



**GOD'S LAW
IS LOVE**

THE SILENT MOMENT

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The Silent Moment

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
—— Psalm 19:7 (KJV)



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God's Law Is Love

When we think about the place God's law has in our lives as believers, it might be a bit confusing to sort out. What bearing does old covenant (Old Testament) law have on our lives as new covenant (New Testament) believers who are in Christ? It would be a mistake to say that the old and new covenants are fully separate. They are actually a cohesive unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

God promised to bless all people through Abraham's offspring (Genesis 22:18). Then when God had increased Abraham's descendants through Isaac and brought them out of Egypt, He made a covenant with them. Through His servant Moses, God gave them His law to observe and obey, which would set Israel apart from other nations. And through Israel, God would send His Son to be the redeemer for all humanity—to bless all the nations, just as God promised to do through Abraham.

The law of Moses is recorded in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy. This body of instruction contains the *ceremonial* law—the various sacrifices, rituals, feasts, and festivals—and also the *moral* law—the regulations that reflect God's holy nature and deal with justice, respect, and upright conduct. Jesus said that not one “jot or tittle” of that law would pass away without its being fulfilled (Matthew 5:18, *KJV*). And during His time on earth, Jesus fulfilled all of it. He fulfilled the moral law, which qualified Him to be the perfect sacrifice that the ceremonial law was pointing to. And by His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection, Jesus atoned for our sin once and for all.

The truth revealed in the law of Moses about God's character—about what honors and dishonors Him, and also about our need for atonement—has not passed away. What *has* passed away is our need to try to find our right standing with God through it. Jesus'

sacrifice ushered in the new covenant. Now in faith we look to Christ Jesus our Savior, trusting in what He has done *for* us in fulfilling the old covenant.

As new-covenant believers, we can stand in reverence and can delight in what we see of God's character revealed in the old covenant. (His character has not changed.) Even more, we can rejoice in the redemption we have in Christ and the freedom of living by His Holy Spirit, who teaches us to love God fully and love others fairly, which is the fulfillment of the law.

It from within God's holiness and faithfulness that His beautiful law of truth and love has been revealed to us, has been fulfilled by Him, and by His Spirit has now been written on our hearts. God's law is, indeed, love.

Peace to your heart!

Christine Dallman, Editor

You're Invited!

[Jesus said,] “When you give a banquet, invite the [less fortunate] and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:13-14).

Scripture: Luke 14:7-14

Song: “Make Me a Blessing”

A group of girls squeals with delight as they gather after school. Teachers smile knowing these students will be celebrating a birthday party together. Standing alone, apart from the excitement, another student looks on. Her eyes convey happiness for the girls yet also sadness and deep loneliness at not being included. Feeling unpopular and ashamed of her out-of-style clothes, she shyly fades into the background of social life at school.

Today's passage challenges us to invite into our gatherings, celebrations, and everyday lives those who cannot reciprocate. Remembering to include the less fortunate—rather than focusing on what brings us admiration, status, or advantage—carries an eternal reward.

The birthday party scenario is a common one and can help us consider our own priorities. In humbling ourselves to see others as Christ would, we can be more like Him as we cheerfully invite to a birthday, banquet, or afternoon coffee those who may not be able to repay us but who are precious in God's sight.

Father, as I look for ways to share the blessings You've given me, give me Your per-spective to honor those who cannot repay. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scrubbing Power

[God said to Moses,] “Whenever [Aaron and his sons] enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die” (Exodus 30:20).

Scripture: Exodus 30:17-21

Song: “Give Us Clean Hands”

Have you ever thought about how often we wash our hands? It is an important part of keeping healthy. When our kids were young, we taught them to sing the “ABC Song” while handwashing to ensure their routine was thorough. This practical approach probably saved us some trips to the doctor and kept us from spreading illness. Even as an adult I still may secretly sing that song as I wash up.

The lasting ordinance recorded in today’s passage was also one of washing. This act, even though physical, had symbolic meaning. It pointed to our need for spiritual cleansing and the provision God would later make by sending His Son. Through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, He made a way for us to be cleansed from sin. Nothing we can do on our own will wash away our sin. This type of washing comes only from Christ’s atoning work on our behalf, and only by placing our trust in Him—receiving His gift of salvation—can our hearts be cleansed from sin.

Throughout the day, whenever you wash your hands, use this simple act as an opportunity to remember the sacrifice Jesus made to cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9) and offer a prayer of thanks to God.

