

THE PENTECOST

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Hello, and welcome to the May, 2010, issue of *The Pentecost*. Here, we will be discussing the role of God's Law and how it relates to the Gospel. We will also look at the role of free will in salvation. God bless you.

Shawn Stevens

Just as societies have laws in place to govern their people, God also has laws. Yet, God's laws are in place without any selfish ambition or compromise. God is 100% true, righteous and just. Therefore, in changing times, we can always trust in His law and His love.

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THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
Psalm 19:7

The word "law" may stir up different feelings in different people. It also would be defined differently by different people, and in different contexts. However, law is simply defined as rules of action or activity. In any organized society, there are laws. Governments make laws to govern society. God also has made laws for His creation. The Psalmist tells us that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul (some translations say "reviving the soul") of men and women. What does this mean? The sinful souls of people need converting from their darkened state. They need a transformation to spiritual life and holiness. We are told elsewhere in the Scriptures that the law does not have power, in itself, to produce spiritual life. The Apostle Paul said, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh," (Romans 8:3). This says that God's Law, good and right as it is, does not contain, within itself, the power to enable a person to be holy and spiritual. However, there is another sense in which the Law does have a certain power, and, that is, it shows or reveals to the unredeemed man or woman their sin, and their need of Jesus Christ. Man naturally has, within himself, some sense of conscience and duty. He has a sense of good and evil. However, this sense is distorted and is not fully clear, nor is the seriousness of good and evil fully realized, until God enlightens man by means of Divine Law to, both, his sin and his need of Jesus. When this is realized and acted upon, a person, repentant, runs to Jesus and finds he or she finds the grace, power, life and love needed to redeem, transform and convert them into the spiritual creature that they always were meant to be.

How, again, does the Law work in the process of conversion and salvation? It is a tutor. "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith," (Galatians 3:24). It is a tutor which reveals to a lost man or woman their sin and their need of a Savior. Where are the souls of men or women without this knowledge? These ones are wandering in the world of moral relativism which does not tell them that they are sinners, sinners who, with every heartbeat, are racing to the judgment seat of Christ, where they will be judged. They do not know that they can undergo a judgment here in this life, by which they realize their sin for what it is, agree with God's judgment, turn from their sin in repentance and faith, and experience forgiveness and conversion. This turning around, and conversion, begins with the Holy Spirit bringing the knowledge of personal sin. The Law is a useful means, or tutor, for God to use in bringing this knowledge to our consciences.

Divine Law is like the Bethlehem star which shone above the manger where Christ lay. The wise men saw the star and followed it to Jesus. Likewise, wise men and women today come to God's Law and find it pointing them to Christ. What use is Divine Law in saving a man or woman? A man who is drowning will fight off help from a lifeguard if that man does not know, himself, that he is drowning. Many times it is like that with the salvation of human souls. The unsaved are often offended when they hear a Christian

say that they need Jesus and forgiveness for their sins. This is because they consider themselves to be good persons. They are not good persons; they are sinners and God's Law shows them their guilt and their great need. It gives them knowledge, or a realization, of their condition. I do not mean merely intellectual knowledge but knowledge of a transgressed conscience, which is the knowledge of sin. The word "conscience" means "with knowledge." Paul testified that, "...I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" (Romans 7:7). God's Law makes sin known to us. It also stops the mouths of those who would defend their self-innocence and self-righteousness. Scripture teaches, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:19-20). (Emphasis mine)

It is because by the Law is the nature of sin known, that the revivalist, Charles Finney, said, "Evermore the Law must prepare the way for the Gospel. To overlook this instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience and fill the church with false converts. Time will make this clear." Finney felt so strongly about this that he instructed soul-winners dealing with conscience-awakened souls in these words:

If you find a person awakened, no matter by which means, lose no time in pouring light upon his mind. Do not be afraid, but show him the breadth (HEB 87621, STRONG 87341) of Divine law, and the exceeding strictness of its precepts. Make him see how it condemns his thoughts and life."

