

9 *Exceeding The Righteousness of the Shallowly Righteous — Matthew 5:20.*

Introduction

Jesus beyond dispute taught the Pharisees suffered from shallow teaching on the Law. (Matt. 23:23.) They taught the “less weighty matter” of tithing to the neglect of the “weightier matters of the Law.” (*Id.*) Jesus taught that the Pharisees replaced written commands from the Law given Moses with oral tradition at odds with the Law. (Matt. 15:6.)

However, these simple truths have been vigorously fought by the proponents of cheap grace. It turns out that cheap grace had to use all its resources — incessant repetition in Sunday sermons and commentaries — to affix the label upon the Pharisees as *legalists* — because if the truth were known the Pharisees were shallow followers of the Law — Jesus’ true gospel at odds with cheap grace, particularly in Matthew 5:20, would surface and destroy cheap grace doctrine.

Thus, unless one fixes this misunderstanding about the Pharisees as *legalists*, Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:20 fall on deaf ears:

For I say unto you, that ***except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees***, ye shall in ***no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven***. (Matt. 5:20 ASV.)

To explain this challenging verse, we are incessantly told Jesus is pulling our leg. He does not want us to correct for any shallowness in the Pharisees' doctrines. No, they were supposedly in full obedience to the Law, and more righteous than anyone. Thus, Jesus allegedly intends by the statement above to force us on our knees to accept grace, for we can never hope to exceed the high level of obedience of those who legalistically following all the Law given Moses.

However, this is a complete and utter falsehood, solely intended to negate this verse and save cheap grace (belief alone salvation).

Zeal Knowing No Bounds To Mislabeled Pharisees as Legalists

With a vigor almost knowing no bounds, the Gospel of Cheap Grace has succeeded in altering the perception of what Jesus condemned about the Pharisees. This error then feeds the Gospel of Cheap Grace. In hindsight, we will see that the Fable of Cheap Grace relies heavily upon a view of the Pharisees that is 180 degrees opposite of what Jesus faulted the Pharisees for teaching.

The Pharisees are incessantly labelled as legalists by the cheap grace gospel. This charge of *legalism* is the claim that the Pharisees taught every jot and tittle of the Law, and that they thought one could be right with God by acting obedient to the Law. The cheap grace gospel adherents desire us to think that Jesus supposedly wanted us to know only faith was necessary to be right with God; and that the Pharisees' error was that they rejected *faith alone* and instead they wrongly relied on obeying all the Law.

Legalism is thus portrayed in such a way that it supposedly is the reason why Jesus excoriated the Pharisees. Hence, we learn from this alleged truism about the Pharisees that we too must avoid ever thinking we are made right in God's sight by obedience to the Law which God had given previously to Moses even though Deuteronomy 6:25 and many other passages teach this.¹

However, this is a massive distortion of truth. It is necessary for the Cheap Grace Gospel to perpetuate this myth because the truth about the Pharisees' doctrine means Jesus is condemning key principles taught by the cheap grace gospel itself. Cheap grace would blow itself up if it had to cite Matthew 15:6 and 23:23 on what were indeed the flaws of the Pharisees.

The Truth

The truth is that the Pharisees were *anti-legalists*. This was Jesus' main fault with them. By their oral traditions they made of "none effect" the written precepts of the Law. (Matt. 15:6; 23:23.) Jesus clearly said the Pharisees were only big on tithing — a "less weighty matter of the Law," but otherwise "ignored the weightier matters of the Law." (Matt. 23:23.)

Nor was Jesus ever attacking the principle that one was made justified by faithful obedience. This principle was clearly taught by God in Deuteronomy 6:25, Leviticus 18:5, Ezekiel 18:5, 9, and Habakkuk 2:4 (correctly translated), as we discuss elsewhere.²

Moreover, Jesus Himself said the very same thing about the key role of obedience to the Law in salvation. Jesus taught the young rich man that the means for entering eternal life was obedience to the law. ***This is the identical principle which evangelical Christianity derides as legalism.*** Jesus said one entered into eternal life by "obeying the Law."³

In a similar vein, Jesus taught that anyone who would teach a kingdom member not to obey the Law given Moses would be "least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). And

1. See "Justification In the Law of Moses" on page 33 *et seq.*

2. See "The Repentant Goes Home Justified" on page 27 *et seq.*

3. This was Jesus' lesson to the young rich man in Matthew 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-26. For discussion, see page 123 *et seq.*

whoever taught kingdom members to “obey the commandments” of the Law given Moses would be the “greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:19.)

Hence, *Jesus was a legalist if one uses the definition of a legalist as used disparagingly by the Gospel of Cheap Grace.*

Thus, it is crucial to the cheap grace gospel to keep the truth about the Pharisees away from their bewildered flock. Otherwise, their flock will see their cheap grace teachers are the modern version of the Pharisees — teachers who say the Law is no more except tithing. And their deceived flock will find out that their teachers are wrong to teach that obedience is not a pathway to entering eternal life.

Yet, the most important aspect of this chapter is that by studying the true error of the Pharisees, we learn more about Jesus’ doctrine of salvation, especially in *Matthew 5:20*.

Jesus said the Pharisees were causing their proselytes to be lost. Jesus pointed at the Pharisees’ doctrine as the cause. Thus, we need to learn from Jesus what was that false doctrine or doctrines. Jesus is saying that the Pharisees’ heresy will cause our loss of salvation. Thus, it is imperative we find out what the Pharisees really taught and treat those doctrines like the plague. It turns out to be highly relevant today because *true* Pharisaism — anti-legalism — is rampant.

A Shallow Righteousness or An Impossible Standard?

Introduction

Jesus said: “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case *enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matt. 5:20.) Please note this is clearly a salvation

verse. It is a requirement to *enter* the kingdom of heaven. Thus, it is essential to understand what Jesus meant by a “righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees.”

Jesus in Matthew 5:20 is slighting the doctrine of the Pharisees, as He does elsewhere. We shall see Jesus means identically what the Prophet Hosea said about the priests in Hosea 4:6. Hosea said the priests likewise taught a *shallow* form of the Law which caused the people to be destroyed for lack of knowledge of the Law:

My people are ***destroyed for lack of knowledge***: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be ***no priest to me***: seeing ***thou hast forgotten the law of thy God***, I will also forget thy children.
(Hos 4:6 ASV.)

The “knowledge” the people lack is clearly identified by the end of this passage as *knowledge of the Law*. The priests had “forgotten the Law of God.”

Thus, the priests who Hosea excoriates were ***no longer teaching the true Law of God***. They had devised their own traditions. They had forgotten the Law of God. The people were, as a result, being destroyed. The people lacked the knowledge of the Law to follow. This would necessarily lead to disobedience to God by the mere fact the people were being taught a *shallow version* of the Law.

Discussion of Matthew 5:20

Jesus’ words about entering heaven in Matthew 5:20 is a very blunt and difficult verse for the Fable of Cheap Grace to accept. The typical explanation, especially among faith-alone adherents, is that Jesus meant ***the Pharisees were doing an excellent job of keeping and teaching the Law***. If you wanted to enter heaven you had to do better than the best. Jesus was allegedly upholding therefore a standard so *excessive* it must be supposed that ***Jesus implied obedience to the Law was an impossible standard***. Why would Jesus do this?

According to these faith-alone theologians, Jesus did so to show you the impoverished nature of works righteousness. Works are supposedly never relevant to salvation. ‘Faith alone’ is the only path you allegedly can take that will succeed. Any other path that actually takes Jesus literally and expects us to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees is supposedly a heresy of works-righteousness. Rather than allow Jesus to test their assumption on the relevance of works, they distort Jesus’ words to uphold a doctrine never spoken from the mouth of Jesus — the doctrine of faith-alone!

Is this notion of a Pharisee as a highly obedient figure justifiable? No. ***It is indefensible.*** Jesus excoriated the Pharisees, as we shall see, for several teaching errors:

- The Pharisees’ teaching selectively from the Law only the lesser commands (such as tithing), leaving the more weighty matters of the Law undone (Matt. 23:23);
- The Pharisees’ teaching traditions which if followed led to the violation of the Law of Moses (Matt. 15:6); and
- The Pharisees expressly teaching that certain wrongs under the Law were acceptable behavior (*e.g.*, adulterous lust if no adulterous act followed).(Matt. 5:27-28.)⁴

Thus, Jesus could not possibly mean the Pharisees were upholding the Law to a very high standard. ***Jesus was saying the very opposite of that.*** The Pharisees were *shallow* in terms of teaching obedience to the Law, missing the mark in many ways.

In fact, Jesus even identifies this shallowness as precisely why their proselytes were not entering the Kingdom of God. Thus, there is a complete parallel between Matthew 5:20 — where ***a righteousness that matches Pharisaic righ-***

4. “People had come to believe that one could lust after a [married] woman, as long as the act of fornication was not committed. But Jesus showed that this understanding was foreign to the actual command by Moses.” Robert A. Hawkins, “Covenant Relations of the Sermon on the Mount,” *Restoration Quarterly* Vol. 12, No. 1 (explaining Matt. 5:27-28).

teousness will never be enough to be saved — and the fact Jesus says in Matthew 23:13-15,23 the Pharisees' pupils were lost. Thus, shallow teaching of the Law of God caused the Pharisees' proselytes to be lost. This is why to be saved one must do better than the shallow law-negating doctrine of the Pharisees.

What was Jesus' principle? It is frightening to consider because the Fable of Cheap Grace so blatantly rejects Jesus' words. Jesus' true meaning was:

You can never have the righteousness you need for eternal life if you are satisfied following your teachers' *shallow version of the Law*. Obedience to the true Laws of God is the pathway to enter into eternal life. It is a *narrow way* and *few find it*. People prefer *shallow teachers of the Law* than true teachers of all of God's commands. That's why the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is he who teaches obedience to the commands given Moses.

Or as Hosea 4:6 said, the people are perishing for lack of the knowledge of the Law because their priests are shallow teachers of the Law.

Did The Pharisees Imperil the Salvation of Their Pupils By A False Teaching?

One of the ways to know what Jesus preached about salvation is to see what Jesus said was a contrary message which condemned people to being lost. Thus, one of the clearest ways to understand the *affirmative* requirements of salvation is to study what Jesus *negates* as teachings which prevent salvation. As Arthur Pink, a Baptist thinker, says, "the simplest and *most conclusive way of ascertaining* of the nature of the righteousness Christ requires from all who shall

have a part in His everlasting kingdom is to observe that it is placed in *direct antithesis* [to the teachings] from the...scribes and the Pharisees.”⁵

In other words, look at what Jesus said the Pharisees taught wrong which causes the loss of salvation, and you will find what is right to teach for salvation.

