

Hells Best Secret (Transcript)

by Ray Comfort

The problem with modern evangelism is that it attracts sinners with promises of peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness, rather than warning them of the wrath of God.

Scripture: Romans 3:19

Topics: "Law And Grace", "True Repentance"

Description

Ray Comfort emphasizes the alarming trend of backsliding in modern evangelism, revealing that a significant percentage of those who make decisions for Christ ultimately fall away. He argues that the neglect of God's law in evangelistic efforts leads to superficial conversions, as many are not made aware of their sinfulness and the need for true repentance. Comfort illustrates the importance of understanding the law to appreciate the gospel, using various biblical examples to show how the law serves as a schoolmaster that leads to Christ. He warns against a man-centered gospel that promises happiness without addressing the reality of sin and judgment, urging believers to preach the law to awaken true contrition and gratitude for God's grace. Ultimately, he calls for a return to biblical evangelism that emphasizes the seriousness of sin and the necessity of repentance.

Transcript

In the late seventies, God very graciously opened an itinerant ministry to me. As I began to travel, I found that I had access to church growth records, and found to my horror that something like 80 to 90% of those making a decision for Christ were falling away from the faith. That is, modern evangelism with its methods is creating something like 80 to 90 of what we commonly call backsliders for every hundred decisions for Christ. Let me make it more real for you. In 1991, in the first year of the decade of harvest, a major denomination in the U.S. was able to obtain 294,000 decisions for Christ. That is, in one year, this major denomination of 11,500 churches was able to obtain 294,000 decisions for Christ.

Unfortunately, they could only find 14,000 in fellowship, which means they couldn't account for 280,000 of their decisions, and this is normal, modern evangelical results, and something I discovered way back in the late seventies; it greatly concerned me. I began to study the book of Romans intently and, specifically, the gospel proclamation of men like Spurgeon, Wesley, Moody, Finney, Whitfield, Luther, and others that God used down through the ages, and I found they used a principle which is almost entirely neglected by modern evangelical methods. I began teaching that principle; I was eventually invited to base our ministry in southern California, the city of Bellflower, specifically to bring this teaching to the church of the U.S.

Things were quiet for the first three years, until I received a call from Bill Gothard, who had seen the teaching on video. He flew me to San Jose in northern California; I shared it with a thousand pastors. Then in 1992 he screened that video to 30,000 pastors. The same year David Wilkerson called from New York. He called from his car. (He had been listening to the teaching in his car and called me on his car phone.) Immediately, he flew me 3,000 miles from L.A. to New York to share the one-hour teaching with his church; he considered it to be that important. And recently I heard of a pastor who had listened to the audio tape 250 times. I'd be happy if you'd listen just once to this teaching which is called "Hell's Best Kept Secret." The Bible says in Psalm 19, verse 7, "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." What is it that the Bible says is perfect and actually converts the soul? Why scripture makes it very clear: "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." Now to illustrate the function of God's law, let's just look for a moment at civil law. Imagine if I said to you, "I've got some good news for you: someone has just paid a \$25,000 speeding fine on your behalf." You'd probably react by saying, "What are you talking about? That's not good news: it doesn't make sense.

I don't have a \$25,000 speeding fine." My good news wouldn't be good news to you: it would seem foolishness. But more than that, it would be offensive to you, because I'm insinuating you've broken the law when you don't think you have. However, if I put it this way, it may make more sense: "On the way to this meeting, the law clocked you at going 55 miles an hour through an area set aside for a blind children's convention. There were ten clear warning signs stating that fifteen miles an hour was the maximum speed, but you went straight through at 55 miles an hour. What you did was extremely dangerous; there's a \$25,000 fine. The law was about to take its course, when someone you don't even know stepped in and paid the fine for you. You are very fortunate." Can you see that telling you precisely what you've done wrong first actually makes the good news make sense. If I don't clearly bring instruction and understanding that you've violated the law, then the good news will seem foolishness; it will seem offensive. But once you understand that you've broken the law, then that good news will become good news indeed. Now in the same way, if I approach an impenitent sinner and say, "Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins," it will be foolishness and offensive to him. Foolishness because it won't make sense. The Bible says that: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1Cor. 1:18).

And offensive because I'm insinuating he's a sinner when he doesn't think he is. As far as he's concerned, there are a lot of people far worse than him. But if I take the time to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, it

may make more sense. If I take the time to open up the divine law, the ten commandments, and show the sinner precisely what he's done wrong, that he has offended God by violating His law, then when he becomes, as James says, "convinced of the law as a transgressor" (Jam. 2:9), the good news of the fine being paid for will not be foolishness, it will not be offensive, it will be "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Now, with those few thoughts in mind by way of introduction, let's now look at Romans 3, verse 19. We'll look at some of the functions of God's law for humanity. Romans 3, verse 19: "Now we know that whatsoever things the law says, it says to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God." So one function of God's law is to stop the mouth. To stop sinners justifying themselves and saying, "There's plenty of people worse than me. I'm not a bad person. Really." No, the law stops the mouth of justification and leaves the whole world, not just the Jews, but the whole world guilty before God. Romans 3, verse 20: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." So God's law tells us what sin is. 1 John 3:4 says, "Sin is transgression of the law." Romans 7, verse 7: "What shall we say then?" says Paul. "Is the law sin? God forbid! No, I had not known sin but by the law." Paul says, "I didn't

know what sin was until the law told me." In Galatians 3:24, "Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." God's law acts as a schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ that we might be justified through faith in His blood. The law doesn't help us; it just leaves us helpless. It doesn't justify us; it just leaves us guilty before the judgment bar of a holy God. And the tragedy of modern evangelism is because around the turn of the century when it forsook the law in its capacity to convert the soul, to drive sinners to Christ, modern evangelism had to, therefore, find another reason for sinners to respond to the gospel.

