

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

by Ray C. Stedman

A covenant is an arrangement between people. All life operates or arises out of a covenant. When two people want to go into business together the first thing they do is draw up a contract or a partnership. That is the basic covenant that defines the terms of their operation. A marriage is that kind of a covenant. It is an agreement between a man and a woman to stick together against all odds, to work out their problems, to share their resources.

Life itself is the most fundamental covenant of all. Life is the agreement or the arrangement that God has already made with us that he will provide to us what it takes to operate, to act. None of us really supplies our own energy; God does. But God does this so continually that we get the illusion that we are supplying it, that it is something inherent in us. We are so used to making a decision and then promptly starting to do something that we never realize that if God didn't give us power to act we could not do what we decided to do. We could not even move a muscle, raise an arm or wink an eye if it weren't for power supplied from something outside of us. All men operate on this principle, but they are blind to this basic truth. It's a funny thing that truth that is really basic is very hard to discover because we take it for granted. It is so much a part of us that we hardly even think about it.

In the Scriptures we have what the Apostle Paul calls an Old Covenant and a New Covenant. Now the passage I use oftentimes in teaching the whole truth of both of these Covenants, or arrangements for life, is found in Second Corinthians. In Chapter 3, Verse 4, Paul says some interesting words:

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God.

What kind of confidence? Obviously, that is referring back to something. Paul is referring to the boldness, the confident sense of adequacy he has in his life that makes him able to function as a human being, and even in his work as an apostle. He says this confidence, this adequacy, comes from a certain source. I am not going to take time to expound this at any length, but I want to show you what kind of confidence Paul is talking about. In Chapter 2, Verse 14, Paul says,

Thanks be to God who in Christ always leads us in triumph, {2 Cor 2:14a RSV}

Now that is confidence. You are always going to be led in triumph not in defeat, not in failure, not in weakness even, but in triumph.

... and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere we go. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one a fragrance from death to death and to another a fragrance from life to life. {2 Cor 14b-16a RSV}

Then Paul asks this question.

Who is sufficient for these things? {2 Cor 16b RSV}

Where do you get that kind of ability and adequacy? What kind of a study course will give you that? What kind of chemical compound will produce that? I am always fascinated by magazine ads. They are forever offering the secret of adequacy. If you get a certain deodorant you will be adequate to handle whatever comes your way. Or if you would use the right mouthwash, or the right toothpaste, it will help tremendously. Now everybody knows those ads are fake. Nobody even takes them seriously, although people do buy the product, which is

what these ads seek. But if you really took seriously the claims of the newspaper advertising and billboard advertising you would think you had discovered the elixir of life in some of these things. They are offering adequacy because that is what human beings long for how to be able to cope, how to handle situations. And not only are chemical compounds offered, but also courses. One says, "Have you discovered all the hidden powers of your personality? Do you know the secrets of the ancients, now rediscovered? Send ten dollars for this course. Read this and you will get all these secret powers." Again, it is the offer of the secret of adequacy. In a hundred ways today the world is offering this.

Paul continues, Verse 17:

For we are not like so many, peddlers of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? {2 Cor 2:17-3:2 RSV}

It is hard to believe, but these people in Corinth had been misled by some teachers who came down from Jerusalem and taught them that they ought to do like everybody else and boast about their accomplishments. These teachers even suggested that the Apostle Paul was not much of an apostle because he did not do this; and that he really was not one of the true apostles because he was not part of the twelve. They actually had the effrontery to suggest that these people write to Paul and suggest that the next time he came to Corinth he bring a letter of recommendation from the Apostle Peter, or James or John, or others of the real twelve, the real apostles.

Paul says, in effect, "Do you really mean that? Are you serious about that? Have you ever thought that you yourselves are our letter of recommendation?" Chapter 3, Verses 2-3,

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. {2 Cor 3:2-3 RSV}

How were they a letter of recommendation? Paul says, "Look what has happened to you. Look at the changes that have happened in your lives since we came and preached to you the word of truth. Has anything happened?" In his first letter to the Corinthians, there is a beautiful passage, which says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" {1 Cor 6:9a RSV}. It goes on to list such things as idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, etc. Paul goes on to say, "Such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified" {1 Cor 6:11a RSV}. Some amazing things had happened to them. So Paul says, in effect, "Take a look at your life. Do you think that these changes could happen if what we were saying was not the truth of God? Your own life is our letter of recommendation ."

