

9. Sin, the Gospel, and the Law (2Q 2026 Growing in a Relationship with God)

Biblical material: Judges 14; Mark 9:42–48; Rom. 3:20; Matt. 5:17, 18; Rom 3:28; Matt. 7:24–29; Psalm 119:93, 94.

Quotes

- Christianity now is in crisis, and a large part because people have marketed it as a religion of good people getting better, when in fact it is religion a bad people coping with their failure to be good. *William McDavid*
- Those who lapse from the Gospel to the Law are no better off than those who lapse from grace to idolatry. *Martin Luther*
- Our sin is what separates us from God, but it's our self righteousness that keeps us from running to Him for the grace He willingly gives to all who come. *Paul David Tripp*
- We are all so sunk in sin, and so wedded to the world, that we would never turn to God and seek salvation, unless He first called us by His grace. Without a divine call, no one can be saved. *J. C. Ryle*
- If you believe what you like in the gospel, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself. *Augustine*
- It is not great faith but true faith that saves. And the salvation lies not in the faith but in the Christ in whom faith trusts. *C.H. Spurgeon*

Questions

Why put sin, the gospel, and the law together? What aspects help in our relationship with God? What do we learn about how to relate to God from stories like Samson and Delilah? What is the role of the law? How can we best define sin in a way that helps us avoid it? What do all these aspects say about God, especially in the context of the great controversy?

Bible summary

Judges 14 recounts the marriage of Samson to Delilah, a Philistine woman. In Mark 9:42–48 Jesus warns against leading other to sin. “For no one is made right before God by doing what the law requires. The law only helps us recognize what sin really is” (Romans 3:20). Jesus says he came to fulfill the law in Matthew 5:17, 18. “We conclude that people are made right with God through their trust in him, and not from legal observance” (Romans 3:2). We are wise to follow Jesus’ words, he says in Matthew 7:24–29. God’s instructions bring life, says Psalm 119:93, 94.

Comment

The real question is “what is the gospel?” The argument over forms and ceremonies for example in Galatians shows how easily the good news of God and about God is perverted into something else. And anything but the good news of *God* is a perversion of the gospel.

Paul saw that very clearly. But do we? How do we help people to come and discover the God of the gospel? When was the last time I really helped someone to a more abundant life in Jesus? The Question that really bugs us all. Because it gets under the skin of our comfortableness, invades our comfort zone, and makes us face the reality of this world and what God wants to do through us. Think what Jesus said:

You go into all the world, and make disciples. If you have seen me you have seen the father. I am come to seek and to save that which was lost. Turn the other cheek. Give you coat, and your shirt too. Give your money to the poor.

Invitations to serve in the fellowship of friendship—for Jesus calls us no longer servants but friends. Friends in the spreading of his good news gospel, good news that is the *god-spel*, the old Anglo-Saxon term that originally meant the *good story*.

Too much and too often the story is about us. And we don't tell the right story. Surely it's time to give up on ourselves, and give back to God. Give back what we value the most—all the world-foolishness that has invaded our lives and exchange it for the treasure that doesn't rust or rot. Time to preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ, with all he said and meant and did: And to leave our sinful lives behind.

Sin. While it can be defined in different ways, Romans 14:23 provides the deepest insight. A literal translation of that verse is “whatever is not of trust is sin.” Any time we leave God and go our own way, not trusting in him, we are sinning. Sin is both disregarding and opposing God.

Faith is trusting God, having confidence in him. So what is the opposite of faith? Distrust, not having confidence in God. So this definition comes out something like: sin is not trusting God. Distrusting God to work in your life. Not believing what he says. Question: when did Eve sin first—when she took and ate the fruit, or when she trusted the Devil and distrusted God as the Devil said “You shall not surely die”? That's the very heart of sin: an attitude that is distrustful of God, suspicious of him; one that says: “God, I may believe in you, I may even come to church regularly and profess to be a good Christian, but I don't really want your help, I don't trust you to be with me in my life.”

Sin is an antagonistic attitude, a spirit of rebellion that separates us from God. We have gone away from God, built a barricade between us and him, and like spoilt children refuse to come back to the only One who can really help us. So in desperation God broke through that barricade and came to us, to ask us to allow him to take us home again.

Our spirit of self-centered rebellion is changed by our loving God, if we allow him. We are remade by God into a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come! How? Through God's action of bringing us back together with Him—his reconciliation. He reconciled us to him, not counting our sinful attitude against us, remaking us into his goodness. For the problem is with us—not with God. He did not need to be reconciled to us, but as rebels we need to be reconciled to him.

It's the law that shows us our rebellion. But as Paul repeatedly says, it doesn't make us right with God. Only he can do that. The law simply shows our faults and failings, since it reveals the principles of God and how we come short in the way we live our lives. The answer must always be to trust in God and his transforming grace, not in trying to make ourselves good through legal observance.

Ellen White Comments

The understanding of the people of God has been blinded, for Satan has misrepresented the character of God. Our good and gracious Lord has been presented before the people clothed in the attributes of Satan, and men and women who have been seeking for truth have so long regarded God in a false light that it is difficult to dispel the cloud that obscures His glory from their view. Many have been living in an atmosphere of doubt, and it seems almost impossible for them to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel of Christ.... {FW 81}

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin... Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments. {GC 499}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. {MB 109}

Christ came to our world to represent the character of God as it is represented in His holy law; for His law is a transcript of His character. Christ was both the law and the gospel. {2SM 106}