

FULL FAITH PART 8

# THE LAW OF LIBERTY



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The Law of Liberty  
Full Faith Part 8  
A *ReVision* Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe  
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## Welcome to *The Law of Liberty*

Welcome to *The Law of Liberty*, a brief study investigating the role of the Law of God in the life of faith. *The Law of Liberty* is Part 8 in our series, *Full Faith*, and one of our *ReVision* series of studies in Biblical worldview.

It is fashionable among Christians these days to regard the Law of God as no longer relevant for believers. We're under grace, not Law, the assertion goes. "For the Christian the Law is a dead and a useless thing," as one theologian happily announced.

But is this really the case? James says the Law is a Law of liberty – it sets us free to live as God intends, in full faith love for Him and our neighbors. Paul says the Law is holy and righteous and good, and John insisted true believers will walk in the path of the Law, just as Jesus did.

Apparently, there's more to the Law – and to realizing full faith in Jesus – than what many people today think.

These studies are designed for individual or group use. While you may derive much benefit from studying on your own, that benefit can be greatly enhanced by joining with a friend or a group to read, discuss, share, challenge, and pray for one another.

Take one lesson at a time. Read through the study and reflect on the questions provided. Be sure to do the *Next steps* assignment each day, as this will help you put your learning into practice. Use the questions at the end of the study to reflect on what you have learned.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your understanding of the Christian faith, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God, and life in His Kingdom.

If you have not already, we invite you to subscribe to *ReVision* so that you can receive it daily on your computer, tablet, or smart phone. Visit our website, [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org), where you can subscribe to *ReVision* and our other newsletters.

Our prayer is that this study will enlarge your vision of Christ and His Kingdom, and encourage you to greater faith, boldness, and consistency in living for Him.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 Which Law?

*So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.* James 2.12

### *Saved for good works*

Martin Luther, the great 16<sup>th</sup> century apologist for the doctrine of justification by faith, had some trouble with the Epistle of James, especially chapter 2. Here James labors to point out that true faith – saving and *full* faith – must be validated in good works.

Luther, concerned about the overemphasis on works in his day as the *means* to salvation, scratched his head over this and concluded that the book of James was a “right strawy epistle.” He didn’t reject it; he simply struggled to put together James’ insistence on good works with Paul’s explanation that justification is by grace through faith alone.

For many Christians today, that struggle continues. Grace has become an idol for many believers, who insist that God loves them just as they are, and He wouldn’t put any expectations on them that they weren’t up to fulfilling, especially not where the Law of God is concerned.

But the Apostle Paul reconciled the two ideas of grace and works in Ephesians 2.10, where he explained that those who have been saved *by* grace through faith are saved *unto* good works, specifically, those good works which God has before ordained for us to walk in.

### *The standard for conduct*

Well, which good works might *those* be?

Back to James, and to his straightforward explanation: “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.” There is a standard for Christian conduct, and it has very little to do with what *we* think is right for us, what we *feel* is most agreeable. The standard by which we must speak and do, and by which God will judge our behavior, is the “law of liberty”, or, as James refers to it in verse 8, “the royal law.”

Christians should make sure that all our speaking and living are in line with this divine standard.

But this begs a further question: Which law is the “royal law”, the “law of liberty”? In the context of his statement – James 2 – and of the book of James as a whole, the apostle is quoting from the Ten Commandments. In that same chapter he warns Christians against acting like “judges with evil thoughts” by showing partiality to rich people over the poor – a precept he appears to have derived from Leviticus 19.15. In chapter 5 of his epistle James condemns those who do not pay wages in a timely manner – a standard of justice based on the eighth commandment and drawn from the civil law of Israel in Deuteronomy 24.14, 15.

James believed that, in some very important sense, Christians, who are under grace in Jesus, are also under Law for the good works grace engenders.

### *The Law of God*

So it’s clear that James means by “the law of liberty” the Law of God as expressed in the Ten Commandments, elaborated, illustrated, and explained by the statutes, precepts, and ordinances of ancient

*The Law of Liberty*

Israel.

