

Born to Win

To the Law and the Testimony

by Ronald L. Dart

This week, when I did the Weekend Bible Study (which was in Deuteronomy 12 and 13 [*The Book of Deuteronomy #6*]), I came to a section there that I've gone to so many times. It was a *profound* break in my own understanding when I began to understand that the Law was not abolished; it's very much a part of our life. But it took me almost automatically to Isaiah, to a short... what amounts to a piece of poetry in the middle of Isaiah (Because Isaiah is almost entirely poetry. Many don't realize, that but it is.) that I have long found fascinating. It begins in Isaiah, chapter 8 and verse 13.

Now, what I'm doing today is sometimes called "unpacking" a particular passage of Scripture; because it's complicated, it's very complex, there's a *huge* amount of material in it, and we need to kind of drag it out piece by piece and look at it. It begins, again, in Isaiah 8, verse 13:

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹³ Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

Now, the first time to take note of: the small caps "LORD" that you see in your Bibles is the Hebrew word *Yahweh* [יהוה, Strong's H3068]—in English, *Jehovah*. It is the name of God. "Sanctify *him*." Now, if you ever noticed this (particularly in some of the psalms) the use of *Yahweh* is extremely heavy. It's just again and again and again and again. And you, kind of, wonder why it was so then; and why, when you come to the New Testament, it isn't that way. And the answer is really relatively simple. Israel of old sat in the middle of an incredible complex of gods. They were *all over the place*. They were in Israel, where they should not have been, because they had not run them out. And therefore, when you spoke of "the Lord", when you spoke of "God", you had to be very clear who you were talking about.

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹³ Sanctify [Jehovah] of hosts **himself**; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

Now, "let him be your fear, let him be your dread" is what's called a couplet. It's one of the most helpful literary devices you'll ever find in studying things that are written in Hebrew, because the Hebrews were *very* given to couplets—that is, a couplet is essentially two phrases that say the same thing in different words. It's also called parallelism—in other words, two parallel statements side by side. It says the same thing, twice, in parallel form. Sometimes there are *inverse* parallelisms, where it says it one way positively and in another way what it's *not*—which is also helpful if you understand, when you come to them, what they are.

This one, "let him be your fear, let him be your dread", is kind of helpful. Because when it says "let him be your fear", the Hebrew word is *mora* [מורה, Strong's H4172]. And, basically, it has a broad variety of applications having to do with things that you're afraid of and so forth. Okay. What is the sense you choose, then, when it has a broad variety of applications in rendering it in English? Which of

them do you pick? Well, it's helpful because you have a parallel structure: "let him be your dread". Here you have the Hebrew *arats* [אָרַץ, Strong's H6206], which means "to be in awe of" or "to dread". I can honestly say I do not *dread* God in any way or shape of the English language sense of the word "dread". I do stand in awe of him. And I think what we're dealing with here is a fairly simple thing: It's let *him* be your fear and your dread. Don't be in dread or fear of these other gods over here. They're *nothing*. God—Jehovah—is the one you are supposed to stand in awe of. Okay. This is one of those cases. The point of the verse seems to be that, if it means fear and dread, we're not to fear any other—be it person, god, circumstance, or crisis—whatever comes your way. Don't be in fear, and don't be in dread. There's only *one* individual you need to be in fear (in the sense of awe) or dread. Okay.

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹³ Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

¹⁴ And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Now, this is interesting. Again, here we have contrast. "For *you*, he is a sanctuary. *But* he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both houses of Israel (which means Judah in the south, Israel in the north) and for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

So, again, this is a poetic structure. It probably was sung—chanted—in their custom of the time. And I expect it was pretty powerful, depending upon who was actually producing the thing. Okay, for us he's a place of safety—a sanctuary. For the Israelites, he is something else entirely. You have both a contrast (a stone a stumbling), an inverse parallelism, and a regular parallelism in the same verse.

