

The Law of the Spirit

by Samuel Chadwick

The Christian life is a spirit, not a philosophy or ordinance, and is subject to the law of Christ, which is found in such words as faith, prayer, truth, love, and obedience.

Topics: "Spiritual Freedom", "Christian Obedience"

Description

Samuel Chadwick preaches about the relationship between law, grace, love, faith, and the Spirit of Life in the Christian journey. He emphasizes that while believers are set free from the law of sin and death through salvation by grace, they are still under the law of grace and truth. Chadwick highlights the importance of being subject to the law of Christ, even in freedom, and the need for obedience and surrender to Christ's reign in the Kingdom of Grace.

Transcript

There is no escape from law. Grace, love, and faith are all declared to be the end of law, but they are also subject to law. There is a law of grace, a law of love, a law of faith, and a law of the Spirit of Life. The Christian set free from the law of sin and death is still under law. He exchanges one kingdom for another, but in each there is law. Salvation, which is of grace and not of works, brings deliverance from the law of works, but it subjects to the law of grace and truth. St. Paul glories above all others in his liberty through grace. The law has no more authority over him. He conforms to it, or rejects it as a thing of no account. Though free, he brings himself under bondage to all, that he might gain some. To the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; to them that were under the law, as under the law, not being himself under law, that he might gain them that were under the law; to them that were without law, as without law, that he might gain them that were without law. His argument is familiar, and his authority and example are often quoted in defense of diplomacy, expediency, and tact; but there is a vital clause in the argument that is often omitted. The Apostle's freedom was not lawless. All his expediency was subject to law; "Not being without law to God, but under law to Christ" (I Cor. 9:20, 21). Christ was supreme. All expediency was subject to the will of Christ. The freed slave was the free slave of Christ; but he was still a slave; a bondservant subject to the law of Christ. To the Christian "all's Love, and all's Law," just as truly as all's Law and all's Love.

Law and Spirit

There is, therefore, nothing anomalous in the paradox of Law and Spirit. The Christian life is above all else a spirit. It is not a philosophy to be debated; not an ordinance to be observed; not an ethic to be achieved.

Truth and ritual and ethic are important, and in some sense inseparable from Christian life and experience, but they are not of the essence of the Life in Christ. They may exist without it, and they are in no sense essential to it. Theological intelligence is not necessary to salvation. The pedant who makes doctrinal instruction a necessary content of saving faith has missed the most elementary teaching of the New Testament, and professing wisdom, he turns out to be what the Scriptures call a fool. The ritualist is no wiser. In this matter circumcision is nothing; neither is uncircumcision. Sacraments and ordinances have their value, but neither the one nor the other is necessary to a cry; and the promise is to every one that shall call on the Name of the Lord. Good works spring from grace, for faith without works is dead; but no logic can make that mean that grace is conditioned on works. Christianity is a life that must be imparted, before it can be lived. All life is a gift, and the gift of God is eternal life. It is a spirit; the Spirit of Christ indwelling the spirit of man, and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.

The supreme value of all life is in the quality of its spirit. The moral quality of an act is in the spirit that prompts it. Familiarity that is acceptable to a friend is an offense to a stranger. The difference between a caress and an insult is not in the act, but in the spirit. Action is without morality, apart from questions of motive and disposition. It is the spirit that counts. In all work of the soul it is the soul that tells. Law effects nothing; certainly it makes nothing perfect. The most careful observance of technique never makes an artist, a statesman, or an orator, much less a friend, a father, or a lover. Where the spirit reigns, law is forgotten, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Worship is not of rules and regulations, it is a spirit inspired by the Spirit of Life. Preaching may be perfect art and poles away from an Evangel. The power of preaching is in the demonstration of the Spirit. So it is in fellowship. Love is without law. Cupid is of all creatures the most erratic and incalculable; and Christian fellowship is of the breath of the four winds. From first to last the life and work of the Christian Church are not of laws and rules, but of the spirit of common life, begotten of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. The life is the Life of the Spirit, and is therefore not lawless, but subject to the law of the Spirit.