Father, thank You for Your faithfulness in sending Your Son to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Daring Feat

[Jesus said,] “Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces” (Luke 11:43).

Scripture: Luke 11:37-44

Song: “All Glory Laud and Honor”

With turbulent water crashing 200 feet below, Nik Wallenda achieved one of the most daring feats ever attempted. Tens of thousands watched in person while more than 13 million television viewers tuned in to see Wallenda’s walk from the United States to Canada on a high wire stretched over Niagara Falls. However, most did not see what he did after the excitement was over. Nik filled in a large hole that had been dug to help hold his cables, and he picked up the trash left by the crowds. He did this not because people were watching, but to fulfill his promise to leave no trace on the environment.

Fame and power often bring attention and accolades. The Pharisees were accustomed to receiving this kind of attention as esteemed spiritual leaders. However, Jesus warned the Pharisees that they were more concerned with fame and status than with what is truly important to God—a heart that pursues and practices what is loving and just.

Walking a tightrope across Niagara Falls or directing the spiritual life of a nation might not be on my to-do list today, but in each situation and in every encounter, I can humbly practice the love of God, doing what is right, even when no one is looking.

Father, may I not neglect love and justice no matter who is or isn’t watching, so that my life will truly honor You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Blessed Life

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits
(Psalm 103:2, *KJV*).

Scripture: Psalm 103:1-12

Song: “Bless His Holy Name”

“. . . And Lord, thank You for all the years I had with Alice. Amen.” My father always ends his prayers this way now. At age 90, he became a widower after a lifetime of loving only one woman—Alice, my mother. Instead of focusing on how much he misses her, he chooses to think about all their wonderful times together and how good God has been to him by blessing his life with her presence for so many years. My dad always makes an effort to remember God’s blessings, and by being thankful, he is blessing the Lord.

Today’s passage repeats the call for us to bless the Lord. When God blesses us, He makes us in some way better off. However, *we* cannot make *God* better off. So how *do* we bless the Lord? He is blessed when we remember to sincerely thank, praise, worship, or exalt Him for His many blessings—regardless of our circumstances.

May we never forget to be mindful of all the ways God has blessed us. Let’s be faithful to bless Him in return with our thanks and praise today and always.

Father, You are so good to me! Thank You for the abundant blessings You’ve lavished on me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Passing Along Righteousness

The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children (Psalm 103:17, *KJV*).

Scripture: Psalm 103:13-22

Song: “Faith of Our Fathers”

Have you ever had someone tell you, “You have your mother’s dimples” or “You inherited your grandfather’s eyes”? People often make observations like these, especially when seeing a baby for the first time. All my life I’ve been told I have my mother’s smile. We know that God made all creatures, including people, to pass down genetic traits from generation to generation.

In today’s passage, God’s compassion toward those who reverence Him is compared to that of a kind father’s toward His children (v. 13). Then verse 17 tells us that the blessing of His righteousness carries on into future generations for those who live reverently before Him. But what or who is the instrument God uses to pass this righteousness down? Verse 18 says, “To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them” (*KJV*). Godly parents, teachers, and caregivers are the ones who pass along faith to the next generation. What an important responsibility and awesome privilege it is to be a spiritual parent!

It’s true that I have my mother’s smile as I’ve been told so many times. But more importantly, thanks to her witness, I also have embraced the faith she modeled for me.

Father, thank You for being a loving father to Your children. Thank You for the righteousness You preserve from generation to generation for those who, by faith, walk in reverence before You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Finding Rest

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8, *KJV*).

Scripture: Exodus 20:8-11

Song: “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus”

In the 1960s when I was growing up in Africa, Sunday afternoons were quiet, comfortable, and pensive. Sunday mornings were busy as we traveled to attend church services, which lasted much longer than typical North American services do. Then we’d come home, and I’d help my mother prepare lunch and clean up afterward. But then came the quiet, restful time.

On other days, I was allowed to play outside with my friends, but not on Sunday. I wasn’t required to sleep, but I had to keep quiet so my parents could nap. There was something nice about slowing down and taking an afternoon off from usual activities. I would read, draw in a sketch book, or play quietly with toys in my room.

Today’s passage from the Old Testament gives instruction for resting on the Sabbath. (Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament would eventually shed more light on Sabbath-related priorities.) The main point in today’s teaching, however, is observing a time of rest, just as God rested (stopped working) after six days of Creation. Jesus would later invite His followers into a special kind of rest—rest for their souls. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (*KJV*). How kind God is to provide such rest!