Now, it's useful to notice this, because it's designed by the writer (or speaker or singer) to get his message in focus. We do the same thing. We will say something, and then we will repeat it in other words. We will sometimes say, "Well, in other words... (and here we go)", because of the possibility of ambiguity in *any* language. And this is true. We moan a little bit about the Hebrews, but the fact is it's just as bad in English as it ever has been in any other language—that we say things once, we say them twice, just to be *sure* that what we are driving at is understood. Okay, now this particular passage about the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense is, I think, what Peter is referring to. In fact, I get the feeling he's almost directly quoting this. First Peter... Keep your place in Isaiah; we'll be back there. But I'm going to go to First Peter 2, verse 6 [quoting Isaiah 28:16]:

1 Peter 2

KJ2000

⁶ Therefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be confounded.

In other words, it is sanctuary to us.

1 Peter 2

AKJV

⁷ To you therefore which believe he is precious: but to them which be disobedient [*he then quotes Psalm 118:22*], the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner [*he then quotes Isaiah*],

⁸ And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;

Now, here comes an interesting thing in Peter. You've got to pay attention to these things.

1 Peter 2

AKJV

⁹ [...] that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;

¹⁰ Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

What did that tell you? He's writing to Gentiles, right? He's not writing to a bunch of Jews. Because he says, "in time past you were not a people; but now you are." In every sense of the word. Peter's learned his lesson, by this time, pretty thoroughly, because he was the *first one* that God sent to confront a Gentile with the Gospel [Acts 10], and to confront Peter with the fact that the Gospel was not going to be confined to Hebrews. It was going to *everybody* in the world. Okay, back to Isaiah 8. Now, as I said, what we're doing here is unpacking this chapter so we can understand the implications of it. He says in verse 15:

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹⁵ And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

Peter strongly suggests that this is what happened to the Jews when Jesus came.

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

Do you spot the fact that we've got another parallel, another couplet here? "Bind up the testimony", "seal the law". "Bind up" in the Hebrew [*tsarar*, צָרַר, Strong's H6887] is a little ambiguous. So is "seal" [*chatham*, חָתַם, Strong's H2856]. But together, they clarify. Let's tie up all the loose ends here on the question. Also important to notice from this (and something you might miss otherwise) is that "testimony" and "law" are synonyms. More on that as we proceed through here, but I honestly think a lot of people miss something very important when they don't understand the meaning in the Old Testament of the word "testimony" [*teudah*, תְּעוּדָה, H8584] as it is used here. We'll come back to it. Verse 17:

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹⁷ And I will wait on the LORD, that hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Indeed, many were doing *exactly* that when Jesus came. Two people who were in this category of people who were *really* looking for him when he came are described in the second chapter of Luke, by name. And I think we'll go over there right now, because I'd like to kind of underline the fulfillment of this prophecy. It paints in the background of a picture here. This is Luke 2:22:

Luke 2

AKJV

²² And when the days of her [*Mary's*] purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished [*This is after the birth of Jesus.*], they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

²³ (As it is written in the law of the LORD, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) [*So he had to be presented.*]

²⁴ And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

²⁵ And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was on him.

²⁶ And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

I don't know how that got to him. I don't know how that was presented to him. It's not explained. Just *somehow* he knew (and when Luke tells the story, *Luke* knows that it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit) that he was going to see the Lord's Christ. Not everybody had that revelation. This man apparently deserved it.

Luke 2

AKJV

²⁷ And he came by the Spirit [*Apparently he was moved that particular day.*] into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

²⁸ Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

²⁹ Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace, according to your word:

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

And every time I read this, it gives me a little children to think about *actually holding* Jesus in your hands as a baby. What did he look like? To me, when they say "Pretty baby", I look and say, "Looks like every other baby to me." But I haven't had one of my own, so I'm not a terribly objective person in that regard. Babies are babies. And people hand me one and say, "Do you want to hold it?", I think: No, I don't think I want to hold this child. I'm glad you've got this child. I love little children. But I'm *insecure* about holding them. Well, Simeon wasn't. And the idea of what he was able to hold in his hands at this particular time must have been *incredible* to him. He said:

Luke 2

AKJV

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ Which you have prepared before the face of all people;

³² A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.

³³ And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him.

Although they already *themselves* had had the testimony of the angel of God, they marveled that *he* had this.

Luke 2

AKJV

³⁴ And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

³⁵ (Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

He's going to be spoken against. What for? So that we'll understand what is in the hearts of an awful lot of people.

Luke 2

AKJV

³⁶ And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

³⁷ And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years [*84 years old*] which departed not from the temple, [...]

I guess she ate there, slept there, lived there—day-in, day-out.

