

## **GOD'S COMPREHENSIVE LAW.**

God's wisdom, and love, and justice decide on what is best, and that decision is his will or law. But strictly speaking only so much of God's will as he expressed to his creatures is law to them. Hence while his laws never conflict, they may be more or less fully expressed on one occasion than on another.

All of God's intelligent creatures are under instruction, being taught those laws which his infinite love, wisdom and justice have enacted for the well-being of all. Though created perfect, each in his plane of being, yet they all lack that scope of knowledge and wisdom which belongs in full measure only to the divine nature of which they are but images. They all lacked experience, hence in giving them instruction in the wisdom and propriety of his laws, it has pleased Jehovah to make an illustration which would manifest and practically exemplify his own character and prove to his creatures the wisdom and righteousness of his laws.

It is evident that the spirit of his law is not to take advantage of some transgressive slip occasioned by lack of experience on the part of his creatures, but that he intends it to apply to the thoughts and intents of the hearts. That this is the real intent of God, we shall see illustrated by his dealings with those who have from lack of knowledge become sinners.

His law in full, as we now see it in the light of His Word, is, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; that no being shall be permitted to live, who, when fully informed of God's righteous will, and enabled to obey it, shall not conform thereto; that all such shall be cut off from life. But this is as it may be seen NOW; once it was not so clearly expressed, nor so clearly seen.

To exemplify this law fully, God caused man to be used as an illustration before the extreme penalty was placed upon the angels. So he placed upon him the full extreme penalty of his law – death, KNOWING that through inexperience he would violate that law and come under its penalty. But God purposed to make an illustration to all his creatures of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the sure consequences, while at the same time his love and wisdom so marked out the plan, that man, the illustration, might not suffer loss, but be fully recovered from the penalty, and be himself blessed by being everlastingly guarded against sin by the lessons learned.

Nor should we forget that God's dealing with man was perfectly just. He had a perfect right to demand perfect obedience from a perfect creature, and the fact that he has not required it at first of the angels, was a FAVOR toward them, permitting them to acquire by observation of mankind, a knowledge of sin and its dire results, before being placed liable to its extreme penalty – death; even as toward man he has displayed his FAVOR also, though in a different manner, viz., through a ransom, and Saviour, and restitution, and future trial for life, more favorable than the first, because of the knowledge of sin and its effects, meanwhile acquired by experience. Let us briefly

### **VIEW THE EXHIBITION**

of God's character as displayed in his dealing toward mankind whom he made a spectacle to angels. (1 Cor. 4:9.) In so doing, let us guard against the common error which judges of God's actions exactly as of our own. Let us remember that justice, love, wisdom, and power, as commonly displayed by the fallen race, in dealing with each other, and with their children, is far from being perfect, far from being what it was at first, the image of those qualities in Jehovah. In consequence of the fall these qualities are

constantly at war with each other, in our experience; sometimes love has a victory over justice, and sometimes justice has the victory over love.

But with Jehovah there can be no conflict, and neither ever gains a victory or ascendancy over the other; both are perfect, and work only in perfect harmony.

Before man was created, the justice, wisdom, love, and power of God held conference on the subject, and devised the plan which has since been developing. The plan was suggested by wisdom and concurred in by the other qualities, the arrangement and execution of it being left in Wisdom's hands.

Wisdom designed to have the largest returns of experience and benefit to man, and the most valuable illustration of God's character to all his creatures, on every plane of being. Accordingly Wisdom said, Let the man come under the control of Justice, Love, and Power, separately, that the force and operation of each may be the more forcibly illustrated. Let Justice first have complete control, let the man be dealt with by the strict law, "Thou shalt not – " "In the day that thou dost...dying thou shalt die." And it was so.

Man inexperienced and unused to controlling his liberty, violated it and experienced the full weight of Justice, as Wisdom had foreseen.

The lesson under Justice has been long and severe, but the lesson must be thorough, so that it shall never need repeating. Men and angels must learn that Justice is relentless, irrevocable and unalterable. Then, too, before it could be realized that the remedy for man lay only in Jehovah and nowhere else, an opportunity was offered for the trial of other methods for his recovery. First, the angels were given rulership, (during the age before the flood), and made a miserable failure, for while man became more and more

corrupt himself, his evil influence led to the fall of some of those who had attempted his assistance – "those angels which kept not their first estate."

