

# The Principle of Restoration in the Battle for Truth

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## Introduction

This subject deals with attitude. Neither restoration nor maintenance of the church of Christ is possible apart from the proper and wholesome attitude toward Truth. Paul wrote of the crucial importance of one's attitude toward the Truth:

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 The. 2:10-12).

Notice that twice in this remarkable passage Paul emphasized the importance of proper attitude toward the Truth in the phrases, *received not the love of the truth* and *believed not the truth*. The sentence upon those possessing such blasphemous attitudes is manifold:

1. deception through unrighteousness,
2. belief of error (i.e., "strong delusion," "a lie"),
3. taking pleasure in unrighteousness, and, at last,
4. perishing, being lost, and damned.

Rather than resulting in the restoration of anything spiritual or Scriptural, the attitude of disbelieving and despising the Truth will only restore and maintain the doctrines, morals and religions invented by Satan, by which he will damn the souls of men. It is obvious to perceptive men that one's attitude toward the Truth will determine his direction on earth and his destiny in eternity.

## Two Basic Attitudes Toward the Truth

### *Unbelief*

There have always been unbelievers and there always will be. There is no need to distinguish between unbelief in God, in His Son, or in the Bible. A rejection of any one of them equals a rejection of all of them (Mat. 10:40; John 5:23; 12:48). It is impossible to believe in God or His Son while rejecting the Bible, His Word. If one does not believe in God or Christ, he cannot believe in the Bible. The first sin was committed due to unbelief in the Word of God, which led to the rejection of God. It was for lack of faith that a generation of Hebrews perished in the wilderness on their way to Canaan (Heb. 3:19), and we are warned not to have such evil hearts as did they, thus falling away from God (v. 12). Although Saul of Tarsus was a "Theist"

when introduced to us in Acts 7:58, believing in Jehovah, at that time he despised the Christ, sought to destroy His cause, and correctly called himself an "unbeliever" (1 Tim. 1:13).

Unbelief is often devious and deceptive. This is especially true in reference to liberal theologians. They would have men accept them as believers, all the while they are ridiculing, mutilating, and castigating God's Word. They cannot tolerate the idea that the Bible is inspired word by word, as it declares of itself (1 Cor. 2:13). It is repugnant to them to read that the Scriptures were breathed out ("inspired") by God (2 Tim. 3:16–17). They cannot bear the thought that the Bible was penned by men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit, rather than by their own private interpretations, observations, imaginations, and opinions (2 Pet. 1:20–21). The last thing any of these sanctimonious infidels would admit is that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God.

This being so, they seek some way to bring the Bible down to their level of production. They apply "higher criticism" to it and make of it a book that has its roots in ancient fables and myths, much of it from unknown, invented sources. It is a mere product of human literary evolution to such blind guides. Because of this they have no reverence for it. They do not hesitate to speak of its "contradictions" that clash, jar, conflict with, and contradict each other. Moreover, they cannot be content in their own blasphemy – they must uproot the faith of as many others as possible. Thus, they send an unending stream of infidel pulpитеers from their seminaries, hypocritically posing as men of God, when, in fact, they are trained to subvert the faith of those who will hear them. Let us not naively suppose that we are immune to such unbelief. Some among us who stand in pulpits, lecture in classrooms, and write in journals have little more faith than that which we have just described. Do not miss the point: **Unbelievers have no concern for restoration.** The very concept is to them an unnecessary and undesirable one at best, to say nothing of an impossible one.

Our world is overburdened with unbelief. Liberal theologians and their fellow infidels (e.g., secular humanists, atheists, communists, evolutionists, et al.) would wipe the last vestige of faith in God and respect for His Word from the face of the earth if they had their way. They are in the majority in "higher education," and their influence is exceedingly strong. We are in a death struggle with them on every hand (1 John 5:4). We must not tie ourselves to them in such a way that they can destroy our faith (2 Cor. 6:14–18). Their doom in the lake of fire, the "second death," is certain (Rev. 21:8).