Luke 2

AKJV

³⁷ [...] but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

³⁸ And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise to the Lord, and spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

The implication here is there is going to be a very different response to Jesus on the part of different kinds of people—different hearts, different minds, different lifestyles, and so forth. And it would seem we see much of the same thing to this day. Back in Isaiah 8, verse 18:

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwells in mount Zion.

Now, to understand this you've got to go all the way back to verse one of chapter eight, because he starts talking about the children that he was to have. Isaiah, his wife, his kids, he says, were for signs and types. Now, just to briefly explain (because I think I have explained it before): The Greek language uses the term (and the Hebrew does as well)...a "type" is actually a die. You can have something almost like a cold chisel that has a flat plate on the end with a letter, shall we say, of the alphabet, or the image of something or other, on it. You can put it onto a piece of metal, you can whack it with a hammer, and it puts whatever is on that into the metal (assuming the metal is softer than the die). The die is the type. The image it strikes is the anti-type. And, generally speaking, the anti-type is what you're after; the die itself will be in reverse of what finally makes it down here. So Isaiah basically says, "I and my children are for signs and wonders [symbols] in Israel", and he's talking about types. Chapter eight, verse one; the way he starts this out, he says:

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹ Moreover the LORD said to me, Take you a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Mahershalalhashbaz.

And you will have no idea how many times I had to pronounce that to be sure I got it right in class when I was teaching this. It's a real jawbreaker of a name. It has meaning in Hebrew. It's like Indians in this country. You know, you have Chief Thundercloud, Chief Something-Chases-the-Fox. Their names all means something in their language.

Isaiah 8

AKJV

² And I took to me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.

³ And I went to the prophetess; and she conceived, and bore a son. [...]

Okay, who's the prophetess? Probably Mrs. Isaiah—his wife. She conceived and bore a son.

Isaiah 8

ERV

³ [...] Then said the LORD unto me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

⁴ For [*And this is where the meaning comes.*] before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria.

Now, let me put you back in the picture of this. This is a time well before the rise of Babylonia as a world power. Assyria was a *huge* power in the east. Also, though, you had in this particular case, Syria—headquartered in Damascus (which, I think, is to this day the oldest continuing city on the face of the earth). From Damascus in Syria, along with the northern tribes of Israel, they had gotten into confederation and were now coming and looking in the general direction of Jerusalem with what they were going to do. God's telling them, through Isaiah, "Don't worry about it. Before this child—that your wife has just conceived—is old enough to know his right hand from his left, to know good food from bad food, or whatever; before that child grows up in any degree at all, *both* these lands are going to be forsaken of their kings. The king of *Assyria* is going to be coming in. *That's* what you've got to worry about; not Damascus, and not Samaria."

Isaiah 8

AKJV

⁵ The LORD spoke also to me again, saying,

⁶ For as much as this people refuses the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;

⁷ Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up on them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks:

⁸ And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

"O Immanuel" comes right out of the blue. It means "God is with us", as we all know. And it found its way into Handel's *Messiah*, and with good reason. Because, as you read through this whole segment, it's one of the best examples (let's say Isaiah 7 through about 9) of *duality* in prophecy—type and anti-type, historical fulfillments that have still got something way out ahead of them in the future to be fulfilled. Now, verse 19 in Isaiah seems to change the subject. But it doesn't; not really.

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹⁹ And when they shall say to you, Seek to them that have familiar spirits, and to wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek to their God? for the living to the dead?

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Now, as I already pointed out to you, “law” and “testimony” are used in this segment of the Bible as synonyms; they’re not different things. And I’ll go on with that, as well, continuing to unpack the message. This is also reminiscent of Saul going to a witch to consult Samuel, who was dead. Remember the instance [1 Samuel 28]? He went to the Witch of Endor and he said, “Bring me up Samuel.” And she did. And whenever she saw Samuel, she was terrified. She did not realize, apparently, what was happening here until it actually had happened. That, in itself, is a *really* interesting story. But what has happened here is Saul—the living—has gone to Samuel—the dead—to consult him, *absolutely contrary* to any instructions that God ever gave anybody. He didn’t have to go there. He’d already been told what the story was. (Of course, what Samuel told him was not very pleasant either.)

