



Temptation and the 'Law' of Grace?

A Call to Sanctification by the New Covenant

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Enter – The Frame

We open here just after a freshly unveiled Messiah is announced for the first time in the public square.

After approximately 30 years of living as ‘one of us’, Jesus the Christ is not only proclaimed to be among us, but the *Son in the Triune God*, and His purpose again proclaimed by the prophetic forerunner, John the Baptist (Elijah, if you will, revisited). What was that purpose according to this seminal and foundational proclamation? That this Jesus was the “**Lamb of God**” and He was here to “**take away the sin of the world.**” (John 1:29) From the outset, The Christ was born to be a sacrifice to recreate a better way for those who *sinned* – missed the mark of God’s glory, and thus had *forfeited* their station – back into that original created place.

Now we turn to the Gospel writer Matthew, who goes on to record in Chapter three that the first act in fulfilling that mission was to be baptised by this John – fully immersed in the waters, but why?

After John had resisted being part of this act of humility, surrender and repentance for the One he just (as the greatest prophet that ever lived) declared was unworthy even to carry Jesus’ sandals, and who wanted to be baptised by Him. Jesus commands John that this be done and in absolute concert with his foundational mission, which was also to “**fulfill all righteousness.**” (v15). Jesus didn’t have to *repent* of any wrongdoing at all, but he did signify through this sacrament, that he was dying completely to self and raising up in complete surrender to the will and mission of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Gospel of Matthew goes on to then record the very next act in this mission of *salvation of the world*. The Holy Spirit in *The Triune God* then leads, or *brings up*, this Messiah into a desolate, isolated, and barren place for a specific purpose – to be tempted by the Devil.

Note it is the Holy Spirit Who did this. (Matthew 4:1)

This Devil is the Adversary, the original [fraudulent usurping contender for the appointment of Son.](#) (read pages 14-21) The one whom had ‘tricked’ the original stewards of God’s creation – Adam and Eve – into inviting this usurper’s influence into the government of God’s creation. Thus, by this default, granted Satan that manipulative management at the surrender by those original stewards of this world to him – they had lost their *place*.

This second and imperative phase of the mission required the first ‘bookend’ of dealing with this squatting manager. To prepare for that Jesus was led by the Spirit (under the Fathers’ empowered instruction) to fast for 40 days and 40 nights. This ‘bookend one’ of battle (the Cross and Resurrection the other ‘bookend’) was to be not merely intense and demanding, but utterly strategic in the Divine Plan of Redemption.

Right here I want to give some information that some may not be across – data that I hope will help you grasp a little better the gravity of this encounter.

The ‘Bible’ that Jesus used was the [Tanakh](#) - The ‘Law’ (Torah), the Prophets, the Writings etc, essentially the Christian Bibles Old Testament. It is important to note too that the texts Jesus quoted from the most – and in order of highest used was – **Psalms**, then **Deuteronomy**, then **Isaiah**.

To me this makes sense for this new mission of *recalibration* of the world.

Firstly, Jesus uses King David’s writings. Of course, we can make sense of that from the lineage issue, set in motion with the Abrahamic Covenant and the commencement of a ‘ruling class’ when the ill-advised (but foreseen) request by the Jews for a king. This the Sovereign God used to bring into the frame of human history the ONLY True Sovereign – KING – back to His rightful place of Government. (Isaiah 9:6)

However, there is more when one looks through the lens of the relational dynamic of not only Covenantal governance, but what they always reflected from the beginning.

Which was? Triune Creator God’s desire to have fellowship – intimate communion – with a free will endowed creature made in *His Image*.

The Psalms that King David wrote are a powerful lens into that space. They are replete and rich with this passion for communion, intimacy, relationship, and the collaboration these profound and freely surrendered to contexts will bring. Returning to that original design of stewardship of this domain, this world, together in an Edenic context.

Ah, but the second text Jesus draw from most consistently was the book of **Deuteronomy** – which translated is, the second reading or, ‘*the Law revisited*’.