Catherine Booth, the co-founder of the Salvation Army, said, "The eyes of the soul must be opened to such a realization of sin, and such an apprehension of the consequences of sin, as shall lead him to an earnest desire to be saved from sin. God's great means for doing this is the law, as the schoolmaster, to drive sinners to receive Christ as their salvation." "The Law prepares the way for the Gospel. It reveals sin. What is sin? The Bible says that "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness is simply living without respect for law. Sin is living without respect for, or obedience to, God's laws. Again, Divine Law spells this out. Sin is primarily against God. David, the king of Israel, said, "I said, 'Lord, be merciful to me, Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.'" (Psalm 41:4). That is why James talks of people being "...convicted by the law as transgressors," (James 2:9). It is also why the minister, Charles Spurgeon, said, "Lower the law and you dim the light by which man perceives his guilt. This is a serious loss to the sinner rather than a gain, for it lessens the likelihood of his conviction and conversion." "If lowering the Law dims the light, then raising, that is, emphasizing or proclaiming the Law, is like shining the light brighter and brighter so that sin, and the need of the Savior, is revealed.

Raising the Law makes sin more visible, or obvious, and I believe that that is why Jesus used it on occasion. We read the following account of Jesus conversing with a lawyer:

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Luke 10:25-28 American Standard Version

This lawyer wanted to know how he could obtain eternal life. Jesus immediately raised the Law. The lawyer then quoted from God's Law. I believe that the desired response that Jesus wanted to hear from the lawyer would have been, "Lord I have broken these laws, and others. How can I be forgiven?" The lawyer did not respond this way, but Jesus did use the Law in this instance.

Imagine a sheep standing in a green field. That sheep looks so clean and white. However, when that same field is full of freshly fallen snow, that same sheep now looks dirty because of the contrast with the brightly clean snow. Souls are like that sheep and the Law is like that snow. Men and women like to think of themselves as good and clean. They may be good and clean in comparison to each other. However, when God's Law becomes the standard, all of a sudden, the illusion of goodness is taken away. The words to one old hymn read, "By God's word at last my sin I learned, then I tumbled at the law I spurned. Till my guilty soul imploring turned, to Calvary."

A man gains an accurate and vivid sense of his guilty soul when God shines His Divine Law upon his conscience. God's Law pierces through all of the reasonings and justifications that men have constructed, and the sinner realizes what he has done and discovers who he really is. The sharp, two-edged sword of God's Word puts a finger on it. The sinner's fig leaves are torn away and he is naked and empty and guilty before God. However, there is good news for him! That is the point; the Law does not just leave us guilty but it points us to Jesus, that we would find, through repentance and faith in Jesus, forgiveness and eternal life. Without the Law, grace has no meaning or necessity. However, with the Law revealing our need, the grace of the Gospel is huge. The Law enlightens man to their sin and their need of salvation. Then they are given the Gospel, which shows them the grace of pardon and a much higher life than what they have been living. Then they see shown the beauty of this higher life, lived out in the life of Jesus. Then they see that Jesus has opened the door to them, calling them in, into a holy life of love and grace. They see that this doorway has been opened to them at a great price, the death of Jesus in payment for our sins. They also feel their obligation to obey the voice of the Lord and to take the pardon which is being extended to them.

The word "law" may stir up fear in the hearts of people but God's Law is perfect, converting or reviving the soul. It does so by showing us our sin and our need for the Savior, Jesus Christ, the only Author of Salvation. Then we come to Jesus and find salvation through Him.

Shawn Stevens

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The following article is taken from The Apostolic Faith magazine of November 1906, the official magazine of the Azusa Street Revival of Los Angeles. This gives us a beautiful picture of the Azusa Street Revival which should challenge us today.

BIBLE PENTECOST

Gracious Pentecostal Showers Continue to Fall.

The news has spread far and wide that Los Angeles is being visited with a "rushing mighty wind from heaven." The how and why of it is to be found in the very opposite of those conditions that are usually thought necessary for a big revival. No instruments of music are used, none are needed. No choir - but bands of angels have been heard by some in the Spirit and there is a heavenly singing that is inspired by the Holy Ghost. . . . No bills have been posted to advertise the meetings. No church or organization is back of it. All who are in touch with God realize as soon as they enter the meetings that the Holy Ghost is the leader. One brother stated that even before his train entered the city, he felt the power of the revival.