Jesus clearly said the Pharisees were evangelizing far and wide but held a doctrine that once swallowed by their followers prevented their salvation. It also prevented the salvation of the Pharisees.

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because **ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men**: for **ye enter not** in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter. (Mat 23:13)

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make **one proselyte**; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves. (Mat 23:15)(ASV)

Thus, we see the Pharisees were highly evangelistic. Jesus said do not mistake zealous evangelistic behavior as proof someone is from God. The Pharisees were blind guides. People wanted to enter the kingdom, and the Pharisees were abroad evangelizing them. Yet, the Pharisees had a false teaching that made their proselytes not enter the kingdom of God. Matthew Henry in his famous commentary sees this clearly: “The scribes and Pharisees were enemies to the...*salvation* of the souls of men.”

5. Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: 1959) chapter eight at http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Sermon/sermon_08.htm (Providence Baptist Ministries) (last accessed 6/16/06).

What was this teaching that was a barrier to salvation for the proselytes of the Pharisees and the Pharisees themselves?

Josephus Identifies The Pharasaical Teaching Jesus Was Attacking

A little historical background helps tremendously identify the false teaching of the Pharisees that Jesus is going to identify.

There were two primary parties in Judaism in Jesus' day. They were the Sadducees and Pharisees.

The Sadducees were the ones primarily in charge of the temple. They were the dominant force in the Sanhedrin — the religious ruling body of Israel. The Sadducees were not liberals at all in terms of the Bible. They taught strict obedience to the Law. In fact, the Sadducees rejected the Pharisees precisely for their opposite approach on the Law of Moses. They believed the Pharisees supplanted the Law of Moses with mere traditions of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were *negating* the Law by their traditions.

Jesus, we shall see, was siding with the Sadducees. Here is Josephus, the First Century Jewish historian, identifying what divided these two parties:

What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are ***not written in the Law of Moses***; and it is ***for this reason that the Sadducees reject them***, and say we are to esteem those observances that are in the written word, but are ***not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers***. (Josephus Flavius, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13.10.6 (13.297)(Whiston translation at 281.)

Thus, Jesus comes and faults the Pharisees primarily on the issue in dispute with the Sadducees. The Pharisees' oral teachings negated the Law and ignored the weightier matters of the Law. Jesus never criticizes the Sadducees for their rigid position of following the entire Law of Moses. Instead, Jesus repeatedly confirms the validity of the Sadducees' position. Jesus' only express rejection of a Sadducee teaching was their doctrine that there was no resurrection to eternal life.⁶

Hence, in the quote above, Josephus, unwittingly, helps identify the *precise* reason for Jesus' rejection of the Pharisees. The Sadducees taught adherence to the written Law of Moses. The Sadducees rejected the Pharisees' teachings that were *added* to the Law of Moses as if necessary to keep. Jesus did not fault the Sadducees on their rejection of the anti-legalism position of the Pharisees at all. Jesus only faulted the terrible doctrine of the Sadducees that there is no such thing as eternal life in a resurrection to come.

As we shall see, Jesus had a multi-faceted attack on the Pharisees, but it always came back to this Sadducee-Pharisee divide. Jesus would fault the Pharisees for selective teaching from the Law of Moses. This Pharisaical doctrine had the effect of a *shallow* definition of righteousness, lopping off wholesale the main commandments. Jesus would

6. Jesus spoke harshly about the Sadducees. "Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." (Matt. 16:6.) Matthew explains the leaven meant the "teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Matt. 16:12.) The Sadducees taught "there is no resurrection." (Matt. 22:23.) The manner of Jesus' refutation proves the Sadducees were denying any reality to *eternal life*. The Sadducees' argument is easy to deduce from the question their agent posed to Jesus. If there was really eternal life then one woman who married seven times and widowed seven times in the resurrection would have seven husbands. This would result in a violation of the Law because the men would each thereby commit adultery. Why? Because in the Ten Commandments, if you read carefully, a woman with multiple husbands, all living, would commit adultery. Each man would have sex *with another man's wife* even though technically it is also his own wife. Jesus refuted this by saying there is neither sex nor marriage in heaven.

also fault them for creating traditions, which if followed, *negated* the Law of Moses, making it of none effect. Thus, the Pharisees were guilty of both *subtraction* from and *dilution* of the Law of Moses. Jesus never levelled any comparable charge against the Sadducees who taught the inspired Law should be taught without adding traditions.

Let's next examine the grounds that Jesus had for the excoriation of the Pharisees.

What Pharisee Teaching Clearly Imperiled Salvation?

What did Jesus say the Pharisees were falsely teaching which imperiled the salvation of their proselytes (Matt. 23:13)? Ten verses later Jesus said the Pharisees were only teaching tithing from the Law, but not the rest of the Law.

Jesus said:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the **weightier matters of the Law** [—] justice, and mercy, and faith: but these **ye ought to have done**, and **not to have left the other undone**. (Mat 23:23)(ASV)

Matthew Henry again sees clearly what Jesus is reproving. "They [*i.e.*, the Pharisees] were very strict and precise in **smaller matters of the law**, but **careless and loose in weightier matters [of the Law]**." However, Henry never puts two-and-two together. He never realizes this *anti-Law* doctrine which Jesus reproved was the very doctrine keeping proselytes of the Pharisees from entering heaven.

What the Pharisees were doing was minimizing what portions of the Law were important to follow. They only were following the ones that could be seen outwardly. "But all their works [from the Law] they do for to be seen of men" (Matt.

23: 5). Tithing fit perfectly into that category. It could be seen by men, if you chose to let others see your tithing and alms-giving.

Many Christian commentators get this right. The *Daily Bible Study* says:

The lesson from the Pharisees' example is...God's true people are to live according to **all** of God's Word, **not just certain parts** that are most convenient or to one's own liking.⁷

Others like the famous Baptist pastor, Pink, agree the Pharisees' error which Jesus exposed was "their observance of the law was a *partial* one: they laid far more stress on its ceremonial aspects than upon its *moral requirements*."⁸

Pharisaic Shallowness in Law Teaching Identifies Salvation-Critical Laws

Introduction

Jesus in the same vein elsewhere warns about the salvation-threatening teachings of the Pharisees from *dilution* of the Law of Moses.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount says the Pharisees ignore God's law on ***hate and vengeance***. Despite the Bible clearly prohibiting personal vengeance and hate, the Pharisees taught it was permissible to hate your enemies and exact vengeance. They rationalized this by out-of-context proof text quotes of the 'eye for an eye passage' and reliance on non-inspired texts. Jesus bluntly corrected them, and paraphrased passages of the Law of Moses against hate and vengeance which the Pharisees glazed over in their analyses.

7. <http://www.keyway.ca/htm2002/pharisee.htm> (last accessed 6/16/06).

8. "Sermon on the Mount," *supra*, http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Sermon/sermon_08.htm (last accessed 6/16/06).

Jesus also taught in the Sermon on the Mount that the Pharisees are teaching that *the sin of adultery is not in the heart*, but only in action. Just prior to this declaration, Jesus says that to enter heaven, the people must have a righteousness that *exceeds* that of the Pharisees. Jesus then explains what this means. He does not say the people need a *faith* which the Pharisees lack. Instead, the people need to follow *principles* from the Ten Commandments such as the command to not *covet your neighbor's wife* which the Pharisees negated by their teaching that adulterous sins were not completed if they remained solely in the heart and not acted out.

The Sermon on the Mount Identifies Soul-Saving Changes To The Pharisees' Doctrine The People Must Follow

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus touches precisely on how the Pharisees ignored the commands from the Law which focused on *inward sins* such as coveting a married woman. Jesus says in the same context that if the people want to “enter the kingdom of God” then their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees. (Matt. 5:20.) They must *do* the commands of the Law which the Pharisees were ignoring.

Jesus begins the Sermon by saying “you shall in no wise *enter the kingdom of heaven* unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees.” (Matt. 5:20.) By saying this, Jesus is harkening to His theme that the Pharisees had shallow teachings on the Law which were a barrier for salvation. (Matt. 23:13, 15.) In the Sermon, Jesus will explain what is the *missing righteousness* untaught by the Pharisees. Jesus will identify precisely what *righteousness* the Pharisees are not teaching, which if such shallow doctrine were corrected, would allow one to exceed the Pharisees supposed righteousness, and hence permit entry into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus was insisting the people had to obey the parts of the Law the Pharisees were not teaching them *i.e.*, were *subtracting* from the Law. Jesus was telling the people that their leaders had also misconstrued passages to contradict other

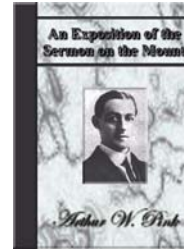
passages, *i.e.*, they were *diluting* the Law. Jesus taught them in the Sermon on the Mount the following specific errors by the Pharisees regarding the Law.

- The Tenth Commandment prohibiting coveting a married woman was just as much against adultery as the Seventh Commandment that prohibited the *act* of adultery. This is discussed in detail below.
- Do not swear *falsely* at all (whether in God’s name or by heaven or anything else).⁹
- Do not use the command which allows public authorities to punish ‘eye for an eye’ as justification for you to take personal vengeance when personal vengeance is prohibited in the Law.¹⁰
- “You heard it said, hate your enemies” was a reference to teachings by the Rabbis from the *non-inspired* portion of Psalms. As surprising as it may be to learn this, the book of Psalms was deemed in Jesus’ day (and still today among Jews) as part of the

9. The Greek translation of Matthew inadvertently dropped the word *falsely* from the Hebrew Matthew. This erroneously made it appear Jesus said one is *never* to take an oath. (Nehemiah Gordon, *Hebrew Yeshua v. Greek Jesus* (Hilkia Press, 2006) at 59, **65-66**, 68.) But God commands people to take oaths in God’s name. “Thou shalt fear Jehovah thy God;... and by his name shalt thou swear.” (Deu 10:20 ASV.) Gordon, a Jewish scholar, notes the Pharisees taught you could violate an oath as long as not sworn in Yahweh’s name. The Bible prohibited any *false* swearing in God’s name. (Lev. 19:12.) By examining Jesus’ criticisms, one can deduce how the Pharisees twisted this verse. The Pharisees obviously said this passage implied you could falsely swear even if you invoked objects closely associated with God, like the Temple. You supposedly would transgress the command only when God’s name is used. However, what Jesus was invoking was the broader principle such as in Zechariah 8:17 which said “love no *false* oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith Jehovah.” Thus, you were not allowed to dupe others if you worded your oath carefully. Thus, the Pharisees diminished the Law once more. Gordon detected the difference in the Hebrew version of Matthew where Jesus corrected them, saying ‘do not swear *falsely* at all,’ whether by the temple or anything else. The Greek translation dropped the word *falsely*. Then Gordon explains the instruction ending ‘anything beyond this is evil’ was an Hebraism used in the Original Testament, meaning anything beyond (*added to*) the Torah was evil.