This imperative revisiting of the law was done just prior to the wandering nation of Israel’s entering into the promised land. After 40 years of desert *nomading*, (all for the purpose of culling the rebellious demographic from the ranks and essentially not getting them out of Egypt, *but getting Egypt out of them*.) This now fully fledged *nation* of people must be schooled in how to not simply conquer, but more specifically behave, act, live and *govern* in this new land, if this nation was to be to the world what God intended it to be – a *beacon* to return to the Creator.

The 614 laws – civic, health, ceremonial, moral and spiritual – had to be outlined afresh and brought to front of mind to help this people find God’s best practice.

This collective work of legislation and principle, the Tanakh, is the first Covenant, and it was not a *mistake* or an *experiment*, it was **good**.

Psalm 1:1-3 (NLT) *Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.*

Psalm 19:7 (MEV) *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

119: 9-11 (Voice) *How can a young person remain pure? Only by living according to Your word. I have pursued You with my whole heart; do not let me stray from Your commands. Deep within me I have hidden Your word so that I will never sin against You.*

Isaiah 29:11-16 (ESV) *And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." ¹² And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read." And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden." Ah, you who hide deep from the Lord your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?" You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?*

Just in these short texts alone, you can see, not only how affirming of the First Covenant and its intent Godly men were, but also how manipulation of the text or its intent and endeavour, meant it was made powerless or counterproductive to God's design. Consequently, how many of those gatekeepers of this vital covenant in Israel had now become ethnocentric, elitist, manipulative and controlling. Sadly, more aligned with the 'usurpers' governance style, than with the Creators Kingship.

Enter The King – Jesus the Christ.

Let's return to the pending wilderness battle in Matthew 4. This now publicly revealed, Old Covenant honouring, [rightful Sovereign is subjecting his fully human nature to the fully Divine practice](#) in His super-human fast. Surrendered and fully embracing not only His Mission, but his new incarnated status, in round one, he confronts the Adversary of not only His creation but its paragon – humanity.

Now it's important for us to again remember that Satan knows the *Tanakh* very well. He was there when it was created and as we've seen above, working tirelessly to test, tempt, and try humans to deny, diminish, deconstruct, and just plain disobey God's best-practice counsel.

I would humbly contend that Satan thinks he has an idea of what's going on, and how he might sabotage it, but not the full picture as evident in Paul's writing in his [First Letter to the Corinthians chapter 2 verses, 6-8.](#)

So, Satan's tactic begins. First and softest target is the very real 'felt need' of staggering and arguably unimaginable hunger. The Devil appeals to a perceived need, and then invokes Jesus' capacity and agency to meet that need. However, Jesus goes beyond this immediate and engages God's *law revisited* and quotes an abridged version of Deuteronomy 8:3 *"And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."* Demonstrating that the eternal has far greater weight than the ephemeral, **no matter how demanding it may present** – Best practice for transformation is invoked, not neglected.

Then, Satan tries to get Jesus' to perform party tricks – to show off not only His position, authority and entitlement, but so 'prove' Jesus is a 'King', even quoting [Psalm 91:11-12](#) to the Author of Wisdom. Again, this is exactly what a carnal counterfeit monarch would do, using God's Word for egocentric ends – self-indulgence and self-justification. The Kingdom of Heaven is an upside-down Kingdom, and Satan had long forgotten that truth in his personal pursuit for power. The Usurper got the position, power, potential, and prominence, but he was still wilfully ignorant of the Divine Posture.

Jesus has been tested on human needs. Then tested on Divine potential. Now the last and arguably most powerful temptation; Jesus the Christ was tempted on assignment – His mission.

In verse 8 we read that the Devil took Jesus up to a *world-view* context and showed Him all the Kingdoms that rightly belong to Jesus, but that had been *forfeited* to Satan by fallen stewards, and rightly says he can give them back. But, again, Jesus correctly invokes God's Word to counter Satan's manipulation of the Godly text and remind him about what the Kingdom and its Law are really all about, thus re-stating the Divine Order.

Notice it wasn't the quoting of Scripture that made Satan leave, no it was the command given by a surrendered [Servant of the Kingdom \(a true Kings posture\)](#) and the authority that releases that compelled Satan to leave. ([James 4:7](#))

It was legendary preacher Jonathan Edwards who perhaps glimpsed this posture's power when he stated... *"Nothing sets a person so much out of the devils reach as humility."*

It is important to note that Jesus did not only cite the **law**, but used God's Counsel, to resist temptation and to remind the devil of the original intent of God's Counsel. However, Jesus was also more importantly digging deeper the [trench of truth](#) about God's practice and purpose for His most Beloved Servant.