Can this possibly be? Does James mean to say that the good works God has redeemed us for are the very ones explained in the Law of God, and that this Law is the standard for divine well-doing?

I see no other alternative. The Law of God, contrary to the views of the vast majority of contemporary Christians, including most preachers, is the “law of liberty” and the standard of goodness by which we are to live unto the Lord. If we want to be increasingly free of the grip of sin and know the inward power of the Spirit of God, then we must embrace the Law of God and seek within its teaching the liberty and life only the Spirit of God can give (Jn. 6.63; 2 Cor. 3.12-18).

But in what sense can this Law, which many of us have been taught is a burden from which Jesus freed us, serve to liberate us? As we shall see in this study, in many wondrous and glorious ways, indeed.

*For reflection*

1. Meditate on Psalm 1 and Matthew 5.17-19. What role does the Law of God play in your walk with and work for the Lord?
2. Is it true that Christians are “under grace” and not “under Law”? Explain.
3. Meditate on Hebrews 11.1 Christians are not saved *by* works, but we’re not saved *without* them. Explain.

*Next steps: What is the position of your pastor and church leaders on the role of the Law of God in the life of faith? Ask a few of them.*

## 2 Liberty? Really?

*“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* Matthew 5.19

*Don't blame me!*

The Law of God – the Ten Commandments and the precepts, rules, statutes, and ordinances that accompany them – are the “law of liberty”, the “royal law” which God has before ordained to guide us in doing good works of love to God and neighbors for His praise and glory (Matt. 22.34-40; Matt. 5.16).

I am not unaware that many of you are saying, “No, no!” even as you read these words; and I fully expect to hear from some of you who will insist that I am teaching salvation by works.

Let me say again emphatically: We are saved *by* grace through faith, *unto* good works – the good works of the Law of liberty, the Law of God. Full faith living is living in love for God and neighbors, according to the teaching of God's Law and all His Word.

So if you want to insist, as one theologian put it, that “the Christian has no relationship to Law...for the Christian, the Law of God is a dead and a useless thing,” you should be clear that your argument is not with me: it's with the apostles James, Paul, and John, as we shall see.

More than that, your argument is with the Lord Jesus Himself, Who taught us that you cannot attain to greatness in His Kingdom without obedience to the Law of God, and faithfully urging of that Law on all the followers of Christ.

*Salvation unto works*

This is not salvation *by* works, but salvation *unto* them. But which works? The good works prescribed in the holy, righteous, and good Law of God (Rom. 7.12). Believers in Christ are called to confirm, work out, express, enjoy, and give evidence of the full power of their salvation, and their full faith commitment to Christ, by keeping the Law of God. Any who refuse, fail, or neglect to do so must consider that, in spite of having confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord, they may not have come to saving faith at all (Matt. 7.20; 1 Jn. 2.1-6; Jms.2.14-26).

But how can this be?

*To set us free!*

The explanation is simple: As James put it, the Law of God is a *liberating* moral code. It does not encumber us with man-made obligations and traditions, like the Pharisees in Jesus' day tried to do. Rather, it liberates us from merely human protocols and priorities into the clear light of divinely-revealed Truth. It sets us free from the confusion and uncertainty of our own best guesses or strongest inclinations into the unchanging reliability of God-given standards. The Law of God frees us from relativism and pragmatism into the light of life and Truth. It shatters the bonds of guilt and the allure of sin, bringing us to the forgiveness of Christ and the sweet attractiveness of the divine presence.

The Law of God liberates us from folly into glory; all who live and teach the Law of God discover the course of Christ's Kingdom and walk in full faith the path of good works that Jesus Himself did (1 Jn. 2.1-6).

### *The Law of Liberty*

We are not talking here about the laws of sacrifice, diet, and cleansing, all of which pertained to the ancient priesthood of Israel. Even though these religious codes provide some guidance for following Jesus, all those laws ceased when Jesus assumed the eternal priesthood from the tribe of Judah, rather than Levi (Heb. 7-10).