It’s really, “Why do you fool around with mediums and spiritists? Why don’t you look to God, who is alive? What are you doing consulting the dead?” But then comes the climax. You seek to God. Okay, how do you do that?

Isaiah 8

AKJV

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

So he brings back the law and the testimony—a couplet and synonyms. Now, I had never thought of this until I heard a scholar in conference point it out. In Exodus 25... We’ll be back to Isaiah again. You can remember that for the whole sermon. But in Exodus 25, verse 10, the instructions come along for the making of the ark.

Exodus 25

AKJV

¹⁰ And they shall make an ark of shittim wood [*I think that’s acacia in other translations.*]: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

You can visualize the rough proportions. A cubit is about the distance from the elbow to the tip of the finger. And, of course, since we’re all different that means it varies somewhat. $2 \frac{1}{2}$ is the length of it. $1 \frac{1}{2}$ is the breadth. $1 \frac{1}{2}$ is the height.

Exodus 25

ASV

¹¹ And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.

¹² And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four feet thereof; and two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it.

¹³ And thou shalt make staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.

These are the things you’re supposed to *carry* this ark with, and the instructions are *very explicit*: It had rings on the side, you were to put the staves through the rings, and men could get on both ends of it, and they’d carry it with the staves. They were not supposed to touch the ark. Once it was finished, once it was sanctified, it had to be left strictly free of the hands of Man. Some people *died* because they did not take that seriously [1 Samuel 6, 2 Samuel 6]. (Of course, that’s also the subject of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*—that rather exciting and humorous adventure movie that came along some time ago.)

Exodus 25

AKJV

¹⁴ And you shall put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.

¹⁵ The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.

You just leave it there, just like that.

Exodus 25

AKJV

²¹ [...] and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you.

Now, what in the world might that be? You think about it just for a moment. If you've read your Bible and you recall, there was nothing in the ark except the two tables, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. And that was it. So, when he says, "You shall put in the ark the testimony", that's a pretty strong indication that we're talking about those two tables of the Ten Commandments, right? And the way this scholar, when we were talking, put it to us, he said this. He said, "If God were going to come into court, as it were, and give his testimony. 'This is what', God says, 'I have to say to you.'" That testimony is the Ten Commandments—the two tablets. In Exodus 25, verse 21:

Exodus 25

NIV '84

²¹ Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.

²² There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, [...]

Now, I think this is the first time in the Bible that the ark is given a name. And the name is not "the Ark of the Covenant", it's "the Ark of the Testimony". And it is named *for* those two tablets that went inside it. Okay? What was this? Like I say, this testimony can *only* be the Ten Commandments. He says:

Exodus 25

NIV '84

²² [...] I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

So the Ark of the Testimony was called *that* before it was ever called the Ark of the Covenant. You'd have to do your own research to find out where that change begins to take place and the reasons for it. Exodus 26, verse 33:

Exodus 26

NIV '84

³³ Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. [...]

Everybody knows about that curtain. That's the one that was rent in two, from top to bottom, when Jesus died. "Put it in there."

Exodus 26

NIV '84

³³ [...] The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

³⁴ Put the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place.

(Now, when you find me not in the King James Version, I am either paraphrasing the King James Version or I'm in the NIV. You'll have to figure that out for yourself.) Exodus 30:

Exodus 30

NIV '84

⁵ Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.

⁶ Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony—before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony—where I will meet with you.

Is it not yet completely clear? Exodus 31:

Exodus 31

AKJV

¹⁸ And he gave to Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him on mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Why was that important? It's worth thinking about that for a moment. Because he could have dictated it, and Moses could have got a hammer and chisel. Moses could have done that. But that was not to be. This is a covenant that's going to be established, not between *Moses* and the people, between *God* and the people. And that's why the people had to come around Mt Sinai. That's why they had to hear the voice of God *speak these words himself*. They could not make something up in their own mind and hearts saying, "Oh, Moses came up with that. That's just Moses' idea." They knew better than that, because they had heard the voice of God and it scared them *slap to death*. They didn't want to hear it again; it was a little bit too much for everybody. Okay. And they were written with his own finger. Why? Because they were *his* testimony, not Moses', and it needed to be done that way.