## ***Belief***

Belief in God, His Son, and Their Word is the polar opposite of unbelief. From the beginning God has attempted to train men to believe in and rely upon Him. Faith is the necessary underlying element in the approach of anyone to God: "He that cometh to God must believe..." (Heb. 11:6a). Belief is not mere supposition or assumption in the absence of or contrary to evidence and testimony. It is not theological "wishful thinking." Rather, it is conviction based upon and in light of evidence or testimony (v. 1). To hear some define *faith* one would think it is what one believes in **spite** of, rather than **because** of, what the evidence demands. Biblical faith travels where testimony and evidence lead and nowhere else.

Just as God condemns unbelief, He commends faith. The centurion of Capernaum exhibited such a degree of faith in the Christ that the Lord marveled at it and declared that He had not found so great faith among the Jews (Mat. 8:5-10). To the woman who touched the garment of Jesus, He declared, "Daughter, be of good cheer; thy faith hath made thee whole" (9:20-22). Similarly, to the Canaanite woman, Jesus said, "O woman, great is thy faith" 15:21-28). The very purpose of the miraculous activity of the Lord was aimed at producing faith (John 20:30-31). More than once Jesus chastised men, including the twelve, for their unbelief (Mat. 6:30; 8:20; 14:31; 16:8). The necessity of faith is emphasized in His statement to the Jews: "...Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Rejection of Christ implies rejection of God, just as belief in Christ implies belief in God (John 5:23). Belief in Christ implies belief in and reverence toward His teaching, His Word (John 12:48). It is by believing in the Gospel and being baptized according to its command that men can be saved from the guilt of their past sins (Mark 16:16). Only when men have absolute respect for the Bible as the infallible and inerrant revelation from God will they ever be interested in restoring and maintaining the church described within its pages. Unbelief is the fundamental problem of all those who reject the aim of restoration.

## **Two Basic Facts Concerning the Truth**

### ***Absolute Truth Exists***

We live in a world full of relativists. They deny the existence of absolute truth in any field of knowledge. They assert that all things are "relative" as opposed to absolute. The only thing of which they are certain is that everything is uncertain. The only "truth" they hold to be absolute is that there is no absolute truth! Those who deny the existence of truth can make neither a positive nor a negative declaration without being inconsistent and self-contradictory.

This self-contradictory nature of their position makes its falseness obvious and incontrovertible. If men do not believe in the existence of truth in general, they will surely not believe in **the** Truth, the Bible. If there is no such thing as spiritual or religious truth, there is certainly nothing to restore. No relativist will be found who is concerned with primitive Christianity. He has nothing sure and absolute (as he views things) to which he can or ought to fasten himself. The plainest and strongest declarations of the Bible are but "suggestions" to be accepted or rejected as one chooses. In the final analysis, the relativist is an agnostic.

One must be irrational to take the position that there is no absolute truth. The existence of our universe depends upon physical laws that are absolutely true to the point of infinite precision (mathematical laws, gravitational laws, etc.). We regularly depend upon absolute historical, geographical, scientific, astronomical, and mathematical truths in our daily lives. For example, it is a matter of absolute truth that there is a city by the name of Denton, Texas. It is located at a certain place to which I have returned time after time over the years. By use of measurements of distance and time (involving mathematical truth) I can know how far from Denton I am and how long it will take me to return at a given speed from any point on the globe.

If there can be (and we have demonstrated that there is) absolute truth in other areas of human thought and experience, it is reasonable to conclude that there is also absolute truth in religion. Of the 106 times the word *truth* appears in the New Testament, 105 of those come from the Greek word *aletheia* and its relatives. Arndt and Gingrich list the three principal meanings of the word as truthfulness, truth as an entity (as opposed to that which is false or erroneous), and reality. Significantly, in discussing truth as an entity, these respected linguists indicate that *aletheia* is used "**especially of the content of Christianity as the absolute truth**" (emph DM).<sup>1</sup>

