

Fundamentals of Belief #7A: Sin and Law

Edited Sermon Transcript
Jon W. Brisby; 6-3-2000

This afternoon, we are going to continue with the series that we have been involved with now for a number of months: The Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. Today, we are going to begin on fundamental number seven. I have given brief little titles to each of these fundamentals. They really don't exist on the paper; but especially for putting together the fundamentals on our Internet website for the church, I was asked to put together little subheadings on each of the twenty-six fundamentals. I had to go through and determine, in a synoptic fashion, what was an appropriate short title that encompassed what that particular fundamental was about. Some of them were easier than others to do.

Fundamental number seven I have entitled, "Sin and Law." Up until now, through the first six fundamentals, we have gone through the nature of God (including the Father and Jesus Christ), the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures, who that adversary is, and the nature of man. Basically, we have handled many of the key doctrines that separate us in our beliefs from the rest of the world's churches and their philosophies.

When we went through the fundamental on the nature of God, we found out how differently we believe than those who believe in a trinity. When we talked about the nature of man, we found out he is not an immortal soul, which is one of the fundamental beliefs of just about every, if not every, other church in the world. Now, we are going to hit another key doctrine, when we are talking about sin and law, which separates us from the beliefs of the rest of the world and from those churches that claim to be Christian.

In the world's churches, even those that claim to be Christians, they do not have a respect for the law of God. They do not believe that the law of God applies to them. We are going to analyze, through this fundamental number seven, exactly what God says about the law. What is the law? Who does it apply to? How valuable is it? Let's read it. Here is the fundamental.

We believe sin is the transgression of the Law; that the Law is spiritual, perfect, holy, just, and good, summed up in the word "LOVE;" that it involves the two great principles of love to God, and love to neighbor, and that the Ten Commandments compose the ten points of the Law, and that the breaking of only one point makes one guilty of sin. We believe this fundamental spiritual Law reveals to us the only right and true way of life—the only possible way of happiness, peace and joy; that it has existed from Adam, is immutable and binding thru-out eternity; and that all unhappiness, misery, poverty, anguish, and woe has come from its transgression.

That is fundamental number seven. I can already tell you we are not going to cover all of this in one sermon. If I do well, we are going to get it done in two. Let's begin with the first statement: "We believe sin is the transgression of the Law . . ." Why do we believe that? The Apostle John said so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Turn with me to 1 John 3:4. If you have been in God's church for any number of years, you probably know this one by heart. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." How simple, how direct and straightforward. Sin is the transgression of the law. So, immediately, what do you think about those that say the law has been done away? Do they really understand that they are saying that sin is done away? Notice it as we go forward.

1 John 5:17:

We are going to build a mathematical equation that I still think is fascinating. What else do we find as a fundamental principle? "All unrighteousness is sin [So said John]: and there is a sin not unto death." He is talking in a dissertation about a point which is not understood by the

commentators. They all have different ideas about what this "sin unto death" and "sin not unto death" is. Obviously, he is clarifying here, so that those who are reading do not misconstrue what he is saying.

The statement "All unrighteousness is sin" reconfirms that which we are also going to see later on. If we are guilty of one point of law, no matter how "small," we are guilty of all. Whatever John is talking about here, it is probably a distinction that has to do with the attitude. Perhaps that which distinguishes someone who commits sin willfully, out of rebellion, versus someone who sins out of weakness and is repentant. In other words, a form of sin that can be forgiven versus that form of sin which leads to destruction and probably includes an attitude of rebellion.

However, in the midst of making these statements, John certifies that he is not talking about taking away from the gravity of what sin is. Here, the statement in 1 John 5:17, "All unrighteousness is sin . . ."

What do we know? We saw in 1 John 3:4 that sin is the transgression of the law. Now, we add to that, that unrighteousness is sin. So, what else can we conclude? Unrighteousness is what? The transgression of the law. This may have been part of the new math, I don't know, but we had exercises when I was in school in deductive reasoning that said, "If A=B and if B=C then A=C." Any of you remember those kinds of things? That's what we are doing here. If sin is the transgression of the law and unrighteousness is sin, then unrighteousness is the transgression of the law.

