

# The Law and the Saint 1. Introduction

by A.W. Pink

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*A.W. Pink's sermon explores the relationship between the Law and grace, emphasizing the importance of understanding and obeying God's moral Law in the life of a believer.*

**Scripture:** Romans 8:7, Ephesians 5:22

**Topics:** "Law And Grace", "Moral Decay"

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## Description

A.W. Pink discusses the dual nature of unregenerate sinners, who embody both Phariseeism and Antinomianism, leading to a pervasive lawlessness in society and the church. He emphasizes that the disregard for Divine Law stems from a lack of fear of God, which has resulted in moral decay across various aspects of life. Pink argues that the Law of God is eternal and binding on all, serving as a moral standard that reflects God's character, while grace does not abolish the Law but fulfills its requirements through Christ. He warns against the contemporary teaching that separates Law from Grace, asserting that both are integral to understanding God's plan for humanity. Ultimately, Pink calls for a recognition of the Law's importance in the life of believers, as it guides them in living righteously under the grace provided by Christ.

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## Transcript

### THE LAW AND THE SAINT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

It has been said that every unregenerate sinner has the heart of a Pharisee. This is true; and it is equally true that every unregenerate sinner has the heart of an Antinomian. This is the character which is expressly given to the carnal mind: it is "enmity against God"; and the proof of this is, that "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Should we be surprised, then, if we find the underlying principles of Phariseeism and Antinomianism uniting in the same mind?

Surely not. There is no more real opposition between these apparently opposing principles, than there is between enmity and pride. Many a slothful servant has hated his master and his service, and yet had he pride and presumption enough to demand his wages. Phariseeism and Antinomianism unite, like Herod and Pilate did, against the Truth. The term Antinomian signifies one who is against the Law, hence, when we declare that ours is an age of lawlessness, it is only another way of saying that it is an age characterized by Antinomianism.

There is little need for us to pause and offer proof that this is an age of lawlessness. In every sphere of life the sad fact confronts us. In the well-nigh total absence of any real discipline in the majority of the churches, we see the principle exemplified. Not more than two generations ago, thousands, tens of thousands, of the loose-living members whose names are now retained on the membership rolls, would have been dis-fellowshipped. It is the same in the great majority of our homes.

With comparatively rare exceptions, wives are no longer in subjection to their husbands (Eph. 5:22,24); and as for obeying them (1 Pet. 3:1,2,5,6), why, the majority of women demand that such a hateful word be stricken from the marriage ceremony. So it is with the children--how could it be otherwise? Obedience to parents is almost entirely a thing of the past. And what of conditions in the world? The abounding marital unfaithfulness, Sunday trading, banditry, lynchings, strikes, and a dozen other things that might be mentioned, all bear witness to the frightful wave of lawlessness which is flowing over the country.

What, we may well inquire, is the cause of the lawlessness which now so widely obtains? For every effect there is a cause, and the character of the effect usually intimates the nature of the cause. We are assured that the present wide-spread contempt for human law is the inevitable outgrowth of disrespect for Divine Law. Where there is no fear of God, we must not expect there will be much fear of man. And why is it that there is so much disrespect for Divine Law? This, in turn, is but the effect of an antecedent cause.

Nor is this hard to find. Do not the utterances of Christian teachers during the last twenty-five years go far to explain the situation which now confronts us? History has repeated itself. Of old, God complained of Ephraim, "I have written to him the great things of My Law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hos. 8:12). Observe how God speaks of His Law: "The great things of My Law"! They are not precepts of little moment, but to be lightly esteemed, and slighted; but are of great authority, importance, and value.

But, as then, so during the last few years--they have been "counted as a strange thing". Christian teachers have vied with each other in denouncing the Law as a "yoke of bondage", "a grievous burden", "a remorseless enemy". They have declared in trumpet tones that Christians should regard the Law as "a strange thing": that it was never designed for them: that it was given to Israel, and then made an end of at the Cross of Christ. They have warned God's people to have nothing to do with the Ten Commandments.