As previously stated, the enemy of our souls knows the Old Covenant well, but he did not know a New Covenant was coming.

Jesus Christ, the Co-Author of this first relational covenant with His people, understood not only it's context and purpose, but also its intent and context and subsequently its best-practice implementation. Satan was always looking for ways to misuse, manipulate and mould the text to accomplish or justify *his interpretative ends*. However, the law as given to

promote righteousness, as well as protect and provide for His people, and in so doing draw them to not only God's ways, but God Himself – into communion with Him again.

Yet, this law can be re-tasked through misinterpretation or misuse to justify that which does not promote those chief ends of the Kingdom – Misused for self-preserving and placating means. To avoid trouble and draw down blessings and create and maintain prosperity.

Sound familiar?

Before we venture into introducing this New Covenant of grace, I want to round out this very synoptic look at the Old Covenant intent and worth with a look at one of The Messiahs masterful, but arguably shortest parable.

I think it is important to do this especially as we move into what many 'single lens' evangelical commentators have not merely dismissed but ignored – The Law – that which Jesus Christ was to honour and fulfil.

By *single lens*, I mean that some have determined that all of Jesus Christ teaching were essentially aimed merely at deconstructing and refuting 'legalism' and therefore all 'interpretations' of His teaching are framed as essentially 'anti-pharisee' and consequently anti-law. Whilst there is no doubt this was a significant part of the recalibration process of the Author of the Old and about to be introduced, New Covenant, it was by no means all of His focus and intent.

This New Covenant was (as with the Old) was to be for all humanity, not just the Jew – as God always intended – and therefore needed to address far more than legalistic cultures, it must address all *non-Kingdom cultures in Heavens* instructionally prescriptive invitation process.

In the Gospel of Matthew, which was written specifically for a Jewish audience, we see this Parable of the Householder recorded, and it is only Matthew who records this gem.

“Therefore, every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” (NRSVUE)

It is interesting here that Jesus refers to 'scribe' – one very learned in Jewish Law, and often a teacher of such – in a non-pejorative manner. Later on in [Matthew chapter 23 verses 27 – 31](#) Jesus goes hard after them, and in the most vitriolic and accusatory tone He condemns them this group, along with he Pharisee.

So, what appears to be the difference in this short and earlier parable?

It may help us to go back and frame it up in its immediate context. Matthew records here in our Chapter 13 what I call the 'touchstone' parable – The Parable of the Sower. It was the one Jesus declared if you didn't get this parable, you'd miss all of them. In fact Matthew records unequivocally that [without parables Jesus taught the people nothing.](#)

Why was the Parable of the Sower so important? Well, I'll let you spelunk the depths of commentary on this, but for brevity sake I'll offer the following.

This Parable brings attention specifically to the soil as the key issue in Kingdom transformation. Yes, the Sower is important they must be both deployed, careful, and efficient. The seed is vital, it has all the Kingdom capacity locked within to bring full and multiple fruit. However, it is the soil – the heart – in which it lands that will determine the outcomes – the *fruit*.

It's this *heart* that heaven is always looking to cultivate, and it is this *heart* that must surrender daily to that tending so that the precious eternal seed may grow and bear fruit. It is not a performance for, but a collaboration with. Following Kingdom prescriptions so weeds will not germinate. Surrendering in complete humility so rocks can be removed. Trusting fully so cultivation and watering can produce. Jesus is saying in part here, fruit development is not an event, it is a continual process, and it is important to note that it is only good fruit that receives the reward.

So, back to the framing.

In verses 36-43 Jesus unpacks the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, giving a broader context to good and bad seed and the fact that bad seed will grow in good soil. Darnel or 'Black Wheat' as it looks very, very similar to genuine wheat, but has a toxic black 'lines' on it which poison you in an almost 'drunken state'. (again, I'll let you dance with the possible allegorical manifestations of that in human society). Suffice to say, it is only the discerning agriculturalist – the one fully vested in seeing good fruit come – that sees, reveals and sets aside.