Now, how many of your acquaintances who consider themselves Christians in the world's churches would try and justify being unrighteous? No, they all want to be righteous; they are all seeking to be righteous. How many of them are simultaneously seeking to defend and uphold the law of God? They don't understand and recognize that unrighteousness is law-breaking. That is what we have just determined.

1 Corinthians 6:9:

What did the Apostle Paul say? This is the apostle who is quoted most often by those who want to justify the doing away with the law.

Know ye not that the unrighteous [Who are the unrighteous? The lawbreakers.] shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

You can just as easily take out the word "unrighteous" and put in "lawbreakers." "Know ye not that the [lawbreakers] shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Now, how does that strike you? What does that say about our responsibility to uphold, value and love God's law and apply it daily?

It is the key to salvation—obeying the law, loving the law, seeking to uphold it, to root out self and to obey that which does not come naturally to us. How did Paul further define exactly what he was talking about? "Be not deceived: neither fornicators . . ." Uh-oh, sounds like we are starting to talk about commandments now, for those that want to argue about what this law is.

Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

See, just in case someone misconstrued or didn't understand what Paul was talking about when he said "unrighteous"—which we said was law-breaking—he further defines and lists several of the Ten Commandments just so that we know when he says "unrighteousness," he is talking about commandment-breaking—law-breaking.

Why do we believe sin is the transgression of the law? Because that is what the Bible says. The next part of our fundamental of belief says, ". . . that the law is spiritual, perfect, holy, just and good . . ."

This is opposed to what most people in this world believe about God's law—that it is hard, unfair, difficult, unyielding, too burdensome, a bother, and something that is bad. That's what most people think when you ask them about the law of God. They are so glad to be free of the law of God, so they think. We are going to find out that that law which the mind of men hates most is spiritual. What is spiritual? It is eternal, perfect, holy, just and good.

Let's begin in Psalm 119:172. "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness." No, the psalmist didn't say the commandments of God were a burden, a terror, or that they were horrible. No, he said they are righteousness. If the law of God is righteousness, then it means it is not unrighteousness.

We already saw, because we deduced from the other scriptures, that unrighteousness is law-breaking. So, we shouldn't be surprised to find here in the Psalms a reconfirmation of the fact that righteousness is found in the commandments which are the law. It makes sense, doesn't it? It is a way to check our mathematical work. Unrighteousness is law-breaking and here we find the commandments are righteousness. It fits together.

Romans 7:12–14:

Why do we believe that the law is holy and perfect, just and good? Notice again what Paul said. "Wherefore the law is holy . . ." It doesn't sound like the Apostle who was trying to do away with the law for Christians, does it?

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me?

He is even addressing the very thing that people try to attribute to Paul—being the Apostle that did away with the law. He says, ". . . the law is holy and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me?" Did the law become death to us? Meaning, of no effect on us because it was done away and we are not subject to it any longer?

God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Well, what does that mean? That sounds a little bit confusing. All Paul is saying is that which we came to know; we would not understand how evil and vile we are by nature in our carnal minds if we did not have a perfect and a holy law as the yardstick by which to measure.

We don't know how evil we are. We don't know how sinful sin is unless we have a perfect and a righteous law in order to make it come to the full that we may recognize and understand it. That's what the law does for us. It spells out for us what is righteousness, what is unrighteousness, what God loves, what He approves of and what He hates, what it is that can draw us closer to God and what it is that can separate us from God. It's the law.

Verse 14: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." What is it that is called unrighteousness? Breaking the Ten Commandments. We just saw Paul relate that holiness to the law and the Commandments because those Commandments are considered under the law. Therefore, breaking the Ten Commandments is breaking the law, which is sin.