And we're not auguring for believers to take each statute of the civil code of Old Testament Israel and carry it out on their own authority or even in the *letter* as opposed to the *Spirit* of the Law (2 Cor. 3.4-6). What we're saying, echoing the apostles and the Lord, is that the Law of God is of enduring value for those who believe in Jesus – indeed, for all people – in learning to walk the path of holiness, righteousness, goodness, and love, the path of Christian discipleship (Rom. 7.12; 1 Jn. 5.1-3; cf. Lk. 1.6).

We are unable to walk that path on our own strength, as we shall see; and we cannot walk that path in order to *earn* our salvation, as I have said.

However, if we have come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord, and have been born again into the light of His Truth; and if we desire to grow in full faith in the Lord, then taking up the Law of God to obey and teach it will lead us into the freedom of the sons and daughters of God.

#### *For reflection*

1. The Law of God, given through Moses, is the acorn to the oak of Biblical revelation. Explain.
2. Meditate on Romans 3.21-31. Jesus fulfilled all the righteous requirements of God's Law so that, in His righteousness, we might follow that same path. Explain.
3. Can we love God and our neighbors without knowing the Law of God? Why not?

*Next steps: Have you memorized the Ten Commandments? If not, do so this week.*

### 3 Freedom in the Spirit

*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit...* Ephesians 5.18

#### *Sorting out the confusion*

I don't know a single Christian who doesn't believe that being filled with the Spirit of God is a good and necessary thing.

But I know lots of believers who don't have a clue as to what that means.

For some believers, the filling of the Spirit is a simple formula: breathe out your sins through confession, breath in the Spirit by prayer. Having done that, you're filled.

Others insist that the filling of the Spirit is achieved through extraordinary gifts. In some churches you can even find instruction in how to "prime the pump" of your speech by uttering mindless, repetitious phrases until the Spirit takes over and, *voilà*, you're filled with Him.

Still others will insist that being filled with the Spirit means don't drink, don't smoke, and don't hang with those that do. Or just having a swell time singing and raising your hands during the praise songs of "worship."

#### *Looking to the Scriptures*

With such divergent views of the filling of the Spirit, we do well to see if Scripture has any clear and complementary instruction to help us understand what Paul means.

The Spirit of God, we know, teaches us the things of God by comparing passages of Scripture with one another so that, in their harmonizing tones, we can hear and delight in the Truth of God (1 Cor. 2.12, 13). Whatever we believe about the filling of the Spirit, therefore, must come from His instruction in His Word.

I want us to look briefly at three passages of Scripture that relate to the work and filling of the Spirit of God. In the light of these texts we can gain a better understanding of what God has liberated us unto in His holy and righteous and good Law.

#### *God at work in you*

The first passage is Philippians 2.13. Here Paul says God is at work within us to make us willing and able to do whatever pleases Him. Now we know that the Spirit of God, dwells in the hearts of all who believe in Jesus, and is the power of God Who works within us to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ (Acts 1.8; 2 Cor. 3.12-18; Eph. 3.20).

But what pleases God? What is the Spirit working within us to make us willing and able to do? Certainly we must believe that He is at work within us to make us willing and able to speak and do those good works for which we have been redeemed, and which God has prepared for us in His Law (Eph. 2.10). We are filled with the Spirit when He is having His way in us and we are speaking and doing that which accords with His Law.

#### *To convict and to instruct*

Jesus taught that the Spirit of God will convict and instruct us when He comes to dwell within us. We read this in our second passage, John 16.8-11. This is how the Spirit begins to make us willing and able to do the

### *The Law of Liberty*

good works of God. He convicts us of our sins – which Paul says He does by pointing us to the Law of God (Rom. 7.7) – and He teaches us the way of righteousness, which is the way of Christ’s Kingdom (Rom. 14.17, 18).

So by drawing us into the light of God’s Law, the Spirit of God convicts us of sin and points us down the path of right living and good works. Surely to be filled with the Spirit means to be always ready to confess and repent of our sin and to take up the life of righteousness in Jesus (Ps. 119.59, 60; Eph. 4.17-24).