Writings section of the Jewish Bible. It was not believed then or now by Jews to be 100% inspired. The *Writings* section meant the Holy Spirit *at times* was present in them but not always.

However, the Rabbis liked to quote from Psalms as if authoritative even when it justified hating your enemies. (Psalm 139:22, “I hate them with a perfect hatred.”) Yet, Jesus said rather love your enemies. Jesus then revived the Law’s command against hate of your brother and neighbor. (Lev. 19:17.) Jesus later explained in the Parable of the Good Samaritan that any stranger is a neighbor.



Jesus said hate is as wrong as murder.¹¹ Incidentally, Christian commentators, now knowing what Jesus was saying, actually still rely upon Psalms to justify hating your enemies if you believe them to be God’s enemies.¹²

Pink Concedes Jesus Taught Works-Righteousness for Salvation Before Pink Tries to Reaffirm His Grace Doctrine

Once you make this analysis of the errors of the Pharisees, Jesus’ point in Matthew 5:20 becomes self-evident. The righteousness required to enter heaven that exceeds the Pharisees’ righteousness is the obedience to the principles from the Law which the Pharisees negated or ignored. As the famous Baptist commentator, Pink, put it:

10. The people were being told they could take vengeance because the Bible says ‘an eye for an eye.’ (Lev. 24:17-21.) Yet, implicit in that authorization was that it was the public authorities who would examine and decide the case. An individual could not do so, unilaterally punishing malefactors. The Bible also said, and which Jesus was re-invoking: “Thou shalt not take *vengeance*, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am Jehovah.” (Lev. 19:18, ASV.) Jesus was not saying legal authorities should no longer exact proportionate punishment to the crime committed. Jesus was saying *vengeance* cannot be personally exacted. It belongs to God through the lawful authorities to do so. You must turn the other cheek, and not pursue personal vengeance.

[T]he simplest and **most conclusive** way of ascertaining the nature of the righteousness which Christ requires from all who shall have part in His everlasting kingdom is to observe that it is placed in **direct antithesis from the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.** (Arthur Pink, *Sermon on the Mount*, chapter eight.)¹³

Pink was honest enough to recognize Jesus' obvious message in the Sermon on the Mount even though it contradicted cheap grace. Pink explains Jesus intends us to see the shallow doctrine of the Pharisees is the opposite of the elevated standard of righteousness the people must have. His list is comparable to our synopsis of the Sermon in the bullet outline above. Pink says Jesus teaches in the Sermon:

11. Leviticus 19:17, the verse prior to prohibiting vengeance (see prior footnote), prohibited hatred. Lev 19:17 states: "Thou **shalt not hate** thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him." This equates 'brother' with a 'neighbor.' For the message is that you do not harbor a grudge against your neighbor and hence hate a brother. It was trying to say treat your neighbor like a brother. (Keil & Deilitzch.) This is why Jesus then says in the Parable of the Good Samaritan that a neighbor is any stranger. Christians, unfortunately, were given a misimpression that Psalms is 100% inspired by dropping the Jewish division of the canon. The Jewish canon in Jesus' day (which Josephus confirms) was divided as Law (the five books of Moses), the Prophets (the recognized prophets) and the Writings. The latter were not regarded as 100% inspired but the Holy Spirit's presence was detectable at points. This is why Jesus said He fulfilled prophecies "written about me...in Psalms." Luke 24:44. Portions are inspired, but not all. Jesus' condemning the principle of hating one's enemies is in glaring conflict with numerous precatory portions in Psalms. What was this Writings section? It included Proverbs, Psalms, Chronicles, and Ecclesiastes. On their face, none of these works claim to be prophetic. They are largely songs, history or wisdom writings. The Writings section was also used as a holding-place for books whose prophetic nature was suspected but no prophecy had yet come true. Hence, in the First Century Daniel was still in the Writings section as well. This proves conclusively the Writings section was deliberately a step beneath the Prophets section.

- The Pharisees failed to acknowledge the Bible does sometimes condemn internal thoughts
- The Pharisees obeyed only “certain parts of the Law which suited their tastes while utterly ignoring or nullifying other vital features thereof;” and
- The Pharisees obeyed the parts of the Law they favored solely to please men, not God.

Then Pink gets down to the key issue: does obedience to higher principles of God’s Law rather than the shallow ones of the Pharisees play a role in salvation? Pink shockingly answers *yes*, at odds with cheap grace.

This ***superior righteousness, then, consists of an obedience to the Divine Law*** which would be acceptable to a holy but gracious God. Such an obedience must necessarily spring from the fear of God and love to God: that is, from a genuine reverence for His authority, and from a true desire to please Him. ***It must comprise a strict conformity to the revealed will of God***, without any ***self-invented*** and ***self-imposed additions*** thereto. It must give particular attention to the ***“weightier matters of the law,”***

12. Christian pastors, not understanding this, insist it is permissible to hate God’s enemies. They argue it is only wrong to hate your *own* enemies. Unfortunately, this clearly implies it is permissible to hate your own enemies if you can rationalize they are also God’s enemies. In this way, these pastors teach you to violate Jesus’ command. Andrew Sandlin in the *Forerunner* commentary, for example, quotes Psalm 139 as if inspired, and says: “This statement by David, as well as scores of others in Scripture... no doubt sounds strange — perhaps even offensive to the ears of many modern believers....The idea of a Christian’s hating...wicked people is largely incompatible with the religious sentimentalism pervasive in modern Western Christianity....” (See A. Sandlin, *The Attitude of the Godly Towards God’s Enemies*, http://forerunner.com/forerunner/X0508_Sandlin_-_Gods_Enemi.html (last accessed 11-30-2006).)

13. Pink, *Sermon on the Mount*, Chapter Eight (Providence Baptist Ministries), http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Sermon/sermon_08.htm (last accessed 11/30/06).

namely justice, mercy and faith. It must be a sincere and not a feigned obedience, a filial and not a slavish one, a disinterested and not a self-ish one. It must be a symmetrical or complete one, having respect to ***all God's commandments***. Such an obedience will not puff up or encourage self-righteousness, but will cause the one who sincerely aims thereat to walk softly before the Lord, and will produce humility and denying of self.¹⁴

Of course, Pink as a Baptist cannot leave this admission alone. Pink must affix a cheap grace verbiage to Jesus' words. Thus, Pink attempts to ascribe all this *work* to the activity of the Holy Spirit acting in you by divine grace. But slapping the word *grace* onto Jesus' doctrine does not change the fact Pink concedes ***Jesus teaches obedience to the strict letter of the Law as vital for salvation***. Pink's digression into cheap grace labels of justification and glorification serve to comfort the listener that the familiar gospel of cheap grace has not been altered by Jesus. But it is a deceptive comfort.

Pink's casting Jesus' words on the waters of cheap-grace verbiage permits the listener to continue the deeply ingrained practice of marginalizing Jesus' teaching.

Thus, our critique here is vital to hold in mind. Without ***holding the line on what Jesus teaches***, we would end up committing the very error that Pink admitted Jesus was excoriating the Pharisees for committing. For Pink said the Pharisees taught obedience to only

certain parts of the Law which suited their tastes while utterly ignoring or ***nullifying*** other vital features thereof (Arthur Pink, *Sermon on the Mount*, chapter eight.)

14. Pink, *Sermon on the Mount* Chapter Eight, excerpted in full at http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Sermon/sermon_08.htm.

This nullification of the Law is precisely what the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace depends upon. As we shall discuss later, most of the modern church teaches that tithing is still valid from the Law, but nothing else from the Law applies in the era of grace.¹⁵

This means *modern grace teaching is identical to the Pharisees' doctrine*. Jesus said that the Pharisees were big on tithing, but had set aside the weightier matters of the Law, stressing the less weighty matters of the Law. (Matt. 23:23.)

Deficiency of Pharisees on Adultery Doctrine

Let's explore in detail the Pharisee error on adultery. We will learn Jesus was excoriating the Pharisees' negation of one of the Ten Commandments. Jesus' point is not self-evident unless you (a) know the Law and (b) become aware of Pharisaic teachings on lust for a married woman.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains while discussing adultery what was deficient in the Pharisees' teaching. Jesus explains the Pharisees fell down by not teaching the Tenth of the Ten Commandments: thou shall not *covet* thy neighbor's wife. The Pharisees were failing to teach it was wrong to covet your neighbor's wife (*i.e.*, number ten of the Ten Commandments). Instead, they emphasized it was only important not to commit the *act* of adultery, which of course is also *separately* prohibited in the Seventh Commandment of the Ten Commandments. The Pharisees focused on only one command touching on adultery to the neglect of another command on adultery that was *equally important* to teach.

Jesus says: "You've heard it said do not *commit* adultery [*i.e.*, the Seventh Commandment], but I tell you that whosoever looks on a [*married*] woman¹⁶ to lust after her has committed adultery in his heart" [*i.e.*, the Tenth Commandment]. (Matt. 5:27-28.)

15. See page 194.

The Pharisees taught there is no sin in *thoughts* of lust for a married woman if the act of adultery did not follow. They taught this despite one of the Ten Commandments expressly prohibiting *coveting* of a married woman. As one commentator points out regarding Jesus' meaning:

People had come to believe that one could lust after a woman, as long as the ***act of fornication [i.e., sex] was not committed***. But Jesus showed that this understanding was foreign to the actual command by Moses.¹⁷

This is likewise understood by a commentator who nevertheless favors the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace, Definbaugh, Th.M.:

The Jewish interpretation of the seventh commandment was that one was guilty of adultery ***only if he or she had committed the physical act***. This was a very narrow and external interpretation of the Law and ***ignored the clear teaching of the tenth commandment***: 'You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife....(Exodus 20:17).¹⁸

The oral tradition had made of none effect the tenth of the Ten Commandments. The *oral law* of the Pharisees had come to tower over the *written Law given to Moses by God*.

16. The Greek word typically means a *married* woman. This is the correct translation because the Bible never said lust or sex with a single woman was *adultery*. For adultery to take place, a woman had to be married already. (Lev. 20:10.) Thus, as commonly translated, *woman* cannot possibly be the correct translation. Only a *married woman* fits Jesus' defining the lust as *adultery* in your heart.

17. Robert A. Hawkins, "Covenant Relations of the Sermon on the Mount," *Restoration Quarterly* Vol. 12, No. 1 reprinted at http://www.restorationquarterly.org/Volume_012/rq01201hawkins.htm (last accessed 6/16/06).

