

THE LAW OF GOD

MISCELLANIES 2



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Law of God Miscellanies 2
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The Law of God Miscellanies 2: Introduction

Welcome to Part 2 of our 3-part series on the Law of God.

In this series we are sampling excerpts from God's Law in an effort to show the scope, beauty, and relevance of the Law of God for Christian life.

We must not neglect God's Law. The Spirit of God uses the Law to unlock all the rest of Scripture, point us to Jesus, and guide us along the path of full and abundant life. In this series we hope you will find much encouragement and guidance in making daily reading and meditation in God's Law part of your spiritual disciplines.

We're pleased to make this resource available for personal or group study at no charge, and we hope you will find this series helpful in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

Please visit our website, www.ailbe.org, to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to subscribe to our thrice-weekly devotional newsletter, *Crosfigell*, or our daily *Voices Together* devotional and prayer guide.

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1 In the Gates

*That I may tell of all Your praise
In the gates of the daughter of Zion.
I will rejoice in Your salvation.* Psalm 9.14

*Salvation is far from the wicked,
For they do not seek Your statutes.* Psalm 119.155

*LORD, I hope for Your salvation,
And I do Your commandments.* Psalm 119.166

Reflect and discuss.

1. We are not saved *by* works, but we're not saved *without* them. Explain.
2. Since the Law is holy and righteous and good (Rom. 7.12), what should be its role in defining and directing the good works which saved people do?

Think about it.

Let's take a closer look at these psalms, beginning with Psalm 9. Here David says that the joy of our salvation is to be told and experienced in the gates of Zion. While this certainly intends to locate the saving blessings of God within the community of faith, the particular reference to the gates of Zion suggests the *Law* of God as an even sharper focus. In the gates of the cities of Israel is where the elders met to deliberate matters of Law for the good of the community (cf. Ruth 4). Those deliberations helped the people of those communities to know the salvation of the Lord for all aspects of their lives.

We know and enjoy the salvation – life – God intends for us as we walk and dwell within His Law. There must be no separation of Law and grace within the divine economy. By grace we know God and understand His will (Ps. 9.13). God's will is revealed in His Word, beginning with His Law. If we would know the full joy of our salvation, we must reside “in the gates” where God's Law unfolds the path of Kingdom greatness (Matt. 5.17-19; Ps. 119.105).

It is important to note here that David contrasts the gates of Zion with the gates of death (v. 13; cf. Jesus' “gates of hell” Matt. 16.18). Those who do not believe are “far” from God's salvation, as evidenced by the fact that they want nothing to do with His Law. The Church finds safety and salvation within the gates of Zion – all the Law and Word of God. This should lead first to praise (v. 14a) and then increasing understanding and obedience. All this must be understood and embraced within the larger framework of God's righteous judgment and the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Ps. 9.8, 16; cf. Acts 17.31).

Jesus is the last word on the Law and righteousness of God. In Him we are safe within God's stronghold (Ps. 9.9), impervious to the threats or power of our enemies (vv. 9-12), and empowered to know, will, and do what pleases Him and conduces to our salvation, because of the Spirit dwelling in us (Phil. 2.13; Ezek. 36.26, 27). In the Lord we hope for a greater measure of His salvation, and that hope is directly tied to our obedience to the commandments of God.

As believers, we dwell within the gates of Zion, against which no foe can prevail. As we live this way, doing the good works of salvation God's Law prescribes, our joy is full, and we know full assurance of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 6.9-12).

What will it mean for you to dwell within the gates of Zion today?

Meditate and discuss.

1. Read Ruth 4.1-12. The gates of the city is where elders and judges met to deliberate the wellbeing of their communities. Why would it have been important for them to be well-grounded in the Law of God?
2. In churches today, what compares to the “gates of Zion”? Who should sit in those gates? What should they do?
3. If the wicked are far from the Law of God, where should the righteous be? How can they do that?

