins and general sinfulness. It also leads him to love God, and feel extreme gratitude towards Him because it cost God dearly to sacrifice Jesus and make salvation a gift to humans. A person will

\(^{73}\) The first reference to clean animals is Genesis 7:2
not feel this way if he thinks that some good deed or virtue of his own is what saves him.

The truth in James’ statement

The truth in James’ statement is that the more readily a person owns up to his flaws, on the one hand, and the more gratitude he feels towards God, on the other hand, the more he transforms personally. His hard, selfish, arrogant heart slowly becomes more humble and contrite. A desire to please God and a concern for his neighbor will gradually take hold. He will ask himself: “How come I, an undeserving sinner, am saved. Why not my neighbor, who is no worse than I? I must not keep this knowledge to myself.” In that sense, faith will lead to action, even if it is at first only a “thought action” operating on the inside of the person, an inner concern for the salvation of another. If, on the other hand, a person has no sense of urgency for his neighbor to hear the gospel, his faith is indeed dead.

Once saved, are you free from sin?

A common assertion is that once you are saved you not only can but must keep your slate clean. No more sin if you do not want to lose your salvation. This is wrong and it can ultimately lead a person into despair and rejection of the gospel as a merciless trap.

Getting saved does not rid us of our human nature, which is inherently sinful. There is no such promise of this in the Law. Humans are envious, covetous, adulterous, prideful, murderous, gluttonous, lazy, and on and on, at least in our thoughts. Honest self-examination tells us we are far from righteous; our only valid recourse is to the forgiveness of God through Christ.

The good news is that we humans have continual coverage when under the blood of Christ. We can freely admit our sinfulness and confess it on an ongoing basis, knowing it is paid for by the blood of Christ. Once saved, we are still very much sinners, but we have free access to God’s forgiveness. It is like a credit card with no fees that never runs out of money. By claiming Christ’s shed blood we
are given a cloak of His righteousness, imputed to us by God, enabling us to belong to His flock.

**Cheap grace?**

The common “cheap grace” argument against the idea of being totally forgiven for sin through Christ is that it gives a person a ticket to sin any time they like. But it does not work that way. When a person truly “gets” the gospel, it goes along with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit energizes the conscience to give us pangs of guilt that make our life miserable if we continually give in to the voice of temptation.

We begin to change for the better when saved, but never cease being sinners in this lifetime. We cannot come anywhere near perfect indwelling righteousness. In fact, the more a person appreciates the forgiveness of God, the more they see their own corruption. Acknowledging it for what it is permits a person to gain increasing control over it, to push it farther and farther back into a corner and de-fang it, but it does not go away while a person is in this world.

**Does the definition of sin change?**

In spite of what many Christian teachers say, the definition of sin does not change from the Old Testament to the New. The difference is that in Old Testament days one could get evicted from the congregation or even stoned for breaking many of the rules. Nowadays there is little or no human enforcement for infractions outside of criminal and civil law.

**God has not turned all-tolerant**

God has not changed His mind about the Law; He is merciful but not all-tolerant. On the contrary, He has now given individual humans more responsibility for knowing and keeping the Law. God is saying: *Grow up. No more policemen to make you toe the line. You have the owner’s manual. Go read it. It is up to you now.* In order to follow God’s mandates while living in a society
that has no concern for them, believers have to operate inside a bubble. They can learn to be, as they say, “in the world but not of the world.”

The Law is very much in effect in all its jots and tittles today. It is highly relevant for the conduct of our lives as thriving people at peace with our maker, looking forward to eternal life with Him.

**The Law has always been spiritual**

Some say the Law is not carnal today, but only spiritual. What most people in the church do not realize is that the Law has *always* been that way. That means it applies both to our actions and our thoughts. God is the only One who hears and enforces punishment for wrongful thinking. Some doubt that the human heart is wicked, but the prophet Jeremiah said:

> “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)

The Law applies to inner processes as well as outer ones; circumcision is to be primarily of the heart. Says Deuteronomy 10:16:

> “Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be not stiff-necked.”

**False arguments against the Law for today**

Sadly, the Christian church cuts the head off the body by rejecting the Law that is so important to our understanding of who Christ really is. What follows are some of the false arguments against the Law for today.

**Only for the nation of Israel**

One false idea is that the Law was given only to the nation of Israel, which contradicts the Bible. The following passage from
Deuteronomy proves that the Law has always been available to non-Israelites:

“Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; But with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.” (Deuteronomy 29:14-15).

You cannot get more inclusive than “him that standeth here” and “him that is not here.” This is not the only instance of such a statement in the Bible. There are other places where God states that the covenant is not just for the Israelite, but also for the “stranger that sojourneth amongst you” (Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 17:12). Salvation through the substitutionary blood atonement covenant has always been freely available outside of the nation of Israel. This was not something that started with the New Testament.

A better covenant?

Some say that Law God gave Moses is obsolete because the writer of Hebrews refers to a better covenant or testament (Hebrews 7:22, 8:7, 8:8, 8:13), or a change in the Law:

“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also in the law.” (Hebrews 7:12).

However, this is not saying that the entire Mosaic Law is obsolete. Nor does this verse refer to a new law or dispensation regarding salvation, in spite of what the dispensationalists like to think. It is true that Christ’s death on the cross did change the form of the sacrifice into something incomparably better, lasting and more powerful, but the essence of the substitutionary blood atonement remains.

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74 See Chapter Two for a critique on dispensationalism.
What changes with the New Covenant?

Christ kept it for us so we can forget it?

Another false argument in favor of throwing out the Law is that, because Christ kept the Law for us by proxy, there is no need for Christians to observe any part of it. The argument is that, just as Christ fulfilled and replaced all the sacrifices to pay for sin, He also fulfilled and replaced all the ordinances of the moral law and other codes.

One problem with this argument is that the Law is a recipe for human well-being. Then why get rid of it? The other problem is that if humans were not under the indictment of the sin/death curse, Christ would be superfluous. The law defines sin. If there were no Law, there would be no sin, and nobody would be under the curse of eternal separation from God for law-breaking. If there is no sin, humans can lie to themselves that they are good, and not sinners. That is just what is happening both in the church and outside of it today. The bumper sticker says: “I’d rather be in denial.” Well, denial has a terrible eternal consequence. Denial keeps a person on track for the Lake of Fire.

New wine

What did Christ mean when he talked of new wine in new bottles (Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39)? Some say that the new wine is grace that has replaced the Law, and that the new bottle means that the “old bottle” Law and all its contents became obsolete after the coming of Christ (Mark 2:22). But that interpretation would contradict Jesus’ statement that he was coming to fulfil the Law, not to destroy it. (Matthew 5:17-18)

The truth is, the new wine, as the New Testament, or Covenant, in Jesus’ blood, is a spiritualized form of the substitutionary blood atonement covenant. Now salvation is based on belief in the atoning work of Christ. No longer is one required to make blood sacrifices of unblemished animals from one’s own flock. God made the final and total blood sacrifice from His own flock of humans, a man Who is also God, therefore unblemished and
capable of atoning for an infinite amount of human sin. He offered Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God. John 3:16 says:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have eternal life.”

Salvation hinges on belief now, rather than belief plus the action of making one’s own sacrifice to pay for sin. What is the new bottle? The author’s guess is that it refers to the fact that human enforcement of the Law is largely removed. There is no more stoning for adultery, Sabbath-breaking, or other sins. However, God is watching and he will punish transgressions. What loving Father would not?

Thrusting away the voice of the Holy Spirit

Satan wants us to believe that human tendencies are not sins. Why? Because constant denial of the conscience, or “sin-meter,” can blind a person to the necessity of Christ. When you keep thrusting away that inner voice pointing out your sin, you lose contact with yourself and with God. Until you have reason to believe that through Christ all is forgiven, you rely on denial to drag yourself through life.

Denial and other forms of psychological defense promote various psychiatric disorders involving dissociation and delusion. Even after you are supposedly “saved,” the denial can continue and can reach the point where you reject the voice of the Holy Spirit and lose your salvation. Like a dog, you return to your own vomit (Proverbs 16:11; 2 Peter 2:22).

You might argue that it is impossible for a person to lose their salvation, but when you look at the examples of King Saul and King Solomon, what do you see? Individuals chosen by God, are filled with the Spirit, and who yet go into idolatry. Better for us to
be on guard against the wiles of Satan however much we think ourselves impervious to them.

**Nothing in the way of Christ**

Obviously, the most important message for anyone ever to hear is that Christ paid the penalty for human sin, freeing one from the Lake of Fire *if* one claims that God-given payment. When Jesus says to his apostles: “If you love me, feed my sheep,” (John 21:16-17) he is saying he wants his sheep to hear that message. The food is the gospel. God wants *us* to spread that message now, to promote knowledge of the mercy in the Law, to point potential believers towards the gospel, which is founded on the Torah, the Law God gave Moses.