Travellers from afar wend their way to the headquarters of Azusa Street. As they enquire their way to the Apostolic Faith Mission, perhaps they are asked, "O, you mean the Holy Rollers," or "It is the Colored Church you mean?" In the vicinity of a tombstone shop, stables and lumber yard (a fortunate vicinity because no one complains of all-night meetings) you find a two-story, white-washed old building. You would hardly expect heavenly visitations there, unless you remember the stable at Bethlehem.

But here you find a mighty pentecostal revival going on from ten o'clock in the morning till about twelve at night. Yes, Pentecost has come to hundreds of hearts and many homes are made into a sweet paradise below. We remember years ago, when a bright, young missionary was dying in Bombay, India, in his last hours, unconscious with the fever, he kept crying, "Pentecost is coming! Pentecost is coming!" It seemed prophetic! Pentecost has come and is coming in India, and thank God in many other places.

A leading Methodist layman of Los Angeles says, "Scenes transpiring here are what Los Angeles churches have been praying for years. I have been a Methodist for twenty-five years. I was a leader of the praying band of the First Methodist Church. We

prayed that the Pentecost might come to the city of Los Angeles. We wanted it to start in the First Methodist Church, but God did not start it there. I bless God that it did not start in any church in this city, but in a barn, so that we might all come and take part in it. If it had started in a fine church, poor colored people and Spanish people would not have got it, but praise God it started here. God Almighty says He will pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh. This is just what is happening here. I want to warn every Methodist in Los Angeles to keep your hands off this work. Tell the people wherever you go that Pentecost has come to Los Angeles."

As soon as it is announced that the altar is open for seekers for pardon, sanctification, the baptism with the Holy Ghost and healing of the body, the people rise and flock to the altar. There is no singing. What kind of preaching is it that brings them? Why, the simple declaring of the Word of God. There is such power in the preaching of the Word in the Spirit that people are shaken on the benches. Coming to the altar, many fall prostrate under the power of God, and often come out speaking in tongues. Sometimes the power falls on people and they are wrought upon by the Spirit during testimony or preaching and receive Bible experiences.

The testimony meetings which precede the preaching often continue for two hours or more and people are standing waiting to testify all the time. Those who have received the baptism with the Holy Ghost testify that they had a clear evidence of sanctification first. Hundreds testify that they received the Bible evidence of speaking in a new tongue that they never knew before. Some have received the "gift of tongues" or "divers tongues" and the interpretation.

The demonstrations are not the shouting, clapping or jumping so often seen in camp meetings. There is a shaking such as the early Quakers had and which the old Methodists called the "jerks." It is while under the power of the Spirit you see the hands raised and hear speaking in tongues. While one sings a song learned from heaven with a shining face, the tears will be trickling down other faces. Many receive the Spirit through the laying on of hands, as they did through Paul at Ephesus.

Little children from eight years to twelve stand up on the altar bench and testify to the baptism with the Holy Ghost and speak

in tongues. In the children's meetings little tots get down and seek the Lord.

It is noticeable how free all nationalities feel. If a Mexican or German cannot speak English, he gets up and speaks in his own tongue and feels quite at home for the Spirit interprets through the face and people say amen. No instrument that God can use is rejected on account of color or dress or lack of education. This is why God has so built up the work.

In the testimony meetings, they report from cottage prayer meetings where perhaps a number were baptized with the Holy Ghost . . . and those who have been seeking at home report what God has done for them. The singing is characterized by freedom. "The Comforter has come" is sung every day, also "Heavenly Sunlight" and "Under the Blood." Often one will rise and sing a familiar song in a new tongue.

Seekers for healing are usually taken upstairs and prayed for in the prayer room and many have been healed there. There is a larger room upstairs that is used for Bible study. A brother fittingly describes it in this way, "Upstairs is a long room furnished with chairs and three California redwood planks laid end to end on buckless chairs. This is the Pentecostal upper room where sanctified souls seek Pentecostal fullness and go out speaking in new tongues."

The sweetest thing of all is the loving harmony. Every church where this has gone is like a part of the family. This description is given for the benefit of the many friends who write in and who would like to be present. So many letters are received in the Apostolic Faith office, which is in the same building as the mission. We cannot but weep as we read these letters and pray for those who are seeking.

REFERENCE

The Apostolic Faith, Vol. 1, No. 3, November 1906, Los Angeles: The Pacific Apostolic Faith Movement.