#### *To teach us to obey the Law*

Finally, through the prophet Ezekiel, God specifically told us, that when He gives His Spirit to His people it will be so that the Spirit will teach us His Law, and enable us to walk in obedience to it (Ezek. 36.26, 27).

The Spirit of God – Who is, we should recall, the *Holy* Spirit – is working within us through conviction and instruction to make us willing and able to understand and obey the Law of God, the law of liberty. As we take up the *holy* Law of God we are liberated from the life of the flesh into the life of the *Holy* Spirit of God.

And the more we take up that Law, reading and meditating in it day by day, and walking the path it marks out for us, the more we will be *filled with the Spirit* according to the teaching of God’s Word.

#### *For reflection or discussion*

1. Why must we have the Spirit of God to enable us to speak and do according to the perfect Law of liberty, the Law of God?
2. What would be a good way for you to begin becoming more familiar with the teaching of the Law of God?
3. Can we be filled with the Spirit if we remain indifferent to or ignorant of the Law of God? Explain.

*Next steps: How do your Christian friends understand the filling of the Spirit? Ask a few of them. Share some of the insights from this study.*

## 4 Get in Touch with Your Heart

*...for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them...* Romans 2.14, 15

*Gotta be me!*

In our age of increasing narcissism, self-fulfillment and self-actualization are big business.

Whether it's the fitness craze, the latest in cars or fashion, the addiction to social media or fantasy sports, people are desperate to find something of fulfillment for their lives.

Films, literature, and television programs provide many examples of people who are trying to get in touch with themselves, to discover who they really are, what's inside them trying to get out. This is a very human activity, of course. We know of no animals that fret and fuss and carry on about getting in touch with their hearts.

And truly it does seem to be an elusive objective. Psychologists and psychiatrists, as well as drug companies, make a living trying to help people through the confusion of life so that they can get in touch with their inner person or their true self.

But this doesn't have to be that big of a struggle. The problem is that too many people are not really interested in knowing what's in their hearts; they're interested in having in their hearts, as well as in their lives, whatever it is they think will make them happy.

And here is yet another way in which the Law of God shows itself to be the law of liberty to which James refers in his epistle.

*The Law and the New Covenant*

The Bible teaches that, in their heart of hearts, people are bent toward knowing and doing the works of God's Law. It is written on the spiritual fabric of their souls to carry out the commandments of God.

Only when they refuse to do so do they begin to run into trouble, because then they're trying to be something they aren't. They're trying to live as Law-ignorers when, in fact, as the image-bearers of God, they're meant to be Law-keepers, as we have seen.

The Law of God is crucial to our becoming what God has created and saves us to be. Indeed, one of the primary features of the New Covenant is that God writes the Law – not just the *works* of the Law, but the Law itself – on the hearts of those who believe (Jer. 31.33). Once a person comes to saving faith, what he “knew” instinctively, but probably suppressed and ignored – the *works* of the Law – now comes stunningly to light – the Law itself. Coming to salvation a person understands he or she is made, and has been redeemed, to live out the good works of the Law of God.

The Law of God gets us in touch with our hearts because it lays over our inherent sense of the *works* of the Law both the *righteousness of Jesus Christ* – Who fulfilled all the Law of God (Matt. 5.17-19) – and the holiness, righteousness, and goodness of the *substance* of God's Law as well (Rom. 7.12).

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But if we remain indifferent to the Law, or choose to ignore it, the law of sin, still putting up a struggle within us, will deceive us in our hearts, so that we believe that *we* know better than *God* what it means to have full faith, and how we must find happiness and meaning in life.

But as you take up the Law of God, under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, and as you continue meditating daily in the Law (Ps. 1), you will begin to sense, “Yes, this is what I was made for. This is right and true and good. This is me!”

By reading and meditating in the Law of God we get in touch with our hearts, and we are liberated from confusion, doubt, and anxiety into the glorious light and liberty of the sons and daughters of God.

This is the work of God’s Spirit, as He sculpts and transforms us into the image of Jesus Christ, according the teaching of God’s Law.

