

Objection 14

Seventh day Adventists are constantly preaching that men should obey God's commandments, keep the law, as if that were the sum and substance of true religion and a passport to heaven. But the Christian has nothing to do with law; he lives wholly by the grace of God, which he made available to him through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, and thus only, can any man be right with God and be in readiness for heaven.

We freely admit that we preach that men should obey God's commandments. We also preach with equal vigor that a man's only hope of heaven is through the grace of God made available in the gospel. There is no conflict between the two declarations, as we shall seek to show. Note, first, these similar declarations regarding obedience, as set forth in the Old and the New Testament:

Old Testament

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eats thereof thou shall surely die." Gen. 2:16, 17.

"I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." Gen. 26:3-5.

"Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." Ex. 19:5.

"Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself!" Lev. 19:18.

'And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.' 1 Sam. 15:22.

"Turn you from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets." 2 Kings 17:13.

"But this thing commanded I them. saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people: and walk you in all the ways that I shall have commanded you, that it may be

New Testament

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Matt. 5:19.

"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" Matt. 15:3.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Matt. 19:17.

"In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men."

Mark 7:7, 8.

"He that bath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me." John 14:21.

"For this: Thou shall not commit adultery, Thou shall not kill. Thou shall not steal. Thou shall not bear false witness, Thou shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely. Thou shall love thy neighbor as thy self.' Rom. 13:9.

"But who so looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues therein, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

"So speak you and so do, as they that be judged by the law Of Liberty!', James 1:25; 2:12

well unto you." Jer. 7:23.
"For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice." Jer. 11:7.

"The great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments." Dan 9:4.

Note now the similar declarations of the Old and the New Testament concerning the grace of God that is made available through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of the fact that the experiences of certain Old Testament worthies are revealed to us through the comments of New Testament writers, the column entitled "Old Testament Times" will contain a number of New Testament texts:

Old Testament Times

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel." Gen. 3:15.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaks." Hell. 11:7.

"By faith Noah, being warned of the God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Heb. 11:7. Acts 2:38.

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou has obeyed my voice." Gen. 22:18.

"For if Abraham were justified by works, he bath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what says the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

David also describes the blessedness of the man, into whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." "Therefore it is

"BY this we know that we love the children of God when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.' 1 John 5:2,3.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Rev. 14:12.

Note now the similar declarations of the Old and the New Testament concerning the grace of God that is made available through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of the fact that the experiences of certain Old Testament worthies are revealed to us through the comments of New Testament writers, the column entitled "Old Testament Times" will contain a number of New Testament texts:

New Testament Times

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1:21.

"And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel!" Mark 1:18.

"The next day John sees Jesus coming unto him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away sin of the world." John 1:29.

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

"You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 3:25; 4:12.

"And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? -And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved, Even as and thy house." Acts 16:30, 31.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Rom. 1:16.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. Being

of faith that it might be by grace: to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith Of Abraham; who is the father of us all." ROM. 4:2-8, 16.
"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou should say,

Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou may do it." Deut. 30:11-14.

(Paul quotes this passage in Deuteronomy, prefacing it thus: "The righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise." See Rom. 10: 6.)

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." "For thou desires not it in sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delights not in burnt offering. The sacrifice's of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise." Ps. 51:1,2,10,16,17.

Here are the evident conclusions we must reach from studying these passages on obedience and grace in the Old and the New Testament:

1. Throughout all the history of this earth God has had but one rule for those who desire to be His children and thus qualify for heaven, and that rule is, obedience to His commands.

2. Likewise throughout all history there has been but one means by which men can be cleansed of the sin of their past disobedience and be enabled to give true obedience in the future; namely, the grace and power of God, which are made available through faith in the gospel.

Answers to a few questions will help to make these conclusions even more evident.

1. How did sin begin in the human race? Answer: By man's failure in the Garden of Eden to give obedience to God's will, His holy command.