And the issue that modern evangelism chose to attract sinners was the issue of "life enhancement". The gospel degenerated into "Jesus Christ will give you peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness." Now to illustrate the unscriptural nature of this very popular teaching, I'd like you to listen very carefully to this following anecdote, because the essence of what I'm saying pivots on this particular illustration; so please listen carefully. Two men are seated in a plane. The first is given a parachute and told to put it on as it would improve his flight. He's a little skeptical at first because he can't see how wearing a parachute in a plane could possibly improve the flight. After a time he decides to experiment and see if the claim is true. As he puts it on he notices the weight of it upon his shoulders and he finds that he has difficulty in sitting upright. However, he consoles himself with the fact that he was told the parachute would improve the flight. So, he decides to give the thing a little time. As he waits he notices that some of the other passengers are laughing at him, because he's wearing a parachute in a plane. He begins to feel somewhat humiliated. As they begin to point and laugh at him and he can stand it no longer, he slinks in his seat, unstraps the parachute, and throws it to the floor. Disillusionment and bitterness fill his heart, because, as far as he was concerned, he was told an outright lie. The second man is given a parachute, but listen to what he's told.

He's told to put it on because at any moment he'd be jumping 25,000 feet out of the plane. He gratefully puts the parachute on; he doesn't notice the weight of it upon his shoulders, nor that he can't sit upright. His mind is consumed with the thought of what would happen to him if he jumped without that parachute. Let's analyze the motive and the result of each passenger's experience. The first man's motive for putting the parachute on was solely to improve his flight. The result of his experience was that he was humiliated by the passengers; he was disillusioned and somewhat embittered against those who gave him the parachute. As far as he's concerned it'll be a long time before anyone gets one of those things on his back again. The second man put the parachute on solely to escape the jump to come, and because of his knowledge of what would happen to him without it, he has a deep-rooted joy and peace in his heart

knowing that he's saved from sure death. This knowledge gives him the ability to withstand the mockery of the other passengers. His attitude towards those who gave him the parachute is one of heart-felt gratitude. Now listen to what the modern gospel says. It says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll give you love, joy, peace, fulfillment, and lasting happiness." In other words, "Jesus will improve your flight." So the sinner responds, and in an experimental fashion, puts on the Savior to see if the claims are true. And what does he get? The promised temptation, tribulation, and persecution.

The other passengers mock him. So what does he do? He takes off the Lord Jesus Christ, he's offended for the word's sake (Mark 4:17), he's disillusioned and somewhat embittered, and quite rightly so. He was promised peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness, and all he got were trials and humiliation. His bitterness is directed toward those who gave him the so-called "good news". His latter end becomes worse than the first: another inoculated and bitter backslider. Saints, instead of preaching that Jesus improves the flight, we should be warning the passengers they're going have to jump out of the plane.

That it's "appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). And when a sinner understands the horrific consequences of breaking God's law, then he will flee to the Savior solely to escape the wrath that's to come. And if we're true and faithful witnesses, that's what we'll be preaching. That there is wrath to come; that God "commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Why? "Because He has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness" (vs. 31). You see, the issue isn't one of happiness, but one of righteousness. It doesn't matter how happy a sinner is, how much he's enjoying "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). Without the righteousness of Christ, he'll perish on the day of wrath. "Riches profit not on the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death" (Prov. 11:4). Peace and joy are legitimate fruits of salvation, but it's not legitimate to use these fruits as a draw card for salvation. If we continue to do so, sinners will respond with an impure motive lacking repentance. Now, can you remember why the second passenger had joy and peace in his heart?

It was because he knew that parachute was going to save him from sure death. And as a believer, I have, as Paul says, "joy and peace in believing" (Rom. 15:13), because I know that the righteousness of Christ is going to deliver me from the wrath that's to come. Now with that thought in mind, let's take a close look at an incident on board the plane. We have a brand new stewardess. She's carrying a tray of boiling hot coffee. It's her first day; she wants to leave an impression on the passengers, and she certainly does. Because as she's walking down the aisle, she trips over someone's foot and slops that boiling hot coffee all over the lap of our second passenger. Now what's his reaction as that boiling liquid hits his tender flesh? Does he go, "Sssssffff! Man that hurt"? Mmm-hhh. He feels the pain. But then does he rip the parachute from his shoulders, throw it to the floor and say, "The stupid parachute!?" No. Why should he? He didn't put the parachute on for a better flight. He put it on to save him from the jump to come. If anything, the hot coffee incident causes him to cling tighter to the parachute and even look forward to the jump.

Now if you and I have put on the Lord Jesus Christ for the right motive, to flee from the wrath that's to come, when tribulation strikes, when the flight gets bumpy, we won't get angry at God; we won't lose our joy and peace. Why should we? We didn't come to Jesus for a happy lifestyle: we came to flee from the wrath that's to come. And if anything, tribulation drives the true believer closer to the Savior. And sadly we have literally multitudes of professing Christians who lose their joy and peace when the flight gets bumpy. Why? They're the product of a man-centered gospel. They came lacking repentance, without which you can't be saved. I was in Australia recently ministering; Australia is a small island off the coast of New Zealand. And I preached sin, law, righteousness, holiness, judgment, repentance, and hell, and I wasn't exactly crushed by the amount of people wanting to "give their hearts to Jesus." In fact, the air went very tense. After the meeting, they said, "There's a young guy down in the back who wants to give his life to Christ." I went down the back and found a teenage lad who could not pray the sinner's prayer because he was

weeping so profusely. Now, for me it was so refreshing, because for many years I suffered from the disease of "evangelical frustration". I so wanted sinners to respond to the gospel I unwittingly preached a man-centered message. The essence of which was this: "You'll never find true peace without Jesus Christ; you've a God-shaped vacuum in your heart that only God can fill." I'd preach Christ crucified; I'd preach repentance. A sinner would respond to the altar; I'd open an eye and say, "Oh no. This guy wants to give his heart to Jesus and there's an 80% chance he's going to backslide. And I am tired of creating backsliders. So I'd better make sure this guy really means it. He'd better be sincere!" So I'd approach the poor guy in a Gestapo spirit. I'd walk up and say, "Vhat do you vant?" He'd say, "I'm here to become a