So God comes to testify. He gives us the heart and core of what will form the relationship between God and Man. What is it? The Ten Commandments. Very simple. These are the Testimony of God; everything else is commentary. I'll repeat that for you. The tables of stone—these are the Testimony of God; everything else is commentary.

Now, you will find, later, administrative laws. You will find, later, various and sundry judgements about the Law—decisions that have to be made because there were peculiar circumstances. But *all* of it keeps coming back to this point. Even the laws which you may think are ceremonial, even the laws you may think are temporal; they still were for the purpose of keeping people mindful of *who God was—is—right?* They were not to go charging off serving somebody else. They didn't need any new rituals and ceremonies. He gave them what they needed to remember him, stay in touch with him, to be involved in everything they needed so as not to lose track of *who God was*. Okay. Now here's something I might have addressed earlier, but I postponed it until now. Verse 16:

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

That was something... I have overlooked that before, and for some reason this particular time it struck me. The word "disciples" [*limmud*, תלמיד, Strong's H3928] means the same thing that it means in a New Testament. Basically, it means *learners*—those who are being instructed. Jesus had his disciples. And that's why I don't mind calling anybody and everybody who accepts the name of Jesus Christ, and calls himself a Christian... I'll accept the fact that they are Christian in the sense that they are disciples. They are being *taught*. And I can tell you categorically, as a teacher, students don't all get taught very well at the same rate. Sometimes they do well, and sometimes they are blockheads.

Okay. Now, another thing this does is it locks into the meaning of the word “Torah” [תּוֹרָה, Strong’s h8451]—which is the one generally translated “law”—because *Torah* doesn’t exactly mean law. What it means is *instruction*. And it applies to the Law, because that’s what the Law is; it is instruction. You consider the Ten Commandments (think about this); they include nothing about enforcement or administration. They don’t tell you what to do if a man does not honor his father and his mother. There is nothing for the government to do. Nothing for Moses to do. It was an instruction to the individual. It said:

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

What does the one have to do with the other? It has to do with the construct of a set of values in society that lead to a longer life for everybody. And when you get old, you will be *very grateful* that you did what this commandment said. And you will be very grateful you taught your children to do what this commandment said. And you will live longer because of it. You won’t have your kids trying to bump you off to get whatever’s in the will.

So these are the attributes of man’s character and his identity with his God. And one of the most striking things to me about the Sabbath law is:

Deuteronomy 5

AKJV

¹² Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD [*Jehovah*] your God has commanded you.

The Sabbath identifies “your God” by name. You could overlook that real easily. It could just say, “Remember the Sabbath of the Lord your God.” No, it says, “Remember the sabbath of *Yahweh* your God.” As I said, it’s *very* important in that day and time, because there was a god on every street corner. There is a God on every nation. They all had their little things that they did. And Israel had not kept themselves as clean from that as they needed to be. Of course, this is given to them *very early*: Don’t go down those roads and don’t have any mistaking who your God is. The Sabbath is a part of it. The holy days are a part of it. The whole structure of God’s Law is a part of it.

Okay. The Ten Commandments are instructions for living a life. And when we start thinking in terms of enforcement, we jump the tracks. Simple. You don’t have to do that. When you come into court to judge, you can only judge by the letter of the law. Right? In other words, you’re in a court and you’ve got some guy on trial; you’re the jury or you’re the lawyer. You have to go by what the law *says*. (Although nowadays you wonder, sometimes, whether they do.) Now, Paul, writing to the Romans, chapter 2, verse 27, has an interesting sidelight. He says:

Romans 2

AKJV

²⁷ And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge you, who by the letter and circumcision do transgress the law?

Okay. You’ve got the Law. You’re circumcised. And here we’re going to have some uncircumcised people sit in judgement of you people in that circumstance.

Romans 2

AKJV

²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in

the flesh:

²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter[....]

Now, Paul's adamant about this, and it's one of the things that, really, has been impressed upon my mind over the years. (And I talk about it considerably in the book *Law and Covenant*.) That it is the meaning *behind* the law that we should be looking for. If you sit down and read through the 119th psalm, you get a really good, clear idea of what the Law is *for*: It is to teach you *how to live your life*. He says:

Psalm 119

AKJV

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers [*Why? Because your law is my instructor.*]: for your testimonies are my meditation.