18. http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=604 (last accessed 7/4/06).

What corroborates this was the Pharisaic oral teaching in the time of Jesus is that this *oral teaching* continues to be a significant doctrine among conservative Jewish rabbis. Without naming names, a conservative Rabbi on national radio (whom I admire greatly) teaches Judaism does not say there is any such thing as adultery in *thoughts*. The only adultery is in action. This rabbi says this is true beyond adultery: there are no sins of the heart in Judaism. There are only sins in physical actions. (He says this is the major difference between Christianity and Judaism.) But that very teaching is *contrary* to Torah, in particular the Tenth Commandment which prohibits lusting after a married woman. “Thou shalt not *covet* your neighbor’s wife.” Thus, the error Jesus tried to correct within Judaism 2,000 years ago still persists.

The Importance of the Oral Law in Tradition

How can a blatant contradiction emerge that negates one of the Ten Commandments?

Because by Jesus’ day, the oral law became so important in Judaism that it was axiomatic that the oral law had more weight than the Prophets. For example, Maimonides, the greatest exponent of the Oral Law,¹⁹ explained in the Middle Ages why there is an appropriate emphasis on Rabbinic oral law over the written prophets. Maimonides cites Eliezer who was a famous Rabbi in Jesus’ day, and synthesizes a lesson from Eliezer:

If there are 1000 prophets, all of them of the stature of Elijah and Elisha, giving a certain interpretation, and 1001 rabbis giving the opposite interpretation, you shall ‘incline after the majority’ (Exodus 23:2)²⁰ and the law is according to the 1001 rabbis, not according to the 1000 venerable prophets.²¹

19. Ironically, even the Oral Law was later written down. One key text is the *Mishnah*.

This is the attitude Jesus was battling. The Pharisees developed doctrines that cancelled the words delivered by the prophets. The Oral Tradition was of more weight than God's messengers.

This explains how someone so intelligent as this radio rabbi I mentioned earlier can affirm the difference between Christianity and Judaism is that Judaism does not recognize as sin anything that is not accompanied by action.

This is precisely what Jesus was criticizing 2000 years ago. It continues among sincere God-honoring Jewish Rabbis today. It has never changed. This is the power of *oral* tradition. ***Two thousand years later, and it is still with us.*** And somehow, the fact the Tenth Commandment is staring them in the face does not dissuade these rabbis from their teaching doctrines. They have rationalized away the fact their teaching is directly contrary to what the Law says. Even good, fair, and sensible rabbis rely more on the oral law than the written law.

Incidentally, not all of Judaism agrees with this radio rabbi. So please do not misread that the radio rabbi's views are dominant. Instead, Judaism, like Christianity, is fraught with commentators who are at odds with each other. So the *Encyclopedia of Judaism* can say "covetousness" is defined as *inordinate desire* for another's wife or possessions, and is condemned in Judaism based on the Tenth Commandment.²²

20. The Pharisees were notorious for out-of-context proof-texting. The passage being cited is a command not to follow the majority when you testify as a witness; instead, always tell the truth. The Oral-law advocates (*i.e.*, the Pharisees) took it out of context, and read it as a command to adopt majority viewpoints on the meaning of the Law or Prophet even if it violates the actual words of a Prophet. As Nehemiah Gordon (a Karaite Jew and scholar) says, the rabbis read Exodus 23:2 "out of context," and "derive a completely different principle" from it than what it states. (N. Gordon, *Hebrew Yeshua v. Greek Jesus* (2006) at 18.)

21. Moses Maimonides, *Introduction to the Mishnah* (Jerusalem: 1992) at 27-28 [Hebrew text as translated in Nehemiah Gordon, *Hebrew Yeshua v. Greek Christ* (2006) at 83-84.]

The radio rabbi thus represents a strain of thinking identical to what Jesus was trying to correct. It is still alive today, which helps us *corroborate* how to understand what Jesus was correcting. Jesus was confronting oral tradition by the Pharisees which negated the Law. This led to an inferior righteousness *in practice* and *in teaching* by the Pharisees. It did not meet God's standards. ***It was shallow.*** Jesus said that to enter the kingdom of heaven, the people must have a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. ***One of those higher standards*** the people needed is ***that they must follow the Tenth of the Ten Commandments*** which the Pharisees nullified by the Oral Torah.

The radio rabbi then becomes a contemporary example of what Jesus was up against. No doubt ordinary Jews of Jesus' era were struggling to understand how the very moral and devout rabbis (just like many may respond to my criticism of the radio rabbi) could be *wrong* in a way that negated the Law. The ordinary Jew who heard there was no sin from mere thoughts unless action followed must have assumed the rabbis learned this truth due to superior study of the Bible. Yet, that assumption was unfounded.

To dislodge this assumption which prevailed 2000 years ago, Jesus gave numerous speeches on the hypocrisy and leaven (false teachings) of the Pharisees. It must have shocked Jesus' audience what He was saying. Only those who truly loved God would have tried to attempt to focus on Jesus' words to see how He corrected the Pharisees' doctrines.

Paradoxically, today the same spiritual airs are assumed by our modern church leaders. We have to dislodge this smugness by the direct and powerful impact of Jesus' words. Thus, in this book we have spared no punches. This book has tried to lay bare the many contemporary founda-

22. "Covetousness," <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=838&letter=C> (last accessed 7/4/06).

tional doctrines that clearly violate Jesus' words, *e.g.*, the mocking of Jesus' doctrine of repentance and obedience as 'earning salvation,' etc.

You need to escape these mantras. By dint of repetition, many of you have accepted a view of salvation that displaces Jesus' doctrine. Please listen attentively to Jesus' teachings on this score. Jesus says your very salvation is at risk if you swallow the modern equivalent of the Pharisees' doctrines.

Corroboration of Jesus' Intent from Jesus' Excoriation of the Pharisees' Nullification of the Law by Their Traditions

There is no mistaking what angers Jesus about the Pharisees' teaching which He says is a barrier to salvation. The Pharisees had a similar teaching about one of the Ten Commandments to *honor your mother and father*. In Jewish interpretation, including by Jesus, this meant taking care of your mother and father if they were poor. If you failed to do so, then you *dishonored* your mother and father. However, the Pharisees taught that if you paid a *Korban* to the Temple — a large sum of money — the Temple priests would take care of your mother and father in their need.

In the quote below, Jesus refers to this special Korban obliquely in Matthew 15:5. Jesus was quoting what such a Korban payor was allowed to say to his parent: "That where-with thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God." Jesus believed this substitutionary replacement negated the commandment of God. Honoring (*i.e.*, taking care of) your mother and father was your *personal* duty. It was not to be handed over to the Temple authorities. *See*, Matt. 15:6 ("thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.")

In Matthew 15:2-9, we read:

(2) Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. (3) And he [Jesus] answered and said unto them, **Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?** (4) For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death. (5) But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God; (6) he shall not honor his father. And **ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition.** (7) Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, (8) This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. (9) But in vain do they worship me, **Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.** (ASV)

Thus, Jesus excoriates the Pharisees for replacing the commandments of God (*i.e.*, the Law of Moses) with what is merely a *tradition* of men. Jesus regarded the Pharisees as *negating* the Law of Moses by means of their own oral law. All mainstream commentators concur Jesus was attacking those who make an Oral Law of greater stature than the Written Law.

For example, Clarke in his commentary says: “Pretenders to zeal often prefer superstitious usages...and **human inventions** to the positive duties of [God].”

Barnes in his commentary likewise concurs that the Jewish leaders trained the people to trust them over the written Law: “[The commands in the oral law] are, however, regarded by the Jews as **more important than either Moses or the prophets.**”

Robertson's *Word Pictures* concurs too: “The rabbis placed tradition (the oral law) **above** the law of God.”

Thus, we see Jesus is upset with the Pharisees once more for negating the Law. The Pharisees were giving contrary Oral Law teachings. This was comparable to what we previously noted. For example:

- The Pharisees taught the less weighty matters of the Law (*i.e.*, tithing) had to be followed, but they left untaught the weightier matters from the Law. (Matt. 23:23.) It was in this context that Jesus said they were preventing salvation of their proselytes. (Matt. 23:13, 15.)
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said the Pharisees taught it was wrong to commit adultery, but they negated the validity of the Tenth Commandment that it was wrong *in itself* to covet a married woman, whether actual action followed or not. (Matt. 5:27-29.) Jesus told the people to “enter into the kingdom of God” they had to follow a righteousness higher than this shallow righteousness of the Pharisees. (Matt. 5:20.)
- Lastly, in Matthew 15:2-9, we see the Pharisees’ substitutionary teaching about the special Korban was viewed by Jesus as negating obedience to one of the Ten Commandments. Their human *oral* teaching had the effect of causing obedience to the entire Law to wither. Their teaching was a Law-less teaching. It served to negate the Law.

The Pharisaical Error Pin-Pointed Again
by Jesus

If the Pharisees’ Lawless teaching is what prevents salvation, then we would expect to find Jesus explicitly giving us direction on this. Does Jesus ever explain that a false guide is one who teaches us not to follow even a small command in the Law of Moses?

Yes, Jesus tells us clearly what He thinks about those who teach us *not* to obey some provision in the Law given Moses by God.

In Matthew 5:18-19, Jesus explains that anyone who “shall teach” others not to follow the least command of the Law of Moses will be least in the kingdom of heaven:

(18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the Law [i.e., Nomos], till all things be accomplished. (19) **Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so,** shall be called least in the **kingdom of heaven:** but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (ASV)

Jesus thus excoriates those (like the Pharisees) who taught commands from the Law of Moses did not necessarily have to be followed. Jesus says, by contrast, in his “Gospel of the Kingdom” that those who are “great in the kingdom of heaven” will be those who teach others to obey all of the Law given Moses.

Thus, we see Jesus taught every aspect from the Law given Moses had to be followed. The small and the great. The weighty and the less weighty. The moral commands from the Law (*e.g.*, thou shalt not covet) as well as the externally-testable commands (*e.g.*, thou shalt not commit adultery). Jesus taught us the Pharisees failed to teach both. Jesus said their teachings were causing those coming to them for salvation to not enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said for us to enter the kingdom of heaven, our righteousness **must exceed this half-hearted shallow effort** to keep the Law. The Pharisees were **lukewarm** about the Law. They were not on fire to obey all of it: Jesus said they picked and chose what to obey.

