

## THE ROYAL LAW : THOU SHALT LOVE! : PART 1

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One disturbing question which has plagued many sincere Christians over the past two thousand years concerns why Jesus continually stressed the importance of keeping the Mosaic Law when He knew that no one would ever possibly be able to fully abide by it. The Mosaic Law is a very complex moral code which was given to Moses on Mount Horeb, or Sinai, as it is also known, following the departure of the Hebrew slaves from the land of Egypt. It is comprised of a very strict body of laws, each of which prescribes a specific punishment for those who failed to keep it. In quite a few cases, failure to keep the Mosaic Law was punishable with death by stoning. Consider the following examples:

"Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones."  
Leviticus 20:2, KJV

"And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."  
Leviticus 20:10, KJV

"A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them."  
Leviticus 20:27, KJV

"And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death."  
Leviticus 24:16, KJV

Thus, as can be seen, stoning was the most common form of putting a person to death in the Old Testament. Within New Testament Jewish society, this was still the principle means

of putting a person to death as well. We find a clear example of this in the incident of the woman caught in the act of adultery found in the Gospel of John:

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not."  
John 8:3-6, KJV

In the Book of Acts, the martyr Stephen was also slain by stoning because the self-righteous Jews viewed him as being guilty of blasphemy when he made Jesus equal to God in the following verses. This occurred right after Stephen had completely exposed the hypocrisy of their religion:

"And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."  
Acts 7:56-60, KJV

It was because of the fact that, in the eyes of the Jews, Jesus also made Himself equal to God, that the Scribes and the Pharisees considered Him worthy of death. However, in that case, being as it was such a sensitive issue, they persuaded the Roman justice system to do the dirty work for them:

"Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."  
John 5:18, KJV

"When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."  
John 19:6-7, KJV

The Apostle Paul put things in proper perspective regarding the status of Jesus Christ when he wrote the following to the Church at Philippi:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and

given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."  
Philippians 2:5-11, KJV

Notice how in the previous verses from the Book of Acts, the Law-bound Jews were very careful about the manner in which they slew Stephen. They made sure that, in compliance with the Mosaic Law, they had their witnesses present in order to justify their crime. This sad event is accurately portrayed in the excellent movie "Peter and Paul" starring Anthony Hopkins and Robert Foxworthy. In other cases where a crime might not merit death by stoning, under the Mosaic Law, one might still face severe punishment in the form of losing one of his bodily members such as an eye, or a hand or a foot, as was prescribed in the following verses. This is still acceptable punishment in some modern Arab countries:

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."  
Exodus 21:24-25, KJV

Unlike today in which a corrupt and weak American justice system permits many dangerous criminals to return to society within a matter of hours, days, weeks, months, or at the most a few years, crime in Jewish society was kept to a minimum by exacting stiff penalties upon the evildoers. After witnessing a person being stoned to death, surely many people had second thoughts about committing similar crimes. As I explain in "Killing and the Phinehas Priesthood", in place of actual prisons, the Hebrews set aside what were called cities of refuge. These were communities to which criminals could flee while they waited for their day of judgment. If they were to leave one of these cities before that time, they would become fair prey to anyone who might seek to kill them:

"But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession. So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death."  
Numbers 35:26-31, KJV

You can find some of these cities of refuge mentioned by name in the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Joshua. Throughout the four Gospels, the Lord consistently spoke hard sayings which were very difficult to accept for those who heard Him preach; not only for the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees, but for His own Disciples as well.

Some of these were directly related to the keeping of the Mosaic Law. For example, consider the following:

"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. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 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 5:18-20, KJV

Consider how extremely difficult this must have been for those listening to the Lord that day. How could anyone possibly exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees? Why, if there was anyone worthy of Salvation, surely it must have been the Pharisees; after all, they rigorously observed the Mosaic Law. They were the holiest people in Israel; at least that is what the common people were led to believe. It appears that Jesus was deliberately setting up a seemingly impassable roadblock to our Salvation; in fact, this is precisely what He was doing; and this wasn't the only time that He did it either. A little later in the very same chapter, we find the Lord saying:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart . . . It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

Matthew 5:27-28, 31-32, KJV

Those self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees thought that they were so holy because they didn't physically indulge in the act of adultery; however, Jesus was quick to point out that just allowing the thought to pass through our minds is just as bad as actually having performed sex with that woman. Not only that, but the Lord pointed out that if one divorces his wife for any other reason than for fornication, which in this case means sexual infidelity, he is not only guilty of causing her to commit adultery, but he is also guilty of causing the one who marries her to commit adultery!

