



**How the New Testament  
Reveals God's Law  
To Us**

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## How the New Testament Reveals God's Law to Us

In 1 John 3:4 we are told that "sin is the transgression of the law." But how can one transgress the law of Christ? There are two very different ideas in the religious world about how this can be done. This difference is the direct cause of much of the religious division that we see today and has been the cause of division for many years.

The first time in history that I have found this difference mentioned is about 450 years ago during what is usually referred to as the Reformation. Two of the leaders of this movement held very different views about what the law of Christ authorizes. Martin Luther said that one can do anything that God has not forbidden in the Bible. Ulrich Zwingli said that one can do only the things that God instructs us to do. These two views have been held by many people down to our present day. It is obvious that these two views of how God instructs people are incompatible. Where they both exist there must be division. Both cannot be right. But which view is right? Is either right?

### Can We Do All God Does Not Forbid?

If the view that God allows people to do anything that the Bible does not forbid is right there is no wonder that division exists. Division would exist between the people who

believe this idea as well as between them and those who hold the other view. This idea would allow people to do what they want to do in many areas. Of course God has specifically forbidden a number of things, but there are many others that He does not mention. The things He forbids must certainly be left out of the lives of those who would obey God. But there are many things that God has not specifically forbidden. May we do one or all of these things and still be pleasing to God? Where is the Scripture that specifically forbids the use of mechanical instruments of music in our worship of God? And where is the Scripture that says that we must not whistle or hum in our worship? Where are we forbidden to burn candles, offer animal sacrifices, or even "dance to the glory of God"? Where are we told not to use cake and ice cream or ham and eggs on the Lord's table? This list would never end. We can clearly see that this is obviously the wrong way to determine what is sin.

### **Silence of the Scriptures Must Be Respected**

The silence of the Scriptures must be respected. Note the following passages of Scripture. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10.) Here

we are told that all of us must "speak the same thing." This we cannot do if we each preach and do anything just because God does not forbid it. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4: 11.) If each of us speaks "as the oracles of God" we will "all speak the same thing." "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the law." (Deut. 29:29.) We must remember that there are some "secret things" that God has not revealed, but He has "given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness." (2 Pet. 1:3.) If we make decisions on secret things ourselves and then try to bind them on other people divisions will inevitably result.

Ezekiel had a message from God for the false prophets. "They have seen vanity and lying divinations, saying, The Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, I am against you, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 13:6-8.) These false prophets would say, "the Lord saith it." But God said, "I have not spoken."

They had "spoken vanity, and seen lies." Paul, by the inspiration of God, said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Tim. 4:2.) If all who preach would "preach the word" and that only we would not have divisions. We must realize that God has told us what He wants us to know and respect His silence. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:19, 20.) Jesus' followers are to teach "whatsoever I have commanded you," not "what I have not commanded you."

### **We Must Preach Jesus Christ, Crucified**

It was Paul who stated, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2.) Paul preached Christ wherever he went. He did not preach about the political and social injustices, nor the evils of slavery, but he preached Christ. I am sure he preached about Jesus' work while on earth, and the things Jesus did as a man. But that was not the real burden of his message. He preached "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." It was the crucified and risen Lord and His gospel that filled Paul's messages. He was not

preaching "the man and not the plan" as we sometimes hear people advising. Paul knew that the man and the plan had to be preached together. God's purpose in sending His Son to earth was to give the plan of redemption to all men through Him. We often worry about the young people of today losing their faith and wonder why this is happening. But if we look around and see how "Jesus Christ and him crucified" is being replaced in the pulpit by the "social gospel" we may well wonder why they have as much faith as they do have.

### **There Is One Gospel for All To Preach**

Paul further says, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any Man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:6-9.)

### **We Must Continue in All God's Commands**

If we are to please God and not transgress God's law we must continue in all that God has told us. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them."

(Deut. 27:26.) This statement was made concerning the law of Moses, but is also true of the law of Christ. In the New Testament we are told, "Whosoever transgresseth [goeth onward - A.S.V.], and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

In writing to Timothy Paul said, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16.) It is fine to start right in our service to God, but it is not enough to merely start right - we must continue in this course. By so doing we will save both ourselves and them that hear us. We are not to continue in the man-made creeds, nor in the traditions and customs of men, nor in those things that we like, but in what God has revealed to us in the Bible.

### Conclusion

Of the two views of what constitutes the authority of the Scriptures we are forced to conclude that the correct view is that we can do only the things that God instructs us to do. To do otherwise would be to go beyond what is written.

## THREE WAYS THE BIBLE TEACHES

All people who say that they are Christians agree that the Bible teaches us things concerning what to do and how to live in order to please God. But there is division as to how the Bible teaches. In this section of this tract I want to show three ways by which the Bible teaches.

### Expressed Statements

First of all and the easiest to understand is by expressed statements. The most direct of the expressed statements is the commands. Many examples could be cited but I will refer to only a few. In 1 Corinthians 16: 1, 2, we find this plain command: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." In verse one the writer says, "I have given order to the churches of Galatia." Then follows the command for the Corinthian Christians to give and when the giving is to be done.

In Ephesians 5:18, 19, we find other commands. "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making mel-

ody in your heart to the Lord." In verse 18 Christians are commanded to "be filled with the Spirit." This passage does not tell how we can fill ourselves with the Spirit. But a companion passage in Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." This is the way this command can be obeyed. We can be "filled with the Spirit" by filling ourselves with the Word of Christ - the New Testament Scriptures. Both of these companion passages contain the command to sing. It is hard to see how anyone could fail to understand this plain command to sing. It does not say to play on a mechanical musical instrument. The instrument with which we are to "make melody" is the heart. (Eph. 5:19.) This is the only way we can obey the plain command to sing.