**Preaching against sin**

Instead of giving out the gospel, the church today wastes a lot of energy preaching against sin, rather than promoting awareness of the freedom to claim the God-given “bail money.” This turns off prospective and new converts. A pile of “dos” and “don’ts” fall on top of them at the same time they hear the gospel message, assuming they even hear the true gospel. What they hear is: “Jesus saved you, now quit sinning.” People need, instead, the assurance that their sins are paid for, that they are paid up sinners saved by the blood of the God-given Lamb, Jesus.

It is important to point out that the moral law and all the other ordinances are valid; they are a recipe for well-being. Actual turning from sin is prompted by the Holy Spirit *after* a person is saved by grace, the gift from God of the atoning blood of Christ. The process is called “sanctification.” It does not get rid of our sinful human nature but, by allowing it to become increasingly apparent to us, by showing us the difference between right and wrong, we find ourselves repulsive. We want to get rid of that dark side but it keeps rearing its ugly head. The Holy Spirit certainly helps us in our functioning, but we never come even close to being fully righteous in ourselves.
The multi-facetedness of human sin
Humans rarely grasp how broad and subtle sin is. The author was shocked at first encountering many forms of sin in the Law that have nothing to do with morality. Sin goes far beyond moral failure; it concerns every aspect of human life. For example, not washing your clothes or bathing after eating an animal that died of natural causes is a sin in the Law (Lev 17:15). The fact that even the contemplation of performing an illegal action is a sin should make us see that nobody other than God is untainted. God wants us so see our corruption so we know there is no way to wash ourselves clean. To avoid the Lake of Fire, we have to be covered by Jesus’ shed blood.

Antinomianism: guidelines, not sins?
The Law has come to be seen as a set of loose guidelines rather than rules. Through that mechanism one can regard oneself as basically a law-keeper and not a sinner, therefore not needing Christ as the payment for sin, but just a good example and a friend. This phenomenon may be what the prophet Daniel called the “abomination of desolation” in the temple. Jesus mentioned this in Matthew 24:15. It would be today’s removal of the daily offering, i.e. Christ—and salvation—from the church, replacing it with a focus on human performance.

Christ killers?
Christians have failed to learn about the Law God gave Moses, despite the suggestion made by James (Acts 15:21). The early church wanted to separate itself from Judaism and the “Christ-killers” by moving away from the Old Testament. Sunday became the Sabbath, for example, and was not a day of rest. Also, there was paganization of the feast days: Passover became Easter, named after a Babylonian fertility goddess, Ishtar or Astarte.

Do all the ordinances still apply? If so, how?
How is it that Christ said all the ordinances would be preserved until heaven and earth disappeared, yet Christians do not observe
most of the practices prescribed by the Law? What really changed when Christ introduced the New Testament in his blood?

**Pre-Mosaic ordinances**
To make the case that the Law was not merely for the nation of Israel, we can look at the most important promises and ordinances in the Law that were given long before there was such a nation.

**The blood sacrifice for salvation**
The most-important promises in the Bible deal with salvation. In Genesis 3:15, God says to the serpent, Satan:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

This is talking about Christ, the seed of the woman, who has destroyed the head, or plan, of the seed of the serpent, Satan. Satan wanted the human race, in fact the entire creation, to be lost, destroyed forever. However, God did not let that happen; He saved it through killing Christ, the only viable form of ransom for us.

Another ordinance involves the substitutionary blood atonement covenant, first pictured when God covered Adam and Eve with the skins of animals He had slain (Genesis 3:21). This was the first blood sacrifice; God provided the shed blood of a substitute for our forefathers, thereby buying them back from Satan’s clutches. This is not stated in the text but follows the codes God spelled out later.

God’s requirement that humans make a blood sacrifice is revealed in His anger towards Cain regarding the offerings he and his brother, Abel, made to Him (Genesis 4:4). Cain offered crops he

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75 See Chapter Two for several instances of God accepting or expecting a blood sacrifice before He gave the Law to Moses.
had grown in the field, whereas Abel offered a lamb. How did Abel know that God wanted a blood sacrifice? We are not told, but God must have mandated this, and if He did not expect Cain to obey, why would He be angry with him for not doing so? We also see Noah taking extra animals onto the ark with him to be sacrificed (Genesis 7:1-9), although this was before the Law was ever spelled out in writing by God to Moses for the nation of Israel.

The death penalty for murder
Other important parts of the Law were given by God before anything was in writing, pre-dating the time of Israel as a nation. This includes the death penalty for murder during the time of Noah. Genesis 9:6 says:

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.”

Circumcision
God gave his people the command for circumcision through Abraham (Genesis 17:10-14):

“This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed; he that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.”
Forbidden to eat blood, tithing

There are also commandments regarding not eating blood (Genesis 9:4), and tithing (Genesis 14:20)\(^76\) that were given before Israel was a nation.

The Ten Commandments, the moral law and other ordinances for today

The Ten Commandments and all other aspects of the moral and behavioral codes boil down to loving God and one’s neighbor. To be sure, one will not lose one’s salvation for breaking the Law in any way other than rejecting Christ, Who paid the penalty for all our wrongdoing. One can confess with contrition and receive forgiveness. Nevertheless, there may be some worldly unpleasantness to harvest, whether God directly punishes you or whether you simply suffer a painful consequence for your action. God has warned us we will reap what we sow (Job 4:8).

Nothing is quite the same in your marriage if you commit adultery. If you steal and confess it to God, He will forgive you, but that does not stop you from going to jail. As to murder, a few years ago a televangelist was trying to get a female murderer off death row because she had become saved and was now supposedly a good person. The argument was that since she was now reformed, why should she still be imprisoned? Well, according to God’s Law, she should have been executed when found guilty for murder—but that is another matter. The point here is, if she truly appreciates the gift of salvation, remaining in jail should not bother her. She should feel herself blessed to have lived long enough to be saved, and look forward to the freedom she will one day have in heaven. Moreover, can she not spread the gospel in prison?

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\(^76\) Tithing is not recorded as God-ordained until the time of Moses. However, Abraham offered tithes to Melchisedek, high king of Salem.
If one truly comprehends the wonderfulness of the gift of salvation, that knowledge mitigates the sting of having to suffer the worldly consequence of sin. One has to think like this: the suffering is temporary; it cannot compare to losing eternal life in heaven and being thrown into the Lake of Fire.

The fact that the moral codes of societies all over the world approximate the Ten Commandments suggests that these mandates are born into the human psyche. The first four concern our relationship with God; the second six concern our relations with other men. As nations move away from the God of the Bible and the church goes into apostasy, we find increasing social disarray. People are not inspired to keep the second six commandments that deal with human relations unless they are inspired to keep the first four concerning relations with God.

The first four of the Ten Commandments

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, also known as the moral law, on Mount Sinai soon after the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 20). The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God: no other gods before me, no graven images of other gods, no taking my name in vain, and keep the Sabbath. Are idolatry, graven images and taking God's name in vain permissible today? Of course not. These first three commandments are considered sins in the Christian church, even though there are lapses in adherence to them in many denominations.

77 “Apostasy” comes from the Greek apo=away, and stasis=standing, literally meaning “standing away from faith.”

78 For instance, the worship of the virgin Mary and saints; the “Jesus only” movement; and the more subtle forms of idolatry elevating the self to godhood in the “word-faith” movement and other charismatic spin-offs. In fact, both perfectionism and antinomianism involve worship of the self.
The seventh day Sabbath: where did it go?

What about the fourth commandment? None of the apostles and teachers writing in the New Testament promote the seventh day Sabbath, nor even the importance of a weekly day of rest, which is a picture of Christ. This seems odd considering the huge importance it has in the Law God gave to Moses. Breaking it was punishable by stoning to death (Exodus 31:14-15). Let us now examine this in some depth, as it is emblematic of other innovations by the early Christian church.

God ordained in the Mosaic law that the seventh day, as a day of rest, is to be a commemoration of the seventh day of the Creation on which He rested:

“It is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.” (Exodus 31:13).

Nowhere do we find a God-given ordinance for a different day of rest after Christ, yet the Christian church has shifted to Sunday.79 This switch has been accepted without question by most of the church, although it is a bone of contention in some Christian quarters.

A certain radio evangelist who had a call-in question-and-answer program consistently had to defend his promotion of the Sunday worship/rest, the Sabbath on Sunday. Callers often seemed unconvinced by his interpretation of Colossians 2:16, a verse which can seem to do away with a day of rest and worship altogether if the Sabbath is replaced, as he argues, by Christ.

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79 Vestiges of adherence to the Law’s command to rest (not only every seventh day but also) every seventh year is found in the dying practice of the sabbatical in academia, and in allowing fields to lie fallow in farming.
“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come.” (Colossians 2:16).