Now, let us be honest here for a moment. How many of you reading this, whether you be male or female, can honestly say that you have never ever lusted after a person of the opposite sex, even if you knew or suspected that they might already be married? Unless you are a very young child, or else a homosexual or a lesbian, I dare say that very few of you are without guilt. To deny this would be the epitome of self-righteous pride and self-delusion. How many of you have divorced a person for any other reason than sexual infidelity? Because of these sins and human weaknesses, according to the Mosaic Law, we are all guilty of death! This is the severity of the Mosaic Law! According to the

Mosaic Law, the United States of America is literally full of sinners and adulterers from one end to the other who should be put to death!

Sandwiched in between His comments on adultery, Jesus said something else which must have been equally as hard for His followers to understand. Consider the following:

"And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."  
Matthew 5:29-30, KJV

If we were all to be judged by the Mosaic Law, if we were all to keep the Mosaic Law, there would be a lot of people walking around with only one eye or one hand. Those today who erroneously insist that we must keep the Mosaic Law as a condition of Salvation might want to reconsider their views. We will be examining this more closely further on in this article. Later on in the Gospel of Matthew we find the incident where the young rich man approached Jesus to ask Him what he must do in order to inherit Eternal Life. That sad event ended with Jesus pronouncing the following difficult saying:

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."  
Matthew 19:23-26, KJV

For the sake of clarification, it is my understanding that this reference to the "eye of a needle" may not be referring to the actual eye of a sewing needle. As Easton's Bible Dictionary points out, Jesus may actually have been referring to the small side entrance which was located close to the principal gate located on the east side of the Temple compound. This primary gate, referred to as the East Gate, is mentioned throughout the Old Testament. Its importance is revealed in the following verse from the Book of Numbers:

"But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, even before the tabernacle of the congregation eastward, shall be Moses, and Aaron and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death."  
Numbers 3:38, KJV

Within modern Jewish Orthodoxy, there is the belief that when their "messiah", Moshiach ben David, arrives, he will enter the newly-built Temple through this East Gate. Because of its narrowness, this small entrance near the East Gate was referred to as the "eye of a needle" in the East. Thus,

some believe that what Jesus was really saying is that just as it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a fully-laden camel to squeeze through this narrow opening without a lot of pushing and prodding by its master, so too, those who were not willing to forsake their worldly wealth would not be able to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Those listening to Jesus were fully aware of the difficulty of passing through this entrance; and this is why we are told that they were "exceedingly amazed".

Another primary example of the hard sayings of Jesus can be found in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. We are told that this one was so difficult that, upon hearing it, many of His Disciples left Him:

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you . . . Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

John 6:60-66, KJV

As can be seen, the Lord's Disciples, followers, the common people, and even the Scribes and the Pharisees weren't just a little perplexed; they were very troubled by some of the Master's teachings. For the young Christian, examples such as the above will probably present a real challenge to their understanding. On one hand we are lead to believe that Jesus came to offer Salvation to all men, as well as to prepare men who would later follow in His footsteps by preaching the Gospel of Salvation to all the world; yet by the above examples, Jesus appears to be saying that Salvation is next to impossible to obtain; and He appears to be purposely driving away potential disciples who may have wanted to follow Him. So the question is: Exactly what was Jesus' goal by stating all of these hard sayings? Was He trying to exclude people from entering the Kingdom of God? Heaven forbid!