Now I have listed in the study I have made on Second Corinthians certain qualities of this kind of life.

First, there is a kind of unquenchable optimism. "Thanks be unto God," Paul says {2 Cor 2:14a RSV}. That marks the kind of life Paul lived. He was always giving thanks for everything that happened, no matter how rough and tough it was.

Then there is a pattern of unvarying success: "Who always leads us in triumph," Paul says {2 Cor 2:14b RSV}. Never in failure. That is, not triumph in his (Paul's) plan, but Christ's plan.

Then there is an unforgettable impact, as brought out in the last part of Verse 14 through Verse 16. Everywhere Paul goes he is like a perfume which fills a room, a fragrance of Christ. To some who are rejecting him, this fragrance is an odor of death unto death, but to those who accept it is an odor of life unto life.

Then there is this unimpeachable integrity, in Verse 17. It is summed up in the words, "We are men of sincerity, commissioned of God, living in the sight of God, speaking in Christ to you."

And then finally, this note of undeniable reality. In Chapter 3, Verses 1-3, Paul says, "Your own lives are proof that what we say and what we do is by the power of the Spirit of God."

That is what Paul means when he says, "Who is sufficient for these things?" {2 Cor 2:16b}. Where do you find the secret of that kind of living? His answer is the New Covenant.

In Chapter 3, Verse 4-6, he says,

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God. It is he who has qualified us to be ministers of the New covenant, not as in a written code but in the Spirit, for the written code kills but the Spirit gives life. {2 Cor 3:4-6 RSV}

Everyone is born into this world operating on the Old Covenant, as contrasted with the New, which we can learn when we become a Christian. Now being a Christian does not mean that you automatically operate in the New Covenant. That is why you find Christians who are just as mixed up, just as torn up inside, just as unable to handle life as non-Christians are. Though they are Christians they have not learned the value of being a Christian. They have not learned how to operate on the New Covenant, which they have available to them in the Lord Jesus. They are still operating, for the most part, on the Old Covenant. That is what is fouling up their lives.

Now what do I mean when I say, "The Old Covenant"? Paul links this with the Law of Moses. He calls it, "the written code which kills, which was written on tablets of stone" {cf, 2 Cor 3:6}, and so on. Why would Paul associate this with the Law of Moses? The reason is that Law was given to us in order to show us that the basis of our human life, inherited from Adam, is all wrong. It won't work. The Law makes that clear to us and nothing else will do it. The Law makes a demand upon us and when we try to fulfill that demand, we find out we can't, ultimately. Nobody has ever lived up to the Ten Commandments by trying his best to do so. If you doubt that, give yourself twenty-four hours in which you seek with all your strength and might to live up to the Ten Commandments. I will guarantee you will have broken one of them before fifteen minutes is over. If not any others, the last one: "Thou shalt not covet." That means you must not look around this room and see anything that anybody has that you would like to have. That is the Law! It is given to show us that the way we are living now, the resources of our life in Adam, is not workable.

The New Covenant Paul describes consists of this: Nothing coming from us, everything from God:

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; [nothing coming from us, but] our sufficiency is from God [everything from God]. {2 Cor 3:5 RSV}

It is God at work in us that makes us act and produce this kind of living, if we are going to do it at all. If that is the New Covenant, what do you think the Old Covenant is? "Everything coming from us; nothing coming from God."

At any given moment you are operating as a Christian on one or the other of those two. You never can draw from both at once. Jesus said so: "No man can serve two masters. Either he will love the one and hate the other or cling to one and despise the other," {cf, Matt 6:24}. You cannot cling to both; you cannot draw from both. The only time you have to live is right now:

- The present is all there is;
- The future is not yet come;
- The past is gone.

You only can live in the present, and therefore the present moment is either being lived in the Old Covenant or the New, but not both.

"But," you say, "I don't understand that. How could a believer in Jesus Christ even act as though nothing depended on God? Of course we depend on God." It's amazing how easy it is to do this. We all know that God is there, but we really don't expect him to do anything. That is the problem. And that is the great problem with the church today.