Father, thank You for Your gifts of rest. I want to come to You now and rest in the truth that You have everything that concerns me under control. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Act Now

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts”
(Hebrews 4:7).

Scripture: Hebrews 4:1-10

Song: “I Surrender All”

A man wakes up in the morning, and his plans for the day swirl around in his thoughts. He heads out the door, and on his way to work, someone runs a red light and hits his car. A few hours later he’s being wheeled into surgery to repair his broken leg. Certainly that’s not what he thought he’d be doing that day!

Life is full of such surprises. People make plans all the time that they’re not able to carry out because something blindsides them and changes things. Sometimes these are relatively minor disruptions requiring only minor adjustments, but other times, a person’s life is altered forever by the unexpected.

Today’s passage speaks of entering into God’s rest, which is done by putting our faith in Him. In verse 7, we read that God has made a certain day called “today.” That verse goes on to quote an Old Testament passage—Psalm 95—warning us not to harden our hearts when we hear God’s voice. In the context of entering into God’s rest, this especially pertains to putting faith in Jesus without hesitation. If we hesitate, thinking we’ll wait for another time to receive God’s gift of salvation, we may end up being too late.

Father, I want to respond quickly to Your Word whenever I hear it. Thank You for the rest You provide through salvation by grace through faith in Your Son and for faithfully calling me to receive it. I affirm my trust in You today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Priest Who Can Empathize

We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Scripture: Hebrews 4:11-16

Song: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years before he became the first Black president of South Africa. Surely he never forgot what it was like to be in prison. Abraham Lincoln was born in a cabin in the backwoods of Kentucky, the son of a poor pioneer, but he grew up to become the sixteenth president of the United States. Surely he never forgot what it was like to be poor.

Once a person suffers through hardship, they gain an understanding of what it's like to go through that experience. Usually this understanding causes them to be able to empathize with people going through similar experiences.

Jesus is our high priest who suffered while He was on earth. He knows what we go through and can empathize with us. Jesus lived as a human, and the writer of Hebrews tells us that He experienced every kind of temptation. Though He never sinned, He still knows what it is like to be tempted and understands our struggle in the face of temptation. What a friend we have in Jesus, indeed!

Father, how marvelous that You sent Your Son to earth to live as a man to experience the kinds of temptations we deal with! Thank You that, as our high priest, Jesus can empathize with us in our pains, problems, and temptations. In Jesus' name, amen.

Attuned to Another's Plight

If you see your fellow Israelite's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to its owner (Deuteronomy 22:1).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 22:1-4

Song: "Make Me a Servant"

During World War II, the Allied forces fought the Axis powers for six years in a war that was responsible for a massive loss of life, property, and treasure throughout Europe. But once the Axis nations had been conquered, the Allies went to work on a plan to help restore the war-torn nations.

Of course the rebuilding of Europe was a complex geopolitical set of negotiations, and the Soviet Union pressed its own agenda. But in general the other "heavy-hitters" among the Allies—the United Kingdom, United States, and China—did not exert their power to permanently divide and occupy Europe as they might have. Germany and the capital city of Berlin were divided in two, but for the most part, countries in Western Europe were "returned" to their people.

Today's passage points to a similar principle of being upright and compassionate when it comes to someone else's losses. These four verses give examples that people back in Bible times would have understood as being valuable and vital belongings: a donkey, oxen, sheep, or a cloak. In each case, God's Word instructs His people to help neighbors by being attentive and merciful, returning what is theirs, especially what is important and needed.

Father, I want to be a faithful servant whose heart is attuned to the plight of those around me. Grant me eyes to see what is needed and integrity to do the right thing. In Jesus' name, amen.

Keeping the Sabbath

[Jesus asked,] “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?”
(Luke 14:3).

Scripture: Luke 14:1-6

Song: “Every Day with Jesus”

The theme of Sabbath rest has come up again this week! We’ve looked at the Old Testament’s instructions about resting on the Sabbath. We’ve also looked at God’s instructions about helping a neighbor when an important need or situation arises. But what if your neighbor needed urgent help on the Sabbath? What *then*?

In today’s passage, Jesus provided some much-needed clarification about God’s heart in the matter. After Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, the religious leaders were outraged, believing He was doing what was forbidden—working on the Sabbath. But Jesus indicated that God’s priority is to do what is right and true and good at all times.