We necessarily must understand therefore that Jesus is telling us that **anyone who says obeying the Law is not important for salvation is bringing a false gospel.**

There Are Two Laws — One for Jews and One for Gentiles

That said, we must realize that the Law sometimes applies differently to Jews than Gentiles. Yet, the Law is being followed even when the Law makes exceptions or has different patterns for Gentiles (also referred to as *sojourners* or *foreigners*). For example, we can say emphatically that

anyone who teaches sojourners (Gentiles) that the Law given Moses when it expressly applies to sojourners is either unimportant or unnecessary are bringing the false teachings of the Pharisees. Jesus condemns this doctrine and warns of its soul-threatening effect.²³

*The Defenders Of the Modern Cheap Grace
Gospel Try to Claim Fulfilling The Law
Abolished the Law*

However, as we all know, the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace says the Law given Moses is no longer applicable. It is nailed to a tree. Abolished. Taken away. It is a shadow of things to come. Yet, nothing from Matthew 5:17-20 says this.

To make Jesus fit the Cheap Grace Gospel, what proponents of this **other gospel** do is lift one word out of context from this passage: *fulfill*. The cheap grace proponents claim Jesus *fulfilled* all the Law for us so we no longer must obey the Law. Thus they make this word *fulfilled* swallow all the principles Jesus just laid down. However, the full context of Jesus' statements speaks at odds with this view:

(17) Think not that I came to **destroy the law** or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to **fulfil**.

23. Obviously, Jesus' view, if taken seriously, would upset the commonly heard notion that the New Testament replaced the old. This replacement-theory is not a doctrine ever taught by Jesus. Instead, Jesus said that if you tried to make a Gentile (Sojourner) follow commands only applicable to Jews (the old), you can cause the new to spill out (be unduly squeezed out and pressured) and cause their being lost. Therefore, the correct doctrine is to put nothing on a Gentile that was not put on a sojourner/foreigner under the Law. See my prior book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007) at 102-05.

(18) For verily I say unto you, ***Till heaven and earth pass away***, one jot or one tittle shall in ***no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished***. (Mat 5:17-18, ASV.)

Now, the defenders of cheap grace concede Jesus means here primarily that He came to fulfill the prophecies in the Law about a Messiah, *e.g.*, Numbers 24 (the Star Prophecy); Gen. 3:15 (man will crush head of snake prophecy); Gen. 49:10-12 (Shiloh Prophecy), etc.

However, what they fail to realize is that, as they also admit, the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 has not yet been fulfilled. This prophecies a man will come who will crush the head of the serpent after having his own heel bruised. Satan bruised Christ's heel at the cross. But Satan is alive and well. In fact, Satan must be loosed at the end of the millennium. Then and only then will he be destroyed. (Rev. 20:10.) Thus, the death blow to the head of Satan mentioned in Genesis 3:15 has not happened. Upon its occurrence, a new heavens and earth will replace the current ones. Thus, literally, the prophecies of the Law will *not be fulfilled* until coincidentally the heavens and earth pass away. At that point, Satan is finally destroyed in the Lake of Fire.

Consequently, when Jesus says the Law continues ***until the heavens and earth pass away***, this completely fits the duration for the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 prophecy. The Book of Genesis is part of the 'Law given Moses,' and the Law, including this prophecy of Genesis 3:15 continues until Satan is destroyed. This happens to coincide with a date still off in the future — the passing of the heavens and the earth. And thus the Law does not pass away until all things are fulfilled, which happens when heaven and earth pass away. That has not remotely yet happened! Hence, the Law is still valid because not entirely *fulfilled*!

Accordingly, what Jesus said was literally true: not one jot or tittle of the Law given Moses would pass away until the Heaven and Earth pass away. This point coincides with precisely when the Law's prophecies are fulfilled in their entirety.

Thus, Jesus' meaning in fulfilling the Law did not mean that His obedience *replaces* any need for individuals to follow the Law prior to the passing of the heavens and earth.

Unfortunately, it is a fact that the Christian dogma of the last four centuries has taught the Law was done away with in 33 A.D. This interpretation does not follow from anything Jesus said about fulfilling the Law. ***Jesus' saying He came to fulfill a prophecy is not the same as saying He came to replace your duty to obey the Law with His perfect obedience.*** Such a teaching undermines everything Jesus did teach about obedience to the Law. Such a cheap grace teaching reflects a Pharasaical ***disrespect for the Law*** in contravention to the respect Jesus said was crucial for salvation. (Matt. 5:20.)

The Pharisees Are The Opposite of Legalists

As we must realize by now, modern Christians are trained to incorrectly understand the Pharisees' error. We are told the Pharisees caused their followers not to be saved because the Pharisees allegedly *insisted upon all the Law* being followed rigorously. Allegedly Jesus was condemning any doctrine that insisted we obey *all* the Law of Moses. For example, *Halley's Bible Dictionary* says:

Pharisees were the most numerous and influential of the religious sects of Jesus' day. ***They were strict legalists.*** They stood for the rigid observance of the letter and forms of the Law, and also for the Traditions.

However, this is misleading in saying the Pharisees stood for the rigid observance of “the Law.” No! The Pharisees’ error was that **they did not teach the entire Law, but only a very small and less weighty part — tithing**. They also *replaced* commandments of the Law with traditions of men. The *Halley Bible Dictionary* blurs this, and implies a different error which is *exactly* the opposite of what Jesus identified as the Pharisee error. **The Pharisees were not legalists**. Instead, they were the opposite of legalists: they worked the *negation* of the Law given Moses.

As Robert Thiel correctly points out:

Some claim that believing in following the laws of God makes one a legalist. However, if legalism is defined as adhering to the ten commandments, then **the Pharisees could not have been ‘legalists’** — the Pharisees repeatedly violated the ten commandments and justified these violations by traditions of men (Mk 7:13).²⁴

If a legalist is anyone who thinks the Law of Moses is valid, and therefore should be followed by a follower of Christ, **then Jesus is a legalist**. The doctrines we condemn as legalism today, as reflected in the *Halley Bible Dictionary*, make Jesus a heretic. For Jesus applauded the Pharisees’ tithing efforts, and then said that **the Pharisees did not go far enough in their obedience to the Law**. They were really good about the less weighty matters of the Law, but they left the weighty matters of the Law undone. (Matt. 23:23.)

24. Robert J. Thiel, Ph.D. *Were the Pharisees Condemned for Keeping the Law of God?* (2001) <http://www.cogwriter.com/pharisee.htm> (last accessed 6/17/06). Thiel is a Christian writer who defends the idea that Paul repeats the ten commandments, and did not mean to say they were ‘nailed to a tree,’ or otherwise abrogated. See Thiel, *The Apostle Paul* (2006) at <http://www.cogwriter.com/paul.htm>.

As Thiel points out, if Jesus' words really had any weight with us, then the sign of the modern Pharisee is someone who "does not actually keep the ten commandments."

Hence, *something is fundamentally amiss in the way we understand the error of the Pharisees*. It's obvious why: we have adopted the Pharisee error as *normative* Christianity. We did away with the Law given Moses. Gone is the Sabbath. It is ignored even though it is one of the Ten Commandments. Most Christians would say they do keep Sabbath on Sunday. However, this is not God's day. We have felt free to move it to a day of our own choosing, just like Jereboam moved the Feast of Tabernacles by one month. This was a day "of his own invention." Jesus abhorred such Lawless teachings. Thus, to prevent us from seeing this, we have to be brain-washed to *think* the Pharisee error was exactly the opposite of what Jesus said it was.

The Modern Gospel: How It Differs from Jesus

The dominant dogma of modern Christianity has become identical to what Jesus condemned. To prove this to yourself, simply listen to a clear presentation of the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace at almost any supposedly evangelical church on Sunday. Here is a perfect example of what you might hear. This is from the *Lectionary Series* wherein it identifies what it thinks is wrong when someone teaches us to obey the Law of God:

Legalism, the heresy known as sanctification by obedience, can easily undermine our initial 'yes' for Jesus. We begin to believe that ***our continued standing before God, his approval and love, and our progress in the Christian life, is gained by obedience to Christ***. This way of thinking undermines "repentance and faith."

So, the initial ‘yes’ for the journey of faith, **can be undermined** if the believer gets into **the business of law-obedience**. For us today, let us beware that we haven’t unknowingly said ‘yes,’ but have then forgotten the Father’s will.

The church today is infested with legalism. The adoption of the heresy of **sanctification by obedience is widespread** and so many church attenders have forgotten their ‘yes’ and now seek a law-righteousness rather than a righteousness which is **apart from the law of God**. If we are to do what the Father wants, then we must live by grace through faith and not by works of the law.²⁵

What is truly amazing is how anyone can think this way if one believes Jesus was God-in-the-flesh. To believe this supposed gospel in the quote above, you must not take Jesus very seriously. For Jesus said you can go to heaven maimed or hell whole. (Matt. 5:30; Mark 9:42 *et seq.*) Yet, what did the *Lectionary Series* just say? The opposite:

[It is heretical to believe] our continued standing before God, his approval and love, and our progress in the Christian life, is **gained by obedience to Christ**.

We can also see that what the *Lectionary* condemns as heresy is exactly what Jesus taught. The *Lectionary* insists justification by obedience to the Law of God is a heresy. Thus, the *Lectionary* teaches justification is **without obeying God’s commands at all**. Anyone who teaches that it is necessary to obey God’s word and thus avoid sin to go to heaven is supposedly a heretic. Thereby, the *Lectionary* actually sides with the views of the Pharisees whom Jesus condemned as causing the loss of salvation for their proselytes.

25. <http://www.lectionarystudies.com/studyg/sunday26ag.html> (last accessed 6/21/06).

The Pharisees taught election by being Abraham's seed. Jesus said this misses the key necessity of repentance *from sin*. (Matt. 5:29-30.) Jesus required a repentance that was an active life-changing correction from sin to obedience to the Law which they broke.

If one had their Master's words *first* and *foremost* in their mind, it is amazing what Christians can come to believe is a *Christian* teaching. Yet, here we have progressed to the point that mainstream Christianity teaches what the Teacher vigorously taught against.

When this conflict is exposed between Church doctrine and Jesus, cheap grace defenders will declare you are a heretic if you insist Jesus' words are still valid. You supposedly do not realize that ***Jesus' words belonged to a prior and different dispensation than the Christian dispensation.***²⁶ Jesus' words are allegedly defunct, but ***Church doctrine of today which is contrary to Jesus is supposedly valid.***

Derisive Rebuttals: Awls in Ears, Fringes on Garments & Head Coverings

One of the rebuttals I receive tries to deride me personally as a hypocrite and then deride the good sense behind the Law itself, as if God is not indirectly being attacked. Those who do this also think they are following a pattern that replicates Jesus' approach. It does not.