As I travel around the world I am continually astonished at how little Christians expect God to do anything, how churches are run and operated exactly like businesses, never expecting God to do a thing. Everything depends on us. It all has to be organized. It all has to be carried out by men alone.

Now God is a God of order, but he is not a God of organization, particularly. Organizations can often become the substitute for the Holy Spirit. Somebody well said that if the Holy Spirit were suddenly removed from most of the churches of this country, nobody would know that anything had happened because they were not depending on him anyway.

Let me illustrate how this can be. Think of that story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. The scene is by the seashore in the evening hours. The crowd has been listening all day and they are hungry. Philip came to Jesus and said, "Send them away. We have no bread to feed them with," {cf, Matt 14:15b}. Jesus said to him, "You give them bread. Give them to eat," {cf, Matt 14:16}. And what was Philip's reaction? "We do not have money and the stores are all closed and we cannot get a loan from the bank and there is no way we can do this," {cf, John 6:7}. Philip is counting on his human resources. Here is the Lord Jesus, whom he had just seen do wonderful things, standing in front of him, but he did not reckon on him at all. His reckoning was on the normal resources of life. Now, if Philip had been an atheist and Jesus had said to him, "Give you them to eat," he would have said the same thing exactly. In other words, there is no difference between the believer and the unbeliever in the way he acts in that situation.

How often and how easily we do this. God tells us to do something and we start immediately saying, "Have I got the training, the background, the skill, the necessary knowledge. Have I had the course? Can I do this? Have I got the personality?" Now I am not implying that you don't have to do some planning because God does direct us to do certain things and not to do other things. But the point is, whom do you reckon on when you do decide to do something? Is it you, or God in you?

That is the difference between the Old and the New Covenant. The Old is, everything comes from me, it all depends on me. If I don't have what it takes, it can't get done. On the other hand, your attitude can be that everything depends on God. He has called you and asked you to be his agent by which this comes. That is the New Covenant. That produces the kind of life Paul has been describing in 2 Corinthians 2:14-17. The Old produces what Paul calls in Galatians "the works of the flesh." That is what the Old Covenant is: the flesh at work. Thus it produces the works of the flesh which he says are evident, manifest, easily visible: "The works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like," {Gal 5:19-21a RSV}.

That explains the struggle that Paul records for us in his own experience in Romans 7: "The thing that I would not do, that I do, and the thing that I would do, I do not," {cf, Rom 7:15}. Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever seen a zealous, eager young Christian or older Christian desperately trying to do something for God and ending up after awhile so discouraged and defeated he just wants to quit? In fact, he probably does. But that is a very hopeful stage. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, who have come to the end of their resources," {cf, Matt 5:3}. Why? "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That is the time when God can give you something. When you have ended your own resources, then he can give you his. That is why the Old Covenant is, "Nothing coming from God, everything coming from me," while the New Covenant is, "Everything coming from God, nothing coming from me."

You only have to look at yourself to see how much of your life is lived in that Old Covenant. You expect success by virtue of something resident in you: your ancestry, your training, your personality, your good looks or something like that. This attitude produces the extrovert, the kind that reckons on his resources: "I've got what it takes, I can do that." Now he may be very modest in his language. We learn all kinds of little subtle tricks to hide this kind of egoism. We say, "I have never really had any special training for that, but I have had some experience in it, and I will do my best." Thus we are subtly saying to people, "I have got what it takes."

Or we look at the demands, the problem, the situation we are asked to enter into or perform, and we say, "I don't have what it takes. I can't do that. Don't ask me to do a thing like that. I am one of those people that was behind the door when the gifts were passed out, and I just can't do anything like that." But who are you looking at when you say something like that? Yourself! You are reckoning on your "unresources" but your eye is fixed on the same person, yourself. So both the introvert and the extrovert are wrong.

Most of us introverts always envy the extroverts and wish we could be like them; but, if we did, we would only switch to the extreme which is just as bad. So we don't improve our position by being that. What we need to discover is how to get off any trust in ourselves at all and trust in the activity of God, who has promised that he would be in us and work through us.