“The gates of the daughter of Zion, being opposed to the gates of death, are praiseworthy deeds and the contemplation on the works of God done according to excellence and wisdom.” Didymus the Blind (313-398 AD)

Lord, I want to dwell securely within the gates of Zion, and that means that I...

Pray Psalm 9.1-14.

As you pray, name the many marvelous works God has accomplished for you in Jesus Christ. Ask Him to show you how to dwell within His gates for the coming day.

Psalm 9.7-16 (*Diademata: Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

Lord, You forever reign in judgment on Your throne.
The world in bitter wrath and pain Your righteousness will own.
All those who know Your Name, though in this life oppressed,
You shelter from the storms of shame and keep them ever blessed.

Praise then the Lord of Zion; declare His deeds abroad!
Praise Judah’s mighty saving Lion, the ever-blesséd God,
Whose blood has washed us clean, Who hears our plaintive cries,
Who good to us has ever been and lifts us to the skies!

Lift up your voice in praise before glad Zion’s gate!
Rejoice in Jesus’ saving ways; His glory celebrate!
The nations fail and fall, condemned by their own hands;
The Lord Who showed Himself to all o’er them in judgment stands.

2 Contending with Wickedness

*Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
But such as keep the law contend with them.* Proverbs 28.4

Reflect and discuss.

1. What does it mean to “forsake” the Law of God? Why would someone want to forsake God’s holy and righteous and good Law?
2. What is it about keeping God’s Law that puts someone in contention with wicked people? Is this a contention to be avoided?

Think about it.

Where the Law of God is forsaken, the wicked enjoy a free hand to pursue their wicked ways. There are no moral or spiritual vacuums in the world. Where God and His truth and wisdom are not present, the ways of evil will grow and prevail. Paul understood this when he wrote, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5.15, 16). Every moment of time and every aspect of life that are not brought under the wisdom of God and His Word will be lost to wickedness.

The Christian community’s neglect of the Law is a major reason why wickedness continues to flourish and abound in our society.

All who forsake the Law thus give encouragement to wicked ways, and praise those who pursue them. God has put His Spirit in the hearts of His New Covenant people, that we might learn and obey His Law. We must persevere in this effort, for there is always more to learn. And persevering will mean striving with wickedness, beginning in our own souls.

They who live the Law of God cannot sit by while wickedness increases. They must “meddle” even if it means they “grate” on those who pursue wickedness (these are alternative meanings of *נָקַד* which is translated “contend”). Think of John the Baptist. Think of Jesus and Paul. Think of those faithful martyrs and witnesses who would not back down from God’s ways even in the face of death.

God expects His people to contend with wickedness, which we do as we learn, obey, and augur for the Law of God. We don’t need to carry signs, picket or protest, or mount a boycott or petition. We simply need to live in obedience to God every day in every aspect of our lives (Rom. 12.21). God will honor His Word and cause us to be lights in the darkness, but we must keep and guard the Law diligently, and carry our two-edged sword into every area of life (Ps. 149).

Persevere in learning and obeying God’s Law and in calling His people to it. Look for ways of injecting the Law into matters of ethics and public policy. Let the truth of God’s Law be our shield and support in an age in flight from God (Ps. 12). It is better that we die contending with wickedness than encouraging it.

Meditate and discuss.

1. What does it mean to “contend” with wickedness? Can we properly contend with wickedness as God intends without understanding His Law and all His Word? Explain.
2. If we’re not contending by God’s Word and Spirit, what is likely to happen in these “evil” days?

3. Should Christians be afraid if unbelievers are offended by our commitment to God's Law? Isn't this only what we should expect?

“Scoundrels think nothing of the law, but those who love the law set it in front of them like a wall.’ For ‘the wisdom of able men will understand the paths of wisdom, but the folly of fools goes in the wrong direction.” Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD)

Lord, help me to contend each day by living in Your truth – all Your truth, including the Law and the prophets and...

Pray Psalm 28.1-9.