Nobody stones a person to death for breaking the Sabbath as they would have done in Israel. Nevertheless, God wants us to keep it, and on Saturday, not on Sunday. He rested on the seventh day of the week, not the first, and wants us to do the same.

**The introduction of the Sunday Sabbath.**

The church did not exactly throw the Sabbath away but changed the day, and gradually got rid of the “rest” requirement. Christians, like everyone else, are as busy as termites on Sundays. The Sunday Sabbath appears to have been a gambit of the early church. Perhaps the pretext was that it would be easier for Christian converts among the Jews (in a society dominated by Pharisees and Sadducees) if their day of Christian worship would not compete with the Jewish day of worship in the synagogues. It made sense to have Sunday, the day Christ was discovered to have risen from the dead, as a new day of worship and rest.

**Bias against the Jews**

However, the real reason for the shift was likely a bias against Jews, and a desire to a split from Judaism. Although it was essential to break away from the phony forms of Judaism of the day, it was a terrible mistake to break away from Torah, or Pentateuch, our first five books of the Bible. In doing this, Christians cut themselves off from the Law, the absolute foundation for faith in Christ. The head is cut off the body.

A point regarding the command by Paul in Colossians to let no man judge you in the matter of meat, drink, etc.: Let no man judge you but what about God, and what will please Him? The fact that there are no more stonings for Sabbath-breaking does not address what God might want. Although the day of rest is a picture of Christ, and of our not needing to work for salvation, this does not
What changes with the New Covenant?

mean it is good to stop having this rest now Christ has fulfilled the Law. The seventh-day Sabbath, as a day of rest, goes back to the Garden of Eden, predating the written law. God never repealed this command. Keeping this day is still of profound importance.

Importance of a day of rest each week

Changing the Sabbath to Sunday and, incidentally, not having it as a day of rest, either, is only one of the slippery slopes that lead us away from God. It happens that not only does Sabbath-keeping bring us closer to Him, but there are also important practical benefits. As a counselor, I frequently encounter people who become physically ill, depressed and full of anxiety due to workplace stress. It invariably also turns out that they do not take a day of rest each week. They are on the go all the time. To be sure, work can be stressful; but it is much more so when people do not take a day of rest each week. By taking that break, stressed people start to feel much better.

The Sabbath also has a deeper level of meaning. As a day of rest it points to the rest to be had in God’s provision of ransom from the Lake of Fire. To be able to rest in the assurance of salvation, it is essential to go to the promises God made in the Law, especially the book of Leviticus, the third book of the Law. The ordinances regarding forgiveness for sin clearly state that God will forgive the sinner if that sinner approaches him sprinkled with the shed blood of a sacrificed sheep, goat, bullock, etc. No good deeds were or are needed. No virtue was/is essential; it says so right there.

Does Christ replace the Sabbath and other Holy Days?

One of the arguments used against the seventh day Sabbath and the other Holy Days is that, as days of rest, they have been replaced by Christ, in whose salvation we rest. Now we have Christ, we can get rid of the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and the rest of the Law.

It is curious that the same individuals who use this argument to eliminate the seventh day Sabbath insist on a Sunday Sabbath,
although rarely as a day of rest. Their argument should lead us to get rid of a day of rest and worship altogether. To be sure, the Sabbath and the Holy Days are a picture of Christ, but not a mere picture. God does not want us to stop observing these days. Was Christ doing away with the Passover by instituting the New Testament in His blood, now called the Eucharist? No, quite the opposite. When he called believers to do this in remembrance of Him, He was talking about celebrating the Passover each year.

Did Jesus tell us in words or actions to forget about the Sabbath? No. He was accused of breaking the Sabbath when he healed a man with a withered hand (Luke 6:8), but actually the Law commands a person to rescue a neighbor’s cow from a ditch, to help a neighbor in a desperate situation, even on the Sabbath. So Jesus was within the Law. If the seventh day Sabbath was to be done away with after Christ, why did Christ Himself speak of the Sabbath as if it were still to be enforced, making no mention of a change in the day, or a future time when it would be obsolete (Luke 6:9)?

Keeping the seventh day Sabbath and other Holy Days

What is important for us to notice is that nobody was told not to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days. What they were told was not to judge others according to whether or not they did this. Up until this time believers in the God of the Bible kept themselves apart from Gentiles. The Law put a boundary around the Children of Israel and enacted the death sentence or exile for those who broke it and did not repent. Now the Jews had to mingle with Gentiles to

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80 Christ was accused of breaking the Sabbath by the scribes and Pharisees, who saw him healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath (Luke 6:9), and heal a woman with an infirmity® (Luke 13:15). However, such behavior was actually permitted by the Mosaic law which states that one must rescue an enemy’s ox or ass that is going astray and “surely bring it back to him again” (Exodus 23:4). Also, as Jesus asked of his accusers, what owner of an ox or ass would not give them water on the Sabbath day?

81 Technically, Jews were of the tribe of Judah only, but as the other tribes were increasingly pushed off the land, the term “Jew” came to be applied to anyone who was an Israelite.
spread the gospel; the penal boundary for Jews was no longer practicable.

However, this does not diminish the value of keeping the weekly Sabbath and other Holy Days in remembrance of Christ. The fact that these days are a picture of Christ means that when we observe them, our hungry spirit is fed and there is transcendent rest. There is no reason to believe that God would want us to stop doing something that benefits us so much in every way. Surely, it pleases Him for us to keep His Holy Days instead of the pagan-Christian hybrids that have crept into the church.82

The second six of the Ten Commandments

Clearly, the first four of the Ten Commandments apply today just as ever they did. The same goes for the six commandments that concern our relations with other humans (Exodus 20:12-17):

“Honor thy mother and father. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.”

People don't have oxen and asses so much these days. They have Ford Mustangs and Dodge Colts, but the same principles apply. These are key elements of the moral law. Why are we getting away from these second six in this nation? Why is there such a moral decline? Because our nation does not observe the first four of the Ten Commandments. Humans will not adhere to the second six unless they observe the first four, and the desire to carry out the first four comes from the knowledge of salvation as a gift, and from our

82 Easter is named after the fertility goddess Ishtar or Ashtaroth, popular in the Middle East; Christmas is the fictitious birthday of Christ, an event superimposed over the pagan Saturnalia, a four-day orgy beginning on Dec 21, the winter solstice.
thankfulness and love towards God for His unearned mercy. We will not begin to want to do these things until we love God, a response to the recognition that first He loved us enough to kill Jesus to pay for our sin.

**Honoring your mother and father**

In Exodus 20:12, God says:

“Honor thy mother and thy father that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

It is interesting that there is a mandate for children and not one for parents among the Top Ten. Why? Perhaps the command to honor parents is a picture of our relationship with God. Idolatry is the big sin against God. By definition, to not lean on the blood of Christ as payment for sin means there is some form of conscious or unconscious idolatry in a person. Because of this, God may be less concerned with possible parental abuse of children than with children who rebel against parents.

Satan rebelled against God, rejecting His authority over him. It is a pattern we see over and over again among humans in the Old Testament: Samuel and his offspring are an example. Honoring one’s parents has a certain consequence attached to it: a long life. One can guess at the reasons why obedience here would be life extending. Part of it may be that our parents possess a useful fund of knowledge. They have gone ahead of us on the hard road of life. Even unsaved parents can tell us about some of the pitfalls. Also, God lets us reap what we sow, and if we treat our parents well, He will do the same to us, perhaps by having our children treat us well, so lengthening our days.

To honor parents does not mean *always* doing what they want. Their goals and purposes are not necessarily godly. It *does* mean treating them with respect and compassion, taking care of them if
necessary in their old age, even if they were abusive to us in our childhood. To do this pleases the God Who has saved us.

In a general way we honor God when we respect those He puts in authority over us. King David is an example of one who honored a man who was out to destroy him. He treated King Saul with respect and gentleness even after Saul had attempted to murder him several times. In the account of this in 1 Samuel, it can be hard to believe how far David went in respecting this man who was so eager to kill him. David did this out of his love for God, acting with respect for the king God had anointed (1 Samuel).

Our nation is moving away from this mandate to honor parents, often in the name of mental health. Our laws increasingly erode parental rights, based on the humanist idea that children are innately good and only become evil as a result of bad parenting. It is now considered wrong for parents to use any type of physical punishment, and the use of other disciplinary measures is increasingly portrayed in the media as cruel. The result is that children grow up as tyrants ignorant of appropriate boundaries.\(^{83}\) There is prophecy concerning this in Isaiah 3:4 “Babes shall rule over them.” Is not this happening today? As our nation fails to

\(^{83}\) Elsewhere in God’s Word there are mandates for parents, who are to be a model of God. They are to play a disciplinary role: “Chasten thy son while there is hope” (Proverbs 19:18); “He that spareth his rod hateth his son” (Proverbs 13:24). The Law gives parents much responsibility and power. Children who curse their parents are punished by death (Lev 20:9); and stubborn and rebellious sons are to be stoned (Deuteronomy 21:18). Whatever anyone may feel about the harshness of this penalty, what is clear here is the specificity of certain boundaries to be enforced by parents. Disciplining a child is an act of love. Children whose parents do not discipline them feel unloved because of it, and develop personality pathology as a result. The key to success is that parents must discipline out of love, and display this love to the child. This means the parent must personally know the love of God, and also fear breaking God’s rules. Otherwise the wickedness of human nature will take over, giving rise to various forms of parental abuse.