Philippians 2:13 has a beautiful promise in which Paul says, "Go to work to work out your own solution." (That is what he means when he says to "work out your own salvation" not in the sense of going to heaven, but of solutions to problems that beset you.) "Work out your own solutions," he says, "knowing that God is at work in you, both to will and to work that which pleases him." Now the only thing that pleases God is what God himself does. Anything a man does apart from God never pleases God. It is always a failure; it is always insufficient in some area. The only thing that can please God is perfection, and the only one who can perfectly work is God himself. Therefore, the only thing, the only life that is ever pleasing to God is the life lived by faith, that is, by expecting God to be at work in you. That is what faith is. That is why Hebrews tells us, "without faith it is impossible to please God" {cf, Heb 11:6}, and why God tells us himself that the only life that is pleasing to him is that which he himself does. That is the New Covenant.

It helped me a great deal to learn that the Apostle Paul did not know this for at least ten years of his life as a Christian. After he was converted on the Damascus Road, he made the same mistake that every one of us makes. He started out with a bit of knowledge of who Christ was and set out to convert the world for Christ by using the brilliance of his mind, the background and training he had, and even his ancestry as a Jew to convince the Jews. He thought he had what it took and he lists a most impressive array of credentials for us in Philippians, Chapter 3. "If any of you think that you are men of the flesh," he says, "I've got something more to glory in. I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, born a Jew, circumcised on the eighth day, raised up as a Pharisee, trained as a Pharisee. I was blameless before the law. My morality was without rebuke in the eyes of the religious world in which I lived. My activity was zealous. I even persecuted the church," {cf, Phil 3:4-6a}. He had all these things going for him. So even after he became a Christian, he reckoned on the same things for success. But, when he tried it in Damascus, not one convert is recorded. Instead they organized a lynch party! Paul had to sneak out over a wall in a basket at night, just like a criminal.

Then he came up to Jerusalem, he tells us, and there he tried the same thing. He went in and out among the Hellenists (the Greek-speaking Jews) and tried to persuade them that Jesus was the Christ. This was his own crowd. He was so sure that he had what it took to reach them. But they organized another lynch party in Jerusalem.

Finally, discouraged and defeated, Paul went into the temple to pray. The Lord Jesus appeared to him and said to him, "I want you to leave Jerusalem because they will not receive your testimony about me," {Acts 22:18}. And what did Paul say? He tells us in Acts 22. I am going to paraphrase a little bit, but in essence what he said was,

"Lord, you don't understand this situation. You are going to miss the greatest opportunity of your life. Do you realize the equipment I have to reach these people? I was one of them. I know their language. I know their customs. I know their attitudes. If anybody has what it takes to reach these Jews it is me. You don't know what you are doing sending me away from here. Why, this is the greatest opportunity you have ever had." {cf, Acts 22:19-20}

But Jesus replied in one word: "Depart!" {Acts 22:21a}.

Then he said, "Don't argue with me. I am going to send you far hence to the Gentiles," {cf, Acts 22:21b}.

So Paul was sent to the hardest place on earth, his home town, Tarsus. For ten years we never hear of him

again, until Barnabas goes down to Antioch where a great awakening has broken out; but he comes down to help him, he is a different man now. He has learned to shift from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. He tells us in Philippians he learned a tremendous truth: that the things he once counted gain he now counts nothing but a pile of manure, compared with the richness and greatness of trusting in Christ to be at work in him {cf, Phil 3:8}.

Now that is the secret of life. That is the way man was intended to live. That is the way he did live in the beginning. When Adam was created he was a man indwelt by the Spirit of God, and therefore everything he did, he did by the power of God. Whenever Adam planted a tree, or weeded the garden, or picked up a shrub, or named the animals, or whatever it was, he did it by the wisdom and power of God. Therefore it was right. It fit the situation. It was done by God at work in him. Adam had a tremendous exhilarating sense of doing things right, knowing they were right, and doing so by virtue of the fact that he expected God who lived within him to supply what it took to do it. That is the New Covenant. When God gave him the choice of obedience, which involved Adam continuing to expect God to supply him with all the knowledge that he needed, Adam chose to disobey and he lost that whole relationship. The Spirit of God was withdrawn from his human spirit. He was plunged into the condition in which we are all born, that of counting on something in us for success. That is what destroys us.

