

The Nature of God

Andrew Wommack

To have a positive relationship with the Lord, we must know His nature and His real character. Is He angry because of our sin, or is He a merciful God who wants to give us His life and blessing, independent of our performance? The Scriptures actually give us two different views of God, not that He has ever changed or done anything differently. There was a period of time that, in the terminology used in the Bible, God “held men’s sins against them.”

This can be compared to raising children. When they’re very young, it isn’t possible to reason with them, to tell them why they should act properly or why they shouldn’t be selfish and take toys away from their brothers or sisters. They have to be told the rules and, if they break them, be disciplined. The rules have to be enforced even though they don’t know about God and the devil, or that they’re giving place to the devil when they are selfish. They may not understand the concepts, but they can understand that if they repeat the action, they will be punished.

In a sense, that’s what the Lord did with the Old Testament. Before people were born again, they didn’t have the spiritual perception we have under the new covenant, so He had to give laws and enforce them with punishment, sometimes even death, to deter them from sin. Because Satan was destroying people through sin, there had to be restraints placed on sin, and they had to be enforced. Although this left the false impression that God didn’t really love us because of our sin, that is not what the Word of God teaches. Romans 5:13 says, “until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law.” “Until the law” means until the days of Moses when God gave the Ten Commandments and other ceremonial laws that applied to the Jewish nation. Up until that time, sin was in the world but wasn’t imputed. The word “impute” is a bookkeeping term: e.g., you go to the store to buy something and say, “put it on my tab.” When it is put on your tab, it is recorded and charged against your account, and the purchase is imputed to you. If they failed to impute it, that means it wasn’t recorded and held against you.

This verse is saying that until the time the Ten Commandments came, sin was not being held against people. That’s an amazing statement. Look at Genesis 3 and 4. Most people have the concept that when Adam and Eve sinned against God, because He was holy and man was now sinful, He could have nothing to do with sinful mankind. They think God drove man out of the Garden to remove him from His presence because a Holy God couldn’t have anything to do with unholy man. They further think that until we clean up our act through right actions, God once again cannot have any relationship with us.

That is contrary to the message Jesus brought. Romans 5:8 says God commended His love toward us and, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; so the New Testament teaches that God extended his love to us while we were living in sin not after we have cleaned up our act. One of the great truths of the Gospel that will change your life is to understand that God loves you just like you are. He loves you so much that if you receive His love, you won’t want to stay as you are. You will change, but you’ll change as a byproduct of God’s love not in order to get His love.

After Adam and Eve sinned against the Lord, Genesis 3:22-23 says, “ And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.” The reason God sent man from the garden was not to banish him from His presence, but so he wouldn’t eat of the Tree of Life and live forever. I believe that was an act of mercy because He didn’t want man to live forever in a body that was subject to depression, disease, and deformities yet be unable to die. The person who knows the Lord has the promise of a glorified body and a new heaven and earth where the suffering we see in the world today will not last forever. God provided something better. He didn’t want man to live forever in a sinful state, subject to all these hurts and pains, so He sent him out of the garden.

In Genesis 4 you can see that He was still fellowshiping with man, still talking with Adam and Eve. He talked with Cain and Abel, and when they came to offer sacrifices to Him, He spoke to them in an audible voice. By their reaction we can see that they were accustomed to hearing His voice, and it didn’t scare them. When Cain killed his brother Abel, the first murderer on the earth, God’s audible voice came from heaven: “Where is your brother Abel?” Cain lied to God, seemingly without compunction. That can happen only if a person is so used to hearing the voice of God that they take it for granted and have no fear of it. All this says is that God was still fellowshiping with mankind and had not broken fellowship as is commonly believed. He was not imputing man’s sins to him.