They have denounced as "Legalists" Christians of the past, who, like Paul, "served the Law" (Rom. 7:25). They have affirmed that Grace rules the Law out of the Christian's life as absolutely as it did out of his salvation. They have held up to ridicule those who contended for a Christian Sabbath, and have classed them with Seventh-Day Adventists. Having sown the wind, is it any wonder that we are now reaping the whirlwind? The characters of the cause determinates the character of the effect.

Whatsoever a man soweth that (the same in kind) shall he also reap. Unto them who of old regarded the great things of God's Law as a strange thing, God declared, "Because Ephraim hath made many alters to sin, alters shall be unto him to sin" (Hosea 8:11). And because many of our Christian leaders have publicly repudiated Divine Law, God has visited us with a wave of lawlessness in our churches, homes, and social life. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked"! Nor have we any hope of stemming the onrushing tide, or of causing Christian leaders to change their position.

Having committed themselves publicly, the examples of past history warn us that pride will keep them from making the humbling confession that they have erred. But we have a hope that some who have been under the influence of twentieth century Antinomianism will have sufficient spiritual discernment to recognize the truth when it is presented to their notice; and it is for them we now write. In the January 1923

issue of a contemporary, appeared the second article from the pen of Dr.

McNichol, Principal of Toronto Bible School, under the caption of "Overcoming the Dispensations". The purpose of these articles is to warn God's children against the perils which lie "in the way of much of the positive premillennial teaching of the day". Quoting, Dr. McNicol says: 1. There is danger when the Law is set against Grace. No scheme of prophetic interpretation can be safe which is obliged to represent the dispensations of Law and Grace as opposing systems, each excluding the other and contrary to it.

If this were the case, it would mean that God had taken opposing and contradictory attitudes towards men in these two different ages. In the last analysis this representation of the relation of law and grace affects the character of God, as everything which perverts the Scriptures, disturbing thereby the mirror of His mind, ultimately does. So far from being opposing systems, law and grace as revealed in Scripture are parts of one harmonious and progressive plan. The present dispensation is spoken of as the age of grace, not because grace belongs to it exclusively, but because in it grace has been fully manifested.

When John declared that "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ", he was contrasting law and grace, not as two contrary and irreconcilable systems, but as two related parts of one system. The law was the shadow, Christ was the substance. The law was the pattern, Christ was the reality. The grace which had been behind the law came to light through Jesus Christ so that it could be realized. As a matter of fact, grace had been in operation from the beginning.

It began in Eden with the first promise of redemption immediately after the fall. All redemption is of grace; there can be no salvation without it, and even the law itself proceeds on the basis of grace. The law was given to Israel not that they might be redeemed, but because they had been redeemed. The nation had been brought out of Egypt by the power of God under the blood of the slain lamb, itself the symbol and token of His grace. The law was added at Sinai as the necessary standard of life for a ransomed people, a people who now belonged to the Lord.

It began with a declaration of their redemption; "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2). It rested on the basis of grace, and it embodied the principle that redemption implied a conformity to God's moral order. In other words, the very grace that redeemed Israel carried with it the necessity of revealing the law to Israel. The law was given that they might walk worthy of the relation in which they now stood to God, worthy of a salvation which was already theirs.

The covenant of the law did not supersede the covenant of promise, but set forth the kind of life which those who were redeemed by the covenant of promise were expected to live. The law was not a covenant of works in the sense that Israel's salvation depended upon obedience to it. The devout Israelite was saved by faith in the promise of God, which was now embodied in the tabernacle services. He looked forward through the sacrifices to a salvation which they foreshadowed, and by faith accepted it, as we look back to the Cross and by faith accept the salvation which has been accomplished.

The Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints are both saved in the same way, and that is, by the grace of God through Jesus Christ alone. Of course the people did not keep the law. It only brought sin to light and proved that righteousness could not come that way, as Paul points out in the Epistle to the Romans. It made all the more evident that there was a need for the work of Christ. But Christ came not to put the law aside and introduce another plan. "I came not to destroy", He declared, "but to fulfill"; not to dissolve the obligations of the law and release us from them, but to substantiate the law and make good

all that it required.