Parents can get their children to outwardly conform through fear of punishment. However, if children do not learn to fear and love God, they cannot be trusted. Motivation must change from extrinsic to intrinsic.
honor God by rejecting Christ, we find our hands tied by the new law of political correctness, making it hard to discipline our young, giving them power over adults by default or by design.

**Stealing**

Stealing is still a criminal offense, but sentences are often very light and the laws of restitution detailed in Exodus 22 are generally not part of the penal system in this country.

It is interesting that there is no mention of jail in God’s word as a form of punishment. Perhaps implementation of the restitution laws was so effective that it made jail unnecessary. Restitution might be a good mechanism for us now. It is sometimes handed down today as part of a thief’s sentence but not on a routine basis. It gives thieves the responsibility of paying back what they stole from someone, adding extra to it for the injury. This makes the punishment fit the crime. It would require oversight but might cost less than prison and produce reform in the thief.

**Murder**

Many people think that the penal codes in the Law God gave to Moses no longer apply because of Jesus’ statements in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 and 7). If you are supposed to reward evil with good, how can you make anyone suffer the death penalty?

In fact, love and punishment are not mutually inconsistent, but it can take some time before the distinction sinks in. Punishment is an action that God decrees and love is a human emotion. Therefore one can love a lawbreaker and punish them at the same time. Moreover, a forgiving attitude benefits the victim. If someone harms me, I am to reward them with good. That goes against my human vengefulness, yet the more I do this the less I am consumed with toxic emotion. Jesus told us to do things that go completely against our nature when he said:
“Whosoever smites thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;” (Matthew 5:40).

Then later:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;” (Matthew 5:44).

So a person is not to seek personal revenge, which would be usurping God’s authority. The right to give and take life belongs to God and not man. The general context involves the definition of blood as life, which belongs to God, Who alone has the right to give and take life.\(^{84}\) However, as God’s agents, humans are to enact the death penalty for murder on His behalf as prescribed in Genesis long before He gave the written Law to Moses. The following mandate was given just after the flood.

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” (Genesis 9:6).

Later, God says to the Children of Israel:

“To me belongeth vengeance and recompense.” (Deuteronomy 32:35).

This puts humans in the position of having to kill a murderer without having any animosity towards him or her, recognizing that one is solely doing this as God’s agent. Given human nature, this neutral state is impossible for humans to attain without a great deal of assistance from the Holy Spirit. This is one more reminder that humans cannot keep the Law to total perfection.

\(^{84}\) The mandate also involves forbidding the eating of blood (Leviticus 17).
Today, many nations reject the death penalty. Execution seems too harsh to our generation primarily because we have lost the eternal perspective. The popular delusion is that this lifetime is all that there is and must be held onto at all costs. Therefore, many think that even a serial killer must not be put to death. Execution is increasingly seen as cruel and unusual punishment.

Where has individual responsibility and accountability gone? Determinism is the rationale now; excuses are offered for criminal behavior. *Anyone who murders must be insane. And if they are insane, it is due to a bad childhood, bad genes or both. Either way, it is not their fault and they should not be punished.* That is faulty thinking. It comes from humanism, which says that humans are basically good. However, that is not what the Bible tells us. Genesis 6:5 says that:

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

The truth is that humans murder because they are wicked. All of us have violent impulses. Fear of being punished by other humans *should* be a less powerful motivator than fear of God. Unfortunately, the opposite is usually true. Our concern is typically with getting caught. If shame is there at all its object is pride-based: who wants to be seen in public as a criminal? The only thing that can make us consistently want to resist our violent impulses is a loving desire to please God, a concern to not feel shame before Him, and a fear of Him. Ideally, of love for God, inspired by His love for us, should be uppermost among these three motives, but human nature makes that rarely the case. Mostly we operate out of fear.

The chastening is part of His love for us. If we think we do not need this, it is because but we do not understand how much like children we are.
“He that loveth him chasteneth him” (Proverbs 13:24).

How often do we forget that everything goes on the record with God? He is not mocked (Galatians 6:7). The blood of Abel cried out to Him from the ground (Genesis 4:10). Since human nature is wicked, a healthy fear of divine retribution is necessary to curb us even when saved. We humans do not like to admit we need to be kept in line; even by a loving heavenly Father. God’s Word shows us this. David was beloved by God, but He also kept David in line. After he murdered Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba, God sent Nathan the prophet to tell David that:

“The sword shall not depart from thy house.” (2 Samuel 12:10)\(^85\)

The child born of his illicit union with Bathsheba died, and, as Nathan prophesied, there was murderous contention among David’s sons. After Nathan spoke to David, he went and confessed to God, offering a blood sacrifice. God forgave him, telling David he would not die for this murder (or eternally). This is one of the examples in the Bible where God softens a punishment—He is long-suffering and merciful. There was a worldly punishment for David, but God did not abandon him. We need to be alert to the fact that He will make us reap what we sow when we defy Him—that there will be a worldly consequence just as there was for King David. However, He will forgive us if we sincerely confess to Him through the coverage of Jesus.

**Death row**

The wisdom of God’s penal code has been established in the real world. A general principle arising out of behavioral research is that the sooner a reward or punishment follows a behavior, the faster a person learns. In the case of the death penalty for murder, the

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\(^{85}\) This came true not long after, when there was a murder among David’s sons. Then his favorite son, Absalom, fought David for the kingdom and had to be put down.
sooner death happens, the more effective is its warning for others.\textsuperscript{86}

The sooner the execution of a murderer, the stronger the deterrent value to society. A long wait on death row with the possibility of numerous appeals is not a potent deterrent to crime. However, quick enactment of the death penalty certainly is one; fear of immediate, drastic punishment is a major constraint for us.

**Adultery**

In God’s eyes, adultery is a serious sin, because faithfulness and exclusivity in marriage represent our relationship with Him. This is why God often uses the words “adultery” and “whoredom” as metaphors for idolatry when He speaks through the mouths of the prophets.

Although adultery was punishable by stoning according to the Law, and still is in many so-called primitive societies, it is no longer even illegal in our society. In God’s eyes, however, it is just as much a sin as ever. Yet the author is aware of heathen therapists and doctors who encourage people to have an affair as a way to spice up their lives.

Adultery is harmful in every way. It erodes trust and destroys the sanctity of marriage. A few years ago a married couple wrote some popular therapy books on the joys of having an open marriage. Each partner was free to have affairs and supposedly everything would be fine. The problem was that this did not work for the writer couple. They got a divorce soon after the book went off the best-seller list.

**Jesus and the woman taken in adultery**

Jesus’ act of freeing the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11) is one of those mysterious passages that many take as a sign that the moral law is obsolete. What was Jesus writing in the sand after he

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had freed the woman? Was it the names of other adulterers in the group? We are not told. It is noticeable that Jesus did not tell the woman her action was not a sin. Sin is still sin. On the other hand, Jesus did not enforce the punishment prescribed in the Law. Instead, He forgave her and told her to “sin no more.” As God in human form, He alone has the power and the right to do that. Was he telling the woman to never, ever sin again when he said sin no more? No, that would be an impossibility. He was either saying “do not commit adultery again”—at least in action—and/or He was referring to the sin of unbelief.

God does not expect humans to stop sinning. Even if we could conform all our outward actions to the Law, our inner thoughts would betray us. In his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:28) Jesus made this clear. He said that that adultery applies not only to actions but also to thoughts. If you look upon someone with lust in your heart you are an adulterer.

Today, even many Christians think themselves innocent if their adultery only operates on the level of thought. This is the reason so many in the church get hooked on pornography, which is a form of adultery. Of course, they are ignoring both the general spirit of the Law and the specific words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Not admitting mental adultery can have serious consequences beyond the fact that it is a sin. It leads people to let down their guard against acting on the thoughts.

In the gospels, there are instances in which Christ avoids administering a penalty prescribed by Part One of the Law. This happens in the case of the woman taken in adultery (John 8). This does not mean adultery stopped being a sin. Part One is still a matter between us and God, as it has always been, but there is no penalty in the human realm for breaking most of it. The exceptions are in the secular realm, the criminal and civic laws all over the world.
Coveting

Coveting is specifically a sin of the mind. What is coveting? Coveting is seeing something that is not yours, wanting it, desiring it, thinking about it, thinking about how to get this thing you probably do not need and should not have. The presence of the prohibition against coveting in the Ten Commandments, the Top Ten, is evidence that these ordinances come from God, because God alone can demand and enforce punishment for this sin of the mind. It is not punishable by a legal system that functions outside the mind. God, and only God, knows our hearts. Proverbs 21:2:

“...the Lord pondereth the hearts.”