Does that mean that he condoned their sins or that they were not wrong? No, that’s the reason He eventually gave the law. When He extended mercy instead of punishment toward the first murderer, He put a mark on his forehead and protected him. He said if anyone tried to avenge Abel’s death by killing Cain, He would avenge Cain sevenfold. Further down in Genesis 4, Cain’s great, great, great grandson killed a man in self-defense. He figured if Cain got by with murder, certainly his murder was more justifiable, and if Cain was to be avenged sevenfold, then he, Lamech, would be avenged 70 times sevenfold. God didn’t say that. Lamech was comparing himself with Cain. Because of this, people began to lose perspective on what was really right and wrong. God had to give the law to bring us back to a proper standard. He had to show us that we need a savior and we have to humble ourselves and receive forgiveness as a gift.

Sadly, religion has manipulated and controlled these things to teach that the law was given so you can keep it and thereby earn God’s forgiveness and acceptance. No! The purpose of Old Testament law was to magnify your sin to such a degree that you would despair of ever saving yourself and say, “God, if this is your standard of holiness, I can’t do it. Forgive me, have mercy on me.”

The overall nature of God has always been love. There was a period of time when He wanted to deal with people in mercy. He started holding their sins against them to show them their need, but when Jesus came, He once again removed the law and is showing us that we can be reconciled to Him without keeping the law. We can just throw ourselves on the mercy of God. That’s the good news for you today, and I pray you will understand that God loves you, that love is His nature, and it will cause you to enter into an intimate, close, personal relationship with the Lord.

THE NATURE OF GOD (Outline)

Romans 5:13, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."

1. To have a positive relationship with God, we must know His nature.
2. There are two opinions of God.
 - A. God holds man's sins against him.
 - B. God loves us just the way we are.
3. Before the law, sin was not imputed.
 - A. Sin didn't break God's fellowship with man.
 - B. Adam and Eve were sent from the Garden because of mercy not anger!
Genesis 3:22-23.
4. The purpose of the law was to show us sin and to show us our need for the Savior.

Most religions teach that we need to keep the law to earn God's love.
5. God's love hasn't changed. He offers forgiveness as a free gift.

THE NATURE OF GOD (Teacher's Guide)

1. Read Romans 5:13. What does it mean to “impute?”
To charge to one's account, as in a debt.
2. A. According to Romans 7:7, what was the purpose of the law?
To make sin known.
B. According to Galatians 3:24, what was the purpose of the law?
To show mankind his need of the Saviour, Jesus Christ.
3. Read John 8:1-11 aloud and explain. In this story, how did Jesus deal with the woman caught in adultery?
He did not condemn her. He showed her mercy and grace!
4. A. According to Hebrews 1:1-3, in these last days how has God spoken to us?
By His Son, Jesus Christ.
B. How did Jesus, the Son, represent God?
He was the express, that is, perfect image or illustration, of God the Father.
5. Read aloud Ephesians 2:1-5. Can you see that God's nature is to show grace and mercy to us through Jesus Christ?
Yes.
6. If you asked Jesus Christ to forgive you and be your Savior, by putting your faith and trust only in His sacrifice as payment for your sin, would God show you His true nature of mercy and grace?
Yes! See Luke 18:9-14.

THE NATURE OF GOD (Detailed Teacher's Guide)

Note: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with the person(s) being disciplined. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

¹To have a positive relationship with the Lord, we must know what the nature and real character of God is. Is God angry at us because of our sins, or is God merciful, wanting to give us His life and His blessing, independent of our performance?

The Scriptures give us two different opinions of God. Now, God has never changed; He has not done anything differently, but there was a time where God held man's sins against them (this is the terminology the Bible uses). I can liken this to raising children. When they are very young, you cannot sit down and reason with them, telling them all the reasons why they should act properly—why they shouldn't be selfish and take toys away from their brothers and sisters. With children, sometimes you just have to tell them what the rules are, and if they break them when they are young, you just have to spank them. You have to enforce the rules. Even though they may not know that there is a God or a devil, or that they are giving place to the devil and are operating in selfishness, they can understand that if they break the rules, they will be punished.