In the Sermon on the Mount He expounded and expanded the law, in all its depth and breadth, and in all its searching sweep. This Sermon spoke to His disciples; it was His law for them. It was not intended for another age and another people; it set forth the kind of life He expected His own people to live in the present age. Of course we cannot fulfill the law of the Sermon on the Mount as an outward standard of life. Our Lord did not leave it at that. He was Himself going to make it possible for His disciples to fulfill it, but He could not yet tell them how.

When He died and rose again and ascended into heaven, and His Holy Spirit--the same Spirit which had fulfilled and exemplified that law completely in His own life--came flowing back into the lives of His disciples, then they had to keep it. The law was written on their hearts. Their lives were conformed to the law, not by slavish obedience to an outward standard, but by the free constraint of an inward spirit. The ordinance of the law was fulfilled in them when they walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

It is this very feature of grace which seems to make it an entirely different and separate system from the law, for it did not exist in the Old Testament dispensation. It could not be realized before the redemptive work of Christ was done and the Holy Spirit came. The Israelites occupied a different position toward the law from that occupied by the Christian now. The law demanded an obedience which the natural heart could not give. In its practical working, therefore, the law necessarily came to stand over man as a creditor, with claims of justice which had not been satisfied.

These claims Christ met on the Cross and put out of the way. More than that, by virtue of our union with Him in His death and resurrection, He has brought us out of the sphere where the law as an outward authority demands obedience of the natural man, into the sphere where the law is written upon the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. He has created us "a new man" whose nature it is to fulfill the law by an inward power and principle. This is what Paul meant when he said, "I through the law died unto the law that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2:19), and when he wrote to the Romans, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace" (6:14).

This new revelation to the law has been created by the grace of God through the work of Jesus Christ. But the law still remains. It is the reflex of His own character and the revelation of His moral order. He cannot set it aside, for then He would deny Himself. The wonder and glory of grace consists in this, that it came in, not to oppose the law and substitute another plan, but to meet and satisfy all its claims and provide a way of fulfilling all its obligations. It has pleased the Lord by His grace to magnify the law and make it honorable.

With the above remarks we are in hearty accord. [1] It is a superficial and erroneous conclusion that supposes the Old and New Testaments are antagonistic. The Old Testament is full of grace: the New Testament is full of Law. The revelation of the New Testament to the Old is like that of the oak tree to the acorn. It has been often said, and said truly, "The New is in the Old contained, the Old is by the New explained"! And surely this must be so. The Bible as a whole, and in its parts, is not merely for Israel or the Church, but is a written revelation from God to and for the whole human race.

It is indeed sad to see how little this elementary truth is grasped today and what confusion prevails. Even the late Mr. F. W. Grant in his notes on Exodus 19 and 20 was so inconsistent with himself as to say, First, "It is plain that redemption, as bringing the soul to God, sets up His throne within it, and obedience is the only liberty. It is plain too, that there is a 'righteousness of the law' which the law itself gives no power to

fulfill, but which 'is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit' (Rom. 8:4).

What is merely dispensational passes, but not that which is the expression of God's character and required by it. Nothing of that can pass. . . grace still must affirm this, therefore, not set it (obedience) aside; but it does what law does not--it provides for the accomplishment of the condition. First of all, the obedience of Another, who owed none, has glorified God infinitely with regard to those who owed but did not pay. Secondly, --for this even could not release (nor could there be blessing in release) from the personal obligation, --grace apprehended in the heart brings back the heart to God, and the heart brought back in love serves of necessity" (italics ours).

With the above quoted words from The Numerical Bible we are in entire accord, and only wish they might be echoed by Mr. Grant's followers. But second, and most inconsistently, and erroneously, Mr. Grant says: "In the wisdom of God, that same law, whose principle was 'do and live', could yet be the type of the obedience of faith in those who are subjects of a spiritual redemption, the principle of which is 'live and do'. Let us remember, however, that law in itself retains none the less its character as opposed to grace, and that as a type it does not represent law any longer: we are not, as Christians in any sense under the law, but under grace" (italics his).