The New Testament declares that Christ brought ultimate, final, absolute Truth to men (John 1:17). Christ claimed to be the source and embodiment of absolute Truth (14:6). Jesus was the One who heard the Truth from God and delivered it to men (8:40, 45-46). Time after time the New Testament equates the "Truth" with the "Gospel," the "Word," and such like (8:32; 16:13; 17:17; Rom. 2:8; 2 Cor. 6:7; Gal. 2:5, 14; 3:1; 5:7; Eph. 1:13; et al.). To deny the existence of absolute spiritual Truth one must categorically reject both the consistent claims of Christ and of the other New Testament writers. I am well aware that the sophisticated liberals, both outside and inside the church, have no difficulty at all in such rejections. However, let those who claim

to be "believers" in Christ and His Testament, yet who reject the concept of restoration, take notice that their rejection amounts to a denial of the existence of absolute religious Truth **in practice** as surely as the abject liberals deny its existence **in principle**. Belief in the existence of absolute spiritual Truth and dedication to restoration and/or maintenance of the institutions established and authorized by the Truth logically stand or fall together.

*Truth Is Understandable, Attainable, and Must Be Preserved*

Some claim to believe in the existence of absolute Truth in religion, yet they reject the possibility of ever understanding or fully attaining unto the Truth. With this denial of the attainability of the Truth always comes its counterpart—the denial that restoration and maintenance of Divine institutions are even possible, much less desirable. In their view, men can never fully discover what God means in His Word, albeit we must ever be merely searching and grasping for it.

This being so, we cannot be sure we have understood the Truth concerning when the apostolic church was established, how it worshiped, what its work and nature were, how it was organized, and such like. Neither can we know for sure that we have perfectly perceived the plan of redemption through the blood of Christ, including the respective elements of an openly confessed faith in Christ, repentance, and baptism unto remission of sins. Moreover, how can we know for sure that baptism must be immersion in water? For that matter, how can we be so sure that one must be baptized in order to be saved? After all, maybe we have only a partial understanding of these matters. So goes the skepticism of those who claim to admit the existence of Truth but deny that we can apprehend it for sure. Again, it is not being unkind to refer to such individuals as "agnostics"—those who know not. It is evident that if we cannot know for sure what the church was/is by reading the New Testament, and if we can only get a fuzzy picture of the plan of salvation at best, there is no incentive for, nor even possibility of, restoration. How can something be restored when it cannot even be understood or certainly identified or described?

Christ and the other New Testament writers not only proclaimed the existence of spiritual Truth, but they also identified it and declared it to be understandable and attainable. As previously discussed, they identified the words which they spoke and/or wrote as that Truth. This was so because they were not their own words, but the words of God (John 8:40; 14:24). They were the words given by the Holy Spirit (16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10–13; 14:37; 2 The. 2:13; 2

Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). The Truth for all men who have lived since the cross and who will live till time is no more is the New Testament, and by it and it alone shall all who have lived in this time frame be judged (John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10).

This body of Truth is set forth as the **revelation** of that which was previously a mystery (i.e., unknown and unknowable) (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:7-10). Not only was this mystery revealed to the inspired men so that they comprehended it, but they wrote it "whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ" (E4). They were able to "make known...the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). The mystery of Truth, though hidden for ages and generations has now "been manifested to his saints" (Col. 1:25-26). Those same Colossians were able to have "the full assurance of understanding" of the knowledge of the mystery of God (Col. 2:2). The "mystery of the faith" (i.e., the Truth) can be **held** (and must be by those who would be deacons) (1 Tim. 3:9). In what sense is the New Testament a "revelation" if men cannot understand it? How can one "hold" that which he cannot grasp? Obviously, Paul was convinced that men could understand the message he was proclaiming.

Not only is it **possible** to know and understand the Truth, it is also **necessary** to know and understand it in order to have eternal life. Jesus clearly taught both of these propositions in a well-known statement: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Furthermore, His statement immediately prior to this one (v. 31), makes true discipleship dependent upon abiding or continuing in His Word. How can one continue or abide in something which he cannot understand or know or to which he cannot attain? From these statements of Jesus, we must conclude that if one can never be sure he understands the Truth then he can never have spiritual freedom nor truly be a disciple of Jesus.

