

The Word of Righteousness (Pure Love & Law)

1. The Same Word which condemns sin is the Word which embodies the pure perfections, beauty, and righteousness of God. After all sin and evil are perversions or corruptions of what is true, good, and beautiful. So how do people who are born in sin and totally corrupted by it attain what the Word promises? The answer is that we feed on the Word.
2. The Law is perfect because it describes God's righteousness. The psalmist in Ps. 119 used the acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet to elucidate (make understood, clarify) and exult in the Word of God. Following are the major terms and classifications of the aspects of God's Law which are used in Ps. 119.
 - a. Law – or 'teaching' (yarah) similar to Torah. It is generally speaking God's revealed instruction.
 - b. Testimony – witness i.e. God's own personal witness about himself! We can read God's Word for information and instruction but supreme is the intent to know Him!
 - c. Precepts – detailed applications of His Word
 - d. Statutes – permanence of His Word
 - e. Commandments – issued as a charge to fulfill
 - f. Ordinances – Judgments i.e. righteous principles which command adherence. E.g. "judgments" & "righteousness" (v. 7) = principles and practice of them.
 - g. Word – the revealed truth of YHWH spoken by YHWH himself
 - h. Promise – also translated as 'word.' However, promise (imrah) is different from the "word" (dabhar) (11). From the root verb "to say." Everything God says (His Word) is purely true and hence a promise!
3. Jesus not only kept God's Word/Law perfectly (Matt. 5:17-20) but embodies it. Not unlike the other Psalms (which are songs of Jesus), Ps. 119 is the quintessential Psalm of meditations on the perfect Word of God. Read Ps. 119:1-8.
4. Some contrast love and law but Jesus is love – precisely because He embodies the pure righteous Law of the Word! In fact, it's a good practice to put Jesus' name in lieu of the "LORD" and all the pronouns referring to Him in Ps. 119, as well as in lieu of love (agape) in 1 Cor. 13!
5. Moreover, in Jn. 1:1-18 Jesus the Logos is attributed as the source and epitome of life, logic, light, and love. In fact; the righteous, eternal, almighty, living Word who issues the Law and who is violated¹ when we transgress against the Law – is the same Word who came to be tortured by the violators and be cursed by the Father in order to redeem those violators! If that's not love, pray tell you show me what is!
6. Even though the Law is righteous and perfect, it can only go so far with sinners. Grace as well as truth is needed (Jn. 1:14). As previously mentioned, Jesus is love and love fulfills the Law (Ro. 13:8-10). The Word of Law incorporated grace through sacrifices; but the Word of Love *became* a sacrifice for us – going beyond legalistic adherence to the Law and fulfilling the impetus of the Law. Love's motivation is others! Therefore, the Law is the righteous rule for healthy relationships. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Mat. 7:12). In Christ we also go beyond fear of and legalistic adherence to the Law to becoming the Law of Love (Ro. 3:31). How do we do such? The answer is the same as the answer to the opening question. Consider this →
7. Jesus demonstrated such dedication to love that when He was on the verge of starvation and Satan tempted Him with His own authority to command the stones to become bread, that He

¹ It is interesting to note that the "Word" was violated. The Word is instructive and thus when we fail to heed its instruction, we violate the Word. The Word is personal and thus lends Himself to the vulnerability of being violated – and even more so than mere man because the Word is love!

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referred to Deut. 8:3 where man is instructed/informed that he does not live on bread alone but by the very Word of God (Mat. 4:1-4). Jesus would also refer to the same salvific word in *Deuteronomy* regarding Satan's other two immediate temptations. What does this reveal?

- a. The Word sustains us more so than food.
- b. The Word is what Jesus wholeheartedly trusted. Distrusting the Word was at the heart of Satan's tempting.
- c. The Word must be adhered to in order to resist temptation (and find salvation cf. Mat. 5:17-20).
- d. The Word is a loving & living revelation provided for us to live and have eternal life (cf. Jn. 6:27, 33). →
- e. The Word is a person on whom we must feed in order to have eternal life. Read Jn. 6:26-58. This passage was, no doubt, shocking even to his disciples but when we consider Deut. 8:3, we can see that Jesus was simply (though cryptically) stating that He is the fulfillment of Deut. 8:3. In other words, living on the Word of God is trusting in Jesus! In fact, I think it is fair to say that Christianity can be summed up in two words i.e. trusting Jesus. And trusting Jesus is expressed in trusting the righteous Law of God which He embodies. We feed on Jesus the Word as He lived on every Word that comes from the mouth of God.

Further Consideration: Before Jesus' response to temptation, where He emphasized that man lives by every word which comes from the mouth of God, He submitted Himself to John's baptism. His submission is ironically seen in that John acknowledged that it was he who needed Jesus' baptism instead. However, Jesus had said it was "now" "fitting" to do such to "fulfill all righteousness." The "now" likely signifies Jesus' acknowledgment of John's acknowledgement that Jesus needed no repentance; and thus if it were not for the "fitting" purpose at hand, Jesus would not need baptism. The "fulfilling all righteousness" includes Jesus' identification with John's message of repentance and the hope of the eschaton which Messiah would bring. The term "righteousness" employed by Matthew here signifies what is "fitting" for Jesus to do in the unique situation of Jesus' identifying with us, albeit without sin (Mat. 8:17), anointing with the Spirit (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1), and commission as the righteous suffering Servant who will make many righteous (Isa. 53:11). Matthew didn't use the term "righteous" as moral righteousness but as "right" as what is "fitting" for the purpose at hand. Running to a car is not morally righteous; but the running becomes righteously fitting if one is to pull an infant out of the car as it is on fire. Therefore the righteous impetus of the Law is seen in love. Love goes beyond the strict adherence to the written Law and fulfills the impetus of the Law. It would not be righteous or even feasible for Jesus to be baptized for repentance of His sins for He had none. Nor would it be fitting for the King to submit to His servant, and yet Jesus' baptism was that of the commissioned obedient Servant who submitted wholly to God's will; thus God anointed and affirmed Jesus as having the Spirit of God and the son-ship of God, which also affirmed His kingship (Ps. 2:7 is affirmed in Mat. 3:17). I include this consideration here because the Word of Righteousness fulfilled all righteousness for us; and thus demonstrated that living by every word of God is not a mere moral submission but a joyful obedient relationship where we can fully trust God's will and instruction. Such is much of the meaning in Jesus' baptism and handling temptation with a reminder to trust every Word which comes from God as it is wholly righteous and thus wholly beneficial.

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PC: The Word of Law (or righteousness) is the same as the Word of love. We live with our carnal desires (the flesh) and have been totally depraved; thus our thinking, motives, and even worship has been tainted by sin. Jesus, however, was born of the virgin and conceived of the Spirit having no fallen nature to corrupt His person. Jesus lived a beautiful life. He lived a righteous life. He lived a loving life. He lived a perfect life. And this He could not do unless He lived “by every **Word** that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (ESV Deut. 8:3). In Mat. 5:17-20, Jesus referred to the Law and Prophets (representing the entire Word of God) as being perfectly fulfilled in His life. The Word is a loving word because He is righteous. And the Word is a righteous word because He is loving. God gives us His Law, His Love, His Word, and His Son because He is beautiful, pure, righteous, compassionate, and sacrificial. Hence there is no necessary distinction between Law and love for both are righteous, pure, personal, beautiful, and salvific.