Let's notice it in Matthew 19:16–17. This is the story of the rich, young ruler who comes and asks the question of Christ: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Here is the sixty-four dollar question. "I want eternal life; what do I have to do?"

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life [here's the answer], keep the commandments.

That is not what most people expect from Christ because they think that Christ came to live it in our stead—to do away with the law and the Commandments. Yet, Christ said, "Anyone who wants eternal life, if that is really what you want, keep the commandments."

We already saw that only those who love and keep the law will inherit that Kingdom. Christ used the word "commandments." Are those "commandments" included in that perfect law which is spiritual, holy, just and good? You better believe it.

"We believe sin is the transgression of the Law; that the Law is spiritual, perfect, holy, just and good, summed up in the word 'LOVE;' that it involves the two great principles of love to God, and love to neighbor, and that the Ten Commandments compose the ten points of that Law . . ."

We have already seen a couple of scriptures on that, but let's turn to Matthew 22:35–40 which tells us more about what Christ said concerning this law and how He defined it.

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Here is someone who is trying to distinguish between the importance of the elements of those commandments that God gave. What is the great commandment in

the law? First, we see that even this lawyer understood that the commandments were synonymous with the law and Christ took it for granted; He didn't correct him on that, did He? ". . . which is the great commandment in the law?" Why do we believe that the Ten Commandments compose the ten points of that law? Here is one specific reference that tells us the commandments are in the law.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The concept of love is the defining feature of the laws of God. The concept of love overshadows all. You cannot separate out love from law-keeping. Opposed to what most human beings believe, the love of God is defined in His laws.

That first great commandment, love towards God, is summed up in the first four commandments. We won't turn to it; you are familiar with it in Exodus 20. The first four commandments include having no other gods but the one and only true God, not having idols, not taking God's name in vain and keeping the Sabbath Day. Those are the four commandments that are specifically contained in loving God—that which we do directly to show our love, reverence, respect and fear for God.

The second great commandment that Christ spoke of, that thou love thy neighbor as thyself, is contained in the last six commandments. Honoring fathers and mothers, no murder, no adultery, no stealing, no lying and no coveting. All of these have to do with our relationships one to another. They all define our relationships and our responsibilities in living with other people. In fulfilling the last six commandments, we are showing perfect love to our neighbors; we are fulfilling the law.

That's why it says, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." They can all be summed up under one of the Ten Commandments.

Romans 13:8–10: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another . . ." Boy, that sure looks like it is going to open up the barn door for anybody who wants to interpret his own brand of love, doesn't it? "Owe no man any thing, but to love one

another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Oh, glory be, sounds like we can apply our own definition to love. Just love one another; we don't have to worry about these old commandments or the law. No, we just have to love. Is that what Paul is talking about? What does he say?

"For this . . ." Uh-oh, he's going to define it. Couldn't get away with it. I wanted to put my own definition on love, wanted to make it just a sappy feeling. Didn't want to be under the law, didn't want to have to obey the commands. What does Paul say?

For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [A reference to the same six commandments—that second great commandment of love—which Christ spoke about under that law.] Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The law of God, brethren, is perfect and something to be appreciated and revered. Those that think that love is an alternative way or a better way to please God, do not understand the beauty of His revelation—the very gift of His priceless commandments and His law. They contain the definition of true love.

It is not a hard, unfeeling, burdensome thing if we recognize the reality of the truth. Coming to the knowledge of the truth, having your mind opened by God as a priceless gift so that you can understand this very fact, opens to you an opportunity that the rest of the world cannot even remotely begin to grasp. The value of the Ten Commandments—do we take that for granted? How much do we really, really appreciate what that law contains?

How much do people in this world, in this country, worship the Constitution of the United States? Oh, they think it is such a great document. How can that even remotely compare to God's law? The Constitution of the United States is not spiritual, it is not holy, and it is not even good. No, God defines that which is good. That which is holy, righteous and spiritual is contained in the law God gave to each one of you, which He revealed and allowed your mind to grasp. That is what we have, brethren.