In a sense, that is what the Lord did with the people in the Old Testament. Before people were born again, they didn't have the spiritual perception that they do under the new covenant. The Lord had to give laws and enforce them with punishments, even unto death, to deter people from sinning. Satan was destroying man through sin. There had to be a restraint placed upon sin, and it had to be enforced, but this left a false impression that God really didn't love them because of their sins. Yet, that is not what the Word of God teaches.

¹Have you ever thought that God is angry and is just waiting to get you if you mess up?

² Most people have the idea that when Adam and Eve sinned against God, that because God was holy and man was now sinful, God could have nothing to do with sinful mankind. So He drove man out of the garden to get him out of His presence because holy God cannot deal with unholy man. Some people believe that until man cleans up his act through acting right, God cannot have any relationship with him. Yet, this is contrary to the message that Jesus brought.

The Scripture says that God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). The Scriptures teach us in the New Testament that God extended His love toward us while we were still living in sin not after we had cleaned up our act. One of the great truths of the Gospel that will change your life, is to understand that God loves you just like you are. He loves you so much that if you will receive His love, you won't stay as you are. You will change, but that change is a byproduct of God's love not a way to get God's love.

³ In Genesis 3:22-23 it says (after Adam and Eve sinned against the Lord), "And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: ²³Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken." The reason God sent man out of the Garden wasn't to get man away from His presence but so he wouldn't take of the tree of life, eat of it and live forever. I believe that was an act of mercy because God didn't want man to live forever in a body that was subject to depression, sickness, disease, and deformities yet not able to die. A person who knows the Lord, has the promise of receiving a glorified body, a new heaven, and earth where things are going to be new. The suffering that we now see in the world today is not going to last forever.

⁴ The sad point is that religion has manipulated and controlled things to where it is taught that the law was given for us to keep and thereby earn God's forgiveness and acceptance, but that is not true. The law was given to magnify your sin to such a degree that you would despair of ever saving yourself so that you would say, "God, if this is what your standard of holiness is, I can't do it. Forgive me, have mercy on me." That's the purpose of the Old Testament law.

² (a) According to Romans 5:6 God's love was directed toward us when we were what? without strength (helpless).

(b) According to Romans 5:6 God's love was directed toward us when we were what? ungodly.

(c) According to Romans 5:8 God loved us while we were? sinners.

(d) According to Romans 5:10 God loved us while we were? enemies. God's love is without cause. It is not caused by anything good in us.

³ (a) According to Philippians 3:21, what is our body now called?

(b) What is it called in 1 Corinthians 15:53?

(c) What is it called in 1 Corinthians 15:44?

⁴ What does Galatians 2:16 say about trying to be saved by the law?

⁵The overall nature of God has always been love. There was a time when He wanted to deal with people in mercy. He started holding their sins against them to show them their need for a Savior. When Jesus came, He fulfilled the law and showed us that we can be reconciled unto God without keeping the law but by throwing ourselves on the mercy of God. That's the Good News for you today, and I pray that you will understand that God loves you. That's the nature of God, and it will cause you to enter into an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord.

⁵(a) According to Galatians 3:24, what was the real purpose of the law?

(b) How does God offer to us His righteousness today? (Romans 3:21-22 - Apart from the law and through faith in Jesus Christ).

THE NATURE OF GOD (Discipleship Questions)

Read Romans 5:13.

Definition: Impute – to charge to one’s account as in a debt.

1. If there is no law, is sin charged or imputed against us?

Read Romans 7:7-8.

2. Is law sin?
3. How would we have known sin?
4. In verse 8, when was sin dead?

Read Galatians 3:24-25.

5. Who was the law to us?
6. What was its purpose?
7. Once we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, do we still have the need of the “tutor”?

Read John 8:1-11.