For example, I am confronted with the argument that I do not supposedly keep the Law. Therefore, I must be a hypocrite. Then I ask them: 'what Law don't I keep?' Then they respond by making derisive attacks on 'why don't you put awls in ears of servants' and why 'do you shave my beard, etc. 'Why are there no fringes on your garments?'

26. See my prior book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007) at 367 ff.

However, these are not commands in the Law I am disobeying, but my verbal pugilist does not know this due to his ignorance of the Law itself.

The implicit assumption behind this argument is that Jesus was so upset with hypocrisy of not keeping these supposed commandments that He abolished the entire Law. Jesus' alleged solution to the Pharisees' hypocrisy was simply to abrogate the Law. Yet, if so, *the Pharisees would no longer be sinners for the many transgressions Jesus had hitherto been hurdling at the Pharisees*. They would now have an easy road. The entire thrust of this argument of my verbal pugilist is obvious nonsense.

But what is most disturbing is that this argument is laden with *a derision of the Law given by God itself*. And this is pernicious because it *attacks the character of God Himself who authorized these supposedly strange commands*. So what about the principles these verbal pugilists denigrate which supposedly come from the Law? They were:

- Awls in ears of a servant.
- No shaving of beards.
- Fringes on garments; and
- Head coverings.

They are actually trying to take these principles, which they assume are in the Law even though they often are not present or are optional, and then use it to *make fun of the Law of God!* They treat God's word as *foolishness!* God only help them!

The verbal pugilist cites these presumed principles from the Law to mock it and denigrate it. What an odd esteem they have for the words of I AM to Moses. *I hate to inform them of this but they are mocking Jesus*, for Jesus said He was the "I AM." Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Thus, when I find these hurled insults at my adherence to God's Law, it is incongruous that these people can claim they love Jesus — the very same I AM who gave these commands they find so strange and distasteful.

Actually, the alleged silly commands they mock are either:

- Not in the Law at all but are a simple tradition (*e.g.*, head coverings);²⁷ or
- Are voluntarily imposed (*e.g.*, awls in ears of servants who volunteer to be a servant for life);²⁸ or
- Are exaggerated interpretations by means of tradition meant to put a hedge around the Law. For example, the notion of not shaving a beard is a modern tradition. The Biblical command is merely a prohibition on a Fu Manchu beard by *simultaneously* cutting below the sideburns and cutting off the chin-edge of the beard.;²⁹ or
- Limited to Israelites only and not Sojourners (Gentiles), *e.g.*, fringes on garments. Also, the fringes command is not that hard to comply with if you happen to be wearing a four corner long garment. It is even decorative.³⁰

27. Nehemiah Gordon is a Karaite Jew, which means a Jew who rejects traditions added to the Law (formerly known as *Kara*). He explains one such accretion of tradition is the *kippah* or skull-cap. “This was a practice unknown in Talmudic times. In the Middle Ages, a custom developed to cover the head and after a few hundred years this custom became binding. Today one of the most basic Rabbinic laws is that a man may not walk four cubits without his head covered nor make a blessing (even while seated) without his head covered.” (N. Gordon, *Hebrew Yeshua v. Greek Jesus* (Halkiah Press, 2006) at 19-20.)

28. Deuteronomy 15:16-17 reads: “16 It shall be, *if he tells you*, ‘I will not go out from you;’ because he loves you and your house, because he is well with you; 17 then you shall take an awl, and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise.”

How Far Does The Law Apply To Gentiles

James taught us that if the Law given Moses says the command applies to a “child of Israel,” it is literal. It does not apply to Sojourners (Gentiles) who are part of the commu-

29. Friedman’s modern translation of the Torah as well as many others make clear that the command was (a) not to cut from your face the hair below the sideburns and (b) cut off the edge of your beard (*i.e.*, hair on the chin). Thus, if you put two-and-two together, the Bible prohibits a Fu Manchu. Friedman translates Leviticus 19:27 “you shall not trim your head’s edge, and you shall not destroy your beard’s edge.” First, this was **not** a command to have a beard. It was how to cut a beard you already had. Second, Friedman’s note indicates “your head’s edge” means “sideburns.” *Pe’ah* means *side*. (Ex. 26:20.) It is obvious that the Bible understands the chin area as the *beard*. The area above the chin on the cheeks is the sideburn area, and is distinct. So the prohibition is on cutting the hair from the sideburn area, thus leaving an empty space between your sideburn area and your chin-beard. Then it says, in Friedman’s translation, “you shall not destroy your beard’s edge.” What does that mean? You were not to cut the chin beard’s edge off. If you put the two commands together, it precisely tells you **not to have a Fu Manchu beard**. Some commentators more loosely say it means “trimming of the corners” is forbidden. (*Beard Bible Dictionary*.) However, this prohibition is not against *any* trimming of *corners*. It is against *shaping the beard in two simultaneous ways*: cutting off the hair below the sideburns and cutting down the edge of your beard so that it was short at the chin area. The Satanic world intuitively understands this verse better than we do. Satanists like LaVey wear a Fu Manchu-styled beard. Such a beard naturally has a more sinister aspect. *That’s all Leviticus 19:27 prohibits*. If having a beard was mandatory or shaving the sideburns was *always* wrong, then it makes no sense that ritual purification of a leper involved shaving all the hair on his head and his beard. (Leviticus 14:9. See also Nu 8:7.) If the modern practice among some Jews to not shave the beard was understood in earlier times, then it makes no sense why devout pilgrims from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria “having **their beards shaven** and clothes rent” bring meal-offerings and frankincense into the “house of Yahweh.” (Jeremiah 41:5.) People closer to the time these commands were first written thought an act of being more holy and clean was to *shave* all of the beard off. Also, other commentators from the Jewish Karaite tradition make plausible arguments from *Bible texts alone* that the prohibition was against cutting a beard to show mourning. See “Shaving and Sidelocks? The Real Meaning of Leviticus 19:27-28,” at <http://www.karaite-korner.org/shaving.shtml> (last visited 11/30/06).

nity.

James in Acts chapter 15 read the command on circumcision in Leviticus 12:3 to mention only an imposition on the children of Israel. James thus said as a matter of literal interpretation, it does not apply to non-Jews.

James' view is clear again later in Acts 21:18-26, when James confronts Paul. James reminds Paul that the decision about circumcision being unnecessary was only true for Gentile Christians. Jewish Christians must still follow the circumcision command.

If you apply the Israel-Sojourner distinction which James employed, then of the Law of Moses which applies to non-Jews, is very limited.

Gentiles would have to obey primarily the Ten Commandments and Leviticus chapters 19 & 20 & 24:13-24 which Jesus alludes to many times. These are moral commands that do not introduce themselves as commands to only Israel.

In fact, in Chapter 20 of Leviticus, it in particular says it applies not only to Israelites but also to "foreigners" in the land. Chapter 20 had to do with sexual practices.

30. "The Lord also said to Moses: *Speak to the children of Israel*, and thou shalt tell them to make to themselves fringes in the corners of their garments, putting in them ribands of blue: that when they shall see them, they may remember all the commandments of the Lord" (Numbers 15:37-39). The Karaite Jewish position (*i.e.*, strict literalist) is that this command only requires fringes on a garment that has, itself, four corners. You are *not commanded to wear four-cornered clothing*, but whenever you wear four-cornered clothing, you must have fringes to remind you of the Torah. See "Tzitzit," <http://www.karaite-korner.org/tzitzit.shtml> (last accessed 11/30/2006). This makes sense or otherwise, all underwear, bathing suits, hats, scarves, shirts, etc. would have to have tassles. Thus, in modern usage, if a child of Israel wore a poncho or toga, then tassles are necessary. Since wearing such clothing is no longer common, perhaps it would be appropriate to find other visible means to remind themselves of the Law. Yet, there is no command to do so.

The fact the Law is sometimes broadened explicitly to include foreigners supports James' method of interpretation. If it always applies to the foreigner, then Leviticus 20:2 and 24:16, 21-22 did not need to say the highlighted portion below:

Moreover, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of ***the strangers that sojourn in Israel***, that giveth of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. Lev 20:2 ASV

Any Israelite or ***any foreigner living in Israel*** who curses the LORD shall be stoned to death by the whole community. (Lev 24:16 GNB)

Whoever kills an animal shall replace it, but whoever kills a human being shall be put to death. This law applies to all of you, to Israelites and ***to foreigners living among you***, because I am the LORD your God. (Lev 24:21-22 GNB.)

Thus, James is being a literalist. The Law's distinction between Israelite and foreigner/sojourner should apply even in the Christian age. The burdens vary.

However, if you believe there is no more distinction between Jew or Gentile, such a false teaching can lead to a heightened burden on the Gentiles beyond what the Law itself required. That distinction is what James was battling to preserve and maintain.

If you say a Gentile is under the same Law that only applies to Israelites, these extra burdens on them are in excess of what the Law itself requires.

Thus, if we erased the Jew-Gentile distinction in reading the Law, we would make it harder for Gentiles to be followers of Jesus. Such doctrine would lead to unnecessary burdens on Gentiles. Instead, we should obey the Law in how it defines its scope on Jews versus on foreigners/sojourners.

In fact, the only commands in the Law specifically addressed to both Jews and *foreigners/sojourners* were in Leviticus 17 (*viz.* 17:8 *et seq.*), all of Leviticus 19 and 20 as well as Leviticus 24:15-22. There are other commands that are *universal*, such as the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the command against adding to Scripture (Deut. 4:2, 13:5). Yet, none of these commands are too hard to follow. Most of the rest of Torah is merely history, *e.g.*, all of Genesis, most of Exodus, most of Numbers.

However, despite this narrowness of application, the leading Christian authorities tell Gentiles that Torah-keeping is a pointless burdensome task.

This is mostly done by sneering at the Law as antiquated or an impossible standard. These theologians make this argument relying upon false interpretations of the Law or assuming burdensome *traditions* are part of the Torah-Law of God. Ironically, this manner of interpreting the Law is precisely what disturbed Jesus and He fought against. Jesus was concerned people would *confuse* these burdensome man-made rules with Torah, and thus hesitate following the Law of Moses.

However, look how Modern Cheap Grace Gospel theologians reinvigorate these excessive teachings about the Law. They disregard how Jesus fought against oral traditions that burdened the people. These theologians instead exaggerate the commands, citing the oral law traditions, so as to denigrate the ongoing relevance of the Law.

How can people read Jesus' words and commit the very same types of distortions of the Law as He was condemning, thereby undermining Jesus' own points? It is astonishing what people who claim to be followers of Jesus can do so at odds with the teachings of Jesus.

*Defenders Of The Modern Gospel Even
Admit The Pharisees' Error Was Teachings
Subversive of the Law*

There are some commentators today who hold to the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace yet who recognize Jesus' words were not attacking *legalism* as the Modern Gospel typically defines it.

