

It is important to recognize that, since the Law of God continues to be a reflection of God's righteous character and an expression of His righteous will for all mankind, human beings continue under obligation to obey the Law of God.

And the truth of the matter is that human beings must either obey it or disobey it, must either keep it or break it, must either fulfill its requirements or transgress them. There is no middle ground!

4. The distinction between external and internal obedience to the Law of God, and the value of external obedience.

What is the difference in meaning of these terms?

External obedience arises out of the remnants of the image of God in man.

External obedience is motivated by fear, by selfish considerations, or by natural love to fellow human beings.

Internal obedience arises out of the recreated image of God in the regenerate person.

Internal obedience is motivated by spiritual love to God, to follow believers, and to the lost, and by a desire to bring God glory.

But someone may ask, 'What is the value of external obedience, since those that are in the flesh cannot please God?'

And it should frankly be admitted that, as a condition of pleasing God, external obedience is totally futile. God's Law requires internal obedience, from the heart; not mere external conformity. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 says, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart!

But just because external obedience to God's Law in the sense of Romans 2:14-15 is futile as a condition of pleasing God, does this mean that external obedience is of no value at all?

For example, let us take the Ten Commandments and ask the following questions:

- (1) Is it of no value for persons to acknowledge, even externally, the existence of the supernatural, and of one Supreme Being, God?
- (2) Is it of no value for human beings to acknowledge, even externally, that this one Supreme God is not to be worshipped by means of images and idols that draw attention and worship to themselves and away from Him?
- (3) Is it of no value for human beings to restrain themselves, even externally, from using God's name or Christ's name or the Holy Spirit's name in an irreverent, meaningless way, or from swearing, cursing, and using profanity? Is that of no value?
- (4) Is it of no value to have human beings, even externally, rest from occupational labor one day of the week, attend churches where the one true and living God is worshipped and proclaimed, and generally recognize that day as God's day, or at least set apart in a special way?