8. What was the woman caught doing?
9. Who brought the woman to Jesus?
10. What do you think their intent was by bringing her to Him?
11. In your own words, what did Jesus say to the Pharisees in verse 7?
12. For those who heard, what were they convicted by?
13. What was Jesus response toward the woman in verse 11?
14. Did Christ condemn her?
15. What was Jesus’ command toward her?
16. Do you believe that Jesus deals with you in the same manner?

17. Do you believe that if Jesus were standing before you now that He would also command you to sin no more?
18. What is your response?

Read Hebrews 1:1-3.

19. How and when did God speak in times past to the fathers by the prophets?
20. Now in the last days how does God speak to us?
21. “Whom he hath appointed _____ of _____, by whom also he _____ the worlds.” (verse 2)
22. In the first part of verse 3, how did Jesus represent God?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
23. How did Jesus “uphold all things”?
24. What did Jesus do after “he had by himself purged our sins”?

Read Ephesians 2:1-7.

25. While we were still dead in trespasses and sin, what did God do for us?
26. Who is the prince of the power of the air?
27. How did we conduct ourselves while we were sons of disobedience?

(BUT; a very small word that negates all that came before it in order to reveal the promise that comes after it.)
28. What is the conclusion of God’s rich mercy and great love toward us? (verse 5)
29. (Verse 6) “And _____ us up together, and made us sit together in the _____ in _____.”
30. What was God’s purpose for raising us up? (verse 7)
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

31. Read Romans 5:6-8.
God's love was directed toward us while we were what?

- A. _____
- B. _____

Read Romans 5:8-11.

- 32. God still loved us while we were still what?
- 33. What did we receive through Jesus Christ? (verse 11)

Read Philippians 3:20-21.

- 34. If you are in Christ Jesus, where is your citizenship? Heaven earth hell
- 35. What is going to happen to your lowly body?
- 36. What is Jesus able to subdue to Himself?
- 37. What does ALL mean? _____

Read 1 Corinthians 15:53-55.

- 38. What two things are our lowly bodies called in verse 53?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
- 39. What is the consequence of our bodies becoming immortal and incorruptible?
- 40. Verse 55 "O _____, where is thy _____?
O _____, where is thy _____?"

Read Galatians 2:16.

- 41. What does this scripture say about being saved by law?
- 42. What are we saved by if it is not law?

Read Romans 3:21-22.

- 43. How does God offer to us His righteousness today?

THE NATURE OF GOD
(Discipleship Answer Key)

1. No
2. No
3. Through the law
4. Apart from the law
5. Our tutor
6. To bring us to Christ
7. No
8. Adultery
9. Scribes and Pharisees
10. Accuse Him
11. He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone
12. Their own conscience
13. Where are your accusers?
14. No
15. Sin no more
16. Yes
17. Yes
18. Help me! My desire is to sin no more
19. Various times, various ways
20. Through Jesus
21. Heir – All things - Made
22. A. Being the brightness of His glory
B. Express image of His person
23. By the word of His power
24. Sat down at the right hand of God
25. Made alive
26. Devil
27. Fulfilled the lusts of our flesh and mind
children of wrath
28. Even though we were dead, He made us
alive-by grace you have been saved
29. Raised – heavenly places – Christ Jesus
30. a. Show the exceeding riches of His grace
b. In His kindness toward us in Christ
31. Ungodly without strength
32. Sinners
33. Reconciliation
34. Heaven
35. Be transformed to His glorious body
36. All things
37. Everything – not one thing left out
38. A. Corruptible
B. Mortal

39. Death is swallowed up in victory
40. Death – Sting – Hades - Victory
41. We cannot be saved by the law
42. By the faith of Christ
43. Through faith in Jesus Christ

NATURE OF GOD

By Andrew Wommack
(Additional Information)

You are probably asking, “Well , if Jesus is the true nature of God, just exactly what was God doing in the Old Testament?” The Word of God tells us clearly what God was doing.