This is a mistake, the more serious because made by one whose writings now constitute in certain circles the test of orthodoxy in the interpreting of God's Word. What has been said above reveals the need for a serious and careful examination of the teaching of Holy Scripture concerning the Law. But to what do we refer when we speak of "The Law"? This is a term which needs to be carefully defined. In the New Testament there are three expressions used, concerning which there has been not a little confusion.

First, there is "the Law of God" (Rom. 7:22,25, etc.). Second, there is "the Law of Moses" (John 7:23; Acts 13:39, 15:5, etc.). Third, there is "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Now these three expressions are by no means synonymous, and it is not until we learn to distinguish between them, that we can hope to arrive at any clear understanding of our subject. The "Law of God" expresses the mind of the Creator, and is binding upon all rational creatures. It is God's unchanging moral standard for regulating the conduct of all men.

In some places "the Law of God" may refer to the whole revealed will of God, but in the majority it has reference to the Ten Commandments; and it is in this restricted sense we use the term. This Law was impressed on man's moral nature from the beginning, and though now fallen, he still shows the work of it written in his heart. This law has never been repealed, and in the very nature of things, cannot be. For God to abrogate the moral Law would be to plunge the whole universe into anarchy.

Obedience to the Law of God is man's first duty. That is why the first complaint that Jehovah made against Israel after they left Egypt was, "How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws" (Ex. 16:27). That is why the first statutes God gave to Israel were the Ten Commandments, i.e. the moral Law. That is why in the first discourse of Christ recorded in the New Testament He declared, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt 5:17), and then proceeded to expound and enforce the moral Law.

And that is why in the first of the Epistles, the Holy Spirit has taught us at length the relation of the Law to sinners and saints, in connection with salvation and the subsequent walk of the saved: the word "law" occurs in Romans no less than seventy-five times, though, of course, not every reference is to the Law of God. And that is why sinners (Rom. 3:19) and saints (Jas. 2:12) shall be judged by this Law. The "Law of

Moses" is the entire system of legislation, judicial and ceremonial, which Jehovah gave to Israel during the time they were in the wilderness.

The Law of Moses, as such, is binding upon none but Israelites. This Law has not been repealed. That the Law of Moses is not binding on Gentiles is clear from Acts 15. The "Law of Christ" is God's moral Law, but in the hands of the Mediator. It is the Law which Christ Himself was "made under" (Gal. 4:4). It is the Law which was "in His heart" (Psa. 40:8). It is the Law which He came to "fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). The "Law of God" is now termed "the Law of Christ" as it relates to Christians.

As creatures we are under bonds to "serve the Law of God" (Rom. 7:25). As redeemed sinners we are "the bondslaves of Christ" (Eph. 6:6), and as such we are under bonds to "serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24). The relation between these two appellations, "the law of God" and "the Law of Christ" is clearly intimated in 1 Corinthians 9:21, where the apostle states, that he was not without Law to God," for he was "under the Law of Christ". The meaning of this is very simple. As a human creature, the apostle was still under obligation to obey the moral Law of God his Creator; but as a saved man he now belonged to Christ, the Mediator, by redemption.

Christ had purchased him: he was His, therefore, he was "under the Law of Christ". The "Law of Christ", then, is just the moral Law of God now in the hands of the Mediator and Redeemer--cf. Exodus 34:1 and what follows! Should any object against our definition of the distinction drawn between God's moral Law and "the Law of Moses" we request them to attend closely to what follows. God took special pains to show us the clear line of demarcation which He has Himself drawn between the two.

The moral Law became incorporated in the Mosaic Law, [2] yet was it sharply distinguished from it. The proof of this is as follows:-- In the first place, let the reader note carefully the words with which Exodus 20 opens: "And God spake all these words." Observe it is not "The Lord spake all these words", but "God spake". This is the more noticeable because in the very next verse He says, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt", etc. Now the Divine titles are not used loosely, nor are they employed alternately for the purpose of variation.