This is basic to an understanding of human activity and the problems of human life. We have to teach people that the problem with them is that they are counting on the wrong resource. This is a painstaking lesson, one not easily learned. We must patiently set it forth and carefully show how it lies in the Scriptures, and then help people to recognize the flesh (the old life at work within them) and analyze various situations to see whether it was the Old or the New Covenant they are drawing on.

Nothing is more basic to getting people operating rightly than this. The Old Covenant is totally rejected by God. It is what the Bible calls "the flesh," and the "flesh cannot please God," {Rom 8:8 KJV}. The flesh results in death, which is the experience of negative qualities in life, like boredom, worry, anxiety, hostility, anger, greed, etc. That is death and that comes by trusting in something you think you have got in yourself.

This does not mean that people become robots. The choosing is left up to us, just as it was to Adam. The power of choice is what is given to men, not the power to do. The minute you choose to act, something else must supply the power within you. Either it is the old twisted form of life called "the flesh," or it is the new life from the Spirit which will produce "the fruit of the Spirit," {Gal 5:22}. But the key is that you must reject the old, then you can choose the new.

Most of us know something about this life in the Spirit. We try to live this way, but the trouble is that we try to hang on to both. I find this everywhere. Talk to people about Body Life, for instance, in a church beginning to function this way, and you find they want to keep the whole program the way it is now and add Body Life to it. Nobody every wants to tear down anything or get rid of anything, but until they do so they cannot put in anything new. That is what Jesus meant when he said, "You cannot put new wine into old wine skins. You cannot put new patches onto old garments," {cf, Matt 9:15-16}. You have got to get rid of it and start with everything fresh, in a sense. But we want to cling to the old, a dependence on something in us, and add God to it.

Do you ever see that in your prayers? Do you ever come to God and say, "Lord, I have worked this all out, I want you to bless it"? What is that saying? "It all depends on me. I want you to make it work, that's all." That is trying to mix the old and the new, and it will never work. You cannot do it. God will never go along with that process. He just folds his arms and says, "If that is the way you want to do it, you do it. I'll watch you." And he watches us until we fall flat on our face. But when we are discouraged, after finding out it did not work, and cry out, "Lord, help me," he says, "Here I am. I have been here all along and I am willing to work through you right now, as long as you quit working, depending on yourself."

This means that we are agents, not instruments. God allows us to make the choices and he works through us. We very definitely have decisions to make in these matters, and without these decisions it won't work. But once we decide something, once we feel that we know what God wants us to do, then what do we count on to do it? That is the great question. That is what this New Covenant is all about.

Replies to comments and questions from the audience:

Both boredom and anger are fleshly reactions. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, patience, etc., and also excitement. God is exciting and his kind of life is exciting. But when you are living in the Spirit, it does not mean that you are keyed up to a high pitch all the time; I don't want to give that idea. But life in the Spirit is never boring. It may be frightening, almost. Life can be filled with such intense problems that you hardly know how you are going to get through them, but you are not bored. You may even be scared, for fear and trembling is part of the Christian life. But not boredom, or anger. There is a right kind of anger, but there is also an impatient anger that is wrong. For example, we will see somebody operating in the flesh and we get upset or irritated with them, so then we are operating in the flesh. This is why, in that beautiful story of the woman taken in adultery, Jesus judged the judges. He would not let them sit there and self-righteously point their finger at this woman. He pointed his finger at them and said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone," {cf, John 8:7}.

Q. Is there a point in your life when you really come into the New Covenant, and you can recognize it, and live in it for days or weeks?

A. I would say that it is very unlikely that you would live for days and weeks in the New Covenant, simply because the enemy we are up against is very clever. The flesh is very deceitful. It is very unlikely, in my judgment, that you would live even a full day in the Spirit. Be glad if it is a few hours. But you never have to live long in the flesh. That is the point. You may catch yourself living in the flesh. (I do not mean tempted to live in it, that is a different thing. We must distinguish between the temptation to get angry, or to envy or lust or whatever it is. That is not sin in itself. It is how we deal with it that makes the difference.) But if we yield to it, we ought not to yield very long. We ought to learn to quickly recognize the flesh. That is the point. Irritability, upset, impatience, anxiety, whatever it may be, immediately recognize it, renounce it as being no longer necessary to us, immediately flee to the Lord and lay it before him. Then we are returned to the Spirit immediately, and we go on until the next fall occurs (which may not be very far down the road).