Like all other sins, coveting is a sin against God as well as a sin against fellow humans. Furthermore, desiring things that do not belong to one can lead to other sins that are criminally punishable. Coveting leads to theft, murder, adultery and bearing false witness; these are attacks on the neighbor because they have what we want.

The fact that there is a prohibition against coveting in the Ten Commandments tells us that it is impossible to keep the Law. We humans simply cannot keep our minds pure enough to never experience even the slightest stab of a “covet.” It does not matter that you renounce that covet as soon as you recognize it for what it is. Once you have experienced it, you have broken the Law.

The prohibition towards coveting fully shows us our need for Christ, because there is simply no way to avoid it happening at least once in one’s life.

Bearing false witness

Telling a lie about somebody is an offense to God and one’s neighbor. Sadly, in our society it is more or less accepted. Although bearing false witness is still a criminal offense—perjury—if the lying occurred under oath, it is prosecuted only selectively.

We humans often bear false witness in an unconscious way as a form of a psychological defense mechanism. The defense known as
projection—where, in the case of sin, I deny responsibility for my own sinful action or thought and blame it on somebody else—can be a form of bearing false witness. *To protect my own ego, my defenses distort my perception of reality. Instead of taking responsibility for my sin, I subconsciously blame you for my wrongdoing. I may even openly accuse you.* We find this in the account of David’s son Amnon, who raped his half-sister, Tamar, and then turned around and poured hatred on her despite the fact that he was the one in the wrong.

This subconscious form of lying aims primarily to fool oneself, but behind that is the attempt to fool God and other people. It would fit into the category of sins of which the sinner lacks conscious awareness, although that category does not necessarily involve the blaming of other people (Leviticus 4).

All in all, the Ten Commandments are the backbone of morality. They may be inborn since they tend to be found in moral codes of all peoples. There is no indication in the Bible that God rescinded any of them. Nor should we want this. The fact is, the Top Ten moral laws give us a recipe for well-being.

**Laws outside the “Top Ten:”**

**What has happened to some important ones?**

Few people would argue that the major moral laws, the Ten Commandments, are irrelevant for today. How about the civil and ceremonial parts of the Law? Were these only for a certain time and place, applying to the nation of Israel only?87

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87 A common position is that only the Ten Commandments, or the moral codes, are relevant in New Testament times, and that the civil and ceremonial codes are obsolete. See Ernest C. Reisinger’s (1996) *The Law and the Gospel*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P. and R. Publishers, paperback.
In some cases these codes were only for Israel, as in the ordinances concerning inheritance of land among the tribes, detailed in the book of Numbers. However, there is no evidence from the Bible that God ever updated any part of the Law beside the ceremonial statutes that replace the animal sacrifices with Christ. The interpersonal, dietary, health and moral codes are left intact. Every time you keep one of these codes, you know God likes it. You are telling Him you belong to Him. Lovers often have secret codes or signals that create an exclusive bond between them. To embrace the Law brings you closer to God.

Peter’s vision: termination of the dietary laws?
In his vision of the clean and unclean meats (Acts 10:9-28), it was made clear to Peter that no man was to judge or reject another man for not keeping the moral and behavioral codes of the Law. This made it possible to mingle with non-kosher Gentiles to tell them the gospel.

Many miss the point and consider God’s message to Peter a command for termination of the dietary laws. Such an interpretation of Peter’s vision would make sense if the dietary laws were not so beneficial. It is not good for humans to eat bottom feeders, offal eaters, and animal fat. Also, Jesus stated that all the jots and tittles of the Law are in effect while heaven and earth remain.

Acts 15 describes how the apostles and elders decided not to foist the dietary laws on new Gentile converts, with the exception they were not to eat blood or things strangled. That does not mean that God has told us to throw out those laws. This was just an introductory modification. People who want to reject Part One of the Law use this and other verses such as Paul’s statement that there is “nothing unclean of itself” (Romans 15:4). However, God was the One Who declared certain foods unclean. It is dangerous to think something acceptable when God has declared it otherwise. The Law-rejecters also use Christ’s statement that:
“Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man...” (Matthew 15:11).

Christ was pointing out the wickedness of the human heart here, not rescinding any dietary law. He had just been accused of breaking the Law by not washing His hands before eating, although no ordinance concerning this is to be found in the Law. Hand-washing was merely a tradition. Jesus kept the dietary codes and all the rest of the laws perfectly as befitting the unblemished Lamb who offered Himself without spot.

**Scientific validation of the dietary laws**

It is understandable that Paul did not want to put any barriers to salvation in front of the Gentiles. However, the more we learn about God, the more we should find ourselves paying attention to His dietary laws. There is nothing frivolous or obsolete about them. Scientific research validates many of the practices given by God to Moses.

Consider the law that tells us not to eat the fat when we eat meat (Leviticus 3:17). Only recently have we discovered the dangers of eating animal fat. In the same vein is the law that says not to eat meat with blood in it, one of the things James and the other apostles insisted on even for Gentile converts. Science has found blood to be the carrier of disease, yet today, Christians ignore the prohibition to eat blood. How about the clean and unclean animals? (Deuteronomy 14). “Clean” fish with scales are less likely to be bottom feeders than unclean fish and molluscs contaminated with pollutants. Animals that part the hoof and chew the cud (grass, straw or hay) are probably a lot safer to eat than those that eat garbage.

To be sure, nobody will lose their salvation by not adhering to the dietary laws, nor will anybody gain or maintain salvation by doing so. However, they might avoid being poisoned, or developing
atherosclerosis, or contracting many other diseases. Moreover, if they observe the codes out of respect and love for God, and not with the mistaken motive of saving themselves, they will come closer to Him. When God sent manna to feed the Children of Israel in the desert, they complained about it to the point where He finally gave in to them. He dropped a flock of quails on them but they derived no real pleasure from eating those birds. Instead, they got themselves “leanness into their soul” (Psalm 106:15). That is the cost of going against God.

**Glaring omission: The disappearance of circumcision**

There is no mention of circumcision in the discussion among the apostles that led to James’ reduction of the law for Gentile converts in Acts 15. James came up with just four things: no idols, no eating things strangled, no fornication, and no eating with the blood. The absence of circumcision is strange considering its importance in the Law. Circumcision had been mandated for all males who followed the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 17:11). It was the mark of a believer.

**Why was circumcision left out?**

One reason given in Acts 15 is that some “Judaizers” insisted that converts to Christ be held to the Old Testament Law, particularly circumcision. Where they went wrong was in insisting that men must be circumcised if they wish to be saved. That is plain wrong. At no time did circumcision save anyone, nor does the Law say this. Other reasons for the unpopularity of circumcision were that it is very painful for an adult, it creates the risk of infection, and the apostles did not want to “trouble” the Gentiles. Paul was sent to preach that faith in the blood of Christ alone saves. Insistence on circumcision could put a stumbling block before them.

“Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.” (Romans 3:30).
Is getting circumcised the same as rejecting Christ?

Some in the Christian church consider physical circumcision the rejection of Christ. Paul does not go this far in his teaching, although he does tell those uncircumcised not to get circumcised (I Corinthians 7:18). He also says that those who get circumcised must then follow all the other ordinances of the Mosaic law:

Paul differentiates between the outward form of circumcision and that of the heart in Romans 2:29. He says that the outward form has no benefit without the inward one. He goes further and downplays the outward type, rebuking Jewish believers who get circumcised to avoid being persecuted as Christians (Galatians 6:13).

“For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?” (Romans 2:25-26).

However, that would only apply if a person believes himself saved by keeping all the ordinances, which has never been possible for humans, nor required by God. Under the Old Covenant, God would accept payment of the penalty for your sin by your offering a blood sacrifice. Anyone who truly understands the Mosaic Law realizes that salvation is only through the shedding of blood on the altar (Lev 17:11), the covenant fulfilled by Christ on Calvary.

The point is that Paul does not actually condemn circumcision; he is against performing circumcision for the wrong reason, especially as an attempt to pay for one’s sins.88

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88 One popular theory is that water baptism has replaced circumcision as the outer mark of the believer in the New Testament age. This is not to be found in Scripture; there is no written mandate from God relating to this. Since Christ was baptized by John the Baptist (Luke 3:21), it would be inaccurate to consider water baptism the mark of a believer. More likely it identifies the believer as a priest, following the ordinance in the Law of the washing of the Levites (Lev 16:4). God said: “I shall make of thee a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6).
Important points Paul does not make about circumcision

There are important points about circumcision to consider. Health paybacks of the practice continue to be documented up to this day. Science has discovered benefits from circumcision such as a lower rate of cervical cancer among the wives of circumcised males. Also, circumcised males have lower rates of cancer and infections, including the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV). This shows how rejection of circumcision misses out on the practical wisdom of God.