Let God reveal any wicked ways in you. Call upon Him for strength to learn and obey His Law.

Psalm 28.1-7 (*Angel's Story: O Jesus, I Have Promised*)

I cry to You, our Savior, O be not far from me!

Lord, speak to me with favor, lest I should dying be.

Hear now my supplications when for Your help I cry;

Receive these, my oblations, before Your throne on high.

Lord, count me not among those who walk in sinful ways;

With words of peace their tongue glows while evil fills their days.

Your works they disregard, Lord, while evil fills their hands;

Destroy them by Your Word, Lord, and let them no more stand.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus, for He will hear our prayer.

His strength protects and shields us with mercy and with care.

In You our heart rejoices; You help us by Your Word.

To You we raise our voices to praise and thank You, Lord.

3 Fearing God through the Tithe

“You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.” Deuteronomy 14.22, 23

Reflect and discuss.

1. What is a “tithe”? Ancient Jews tithed from their material resources. How should Christians practice the tithe?
2. What connection could there possibly be between tithing and fearing the Lord?

Think about it.

How does the tithe help to teach us to fear the Lord?

I can think of several ways. First, as we tithe we are reminded that God *requires the tithe* as a demonstration of His right and power over us, whom He has created and redeemed. We are His servants, according to whatever He requires of us, and for our good and His glory. When we obey His Word, we enter into His promised blessings; however, we are reminded that God stands ready to *discipline* those who will not obey His Word (Heb. 12.3-11).

Second, the tithe reminds us that *the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it* (Ps. 24.1). He gives and He takes away, and He is exceedingly generous toward us in all things, for which we should cultivate and express gratitude through obedience. Ingratitude is a great sin, and God does not wink at sin.

Third, the tithe acknowledges that *God is loving and kind in all His ways*, and that He is powerful to create, sustain, and save us, and all the world as well. As we tithe, we remember the great power and kindness of God toward all creation, power so great that it should cause us to tremble before Him.

And perhaps finally, because tithing was a public act, it was therefore part of what God required for *a healthy, just community*. Failure to tithe would be a betrayal of the community of the Lord and of His chosen servants, and fear of betraying the community loomed large in the souls of faithful Israelites (cf. Ps. 73.15).

Most Christians do not tithe, even though Jesus said we should (Matt. 23.23). Our attitude is that our belongings and resources are *ours*, and we will give to God as we are able, after all our needs and desires have been met.

Is it any wonder that the fear of God is so little in evidence among the followers of Christ, when we will not observe even this clear and easy to implement requirement?

Meditate and discuss.

1. Read Matthew 23.23. According to Jesus, what things ought we to do?
2. Why do you suppose more Christians today do not tithe? How would you encourage a new believer to begin tithing and keep up tithing? Why should he?
3. How can being faithful in tithing help us to grow in the fear of God? Is it important that we fear God (Deut. 10.12-13; Lk. 12.4, 5)? Explain.

“Therefore the God of all things says through the prophet, ‘And now, Israel, what does the Lord require from you but to do justice and to love and seek mercy and to be prepared to follow the Lord your God. For the genuine faith of those being saved is seen in their exceeding readiness to follow.’” Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)

Lord, You know whether I am faithful in this matter. Help me to...

Pray Psalm 116.12-18.

Listen as you pray, and let the Lord lead you to understand the offerings He requires of you. Commit yourself to giving them.

Psalm 116.7-14 *(Mit Freuden Zart: All Praise to God Who Reigns Above)*

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.

My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.

Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,

And dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.

What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?

Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love

And pay my vows most truly.

4 Worship God's Way

"You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things." Deuteronomy 12.2-4

Reflect and discuss.

1. How do we know how to worship God? That is, how do we know what is or is not appropriate to do in worship?
2. Do you suppose God might have a preferred way of being worshiped? Should we learn God's way of worship, or are we free to worship Him any way we like?

Think about it.

