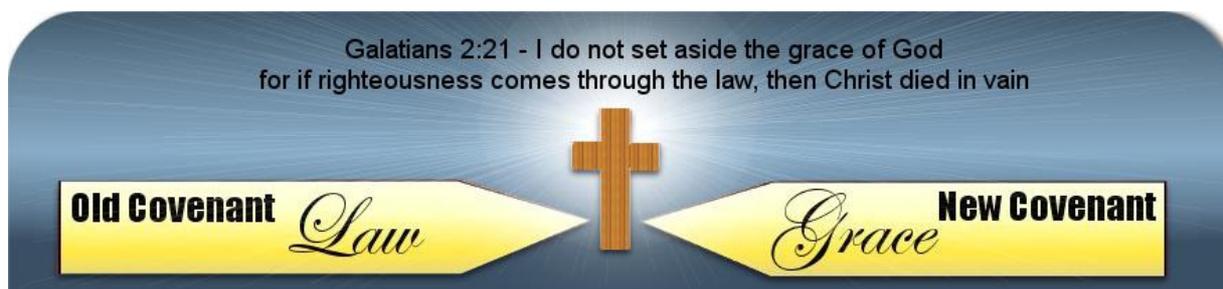


# The Law is Finished, so Quit Preaching It!

Galatians 2:21 - I do not set aside the grace of God  
for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain



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# Did Jesus End the Law or Not?

Many people who still believe they have to live according to the Old Covenant Laws have thrown Matthew 5:17-18 at preachers of the grace message to try and prove their case. But what does the Bible really say about living under the law and whether we are still bound to it?

*“Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Matt 5:17-18 NKJV)*

Peter Ditzel from Word of His Grace explains these two verses as follows:

*“Jesus is giving us two either / or conditions here: The law cannot pass until heaven and earth pass OR the law cannot pass until all is fulfilled. One or the other can do it. Heaven and earth have not yet passed, so we will leave that aside. But what did Jesus mean by ALL being fulfilled? He was referring to what He had just said in the previous sentence: the fulfilling or completing of the law AND the prophets. Once He had fulfilled the law and the prophets, the law could pass. Why is it that so many people who accept that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies have a hard time understanding that in exactly the same way, He fulfilled the Old Testament laws: ALL of them?”*

## Legal Requirements of the Law

When a person is under a contractual obligation to someone else and they fulfill all the requirements of that contract, it means the contract is finished and over. But if they simply destroyed the contractual agreement before fulfilling its requirements, they are not released from its obligations, which is why Jesus said that He did not come to destroy the law. But the moment the obligations of the contract are fulfilled, that person is set free from it! In exactly the same way Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but He fulfilled it.

*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom 10:4 NKJV)*

Because all the righteous requirements of the law were fulfilled in Christ and since we are given the righteousness of Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit as a free gift when we put our faith in Jesus, it means that in Christ we too have fulfilled the requirements of the law and therefore the law has ended for us as well.

*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom 8:3-4 NKJV, emphasis added)*

If someone's mind has not been renewed to think in terms of grace, they might stare themselves blind against the last part of verse 4, thinking that we *have to* walk after the Spirit if we want to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. But look down in verse 9:

*But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (Rom 8:9 NKJV)*

This says that that if the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we are not in the flesh! So what these verses are actually saying is that if someone has the Holy Spirit inside them, it is proof that the requirements of the law *have been* met in them.

## **The Prophets**

*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. (Matt 11:13 NKJV)*

The entire law and the Old Testament Prophets spoke of the coming of the Messiah who would forgive the sins of the whole world. The law was our tutor (schoolmaster), teaching us "right living" until we should put our faith in Jesus and begin to live by faith.

*But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Gal 3:23-25 NKJV)*

This says that after we've put our faith in Jesus Christ, we don't need the tutor of the law to instruct us anymore. The Holy Spirit inside us can do the job pretty well on His own - He doesn't need the assistance of an external set of rules!

*"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it". (Luk 16:16 NKJV, emphasis added)*

This verse implies that if we still preach law-based living we are *not* preaching the Kingdom, because we would be preaching things that ended with John the Baptist over 2000 years ago - read the verse again. How much clearer can it get?

*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. (Gal 3:16 NKJV, emphasis added)*

And also:

*What then is the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (Gal 3:19 NKJV, emphasis added)*

These verses say that the law was given because of transgressions *until the Seed* should come (and Hebrews 3 tells us it was specifically the sin of unbelief). Then when the *Seed* (Christ) came, the law was fulfilled and we were freed from its legal requirements.