The ones denying the attainability of the Truth assume a false humility. They charge that only the arrogant will claim to possess fully, understand, or know any spiritual Truth, and they would not dare be so "arrogant." In fact, some even charge that such a claim is blasphemous, alleging that only God can possess certain knowledge and identity of the Truth. Only three possibilities exist concerning our ability to know and understand the Truth (or any other thing, for that matter): (1) we can know nothing at all; (2) we can know somethings; (3) we can know all things. The first is an utter absurdity and logically demands that one must doubt even his own existence (as some philosophers indeed do). Only an irrational or totally deceived person would thus contend. Should one claim the third possibility he would be claiming that of which

Deity alone is capable. Again, only one beside himself would dare make such a claim. How obvious it is that we can, yea must, know some things and know them with certainty. While we will never know and understand everything about ourselves and the world in which we live, we can certainly know and understand some things (e.g., we know and understand that we ourselves exist, that we have a name, that we live in a certain place, that our skin is a certain color, that we must have food to live, etc.). Denial that one can unquestionably know **some** truths is not humility. It is stupidity.

It is not only possible (and necessary) to know at least some spiritual Truth (as previously demonstrated), it is also possible to **know** that we know: "And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). John wrote about spiritual verities as things we may "know" some 38 times in 1 John alone, an inexplicable phenomenon indeed if absolute Truth is unknowable. There are at least some things that men may "know assuredly" (Acts 2:36). Since the whole point of the New Testament is to serve as the revelation of God's will to man concerning eternal salvation, and since the kingdom of the prophets (the church of Christ) is an integral part of that plan of salvation (Eph. 3:8-12; Col. 1:13-14), one of two things must follow: (1) God deliberately failed to express Himself clearly concerning the church and the plan of salvation, or He was incapable of doing so, both of which deny the Biblical concept of God's nature and make Him responsible for the universal damnation of mankind; or (2) He did express Himself clearly so that we can understand, identify, and ever maintain His plan for saving us through His church. The latter is the only rational and Scriptural alternative.

The Truth of God's Word and the institutions it produces may (and must) not only be known, but also must be maintained and preserved. Just as the Gospel Truth is absolute and will not change, so the institutions pertaining to it must be. The charge from God to "make all things according to the pattern" (Exo. 25:40) was not only for the lesser institution, but also for the greater as well (Heb. 8:4-6). Every New Testament warning against false teachers and their false doctrines is a directive to maintain the Truth where it exists and to restore it where it has been abandoned. Every exhortation to preserve the Truth, the Gospel, and the "sound doctrine" is a mandate to pursue the work of restoration and preservation of God's plan with perseverance. In the very nature of the case, primitive Christianity cannot be correctly conceived apart from the work of vigilant restoration and preservation.

## Two Basic Elements of the Truth

### *Facts*

The word *fact* is often misused. It is not infrequently used as a synonym for such words as *idea, concept, claim, or proposition*. All of these words are neutral concerning truth and error; they may be either. Not so with *fact*, which refers to that which is real, actual, or true. I once heard a brother with a history of doctrinal softness and compromise make a speech in which he several times referred to "true facts" and "false facts" and actually thought he was illustrating the existence of both! *False facts* makes as much sense as *true lies*; the terms are oxy-moronic and self-contradictory. In the very nature of the case, if the Word of God is Truth, we can expect it to contain various facts. These facts form the very underpinnings of the message of salvation. Many of them can be found in propositional statements (e.g., "God is a spirit" (John 4:24); "I and the Father are one" (10:30); "My kingdom is not of this world" (18:36); et al.).

However, some Scripture passages particularly emphasize spiritual facts. Three of those unyielding facts are named in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised again the third day. An even longer list is found in 1 Timothy 3:16: Concerning the Christ Paul wrote that He "...was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory." Paul's five "faithful sayings" (1 Tim. 1:15-17; 3:1-7; 4:6-10; 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Tit. 3:4-8) are all statements of fact that are solid as Gibraltar and cannot be successfully challenged. The facts of the Gospel (e.g., the nature of God, the Deity and authority of Christ, et al.) form the basis of a second basic element of the Truth.

