

What the Law Demands

by Timothy R. Jennings, M.D.

I received the following quotation from a friend in Australia who asked how I understand it:

Righteousness is obedience to the law. **The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law;** but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. **By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account.** Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness; and the pardoned soul goes on from grace to grace, from light to a greater light. He can say with rejoicing, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7)." Faith and Works 101.

The passage above is describing God's solution or remedy for the sin problem and its application to the sinner's life. But before we are able to accurately understand the solution for sin we must first properly diagnose the problem sin caused that the plan of salvation is designed to fix. Those who misdiagnose the sin problem misunderstand the solution and misread the passage above. In order to rightly understand the problem we must start with understanding God's design for life. And God's design is love.

The Bible teaches that God's law is the law of love:

Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:10.

The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14.

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. James 2:8

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matt 12:37-40.

Where does the law of love originate? Is it something God created that exists outside Himself and is compulsory upon Him and the rest of creation? Is God's law an imposed, legislated, or otherwise enacted law? Or does the law of love originate in God's heart/character?

The Bible teaches that God is love. Imagine traveling back in time before earth was created, back before any planets, before angels, back before God created anything at all to a time described in John 1:1,2 .

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Back then, when only God existed, was the law of love in existence? If so, then such a law is not "created" but is the expression of God's being.

God, being love, created everything to operate upon the template of the law of love because all things were made through Him, and through Him all things hold together (John 1:3, Col 1:17). Love is the design protocol for all life. 1Cor 13 tells us that this love is "not self-seeking," which means love is giving, other-centered, beneficent. The law of life for the universe is perfect love, free giving to uplift and bless.

One example of how life is built to operate on giving is respiration. With every breath we take we give away CO2 to the plants and the plants give us O2. The only way to live is to give. If we hoard our CO2 it will kill us. This is God's design, an expression of the law of love.

Then what is sin? What is the problem sin caused that needs fixing? Why does sin bring death? And what needs to happen in order to avoid death for mankind? Here are a few statements from the same author quoted above describing the law of love as the law of life, or the basis of life and what sin is:

In living for self he has rejected that divine love which would have flowed out in mercy to his fellow men. Thus he has rejected life. **For God is love, and love is life.** Christ Object Lessons 258.

Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" **it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.** Great Controversy 493

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. Great Controversy 493.

Here is a slightly longer statement giving a little more detail and how the law of love got broken:

But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, **a tide of love**, to the great Source of all. And thus **through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.**

In heaven itself this law was broken [Law of love]. Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. Therefore **he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator. Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men.** Desire of Ages 21.

How did the law of love get broken in man? We believed lies about God:

"Eve believed the words of Satan, and **the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband.** They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors..." Review & Herald, January 5, 1886 par. 8.

And what happens when lies are believed? The circle of love and trust is broken and fear and selfishness spring up in the heart. This is a terminal condition as life can only exist in harmony with the law of love. As the Bible says "the wages of sin is death" and "sin when full grown brings forth death" (Romans 6:23, James 1:15). This is our situation, born terminal, born selfish, born with the law of love broken in our minds, hearts and characters. Then what would be the remedy for sin? Let's reexamine the statement you sent. Would the above passage be saying this?

Righteousness is perfect harmony with the law of love. The law of love requires righteousness for it is the basis of life (just like the law of respiration demands breathing for life to exist). The sinner owes the law perfect compliance as a basis of life, but is not capable of providing it because the sinner is selfish, out of harmony with the law. The only way he can be brought back into harmony with the law (become righteous) is by trust in God. By faith, or trust, he is infused with Christ's character and

thereby is no longer out of harmony with the law. Through trust he receives the remedy of Christ and is restored to righteousness and in trust brings Christ's character, reproduced in his heart, to God. The Lord recognizes the sinner, thus restored by the indwelling Christ, is no longer out of harmony with the law of love, but is healthy again. He accepts Christ's perfect character reproduced in the sinner and does not hold against him his record of sins.

Consider the following, written by the same author you cited above and see if it doesn't agree with our interpretation:

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.** His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character,** a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. Desire of Ages 762.

What is being described? Christ came to earth, partook of our humanity, overcame where we could not. Jesus, in His human brain, restored God's law of love into humanity via His own victorious life. Now, He offers to share His life with us. Through faith or trust, we receive, via the work of the Holy Spirit the infusion/transfusion of Christ's character so that it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me! God's law of love is restored again in the heart of mankind!

Our Redeemer determined on nothing less than that through His merits **the love of God should be transfused through the soul that believes in Him.** As our life, the vitality of God's love is to circulate through every part of our nature, that it may abide in us as it dwells in Christ Jesus. United with Christ by living faith, the Father loves us as the members of Christ's mystical body, of which Christ is the glorified head. That I May Know Him 19.

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. **I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people. Heb 8:10.

Through Christ the law of love is restored into humanity and mankind is again right with God. Through Christ each person can receive a transfusion of love, righteousness, Christlikeness to be restored in their individuality to be one with God again. Thus the demands of the law are fulfilled in the believer in Christ! Praise God for His love, mercy and healing grace!