*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. (Rom 3:21 NKJV, emphasis added)*

If there were such a thing as the “court of heaven”, the law and prophets would have stood up as witnesses, pointed their fingers to those who put their faith in Jesus and said: “That person is righteous!” Also note the verse says that this righteousness comes *apart* from the law.

From these verses and many more it is plain to see that believers are not supposed to try and live under the law anymore, but instead live by faith in Jesus Christ.

## **Living in Sin**

Here is a shocker, something that should silence the mouths of those who still try to be justified by obeying the law. Let’s look at two verses first:

*And the law is not of faith... (Gal 3:12a NKJV)*

and

*...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Rom 14:23b NKJV)*

It’s quite surprising to see what it says when we combine these two verses. Since the law is not of faith (Galatians 3:12) and since anything that is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23), it means that those who try to be justified by their own good works and try to live up to the moral code of the law are actually living in sin!

## **Righteousness which Exceeds that of the Pharisees**

Jesus also said the following:

*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven. (Matt 5:20 NKJV)*

The scribes and Pharisees prided themselves in how well they kept the laws of Moses; in fact it's what they did for a living! These laws didn't just include the 10 Commandments, but also all the rituals and daily sacrifices and a total of 613 stipulations and commandments that were contained in the five books of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy)<sup>2</sup>.

In fact most people who try to live up to the Law of Moses today would pale in comparison against an average Pharisee. It is therefore simple to see that the righteousness which Jesus was talking about was not about believers trying to live more obedient or more holy; He was talking about a righteousness that comes from God, given to every believer as a free gift at the point of salvation. At the exact same moment that a believer puts their faith in Jesus, they are given His perfect righteousness and He is given their sin and transgressions:

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor 5:21 NKJV)*

Isn't that just an amazing deal? Thank You Jesus!

# Righteousness Through the Law Pt 1

As more and more Christians realize there is a revolution in the earth for the church to be released from the captivity of legalism and law, the people that are still preaching the law are also becoming more ferocious than ever! By reading through the websites of these ministries on the internet it is clear that they are becoming more and more divisive; more determined to steal from believers the liberty for which Jesus paid such a high price and also more clever in their arguments, even trying to seduce and recapture those who for long periods have been soaring in the currents of grace.

Churches are “warning” their people against being “deceived” by grace preachers, cautioning them that grace can’t be preached alone, but should be understood in the context of the whole Bible. They preach that grace by itself can apparently lead to a false understanding of what God had intended with the cross; the right thing to do would be to mix a healthy dose of law in there as well to “balance” the message. Nothing could be further from the truth!

It is these preachers of law that love to quote scriptures from the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John out of context, forgetting that the crowds who Jesus was preaching to were Jews! These Jews had been polluted with hundreds of years of preaching of the Old Testament Law, hearing day after day that it is their obedience to the law will cause them to become righteous and that their level of morality and good performance will earn them God’s acceptance and blessings.

God never originally meant for us to try to relate to Him in this way! Just after God’s commands were written on stone and He set the choice of curse (for disobedience) or blessing (for obedience) before Israel, He said this to Moses:

*And the LORD said to Moses: “Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. (Deut 31:16 NKJV)*

God knew that Israel would not be able to keep His laws and commands, but because Israel refused to have a personal relationship with God (always asking Moses to speak to God on their behalf) and despite all the many miracles God did when leading them out of Egypt (showing great patience with Israel despite all their continuous murmuring and complaining in the desert), they persisted in their unbelief in God, not trusting that He could and *would* lead them to the Promised Land. They were self-righteous and “stiff nicked” as God called them:

*Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people. (Ex 33:3 NKJV)*

Moses also said to them, as they were about to cross the Jordan River:

*Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. (Deut 6:9 NKJV)*

Now imagine centuries of “stiff necked-ness” later and we would have an idea of the crowd that Jesus was preaching into.

Another interesting fact is that God had never appointed any Pharisees, Sadducees or Scribes anywhere in the Bible, but only priests to minister in the temple. The Babylonian Empire of king Nebuchadnezzar overthrew the Jewish kingdom in the year 586 BC and had thousands of Israelites exiled to Babylon. After the overthrow of Babylonia by the Persian Empire, the Persian ruler (Cyrus the Great) gave Jews permission to return to their homeland in 538 BC and to rebuild their temple.

The parties of the Pharisees and their opponents, the Sadducees, were two of the earliest sects to emerge in the Second Temple Period. In general, whereas the Sadducees were conservative, aristocratic monarchists, the Pharisees were eclectic, popular and more democratic.