### *Commands*

There has been a general spirit of rebellion in recent years to all symbols of authority. Religion has been powerfully influenced by this philosophy. Theological liberals have long denied that the Bible is from God and that it is authoritative. To such it is merely a curiosity piece about which to make scholarly arguments and, in many cases, by which to derive a living. At best they ignore its commands, injunctions, and exhortations and at worst they laugh at them.

However, there are those who claim to accept the Bible as God's inspired Word, but who have made it a life-long habit to ignore the clear imperatives of Scripture due to the religious traditions they inherited (1 Pet. 1:18). Such unscriptural and anti-scriptural traditions cause men



to "transgress the commandment of God" and render the Word of God void to themselves (Mat. 15:3, 6). Others who claim to believe in the authority and inspiration of the Bible reject the commands of Scripture because of social influences and family/peer pressure. This affects many of the saints on such subjects as marriage, divorce, and remarriage, drunkenness, dancing, smoking, and fornication. The element of pleasure in gratifying fleshly lusts in forbidden ways also causes many believers to refuse to hear the commands of Scripture.

There is another category of people who accept the Bible as God's Word, but who so reject the commands of Scripture as to evince no more respect for their authority than rank infidels. I refer to those who are now blatantly teaching that under Christ there is no system of law and there are no commands. In the Highers-Blakely debate, conducted in Neosho, Missouri, in April 1988, Given O. Blakely (representing the Independent Christian Church) startled most of those in attendance by arguing that worship is totally unregulated, and one does not need any authority from God for what he practices in worship. However, those who had been reading what he was writing in the few months leading up to the debate were not surprised. In January before the debate, for example, Blakely wrote: "Observe that there are no commandments in the New Covenant—none at all!"<sup>2</sup> His contention is that commandments relate only to "entrance into" the covenant of Christ, rather than to one's behavior under the covenant. His motive for such a radical statement is justification of the use of mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship: "The anti-instrumentalist forms his view supposing that Jesus<sup>3</sup> has inducted a new order of law, and that acceptance to God is based upon conformity to external standards."<sup>4</sup> This antinomian, command-denying view constituted the basis of Blakely's argument throughout the debate<sup>5</sup>. Similar to this heresy is that of Cecil Hook, who wrote an entire book, the absurdity of which is exceeded only by its blasphemy, denying the existence of law or commandment in the Lord's covenant: "God did not send another law, but He sent His Son in whom we may be justified.... The new covenant is not a written code...."<sup>6</sup> The denial among our brethren of the presence of law in the New Testament can actually be traced much further back than the sources just cited. As early as 1957, K.C. Moser was teaching: "**Law ended at the cross and by the cross** (Col. 2:14). Salvation is not offered upon arbitrary conditions. Christ died for sinners and placed them under an administration of grace because there is no other means of salvation" (emph. KCM).<sup>7</sup>

Moser not only meant the Mosaic law, but law period! He conceived of law and grace as mutually exclusive: "The two principles of law and grace cannot exist together."<sup>8</sup> Moser had

already widely published similar antinomian concepts 25 years earlier: "Law is everywhere associated with works, as grace is with faith. ...[T]he principle of grace and the principle of works are not compatible.... These two principles are everywhere represented as exact opposites."<sup>9</sup> All of those brethren who in recent years have adopted a *grace-only* view of the Gospel have essentially adopted an antinomian, commandment-denying and -despising position.