Christian." I'd say, "Do you mean it?" He'd say, "Yeah." I'd say, "Do you REALLY MEAN IT!?" He'd say, "Yeah, I reckon." "Okay, I'll pray with you, but you'd better mean it from your heart." He said, "Okay, okay." "Now you repeat this prayer sincerely after me and mean it from your heart sincerely and really mean it from your heart sincerely and make sure you mean it. 'Oh, God, I'm a sinner.'" He'd say, "Uh...oh, God, I'm a sinner." And I'd think, "Man, why isn't there a visible sign of contrition.

There's no outward evidence the guy is inwardly sorry for his sins." Now, if I could have seen his motive, I would have seen he was 100% sincere. He really did mean his decision with all his heart. He sincerely wanted to give this Jesus thing a go to see if he could get a buzz out of it. He had tried sex, drugs, materialism, alcohol. "Why not give this Christian bit a go and see if it's as good as all these Christians say it is: peace, joy, love, fulfillment, lasting happiness." He wasn't fleeing from the wrath that was to come, because I hadn't told him there was wrath to come. There was this glaring omission from my message. He wasn't broken in contrition, because the poor guy didn't know what sin was. Remember Romans 7, verse 7? Paul said, "I had not known sin but by the law." How can a man repent if he doesn't know what sin is? Any so-called "repentance" would be merely what I call "horizontal repentance". He's coming because he's lied to men, he's stolen from men. But when David sinned with Bathsheba and broke all ten of the ten commandments (when he coveted his neighbor's wife, lived a lie, stole his neighbor's wife, committed adultery, committed murder, dishonored his parents, and thus dishonored God), he didn't say "I've sinned against man." He said, "Against you, and you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight" (Ps. 51:4). When Joseph was tempted sexually, he said, "How can I do this thing and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). The prodigal son said, "I've sinned against heaven" (Luke 15:21). Paul preached "repentance toward God" (Acts 20:21). And the Bible says, "Godly sorrow works repentance" (2Cor. 7:10).

And when a man doesn't understand that his sin is primarily vertical, he'll merely come and exercise superficial, experimental, and horizontal repentance, and fall away when tribulation, temptation, and persecution come. A.B. Earl said, "I have found by long experience that the severest threatenings of the law of God have a prominent place in leading men to Christ. They must see themselves lost before they will cry for mercy; they'll not escape danger until they see it." Now I'd like you to do something a little unusual. I'll not embarrass you; I give you my word. But I would like to ask, how many of you were thinking of something else when I was reading that quote from A.B. Earl? Now, I want to admit something to you. I was thinking of something else when I was reading that quote from A.B. Earl: I was thinking, "Nobody's listening to me; they're thinking of something else." So, to make a very important point, I'd like you to be really honest. If you were thinking of something else and you haven't got a clue what A.B. Earl said, could you raise your hand up nice and high...up nice and high. It's usually half to two-thirds and we've got that here tonight. Let's try again....God bless you, Pastor, for your honesty. A.B. Earl was a famous evangelist of the last century who had 150,000 converts to substantiate his claims. Satan doesn't want you to get a grip of this, so listen very closely. A.B. Earl said, "I have found by long experience [that's the true test] that the severest threatenings of the law of God have a prominent place in leading men to Christ. They must see themselves lost before they will cry for mercy; they'll not escape danger until they see it." You see, you try and save a man from drowning when the man doesn't believe he's drowning, he'll not be too happy with you. You see him swimming out in the lake; you think, "I think he's

drowning. Yes, I believe he is." You dive in, pull him to the shore, without telling him anything. He's not going to be very happy with you. He won't want to get saved until he sees that he's in danger. They'll not escape danger until they see it. You see, if you came to me and said, "Hey, Ray," and I said, "Yeah." You said, "This is a cure to Groaninzin's disease; I sold my house to raise the money to get this cure. I'm giving

it to you as a free gift."

I'd probably react something like this: "What? Cure to what? Groaninzin's disease? You sold your house to raise the money to get this cure? You're giving it to me as a free gift? Why, thanks a lot. Bye....That guy's a nut." I mean, that's probably how I'd react if you sold your house to raise the money to get a cure for a disease I'd never heard of and your giving it to me as free gift, I'd think you're rather strange. But instead, if you came to me and said, "Ray, you've got Groaninzin's disease. I can see ten clear symptoms on your flesh. You're going to be dead in two weeks." And I became convinced I had the disease (the symptoms were so evident), and said, "Oh! What shall I do?" And then you said, "Don't worry. This is a cure to Groaninzin's disease. I sold my house to raise the money to get this cure. I'm giving it to you as a free gift." I'm not going to despise your sacrifice; I'm going to appreciate it and I'm going to appropriate it. Why? Because I've seen the disease that I might appreciate the cure. And sadly, what's happened in the U.S. and the Western world as follow is that we have preached the cure without first convincing of the disease. We have preached a gospel of grace without first convincing men of the law, that they're transgressors; and, consequently, almost everyone I try and witness to in southern California or around the Bible belt has been born-again six or seven times. You say, "You need to give your life to Jesus Christ." "Uh, I did that when I was seven, eleven, seventeen, twenty-three, twenty-five, twenty-eight, thirty-two..." You know the guy's not a Christian.

