

THE LAW OF CHRIST

Jim E. Waldron

The perfect law of liberty (James 1:25) was specifically designed for man by his Creator. It teaches man he can truly have liberty in law: the law of Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:2). When a law provides no liberty for those under it, it is a cruel dictator, but without law there is no liberty. Simply put, could any man drive his car in a great city if there were no traffic laws?

It is a law of faith (Romans 3:27). It is a system of ethics based on love. The love called *agape* in the Greek New Testament. It was this love that constrained God to give His Son for His world (John 3:16). As it is written, "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This love required Christ to lay down His life (John 15:13).

And God expects man's love in return for His love, for it is written again, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind...and...thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

This kind of love expects obedience for the Master said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and again "If a man love me, he will keep my word" (John 14:23). The apostle of love wrote "whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. (1 John 2:5), and again "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

When Christians insist that the New Testament of Jesus must be obeyed they are often accused of legalism. But the New Testament is so constituted that he who obeys it will not be a legalist. He will instead be a lover of God and man. We must know it is God's "law" to be written in the heart (Jeremiah 31:33).

NOTE: The above statement is part of the introduction to the classroom study book: *Is There A Universal Code of Ethics?* It contains 21 lessons in 243 pages with questions after each lesson. You may purchase ten copies for \$20.00 only to cover printing and postage or you may have one copy for \$3.00. Write to us at P.O. Box 123, Dunlap, TN 37327

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World population

AREA	% GROWTH NATU- RAL	% UNDER 15	% OVER 65	POPU- LATION MILS
WORLD	1.4	32	7	6,000
CHINA	1.0	26	6	1,245
INDIA	1.9	35	5	996
USA	0.6	22	13	275
INDO- NESIA	1.6	34	4	214
BRAZIL	1.5	32	6	168
RUSSIA	-0.5	20	12	146.5
PAKISTAN	2.8	41	4	146.5
JAPAN	0.2	15	16	126.7
BANGLA DESH	1.8	43	3	126
NIGERIA	3.0	46	3	114
MEXICO	2.2	35	5	100.5

In July 1999 the world population passed the six billion mark (6,000,000,000) and our Lord Jesus commanded us as His disciples to preach the gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). He said, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white unto harvest!" (John 4:35).

There are now eleven countries on this planet that have more than 100 million. Of these, 93 percent live outside the US. Not counting Japan the vast majority live in dire poverty. These poverty stricken peoples like "Lazarus, full of sores" have been laid at our door. Will we, like Jesus, preach the gospel to the poor (Mt. 11:5)? Will you pray for the six billion lost souls just outside the door?

(U.S. Population Reference Bureau, Washington, D.C.)

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THE BIBLE ACCORDING TO

BARNEY FIFE

Barry Gilreath, Jr.

The January 8-10, 1999 edition of *USA Weekend* contained an article entitled, “The Bible According to Barney Fife.” As I read the article I learned that the Twickenham church of Christ in Huntsville, AL was re-playing episodes of the Andy Griffith Show during their Wednesday evening Bible classes. Following the airing of an episode, they would use the remainder of the class time to draw spiritual applications from the episode.

The article described several examples of how the show was used. In the episode entitled, “Opie the Birdman,” Andy cautions Opie to be careful with a new slingshot. However, Opie uses it to kill a mother bird. Andy requires Opie to raise the baby birds. When the birds are finally ready to leave the nest, Opie takes them out of the cage and sadly says goodbye. One class member asserted that the “Birdman” episode reminded him of the difficult time in his life when he had to let his 23-year old son go who had married. Other episodes recommended were “Opie’s Charity” (dealt with prejudging people), “Barney Fife Realtor” (being consumed with appearances), and “Andy on Trial” (emphasized how we should go not so much by the book, but the heart).

After reviewing the newspaper article, I sat in unbelief at my desk considering the extent that some brethren have resorted to in the name of Bible teaching. Although I do not question their sincerity, I do question their means. Perhaps you, too, are scratching your head over the Twickenham congregation’s attempt to make God’s message more “user friendly.”