#### *For reflection or discussion*

1. The soul consists of three components – mind, heart, and conscience. How well do you understand the role of each of these?
2. The heart has to do with our affections – what we desire and love. Why would God’s Spirit write His Law there, as opposed to our minds?
3. What is the law of sin? How can it keep us from knowing the freedom God intends for us in the Law of liberty?

*Next steps: Set a schedule to begin daily reading and meditating in the Law of God. How might you incorporate the Ten Commandments into your time of prayer?*

## 5 Be Like Jesus

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3.18*

### *Transforming our souls*

In its context, our text is speaking about looking into the Law of God, just like Moses did on Mt. Sinai, and encountering in that Law the very presence of God Himself – His glory.

As that happens, Paul says, the Spirit within us begins to do a work of transformation in our souls. Taking the raw material – which is our old life, now redeemed – He uses the glory of God in the Law, and, indeed, in all His Word, to shape, sculpt, and transform us into the very image of Jesus Christ. We begin to be more like Jesus as the Law and Word of God, in the strong hands of the Holy Spirit, does its work in our souls.

Daily reading and meditating in the Law of God has the potential for bringing us into the presence of God and His glory, where we see the very face of Jesus, and are transformed into that which we see (2 Cor. 4.6).

Do you want to be like Jesus? Stand in front of the mirror of God's Law!

### *To be like Jesus!*

We are liberated by the Law of God from the old person we used to be – with all our foolish and corrupt notions and sentiments, and all our wayward priorities and practices – into someone who begins to reflect the character, values, and works of Jesus Christ.

Back in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Charles Sheldon made a stir among believers with his book, *In His Steps*. In this brief volume, Sheldon invited readers to ask, “What would Jesus do?” in any situation as a way of following Him more consistently.

In our own generation we have seen that slogan and passion revived, with “What would Jesus do?” being etched onto Christian jewelry, tee shirts, and plaques in a money-making frenzy which knows a good thing when it sees it.

But what does this kitschy trend reveal? It shows us that, in their heart of hearts, Christians want to be like Jesus.

This is a very good thing, of course. We're tired of the old sinful person we were. We chafe against the continuing presence of the law of sin in our hearts. We want some relief from the daily barrage of temptations that so often lead us astray. If only we could be liberated from all this to become more like Jesus!

Well, Paul tells us the answer lies in the glory of God which He has encoded in His Law. The Law of God is the law of liberty because it frees us to be like Jesus.

### *Conditions*

But becoming like Jesus entails some conditions, of course.

First, Paul says, we have to *hope* that this glory and transformation can actually occur within us (2 Cor. 3.12). That is, we have to believe that we can meet God in His Law – we can encounter His glory in the holy, righteous, and good teachings of His commandments, precepts, statutes, and rules. We believe that, when we go to the Law daily in the confident hope of entering the glory of God, this will actually be our experience.

Then, second, we must be very bold to *come* before God in His Law and to linger there, waiting in patient meditation for the Spirit of God to do His work. This means we need to establish some discipline that will find us coursing through the Law of God on a regular basis. That might involve praying through the Ten Commandments daily, or reading the book of Deuteronomy over and over. Or even meditating on all the [statutes and precepts of God's Law](#), according to the commandment to which each applies.

Then, third, we must *go forth* unto God's glory; we must come away from this encounter with God's glory in His Law, looking for Jesus and fully determined to be like Him, to think and feel like Jesus, speak and do what Jesus would do.

As we thus go forward in faith, the Lord meets us in His Spirit, works out our salvation in us, and makes us able to do exceedingly abundantly more than all that we could ever ask or think (Phil. 2.13, Eph. 3.20). And so, in the daily course of our lives, we are liberated from our old selves into the new selves which are being made according to the righteousness of Jesus Christ and living for the glory of God (Eph. 4.17-24; 1 Cor. 10.31).

This is why God wrote His Law on our hearts when He sent His Spirit to dwell in us, so that, by His inward power and working, we might become more like Jesus.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. To this point, what has been your approach to becoming more like Jesus? Can you see how this might be greatly enhanced by reading and meditating in God's Law? Explain.
2. The Law in God's Word is the *focus* of our sanctification. The Law in our hearts provides the *incentive* for sanctification. And Jesus is the *goal* or *outcome* we seek in sanctification. Why does it make sense to spend more time reading and meditating in the Law of God?
3. Can you expect to become more like Jesus apart from reading and meditating in His Law? Explain.