He's a fornicator. He's a blasphemer, but he thinks he's saved because he's been "born-again". What's happening? He's using the grace of our God for an occasion of the flesh. He doesn't esteem the sacrifice. For him it's not a bad thing to trample the blood of Christ underfoot (Heb. 10:29). Why? Because he's never been convinced of the disease that he might appreciate the cure. Biblical evangelism is always, without exception, law to the proud and grace to the humble. Never will you see Jesus giving the gospel, the good news, the cross, the grace of our God, to a proud, arrogant, self-righteous person. No, no. With the law he breaks the hard heart and with the gospel he heals the broken heart. Why? Because He always did those things that please the Father. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (Jam. 4:6; 1Pet. 5:5). "Everyone who is proud of heart," scripture says, "is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 16:5). Jesus told us whom the gospel is for. He said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives and the blind" (Luke 4:18). Now, they are spiritual statements. The poor in spirit (Mat. 5:3). The broken hearted are the contrite ones (Is. 57:15). The captives are those of whom Satan has taken captive to do his will (2Tim. 2:26); and the blind are those of whom the god of this world has blinded lest the light of the gospel should shine on them (2Cor. 4:4). Only the sick need a physician (Mark 2:17), and only those who are convinced of the disease will appreciate and appropriate a cure. So we're going to now very briefly look at examples of law to the proud and grace to the humble.

Luke 10:24...Luke 10:24. And when I give you a reference from the pulpit I'll give it twice, because I know that men are present, and men need to be told things twice....Men need to be told things twice. This can be backed up biblically. When God speaks to men in the Bible he uses their name twice. "Abraham, Abraham...Saul, Saul...Moses, Moses...Samuel, Samuel..." Because men need to be told things twice. Women once. I don't know how many times I've sat in a pew, preacher said, "Ah, Luke 10:25." I turn to my wife and say, "What'd he say?" She says, "Luke 10:25." I say, "Thank you, dear." HELP-MATE. That's why God created women, because men could not handle it on their own. The whole thing is: men lose things, women find things. "Where's the keys love?" "Hangin' on your nose, Dear." I mean, I don't know how many times I've opened the cupboard, "[Burp] There's no honey here, Honey!" She says,

"Here is here, Dear." Where would man be without women? Mm? Still in the Garden of Eden. Eve found the tree. Adam didn't really know what was going on. In fact, if you look at the creation of woman, to create woman the Bible says God put man into a deep sleep. And Scripture doesn't say he ever came out of it. In Luke 10:25 we see a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Jesus. This is not an attorney, but a professing expert on God's law. He stood up and he said to Jesus, "How can I get everlasting life?" Now, what did Jesus do? He gave him law. Why? Because he was proud, arrogant, self-righteous. Here we have a professing expert on God's law tempting the Son of God. And the spirit of his question was, "And what do you think we've got to do to get everlasting life?" So Jesus gave him law. He said, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" He says, "Ah, you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength; love your neighbor as yourself." And Jesus said, "This do and you shall live." And then the Scripture says, "But He, willing to justify Himself, said to Jesus, 'Who's my neighbor?' " The Living Bible brings out more clearly the effect of the law on the man. It said, "The man wanted to justify his lack of love for some kinds of people; so he asked, 'Which neighbors?' " See, he didn't mind Jews, but he didn't like Samaritans. So Jesus then told him the story of what we call the "good Samaritan" who was not "good" at all.

In loving his neighbor as much as he loved himself, he merely obeyed the basic requirements of God's law. And the effect of the essence of the law, the spirituality of the law (of what the law demands in truth), was that that man's mouth was stopped. See, he didn't love his neighbor to that degree. The law was given to stop every mouth and leave the whole world guilty before God. Similarly, in Luke 18, verse 18, the rich, young ruler came to Jesus. He said, "How can I get everlasting life?"

I mean, how would most of us react if someone came up and said, "How can I get everlasting life?" We'd say, "Oh...quickly say this prayer before you change your mind." But what did Jesus do with His potential convert? He pointed Him to the law. He gave him five horizontal commandments, commandments to do with his fellow men. And when he said, "Ah, I've kept those from my youth," Jesus said, "One thing you lack." And he used the essence of the first of the ten commandments: "I am the Lord your God...You shall have no other Gods before me" (Ex. 20:2-3).

He showed this man that His god was His money, and "you cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:24). Law to the proud. Then we see grace being given to the humble in the case of Nicodemus (John 3). Nicodemus was a leader of the Jews. He was a teacher in Israel. Therefore, he was thoroughly versed in God's law. He was humble of heart, because he came to Jesus and acknowledged the Deity of the Son of God. A leader in Israel? "We know that you've come from God for no man can do these miracles that you do unless God is with Him."

So Jesus gave the sincere seeker of truth, who had a humble heart and a knowledge of sin by the law, the good news of the fine being paid for and "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son." And it was not foolishness to Nicodemus but the "power of God to salvation." Similarly, in the case of Nathaniel (John 1:43-51). Nathaniel was an Israelite brought up under the law in deed, not just in word, in whom there was no guile; there was no deceit in his heart.

Obviously the law was a schoolmaster to bring this godly Jew to Christ. Similarly with the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). They were devout Jews, godly Jews, who, therefore, ate, drank, and slept God's law. Matthew Henry, the Bible commentator, said the reason they were gathered together on the day of Pentecost was to celebrate the giving of God's law on Mt. Sinai. So when Peter stood up to preach to these godly Jews, he didn't preach wrath. No, the law works wrath; they knew that.

