



BUT whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (James 1:25)

FORASMUCH as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. **4** And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: **5** Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. (2 Cor 3:3-5)

FOR we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.¹⁵ For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.¹⁶ If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.²⁰ Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.²¹ I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:14-25)

What law can be considered perfect? It is only that law which is compliant to, and submissive before, the Law of God. The Law of God is more than a code of ethics or of behavior – it is spiritual in nature and supersedes every other judicial power in either Heaven or on earth. It is for this reason that justice runs afar afield when men enact laws contrary to, and in alienation of, the Law of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ set forth the Gospel through His Righteousness, His Miracles, His Parables, His fulfillment of all the prophecies of the Coming Messiah, and He sealed it with His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. In the Epistles, we read of the challenges of the apostles in teaching and defining the life experiences whereby the Gospel of Redemption has blessed us. The struggles are never light and simple. There will always arise storms after the quiet evening solitude in the life of God's elect. The Plan and Purpose of Christ finds its continuing expression in the hands of whom the Lord deigns to remove the grave clothes from Lazarus (the sinner justified) and as we read the Epistle before us, and those that follow, we will discover beautiful Rubies hidden beneath talents of Gold.

As Paul has already done, we discover the revelation of the meaningful terms of our walk with God through the Garden of Grace. We discover that on the morning of our salvation we experience a change in standing before God – this change is **justification** by the terms of the law. Following our new status before God, we are made **regenerate** as possessing a new nature before God. The old nature has perished with the death of the old man. We will note then that we will have a change of Mind concerning God. Of the old life of sin, we find tearful **repentance** in our changed heart. We are no longer bound by sin to desires unholy. We are reviled at our old self and rejoice in the Bright and Heavenly Way before us. We undergo **conversion** by a change of life for God and in Christ. Now we are **adopted** into the family of God having been orphaned by that old life in Adam. Having been adopted into a new family, we learn to live according to the example of our new Father in God, and we bear His name. This change of living and growth in service is called **sanctification**. At length, we shall experience a glorification which will be a change of place from this mortality to that abode with God in Eternity. These are the Rubies abounding in the Scriptures that lead us into a more perfect knowledge of our changed state in Christ. Look for them as we study.

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.” If we were our own, we could not have been sold – our so-called free will actually in bondage to sin and more properly called self-will. Satan was our master and owner ere we came to the glorious liberty of the cross. A slave belonging to a greedy master cannot be set free except he be purchased at whatever price required. The wages of sin being death, the purchase price is also death – either our death, or a substitutionary death by a worthy and sin-free surrogate. Being sold, we must now be purchased. Christ made the purchase with His own life blood. We have been purchased away from our death in sin.. The law cannot be evil for it is a spiritual offering of God. It is our failure to live the perfectly righteous life of Christ that warrants our death in sin, and now the righteous death of Christ that purchases (under the terms of the law) our freedom. When human law contradicts Divine Law, all morality is corrupted.

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” This is evidence of the regenerate inner man. We abhor our lingering sinful inclinations in the inner man. We are disgusted at the old habits and proclivities to sin that beset us at moments unawares. The struggle is of the heart, spiritual, and of the regenerate heart. On every Morning and Evening Prayer Service, we are called to two categories of sin. There are two major categories of sin mentioned therein – those sins of commission, and those of omission. Love compels action to help those who are forlorn of hope – widows, orphans, homeless, hungry and despondent. It is not enough to keep a list of laws – those laws must be written in the red ink of LOVE in the hearts of His people. Our Prayer Book beautifully sets this truth out in the General Confession: ***“We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. **We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us.”***** We often utter the thoughts in this prayer

with complacent detachment. Any prayer made to God without intention is vanity of a serious nature. Remember, *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."*

"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good." This is not an excusal of any measure of sin by the apostle. He is laying out the perimeters of the battlefield of the heart and mind. The old memory of man cannot suddenly and entirely extinguish the thoughts that led to sin and lust. But the new man struggles constantly in spirit against that former nature, being made new in Christ. With every victory overcome, his ranks on the battlefield are made stronger. But the battle is ongoing with the life of a Christian. The enemy of our souls is cunning and alert to every weakness in our defenses; therefore, we must also post our sentinels and vedettes in advance of our Mind's and Soul's outer defenses to deter his trickery.

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Another manner of stating this would be the words of Christ, *"The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."* The changed inner man, being justified by faith and made righteous by the blood of Christ, cannot will to sin. But the old carnal nature raises its head without invitation or prompting. It comes against us to battle, and the battle is joined between the sin carnal nature of the flesh and the spiritual nature made new in us through our justification and regeneration.

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." This struggle between conscience and passion cannot be that of an unregenerate man for the unregenerate experience no such conflict of flesh and spirit. *"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."* (Romans 7:20) The apostle devoutly desires to conform to all points of righteousness, but he finds himself, even subconsciously, following the habits of the carnal. The continued struggle will result in an eventual sanctification of the individual who so struggles for *"....greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4) If Christ is the Lord and Master of our hearts, He will keep it from willful sins.

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." In the same way that the simple lust to commit adultery is counted for the very act itself, so, in the case of Godly intentions of the heart counted for righteousness. The poor widow's mites were less in value than all cast into the treasure, but her gift was all that she had and given from a heart abundant in love toward God. It was MORE than all the talents and shekels cast in by the wealthy who gave out of their riches not out of their want. We delight in the law of God. We hold it up as our banner and, likewise, *"I love thy Word, O God"*.

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Is it ever 'OK' to sin? NEVER! There is at work, always, the sinful principle in the flesh of the regenerate; and the Holy principle of the renewed mind of the same. This is not an open rebellion on the part of the regenerate nature against God – it is a civil war between flesh and spirit. *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."* (Gal 5:17-18) This war will continue until the call to glory. Who shall deliver?

"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." Excuses are made in the mind. There is no excuse for sin, but the mind, set on the righteousness of God, is that which survives the grave. The body will be consumed away in the same grave. Our soul's mind

formulates the treasures of our heart. If Christ, and His righteousness, are the treasures of our hearts, the mind will reflect that treasure in its thoughts, plans, and judgments. This chapter of Romans was a great power and weapon in the hands of the English Reformers and Continental Reformers (Lutherans) in combating the theory of Rome that the sinful principle in our fallen nature was sin at all. The Reformers pointed strikingly to this chapter to undo that Pelagian heresy. Sin is sin regardless the terms and persons in whom it is expressed. But the regenerate have the power of Christ to overcome said sinful inclinations and actions through the process of sanctification and subjection.

As you will recall in Matthew 22: 36, Jesus was asked which Law was supreme: *“36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus precisely lays out the whole scope of our means of obedience to God, and that means is by one element alone – LOVE! 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”* (Matt 22:37-40)

In this context, it should be understood that no Law of God can be nullified – they are all operative and effective for us; however, the key to keeping the Ten Commandments does not reside in our ability to obey a stone-written list of Laws, but by means of the love we bear for our Lord and for one another, and for the Law of God.

When we assume the title of Christian, we have received adoption into the family of God. Our old sinful natures are changed into a new man. The old desire to sin passes away, and we are imbued with a nature that hates sin. Now, we are free indeed because we are enabled to have the perfect liberty to do that which we desire since our desires coincide with those of our Lord Jesus Christ. All that we do will be good for us and our families, our friends and our neighbors; instead of those things which debilitate our health and poison our relationships. A son or daughter of God and the King of Kings should deport themselves in royal fashion to protect the dignity of their Father.