As Christians we may have different perspectives about how to observe a day of rest and worship. In Romans 14:5, the apostle Paul offered some help on the question when he pointed out that one person might regard one day as special while another treats each day the same. Then Paul said that every person needs to be convinced in their own mind about what they’re doing. In other words, as we observe the Sabbath according to our convictions, we might notice that someone else’s convictions differ from our own. We can leave that between them and God. Meanwhile, we can enjoy resting and worshipping with a sincere heart as we seek to do what pleases God every day of the week.

Father, help me worship and serve You with a pure and sincere heart. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Relationship: The Key Ingredient

“You will find your joy in the LORD. . . .” The mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 58:14).

Scripture: Isaiah 58:6-14

Song: “Bread of Heaven”

When I was first hired as a cook for a small café, I painstakingly labored over each item I prepared. I was especially meticulous about the pie crusts. Pleasing my boss and providing our customers with something tasty and pretty that would make their day extra special was important to me. After several years and thousands of pie crusts made while isolated in the kitchen, the work lost its meaning. I still strove to do a good job, but my heart was not in it anymore. The joy and love I had once expressed through preparing food returned only when I reconnected with those I was serving.

In today’s passage, God reminded His people of the importance of their relationship with Him. They were going through the motions of obedience, but sadly it had lost its meaning because they were not focused on the Lord himself—the one they were meant to serve.

God does not want us to miss out on knowing Him or experiencing His blessings. Instead of mere busywork, He invites us into something much better: a loving fellowship as we center our focus on Him.

Father, it’s only in relationship with You that my life has real meaning. Help me refocus on and draw near to You today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Love Is the Rubric

At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath (John 5:9).

Scripture: John 5:1-9

Song: “He Touched Me”

In the 1970s two Princeton social psychologists conducted an experiment with seminary students who were tasked with preparing and delivering a message on the Good Samaritan. In this experiment, students were put under various levels of urgency to get to the location where they were to preach. Researchers planted a stranger on the ground along the route, seemingly in need of help. Among students under the greatest time pressure, only 10 percent stopped to help the victim. Only 45 percent of those under medium pressure stopped, and 63 percent of the least-hurried checked on the victim. Practicing what they were about to preach proved challenging under the stress of the perceived expectations of their academic supervisors.

Jesus understood the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. God had commanded His people to keep the Sabbath holy. It was important they not labor but focus on rest and worship. Yet Jesus knew that helping the disabled man would be more glorifying to God than being a stickler for religious rules and meeting others' expectations.

God's laws are given in love. We are meant to reflect God's love in all we do. We may fail to meet others' expectations when we prioritize love, but in God's eyes we have succeeded.

Father, help me to recognize the spirit of love in Your law and put it into practice. In Jesus' name, amen.

Missing the Miracle

Because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him (John 5:16).

Scripture: John 5:10-16

Song: “God of Miracles”

One night after a long, stressful week, a group of friends gathered at one of their colleague’s homes for a night of board games. Once gathered, everyone seemed relieved, laughing until their muscles ached as they celebrated reaching the weekend. But when a die was suddenly hurled across the table and against a wall, guests were stunned into silence. In frustration, the host had lobbed the piece, feeling that the group was not paying due attention to the rules and structure of the game. Recognizing this wrong attitude, the host apologized, and everyone enjoyed the rest of the evening together.

In today’s passage, the Jewish leaders were similarly fixated on the rules of the law instead of its essence. They were so frustrated that the healed man was carrying his mat on the Sabbath that they missed the opportunity to celebrate and marvel at a miracle. Sadly, instead of experiencing joy in worshipping God for giving the man a new hope for his life, they turned their hearts against Jesus.

When our attention is fixed on what God deems most important, we get to experience the wonderful things He is doing in and around us. Our hearts are free to enjoy worshipping and fellowshiping with Him and with other believers. Our lives become celebrations of Jesus’ redemptive power in us and in those around us.

Father, I want to align my priorities with Yours so I never miss opportunities for praising You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Representatives of God's Love

In his defense Jesus said to [his accusers], “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working” (John 5:17).

Scripture: John 5:17-21

Song: “O to Be Like Thee”

In 1916, Jeannette Rankin became the first woman elected to the US House of Representatives. Until that time, with no effective voice in national leadership, women were frequently marginalized and vulnerable, powerless to help enact laws that would protect their families and futures. Rankin's election was an enormous encouragement to the rising suffrage movement that would eventually secure women's voting rights. With Rankin in the House, women had a presence in the halls of influence. “I am deeply conscious of the responsibility,” Rankin said in her victory speech, and she tirelessly used her voice to advocate for peace, fairness, and safety.