Of course, the next three short parables Jesus adds further weight to this priority of the good. He speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven as an great treasure – something utterly priceless, that when people truly see it, there is absolutely no price they would not pay to have it. It is important to note, as [with the widow's small temple offering](#), that it is not the volume, breadth or depth of what one gives, it is ALL of what one has that enables the purchase of this treasure. It is the complete surrender of the heart and soul to the creator that sees the Kingdom come.

Then just before the final of these small but rich parables, Jesus then bookends the Wheat and Tares parable with Parable of the Drag Net. Whilst many may be gathered in the 'harvesting' process, [it is only the right and good that are selected, the rest are thrown away](#).

Now, we have the concluded parable in this set and how does Jesus introduce it? In verse 51 he asks the students listening, "Have you understood all this?" Their answer triggers the parable – they said 'Yes, we do.'

It is here that Jesus drops this important covenantal lesson. It is here that emphasises what a true *Scribe* should do. The one learned in the *Covenantal Law* and teacher of it, must have a heart to grow the intent, passion, purpose, and priority of the *Covenantal Law*, both the one being superseded and more importantly, the one being birthed the Author of Creation and

Salvation. To 'bring out' the very heart of this relational God, the *Heart* that framed the prescriptions and proscriptions of both Covenants that intent was always to enable our hearts to receive and grow fruitfully, the Kingdom of Heaven in and through us.

Keep that in front of mind as you continue.

Enter the New Covenant – The 'Law' of Grace?

Without revisiting the entire global mission of the incarnation, the Cross – the Lamb of God, the Scapegoat – death and Resurrection and thus ratifying of the New Order that Jesus Christ had spent three years teaching about; it is important to understand here that it is now the construct of grace, over the law, that *must govern* our relational journey to and in righteousness, wholeness, intimacy and holiness.

This new *Way* – a Covenant – that opens the path not only back to the Edenic plan of intimacy and communion but enables what the law was unable to accomplish (Not a design fault, a compliance failure); which is to have the Third Person of the Trinity – [the Holy Spirit – not merely move on us and through us, but take up residence within us and all that will mean](#) for continuing the mission of 'saving the world from their sin' – the impediment to a growing relationship with the Holy God. ([John 16: 5-11](#))

Ah, but as I inferred earlier, if the Old Covenant could be *played* to my *own* tune, this New Covenant appears to lend itself even more so to that egocentric manipulation – even as Jude warned in verse 4, (Voice)

“Vile men have slithered in among us. Depraved souls who stand condemned have made a mockery of the grace given to us, using it as a pretext for a life of excess, lived without any thought of God. These poor fools have denied Jesus the Anointed, our one Lord and Master.”

It is now vital that we more circumspectly look at this new *freedom* under the 'law' of Grace – The freedom to conform more completely to the Divine will and nature. When you read the following texts look closely to both the *participatory* and *provisional* statements contained therein.

What is the expected outcome and action in and from us under this New Covenant and the provision assisted call to transcend the good, but disempowering, old law.

Let's start with **Romans 6**

⁵ For you have become a part of him, and so you died with him, so to speak, when he died;^[a] and now you share his new life and shall rise as he did. ⁶ Your old evil desires were nailed to the cross with him; that part of you that loves to sin was crushed and fatally wounded, so that your sin-loving body is no longer under sin's control, no longer needs to be a slave to sin; ⁷ for when you are deadened to sin you are freed from all its allure and its power over you. ⁸ And since your old sin-loving nature "died" with Christ, we know that you will share his new life... ¹⁰ He died once for all to end sin's power, but now he lives forever in unbroken fellowship with

God. ¹¹ **So look upon your old sin nature as dead and unresponsive to sin, and instead be alive to God, alert to him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.** ¹² **Do not let sin control your puny body any longer; do not give in to its sinful desires.** ¹³ **Do not let any part of your bodies become tools of wickedness, to be used for sinning; but give yourselves completely to God—every part of you—for you are back from death and you want to be tools in the hands of God, to be used for his good purposes.** ¹⁴ **Sin need never again be your master,^[b] for now you are no longer tied to the law where sin enslaves you, but you are free under God’s favor and mercy.**