Each one possesses a definite and distinct signification. "God" is the creational title (see Gen. 1:1). "Lord" is God in covenant relationship, that is why it is "Lord God" all through Genesis 2. In Genesis 1 it is God in connection with His creatures. In Genesis 2 it is the Lord God in connection with Adam, with whom He had entered into a covenant--see Hosea 6:7, margin. The fact, then, that Exodus 20 opens with "And God spake all these words", etc. prove conclusively that the Ten Commandments were not and are not designed solely for Israel (the covenant people), but for all mankind.

The use of the title "God" in Exodus 20:1 is the more forceful because in verses 2,5,7,10,11, and 12 "the Lord" is named, and named there because Israel is being addressed. In the second place, the Ten Commandments, and they alone, of all the laws Jehovah gave to Israel, were promulgated by the finger of God, amid the most solemn manifestations and tokens of the Divine presence and majesty. In the third place, the Ten Commandments, and they alone, of all Jehovah's statutes to Israel, were written directly by the finger of God, written upon tables of stone; and written thus to denote their lasting and imperishable nature.

In the fourth place, the Ten Commandments were further distinguished from all those laws which had merely a local application to Israel, by the fact that they alone were laid up in the ark. A tabernacle was prepared by the special direction of God, and within it an ark was placed, in which the two tables of the

Law were deposited. The ark, formed of the most durable wood, was overlaid with gold, within and without. Over it was placed the mercy-seat, which became the throne of Jehovah in the midst of His people.

Not until the tabernacle had been erected, and the Law placed in the ark, did Jehovah take up His abode in Israel's midst. Thus did the Lord signify to Israel that the moral Law was the basis of all His governmental dealings with them. Thus it is clear beyond any room for doubt that the Ten Commandments, the moral Law of God, were sharply distinguished from "the Law of Moses." The "Law of Moses," excepting the moral Law incorporated therein, was binding on none but Israelites, or Gentile proselytes.

But the moral Law of God, unlike the Mosaic, is binding on all men. Once this distinction is perceived, many minor difficulties are cleared up. For example: someone says, If we are to keep the Sabbath day holy, as Israel did, why must we not observe the other Sabbaths--the Sabbatic year, for instance? The answer is, Because the moral Law alone is binding on Gentiles and Christians. Why, it may be asked, does not the death penalty attached to the desecration of the Sabbath day (Ex. 31:14, etc.) still obtain?

The answer is, Because though that was a part of the Mosaic Law, it was not a part of the moral Law of God, i.e. it was not inscribed on the tables of stone; therefore it concerned none but Israelites. In the chapters following this, we propose to offer an exposition of the principal scriptures in the New Testament which refer to the Ten Commandments. First, we will take up the passages which are appealed to by those who deny that the Law is in anywise binding on Christians.

Second, we shall treat of some of the many passages which unmistakable prove that all are under lasting obligations to obey the Law of God. Third, a separate booklet [3] will be devoted to the Christian Sabbath. Fourth, in another separate booklet [4] we shall discuss the nature of true Christian liberty. May Divine grace so illumine our understandings and rule our hearts that we shall run in the way of God's commandments. ENDNOTES

[1] Except that in the closing paragraphs Dr. McNicol is somewhat confused about the present relation of the Law to the believer.

[2] And this of necessity. As already stated, the Ten Commandments reveal the will of the Creator for every human creature, and as Israelites were first God's creatures before being brought into the relationship of His covenant people, the moral Law was given to them before the Mosaic Law. This explains why the Ten Commandments are repeated in Deut. 5. In Ex. 20 they are addressed to God's creatures; in Deut. 5, to Israel as Jehovah's covenant people Mark the absence in Deut. 5 of "God spake all these words"!

[3] "The Christian Sabbath". 30 cents.

[4] "Christian Liberty". 15 cents.

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