He didn't preach righteousness or judgment. No, no. He just told them the good news of the fine being paid for, and they were pricked in their hearts and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (vs. 37). The law was a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ that they might be justified through faith in His blood. And the hymn-writer said, "By God's word at last my sin I learned; then I trembled at the law I'd spurned, till my guilty soul imploring turned to Calvary." 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 8, says, "But we know that the law is good if it is used lawfully for the purpose for which it was designed." God's law is good if it's used lawfully for the purpose for which it was designed. Well, what was the law "designed" for?

The following verse tells us: "The law was not made for a righteous man but for sinners." It even lists the sinners: homosexuals, fornicators. If you want to bring a homosexual to Christ, don't get into an argument with him over his perversion; he's ready for you with his boxing gloves on. No, no. Give him the ten commandments. The law was made for homosexuals. Show him that he is damned despite his perversion. If you want to bring a Jew to Christ, lay the weight of the law upon him; let it prepare his heart for grace as happened on the day of Pentecost. If you want to bring a Moslem to Christ, give him the law of Moses; they accept Moses as a prophet. Well, give them the law of Moses and strip them of their self-righteousness and bring them to the foot of a blood-stained cross. I heard of a Moslem reading our book *Hell's Best Kept Secret*, and God soundly saved him purely through reading the book. Why? Because the law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul. Think of the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1-11). Violation of the seventh commandment. The law called for her blood (Lev. 20:10). She found herself in between a rock and a hard place. She had no avenue but to fling herself at the feet of the Son of God for mercy; and that is the function of God's law. Paul spoke of being shut up under the law (Gal. 3:23). It condemns. You say, "You can't condemn sinners." Saints, they're already condemned. John 3, verse 18: "He that believes not is condemned already." All the law does is show him himself in his true state. Ladies, you might recognize this. Your table needs dusting in your living room. So you dust it clean; all the dust is gone. Then you draw back the curtains and let in the early morning sunlight. What do you see on the table? Dust.

What do you see in the air? Dust. Did the light create the dust? No, the light merely exposed the dust. And when you and I take the time to draw back the curtains of the holy of holies and let the light of God's law shine upon the sinner's heart, all that happens, is that he sees himself in truth. "The commandment is a lamp and the law is light" (Prov. 6:23). That's why Paul said, "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). That's why he said, "By the commandment sin became exceedingly sinful" (Rom. 7:13). In other words, the law showed him sin in its true light. Now, normally at this stage of this teaching I go through the ten commandments one by one, but what I'll do is share with you how I witness personally because I think it would be more beneficial. Now, I'm a strong believer in following in the footsteps of Jesus. Never, ever, would I approach someone and say, "Jesus loves you." Totally unbiblical; there's no precedent for that in Scripture. Neither would I go up to someone and say, "I'd like to talk to you about Jesus Christ." Why? Because if I wanted to awaken you from a deep sleep, I wouldn't use a flashlight in your eyes. That will offend you. I'd turn on the light dimmer very gently. First, the natural, then the spiritual. Why? Because "the natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God; neither can he know them. They are foolishness to him because they are spiritually understood" (1Cor. 2:14). The precedent in Scripture is given in John 4 for personal witness. You can see Jesus' example with the woman at the well. He started in the natural realm, swung to the spiritual, brought conviction using the seventh commandment, and then revealed Himself as the Messiah. So, when I meet someone, I'll talk about the weather, I'll talk about sport: let them feel a little bit of sanity. Get to know them; maybe joke here and there and then deliberately swing from the natural to the spiritual. Now, the way I do this is that I use gospel tracts. We have something like

24, 25 different tracts; we're a ministry to the body of Christ. We've printed millions and millions of tracts and our tracts are unusual. If you get a hold of them, what you'll have to do is have a stack on you because people chase you and ask for more. Let me give you an example. This is our optical illusion tract. Which looks bigger, if you can see? Does the pink look bigger? Can you see that? For those listening by tape...They're the same size; it's an optical illusion. I say, "It's actually a gospel tract; instructions are on the back...how to get saved, actually." I say, "You can keep that." He says, "Hey...thanks a lot! This is neat...Whoa!"

"Got another gift for you." And out of my pocket I get a pressed penny with the ten commandments on it. We have a machine that does this. We buy the pennies new from the bank; nice golden-looking pennies and we feed them into this machine and it presses them, or it will do your thumbnail if you want to hold still.