The ESV has the better translation here: "You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way." While the verb, עשה, means essentially "do" or "make," the context is clearly dealing with worship, and the focus is not so much on *things* as on the *way* we worship God.

God's people must not "do" or "make" worship the way pagan peoples do. There is a way to worship God, and He has revealed it in His Word. But we must not incorporate into divine worship any ways of worship which pagans employ, lest we insult the majesty and dignity of God.

In the days of ancient Israel, pagan worship was reductive, man-centered, immoral, irrational, and fruitless, because it was false. It centered on created things that were employed as means for gratifying human needs. Pagan gods were to be placated, so that they would do good to those who worshiped them. They were worshiped for what they *could* do for people, not what they *had* done, and much less for who they were (except insofar as what they were was related to what they could do for the worshipers).

Paganism today, though less formal in its rituals, and hardly conscious at all of the religious nature of its practices, is the same in many respects as paganism in the Old Testament. It reduces God to created things, which are sought, served, and savored for the benefits they confer, and not for any inherent worth they may possess (cf. Rom. 1.18ff). The "worship" of things or status or sensual pleasure or leisure or other forms of pagan deities involves whole-hearted devotion to such things, not because they are in themselves worthy of devotion, but because by devoting oneself to them, one finds – or hopes to find – satisfaction.

Thus, pagan "worship" is self-serving, shape-shifting – according to the pleasures of the moment – pragmatic, and vain. Its sole purpose is to please the *worshiper*, not the thing worshiped. For the thing worshiped itself exists for the one who pursues it, and not because it has any inherent value or worth.

Pagan ways have no place in the worship of God. We must make certain that, in our worship, we are practicing only those ways God commands or commends.

There is a way to worship God which, because it acknowledges His character, conforms to His will, and follows His prescriptions, can fulfill the purposes and promise of worship, which are to meet and honor God and to enter more fully into His blessing. He shows us the pattern of sound worship in His Word, beginning in the Law. Our duty is to discern, practice, and teach this pattern, at the same time making sure no pagan influences are introduced.

We must be careful and consistent in worshipping God, for only as we practice sound worship do we worship truly.

Meditate and discuss.

1. Meditate on Leviticus 10.1, 2. What happened here? What is the key phrase? Why did this happen? What are we supposed to learn from it?
2. How confident are you that the worship your church offers reflects a full understanding of what God is seeking from you in worship? Explain.
3. The Law warns us of what we must *not* do in worshipping God. Should we expect it to guide us in what we *should* do? Such as?

“When the land shall have been given into your power”—he says first ‘into your power’ and so enjoins what is to be done—‘then you shall destroy their altars and break in pieces their groves, and hew down all their images.’” When the power has not been given us, do not do it; when it is given, do not neglect it.” Augustine (354-430 AD)

I want to worship You truly, Lord, so show me...

Pray Psalm 95.1-11.

Use the words of this psalm to worship God. Which words tell you what to do? Which words tell you why to do it? What seems to be the end of worship?

Psalm 95.1-11 (*Tidings: O Zion, Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling*)

Come, let us sing with joy to God, our Savior!
Let us with joy to Him, our Rock, bow down!
Come now before Him, grateful for His favor;
Let joyful psalms break forth from all around.

Refrain v. 6

Come let us worship, kneel to our Lord;
Worship our Maker: Father, Holy Spirit, Word.

Great are You, Lord, a King above all nations.
All of earth’s depths lie hidden in Your hand.
Yours are the mountains, Yours the sea, You made it;
You by Your hands created the dry land.

Refrain

You are our God, we are Your sheep, Your people:
Speak, Lord, and let us hearken to Your Word.
Let not our hearts grow hard through sin, and feeble,
As when our fathers sinned against You, Lord.

Refrain

Long years You loathed that wicked generation,
Who in their hearts, rebelled against Your path.
Them You forsook, and kept from Your salvation;
Them You subjected to Your fearsome wrath.