They realize Jesus was attacking those like the Pharisees who taught against keeping the *whole* law.

However, despite Jesus thereby contradicting the Cheap Grace Gospel's doctrine on the Law which should lead a Christian to repent of false doctrines about the Law, these same commentators insist *things changed* later.

They preach the Law was done away with after Jesus' resurrection. Thus, these same commentators say we are in the right if we now adopt the very outlook of the *enemies* of Jesus and His salvation doctrine during His ministry. ***These commentators' analysis is a most astounding mental giration to watch.*** Here below are some excellent examples of this amazing rationalization of a contradiction between Jesus and their understanding of the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace.

You know a doctrine is bankrupt when its own proponents unwittingly offer self-contradictory explanations for what they are *willing* to believe.

Deffinbaugh Gets It Right But Still Dismisses Jesus' Relevance Today

An excellent article on this issue is by Bob Deffinbaugh, Th.M. It is entitled *The Fatal Failures of Religion: #2 Legalism Matthew 5:17-48*. Deffinbaugh recognizes the real flaw of the Pharisees which led people from salvation was the Pharisees did not take the Law seriously enough. The Pharisees' error was not *legalism* as defined today by the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace.

The stage is now being set for the contrast Jesus made between Himself and the scribes and Pharisees. The real culprits were the scribes and Pharisees. ***They did not regard the Old Testament Law highly enough.*** They had ***set it aside***, preferring their own rules, regulations and traditions (Mark 7:7-9). The one who was truly great in the Kingdom was he who would ***both teach the Old Testament faithfully (without watering it down)***, and who would live in accordance with this teaching. In the remaining verses, Jesus demonstrated how it was the scribes and Pharisees ***who failed to take the Law far enough***, thus loosening and lowering its requirements.³¹

Bob Deffinbaugh points out that everyone in the crowd assumed the Pharisees were obedient to the *whole* Law. But Jesus said they were wrong. The Pharisees had been selective. For this reason, Jesus warns the crowd in the Sermon on the Mount that they have to have a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. Deffinbaugh explains: “His listeners would have to do better than them if they wanted to ***enter into God’s Kingdom.***” (*Id.*)

Ironically, then Bob Deffinbaugh signals that the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace properly teaches us that this later all changed. Deffinbaugh then undercuts what he just said Jesus meant. He says:

[I]f the best within Judaism could not merit entrance into God’s heaven, neither can you or I. Legalism seeks to win God’s heaven by the keeping of some code of conduct. (*Id.*)³²

31.http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=604 (last accessed 7/4/06).

32.Deffinbaugh says: “The Old Testament Law was given to men as a standard of holiness. By its keeping, none of us would ever enter into eternal life, for it only condemns us.” This contradicts Deuteronomy 6:25 which says obedience to the Law imputes righteousness to us — we are no longer seen as sinners.

Yet, Deffinbaugh had just said that the listeners had to do better than the Pharisees to “enter the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus said the Pharisees were not entering because *they disobeyed the Law* by not teaching all of it or by nullifying parts of it through oral traditions. It logically follows that Jesus meant his listeners had to *obey all the Law*, and not trust the oral traditions that nullified various parts of the Law.

Deffinbaugh is actually *contradicting* Jesus by saying that obeying the Law was irrelevant to “entering the kingdom of God.” (Matt. 5:20.) Jesus just told the audience this was crucial: to enter heaven, they had to exceed the Pharisees who were failing to follow *all* of the Law.

Let Us Reason: Correctly Understands The Pharisee Error But Then Nullifies This Truth from Jesus Is Any Longer Relevant

Here is another similar example of an article that likewise correctly understands Jesus from *Let Us Reason Ministries* entitled *Beware the Leaven of the Pharisees*.³³ However, by the end of the piece, the author will say Jesus’ words no longer apply to us because we live in the era of grace, and the Law is abolished. The fact *Let Us Reason* understands Jesus abhorred that same teaching from the Pharisees of His era does not cause the *Let Us Reason Ministries* to ever hesitate. They feel free to rely upon a Pharisaical doctrine which apparently is bewitching us rather than the teachings of Jesus.

Regardless, what is refreshing is this article does *not* attempt to redefine Jesus’ meaning by resort to other sources as a filter to hear Jesus. It is a Jesus’-words-only discussion. This article is absolutely profound even though it is another disturbing example of what irrationality supports the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace. This article entitled *Beware the Leaven of the Pharisees* begins totally on target:

33.<http://www.letusreason.org/WF39.htm> (last accessed 6/17/06).

If one does a study of who the Pharisees were and what they believed and practiced they **would be shocked to find they are still among us today**. Not just in the Judaism as in the Ultra Orthodox, but in Christianity. And you probably have seen them and **been bewitched by their teachings** and practices and **do not even know it**.

The Pharisees tried to correct Jesus with their own **man-made laws that were not from Moses**. They made up **their own laws** that were not from God to correct Jesus. Jesus' whole ministry was in conflict with their teachings, and more often than not he was addressing the religion that **they perpetrated upon the people**. They were very religious and most were in awe of how blessed they were....

If there is anything we can learn from Jesus on this it is to **not submit to man made laws, traditions** of men or **false Bible interpretations** by **famous religious men** who are known by all. The main point is that we are all are to be subject to the same authority and standard, the Word of God....However they have clever ways to convince you by guilt, fear and just plain **spiritual manipulation** just like the Pharisees.

Next, the author recognizes that the Pharisee teachings were destructive because they went *beyond* the Scriptures. They made people follow the *non-Biblical* oral law:

When someone leads people beyond the Scriptures instead of correctly explaining what is contained in them, he is being **spiritually destructive** to himself and others who listen to him. This is no small matter to be shirked at. The Pharisees brought almost the whole nation of Israel into their bondage by **obedience to their non-biblical teachings**.

Let Us Reason Ministries next clearly understands the Pharisees were not teaching obedience to the Word of God either in the person of Jesus or Yahweh's words to Moses:

Intentional false teaching has its source in pride. This is why Jesus warned of the leaven of the Pharisees in both their teachings and practices. ***Their own arrogance and pride had them reject Jesus' words.*** When the Pharisees disputed Jesus over His claims, ***He pointed them to the Word.*** Jesus often told them that they did not understand the word. Mark 7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders." The reason is because ***they were following their own law not Moses law the way it was intended;*** it was ***corrupted*** by the Pharisees interpretation. Jesus responded in v.13 "making ***the word of God of no effect through your tradition*** which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Let Us Reason Ministries thus is unquestionably aware of what Jesus was condemning: Lawless teachings that nullified the Law given Moses. This appears even more clear in the next quote. However, a notion begins to creep in that Jesus' principles are all passé — a suggestion that Jesus' words were solely for a different era — supposedly the era of the Law that allegedly died at the Cross. We live allegedly in a *distinct* era of grace where the Law is no longer applicable.

This suggestion obviously is in reliance upon a teaching of a Pharisee that has somehow wormed its way into the consciousness of those who *claim* to follow Christ. *Let Us Reason Ministries* thus gives us the following mixed message:

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to

have done, without leaving the others undone.” In Matthew 23:23 Jesus explains they “have ***neglected the weightier matters of the law:*** justice and mercy and faith.” These you ought to have done.” Here Jesus makes it clear that living the life of faith toward God included love toward man that was just as important as what you give to God; and ***this was under the law, not grace.*** However when you see a lack of grace and mercy in a person’s life is often a sign of something wrong. A lack of compassion for the poor and neglecting to help people when you are able shows whom you are serving. We see in the Pharisees the example of false teachers ***who majored in the lesser things of the law, and neglected the greater.*** As Jesus pointed out “justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23; Micah 6:8). The Pharisees became blind because they ***upheld their own laws and interpretations over Moses,*** and were stricter at enforcing them.

Thus, this is a brilliant piece. It is regretfully true the author is pointing to the idea that Jesus’ words are all passé — meant solely for the Era of the Law. They make this claim based upon their trust in the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace.

Yet, their adherence to cheap grace is what makes the above *admissions* so compelling to accept. The author does not realize the entire idea that the Law is passé comes from an adoption of Pharisaical principles of Law-negation. **It is as if we embraced a Pharisee into our New Testament and treated his teachings on par with or superior to Jesus’ words.** Yet, there is no denying the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace holds ***doctrines identical to the enemies of Jesus.*** These Modern Gospel teachings are *indistinguishable* from what this author just admitted Jesus condemned the Pharisees for teaching.

Let's recapitulate this author's key *admissions* of what was wrong with the Pharisees. This way we can see that *anyone* should acknowledge Jesus indicts the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace as false:

- The Pharisees' "*spiritually destructive*" message was that they put "Israel into their bondage by *obedience to their non-biblical teachings*."
- The Pharisees' non-biblical teachings were "their own man-made laws that were *not from Moses*. They made up their own laws."
- The Pharisees' "own arrogance and pride had them reject Jesus' words." What did Jesus teach? Jesus "pointed them to the Word...[but] they were *following their own law not Moses law* the way it was intended; it was *corrupted* by the Pharisees' *interpretation*. Jesus responded [they were] 'making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.'"
- "We see in the Pharisees the example of false teachers who majored in the *lesser things of the law*, and neglected the greater. The Pharisees became blind because they *upheld their own laws and interpretations over Moses*, and were stricter at enforcing them."

Cannot this author see the incongruity that he holds today a doctrine which ultimately is *identical* to the Pharisee teaching of yesterday? It is frankly astonishing that people who profess Christ cannot see this. *It is like a blindness has descended over our eyes.*

Yet, this author correctly understands Jesus' point. No doubt about that. Yet, even then, he still accepts for today the very same teaching by the Pharisees that we can select what the church likes the people to follow from the Law, *i.e.*, tithing, but the rest is not important. It is as if we are rebuffing Jesus by claiming we can follow a teaching of a Pharisee among us who has teachings at *total* odds with Jesus. This is not merely ironic but also very disturbing.

Before we finish by discussing Matthew 5:20, let's now take a time-out to actually consider how horrifying is our modern doctrine on the Law of Moses in light of Jesus' words.

Modern Gospel Has Identical View of Law as Jesus Condemned — Tithing Valid But Rest Is Optional

In what I call the **Greatest Irony of the Centuries**, the Modern Gospel of Christianity teaches precisely what Jesus condemned 2,000 years ago.

A vast majority of Protestant churches today teach there is only one command from the Law of Moses which needs be followed: the Law of Tithing. However, all the other commands from the Law of Moses need not be followed. They are mere shadows, and have passed away.