“For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”
(Romans 5:13)

When we use the term “Law,” we can be referring to all of the Old Testament, but the Law used in context of this scripture is more specific. When we say Law here, we are referring to the Mosaic Law, which includes the Ten Commandments, judgments, punishments, and all of the ordinances and ceremonial observances.

Romans 5:13 shows us that before the Law, or before the Law of Moses was introduced, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no Law. The word “impute” means to take what you have done and apply it to your account, or to hold transgressions against you. In other words, sin was not being held against people until God gave the Law to Moses.

Any person who really understands the goodness of God runs straight to Him when they mess up. Yet many of us, when we get into problems, and especially if we aren’t living a godly life, run from God.

What’s the first thing that happens when we sin and our conscience convicts us that we’ve done wrong? The first thing that happens to most believers when they sin is that they start feeling guilty and condemned, and they begin avoiding God. They know they have broken God’s Law.

Usually when a believer knows they have broken the Law, they don’t want to be confronted by God. They are afraid He is going to reject them or bring some terrible punishment on them if they go near Him. So they forget their Bible study and skip their prayer time. They avoid church and the people of God because they are afraid they will be exposed.

Do you relate to what I’m sharing? Maybe you know somebody who got into sin and eventually stopped going to church, or maybe I am describing you. When you sin, you may not even think it through enough to verbalize what’s actually happening, but in your heart you’re fearful of coming before God. You’re a person, and you feel that He will find no value in your life.

Then there’s the punishment part. Most of us who are born again don’t believe God is going to send us to hell for a few sins, but we believe He will not continue to fellowship with us, protect us, or provide for us. We think there has to be some groveling in the dirt and major humiliation to get God to go easy on us. This attitude drives us from God. Where does this attitude come from?

The Law Brings Condemnation and Gives Strength to Sin

We have discussed how the Old Testament is not an exact representation of God, but it goes much deeper than that. The old covenant was an inferior covenant to the New Covenant. The whole book of Hebrews addresses this concept in detail, but here are a few scriptures to illustrate my point.

“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (Hebrews 8:6-7).

“In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old, Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13).

“Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Hebrews 7:22).

The Old Covenant couldn't make anything perfect, so God had to bring in something better. This is the New Covenant, which was by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The New Covenant brought greater glory to God than the Old Covenant.

“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: ⁸How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? ⁹For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. ¹⁰For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. ¹¹For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (2 Corinthians 3:7-11).

This passage of Scripture also says that the Old Testament administers death and condemnation!

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law” (1 Corinthians 15:55-56).

This passage of Scripture says that the Old Testament Law gave strength to sin! The truth we are seeing here is, if it hadn't been for the Old Testament Law, brought into being through Moses, sin would not have had strength to destroy us. I know this may be challenging your theology. In fact, this may just make everything tilt on the inside of you. But we need to come to grips with some truths to harmonize the Old Testament Law with New Testament grace, love, and forgiveness.

“What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ⁸But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. ⁹For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. ¹⁰And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death” (Romans 7:7-10).

Did you know there was a period of time in your life when sin was “dead”? Then you gained the knowledge of right and wrong, and the Law came into your understanding. Sin was present before, but it wasn’t dominating or controlling you. Sin was “dead.”

Once you were confronted with the Law and saw God’s perfect, holy standard, you realized how sinful you were. Concupiscence is uncontrolled lust or desire. Did you know that the Old Testament Law actually drew uncontrolled lust or desire out of you? You heard the commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” and you saw yourself as a covetous maniac!

The Law points to your sin, brings it to life, and condemns you for it!

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19).

Have you ever felt guilty? Do you know where that came from? You got that through the Law, through the Old Testament administration. The Law makes you feel guilty. It condemns you according to 2 Corinthians 3:9 and Romans 3:19.