It is my view that some Christians today have simply misunderstood the true intent, spirit or meaning behind some of Jesus' words. Sometimes this happens because they don't possess sufficient knowledge of the Scriptures. Other times it occurs because their judgment has been clouded by erroneous teachings they have learned from others; whether it be from a radio or television preacher, or perhaps from a priest, pastor, minister, or teacher in a local church or organization. One of the primary lessons I have strived to teach in my many articles is that we must all go directly to the Word of God ourselves and read, read, read, instead of just depending upon others for our spiritual nourishment. If

you truly and sincerely ask the Lord to help you to understand His Word, I am absolutely certain that He will not disappoint you. As Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8, KJV

The Apostle Peter also gave us some sound advice when he wrote the following in his first Epistle:

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

1 Peter 2:2, KJV

However, before one even does that, he must make sure that he has accepted the Lord's Salvation, and that he has received the anointing of God's Holy Spirit; both of which are free gifts for the asking. If you do not understand this, then I encourage you to read more of my articles on the topics of Salvation and the Holy Ghost. Once you have accepted the Lord into your life, and have been baptized by His Spirit, He will begin speaking to you clearly through His Word; and the more you read it and become familiar with it, the more He will be able to show you the connecting links between various passages. It is truly a wonderful experience.

I am very hesitant to talk about this too much as I feel some people might take it the wrong way and get the mistaken impression that I am elevating myself; however, the truth of the matter is that sometimes hearing from the Lord is like a water spigot which you simply cannot turn off. Such is the case with this current article. It actually evolved from another article I was updating the night before. As some of you know, sometimes I tend to go off on tangents in my articles. It is similar to driving down the main highway on your way to a certain destination. Now and then, you might turn off of the main road or highway and go down a side road, perhaps to buy a snack, or to stop and buy more gasoline. In my case, I begin writing about one thing which may then lead into a completely different subject. If I really become sidetracked, I will often cut that particular section out of an article and make it a brand new article.

In this particular case, when I went to bed early this morning, apparently my mind was still dwelling on this topic; because when I woke up about four hours later, the Lord, or His Spirit, or helper, or whoever it was, was still feeding verses and ideas to me. Even though I knew what was happening, I was so tired that I decided to try to sleep a few more hours. After about two hours I finally had to get up and go to my computer to enter it all in before I forgot everything the Lord had given me. I was literally laying there saying to the Lord, "Lord, help me not to forget that verse. Lord help me to remember the connection you showed me between those two Scriptures." It got to the point that it was so much information that I had no choice but to do something about it. Well, this may sound crazy to some of you, but that is just the way it works; and it has happened

to me on a number of occasions. It isn't an audible voice; it is just a still small voice deep inside of me. I am reminded of the following verses from the First Book of the Kings:

"And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?"  
1 Kings 19:9-13, KJV

While none of us should seek to elevate ourselves to the status of a Prophet, this does not mean that we should refuse to listen to the Lord when He tries to speak to us; or refuse to share what He gives us with others if it might edify their spirits and be a blessing in their lives. As the Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Hebrews:

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."  
Hebrews 3:12-13, KJV

Perhaps if more people did take the time to hear from the Lord, the world would not be in such a sad shape as it is today. The key problem is that most people simply do not want to accept the Lord, much less hear from Him. Jesus clearly exposed one of the main reasons for this unhealthy attitude when He said of the Scribes and Pharisees:

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."  
John 15:22, KJV

Those who rebel against the Lord and against His will for their lives simply do not want to have their sins of rebellion and unbelief exposed. They are quite comfortable living their lives of sin exactly as they are, and they do not want anything or anyone shaking up their little dream world of plastic peace.

Returning to our main topic, being as I have already discussed the theme of Discipleship in a number of other articles, let me just say that the Lord knew exactly what He was doing when He shared such difficult teachings. He knew that those who would follow Him fulltime would have a long hard road ahead of them. For most of them, it would end in



martyrdom. Being as He knew that He had but a few short years to accomplish His mission on Earth, Jesus was very careful to only choose men whom He was sure would be able to carry on the job once He had returned to His Father; after all, the Salvation of the world was at stake; not only the Salvation of the world of those days, but the Salvation of everyone who has ever lived since then. Thus, the Lord had to select men who were full of faith and a spirit of perseverance. Those He deemed unfit for the job, He simply cast aside, even if they personally felt that they were up to the task. Jesus wanted everyone to count the cost; thus He purposely made the way of Discipleship difficult. Consider what the Lord said in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke:

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14:27-33, KJV

Concerning the issue of Salvation, in order to fully understand the true spirit behind some of Jesus' difficult sayings, I would like to discuss a topic which at first may not even appear to be related to this theme. Within the New Testament, there are a number of events which are of much more importance than most people tend to realize. Perhaps one of the most profound of these events concerns that of the Mount of Transfiguration. Most of us are familiar with how Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus and His three primary Disciples, Peter, James and John, on top of the mountain. One account of this event is found in the Gospel of Mark:

"And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."