When confronted about healing the infirm man on the Sabbath, Jesus affirmed His authority to do so as God's representative. Jesus was sent by God to speak His word and do His work, caring for the hurting and afflicted while challenging the religious leaders' self-righteous attitudes with truth. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that His Father is always working in righteousness and, as His Father's representative, Jesus will do the same.

As believers called to follow Jesus' example, we are His representatives. We are part of His plan to build His kingdom through proclaiming the gospel and demonstrating His care, especially for those who are vulnerable and helpless.

Father, help me represent Your love and character through service, especially to those who are in need. In Jesus' name, amen.

Priorities Speak

Observe [God's instructions] carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deuteronomy 4:6).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:1-14

Song: "Put God First"

During her 11-year term as prime minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher famously never hired a chef as part of her staff. Instead, she chose to cook dinner for herself and her husband, Denis, whenever they were home together. Even when matters of national and international importance required late-night attention, she faithfully took to the kitchen, often inviting cabinet members to the meal. While this choice defied the tradition of previous prime ministers, it demonstrated Thatcher's priorities and perhaps also her understanding that the stability of a nation begins in the home.

In the book of Deuteronomy, God set in place laws and traditions that would shape the lives of His people in such a way that they would reflect His character. These God-focused priorities were intended for guidance, protection, and provision. They also made Israel a unique witness to surrounding nations.

Despite demands or responsibilities that may be pressing in on us today, as we prioritize God in our hearts, homes, and in all we do, He will lead us in wisdom and understanding. Honoring God as our utmost priority is a privilege, and as we walk in His ways, our lives will be a unique witness to those around us.

Father, grant me understanding to recognize and rectify anything I may be prioritizing over You. Help me to live faithfully in big and small matters. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Law of Hope

I have done what is righteous and just; do not leave me to my oppressors (Psalm 119:121).

Scripture: Psalm 119:113-128

Song: “Teach Me, O Lord, Thy Way of Truth”

The summer following his graduation from high school, the course of 17-year-old Jarrett Adams’ life shifted dramatically. Arrested on false charges, he was tried as an adult and was provided an inadequate public defense. Although innocent, young Adams was sentenced to 28 years in a maximum-security prison. While there, he used his time to diligently study the law, and after eight years of incarceration, he was able to get his sentence overturned. Reclaiming his freedom, Jarrett Adams became a nationally recognized criminal defense and civil rights attorney. Dedicating his practice to helping other falsely convicted people, he continues to work hard to help make the justice system more truly just.

The psalmist expressed a similar desire to see God’s justice enacted on the wicked and to see deliverance for the innocent carried out. Though the laws and justice systems of mankind are flawed, we can find hope in God’s faithful justice and mercy.

God can create unforeseen good out of even the most unfair and harsh circumstances. As we take His holy Word to heart and put His perfect law of liberty into practice (James 1:25), we can experience joy in our hope for the future. We may be subject to the wrongs of this world for a while, but total freedom from the oppression of sin will be ours in eternity.

Father, thank You for Your perfect justice and Your love-based law. Teach me to rightly apply it in each circumstance. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Ambassadors of the King

[Jesus said,] “Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own” (John 7:17).

Scripture: John 7:14-24

Song: “The King’s Business”

In the early 1600s, as the Western world awakened to India’s rich culture and wealth, King James did not want England to miss out on trade opportunities there. However, the Portuguese had been influencing India’s Mughal Emperor Jahangir against the English. It would take someone of noble character, well-educated, and impressive to gain the emperor’s respect. Sir Thomas Roe was chosen as ambassador to represent England’s interests to India. Once in India, Roe began his journey to the palace. Along his way he was met with harassment and demands by regional princes and governors. As a representative of his king, however, Roe refused to compromise his mission by submitting to their terms. This gained Emperor Jahangir’s respect and favor and ultimately secured England’s access to trade with India for many years.

Roe faithfully represented his king despite pressures that could have undermined his mission. Similarly, Jesus put the glory of His Father above the protocols and expectations of His day. Both understood that compromising themselves was not an option if they were to faithfully represent the ones who sent them.

Conducting ourselves with honor and integrity brings honor to our king. As we serve truthfully and selflessly, we convey God’s goodness to those who wonder, doubt, or even oppose us.

Father, use me to bring glory and honor to You as a faithful representative of Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.