Condemnation is not to be confused with the conviction of the Holy Spirit, however. Thank God for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit! He’s on the inside of you and will let you know immediately if what you are thinking of doing or have done is sin or not God’s will for your life. Conviction draws you to God and leads you in His ways. Condemnation drives you away from the intimacy of God and makes you feel helpless to do anything but sin.

Most believers would agree that Satan is the author of condemnation, but one of the biggest things he uses to minister condemnation to us is the Old Testament Law. We frequently rebuke the condemnation of the devil, but sometimes condemnation comes from thoughts established in us through religion.

A recurring nightmare I had as a teenager was that I smoked one cigarette and went to hell for it. This is a pure example of how the Law condemns us, kills us, and sends us to hell.

“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” (Romans 3:20).

The Bible says the purpose of the Law is to give you the knowledge of sin—not knowledge of Jesus, God, forgiveness, or any doctrine that is so well expressed through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law pointed your attention to yourself, your sin, and your unworthiness.

The Law and Faith

Now not everything from Genesis to Malachi is Law. There is also a tremendous amount of faith in the Old Testament, but you’ve got to look for it. This is because the Old Testament was basically an administration of Law, and the Bible says,

“So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. ¹⁰For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is the every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. ¹²And the law is not of faith” (Galatians 3:9-12).

I'm glad Paul said that instead of me! I would get in trouble with the religious crowd for saying “the law is not of faith.” Put that together with Romans 14:23, which says, Whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and you can see that a New Testament believer trying to please God by living under Old Testament Law is not in faith and is actually in sin.

Correct Use of the Law

“But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed” (Galatians 3:23).

People had been trusting themselves for salvation thinking, Well, I'm really pretty good. I haven't done anything terribly wrong in a long time, and surely I'm alright now. After the Law was given, they began to realize, “Even if I never sin again, I can't do anything to atone for my past sins.” They began to realize the hopelessness of their situation.

“But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; ⁹Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:8-10).

There is a right purpose and use of the Law. The correct purpose of the Law is to give revelation to a person who does not see his need for God. A person who does not understand he has transgressed against God has deceived himself, and the Law can be used to show that he is not going to heaven without salvation through Jesus.

I was ministering in Houston, Texas, when a man stood up in one of my services and started yelling at me. I tried to talk to him, but he wasn't even coherent. Finally I just rebuked him and told him to sit down, and he did. After the service was over, he came up to the front and sat down in the front row. He was totally spaced out on drugs and could barely talk to me. I told him, “God loves you, and God wants to change your life. He can set you free and take you out of the bondage you're under.”

The man said, “I don't have any problem. I'm not under any bondage. Everything's cool with me. Everything's fine.” I could tell by looking at the guy that it wasn't, so I said, “Look, God Himself can come live on the inside of you and set you free.”

He replied, “I am God. God's in the ceiling. God's in the cement.” He regarded God as a force and concept, not as a real person. He said, “I don't have any sin. Sin is just relative.”

This man had actually hardened and deceived himself to the point where he didn't even understand God's perfect standard. I had started out ministering love, trying to use the goodness of God to lead him to repentance. But the man was so deceived that his conscience was disconnected. He couldn't recognize a true standard of right and wrong.

When I saw that, I started using the law on him. I took the Word of God and I began to reveal his sin to him. I cut him from one side to the other. "You sorry scum of the earth. You think you're all right, but you're not. You don't have any power. You don't have any joy."

I began to reveal every rotten thing on the inside of him—lust, greed, covetousness, and all the other sins God hates. I used the Word of God to whittle him down and show him that he needed a Savior, that he was headed straight for hell unless God intervened in his life. And guess what? The Law cut through all his deception. The moment the Law comes, the conscience will snap back to a proper, godly standard.

I don't care how deceived a person has become or how much they think drugs are alright, free sex is alright; sin is just relative. You minister the Law to them in the right way, and I guarantee you they will see their sinfulness. The Lord will destroy all deception and cause their conscience to work properly.