Refrain

5 The Lord Our Provision

“And if you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?’ Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years.” Leviticus 25.20, 21

Reflect and discuss.

1. Certain teachings of God’s Word are difficult to understand and seem impossible to obey. Does this mean we can simply set these aside? Explain.
2. Every Scripture must first be understood in its original context. Then we look for a general principle that will apply to our context. The context for today’s passage is quite different from our own. Should we nonetheless expect to discover some principle we can apply?

Think about it.

The Lord promises to provide for His people. The provision of the Lord encourages us to obey Him, and obedience to the Lord leads us into further blessings. Our responsibility is to understand the will of the Lord and what He requires of us, and to be faithful in obeying and serving Him, out of sincere fear and love.

By so doing we do not earn His blessings. Rather, we *enter* His blessings through faith and obedience, and we find His Word and promises to be abundant for our needs. The ultimate provision of our needs – not just our daily bread, but everything we need to live as witnesses for Christ – does not depend upon us. We must be faithful as good stewards of our time, resources, and opportunities. God will meet us at the point of our need, just when we need Him. We do not always understand how He does this, but *that* He does is certain.

It must have been puzzling to Israel how they could have their daily bread supplied by taking a year off from working the land. But God commanded it, to reinforce the people’s need to rest in Him at all times. If they would obey, He would be faithful. If they would let the land rest, He would cause their harvests to abound. That they did not obey Him, never once keeping a year’s Sabbath for the land, was the reason for their being carried off into captivity in Babylon (2 Chron. 36.20, 21).

It might puzzle us to think that God could use us as witnesses for Christ. But He will, as long as we are faithful in making His Good News known.

Our Father knows what we need even before we ask Him. Why should we ever worry about this? To worry or be anxious is not only to doubt the Lord; it also distracts us from giving full and glad attention to the stewardship of our moments. God will provide. Everything you need – whether for daily sustenance or daily witness – comes by His blessing and according to His promise. Trust and obey: this is what God is looking for from you.

Plan well. Commit your work to the Lord. Do your work with excellence. Grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and stir up the gifts that are within you. Be accountable for every moment. Obey God’s Word as fully and completely as you can. This is the way into the presence and sustained blessing – as well as the power – of the Lord.

Meditate and discuss.

1. God explained how He would provide for His people during the sabbath year of the land (Lev. 25.21). But that seemed impossible to the people of Israel. Our Lord promises to make you His witness (Acts 1.8). Does that seem impossible to you? Hard? Explain.
2. Israel couldn’t see how the sabbath year would work, so they simply chose not to obey it. You may not be

able to see how you could possibly be a confident, outspoken, and effective witness for the Lord. But the Lord will provide. Meditate on Luke 12.11, 12. How can this help you obey the Lord's calling?

3. The Lord provides the power and words for our witness as surely as He provides our daily bread. But we need to "be ready" for every such opportunity (1 Pet. 3.15). What does being ready to bear witness entail?

"The Christian should not fear or be distressed in difficult circumstances and thus be distracted from trust in God. He should take courage as if the Lord were at hand directing his affairs and strengthening him against all his adversaries." Basil the Great (330-379 AD)

Lord, thank You for providing my daily bread. I do want to be a faithful witness for Jesus, and though I may not be able to see how, I know You will provide the power and words I need. For my part, I intend to...

Pray Psalm 107.

As you pray, respond in faith to the Lord's charge to bear witness. Can you find in the various vignettes presented in this psalm one that fits your own experience? Pray it back to the Lord with thanks for His mercy and grace.

Psalm 107.1-3 (*Faithfulness: Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

Lord, You are good, we give thanks and we praise You!

Your steadfast love will forever endure.

Let the redeemed, who from trouble You rescue,

Gather and say that Your mercy is sure!

Refrain v. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,

We give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!

We who from east and west, north and south gather,

Boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

6 The Threat of Slavery

“If the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed. He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.” Exodus 22.3

Reflect and discuss.