Allegedly we now have a Christian morality that only avoids what is "obvious" as wrong. This *obviousness* is measured by *expediency*: "All things are lawful but not all things are necessarily expedient." Thus, even though the Sabbath command is one of the Ten Commandments, you will hear instead "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" whether to follow it at all or on a day that pleases himself.

However, these same teachers in the modern Protestant church will tell us we are not free from every part of the Law. There is one provision we need still to follow: tithing. This is explained by the highly popular pastor Randy Alcorn, in his mainstream Christian book entitled *Money, Possessions & Eternity* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale, 2003) at 174-75, 181.³⁴

Larry Burkett, another mainstream Christian author on financial issues, shares this view,³⁵ and expressly finds that the command on tithing from the 'Old Testament' clearly remains valid for Christians.³⁶

However, both Alcorn and Burkett are embarrassed to admit they insist this one principle from the Law still applies. They do not want to be accused of being legalistic. Yet, they

both concur there is one command from the Law of Moses to follow: tithing. Other than that, Alcorn says the *Old Testament* is just that: old and passé. No other command than tithing from the Law given Moses need concern us in the modern Christian church.

Moreover, any of us who attend church in America regularly also know when it comes to offering time, the sermonette is straight from the Law with little or no hedging on its applicability.

Yet, tithing can never be argued to be a principle that is *obvious*. There is *nothing obviously* immoral for not paying a tithe. It is simply a principle from the Law given Moses. Hence, this is why the tithing principle must be quoted from the Law given Moses to get people to even think about it.

Thus, mainstream Christian teaching today is *identical* to the Pharisaical teaching that Jesus condemned. Jesus specifically said this lukewarm teaching about the Law was

34.Randy claims he “detests legalism.” He means teaching the Law applies to a Christian. (Id., at 181.) He then acknowledges the strongest argument against tithing is the ‘law versus grace’ argument. Yet, he says just because we are under grace does not mean we “should stop doing all that was done under the law.” (Id.) Randy then says “I believe there’s ongoing value to certain aspects of the old covenant.” (Id., 181.) The only such aspect he finds is *tithing*. How can Jesus’ words about the Pharisees not burn in his ears?

35.Larry Burkett, the modern spokesperson on issues of Christian financial duties, similarly explains Matt. 23:23 endorses tithing this way: “Those who encourage Christians to completely ignore the Old Testament and teach that Christians don’t need to observe anything that the Old Testament commands are ignoring Jesus’ *advice*.” <http://www.new-life.net/faq212.htm>. For Mr. Burkett, this “advice” of Jesus is limited to obeying the command to tithe. But that is the opposite of Jesus’ point. That verse has Jesus saying that not only tithing that should be followed, but all the commands of God given to Moses, in particular the Ten Commandments.

36.Burkett writes: “The second thing that creates problems for Christians related to the tithe is that most Christians have a misunderstanding of the validity of the Old Testament for today. I think that it’s clear that the Old Testament has *some* continuing legitimacy for Christians today.” <http://www.new-life.net/faq212.htm>

keeping people from salvation. Jesus specifically condemned *stressing only tithing from the Law*. (Matt. 23:23.) This Pharisaical teaching was causing the prevention of salvation both for the Pharisees as well as their proselytes.

How could we possibly have fallen into the very same error that Jesus condemned? I have to repeat *over and over* that it is **as if some Pharisee's words have been incorporated into Scripture**, and we swallowed him hook, line and sinker. It is **as if a Pharisee who preaches against keeping the Law** has crept into the New Testament.³⁷

In light of our doctrines being so identical to what Jesus condemned, don't you think on Judgment Day that Jesus as Judge is going to ask some tough questions? Won't He ask us if we were *listening* even ever so barely to Him? He will ask you point blank *why you followed anyone who came with precisely the teaching that Jesus condemned!* Judgment Day is going to be a disappointing day for many.

In fact, Jesus says this tithe-only doctrine is certainly a perilous teaching for the one who teaches the Law is otherwise not to be followed. Jesus warns the Pharisees in very stern terms only ten verses later about the consequence of a doctrine that stressed only tithing:

Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell? (Mat 23:33)(ASV)

The Salvation Message of Matthew 5:20

Finally, we are ready to listen to Jesus in Matthew 5:20. Knowing the Pharisees were shallow in obedience to the Law (rather than faithful adherents), we no longer will misunderstand what Jesus meant about the Pharisees in this verse.

37.The book *Jesus' Words Only* (2007) discusses this question in depth.

For I say unto you, that ***except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.*** (Matt. 5:20 ASV.)

To help me explicate this passage, I will call upon an audio sermon that everyone should listen to. It was given by Steve Walker, the pastor of Central Valley Reformed Church (Presbyterian) in Turlock, California. The sermon is entitled *God's Grace for the Impure Heart*, and begins by talking about Matthew 5:6.³⁸

To understand the “hunger for righteousness” in 5:6, Pastor Walker explicates Matthew 5:20. In 5:20, Jesus uses the word “righteousness” one more time. This time, however, Jesus says “to enter heaven” our “righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees.”

Could Jesus actually expect *real* righteousness or does Jesus want us to put on *His imputed* righteousness? This is key for it determines whether salvation is *entirely* by *imputed* righteousness or depends, in part, upon our *actual* righteousness. Pastor Walker does not subtract or suppress from Jesus' words. His sermon points were:

- If we are only sorrowful (mourn) about our sin, and are not “exhibiting” a change, we have not gone far enough.
- The truth of what God requires men “suppress” in their hearts or they “suppress the truth” in unrighteousness. Men do not like to hear the need to repent from sin.
- In Matthew 5:20, when Jesus says our “righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees,” it is “pretty clear” that Jesus intends us to understand this “has to do with righteousness *in acts*.”
- Walker offers as proof that Jesus gave several illustrations thereafter designed to expose defects in the Pharisees' *actual* behaviors. We must actually do better. These passages were: (1)

38. It is available at <http://www.cverc.org/update/sermons.htm> (last accessed 7-1-07).

Verses 27-30 tell us the true importance not to lust unto adultery; (2) Verses 31-32 tell us the true nature of the commands not to divorce; (3) Verses 33-37 tell us to keep our promises whether in the form of an oath or otherwise; (4) Verse 38 tells us to not retaliate, but turn the other cheek; and (5) Verses 43-48 teach us to love our enemies.

What Pastor Walker is saying is hardly remarkable in light of the true nature of Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees. Yet, in this day and age, Pastor Walker is a brave soul for teaching this so bluntly.

What is the opposing argument? I could read you dozens of commentaries that unabashedly say Jesus is setting the bar so high above even the most righteous people (*i.e.*, the Pharisees), that Jesus could never possibly be suggesting we could enter heaven by obeying the principles He then outlined. You will hear this argument time and time again, such as in Willard's *The Great Omission*.³⁹

Not surprisingly, I had a Christian friend actually admit that what he believes is that Jesus was *pulling our leg* in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was supposedly being cynical about our capacity to obey, by supposedly setting the standard so incredibly high. Jesus' intended that we would respond to the Sermon by falling on grace instead, seeking salvation by faith alone, without worrying any more about obedience for salvation's sake. Such obedience was supposedly so above our ability that Jesus could never be suggesting we need it ever again for salvation's sake.

Yet, you see, this argument that Jesus was being facetious depends crucially on the misleading claims about the Pharisees as very righteous people. This is why we have spent over 50 pages disproving that claim. Otherwise, you cannot hear Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount. They are neutralized from being taken seriously.

39. These competing arguments are discussed and refuted in the chapter entitled "The Sermon on the Mount" on page 201 *et seq.*

Conclusion

Thus, the decontamination of our collective consciousness about the Pharisees is one of the most important repairs we need in our thinking. Why? Because **the preservation of what Jesus meant in His most important sermon depends upon erasing the misinformation about the Pharisees**. Unless you obliterate the false indoctrination you have received about the Pharisees' errors, you *never* can see the meaning and point of the Sermon on the Mount.

Conclusion

Jesus is clear. Make sure you do not have a view of God's written law as shallow as that of the Pharisees. Otherwise, you can never exceed their righteousness and thereby "enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20. That's it. It was always a verse with a blunt meaning.

The cheap grace gospel deflected it by indoctrinating us that the Pharisees were 100% obedient to the Law. By that false premise, they were able by means of commentary to cause us to *see* Jesus' words as not *literal*.

The truth is Jesus was being blunt. Our teachers are the ones who lied to us about the nature of the Pharisees as legalists. Rather, the Pharisees were *anti-legalists*, as Jesus repeatedly exposed and denounced them for.

As a result of this fundamental lie in so much modern doctrine, we have fallen into the identical pit the Pharisees were in: we teach tithing as necessary from the Law, but the rest of it are suggestions which we can accept or reject according to how they feel to us. (Matt. 23:23, Jesus says the Pharisees are good on tithing, but excoriates them for leaving the rest of the Law untaught and undone.)

The Young Luther taught this even though the Mature Luther firmly rejected it. The Young Luther said in 1525:

So, then, we will neither observe nor accept
Moses. Moses is dead. His rule ended when
Christ came. He is of no further service

....[E]ven the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us.

The sectarian spirits want to saddle us with Moses and all the commandments. We will just skip that. We will regard Moses as a teacher, but **we will not regard him as our lawgiver** — unless **he agrees with both the New Testament and the natural law.**

In the first place I dismiss **the commandments given to the people of Israel.** They neither urge nor compel me. They are dead and gone, **except insofar as I gladly and willingly accept something from Moses,** as if I said, “This is how Moses ruled, and **it seems fine to me,** so I will follow him in this or that particular.”⁴⁰

Yet, the Mature Luther woke up and reversed his own earlier doctrine. He denounced antinomianism in the *Antinomian Theses* (1537).⁴¹ The Mature Luther wrote in that work: “To abolish the Law is therefore to abolish the truth of God.” (*Id.* at 33-34.) Leaving the Young Luther out-to-dry, the Mature Luther said anyone who would “discard the Law would effectively put an end to our obedience to God.” (*Id.*, at 32.) Luther in his *Catechism* of 1531 reinvigorated the Ten Commandments as the rule of life for Christians. Their violation impacted salvation. (See Luther, *The Smalcald Articles.*)

The dominant Protestantism of today, however, is evidently going along in reliance on the words of the Young Luther. It has still not grown as its founder did, to realize that it was wrong to deride *legalism.* **For this word is a derision of our Lord Jesus Himself.** Luther finally saw this. Will we?

40.Martin Luther, “How Christians Should Regard Moses,” *Luther’s Works: Word and Sacrament I* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960) Vol. 35 at 161-174.

41.Martin Luther, *Don’t Tell Me That! From Martin Luther’s Antinomian Theses* (Lutheran Press: 2004).