And the fact of the matter is: When it comes to living a life, comes to getting along in the world, making society work, you cannot *beat* the Law of God.

Romans 2

AKJV

²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Romans 7, verse 6:

Romans 7

AKJV

⁶ But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Now, the perversions that have arisen around this verse are astonishing, to say the very least. “We are ‘delivered from the law’. That means we don’t have to do it anymore.” Okay. Does that mean that I can steal your wallet—if I can lift your credit cards and go out and use your money? Because, after all, I’m delivered from the law. No, I don’t think anybody really wants to believe that.

We “serve in newness of spirit not in the oldness of the letter.” And, in fact, the spirit—the underlying intent—of the law is the *principle*. And the principle is stronger than the law. Oftentimes, people will want to think, “Oh, that’s not a law; it’s *only* a principle.” When you say, “It’s not *just* the law; it is a principle”, you have said something that is far beyond “not only”. It is *strong*. It’s powerful. It goes all the way down to the fact that the law says, if you’re out there on the walk and you see your neighbor’s ox has gotten out, you can’t just ignore it. The law specifically says you *must* not [**Deuteronomy 22:3**]. You go, you throw a halter on that animal, and you take him back to his owner. That is a *requirement* of the law. Now, nobody will probably know if you don’t do it, but that’s what your society is supposed to be like.

Now, we’re out walking in Country Place, where we live, and a little bird dog (A little puppy; She’s about one year old.) joins our walk, because dogs like to be hunting *with* somebody. So she was with us, and she was hunting around all the bushes. Nobody was going to creep up on us. And she followed us all the way home. And we invited her into our backyard—up on our porch—gave her water, and gave her something to eat, and then we started looking for the owner. Why? What motivated that?

Well, the motivation for it lies so deep...and you could easily say, “A dog is not an ox. So the law does not apply.” But the person who understands the law and the *intent* of the law sees: This is a valuable animal here. And it was turned out it was. She was a very valuable pointer. She was only a year old. The owners were on a cruise and the dog-sitter had let her get away. So we called around, found out who the owners were, and restored the dog to the family. Why did we do that? I don’t know if we thought about it, exactly, at the time, but I think it was in my mind, at least, that this is *required* of a person of character—that you look after your neighbor’s property. Where did we learn that? We learned it in the Bible, didn’t we? We learned it in Christian principles, as well, but it is right there.

Okay. Now, we serve in newness of spirit not an oldness of that letter, and we aren’t delivered from the *spirit* of the law. We are delivered from the law the way the Jewish authorities used it among themselves.

Romans 7

AKJV

⁷ What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. No, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet.

I could have said to myself, “What luck! I have found myself a beautiful bird dog!” Except for one thing: It wasn’t mine. And I had to find the owner of that dog. I would have moved heaven and earth to find that owner. If I had never found them, I would have probably kept the dog. But nevertheless...she needed a little taming down, I think, but she was a puppy.

Romans 7

AKJV

⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, worked in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

⁹ For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

¹⁰ And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be to death.

Why? Because he’d *broken* it. It’s that simple.

Romans 7

AKJV

¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Now, Paul has written “some things hard to be understood” [2 Peter 3:16], but it isn’t really rocket science to realize what he’s driving at here. He’s saying, “Before the Law came, I was just blissfully ignorant of the Law. I could covet anything I *wanted* to covet. If I found something, I could keep it. I had all this stuff going on. But then *the Law came*, and my *awareness* of my sin revived, and I realized I was dead.” That’s what Paul’s driving at here. Not that he’s being *liberated* from any obligation to keep the *moral principles of the Law*. And this is a difficult thing for some people. Second Corinthians, chapter three, verse five:

2 Corinthians 3

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⁵ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

In fact, it shouldn't be new in Paul's day. It *should* be something that carried all the way from Moses forward. It's clear as crystal, even in the old Law: that the *point* of this thing—the *spirit* of the law, the *intent* of the law—gives life. How do I know that?