1. Today’s text contains a statute related to the eighth commandment. It explains how to deal with someone who has stolen the property of another. Do you see how the threat of punishment set forth in this statute is still acknowledged as valid today? Explain.

2. This text is one of several in the Law of God that *validate* and *qualify* the practice of slavery. Slavery in Israel was quite different, either from what surrounding nations practiced or what was done in America prior to the Civil War. Because the Law permitted slavery, does that mean we should permit it today? Explain. Does the practice of slavery as a threat in ancient Israel contain a valid principle of justice for us today?

Think about it.

While slavery in ancient Israel was nothing like the horrendous chattel slavery practiced in the American experience, it was nonetheless a deprivation of freedom that no one would enter into voluntarily, except under the most extreme conditions.

Everyone in those days would have preferred to be free rather than to be owned by another person, even though slaves in Israel had many rights. They could own and accumulate property. They were not to be kept from instruction in God’s Law. They could marry and raise a family, were protected against physical violence, and could ultimately be emancipated or emancipate themselves.

The threat of slavery, as a punishment for theft when one could not meet the demands of restitution, would have been an effective deterrent for those who, especially among the poor, might have been tempted to steal from their neighbors. It is not clear from today’s text, but the suggestion in God’s Law is that the period of enslavement would have lasted until the obligations of restorative justice were fulfilled – that is, until the fruit on any income-producing activity accomplished by the perpetrator would have been passed to the victim of the theft, or the condemned would have been required to do work for the one who “owned” him until the debt of restitution was satisfied.

The New Testament points the way to the eradication of slavery in all its forms (cf. Gal. 3.26-29; Philem. 1.8-16); and historically, Christians have always been on the forefront of the battle to end human trafficking. To be a slave in ancient Israel would not have been a preferred lifestyle for most people. However, it would have been far preferable to being a slave in any of the surrounding countries. Even in her own time and context, Israel was showing the way to restored humanity and freedom through obedience to God’s Law, even in those laws that regulated the practice of slavery.

Meditate and discuss.

1. Biblical justice is a jewel with five facets, one of them being *restorative* justice. What does restorative justice require? Why is this just?

2. When Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon, no longer as a slave, he might have been accused of breaking the Law of God (cf. Deut. 23.15, 16). Paul, however, understood that, with the coming of the Spirit and the Kingdom, things had changed. He sent Onesimus back as a *brother* and not a *slave*. How can you see that Paul both *fulfilled* the Old Testament laws about slavery (see especially his explanation in Philem. 1.17, 18) and pointed the way to a new view of this practice?

3. Is there a sense in which imprisonment today reflects the threat of slavery in ancient Israel? Explain. But does our practice of imprisoning offenders include restoration? Should it?

“Therefore the thief being taken pays fourfold, but he that spoils by violence is worse than if he steals. And if this last ought to give fourfold what he stole, the extortioner should give tenfold and much more. Even so he can make atonement for his justice.”
John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)

Pray Psalm 142.

God is in the freedom business (Jn. 8.32). As you pray, ask the Lord to show you any areas where your soul is in prison or otherwise enslaved to sin. Confess and repent.

Psalm 142.1-7 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

With my voice, O Lord, I cry –
Hear my plea for mercy, Lord!
My complaint mounts up on high,
Bringing You my troubled word:
Refrain vv. 5, 6
Lord, You are my Refuge strong!
O receive my plaintive song!

When my spirit faints away,
You my falt’ring pathway know;
Where I take my journey they
Traps have hidden to my woe.
Refrain

Lord, look to my right and see:
None takes notice of my plight.
Is there refuge left for me?
Is my soul out of Your sight?
Refrain

Hear my cry, Lord, I am low!
They are strong who seek my soul.
Jesus frees from every foe;
He will keep and make me whole!
Refrain

Out of prison lead me, Lord;
Thanks and praise to You shall be.
Righteous men armed with Your Word
Will Your grace bestow on me.
Refrain

7 The Benefits of Reading God's Law

“And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.” Deuteronomy 17.19, 20

Reflect and discuss.