*Next steps: Meditate on Matthew 24.12. Why does love decrease as lawlessness increases? Talk with some Christian friends about this question.*

## 6 The Pursuit of Greatness

*“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* Matthew 5.19

### *Good to great*

A popular business book of a few years back carries the title, *Good to Great*. It offers itself as a guide for good companies to become great ones – more productivity, better products and service, more revenue, a better standing in the world.

The book, of course, was a huge best-seller, and continues to do well, because anyone who has a *good* business has had a taste of how exhilarating that can be. Naturally, therefore, he’d like to get from good to *great*, and this book is evidently helping many businesses to fulfill that desire.

Jesus said that the highest priority of every Christian is to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6.33). Whatever else we do – make a living, raise a family, play sports, take care of the lawn, love our spouse, vote in the next election, try to get our business to go from good to great – all this and everything else besides must be pursued within the overall framework of seeking the Kingdom of God.

Kingdom-seeking thus becomes a full-time calling that embraces and transforms every aspect of our lives. Once a person makes that Kingdom turn, and begins to realize how good, how truly good it is to live in the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit, he will understand that this is what life is all about (Rom. 14.17, 18).

### *The Law of love*

And if we really taste the goodness of God and His Kingdom, we won’t be satisfied. Good is good, to be sure; but if it is possible to go from good to great in the Kingdom of God, most of us, I think, would want to move on to that higher plateau.

Those who don’t should question whether they’ve ever made the turn into the Kingdom of God in the first place.

Jesus said it is possible to go from good to great in the Kingdom. All you have to do is keep the Law of God and teach others to do so as well. How does that work? How does keeping and teaching the Law of God lead to greatness in the Kingdom?

It’s really rather simple. The more we keep and teach the Law of God, the more we grow in love for God and our neighbors (Matt. 22.34-40), inclining us to serve them in all our speaking and doing by whatever means may be at hand. The Law teaches the way of love. Keep the Law and you will learn the priorities, protocols, and practices of love; and as you love, you will become more like Jesus, and you will serve others in love like Jesus did.

And Jesus insisted that he who would be greatest of all must be servant of all (Mk. 10.43). Kingdom greatness has nothing to do with strutting around and being admired by everyone, or throwing your weight around and offering political favors to your friends and supporters. Kingdom greatness is greatness in loving service, in denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily to follow Jesus in faith and obedience. The greatness Jesus offers is the greatness of suffering, service, and the inward assurance of His presence with us always.

## *The Law of Liberty*

The Law of God is thus the ticket from the bleachers to the box seats, from the nose bleed section of the Kingdom to the orchestra row. On the mount of transfiguration, Peter said to Jesus, “Lord it is good for us to be here.” But he wasn’t satisfied with “good.” Peter wanted “great.” He wanted to stay there permanently, basking in the glory of God as it radiated through the person of the Law-keeping Christ.

As we do so, glimpsing and adoring the face of Jesus, revealed in the Law of God, we experience the glory of God and are worked on by the indwelling Spirit, Who takes our good experience of the Lord and His Kingdom and begins to make something great of it.

Once you have truly tasted the goodness of God’s Kingdom, you won’t be content with anything other than greatness. And the Law of God marks the way to greatness through loving service to God and neighbors.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What would being great in the Kingdom look like in your daily life?
2. Suggest some *next steps* you might take to move from a *good* experience of the Kingdom to a *great* one.
3. How can Christians encourage and help one another in seeking to be great in the Kingdom of God?

*Next steps: Download the free [Personal Mission Field worksheet](#), map out your Personal Mission Field, and discover the people and places among whom you might begin to know more of the greatness of Christ’s Kingdom.*

## 7 Free from Judgment

*So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.* James 2.12

### *The Law fulfilled*

James says that we should expect to be judged by the law of liberty – the Law of God. In all our speaking and in all our doing, we should have before our minds and in our hearts the holy and righteous and good Law of God.