Physical circumcision should be performed, not out of any type of bondage, not as an attempt to earn salvation, but out of respect and gratefulness to God for having saved a person by grace, through the blood of Christ. This would be a free-will offering.

Many Christians maintain that the circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29) is a new concept or code that has replaced the physical circumcision. However, circumcision of the heart is not a new idea. The inner circumcision is mentioned in the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 10:16: “Circumcise therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.”).

Just as both inner and outer forms of circumcision are important to the Mosaic Law, there is every reason to believe God continues in New Testament times to be pleased when men make efforts to perform both types of circumcision. However the inner form, the opening of the heart, has always been the one of ultimate importance.
There is no reason at all to believe that God wants us to throw out circumcision; this seems to have been a ploy to establish the new religion of Christianity as separate from Judaism. If a person opts out of God’s mandate for circumcision, he will experience the same kind of practical and spiritual losses associated with not keeping the Sabbath, etc. There is a loss of closeness with God, and a loss of the health benefits ascribed to circumcision.

Penal codes
Unfortunately, many nations in the world have retreated into very liberal penal codes that go along with rejection of the Bible, a practice reflected in increasing crime rates. The penal code is a very important part of the Law, seen in Exodus 21:12-25. An eye for an eye is the general principal; you reap what you sow. Some of the penal codes in the Torah are very tough. How about stoning to death a rebellious youth, one who continually disobeys his parents? I wonder how often, if ever, that was applied. No instance is given in God’s word.

The general thrust in the Law is towards stiff, rapid punishment for disobedience, applying the death sentence in many situations. This seems too harsh to our generation but God has His reasons for doing things. God’s judgments only seem too harsh for those who do not see His mercy.

Health codes
There are some wise health laws in the Torah that have practical relevance for today. Although the intricate codes concerning leprosy (Leviticus 13), unclean discharges (Leviticus 15), and the handling of the dead and mildew (Leviticus 14) seem fussy and repetitive, important principles are being expressed. It is only in the last century that we have discovered the microbe, revealing the importance of cleanliness and quarantine.

There is another level of meaning to the Law’s insistence on avoiding physical contamination. These things are a picture of sin,
of the thorough contamination and depravity of humans, and of the way in which this separates us from God. Just like all the other commandments of Part One, the health codes point out our need for Christ.

**Tithes**

The practice of tithing first appears in the Bible when Abraham gives tithes to Melchisedek, high priest and King of Salem, during a ceremony involving a meal with wine and bread, apparently a forerunner of worship under the New Covenant (Genesis 14:20). In the Law, the tithe money was to go to the Levites as necessary income due to the prohibition of owning land on which they could keep flocks. It was also to go to the “stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow” who had no other provider (Deuteronomy 14:27-29).

The question is, since the Levitical priesthood ended with Christ, and believers in Christ are themselves priests with free access to God through their High Priest, would it not follow that the command to give a tenth of one’s income is now obsolete? No. Even though secular agencies have largely taken over the social welfare function of the Levites, it is important to tithe. It is part of our bond with God, a recognition that everything comes from Him, and that He is entitled to our first fruits. Tithing to God brings us closer to Him. The most important use for tithes is the spreading of the gospel through all possible media. This is the feeding of the sheep commanded by Jesus to those who love Him (John 21:15-17)

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89 The tithes took care of the widow and the fatherless as well as providing for the Levite who was to distribute them. Tithe money was the first social welfare and the government was a theocracy. Church was definitely not separated from state; priests were in charge of social welfare. Things have changed. Now the social welfare aspect of tithing has become taxation by secular governments.

It is interesting that some tax money pays for military defense which, as God had warned (Deuteronomy 28), only became necessary for the nation of Israel when it went into
Part Two: Mercy in the Law for today

How can all the details of Part Two of the Law still be intact, when the elaborate animal sacrifice system is no longer in place? This is a fascinating question. The fact is that the more we study the Law and prophets, the more fully we see that the details have been met in Christ, Who is the fulfillment of all the jots and tittles concerning the payment for sin. It makes reading the Law and prophecies exciting, like poring over a detective novel where you constantly look for clues.

In no way does Christ’s arrival alter the Law other than this: His death eliminates the animal sacrifice atonement system and replaces it with the God-given right to claim His blood as the total payment for sin. The physical ritual is gone; the human actions involved in bringing the animal to be sacrificed, killing the animal, and sprinkling the blood in the physical temple, are replaced by faith that God has done these things on our behalf by offering a form of Himself in a tabernacle of human flesh.

The difference is that the forgiveness clause changes from a physical/spiritual level, based on actions and belief, to a spiritual one, consisting of belief alone (John 3:16). The animal sacrifice system in place before Jesus died on the cross is a form of atonement “on credit.” Jesus’ arrival in the flesh fulfills and updates only the statutes of the Law dealing with the form of the atonement for sin. The killing of the animal, the Levitical priesthood and the physical tabernacle/temple at Jerusalem are metaphors for Christ that are now replaced by Him.

idolatry. Investigation of the history of other nations reveals the same pattern of events. Every nation that has gone into apostasy has experienced decline and invasion by enemies.

90 Chapter Four of this book points out some of the ways in which Christ can be seen in the Law.
1. There are no more physical blood sacrifices. Chapter Nine of Hebrews defines the differences between the old and new covenants. The “sacrifices” and “burnt offerings” which were offered by law are now obsolete (Hebrews 10:9):

“He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second”

Christ’s blood cannot be compared to the blood of bulls and goats, or the ashes of the heifer (Hebrews 9:13). Animal sacrifices have only limited application, paying for limited amounts of sin for a limited number of individuals over a limited time period. The one act of killing Christ put redemption on a new, unlimited, infinite level. It was the “real” payment for what was formerly paid on credit. The New Testament offers redemption of the transgressions under the Law (Hebrews 9:15).

Jesus institutes the communion meal in the Upper Room during the Last Supper celebrating the Passover. He clearly identifies himself as the Passover lamb whose blood protects a household from the Angel of Death. Holding the unleavened bread, he breaks it and gives it to his disciples saying:

“Take, eat; this is my body.”

Then he prepares the cup of wine and states:

“Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:24).

Luke’s rendering defines this as an act of remembrance:

\[91\] The ashes of the red heifer detailed in Numbers 19 were used to purify anyone who touched a dead body.
“This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me...this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20).

The communion is taken in remembrance of the blood offering made by God in the form of Jesus, the only physical ritual commanded by the new version of Part Two of the Law. The wine and unleavened bread represent the blood and sinless body of Christ. This memorial is tied to the Law, particularly Leviticus 17:11, the one verse which most encapsulates the blood atonement covenant. The believer understands that Christ’s death is the final and complete payment for sin, and that claiming His blood is the single requirement for participation in the forgiveness of God. The sinner will go on sinning, but the blood sacrifices do not go on having to be offered.

Moreover, instead of the pagan-based Easter celebration, believers in Christ should annually keep the Passover in the manner specified in Exodus 12, as commanded in Exodus 12:24:

“And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons forever.”

2. A physical temple is unnecessary. The writer of Hebrews states that the “worldly sanctuary” (Hebrews 9:1) has been replaced by a “more perfect tabernacle” (Hebrews 9:11) which is Christ’s body. Christ takes the place of both the temple and Jerusalem as the physical place where God met with humans. Said Jesus:

92 Leaven is a metaphor for sin in most contexts (Exodus 12:15; Luke 12:1)

93 Drinking the wine sealed the betrothal contract leading to a Jewish wedding. So the eucharist is a type of the betrothal awaiting the final marriage supper of the Lamb. On that occasion Christ as groom will bring into Paradise His bride, the church of believers.
“. ...the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father” (John 4:21).

Now we are free to worship the Father "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). This does away with the requirement that Jerusalem be the only place where sinners can be reconciled with God (Deuteronomy 12; Amos 4:4 and 5:5). The confinement to one meeting place was not because the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was a local god, as some have assumed. It was and is a portrayal of the exclusiveness of God, pointing to Christ as the one way to come to God. In fact, there has been no temple in Jerusalem since 70 A.D.

3. There is no longer a need for a special class of priests as intermediaries between humans and God. The holy of holies was where the high priest alone was allowed to enter just once a year on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat. When Christ died, the veil between the holiest part of the temple and the outer part of the temple was torn from top to bottom. This signifies that now Christ is both the high priest, who has the right to enter the holy of holies, and our bridegroom, who has the right to remove the veil of the bride, his espoused church of believers.