I John 5:2–3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God . . ." When we love God how? By doing good works in our communities, visiting people, saying nice things, patting people on the back, being conciliatory no matter what they are doing? Is that how we show love for God and that we are true Christians?

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God [And do what?], and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments [How are we going to get around that? The love of God is defined in law-keeping.]: and his commandments are not grievous.

Contrary to what you have heard, contrary to what many of you used to think before you were called, before your eyes were opened to the truth, God's commandments are not grievous. They are good, righteous, just, holy and spiritual.

What else do we believe? ". . . and that the breaking of only one point makes one guilty of sin." The law is so perfect and so complete that every one of them is absolutely critical. Breaking of any one of the commandments is the same as breaking them all.

Let's notice it in James 2:8. "If ye fulfil the royal law . . ." Now, there is an interesting term. James refers to it, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as the royal law.

What does it mean to be royal? What does royalty imply? It is the law of a ruling family. It is the law that was created, set into motion, brought into being by a king. The King, who is God the Father, with His Son Jesus Christ sitting on His right hand are the ruling family of the entire universe. It is that family that brought into being the perfect law, the holy law. It is their law.

It wasn't the law of Moses, as we are going to find. No, it's God's law. God created it, made it, and brought it into being. He made it holy and perfect and it is a royal law. It is the law, the High law, and the commandments of a ruling King.

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is

guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

We have already seen in past sermons that the penalty for breaking the law is death. Death passed upon all men because of sin; we are all guilty. Whether we broke ten commandments, nine commandments or only one commandment, we each ended up in the same soup—guilty of the death penalty.

John 8:3–11:

This is an interesting experience that was recorded in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Obviously, those who were involved in this particular incident had a false perception concerning the points of the law.

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

Now wait a minute; that is not playing fair. There must have been a perception that adultery was the great, serious, ultimate, worst sin of all sins. In essence, what Christ was saying here was, "Each of our sins, even if it's not adultery, makes us worthy of stoning, or of death—the same decree."

Is that a way to justify adultery, to downplay its significance? Absolutely not. Not unless we believe that is what Christ was doing here. Was Christ taking away or watering down the law concerning adultery? No, He was perfect, He was the author of that perfect law, and He was the personification of the law as the Holy Word. So obviously, He wasn't detracting from Himself, but He was teaching the principle.

And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and

saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee . . .

What did He mean by that? Did He mean, "I don't condemn you for committing adultery because I don't consider it that serious?" Is that what He was saying? Oh, not at all. No. ". . . Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Christ was upholding the law. He was upholding that adultery was sin, it was a transgression of the law and it was worthy of the death penalty; yet, He applied mercy. Then, it becomes a matter of our orientation and whether we will recognize our deficiencies against the yardstick of His perfect, holy and righteous law. Whether we will be humbled, turn around and walk the other way or whether we will continue, defiantly and rebelliously, defying the law of God.

It doesn't matter, brethren, whether we uphold nine of the ten; but if we rebelliously break the one, then there is no sacrifice of Christ for us. Christ didn't do away with the law, but He expanded the principles to say, "Don't try and make a distinction; don't try to judge those within the body, others you see that have committed sins that we know about." We are all going to be guilty sooner or later and people are going to know. The question is, how are you going to respond to that individual?

As we have said a number of times before, there is a big difference between those who sin in weakness—who are overcome by a weakness and they fall—as opposed to those who, not only defiantly sin, but also seek to justify it and then to influence others to condone it. That is a totally different thing. Christ does not allow it, condone it, or accept it and neither do we. We will not justify or condone sin; we will not water down the law. We also are not going to fail to use mercy the way Jesus Christ used mercy for those who want to live differently—if we are going to use the Holy Spirit.

". . . We believe this fundamental spiritual Law reveals to us the only right and true way to life—the only possible way of happiness, peace and joy . . ."