Mark 9:2-10, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

wordweaver777@gmail.com  
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

THE ROYAL LAW : THOU SHALT LOVE! : PART 2

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The Mosaic Law, The Death Of Stephen And Jesus, Cities Of Refuge, Jesus' Hard Sayings, Our Sinful Condition, The East Gate And Eye Of A Needle, Spiritual Nourishment And Hearing From God, The Price Of Discipleship, Jesus' Transfiguration

It is very significant that the Lord chose Moses and Elijah for this particular event. If you are familiar with their Earthly ministries, then you will realize that collectively, they represented the Law and the Prophets. This term "the Law and the Prophets" holds a lot of importance within Judaism, as well as within our Christian heritage. In fact, Jesus used it several times in His teachings. Consider the following instances in which it is used in the New Testament:

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."  
Matthew 7:12, KJV

In other words, Jesus is basically saying, you reap what you sow. If you want people to treat you with love and respect, then you must do the same with them. This is what the message of Moses and the Prophets was all about. Here is another one:

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 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. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."  
Matthew 22:36-40, KJV

Here Jesus makes the message even clearer. He is saying, "Look, instead of trying to remember every little aspect of the Mosaic Law, all you have to do is to remember this: It is all summed up in a few simple words; love the Lord, and love your neighbor." By doing this, you will be sure to fulfill everything taught by Moses and the Prophets. After

all, if you really love someone, you are not going to steal from them, or take their wife, or kill them, etc. Here is another interesting verse:

"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, KJV

That is a very interesting verse because it shows a definite time division, and a change of events which some people still fail to understand. We will look into this more fully in a moment. Another verse from the Gospel of Luke is the following:

"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."

Luke 24:44, KJV

Chronologically speaking, this verse occurred after Jesus' Death and Resurrection. Do you understand the full meaning of what Jesus is saying here to His Disciples? Not only is He saying that everything He accomplished was prophesied in the Law of Moses, in the writings of the Prophets, and in the Psalms of David; but He is also saying that with His Crucifixion and Resurrection, they have now been fulfilled. With His Blood Sacrifice, Jesus has met and satisfied the requirements of the Law. He has brought an end to our dependence on it for our Salvation. Following is another verse which clearly shows that Israel was ripe for her Saviour. Everyone was fully expecting the arrival of the Messiah, exactly as they had read in the Law of Moses, and in the writings of the Prophets:

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

John 1:45, KJV

In the following verse, we see the importance that the rulers of the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia placed upon the Law and the Prophets. This was in Asia Minor, what is today a part of the nation of Turkey:

"And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

Acts 13:15, KJV

If you read the above chapter in its entirety, you will see that Paul and Barnabas took advantage of this opportunity and delivered a powerful message to the Jews and the Gentiles who had come to hear them preach. Paul concluded his discourse with the following words which confirm exactly what Jesus said to His Disciples following His Resurrection; and that is that we cannot be justified by the Law, but only by the Sacrifice of Love of Jesus Christ:

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that

through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts 13:38-41, KJV

While the Gentiles gladly received the words of Paul and Barnabas, the Jews soon became jealous of the crowds they were drawing to themselves. In fact, we are told that the very next Sabbath, almost the entire city went to hear them preach, so that the envious Jews began to stir up trouble against Paul and Barnabas:

"And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." Acts 13:44-45, KJV

It was at that point that Paul issued his famous statement which you can also see in the excellent cinematographic work, "Peter and Paul":

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:46, KJV

Following Jesus' own wise counsel, once the Jews had stirred up persecution against them so that they threw Paul and Barnabas out of the entire area, these brave missionaries simply shook the dust off of their feet and continued on to Iconium which today is modern Konieh, located at the foot of Mount Taurus, about one hundred and twenty miles from the Mediterranean coast:

"But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium." Acts 13:51, KJV

Turning to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, we find the final verse where the Law and the Prophets are mentioned together. As in the Book of Acts, Paul clearly states that both the Law of Moses, and the writings of the Prophets prophesied the coming of Jesus Christ, whose Sacrifice would manifest the righteousness which comes by faith alone, and not by the works of the Law:

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;" Romans 3:21, KJV

Thus we see that both the writings of Moses, as well as the writings of the Old Testament Prophets spoke of the coming of Jesus Christ, who would not only fulfill everything they had written about Him, but who would also abolish our dependence upon the Law for our Salvation; for as Jesus

Himself said:

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

This is precisely what Jesus did; He fulfilled or met the requirements of the Law to become the Perfect Sacrifice for sin, which is something which we cannot possibly ever do; for as the Apostle James wrote:

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."  
James 2:10, KJV

No matter how hard we try, we will never ever be able to keep the entire Mosaic Law. This is the main point that Jesus was trying to get across to the self-righteous religious rulers of His day. This is why He constantly threw the Law right back in their faces. No matter how many laws they thought they could keep, or try to force others to keep, they would continue to fall short of perfection; because they could not possibly keep them all, even if they had deceived the common people into believing that they did. This is why when they brought to Him the woman taken in adultery, Jesus' response was simply:

". . . He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."  
John 8:7b, KJV

Thus, just like the common people whom they self-righteously judged, they were guilty, guilty, guilty. The Apostle Paul expressed this fundamental point quite well when he wrote:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"  
Romans 3:23, KJV

It is for this very reason that the Apostle Paul also tells us that we are no longer to place our faith in the Law to save us, but rather in the Blood of Jesus Christ, because He did for us what we cannot do for ourselves; He met the full requirements of the Law:

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."  
Romans 7:4, KJV

In his first Epistle, Peter referred to Jesus as a lamb without blemish, showing the link with the sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament. Notice that Peter also clearly exposes the vanity of trying to save oneself by adhering to the Law and the Oral Tradition of the fathers. In the following verses, the word "conversation" is derived from the Greek word "anastrophe" and actually means one's way or manner of life, conduct or behaviour:

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But

with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."

1 Peter 1:18-21, KJV

If the Pharisees were not as righteous as everyone believed them to be, why then would Jesus say ". . . except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."? If they didn't stand a chance of gaining Eternal Life, then how could the common people possibly surpass them in righteousness? As I have already shown, Jesus was using a bit of rhetoric here. He knew that this was an unobtainable goal. He knew that He was placing a stumbling block in front of them; but it was for the very specific purpose of forcing them to realize that there must be another way, a way which was impossible for mortal men. This is why when His Disciples asked Him with extreme amazement "Who then can be saved?", Jesus straightforwardly answered "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

Do you understand what the Lord meant by this? It is really quite simple. He was basically saying, "You cannot save yourself. It is impossible. If you really think that you can save yourself by your own self-righteous works of keeping the Law, you might as well forget it, because it simply will not work. You and I both know that you cannot possibly keep every single aspect of the Mosaic Law. As such, you are guilty of death." In fact, when Jesus lambasted the Scribes and the Pharisees, He said something very profound which is directly related to another verse I will share in a moment. Here is what the Lord said:

"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

John 8:21-24, KJV

Do you realize how serious that is? Do you realize how serious it is for a person to die in their sins because of their pride in rejecting Jesus Christ, or because they thought they could save themselves through the works of the Law? If your sins are not covered by the Blood of Jesus when you die, you will die in your sins; and what did the Apostle Paul say regarding this?:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 6:23, KJV

Notice exactly what Paul is talking about here. He is not just referring to our Earthly death; that is, the decay of our mortal bodies; he is talking about something much more important. He is making a contrast between Eternal Death and

Eternal Life. He is talking about the Second Death from which there is absolutely no return! That is it! Your body and your spirit are destroyed for Eternity! Consider what John wrote in the Book of Revelation:

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Revelation 2:11, KJV

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years . . . 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 20:6, 14-15, KJV

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Revelation 21:8, KJV

That is how serious it is to reject Jesus Christ, or to think that you can save yourself by keeping the Mosaic Law. You only get one chance; but you have your whole life to do it; for as the Apostle Paul also wrote in his Epistle to the Hebrews:

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

Hebrews 9:27, KJV

The next question might then be, "Well, exactly what is meant by sin?" The Apostle John spelled it out for us quite clearly in his first Epistle when he wrote:

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

1 John 3:4, KJV

Simply put, when you break the Mosaic Law in any way, no matter how small, you are sinning. The Mosaic Law is the standard which makes us aware of our sinful condition. Because of its severity, the Mosaic Law also shows us that, unless we place our faith in the Blood of Jesus Christ, we are without hope of Salvation. We are lost. We are doomed to die eternally. As the Apostle Paul wrote, the Mosaic Law served as a schoolmaster to bring us to the Salvation which is found in Jesus Christ. Once we have come to Christ, there is no longer any need to rely upon the Law for our Salvation because it could never save us to begin with:

"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."

Galatians 3:24-25, KJV

Paul couldn't have said it any clearer than that. Once you come to Jesus, you are no longer under the Mosaic Law.

Despite this fact, we still have Christians today who are trying to mix faith with works; and it just won't work. So again, through His many hard sayings concerning the Law, Jesus was trying to show everyone that they must not look to themselves or to their ability to fulfill the Law for their Salvation in any way, because it cannot save them. They must find another way. Of course, that was the Plan all along, which is why Jesus later said:

". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."  
John 14:6b, KJV

The Lord wanted everyone to know that the only way they could ever exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees was by accepting the righteousness which He freely offers through His Death on the Cross. That is the only righteousness there is. Being the sinners that we are, we must depend solely upon the grace of God by placing our faith in the Sacrifice of His Son. This is the only way we will ever achieve any form of righteousness. Only by believing in Jesus Christ will we ever obtain Salvation. This is precisely what John the Baptist meant when he said at the beginning of the Gospel of John:

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."  
John 1:17, KJV

As I explain in the three-part series "Elijah: Where are the True Prophets?", the whole purpose of John the Baptist's ministry was to hammer away at people's pride by using the Mosaic Law as a tool to show them how sinful they really were. John knew that none of them could keep the Law anymore than he could himself, but that wasn't the purpose of his ministry. It was to soften their hardened hearts so that they would be in a state of humility and repentance, and in a receptive mood to accept the One who really could save them from their sins; and that was the man Jesus Christ.

As we have already seen, fulfilling the Law basically comes down to three key words, "Thou shalt love"; and this is something which is severely lacking in the world today, just as it was lacking two thousand years ago when the words were first spoken. While some people may not realize it, mercy is a form of love; and if there was one thing in which the Scribes and the Pharisees were lacking, it was in mercy. This is why Jesus accused them of using the Mosaic Law to lay burdens upon men which were grievous to be borne:

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."  
Matthew 23:1-4, KJV

As a former Pharisee himself, the Apostle Paul fully understand the challenge Jesus faced in dealing with these legalistic vipers. The Scribes and the Pharisees were so



caught up in enforcing the tiniest aspect, or letter, of the Mosaic Law, that they completely overlooked the true spirit and intention of the commandments first given to Moses; and that was to teach people to love God, and to love and respect their neighbor. The Mosaic Law was meant to serve as a framework for decent behavior, and was never meant to become a snare as it did in later years when men began to measure their goodness by how well they adhered to it.

Instead of being content in their hearts with knowing that they were pleasing the Lord, the Scribes and the Pharisees fell into the dangerous practice of comparing themselves with others. Likewise, they began to boast of their supposed goodness and holiness, and of their self-righteous works, such as circumcision, in order to receive the praise of men. It is for this reason that the Apostel Paul wrote the following stinging rebukes concerning those who fall into such practices:

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."  
Romans 2:28-29, KJV

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."  
2 Corinthians 10:12, KJV

Jesus likewise had some stern words to offer to the robed hypocrites who continually sought the praise of the common people as in the following examples:

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."  
Matthew 6:1-6, KJV

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."  
Matthew 6:16-18, KJV

"But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."  
Matthew 23:5-7, KJV

"Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;"  
Luke 20:46, KJV

The Apostle John also commented on the hypocrisy of the chief rulers, and exposed their sin of being more interested in pleasing the Scribes and the Pharisees than in pleasing God. What is truly sad is that all of these verses can be equally applied to some religious leaders today, as well as to some political leaders who bow to their pressure in order to win the votes of their congregations:

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."  
John 12:42-43, KJV

By the time Jesus arrived in the First Century, the Mosaic Law and Oral Tradition had become so exalted, and had become such a weapon of bondage in the hands of the Scribes and Pharisees, that Jesus had no choice but to expose their legalism and their lack of love and mercy as in the following incident where they self-righteously pointed the finger at Him for keeping company with sinners:

"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."  
Matthew 9:10-13, KJV

In another incident, Jesus clearly told them that their perspective concerning the Law had become totally reversed from the way the Lord had originally intended for it to be understood when it was first given to Moses. Rather than serving as a guide or schoolmaster for good behavior as mentioned by Paul, the Scribes and Pharisees had converted it into a driving slave master for the common people who knew no better than to follow their spiritual elders:

"And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days

of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:"  
Mark 2:23-27, KJV

Notice Jesus' final words in the previous verses. Even today there are those who would have us compromise our faith in Jesus Christ alone, by telling us that we still need to observe certain parts of the Mosaic Law in order to "supplement" our Salvation. As if the Blood of Jesus Christ is not enough to keep us saved! Lord help them! Unlike the Scribes and Pharisees of yesteryear and the self-righteous religionists of today who continue to strive to keep people under bondage by heaving upon them the burdens of the Mosaic Law, Jesus offered to lift our burdens, and to place them upon His own shoulders. This He gladly did when He bore our sins on the Cross. The only burden He left for us to bear is to believe in the Atonement which He freely offers to all men:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."  
Matthew 11:28-30, KJV

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."  
1 Peter 2:24, KJV

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

wordweaver777@gmail.com  
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

THE ROYAL LAW : THOU SHALT LOVE! : PART 3

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Jesus Paid Full Price For Our Salvation, It's Either Grace Or Works, The Law Of Love, Jesus' Sacrifice Of Love, Peace With God Through Christ, Love And Fear, Divine Love, Invitation

In his first Epistle to the Church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul clearly tells us that Jesus Christ has already paid the complete Price for our Salvation:

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in

your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."  
1 Corinthians 6:20, KJV

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."  
1 Corinthians 7:23, KJV

Being as this is the case, why then do certain Christians today continue to insist that we need to give the Lord a little help by continuing to adhere to the Mosaic Law? As the Apostle Paul clearly wrote, you cannot mix grace and works. It is either one or the other:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."  
Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"  
Titus 3:5, KJV

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."  
Romans 11:6, KJV

Trying to continue to keep different aspects of the Mosaic Law, whether it be honouring special Jewish feast days, or keeping the Sabbath, is simply a religion of works, and not one of grace and faith. As we have already seen, once you begin to attempt to fulfill the Mosaic Law, you must either keep all of it, or else none of it; otherwise it is a complete waste of time. Instead of becoming bogged down in the letter of the Law, these people need to remember the Spirit of the Law; and that is "Thou shalt love". Exactly as Jesus had taught, the Apostles James and Paul also repeatedly stressed that love was the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law:

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."  
Romans 13:8-10, KJV

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."  
Galatians 5:14, KJV

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:"  
James 2:8, KJV

Notice that James even goes so far as to refer to it as the Royal Law. In other words, it is the Supreme Law of the land! It is the Law of Love of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! If you keep just that one law, the Law of Love, then

you are keeping all of the others, because as Jesus said, they are all derived from it, they hang on it, they are dependent upon it.