As bridegroom and high priest He has the right to break through that veil separating us from God. Now there is no longer a need for a separate class of priests. Humans, as priests, go to God through Christ, their high priest. The Levitical priesthood was only a temporary, worldly order, later to be replaced by a spiritual one of the “order of Melchisedek,” outside of time and place (Hebrews 7). We may “come boldly unto the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16) in fulfillment of the prophecy:

“I shall make of thee a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6).

4. Active evangelization of non-Jews becomes possible. The change from physical to spiritual is of huge importance for evangelization outside the borders of Israel. Before Christ died on the cross, atonement for sin was physically limited to one location,
What changes with the New Covenant?

the temple in Jerusalem. Non-Israelites were free to worship the God of Israel but the physical limitation made this difficult.

Once access to God became spiritual, the gospel could spread all over the world. Salvation was no longer dependent on a physical sacrifice in a physical temple administered by a human priest. Atonement now existed as an accomplished work independent of any one place, fully achieved by Christ’s death on the cross, rather than on an ongoing basis by a series of sacrificed animals.

From Genesis to Revelation: the consistency of the substitutionary blood atonement covenant

Fundamentally, at its deepest level, the deal has not changed. Forgiveness for sin has always been available to humans through the shed blood of a substitute for the sinner. It has been that way from the beginning. Even in the Garden of Eden, after the Fall, God covered Adam and Eve with animal skins, making the first blood sacrifice to save our forefathers. That physical covering is a metaphor for spiritual covering. Christ is the fulfillment of the original covenant. Leviticus 17:11 spells out the necessity and sufficiency of the blood payment:

“...for it is blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

Through Christ one blood payment is necessary and sufficient to pay the penalty for all human sin, although many humans will not avail themselves of it. Humans are freed from the Lake of Fire and into eternal life by claiming that blood as their payment. From the moment they cling to Christ, they are spiritually alive.

In spite what the perfectionists think, Christ does not free us from being sinners, but from paying the eternal price for sin. This is a crucial distinction. Once saved, we need continual washing in the forgiving blood of Jesus just as the Israelites needed constant cleansing by the morning and evening lambs burning on the altar in the temple to cover sins, blanket-fashion.
It is only safe to perceive the depth of one’s depravity when assured of being inside the “salvation ship,” an expression for the everlasting arms of God. Once inside that ship, the more deeply we humans perceive our depravity, the more appreciation we have for the mercy of God. This leads us to love God, and want to please Him. Our hearts of stone turn into hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26), enabling us to love God and our neighbor.

Today’s Christian leaders tell us to beg for God’s forgiveness. However, there is no need to do this. Our past, present and future sin has already been paid for. Forgiveness has already been given to us; we need not beg, we can freely claim it. All our impure thoughts, words and deeds are covered by the blood of Christ. However, staying in denial about any sin will cause us to suffer in this world.

Eternity is the real issue. The most critical thing for us to know is that nothing will send us to hell when we stand under Christ. All sin is covered, including sins of which a person is unaware, which would include denial. God gives even the worst sinner the right to claim His forgiveness by faith in Christ. So instead of begging for forgiveness, we can thank Him for giving us the atoning blood of Jesus, and thank Jesus for taking the punishment in our place.

**Conclusion: the Law is good for us today**

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that the Law is the best thing that happened to humans since the Fall, and far from obsolete. We humans should not be afraid to embrace it, just as David did (Psalm 119). The Law is where God spells out His mercy. He states in writing that the shed blood of His Lamb, Jesus, completely atones for the sins of humanity. Without it we are headed for the Lake of Fire.

“If fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7).
This verse is saying that fear and guilt from our subconscious knowledge of the damnation in the Law drives us to the wisdom of God’s mercy—also found in the Law.

Once a person is in the “strongbox” of Christ, a different kind of fear, mingled with love and thankfulness to God, is present. Now the fear is not of damnation, but a milder fear of reaping what a person sows in the flesh. There is a sense of not wanting to get the “fish eye” from God, too. Our increasing love for Him makes us care about how He feels towards us; we want Him to be pleased.

Transformation of the heart enables a person to embrace Part One of the Law instead of trying to run away from it. One is safe to come out of hiding with the assurance that all is forgiven.

**Spiritual level:** In a sense Part Two of the Law operates now on the spiritual level rather than the spiritual/carnal one. Christ has fulfilled the sacrificial codes of Part Two for us so all we need is faith in Him.

**Mercy, love, obey:** The price we pay for ignoring Part One of the Law? Sure, we lose the worldly benefits but the major forfeiture is spiritual. We develop leanness of soul, we lose closeness with God.

Most codes in Part One go against our nature. That is why God has to use commands. When we really “get it,” love, rather than fear, gradually becomes our primary motivation for obedience. In Exodus 20:6, God describes Himself thus:

"...showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

What comes first? Our love for God or His mercy? His mercy does; it is a given. His mercy leads us to love God, and when we love Him, we want to keep His commandments. We know He is reasonable and put them in the Law for our benefit.
Jesus puts love and obedience in the same order found in Exodus. He says: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Love precedes obedience, meaning that, despite the teachings commonly heard in the church today, repentance from sin only begins when humans are already saved and operate out of love for God.

When believers recognize the enormity of God’s mercy and find themselves loving Him in return, and wanting to be closer to Him, they will delve into the Pentateuch (or Torah, or Law). There they will discover God’s recipe for well-being and find themselves wanting to follow it on an increasing basis. Even more importantly, they will develop profound inner peace from the assurance that God takes them as they are, simply by their claiming the blood of God’s sacrificed Lamb, Jesus Christ.

**The lie:** The lie is that if we want to serve God, we can expect to be thoroughly miserable and wretched while in this world, that doing the things God asks will interfere with our fun. The very reverse is true. The Law offers us contentment and psychological well-being. The Law alone gives us reason for hope both on the eternal level and in this short life.

The problem is not the Law. The schoolmaster Law only keeps us in bondage when we do not perceive the mercy of God in it, the provision for being totally forgiven. It is a gift to humans, the umbrella of a total pardon, clearly spelled out in the contract God gave to Moses, finalized by the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

God’s love changes us; it is the only thing that truly changes us. Only the knowledge of being totally loved and forgiven by God initiates the process of repentance towards our depravity. Only when safe in the “salvation ship” do we see ourselves realistically, repulsed by what we are looking at, thankful to God for saving us out of the fire. The gospel gives us a core of sanity as it sinks ever
deeper inside. That penetration is a lifelong process, never reaching completion in this world.

The point is, God established the substitutionary blood atonement covenant in the Law. He is willing to accept the death of a sinless substitute for the imperfect human in payment of the deadly penalty for human sin. The substitute must be God in human form, because only God is sinless and infinite, not doomed by His own Law, able to cover an unlimited amount of sin. Jesus stood in for the whole human race when he, our kinsman redeemer, took our punishment. He did it out of love, asking nothing in return. We are sinners saved from damnation by claiming coverage of the blood of Christ. Says Hebrews 9:22:

“without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.”

Christ replaces the offering always burning in the temple to cover human sin:

“The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.” (Lev 6:13)

The sacrificed animal was burned in place of sinners. Burning—that is the end of humans without Christ.
Chapter Eight

The wonderful truth

The wonderful truth is that Law and grace are one. The Bible presents one elegant, continuous grace-in-the-law theme that gives humans a solid foundation for their faith:

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

The book of Leviticus in the Law God gave to Moses is God’s written promise of total forgiveness for all types of sin for those who participate in the substitutionary atonement. Today, Christ’s death on the altar of Calvary has superseded all the sacrificial offerings spelled out in Leviticus. His death provides the final and complete form of God’s mercy in the Law. Salvation from the Lake of Fire into eternal life with God depends on nothing other than one’s clinging to the blood of Christ as payment for one’s sin.

Legalism has a bad name but there is nothing wrong with it, per se. The problem is the merciless legalism of the false doctrines. All doctrines except the Law God gave Moses offer only damnation for those who fall short of perfection. Sadly, many have been led to think ill of God’s magnificent Law, when in fact it is our only existential defense. Even Christians run away from it and miss out on its protection, its “merciful legalism.” The Law tops damnation with mercy. Damnation is the default option for those who do not avail themselves of the God-given mercy. Nobody can afford to sit on the fence.

Over and over, the Law states that God will forgive the sinner who approaches Him sprinkled with the blood of a sacrificed substitute for himself. Before Christ, the offering was to be a lamb or other acceptable animal, a “clean” or kosher one with no blemishes, killed in its prime, pointing to the sinless son of God killed in the prime of His life. God's Law is our best friend; the more we see that, the
more peace of mind we have. It did not get thrown away when Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty on our behalf. Jesus came to fulfil the Law, not to do away with it.

Unlike the fake gods of all other belief systems, the God of the Bible did not at any time command humans to keep a set of codes lacking mercy for our inevitable less-than-perfect performance. God expects us to mess up and gives us a way to escape the eternal consequence for that. The Law shows that God expects humans to be continual sinners, and that He provides continual forgiveness for those who cling to the blood of the Lamb, Jesus.