Psalm 119:142:

That whole Psalm 119 is worth reading. If you have the time, sit down and read the psalm and you will find out how glorious that law is. Just verse 142 for now. "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth." Is this a law

that God put out and gave to men with flaws? Did He stick in a little bit of error just to see if we were smart enough to figure it out? Maybe, so that in time, as we became wiser and more accomplished, we might figure out that God kind of slipped in something that just wasn't very good? No, it was revealed, brethren, and when God revealed it, it was perfect and it was holy. ". . . thy law is the truth."

If we care about truth, brethren, we care about the law of God. We cannot have truth apart from God's perfect law. Back up to Psalm 19:7–11. Why do we believe that this law is the true way of life and the only possible way to happiness, peace and joy? Read it with me here.

The law of the [Eternal] is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the [Eternal] is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the [Eternal] are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the [Eternal] is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the [Eternal] is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the [Eternal] are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

In keeping the law of God, brethren, there is great reward. How many people in this world even remotely believe that? Even those that have an appreciation to some level for God's law, for his Ten Commandments, there is usually something they are willing to sacrifice given a certain situation. So, we are all fraught with the temptations that come from wanting to pursue our own will. The law of God is usually that which we are willing to modify and to sacrifice in some way to get what we want at a particular time.

How many people did we see of our brethren who once loved this way of life—at least they said so—and were baptized into the body of Christ, accepted this way, repented of their sins, and by the laying on of the hands of the ministry were given the Holy Spirit, committed to walk in the newness of Christ and uphold His laws—to love His laws? What happened when the changes in doctrine began to occur at the hand of the ministry?

Many things were written even years later. I remember reading some computer Internet bulletin boards—places where people go and post messages and comments about different things. I looked at some of them in the Worldwide Church bulletin boards and some of the other splinter groups. Amazing, the comments that you see written. Sentiments to the fact, "Oh how glorious that this doctrine has been changed.

Finally, we are relieved of the burden of this law that really acted as an intrusion in our relationship with Christ. Oh, now we are free with liberty to truly worship God in Spirit in closeness and love like never before. How free we are; what a marvelous and wonderful thing." Did you hear anyone make comments in that vein? I have seen them written.

I tell you what is very sad; I have heard the same sentiments that have come out, even recently, from some who have departed from the remnant church. That is what it made me think of. "Now we feel closer to God than ever before. Now we feel relieved; finally we have peace." The same identical—I mean to the point that it is scary—sentiments that I heard and saw written when the Worldwide Church changed their doctrine on Monday Pentecost, divorce and remarriage, and ultimately in the 90s, when they went to the trinity. When they did away with the requirement to keep the Sabbath, when the Sabbath became optional. Those were the sentiments that you saw of those that stayed in.

The same things that we are hearing even among those who think that by separating from God's truth now, in His law, and where it is being preserved, it is giving them liberty, freedom and peace. What spirit is that? It is the same spirit, brethren. ". . . in keeping of them there is great reward."

What else do we believe about the law? We believe that law has existed from Adam, from the very beginning.

Most people in this world, and those in churches that claim to be Christian, believe that all of the law came into being when God wrote on the tables of stone at Mt. Sinai with Moses. They believe that is when the law came into effect and therefore, when Christ came, He did away with that law. It was temporary, it was only for physical Israel and it doesn't apply to Christians today. Is that true? When did the laws that we have been talking about, the Ten Commandments, come into being? Did they come into being for the very first time on Mt. Sinai with Moses? Or, by chance, does the Bible tell us that they were in existence long before the time of Moses? Let's notice Romans 5:12–14.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law . . .

What is that telling us? How could Adam be considered a sinner, guilty of sin, if the law didn't exist? What did we already learn at the very beginning? What is sin, but the transgression of the law? Now, if the law didn't exist at the time of Adam, of what was Adam guilty? If the law didn't come into being until hundreds of thousands of years later on Mt. Sinai, of what was Adam accountable before God? Why was he kicked out of the Garden of Eden? Maybe, it was just a special temporary law saying, don't eat the fruit off this tree. That was a commandment just for Adam, but it didn't apply to anyone else and that is what he was guilty of.