Incorrect Use of the Law

The purpose of the Law was to show us our need for God. But once we correctly recognize our need for God, the Law is totally incapable of producing the relationship with Him we realize we need. This is where many people have missed it.

After becoming convicted of their sins, they start trying to get a right relationship with God by trying to keep the Law! The Old Testament Law was full of "Thou shalt nots." People interpreted them to say, "God is telling me what I've got to do to earn a relationship with Him. Now, if I'll just keep the Sabbath, if I'll honor my father and mother, if I won't murder, if I won't steal, if I won't bear false witness, and all of these things, then I'll be all right with God."

No, that wasn't what God was teaching. God didn't give the Law so you could keep it and earn your way to heaven—because nobody can keep the whole Law. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." No one has been capable of keeping the Law except Jesus.

God didn't give the Law so that by keeping it you could earn your way to heaven. Rather, God gave the Law to show you how hopeless you were. It was to show you how sinful you were so you would quit trusting in yourself and look to Him for salvation.

Religion preaches the Law. Religion says that unless you come to church and follow an exclusive list of rules, God's not going to answer your prayers, and you'll never get to heaven. But if that was true, none of us could have been born again because we sure weren't living right before we were born again! The Old Testament Law wasn't given so that by keeping it you could earn relationship with God. It was given to show you knowledge of your sin, condemn you, and destroy any hope of trusting yourself for salvation.

The Law Is Like a Red Flag

If you could imagine an old bull lying in a field saying, “I’ve been treating everybody mean. I shouldn’t be this way. I shouldn’t charge everybody who comes through this field, so I’m going to change. I’m not going to be mean anymore. I’m going to be loving toward everybody.” So the bull just lies there in the pasture, chewing his cud and thinking he’s changed. But just because he thinks he’s changed doesn’t mean he has. You try to walk by, and that bull is just looking at you. He doesn’t charge or anything. But pull a red flag out and begin to wave it in front of his face, and suddenly that old bull nature rises up on the inside of him, and here he comes charging!

Did the red flag make the bull mean? No, all it did was draw out what was in him. If a person is deceived, it can be beneficial to draw out the negative stuff on the inside of them. If they think they are all right living a sinful life, pull out the Law and wave it in front of them.

I recall an instance when I knew something was wrong between us and some people we (Jamie and I) were with. Jamie and I had prayed, and finally the last day we were with them, we just agreed together that the problem would come to the surface so we could deal with it. Do you know what happened? A woman exploded at me and started saying I was the devil. She totally flipped out of her mind. Satan tried to kill her that day, and it was a terrible scene. But it was good that the negative stuff came out because we were able to deal with it. It was good because they had been under deception.

These friends of ours didn’t understand what had been going on spiritually, but when they saw how vile that woman became towards me, they recognized something was wrong with her and not me. We countered it with ministry, and we saw all those people set free. We are tremendous friends today.

The Law was used by God in the Old Testament to show mankind his problem—sin—and to reveal the hopelessness of his situation. This is explained to us in the New Testament, and we see how God will still use the Law today if He must.

It was a terrible burden to live under the Old Testament Law, but it was the best God could offer in those days. Some people may say, “Now, wait a minute. You think God wasn’t able to introduce the new covenant back then?” That’s exactly what I’m saying. The Bible says that Jesus was born in the fullness of time (see Galatians 4:4.) Jesus was born just as soon as it was possible for Him to come as the Savior of the human race. Many prophecies had to be fulfilled, certain things had to take place, and God had to deal with mankind and sin in a temporary way by the Law.

Unfortunately, that temporary way has been interpreted by many people as the true representation of the way God is. They think the Law is the way God really wants to deal with mankind, but that is not true! From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, and long after mankind was expelled from the Garden of Eden, God showed His mercy towards mankind and sought for them to come to repentance only by His goodness, always pointing to the Savior who would come.

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