Christ is the mercy, the God-given substitute who was willing to die in our place, to pay the penalty for our sin so we could cover ourselves with his perfection and be saved. This payment satisfies the Law's requirement of the death penalty for sin--not just physical death, but spiritual death, eternal separation from God ending in the Lake of Fire. God actually commands humans to claim Christ’s death to cover their sin. If we do this He promises to see us as if we were as sinless as Jesus. That is our only hope of avoiding the Lake of Fire, and of having eternal life in heaven. The fact that He commands us to do this means He wants us saved in spite of all our flaws; it proves He loves us.

**Be like a Berean**

If you still believe you are under grace but not under the Law, you might want to look at Scripture, following example of the Bereans. They were commended for daily checking what Paul said against Scripture, i.e., the Law and prophetic books (Act 17:10-11).

Do you sign a contract for a new job, or to purchase a house, without first reading what it says? No. Why trust your eternal destiny, then, to what others tell you? This is about eternity, no less. Read the terms God spells out. Be sure that the only thing that atones is the blood of the lamb, Jesus. Study the Pentateuch. Pay attention to the book of Leviticus, especially Leviticus 17:11:
“For the life of the flesh is in the blood and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

This verse points to Jesus, the Lamb of God whose blood was shed on the altar of Calvary. The Law, alone, frees. No human good work or sacrifice will be good enough to save them. What saves a person is belief in the finished work of Christ, who made atonement for us with his blood. God does not require perfect faith, either, but *sufficient* faith, which in reality may be smaller than even a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20).

**Scripture**

Too bad the church generally teaches that Scripture is just the New Testament. It that were the case, why would Jesus quote freely from “Scripture” before there was anything called the “New Testament” which, technically, only begins with his death?

**Lies and about grace**

Heretics twist and distort Bible terms like “grace.” Merciless legalists see grace as God's empowerment of humans to save themselves by refraining from sin. To them, it is a force or a tool from God enabling them to attain perfection through their own efforts. This is self-deception.

On the other hand, the so-called liberals, the “grace-with-no-law” antinomians, see grace as suspension of judgment defined by a lawless “new covenant” under Christ. *Anything goes*, according to the liberal antinomians, which could lead to anarchy. Grace without Law is deadly; it lacks a blood sacrifice and therefore keeps humans on the road to hell.

**Grace, truth and the “salvation ship”**

What is the truth about grace? Well, grace is not a suspension of judgment. Grace is provision in the Law that God will forgive the sinner who approaches Him sprinkled or covered by the blood of a sacrificed animal, a cumbersome system in the Old Testament time finally replaced by the blood of Christ.
The essence of grace is mercy from God enabling humans to reconcile with Him despite being sinners. It is God’s provision of the payment as a gift of love to humans. His pays our deadly “fine” with His Son’s own blood, a terrible sacrifice on His part.

**Mental health**

A bi-product of this for humans is peace of mind, or mental health. Only the truth of the gospel can set our minds free from guilt and fear. The freeing process is gradual. It probably takes more than a lifetime to fully grasp the amazing truth that Christ really did pay the penalty for all our sins. Imagine waking up on Judgment Day to find it is real, as one is welcomed by Christ into the place he provides.

His love gradually melts psychological defenses away. The abominable, dark parts of us do not begin to come out of hiding until they know it is safe to do so. The human ego, impregnated with the mercy of God, can say to the depraved crew, the members of the s-inner self: *It’s alright, you’re forgiven. Relax, come out of hiding, you won’t be kicked out of the flock!* One by one, the roaches of the s-inner self crawl out of the wall into the light of God’s unending forgiveness.

**Where this book has gone**

**Introduction: Who needs grace if they are not under the law?**

Blindness to grace in the Law comes not just from ignorance of Scripture but also from false teaching in the church. The fork-tongued sacrilege of perfectionism reinforces the lie that Law and grace are separate. Satan is in the heresy business, trying to block our view of the free availability of salvation, keeping us lost to God. One of his tricks has been to try to divide grace from the Law.

One outcome is a split between Judaism and Christianity. This means that Jews do not have Christ in the flesh, and Christians do not have the Scriptural foundation for faith in Christ. Neither Jews nor Christians have the full information that would enable them to
believe in Christ as the Lamb of God whose blood alone atones for sin, freeing humans from the Lake of Fire. We need emergency surgery to put the head back on the body.

Chapter One: Dispensationalism separates Law and grace
Perfectionism is helped by yet another heresy: dispensationalism. Indeed, those who say “we’re under grace now and not under the law” are not merely embracing both the left and right wings of perfectionism, otherwise known as liberalism/antinomianism and merciless legalism. They are also embracing the doctrinal error of dispensationalism. Chapter One of the book talks about this error and the reasons to reject it.

Chapter Two: Hell is real
Rejection of the reality of hell, or Lake of Fire, is another heresy that helps split grace from Law. Who needs grace when there is no dread destiny? However, the importance of Christ rests on our belief in the reality of hell, His shed blood being our only refuge from it.

Chapter Three: How does perfectionism harm us?
Chapter Three went into the long-term, short-term, left-wing and right-wing effects of heresy. The short-term effects can be found in personality pathology. The underlying reason for all personality pathology is existential guilt, the universal sense of deserving eternal damnation. We looked at how that guilt produces differences in psychological make-up depending upon which perfectionist wing a person ascribes to. Merciless legalism and antinomianism are associated with distinctly separate pathologies in human coping that will only heal when the closure-producing effect of the gospel enters the human psyche.

However, personality pathology is irrelevant compared to the fact that perfectionism keeps humans on track for the Lake of Fire.

Chapter Four: The gospel in the Law
Today’s Christians often wrongly think that in Old Testament times people got saved by performing all the 633 commandments
perfectly. Chapter Four shows that, in fact, the Law God gave to Moses acknowledges the impossibility of avoiding sin and is full of pictures of Christ. This is never clearer than in the mandate for all Israelites to observe the Day of Atonement as a Sabbath of rest and to afflict one’s soul (repent for sin). This observance covered one’s sins for the whole year and there was nothing conditional about observing it, i.e., it was not just in case you sinned. God is well aware of human depravity and wants us to escape the eternal consequence of it.

Chapter Five: Is the New Testament God unforgiving?
Chapter Five takes a sample of New Testament terms and verses misinterpreted by merciless “law with no grace” perfectionists. It shows that, when properly put into context and given the right semantics, the verses do the reverse of depicting God as a merciless perfectionist. Discussed are terms such as “perfect,” “repent” and “redeem.” We looked at examples from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, certain parables, parts of I John, and verses from James.

Chapter Six: Is the New Testament God all-tolerant?
Now we’re under Grace! We had it bad; now we have it good.” As if God is all-tolerant and the Law is cast aside...this would mean nothing is a sin, leading to a moral free-for-all. Jesus affirmed the continuity of all edicts in the Law in Matthew 5:18 when he said:

“...Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all shall be fulfilled.”

The rebellious antinomian ignores this statement. He twists and distorts text like the merciless perfectionist, but with a different filter. We looked at what is wrong with this filter and offered an interpretation consistent with the Law in selected passages from Paul’s letter to the Galatians, the gospel of John, and even the very words of Jesus.

This chapter also discusses the strange fact that Christians who profess to be under grace and not under the Law are not that way in
practice. It documents the bizarre adherence of so-called liberals to a merciless “law of Paul.”

**Chapter Seven: What changes with the New Covenant? What stays the same?**

This chapter shows that nothing fundamentally changes between the Old and New Covenants regarding the essentialness and availability of the gift of salvation through the blood of the atoning Lamb. The form of the blood sacrifice changes but the underlying terms spelled out by God are the same. Part One of the Law is no longer humanly enforced as it was in the days up to Christ’s death, but it remains our recipe for well-being. Part Two, defining God’s mercy, remains our only route to eternal life, but it is now a more internal act, a pardon free for the taking, forever in effect between man and God.

**Chapter Eight: The wonderful truth**

In sum, this book has established the wonderful truth in its total believability. There has always been one God-given covenant for salvation. Its merciful theme is present in God’s Word all the way from Genesis to Revelation. Through that consistency, humans can gain total assurance of salvation by faith.

**The last word**

The God of the Bible is consistent. His forgiveness is bigger than all our sin. The Law spells out His mercy in the form of the substitutionary blood atonement covenant, which is from “everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 103:17). Jesus is the wonderful gift of atonement God gave us purely out of His love for the human creatures He made. We do not deserve this gift of salvation, nor does God demand anything in return. Such a demand would only keep us away. This did not change when Judaism got the new name of Christianity. We have always been under the Law, but the Law is the source of God’s grace. The blood sacrifice has always been freely available. It was given to Israel but has always been open to "the stranger that sojourneth amongst you" (Exodus 12:49).
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