¹⁵ **Does this mean that now we can go ahead and sin and not worry about it? (For our salvation does not depend on keeping the law but on receiving God’s grace!) Of course not!**

¹⁶ **Don’t you realize that you can choose your own master? You can choose sin (with death) or else obedience (with acquittal). The one to whom you offer yourself—he will take you and be your master, and you will be his slave.** ¹⁷ **Thank God that though you once chose to be slaves of sin, now you have obeyed with all your heart the teaching to which God has committed you.** ¹⁸ **And now you are free from your old master, sin; and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness.** ¹⁹ **I speak this way, using the illustration of slaves and masters, because it is easy to understand: just as you used to be slaves to all kinds of sin, so now you must let yourselves be slaves to all that is right and holy.**

Romans 7: 6-14

⁶ **But now you need no longer worry about the Jewish laws and customs^[b] because you “died” while in their captivity, and now you can really serve God; not in the old way, mechanically obeying a set of rules, but in the new way, with all of your hearts and minds...⁹ That is why I felt fine so long as I did not understand what the law really demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized that I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die.** ¹⁰ **So as far as I was concerned, the good law which was supposed to show me the way of life resulted instead in my being given the death penalty.** ¹¹ **Sin fooled me by taking the good laws of God and using them to make me guilty of death.** ¹² **But still, you see, the law itself was wholly right and good.** ¹³ **But how can that be? Didn’t the law cause my doom? How then can it be good? No, it was sin, devilish stuff that it is, that used what was good to bring about my condemnation. So you can see how cunning and deadly and damnable it is. For it uses God’s good laws for its own evil purposes.** ¹⁴ **The law is good, then, and the trouble is not there but with me because I am sold into slavery with Sin as my owner.**

1 Corinthians 5: 1-8

¹ **Everyone is talking about the terrible thing that has happened there among you, something so evil that even the heathen don’t do it: you have a man in your church who is living in sin with his father’s wife.^[a]** ² **And are you still so conceited, so**

“spiritual”? Why aren’t you mourning in sorrow and shame and seeing to it that this man is removed from your membership?

⁶ What a terrible thing it is that you are boasting about your purity and yet you let this sort of thing go on. Don’t you realize that if even one person is allowed to go on sinning, soon all will be affected? ⁷ Remove this evil cancer—this wicked person—from among you, so that you can stay pure. Christ, God’s Lamb, has been slain for us. ⁸ So let us feast upon him and grow strong in the Christian life, leaving entirely behind us the cancerous old life with all its hatreds and wickedness. Let us feast instead upon the pure bread of honor and sincerity and truth.

1 Corinthians 10: 1-13

For we must never forget, dear brothers, what happened to our people in the wilderness long ago. God guided them by sending a cloud that moved along ahead of them; and he brought them all safely through the waters of the Red Sea. ² This might be called their “baptism”—baptized both in sea and cloud!—as followers of Moses—their commitment to him as their leader. ³⁻⁴ And by a miracle God sent them food to eat and water to drink^[a] there in the desert; they drank the water that Christ gave them. He was there with them as a mighty Rock of spiritual refreshment. ⁵ Yet after all this most of them did not obey God, and he destroyed them in the wilderness. ⁶ From this lesson we are warned that we must not desire evil things as they did, ⁷ nor worship idols as they did. (The Scriptures tell us, “The people sat down to eat and drink and then got up to dance” in worship of the golden calf.) ⁸ Another lesson for us is what happened when some of them sinned with other men’s wives, and 23,000 fell dead in one day. ⁹ And don’t try the Lord’s patience—they did and died from snake bites. ¹⁰ And don’t murmur against God and his dealings with you as some of them did, for that is why God sent his Angel to destroy them.

¹¹ All these things happened to them as examples—as object lessons to us—to warn us against doing the same things; they were written down so that we could read about them and learn from them in these last days as the world nears its end.

¹² So be careful. If you are thinking, “Oh, I would never behave like that”—let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin. ¹³ But remember this—the wrong desires that come into your life aren’t anything new and different. Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you. And no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it, for he has promised this and will do what he says. He will show you how to escape temptation’s power so that you can bear up patiently against it.