Unfortunately, that is precisely the problem. In our modern day, we don't even know how to love each other properly. In many cases, what some people call love today, comes with all kinds of attachments or pre-conditions. It is not an unselfish love such as what Jesus taught. Just as the Lord said that His Disciples would be known for their fervent love for each other, He also said that the Endtime would be marked by a severe decline in man's love for his fellow man. Note the sharp contrast between the following two verses. They clearly show who will be in charge of the world prior to the Lord's return. It certainly won't be the Disciples of Jesus Christ:

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."  
John 13:35, KJV

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."  
Matthew 24:12, KJV

In other words, because iniquity, or sin, will fill the world in the Last Days, true unselfish spiritual love will diminish. This is the kind of love Jesus demonstrated when He died on the Cross. Not only did Jesus fulfill the Mosaic Law by living a sinless life, but He also fulfilled it by offering Himself as the Perfect Sacrifice of Love, thus fulfilling all of the Law and the Prophets, because love is the fulfillment of the Law. Consider some of the things He said to His own Disciples prior to His Death on the Cross:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep . . . As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."  
John 10:11, 15-18, KJV

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."  
John 15:13, KJV

If there was one person who fully understood the Sacrifice of Love made by Jesus Christ, and the pre-eminence of Love over the Law, surely it was the Apostle John. Throughout his writings he emphasized this point over and over again:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."  
John 3:16, KJV

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down

his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

1 John 3:16, KJV

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

1 John 4:8-10, KJV.

The Apostle Paul shared this same Message of Love in his Epistle to the Romans when he wrote:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:6-8, KJV

Because of the mercy and the grace which he personally experienced, despite his own sins of having persecuted the Church prior to his conversion to the Christian faith, Paul was absolutely convinced of the Love of God. Aside from being noted for his excellent treatises on faith versus the Law, Paul is also known for having written the following verses in his same letter to the Church at Rome:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38-39, KJV

This brings us to the final topic I wish to cover in this article. Those who do not know God's love, or who have not accepted God's love through the Sacrifice of His Son, will never experience the peace which He offers. As Jesus said:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

John 14:27, KJV

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33, KJV

Notice that in both of these verses, Jesus is saying that the only way to obtain this true peace is by having faith in Him alone. It is only when one realizes that he cannot save himself through any vain attempts of his own, and when he finally surrenders his will and accepts the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that he can achieve peace between himself and God the Father; for God will not be satisfied with anything less than this. Until such an one arrives at this point, he will continue to experience turmoil and spiritual unrest in his life. This thought is further confirmed by additional

Scriptures found in the Epistles. Consider the following:

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

Romans 5:1, KJV

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Ephesians 2:13-18, KJV

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:7, KJV

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:"

Colossians 1:19-22, KJV

Not only do those who resist the Sacrifice of Love of Jesus Christ experience turmoil and spiritual unrest in their lives, but they may also live their lives in constant fear. If they knew and accepted the Lord as they should, then they would realize that everything is going to be alright because God is certainly one who knows how to take care of His children. Jesus stressed this point over and over again in the Gospels. One verse I have often quoted which demonstrates this point is the following taken from Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It is an excellent verse for building one's faith in the Lord, and for solacing those who are in need of comfort during times of trial or great testing:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:28, KJV

On the other hand, if one has not accepted God's Gift of Love in his life, not only does he live in fear, but he may also live in torment, for as the Apostle John wrote:

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

1 John 4:18, KJV

Aside from a fear of failure in life, which many people are prone to suffer, particularly those in the industrialized

nations of the West, perhaps one of the biggest fears in the world is the fear of death. Some people live their whole lives in fear and torment wondering how they are going to die, when they are going to die, where they are going to die, and what will happen to them after they die. Not only that, but when people do not live a life of love, they are constantly in fear of what others might do to them because of the unloving things they have done to them. This is particularly true of those who become involved in a life of crime. All of this could easily be avoided if they would just stop and accept God's Gift of Love into their lives, and allow the Lord to turn their lives around. Sadly, in their own pride and arrogance, many simply refuse to do this.

To conclude this series then, as Jesus, Paul, John, and James have all said, the greatest commandment, the greatest law, the Royal Law, is simply "Thou shalt love". As James wrote, if we do this, surely we will do well. However, we cannot do this of our own accord. To love as we should requires a special kind of love; it requires a Divine Love. The only way to acquire this kind of Love, is by accepting the Gift of Love which God offers through His Son Jesus Christ. If you haven't yet accepted the Lord, I hope you will do it today. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus:

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."  
Ephesians 3:14-19, KJV

Remember, you can't do it on your own; only Jesus can. Won't you accept Him today? I pray that this series has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life.

Written by the WordWeaver

wordweaver777@gmail.com  
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>