The Bible is clear that God is to be emphasized through teaching and preaching. Christ said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). In Corinthians we read, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord...” (2 Cor. 4:5). Any approach that takes attention away from God’s book and God’s Son is not an approach that is pleasing to the Lord. The emphasis of Bible classes and sermons must not be on wit, humor, entertainment, or even legitimate illustrations. *The emphasis must be on the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The gospel according to Barney Fife, Columbo, or even Rin Tin Tin cannot save a single person (Gal. 1:8-9). Only the Gospel of Christ as revealed through the Holy Scripture has the potential to save souls from destruction (James 1:21).

This does not mean that modern examples or illustrations

aren’t legitimate ways to help impart God’s word. But even something legitimate can become illegitimate, if it is not used in a responsible way. When a modern example, joke, illustration, sit-com, or such like become the primary focus of attention in a class or sermon, it is no longer fulfilling a supporting role to Christ’s message, but indeed has become the message itself! Rather than the end (Jesus Christ) being elevated, the means (joke, illustration, example) is erroneously lifted up in the name of Bible teaching and preaching.

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The pattern

Tim Arthur

It is a Biblical fact that man has often departed from the pattern God has given. In the Old Testament we have such examples as Cain (Gen.4:2-5), Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1,2), Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28-33), et.al. In the New Testament we have warnings of man departing from God’s pattern (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 4:1; et.al.).

Today, men are still departing from God’s pattern. They depart from His pattern for the organization of the church, His pattern for the worship of the church, His pattern for what man must do to be saved, etc. The reason denominationalism exists is because men have departed from God’s pattern. Where God has given the pattern we dare not deviate from it in the slightest.

For it is written “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13).

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Is it lawful to put away a mate

For every cause?

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Ancient people of lascivious lifestyles answered with adamant affirmatives. Thirty-five centuries ago Moses wrote out divorce edicts for Physical Israel (Deut. 24:1ff). Jesus looked back on such legislation as linked with hardness of human hearts (Matt. 19:7,8). Men in Malachi’s era favored the divorce sys-

tem. They were dealing treacherously against the wives of their youth. Jehovah thundered against such husbands of hardness. He thundered His hatred toward such devilish dissolutions of unions He had bound together (Mal. 2:14-16). Preceding Christ by only a few years Hillel and other liberal Jewish rabbis taught marriage could be dissolved on the most flimsy of grounds such as burning the bread, seeing and wanting a more desirable mate, etc. Maritally misguided Pharisees with loose links toward matrimonial loyalty and longevity asked the Lord this very question in Matthew 19:3.

Multiple-mate seekers today are just as liberal and loose as their ancient progenitors were with one exception. Today they do not even ask such queries; they just proceed to divorce at the drop of a hat and remarry at will – theirs – not Jehovah’s! They repeat the process when tired of a mate and a more exciting one appears on their horizon.

Jesus said ONE cause and one cause only would permit the innocent one to put away the guilty party and to enter marriage with another who is eligible. Men and women who ignore such Divine directives as these are flirting with eternal damnation in a devil’s hell. Heaven’s door is not ajar for people who enter into, remain in and die in fornicating frameworks or adulterous entanglements. Many passages so attest (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5; Rev. 21:8; 22:15).

It is sad, immeasurably so, that preachers, professors, teachers, elders and people in pews en masse are as lax, loose, and liberal relative to this matter as are worldly people. Yet positions are now taken by prominent professors and preachers that would allow a member of the church to have a multiplicity of mates (two, 10, 20 or more) over a lifetime and NEVER be in violation of Matthew 19:9 regardless of the WHY of each convenient divorce obtained. The number of church members who reject the crystal clear teaching of Matthew 19:3-9 is now in epidemic stages. Infidelic views relative to Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:9 are increasing among us with pathetic rapidity.

(Spiritual Sword Lectures, Jim Laws, Editor. 1992, p. 58, 1511 Getwell Road, Memphis, TN 38111. Used by Permission)