No, you see, when Adam and Eve ate of the tree in the middle of the garden, they probably defied every one of the Ten Commandments in one way or another. Covetousness was involved as well as rank disobedience and rebellion against God. Is that showing love for God? Can you fulfill the first commandment—love God and God only—when you break any one of His instructions? Was it not idolatry, putting something else in front of God?

(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses . . .

The death penalty reigned from Adam to Moses because there was a law in force. We understand that in today's modern society. We have laws in our land and we respect those laws—well, at least to a certain extent. We know if we do something and get caught, we are going to pay a penalty at the hands of the civil government, don't we? There are a lot of people that refrain from murdering, even if they don't respect the law of God or fear for their spiritual salvation, because they don't want to be in jail or they don't want to be put to death at the hand of man. They recognize a law exists in the land against killing and if they commit murder and are caught, then they come before the judge and are put on trial and if convicted, they go to prison and perhaps are put to death. So, there is a penalty with the law. They are convicted, they are considered criminals, and they are lawbreakers.

The same thing applies to the law of God, brethren. There is no transgression, there is no penalty (and death was the penalty), there is no death penalty in God's system unless there is a law that is broken that brings death. Yet, we find that death reigned from Adam to Moses. How could it be unless there was a law which, in the breaking of it, brought a death penalty? That is why death reigned.

". . . even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression . . ." Adam's transgression. If Adam transgressed, what does that tell

you? What is transgression? The transgression of what? The transgression of a law that didn't exist? He was not a transgressor except there was a law in force at the time and in transgressing he became what? A sinner, because sin is the transgression of the law. And what is the penalty for sin? Death.

If there had been no law in force, Adam would not have been guilty of a transgression; but he broke a law. Let's notice some of these other specific references in the Old Testament that demonstrate the existence of a few of those Ten Commandments. All of them can be demonstrated; I am just going to pick out several of them that have the strongest evidence of the existence and the force of the Ten Commandments prior to the time of Moses.

The sixth commandment in Exodus 20:13 says, "Thou shalt not kill." Was that law in force before the time of Moses? Notice Genesis 4:8–11. We read the story of Cain and Abel.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the [Eternal] said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth . . .

Cursed why? Why was God applying a penalty to Cain if there was not a law that forbade him to take the life of his brother? If the sixth commandment was not in full force, of what was Cain guilty? ". . . And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand . . ."

Was the law against murder in force before the time of Moses? Yes, indeed. What about the seventh commandment? Exodus 20:14 says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Was it a sin; was it a transgression of the law, to commit adultery, prior to the time of Moses? Let's notice Genesis 39:7–9:

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

How many years did Joseph live before Moses and the codification of the law on Mt. Sinai? Probably at least three to four hundred years. Yet, Joseph said in full confidence, ". . . how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Was the law against adultery in full force from the very beginning? Yes, indeed.

Matthew 19:4–8:

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder . . .

Christ speaking concerning a statement, a requirement, a commandment that God laid down from the very beginning of the first man and woman who were created. He said, ". . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder . . ." How is it that man puts asunder marriage? Is it not in committing adultery? After making that marriage vow and being bound and made one by God, if either party separates and marries another or has illicit relations with another, in any regard, it is adultery. That is how marriage is put asunder.

Now, it can't be obliterated because what God bound, man is incapable of unbinding; yet, the way man has corrupted marriage is through the committing of adultery.

They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

From the beginning there was a law and those Ten Commandments were in force. The law against adultery was in force; the laws of marriage applied absolutely. We are going to talk more, when we get way down the road in future sermons, concerning the doctrine of marriage and divorce and remarriage.

What other laws can we substantiate from the Ten Commandments that were in existence from the beginning? What about the Sabbath?

Exodus 16:4–5, 22–30:

Then said the [Eternal] unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you [Here, the Israelites are in the wilderness. They have run out of food. They are hungry and God is finally going to bless them and provide manna.], and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no . . .