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

I want to live a long time; I've got to honor my mother and my father. Okay? And honor doesn't just mean speak well of them; it means take care of them, as well—that you don't let your mother and your father go into poverty when you can do something about it. Clear enough. So the spirit of the law...you know, in so many ways...for example, one just as simple as it could possibly be: You're out plowing a field. You come across a bird's nest with eggs and a dam sitting on the nest. What do you do? It says you can take the eggs (or even, I think, even the little birds) but you *have to let the dam go* [Deuteronomy 22:6]. And then it gives you the reason for it:

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² [...] that your days may be long on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

What you are going to do is to *take care of nature*. It's what we used to call “conservation”—which, I think, is a far better term for it than “environmentalism”, which has become almost a religion. The environment is not necessarily God, but taking care of the land is a part of the Law of God, and we ought to be looking at it that way.

So, what's the purpose of it? I've been coming across this in Deuteronomy in the Bible study again and again. *It's for you*. It's not for God. God doesn't need a thing in the world that you've got. He doesn't need anybody to worship him. He doesn't need a thing from anybody. He doesn't need anybody's tithes, doesn't need anybody's offerings. He says:

Psalms 50

AKJV

¹² If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.

Everything he tells us is for *us*. So when he gives you a law, it behooves you to sit down and think it through and say: What does it mean? How does it apply to me? What's the spirit and the intent? What's God driving it with this, so that I can *have a better life*—and the people who are around me. Okay. He goes on to say:

2 Corinthians 3

NIV '84

⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was,

⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? [And it won't fade.]

⁹ If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!

¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.

¹¹ And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

Paul's not easy; but if you take the time to think about what he was trying to say, in his rather clumsy way, it's clear. And Paul's tough. I mean, he's not really a great writer in my opinion, but I have to cut him some slack—he did not have a word processor, you know. Whatever he said was what was there, and he had to do it all from his head. I don't think he worked from notes, at all. Okay.

2 Corinthians 3

NIV '84

¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away.

¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.

What's taken away? The old Law? The Law of Moses? Or the veil? It's the *veil* that is taken away, so that you can *understand what God is doing*. And when you get that clear in your mind, you've made a huge step forward. Because the Jews...they sat and listened to it, and all they heard was the letter of the law. Well, they heard more than that; they had created their own letter of the law—their own interpretation of the letter of the law—which actually turned God's Law upside down. But they did not understand it.

2 Corinthians 3

NIV '84

¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.

¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

If you underline anything in your Bible at all, you ought to underline that word, “freedom”, because the liberty that comes from God is one of the biggest things that God is aiming at for Man. He wants Man to make the choice to worship him. He wants Man to make the choice to live his life in *freedom*, not in coercion. It's one of the biggest mistakes anybody makes. The Jews made it. Any number of churches make that mistake as they attempt to take away people's freedom. It's just one of the weaknesses of Man.

The primary difference between we who call upon Christ and others is that we look to the spirit—the moral instruction of the law—not merely the letter of the law. So now that we have unpacked that passage from Isaiah, let's go put it back in the suitcase. Isaiah 8, verse 13:

Isaiah 8

NIV '84

¹³ The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy [*the one*],
he is the one you are to fear,
he is the one you are to dread,

Now, of course, in the sense of standing in awe on him. And he's doing this to contrast against being afraid of *other* things.

Isaiah 8

NIV '84

¹³ [...] he is the one you are to fear,
he is the one you are to dread,

¹⁴ and he will be a sanctuary;
but for both houses of Israel he will be

a stone that causes men to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall.
And for the people of Jerusalem he will be
a trap and a snare.

¹⁵ Many of them will stumble;
they will fall and be broken,
they will be snared and captured.

Why is that going to happen? Because they absolutely will not look at the thing as God wanted them to look at it. They absolutely wouldn't.

Isaiah 8

AKJV

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony
and seal up the law among my disciples.

Not anything else. Just the testimony and the law; that's what these things are. Bind them up. And you might wonder a little bit: Why does he say bind them and seal them? It's just two ways of saying the same thing. It is to emphasize the fact this thing is to be tied up, handed to us, sealed, and we are to hang on to it. *It's not going to go away.*

Isaiah 8

NIV '84

¹⁷ I will wait for the LORD,
who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob.
I will put my trust in him.

¹⁸ Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.

¹⁹ When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.” They wander in the dark.

So, in sum: The Testimony, the Torah, the instructions of God *are* the light of dawn. They are a way of life. They are an identity—a way of living that is good for us, good for our children, and good for our nation. And they give freedom.

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*To the Law and the
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