But it presses them with the ten commandments. It's legal to do this: this is considered art. It's not defacing a penny. So I say, "Here's a gift." He says, "Oh...what is it?" I say, "It's a penny with the ten commandments on it; I did it with my teeth....I do the i's with my eye teeth but the e's are really difficult." Now, what I'm doing is putting out a feeler to see if he's open to spiritual things. If he negatively says, "Ten commandments? Thanks a lot," he's not open. But the usual reaction is, "Ten commandments...Hey, thanks! I appreciate this." I say, "Ah, do you think you've kept the ten commandments?" He says, "Ah, yeah...pretty much." I say, "Let's go through them. Ever told a lie?" He says, "Ah, yeah...yeah, one or two." I say, "What does that make you?" He says, "A sinner." I say, "No, no. Specifically, what does it make you?" He says, "Well, man, I'm not a liar." I say, "How many lies, then, do you have to tell to be a liar? Ten and a bell rings and 'ppppbbbt' across your forehead? Isn't it true if you tell one lie, it makes you a liar?" He says, "Yeah...I guess you're right." I say, "Have you ever stolen something?" He says, "No." I say, "Come on; you've just admitted to me you're a liar." I say, "Ever stolen something, even if its small?" and he says, "Yeah." I say, "What does that make you?" He says, "A thief." I say, "Jesus said, 'If you look at a woman and lust after her, you commit adultery with her in your heart' (Mat. 5:28). Ever done that?" He says, "Yeah, plenty of times." "Then from your own admission, you're a lying, thieving, adulterer at heart, and you have to face God on judgment day; and we've only looked at three of the ten commandments. There's another seven with their cannons pointed at you. Have you used God's name in vain?" "Yeah...I've been trying to stop." "You know what you're doing? Instead of using a four-letter filth word beginning with 's' to express disgust, you're using God's name in its place. That's called blasphemy; and the Bible says, 'Every idle word a man speaks he'll give account thereof on the day of judgment' (Mat. 12:36). 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain' (Ex. 20:7). The Bible says if you hate someone, you are a murderer (1 John 3:15)." Now the wonderful thing about God's law is that God has taken the time to write it upon our heart. Romans 2, verse 15: "...which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness..." Now, conscience means "with knowledge." Con is "with," science is "knowledge." Conscience. So when he lies, lusts, fornicates, blasphemes, commits adultery, he does it with knowledge that it's wrong.

God has given light to every man. The Holy Spirit convicts them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Sin which is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4); righteousness which is of the law (Rom. 10:5; Philip. 3:9); judgment which is by the law. His conscience accuses him--the work of the law written on his heart (Rom. 2:15)--and the law condemns him. So I say, "So if God judges you by this standard on the day of judgment, are you going to be innocent or guilty?" He says, "Guilty." I say, "Well, do you think you'll go to heaven or hell?" And the usual answer is, "Heaven." A product of the modern gospel. I say, "Why do

you feel like that? Is it because you think God is good and he'll overlook your sins?" He says, "Yeah, that's it. He'll overlook my sins." "Yeah, well, try that in a court of law. You've committed rape, murder, drug pushing--very serious crimes. The judge says, 'You're guilty. All the evidence is here. Have you anything to say before I pass sentence?' And you say, 'Yes, Judge. I'd like to say I believe you're a good man and you'll overlook my crimes.' The judge would probably say, 'You're right about one thing. I am a good man, and because of my goodness, I'm going to see that justice is done. Because of my goodness, I'm going to see that you're punished.' " And the very thing sinners are hoping will save them on the day of judgment, the goodness of God, will be the very thing that will condemn them. Because if God is good, He must by nature punish murderers, rapists, thieves, liars, fornicators, and blasphemers. God is going to punish sin wherever it's found. So with this knowledge, he's now able to understand. He now has light that his sin is primarily vertical: that he has "sinned against heaven" (Luke 15:21). That he has violated God's law and that He has angered God and the wrath of God abides upon Him (John 3:36). He can now see that He is "weighed

in the balance" of eternal justice and "found wanting" (Dan. 5:27). He now understands the need for a sacrifice. "Christ redeemed from the curse of the law being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). "God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). We broke the law; he paid the fine. It's as simple as that.

And if a man will repent, if a woman will repent and put their faith in Jesus, God will remit their sins so that on the day of judgment, when their court case comes up, God can say, "Your case is dismissed through lack of evidence." "Christ redeemed from the curse of the law being made a curse for us." And, therefore, exercise repentance towards God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21), put his hand to the plough and not look back because he's fit for the kingdom (Luke 9:62).

That word fit means "ready for use". The soil of his heart has been turned that he might receive the engrafted word which is able to save his soul (Jam. 1:21). Now, I haven't got time to share these quotes with you, but their in our literature. I'm sure you'll recognize these names. John Wycliffe, the Bible translator. He said, "The highest service to which a man may obtain on earth is to preach the law of God." Why? Because it will drive sinners to faith in the Savior, to everlasting life.

Martin Luther said, "The first duty of the gospel preacher is to declare God's law and to show the nature of sin." In fact, as we read these quotes, these men have so much conviction you can feel their teeth grit. They say things like, "If you do not use the law in gospel proclamation, you will fill the church with false converts." Stony ground hearers who will receive the word with joy and gladness. Listen to what Martin Luther said. He said, "Satan, the god of all dissension stirs up daily new sects.

And last of all which of all others I should never have foreseen or once suspected, he has raised up a sect such as teach that men should not be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the preaching of the grace of Christ." So what's Luther saying? He saying, "Listen, guys. There's a demonic, Satanic sect that's just risen up. Man, I never, ever would have believed this could happen. He's raised up a sect such as teach that men should not be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the preaching of the grace of Christ," which perfectly sums up most of our evangelism.

John Wesley said to a friend, in writing to a young evangelist, "Preach 90 percent law and 10 percent grace." And you say, "90 percent law and 10 percent grace? Pretty heavy. Couldn't it be 50-50." Think of it like this. I'm a doctor; you're a patient. You have a terminal disease. I have a cure, but it's absolutely

essential that you are totally committed to this cure; if you're not 100 percent committed, it will not work. How am I going to handle it? Probably like this. "Come in here.

Sit down. I've some very serious news for you: you have a terminal disease." I see you begin to shake. I think to myself, "Good. He's beginning to see the seriousness of this situation." I bring out charts; I bring out x-rays. I show you the poison seeping through your system. I speak to you for ten whole minutes about this terrible disease. How long, then, do you think I'm going to have to talk about the cure? Not long at all. When you're sitting there trembling after ten minutes, I say, "By the way, here's the cure."