To deny that Christ has a law, and that men are responsible to any spiritual laws or commands, renders the concept of "restoration" absurd. This is exactly the conclusion to which all anti-law advocates do and must finally come. If there are no laws — no commandments — then there is no pattern in religion. That which does not exist or cannot be distinctly identified can neither be perpetuated, or if lost, restored. It is impossible to restore a non-entity! Highers made this very point in his debate with Blakely. He pointed out that the Independent Christian Church still claimed, so far as he knew, to be pleading for restoration of New Testament Christianity. Then, concerning the instrument, he emphasized the impossibility of "restoring" that which never existed! **Blakely simply rejected the concept of pattern and restoration wholesale.** He did not try to establish authority for the instrument as part of the pattern for worship. He simply said that no authority is necessary because God did not regulate (give us any laws or restrictions) concerning how to worship Him in the New Testament.<sup>10</sup> While adamantly disagreeing with Blakely's premise and conclusions, he is going to be congratulated for forthrightly and consistently applying them. Some observations are in order on Blakely's antinomian view:

1. He has given our brethren positive, undeniable proof that the differences in the churches of Christ and the Independent Christian Churches are far more basic than the use or non-use of instruments in worship (not to imply that the instrument question is not basic). Further, many of his influential brethren were present at the debate and he said that they agreed with him. Since none of them have denied identity with Blakely's position (to my knowledge), it is fair to assume that this is a general view among them.
2. Blakely is a living demonstration of the end to which every "all grace-no law" commandment- hater among us must finally come in his conclusions: they must all sooner or later give up any pretense at restoration or perpetuation of Christianity. Of course, some (e.g., Cecil Hook) have already done so and announced it to the world — and a multitude of others are well along on the same road.

It is likely that we have here a classic case of the "tail wagging the dog." In my judgment the antinomian position was not arrived at by its proponents as a premise upon which to base a

conclusion. (They **could not** have deduced it from the Bible, as I will demonstrate.) It rather is the sad and fallacious conclusion drawn from a faulty premise. The faulty premise is man's own "will-worship" (Col. 2:23) — his unwillingness to be bound, regulated, or restricted in religion; his determination to have what he wants regardless of God's will. The premise is that God's will is too narrow and restrictive. In the Independent Christian Church this spirit originally manifested itself in the mid-nineteenth century as a few brethren began demanding — at whatever cost — the addition of instruments in worship, which, predictably, has led to numerous innovations. Among our brethren, antinomianism is seen concerning other things besides the use of instruments (e.g., the allowance of divorce and remarriage for various causes, extending fellowship to those outside the body of Christ and to false teachers among us, et al.). While these things among us differ in substance from the demand for instruments, they differ not in principle at all. Having set out on the principle that the Word of God is too restrictive, it is but a small step to finally conclude that it is not restrictive at all. Thus the "tail" of selfish desire in religion and morals has finally wagged the whole "dog" of attitude toward the Bible in such folk. They will not give up their idols, so they simply decide that God has no laws prohibiting or regulating idolatry. How convenient.

Does Christ have a law? Are there any regulations in the New Testament concerning worship and morals and other matters? Does the Gospel/covenant of Christ contain any commands? Only those who have an "axe to grind" — a biased position or premise to uphold — would dare answer, "No." First, I call attention to the Old Testament prophets who foresaw the coming of the Gospel and described it as God's "law" (Isa. 2:2–4; Jer. 31:31–34; cf. Heb. 8:10; 10:16). The Romans letter (most often quoted by the antinomians) calls the Gospel "the law of faith" (3:27) and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (8:2). While Paul denied being under the Law of Moses, he clearly declared himself to be "under law to Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21). How could this be if Christ has no law? What could this law be besides the Gospel? Another bastion of the *no-law* advocates is Galatians, yet therein Paul wrote of the necessity of our fulfilling "the law of Christ" (6:2). In reference to **Gospel requirements**, James wrote of "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (1:25), "the royal law" (2:8), and "a law of liberty" (2:12). James positively identified the saving Word of Christ with "law" (2:21–25).

No more preposterous claim exists than that the Covenant of Christ contains no commandments. To what did Jesus refer when He said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15)? The Gospel accounts are replete with examples of the orders or

commandments of Jesus and with claims of authority upon which they are based (e.g., Mat. 28:18–20). He invested the apostles with His own authority (Mat. 10:40; 18:18; Luke 10:16; John 13:20; 16:13; 20:23), and by inspiration they issued commandments. No statement to this effect could be clearer than Paul's in 1 Corinthians 14:37: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord." The examples of commandments are so numerous in the writings of the apostles that we hardly need cite any others. However, I cannot resist citing at least one: In 2 Thessalonians 3 Paul referred to commands he issued to those brethren no less than four times in the space of only nine verses (vv. 4–12).