Still another plain command is found in Acts 2:38. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." How can anyone fail to understand this plain command to repent and be baptized? Yet there are many people who do not believe and obey it.

Another kind of expressed statement is entreaty or beseeching. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what

is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1, 2.) "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10.) These two passages well illustrate the tender appeal used by God to make known His will.

Still another kind of expressed statement is exhortation. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." (1 Pet. 5:1-3.) "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." (1 Tim. 2:1.)

Then finally some expressed statements of God in His Word are merely statements of God's desire. "For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (1 Pet. 2:15.)

All four of these types of expressed statements are found in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-3. In verse 1 we read, "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the

Lord Jesus. . . ." Here we have two of the above mentioned kinds of expressed statements used. Then in verse 2 another of them - commands - is used. In verse 3 we read, "For this is the will of God. . . ." This is the fourth kind of expressed statements that God uses in teaching His law through the New Testament Scriptures.

How could anyone think that God's entreaties, exhortations, and mere statements of His will are any less binding on us than His commands? All of these show us what God wants. If we really want to please Him and do His will we will seek out and do all of God's laws - not merely what He commands.

#### Approved Examples

In addition to the expressed statements in God's law there are God-approved examples. It is not enough to find mere examples: there are many references to people who did something that could be taken as an example but are bad examples. There is Judas who for thirty pieces of silver betrayed his Lord and then went out and hanged himself. (Matt. 27:5.) Then there is the example of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to God about their gift and fell down dead before Peter. (Acts 5:1-11.) There is also Peter's bad example at Antioch. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gen-

tiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision." (Gal. 2:11, 12.) No one would contend that any of these are examples for us to follow.

For an example to be a revelation of God's will for us it must be a divinely approved example. Jesus' entire life is an approved example for us except that He lived under the law of Moses and we live under the law of Christ. Things that Jesus did in obedience to the law of Moses, such as eating the Passover feast, are not included in His law, under which we live today. But we are told, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Pet. 2:21.) Then the apostle Paul says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1.)

Now notice some passages of Scripture where the New Testament gives us divinely approved examples. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." (Acts 20:7.) In the following verses we read that Eutychus went to sleep and fell out of the window where he was sitting "and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. . . . And they brought

the young man alive, and were not a little comforted." (Acts 20:9, 10, 12.) The example here is that "upon the first day of the week" the disciples came together to break bread. This is the only place in the Bible where we are told when to partake of the Lord's Supper. This is an example, a divinely approved example. The context shows that it was the custom of the disciples to eat the Lord's Supper "upon the first day of the week." Paul, who was there preaching, evidently approved of it. He was an apostle and showed that God was with him by raising Eutychus from the dead. This is, then, a divinely approved example. We must follow it as carefully as we do the expressed statements discussed earlier in this article. If not, why not?

Another instance of an approved example is concerning the bread which we must use in the Lord's Supper. In Exodus 12:3-20 God instructed Israel about the Passover feast they were required to observe each year. One of the requirements of this feast was that no leaven of any kind was allowed in the houses of Israel during this feast. It was this Passover feast that Jesus and the apostles ate just before Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. In Matthew 26:17, 26-29, we have a record of this event. In verse 26 we are told that "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and break it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." Since

they were not allowed to have any leaven in their houses, we know positively that Jesus used unleavened bread. This, then, is a divinely approved example of the kind of bread we must use in the Lord's Supper.

### Necessary Inference

Then there is a third way by which God reveals His law to mankind. This is by necessary inference. An inference is something not specifically mentioned in the context but from what is said it can logically follow. A necessary inference is something that not only can logically follow but it must follow. People have been led astray by failing to recognize this truth.

In Acts chapter eight and beginning with verse 26 we have the account of Philip converting the eunuch. This passage is sometimes used to try to justify sprinkling for baptism. The Bible says in Acts 8:26 that Philip was told to "go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert." Since the statement, "which is desert," is used here, some people infer that there was not enough water there to immerse the eunuch. This is an inference but not a necessary inference. In fact, we know that it is not true for in verse 36 we are told plainly that "they came to a certain water." That it was enough water in which to immerse we are told in verse 38, "And they went down both into the water,



both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." In verse 39 we are told that they came "up out of the water."

Another unnecessary inference is often made about the conversions of Lydia and of the jailor. In Acts 16:15 we are told that Lydia "was baptized, and her household." In verses 29-34 we are told that the jailor and "all his house" were baptized. From these statements some people argue that this teaches infant baptism, for a household could include infants. This is an unnecessary inference for there are many households that have no infants. In neither of these conversions are any infants mentioned. Lydia was a business woman away from home. (v. 14.) We are not told that she was even married. It is foolish to infer that she had infants. In the record of the jailor's conversion we can see clearly that there were no infants. In verse 32 we find, "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." In verse 34 we see that the jailor "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Those in his house were old enough to hear, believe, and be baptized. Infants could do none of these things. It is clear, then, that these conversions do not prove infant baptism. We must be very careful not to infer anything unless it is necessarily implied.

But what are some necessary inferences in the Bible? In Matthew 3:16 we are told

that "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water." If He went up out of the water He must have gone down into it. This is a necessary inference. In Hebrews 10:25 we are told, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." If we are to assemble we must of necessity have a place to assemble. We necessarily infer that such a place must be provided. What kind of a place must we have? In John 4:20-24 Jesus indicates that the place of assembling is immaterial. The important thing is how we worship when we assemble.

### Conclusion

From this discussion we see that God's law in the New Testament is made known to us (1) by expressed statements; (2) by approved examples; and (3) by necessary inferences. I know of no other way that God has given His law to us. However He does reveal His law to us in these three ways. To deny this is to disregard a part of His law. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Rev. 22:18, 19.)

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