This was in the wilderness prior to arriving at Mt. Sinai. God had not made the covenant with the children of Israel yet. You know, that covenant you hear so much about being done away, the law of Moses and all of that. Well, this was before that. No covenant had been made; the law had not been codified on the tables of stone. All of those things had not occurred yet; they are still in the wilderness and yet here, God is going to prove them according to his law. Now, how fair can that be if He hasn't given it yet? Make them accountable for something they weren't aware of, is that what God did? Or, is it possible the law about the Sabbath already existed prior to their arriving at Mt. Sinai?

. . . that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

Skipping down to verses 22–30:

And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the [Eternal] hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the [Eternal] . . .

Now, how did Israel and its rulers know that the Sabbath was holy if it hadn't been instituted yet? We can easily read from the first part of Genesis that God created the Sabbath on the seventh day. That's when it was created. The question is, were men required to keep it? Maybe God just created it and He rested, but He didn't expect men to keep the Sabbath until the time of Moses. Then when Christ came, He did away with it so that none of us are obligated to keep the Sabbath any longer. Is that what we find? No.

To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the [Eternal]: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the [Eternal]: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the [Eternal] said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my . . . [suggestion? Is that what He said? Did He say, "I know you don't know about it yet, but in a few weeks I am going to create this law for the first time and I am going to expect you to keep it for a temporary number of a few hundred years until Christ comes and does away with it. Is that what He said here?]. . . How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? . . .

Were the Ten Commandments in force prior to Mt. Sinai? Were they in force from the very beginning? Yes, they were.

. . . See, for that the [Eternal] hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.

They rested because God commanded it. It was a law that was already instituted. The breaking of it brought penalty.

Let's look at one more, the tenth commandment. In Exodus 20:17, the tenth commandment says:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Was that law in force from the beginning? Turn with me to the oldest book in the Bible, as far as from the date that it was written.

Even though the books that Moses wrote are first in the historical account of the period from the very beginning of Adam up through the time of Israel, Job was the earliest chronicler, under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

One minister in the church years ago wrote an article that I remember reading in which he conjectured, based upon certain pieces of evidence, whether it is true or not, that Job was probably a contemporary of Joseph. He even speculated that he might have been the builder—the designer, the planner—of the great pyramid. Whether that is true or not, who knows. However, we do know that Job did live hundreds of years before Moses did. Therefore, his account—those things that he wrote down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—came long before the time of Moses and the codification of the law on Mt. Sinai. What do we read?

Job 31:9–11, 24–28:

If mine heart have been deceived by a woman [Remember, we are asking the question, did the law against covetousness exist?], or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door; Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. For this is an heinous crime [Crime—something perhaps, concerning breaking laws. Isn't that what crime is?]; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges.

Skipping down to verse 24:

If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; If I beheld the sun when it shined . . .

Well, let's stop right there. We are not only talking about the law of coveting, but what else have we moved into? Job understood the laws. He is addressing the existence of the tenth commandment against coveting. He also understood the command against idolatry and graven images and having gods other than the one true God. Notice verse 26–28.

If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge . . .

Punished by the judge why, if the law didn't exist against idolatry, against false gods, against covetousness? What crime would Job have been worried about, had it not existed in his time? "This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above."

Job understood the laws of God. He knew that they were in place. Why else would God have called Job a perfect man? Perfect, regarding what? What was the yardstick to be applied to Job that would certify him as being righteous in some way if the law didn't exist by which to measure him? Have you ever thought about that?

Exodus 18:15–16:

This also is prior to the time of the covenant on Mt. Sinai and the codification of the laws, the Ten Commandments and the statutes and the judgments. Here, Israel has entered into the land of Midian and Moses has met with his father-in-law.

And Moses said unto his father in law, because the people come unto me to inquire of God: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

This also is prior to the time that most think the law was given. However, as the children of Israel have been moving across the wilderness headed for Mt. Sinai, Moses is already acting as a judge of the people, and he is judging them out of what? The laws of God. ". . . I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws."