You grab it and gulp it down. Your knowledge of the disease and its horrific consequence has made you desire the cure. You see, before I was a Christian, I had as much desire for righteousness as a four-year-old boy has for the word "bath." What's the point? See, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." How many non-Christians do you know who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness? The Bible says, "There is none who seek after God" (Rom. 3:11).

It says they love the darkness, they hate the light; neither will they come to the light least their deeds be exposed (John 3:19-20). The only thing they drink in is iniquity like water (Job 15:16). But the night I was confronted with the spiritual nature of God's law and understood that God requires truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6), that He saw my thought-life and considered lust to be the same as adultery, hatred the same as murder, I began to say, "I can see I'm condemned.

What must I do to be made right?" I began to thirst for righteousness. The law put salt on my tongue. It was a schoolmaster to bring me to Christ. Charles Spurgeon said, "They will never accept grace until they tremble before a just and holy law."

D.L. Moody, John Bunyan, John Newton, who wrote "Amazing Grace" (and if anyone had a grip

on grace it was Newton), he said that "the correct understanding of the harmony between law and grace is to preserve oneself from being entangled by errors on the right hand and on the left." And Charles Finney said, "Evermore the law must prepare the way for the gospel." He said, "To overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the church with false converts." Saints, the first thing David Wilkerson said to me when he called me on his car phone was, "I thought I was the only one who didn't believe in follow-up." Now, I believe in feeding a new convert; I believe in nurturing him. I believe in disciplining him--biblical and most necessary. But I don't believe in following him. I can't find it in Scripture. The Ethiopian eunuch was left without follow-up. How could he survive? All he had was God and the Scriptures. You see, follow-up...now let me explain follow-up for those of you who don't know. Follow-up is when we get decisions, either through crusades or local church, and we take laborers from the harvest field, who are few as it is, and give them this disheartening task of running after these decisions to make sure they're going on with God. What it is is a sad admission of the amount of confidence we have in the power of our message and in the keeping power of God.

If God has saved them, God will keep them. If they're born of God, they'll never die. If He's begun a good work in them, He'll complete it to that day (Philip. 1:6); if He's the author of their faith, He'll be the finisher of their faith (Heb. 12:2). He's able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him (Heb. 7:25). He's able to keep them from falling and present them faultless before the presence and glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). Jesus said, "No one will pluck you from my father's hand" (John 10:29). You see, saints, the problem is that Lazarus is four days dead (John 11). We can run in the tomb, we can pull him

out, we can prop him up, we can open his eyes, but "he stinketh" (vs. 39). He needs to hear the voice of the Son of God. And the sinner is four days dead in his sins. We can run up and say, "Say this prayer." Still, he needs to hear the voice of the Son of God, or there is no life in him; and the thing that primes the sinner's ear to hear the voice of the Son of God is the law. It's a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ that he might be justified through faith (Gal. 3:24). Saints, the law works; it converts the soul (Ps. 19:7). It makes the person a new creature in Christ. That old things pass away; behold, all things are become new (2Cor. 5:17). So find yourself a sinner, and experiment on him. But as you do so, remember this one anecdote. You're sitting on a plane, sipping your coffee, biting a cookie, and watching a movie. It's a good flight, very pleasurable, when suddenly you hear, "This is your captain speaking. I have an announcement to make. As the tail section has just fallen off of this plane, we're about to crash. There's a 25,000 foot drop. There's a parachute under your seat; we'd appreciate it if you'd put it on. Thank you for your attention, and thank you for flying with this airline." You say, "What!? 25,000 feet!? Man, am I glad to be wearing this parachute!" You look next to you; the guy next to you is biting his cookie, sipping his coffee, and watching the movie. You say, "Excuse me, did you hear the captain? Put the parachute on." He turns to you and says, "Oh, I really don't think the captain means it. Besides, I'm quite happy as I am, thanks." Don't turn to him in sincere zeal and say, "Oh, please, put the parachute on. It will be better than the movie." Now, that doesn't make sense. If you tell him that somehow the parachute will improve his flight, he's going to put it on for a wrong motive. If you want him to put it on and keep it on, tell him about the jump. You say, "Excuse me, ignore the captain if you wish. Jump without a parachute...SPLAT!" He says, "I'm sorry; I beg your pardon." "I said, if you jump without a parachute, law of gravity. 'Ppppbbbt' on the ground." "Ah! Goodness me! I see what you're saying!"

Thank you very much!" And as long as that man has knowledge he has to pass through the door and face the consequences of breaking the law of gravity, there's no way you're going to get that parachute off his back, because his very life depends on it. Now, if you look around you, you'll find there are plenty of passengers enjoying the flight. They're enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. Go up and say, "Excuse me. Did you hear the command from our Captain about salvation, 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.'

" He turns to you and says, "Oh, I really don't think God means it. God is love. Besides, I'm quite happy as I am, thanks." Don't turn to him in sincere zeal without knowledge and say, "Please, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll give you love, joy, peace, fulfillment, and lasting happiness. You've got a God-shaped vacuum in your heart only God can fill. If you have a marriage problem, drug problem, alcohol problem, just give your heart to Jesus." No. You'll give him the wrong motive for his commitment.

Instead say, "Oh, God, give me courage!" and tell him about the jump. Just say, "Hey, it's appointed to man once to die. If you die in your sins, God will be forced to give you justice, and His judgment is going to be so thorough. Every idle word a man speaks he'll give account thereof on the day of judgment; if you've lusted, you've committed adultery. If you've hated someone, you've committed murder. And Jesus warned that justice will be so thorough, the fist of eternal wrath will come upon you and [SMACK] grind you to powder.