Does grace contradict law? If so, how can it be explained that the Gospel of grace is identified as "law" in so many passages, as documented above? Further evidence of the harmony of grace and the element of law or regulation is that twice James referred to the Gospel as "the law of liberty [grace]" (1:25; 2:12). Grace and law are not mutually exclusive. Space forbids a more thorough study of the relation between grace and law, but we have demonstrated that they are not necessarily at enmity.<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

Numerous significant implications flow from the fact that God has revealed His Will and that we are capable to comprehend it. Among these implications is the fact that God does indeed have laws and regulations that involve New Testament commandments. A further implication is that we are pleasing and acceptable to God only when we live within His regulations—His laws—which involve Divine standards in both religious and ethical matters. This being so, it is ever incumbent upon men to maintain these Divine standards, both personally and institutionally (i.e., regarding the church) where said standards are faithfully observed. Implication further demands that where digression from them has occurred (whether in doctrine or practice), they must be restored—thus **the principle of restoration**.

Finally, those who live by the Law of Christ can be identified, and only those who so revere that Law as to be ever obedient and submissive to it, are the people of God, the church of Christ. When one starts questioning either the need for or the possibility of carefully restoring and /or maintaining Christianity, he is denying the very foundation of the religion of Christ and the Truth that undergirds it. One's **attitude** toward the Truth of God's Word is thus paramount.

## Endnotes

1. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 35–36.
2. Given O. Blakely, *The Word of Truth* (January 1988): 8.
3. Blakely's view of the covenants smacks of some of the contentions of the Bales-Billingsly position. They wrongly contend that one has not "entered" or come "under" the covenant of Christ until he has obeyed the "first principles" of the Gospel. Likewise, Blakely erroneously speaks of "entrance into" the covenant. They all seem to conceive of the covenant of Christ as a mutual, equilateral agreement between God and man, to which man is not bound until he agrees to be by obeying the plan of salvation, concluding in baptism (Acts 2:37–47). Bales and Billingsly refer to the plan of salvation as the "entrance requirements." Contrariwise, a covenant between God and man in Scripture always refers to God's unilateral disposition of His will to man, containing both obligations and promises. Man may keep the obligations or commands and receive the promises, or he may reject the commands and forfeit the promises, but in any case, he is accountable to the obligations and commands imposed by God. For a full discussion of this and related matters, see *The McClish-Billingsly Debate* (Denton, TX: Valid Pub., Inc., 1986), available at 312 Pearl St., Denton, TX 76201.
4. Blakely (August 1987).
5. The quotations from Given O. Blakely are from Wayne Jackson, "The Spirit of Antinomianism," *Studies in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1988), pp. 439–450. I highly recommend this material for further study of this heresy.
6. Cecil Hook, *Free in Christ* (New Braunfels, TX: privately pub., 1984), pp. 19–20.
7. K.C. Moser, *The Gist of Romans* (Oklahoma City, OK: privately pub., 1957), p. 18.
8. Moser, p. 17.
9. K.C. Moser, *The Way of Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1932), pp. 35–36.
10. *TheHighers-BlakelyDebate* is available in book and tape (audio and video) formats from Valid Publications, Inc., 312 Pearl St., Denton, TX 76201.
11. For an excellent treatment of the interrelation between grace and law/faith and works, I recommend Gary Workman's treatise on this subject in *Studies in Galatians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1986), pp. 288–300.

[**Note:** I wrote this MS for and presented a digest of it orally at the Twelfth Annual Fort Worth Lectures, hosted by the Brown Trail Church of Christ, Bedford, TX, January 8–12, 1989. It was published in the book of the lectures, *The Validity of the Restoration Principle*, ed. Eddie Whitten (Mesquite, TX: Biblical Bookshelf, 1989).]

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