1. Meditate on Psalm 1. What recommendation for reading God's Law does the psalmist make? What promise does this hold out to us?
2. Read Matthew 5.17-19. Is there any Kingdom benefit to be gained by reading the Law of God?

Think about it.

In our text, we note six benefits that kings of Israel should expect from reading the Law of God daily. We may expect that these same benefits will accrue to all who read not only the Law but all the Word of God daily.

(1) By daily reading and meditating in the Law and Word of God one may *learn to fear God*, and this is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111.10). We learn the fear of God from His Law because we see how wise, just, holy, and loving He is, and that He backs up His Law with terrifying sanctions for those who will not obey.

(2) By reading the Law daily, a person *learns what God requires for full and abundant life* (Lev. 18.1-5), a life of Christ-like love for God and neighbors (Matt. 5.17-19; 22.34-40). Learning the Law and growing not only in understanding but in the fear of God as well, we will be better able, and more likely, to obey what God commands, thus increasing daily in love and eternal life.

(3) Daily reading God's Law *works humility and a servant attitude in our hearts*, as we realize that all men are made in the image of God, are loved by Him, and deserve our loving care and service at all times.

(4) Daily reading *makes it less likely that we will stray from the Lord's path* to one of our own devising.

(5) Daily reading helps to *ensure a long life of fruitful service in the Kingdom* to which God has called us (1 Thess. 2.12).

(6) Finally, daily reading the Law and gaining the benefits described thus far, *helps to ensure that these benefits will fall upon the generations that follow us*.

What more reason could we want to begin reading and meditating in God's Law every day?

Meditate and discuss.

1. Suggest some ways a person might take up the discipline of daily reading from God's Law. Which of these ways most appeals to you?
2. Keep in mind that *being saved* is not one of the benefits of reading and obeying God's Law. But reading and obeying God's Law *is* important for those who are saved (Eph. 2.8-10; Rom. 3.31). Explain.
3. How can Christians encourage one another in the discipline of daily reading from God's Law?

“You are a wayfarer, like to him who prayed, ‘Direct my steps.’ ‘Give heed to yourself that you may swerve not from the path,

that you decline neither to the right nor the left. Keep to the king's highway. The architect should lay the firm foundation of faith which is Jesus Christ and let the builder look to his materials: not wood, nor hay nor stubble but gold, silver, precious stones."
Basil the Great 330-379 AD)

I want to know fullness of life and all the benefits that come from reading Your Law, O Lord, and so...

Pray Psalm 119.1-8.

Use these verses to set your heart for reading and meditating daily in God's Law.

Psalm 119.1-8 (*Ode to Joy: God All Nations Sing Thy Glory*)

Blest are they whose way is blameless,
All who walk within God's Law,
Who, His testimonies keeping,
Seek Him, filled with joy and awe.
These are they who, no wrong doing,
Ever walk within God's ways.
Lord, Your precepts You command us;
We would keep them all our days.

Let my ways steadfastly keep to
All the statutes of Your Word.
Then shall I, no shame enduring,
Fix my eyes on You, O Lord!
With an upright heart I praise You,
In Your rules will I abide.
I will keep Your statutes wholly;
Keep me ever by Your side.

The Law of God Miscellanies 2

For reflection or discussion

1. From the excerpts we have seen in this series, how can you see that the Law of God is indeed the pathway to life (Lev. 18.1-5)?
2. Do you think a society like ours could benefit from God's Law having *more* influence in the area of public policy? Explain.
3. What are some of the challenges we face in interpreting and applying God's Law today? How can we surmount these so that we gain as much benefit as possible from the Law?
4. What would you say to someone who insisted that Christians don't need to worry about God's Law?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How will you put that lesson to use in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.