That's a very high standard, to be sure, and none of us can keep it perfectly. Jesus is the righteousness of the Law that we require, and His Law and Word are the way into His presence and glory.

Jesus fulfilled the Law of God in two senses. First, through His *active* obedience, He carried out faithfully all the requirements of holiness in God's Law. We cannot fulfill the Law of God, but we don't have to: Jesus has fulfilled it for us.

Then, in His *passive* obedience, He bore all the judgments of God's Law against sinners such as we. We do not have to fear the terrifying sanctions threatened in the Law of God because Jesus has borne them for us. Now He calls us to follow Him and to walk as He did (1 Jn. 2.1-6).

### *Judgment to come*

There are two senses in which God will judge the world by the law of liberty.

First is in the Day of Judgment which is yet to come. In that day every person's works will be examined, and those whose works do not measure up to the standard of God's Law – and who have no one to advocate for them, because they have not known Him – will be cast into eternal condemnation.

At the same time, those who have embraced God's Redeemer, Who is their Advocate, will have their unseemly works – those not in keeping with God's Law – burned away as in a fire, though their salvation will remain (1 Cor. 3.9-15). At the Day of Judgment our works will be judged by the Law of liberty; but we who follow Jesus here and now expect to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," not because of *our* obedience but because of *His*.

### *The discipline of the Lord*

But the fact that Jesus will get us through the Day of Judgment must not make us complacent. Paul says we must all strive to bring holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7.1). This we do, as we have seen, by learning and obeying God's Law. If we refuse to do this, if we simply will not take up the Law of God, God doesn't simply shrug from on high and say, "Oh well."

No, no. He is our Father. He knows what we need. He has given us the rules of His household. And if we will not obey, He will discipline us, and discipline is not pleasant. But its purpose is to yield the fruit of righteousness in our lives – that is, to get us back on track with obeying and teaching the Law of God (Heb. 12.7-11).

Because that's when we're following Jesus, that's when we're filled with the Spirit, that's when we're being transformed, that's when we're learning to love and to serve, and that's when we're moving toward the Kingdom greatness our Father in heaven desires for us.

### *Grounded in the Law?*

### *The Law of Liberty*

God is very serious about this. He tells us that those who neglect His Law are out of sync with His plan for them. They do not have the mind of the Spirit of God (Rom. 8.5-9). They are deceived into thinking that some other way of life is right for them, rather than what God prescribes (Prov. 14.12). Even their prayers are an abomination to the Lord if they will not study and obey His Law (Prov. 28.9).

God is judging the sinful world even now because of its refusal to acknowledge and worship Him (Rom. 1.18-32). This is the second sense of divine judgment. We may certainly expect that we are not exempt from His judgment when we neglect the Law He has written on our hearts, and which He gave His Spirit to teach us.

Daily reading and meditation in God's Law is the way of the righteous person, and a crucial component of full faith in Jesus (Ps. 1; 1 Jn. 2.1-6). Hiding the Law in our hearts will help us walk more fully and joyously in His way (Ps. 119.9-11). Far from being a chain to confine us, the Law of God is the law of liberty, so that we can be free from the power of sin and really live in Jesus Christ.

#### *For reflection or discussion*

1. What can prevent you from giving the Law of God a more prominent place in your walk with and work for the Lord?
2. What do you expect Kingdom greatness to look like in your life as you seek a better understanding and deeper love for God's Law?
3. Given what we've studied in these lessons, what place would you give the Law of God in the proclamation of the Gospel?

*Next steps: Do you think the Law of God needs to have a more prominent place in the life of your church? Why or why not? Talk with a pastor or church leader about these questions.*

*The Law of Liberty*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Why do you think the Law of God has been neglected by many believers in our day?
2. What is the place of works in our salvation? What does it mean to “work out” our salvation (Phil. 2.12)?
3. Have you mapped out and begun working your Personal Mission Field? How do you expect the Kingdom of God to come in greatness there?
4. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned about the Law of God and your relationship to it?
5. How are you planning to implement that lesson in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.