Do we have evidence, brethren, for what we believe in our fundamental that the law of God existed from Adam? If we are willing to read, open our eyes and ears, we have absolute proof that can give us the confidence we need to recognize that this is a spiritual law we have been given. It is perfect; it did exist from the beginning.

Now, the next part of the fundamental is the part we are going to skip for the time being because in fact, that is going to be the subject of the entire next sermon. It says the law "is immutable and binding thru-out eternity." We have addressed the fact that the law existed from the beginning. The next part addresses its applicability beyond Ancient Israel, beyond the time of Christ, for all eternity, into the future. That deserves its own focus because within that, we are going to address all of these so-called proofs that the law has been done away. We are going to go through the New Testament and we are going to look at all the so-called scriptures that supposedly justify the fact that we are not under the law.

So, let's skip over that part and save that for next time. Let's look at the very last part and then we will finish up this afternoon. Our fundamental says, ". . . and that all unhappiness, misery, poverty, anguish, and woe has come from its transgression."

We have already seen, brethren, that it is a holy, good, righteous, spiritual law and that there is great reward in obeying it. So, obviously, what is the antithesis of respecting, loving and valuing that law? What is the result—the consequence—of breaking and living against that law? Notice it in Proverbs 5:21–23:

For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself [His own iniquities—that is sin, that's law-breaking, that's unrighteousness, breaking of that law, brethren.], and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. [Does breaking of God's law generate penalties? Yes, indeed. Some of them are penalties that we can suffer even throughout our lives.] He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Living outside of the laws of God brings heartache and misery and all manner of problems. Skip over to Proverbs 10:27–30. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked [lawbreakers] shall be shortened . . ." What does that tell you? Keeping God's law lengthens your life. Breaking God's law cuts your life short.

"The hope of the righteous shall be gladness . . ." Who are the righteous? Remember, what is righteousness? The antithesis of unrighteousness. Unrighteousness, we found, was sin, which was breaking the law. So, who are the righteous? The righteous are the ones that are keeping the law. "The hope of the [law-keepers] shall be gladness: but the expectation of the [lawbreakers] shall perish . . ." They won't achieve their aim.

How many do you know of who have sought the things that the world values? They set their hearts and lives to gain all that they wanted, all that they thought would make them happy. Yet, how many end up on their deathbed, regretting the choices that they made because those choices were outside of the law of God? You see, money does not bring happiness, which is what most people spend their time trying to get. They break the law of coveting among all of the others. They find at the end of their lives, when they have lived a life of covetousness, that it is emptiness and vanity. Read the entire book of Ecclesiastes as an example.

The way of the [Eternal] is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. [Destruction for the lawbreakers.] The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

The wicked, you see, the lawbreakers, will not inherit the Kingdom of God which will be on this earth. Isn't that what we found at the very beginning when we read 1 Corinthians 6:9? "Know ye not that the unrighteous [the lawbreakers] shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" That is exactly what we find here in Proverbs.

In closing, brethren, Isaiah 13:9:

Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners [He shall destroy the lawbreakers.] thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

This is referring to all of those who are engaging in rebelliousness and law-breaking; those who don't respect the perfect, spiritual laws of God; those who don't consider it something of value to be kept, cherished and feared.

We have been given that way, brethren. We have been given a priceless opportunity to understand the value of God's law. It is that which can be a salve to our minds and to our spirits. It is that which gives guidance; God provided it to light our paths. It is the keeping of the law that shows us where to step and how to follow, how to have a close relationship with Him, and how to receive the blessings and benefits that come from a close relationship with God.

Keeping the law, brethren, is how we become close to Christ. Keeping the law is how we prove our love for God, the Father and for Jesus Christ. If we value that law, if we believe in this Fundamental of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal, then we can absolutely have that priceless gift. Next time, we are going to talk about the immutable, eternal nature of that law.