From the outset we must understand fully that **grace** is not codified as the **law** was and the misunderstanding of this *apparent* lack of stringency could become problematic. The new construct of this grace was not merely liberating for the systematised law bound Jews, but this New Covenant-managed liberty was purposed to keep you free from the slavery to **sin**. not merely free from ‘restrictions’ – what Jesus came to take away – not enable a licence too. ([Galatians 5:1](#)).

Much like the pagan, and often Gnostic gentiles of Jesus time who had little concept of moral law, this inestimably wonderful construction was often harnessed to attitudes like, *how much can I get away with, deny, avoid, downplay or step away from holiness*. This holiness is the invitation, the beckoning and empowering by God to *conform with the image of His Son*, that state of purification – ultimately sinless, not merely guiltless. ([Romans 8:28-29](#) & [Ephesians 4:8-13](#))

This state is not the *requirement* for salvation under the New Covenant – **not at all** – but it is the intended *goal and outcome* of it.

Remember, what Jesus declared in **John 16** about the Triune God’s intent was for the Son to come and fulfill the requirements of the law, (not ignore and write over them). Set in motion a new emphasis and empowerment when it comes to the wrecking ball of sin, and the return to the relational plan of God’s creation, but then to return to Heaven as KING and then be One with his now **called out** church *through the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit*.

It is now in this new unprecedented and unequalled arrangement, with imputed righteousness by faith and repentance, that we are free from onerous framing behaviour modifiers – the law – to God indwelling and empowering to meet, overcome and transcend the issue of sin and all its harms.

The greatest Resource of Heaven, this Third Person of the Trinity now **living in** those who have been ‘**saved from their sin**’ and bought back into right relationship with their Heavenly Father and KING. This should not only be *enabling* and *equipping*, but *compelling*. This grace and endowment should enable an even *greater* compliance to the Heavenly standard, not a lessening of.

Enter the New Standard.

In fact, it was our Saviour Himself who **raised that bar of compliance**, not lowered it, as so many in our post-Truth and carnal culture ‘church’ would have us believe.

I will end this brief treatise with Jesus Christ powerful commission amid the wonderful ‘bookend’ of Kingdom living, what we call the *Sermon on the Mount* (The other bookend is the *Ten Commandments*).

In Matthew Chapter 5 after ‘putting the devil in his place’, Jesus turns to the people and the opening volley of this most blessed of sermons is breathtakingly profound, particularly to

the hearers. The oppressed and/or burdened masses heard how valuable they were and how loved by God they were.

Then in verse 17-19 when everyone is filling with new hope, Jesus Christ doesn't dash it, rather He profoundly scaffolds it with reference to the First and good Covenant, one that He Co-Authored.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (ESV)

Note the warning to whoever *relaxes or teaches others to be careless* about the law? They are relegated and diminished. It's those who hold the practice of the law for its intended goal – relationship with God, will be called great in the Kingdom.

Ah, but it is in verse 20 that we encounter the [raising of the bar to a new level of divine compliance](#).

*For I tell you, **unless your righteousness exceeds** that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

This is not merely imputed righteousness – justification by faith – that is freely bestowed on us to make us guiltless before God. This is a call and, again, empowerment to sanctification unto holiness in the everyday (by HIS grace, mercy and enabling) to conform more and more with the Image of His Son.

It is from verse 21 of this commissioning call to the would-be Disciples of Christ that Jesus takes things to an entirely new level of expectation.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother^[d] will be liable to judgment; whoever insults^[d] his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell^[e] of fire. ²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. ²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your

whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell...³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic,^[b] let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers,^[i] what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The *sin slaying Saviour* of the world wants to live *in and with us* as He lives *in and through us*. Consequently, the expectations on divine compliance move beyond actions and deeds to very thoughts and intents of heart and our *accountability* under this New Covenant for this.

This is the *law of grace* and one we cannot ignore, [or worse, abuse](#).

However, it is one, that surrender to Christ’s Lordship, His continuing undeserved favour and enabling mercy that will see us more than conquerors as we conform to the image of our Saviour.

Selah!

(A perspective) By Shane Wesley Varcoe

Further reading [Who Says We Are Undeserving? \(disciplesplanet.net\)](#)