So the Christian life is not a continual life of unbroken victory, although ideally that would be possible. Jesus undoubtedly lived that way, but we don't have that kind of understanding and recognition of the flesh, so we are apt to be trapped more. That is why the grace of forgiveness is provided for us, because those falls do not impede our progress if we return to the Lord. We have not lost it all by falling, since it did not depend on us in the beginning. If we ever begin to think, "Here I have been making it now for two and a half days -- and now look at me. I have fallen again and all that time is wasted." That shows you that you do not understand the New Covenant. It was not coming from you all that time anyhow. Return to your source of strength, thank God for being shown what was wrong, and then go on.

Notice how Paul often speaks of himself as approaching a demand made upon him with fear and trembling. Jesus did so too. When he went into the Garden of Gethsemane, he said, "My soul is deeply troubled within me," {cf, Matt 26:38}. He asked the disciples to pray with him because of this. Fear and trembling is simply a recognition of weakness, of inability. It is a normal thing in human life. It is the way we ought to approach every situation. But don't stop there. It isn't just fear and trembling; it is fear and trembling that leads us to faith, to the confidence that God is there and he will do it. Therefore we need no longer fear and tremble. But to be frightened and feel a bit nervous or upset by any demand made upon us is a proper thing and not one that we should try to cure.

Q. It is easy to think of the New Covenant in terms of the Lord and the apostles, the New Testament, etc., but how about Moses and the Old Testament?

A. Moses is the symbol of the Old Covenant, but he lived by the New. The Old Testament saints did understand and live by the New Covenant, even though it had not yet been historically laid. The New Covenant is laid in the blood of Jesus: "This blood of the New Covenant which was made with many for the remission of sin," {cf, Matt 26:28}. But as the Old Testament saints were saved by the death of Christ, just as much as we, so they lived by his life, just as much as we. When Moses, therefore, was reckoning upon God

to empower him to speak to Pharaoh and trusted God to fulfill his word that he would put his words into Moses's lips, he was living by the New Covenant. Now there were failures in Moses's life, just as there are in ours. He disobeyed God when he struck the rock, when he should have spoken to it. As a result, he was not permitted to enter into the promised land. But he himself was restored by the activity of God at work in him, even though a limitation was set upon his leadership. As Moses himself was restored to God at work in him and went on, so we can go on to be productive and effective persons.

Yet as a type, Moses stands as a symbol of the Old Covenant because he is associated with the Law, and the Law is always linked to the flesh. If there were no flesh, there would never have been any Law. Adam and Eve were never given the Law. They did not need it. They had the law written in their hearts, as they were trusting the work of God within them. They knew what was the right thing to do in any given situation and that is the way we are to live too -- by the Spirit. This is why Paul argues that the Law is ended the minute we believe. But the minute we disbelieve, the Law comes in again in order to show us our unbelief.

The Law as a standard of life will never change. The Law is nothing but an expression of the character of God, and God never changes his character. If we are to be like God, then that demand is always upon us, no matter how long the world, the heavens, and the earth last. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but these words [the words of the law] will never pass away," {cf, Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33}, because they reflect the character of God. In that sense, the Law remains always. But when you believe in Christ, it is the end of the Law for you. You do not need the Law making demands upon you then. I am not talking about becoming Christian when I say, "believe in Christ," I mean trusting him as a Christian. In any moment that you expect him to be at work in you and to supply you with his life in you and you are counting on that, then you do not need any law. But the minute you stop doing that, you need law again. It is right there waiting to correct you.

In that sense, the Law only ends by faith. This is what Paul says in Romans: "Christ is the end of the law to everyone who believes," {cf, Rom 10:4 KJV}. Now don't quote that as, "Christ is the end of the Law." That would contradict what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: "The law shall never pass away," {cf, Matt 5:18}. Christ is the end of the law to everyone who believes. The minute you act by faith you are not acting by law, because faith and works are exactly contrary to one another. When you try to obey the Law because it is there, that is works. But when you respond to the God who is in you, and act on that basis, that is faith. Then you will fulfill the Law another way.

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A Special Paper
Title: Authentic Christianity
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Scripture: 2 Cor 2:14 - 3:5
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