God bless." Now saints, I'm not talking about hell-fire preaching. Hell-fire preaching will produce fear-filled converts. Using God's law will produce tear-filled converts. This one comes because why? He wants to escape the fires of hell. But in his heart, he thinks God is harsh and unjust, because the law hasn't been used to show him the exceeding sinful nature of sin. He doesn't see hell as being his just desert, that he deserves hell. Therefore, he doesn't understand mercy or grace; and, therefore, he lacks gratitude to God for His mercy.

And gratitude is the prime motivation for evangelism. There'll be no zeal in the heart of a false convert to evangelize. But this one comes knowing he has sinned against heaven. That God's eye is in every place beholding the evil and the good and God has seen darkness, as though it were pure light. He's seen his thought life. If God in His holiness on the day of wrath made manifest all the secret sins of his heart, all the deeds done in darkness, if he made manifest all the evidence of his guilt, God could pick him up as an unclean thing and cast him into hell and do that which is just.

But instead of giving him justice, he's given him mercy. He's commended his love toward him in that while he's yet a sinner Christ died for him. He falls on his knees before that blood-stained cross, and he says, "Oh, God, if You do that for me, I'll do anything for You. I delight to do Your will, oh, my God. Your law is written upon my heart." And like the man who knew he had to pass through the door and face the consequences of breaking the law of gravity and would never take his parachute off because his very life depended on it, so he who comes to the Savior, knowing he has to face a holy God on the day of wrath, would never forsake the righteousness of God in Christ because His very life depends on it.

Let me see if I can coagulate this teaching as we draw it to a close. I was in a store some time ago, and the owner of the store was serving a customer and using God's name in blasphemy. Now, if somebody used my wife's name in blasphemy, I would be extremely offended if they used her name as a curse word in that sense. But this guy was using God's name as a curse word, when God had given him life, his eyes, the ability to think, his children, his food; every pleasure he's ever had was given to him by the goodness of God, and he's using God's name as a curse word. Indignantly, between him and his customer, I leaned and said, "Excuse me. Is this a religious meeting?" The guy says, "What? H-E-L-L no!" "Yes it is, because now you're talking about hell. Let me get you one of my books." So I went out to my car and got a book that I've written called God Doesn't Believe in Atheists: Proof the Atheist Doesn't Exist. And it's a book which uses logic, humor, reason, and rationalism to prove the existence of God, which you can do in two minutes without the use of faith. It's a very simple thing to conclusively, absolutely prove God's existence; and it proves also that the atheist doesn't exist. In fact, let me show you our bumper sticker. "National Atheist's Day: April 1." So I gave him this book, and two months later I went in and gave him another book I've written called My Friends Are Dying! A book which is a true and gripping story about the ministering of the gospel in the most murderous portion of Los Angeles; a book which also uses humor in its presentation. I gave him those books and he called me and told me what had happened. He told me his wife kept giving him filthy looks, because there he was reading a book called My Friends Are Dying! and laughing every two minutes. But he was cleaning out his room and he picked up God Doesn't Believe in Atheists. He said, "Ah," and he opened it up and read the first page and then he read the whole book, 260 pages. He said, "It was weird because I hate reading."

Then he read My Friends Are Dying!, gave his life to Christ, bought himself a Bible, came around to say, "Hi," and told me after two days of being a Christian, in his Bible he was already up to what he called the book of "Lev-ih-tie- kus." And I guess he was going to read "Palms" and then John. But up until his commitment, the man was a practicing witch. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." And it's as though God looked down upon me, as for many years I open-air preached, and as I fought off the enemy with the feather duster of modern evangelism, it's as though God said, "What are you doing?"

My weapons are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds (2Cor. 10:4). Here are ten great cannons." And as I lined up the ten cannons of God's law, no longer did sinners scoff and mock. No, their faces went pale; they lifted their hands and said, "I surrender all! All to Jesus I freely give!" They came across to the winning side never to become deserters. Such converts become soul winners,

not pew warmers, laborers, not layabouts, assets, not liabilities for the local church.

And now saints, with every head raised and every eye open, and no music playing, let me challenge you as to the validity of your salvation. Modern evangelism says, "Never question your salvation." The Bible says the exact opposite. It says, "Examine yourself and see if you're in the faith" (2Cor. 13:5). Better now than on the day of judgment. The Bible says "make your calling and election sure" (2Pet. 1:10), and some of you know that something is radically wrong in your Christian walk.

You lose your peace and joy when the flight gets bumpy. There is a lack of zeal to evangelize. You never fell on your face before Almighty God and said, "I've sinned against You, oh God! Have mercy upon me!" You've never fled to Jesus Christ and His blood for cleansing, in desperation crying out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And there's a lack of gratitude; there's not a burning zeal for the lost. You can't say you're on fire for God; in fact, you're in danger of being one of the ones that are called "lukewarm" and will be spewed out of the mouth of Christ on the day of judgment (Rev. 3:16) when multitudes will cry out to Jesus, "Lord, Lord."

And he'll say, "Depart from me you worker of iniquity--lawlessness: I never knew you" (Mat. 7:22-23). No regard to the divine law. The Bible says, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity"--lawlessness (2Tim. 2:19). So today you need to readjust the motive for your commitment. Friend, don't let your pride stop you. I would like to pray for you: I'll remain up here, you remain in your seat. And if you'd like to be included in this prayer, I'd like for you to slip up your hand, but remember this.

If you say, "Well, I should put my hand up but what will people think?" that's pride. You prefer the praises of men to the praises of God (John 12:43). Everyone who is proud of heart is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 16:5). God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. So humble yourself before the mighty hand of God; He'll exalt you in due time (1Pet. 5:5-6). Call it a recommittal; call it a committal. But whatever you call it, make your calling and election sure.

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