With the Deluge that order of affairs passed away. Then, under the law, given to one selected nation, another and a different opportunity was offered, to prove to man that even if God should cancel all enmity, or resentment, and receive the world into covenant relations, yet they would require a Restorer so that they could continue in harmony with God, even after being brought back. Hence sacrifices and offerings for sin were instituted, and God treated that nation AS THOUGH original sin and guilt had been removed, and then placed them under law to prove to them their inability (as degenerate creatures) to keep his law without a restitution to perfection – his likeness.

Meanwhile Love stood ready to act at the moment Wisdom should give the word. It would have acted at once but for two reasons; First, it could not oppose or interfere with the action of Justice in condemning man and delivering him over for the execution of the prescribed penalty – death. Secondly, Love might have acknowledged Justice and approved its action by promptly providing a ransom [an equivalent price], but Wisdom objected and would not permit this course at that time, because it saw best to make the lesson complete and thorough.

Hence for over four thousand years Love was not permitted to act, and might only speak in shadowy sacrifices and ceremonies, and more or less obscure promises. But finally when the right time had come, "in due time," "in the fullness of time," Wisdom gave the word and Love began to act in man's relief. The first act was to produce a perfect and sinless man to be a suitable "ransom for all," and it must be one not under the Adamic curse, who would lay down his life for the race, and whose sacrifice would meet all the

requirements of justice, and therefore be acceptable as a ransom and propitiation for our sins. And Love's great exhibition was seen in the gift of the grandest, and greatest, and first of all God's creation, who became a man to redeem men, and "they called his name Jesus" when he became a man.

Ah! says one who judges by his own habits and feelings, Now comes Love's victory over Justice. We shall see that God is more loving than severe. Not so, my brother; God is not more loving than severely just, he is perfect in both respects. It will be indeed a victory for Love, but not over Justice. It will be much grander than that. It will prove a victory for both Justice and Love; for it will be gained by Love's paying the price demanded by Justice – a RANSOM, "an equivalent price."

Thus did the love of God magnify the justice and law of God, and "make it honorable," by acknowledging its claims in the payment of the very penalty demanded – man's death (Rom. 5:19).

We need scarcely say, that the love of God so long veiled from sight, was manifested in the gift of his Son to be our Redeemer and Saviour. The record is: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation [satisfaction or appeasement] for our sins." "IN THIS WAS MANIFESTED THE LOVE OF GOD toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might LIVE through him." (1 Jno. 4:9,10.)

When Love had RANSOMED man, and was ready to reveal itself by restoring mankind to perfection and harmony with God, Wisdom forbade it and declared that a further development of its plan would ultimately enhance Love's glory, and perfect the work: that an interlude must occur [the Gospel age] in which should be selected some from among the redeemed; some sharers in Christ's sufferings and reproach, who should be counted worthy to share

his glory, and be his associates in the execution of LOVE'S TRIUMPH in "the restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets."

Long and faithfully has Love labored, yet all her labor will yet be lost, unless in due time Wisdom shall commission POWER to do its part in the great plan.

Power thus far has done almost nothing directly in man's relief. Wisdom forbade it until its due time, hence we see it but feebly expressed save in the resurrection of our Lord and in the miracles, which but shadow forth its coming work.

Now we are living in the day when Power begins to act, not in opposition to Justice, but in harmony with Wisdom, Justice, and Love, in crushing out sin and evil, and in legally removing the penalty of sin and the dominion of evil, cancelled through the ransom paid by Jesus. Oh, blessed day! The Lamb that was slain and redeemed us by his blood is now invested with POWER to restore and bless all whom he bought, and he is now about to take unto himself his great power and shall reign until he hath put all enemies in subjection (Rev. 20:6; and 1 Cor. 15:25).

"A thousand years earth's coming glory,  
'Tis the glad time so long foretold,  
'Tis the bright morn of Zion's glory  
Prophets foresaw in times of old."

Thus God has chosen the plan which most fully and grandly exemplified his unalterable justice and exhibited the exceeding riches of his grace – his love; and in the restoration of man from destruction and death to life and perfection will God's power be illustrated far more forcibly than in man's creation. And as men and angels come to recognize the full fruition of God's plan in the

ages to come will they not with one consent exclaim with our brother Paul, as he caught a glimpse of it: O the depths of the riches both of the WISDOM and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind [plan] of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? ...Because out of him, and through him, and for him are all things. To him be the GLORY for ever." (Rom. 11:34,36.)

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"THERE is a gift that is almost a blow, and there is a kind word that is munificence; so much is there in the way of doing things."

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"NEARNESS of life to the Savior will necessarily involve greatness of love to him. As nearness to the sun increases the temperature of the various planets, so near and intimate communion with Jesus raises the heat of the soul's affections towards him."

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