Law and Life

Christ's gift is a gift of Life. It is called Eternal Life, and "the life which is life indeed." Its distinctive feature is not in its duration but in its quality. It is eternal in its quality; the gift of Divine Life from Him Who is "the same yesterday, today, and for ever." Eternal life stands for fullness and fruition; life that is divine in quality and eternal in progression. It is the life of God in man. It comes by the New Birth through Him Who is the Spirit of Life. The same life is common to the Vine and the Branches, the Body and the Head.

All life is subject to law. The laws of different spheres and qualities of life may not be identical, but they are analogous. In some sense the laws of life are common to all life, and the life of the believer is not without law. It needs attention or it will perish, and without cultivation there can be no progress. There are several things in which the law of the Spirit of Life follows the general order of life in other spheres. Life is inward, mysterious, and secret. It dwells somewhere at the seat of the spirit of life, and vitalizes personality without either absorbing or confusing it. The manifestation appears in an endless variety of forms, and yet through them all it is the same life that appears. There is unity of Spirit without a trace of uniformity in manifestation. The life of the One Spirit appears in each, according to the natural aptitudes and temperament of each, making all like Christ and no two exactly like each other.

The law of the Spirit of Life is seen also in its propagation. Life propagates by contact and cooperation. All that lives comes into being by birth, and no living thing is born of one parent. There must be mutual and complementary service. Life lives by propagation, and there is no propagation without co-operation. This

is preeminently true of the law of the Spirit of Life. As the Father is dependent upon the Son for revelation, and the Son dependent upon the Spirit for both revelation and administration, so the Spirit is dependent upon the Church for Evangelization. The Church is the Body of Christ, and the Holy Ghost in His Spirit. No soul enters the Kingdom of God born alone of the Spirit. There is a human agent, as well as a Divine Spirit. This goes far to explain the limitations of the Kingdom, the sterility of the Church, and the barrenness of the saints. Spiritual children come of a travailing Zion. The trouble of the Church is in its declining spiritual birth-rate.

Space fails for extended notice of the laws of protection and progress. These also are subject to law. All life is exposed to peril, and all life is given for cultivation. There must be watchfulness and nourishment, fellowship and exercise, instruction and obedience. Health must be maintained. Waste products must be shed. Carnality must be destroyed, and "the body of sin done away." There must be receptivity, co-operation, discipline, obedience. The life of the soul cannot live haphazard. There is a law of the Spirit of Life by which spiritual life is ruled.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

The Spirit rules. Christ reigns. There are not two Kings in the Kingdom of Grace. The Spirit is never called King, though He is called Lord. He is the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. In all things He is subject to the Son, as the Son is subject to the Father. His mission is to glorify Christ. He takes of the things of Christ, and makes them known to us. He indwells the Body of Christ; and administers the Kingdom of Christ. He calls, equips, and appoints for service. By Him, and of Him, and through Him are all the gifts and power of the Kingdom of God. No soul is begotten of God without Him. No advance of the Kingdom is made but by Him. No victory of grace is won without Him. He is the sole source and medium of grace and power; but in all things it is "in Christ Jesus." Christ is Lord. But the Spirit of Life reigns in the Kingdom of Life. He is a Person in authority. To Him is committed the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven. He reigns in Christ Jesus and for the Kingdom of our Lord. If we would live in the Spirit we must obey the laws of the Spirit. If we would find the power we must obey the law. We must surrender to Christ, for He cannot rule where Christ does not reign. We must yield our bodies with all their powers, for they are His Temples and His instruments of righteousness. We must obey Him, for without obedience there can be neither fellowship nor co-operation. Communion means mutual understanding, mutual consecration, and mutual cooperation, and it is in the communion of the Spirit of Life we find Eternal Life, abiding peace, and prevailing power. The law of the Spirit of Life is found in such words as faith, prayer, truth, love, and obedience. By these the soul lives. Life is before law, but by law life is maintained and developed, and by the law of the Spirit of Life comes the fruit by which God is glorified and man is blessed. Life is often scant for want of law.

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