2. Where is God's will most concisely expressed? Answer: In His holy law, the Ten Commandments.

3. What is the attitude of rebellious men toward His law? Answer: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7

4. How is sin defined in the Bible? Answer: "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4

5. How many of us are sinners? Answer: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3:23.

6. Then how do we stand in relation to God? Answer: "Guilty before God." Rom. 3:19.

7. Can a man remove his guilt for past sins, and thus stand justified before God, by faithful obedience to God's law in the future? Answer: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Rom. 3:20.

witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness Of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." ROM. 3:21, 22.

"Therefore being justified by faith. we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5:1,2.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. 15:10.
"But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith

he loved Us, even when we were dead in sins, bath quickened us together with Christ (by grace you are saved;) and bath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places In Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might thew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace am you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:4-9.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation bath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11,
"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17.

8. What is the purpose of the law in relation to a guilty man? Answer: "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Verse 20. "For where no law is, there is no transgression." Rom. 4: 15.

9. What is the gospel? Answer: The good news that Christ has come to die for our sins and to offer to men the grace of God (Matt. 1:21; 2 Cor. 5:18-21)

10. What is grace? Answer: The unmerited favor of God displayed toward man in saving and preserving him.

11. How is the grace of God toward guilty man displayed? Answer: (1) By offering him a means by which he may be freed from the guilt of his past sins. (2) By taking away his "carnal mind" and stony heart, which are "enmity against God" and "not subject to the law of God," and giving him a new heart and mind that delights to do the will of God. (Rom. 8: 7; Heb. 8: 10.)

12. How is man freed from the guilt of past sins? Answer: "You know that he [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins." 1 John 3:5. "Being justified freely by his "ace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ... for the remission of sins that are past." Rom. 3:24, 25.

13. How does the guilty man avail himself of this proffered cleansing? Answer: By simple faith in Christ. "That whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

14. At the moment of accepting Christ by faith what takes place for repentant sinners? Answer: There is fulfilled for them the promise of the new covenant: "I will put my law into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Heb. 8: 10.

15. With God's laws thus written in our minds and hearts how do we relate ourselves to its holy requirements, its claim on our obedience? Answer: Christ "condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law ["the just requirement of the law," R.S.V.] might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:3, 4.

16. How else is this miraculous new life of the pardoned sinner described? Answer: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20.

17. Now if Christ is the one who lives out His life through us, what will be our relation to God's law? Answer: The same relation to it that Christ bore.

18. What was Christ's relation to God's law? Answer: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Ps. 40:8.

19. How does the pardoned sinner reveal that he is no longer at enmity against God, but that he truly loves Him? Answer: By obedience to God, which is the opposite of rebellion against Him. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." 1 John 5:3.

20. How may we summarize the contrast between the sinner and the pardoned child of God? Answer: In this way:

The Sinner

1. "Enmity against God."
2. "Has a carnal mind!" Minds the things of the flesh.
3. "Not subject to the law of God."
4. Controlled by Satan (Rom. 6:16),
who originated all rebellion.

The Pardoned Child of God

1. In harmony with God.
2. Walks "not after the flesh, but after the spirit."
3. God's law in his mind and heart.
4. Christ lives in him, and Christ has
His Father's law in His heart.

How evident, then, that there is no conflict between law and grace; between obedience to God's holy law, which is the true mark of the child of God, and salvation from sin through God's grace displayed in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. We are saved from sin, law breaking, that we might live a life of obedience, law keeping. No sinner will enter heaven. The "saints" standing in readiness for Christ's Second Advent are distinguished in two vital ways: They (1) keep "the commandments of God" and (2) "the faith of Jesus." (Rev. 14:12) Adventists, who seek to prepare their hearts and the hearts of others for the Second Advent, preach that men should "keep the commandments of God" and possess "the faith of Jesus." Thus law and grace are combined. And it is because "the faith of Jesus" is kept that "the commandments of God" can be kept.