These sects also forsook many of God’s laws and replaced them with manmade rules and codes, which resulted in what is traditionally known today as Judaism<sup>1</sup>. Jesus rebuked them time and again for replacing God’s commandments with manmade traditions. Look for example how they tried to corner Jesus, saying his disciples transgressed the *tradition* of the elders:

*Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God” – then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men’. (Matt 15:1-9 NKJV)*

The Jews had over the centuries reduced the perfect law of God to a standard that could be “kept”, but Jesus wanted to show them that *everybody* falls short. Even if some claimed they had kept the law their whole life, Jesus pointed out they still lacked in some other area. He wanted people to see that only by putting our faith in a Savior (Him), could we ever be restored unto God and by faith obtain grace, mercy and justification. Paul later received this revelation from God and wrote the following:

*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [no matter how well they may think they have been keeping the laws], being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom 3:21-24 NKJV, annotations and emphasis added)*

*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Rom 3:28 NKJV)*

Verse 23 in the above passage is a favorite with preachers of the law, but they never read it in conjunction with the very next verse, which says that even though everybody on the planet has sinned and fallen short of God's glory, they are justified freely by their faith in Christ. We'll look at this verse again in the next chapter.

## **The Context of Jesus' Words**

If we read Jesus' teachings through this perspective (namely that He was trying to show people they could never measure up to the standard of the law in their own efforts) we can see why He always got so angry at the Pharisees who thought that God would accept them by their "holy" living and why He also showed such mercy and love to those who simply believed in Him and knew they couldn't make it without Him.

The law will always point out our mistakes, make us feel guilty and show us that we haven't done enough. When the rich young ruler boasted in his own morality, claiming he had kept all the laws since he was a young boy, Jesus showed him that he *still* fell short: he valued money more than heavenly treasures.

*A certain ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. (Luk 18:18-23 NKJV)*

But now the modern day "law preachers" will take this scripture and tell God's precious children (who have been freed from the law) that it is wrong for Christians to have lots of money and that you can't go to heaven if you are rich.

Be careful of those who demand a standard of holy living to gain God's approval or who put a disclaimer on God's blessings. We live under a New Covenant and the law (with all its demands of "right living") has been crucified with Christ:

*And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Col 2:13-14 NKJV)*

Remember the 10 Commandments which were engraved on stones tablets?

*But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones... (2 Cor 3:7a NKJV)*

The 10 Commandments is called the ministry of death!

*...but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor 3:5b NKJV)*

This says the letter (the law) kills!

Therefore let us continue to contend for the freedom which we have been called into: the glorious liberty of the New Covenant! Let us beware of the modern day Pharisees who with their form of godliness (void of power) try to snare us into being performance driven, legalistic and continuously under pressure to try and live up to some expired standard.

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Gal 5:1 NKJV)*

# Righteousness Through the Law Pt 2

It's quite amazing how some modern day preachers want to put on God's children the laws and regulations of the Old Covenant which they themselves cannot fulfill, nor the Israelites (Jews) could manage to live by for hundreds of years. When certain Jews came to Antioch, the apostle Peter withdrew himself and did not eat with the Gentile believers as this was considered a sin by those who still lived according to the law. But Paul rebuked him and the other Jews who joined him in his hypocrisy:

*But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?" (Gal 2:14 NKJV)*

A similar thing happened in the churches of Galatia. The Galatian Christians didn't renounce Jesus as being their Messiah, but legalistic Jews had convinced them that they couldn't be right with God by *only* believing in what Jesus had done. They were being told they also had to keep the Old Testament Law in order for God to accept them. The same lie is being propagated today and church congregations are being manipulated to perform according to manmade standards, else the Lord won't accept them, answer their prayers or bless them. Lots of people love to quote the Old Covenant scripture Leviticus 11: 44-45 out of context, where God tells Israel: "Be Holy, for I am holy". It's logical that living a holy lifestyle is not a bad thing, but when we do this in order to gain God's approval, it is not the gospel.

## Manmade Laws

In Paul's day, the issue was circumcision. The legalistic believers still held fast that people had to be circumcised in accordance with the Law of Moses in order to be accepted by God. Today the same legalistic message is being preached using different tactics. Nowadays people are made to feel guilty by using things like prayer, Bible study, church attendance and other actions of "right living" as necessary requirements for God to love and accept them. Instead people should actually be told over and over again that their faith in what Christ did for them is more than enough!

*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Rom 3:28 NKJV)*

It is not a combination of what Jesus did for us *plus* our own actions of holiness: Jesus plus anything equals nothing. Jesus plus nothing equals everything.

No one argues that we shouldn't pray, study the Word, go to church, etc, but any time it is argued that God is angry with us if we fail to do these things, it's not the true gospel.

That type of teaching puts the burden of salvation on us and opens us to condemnation and attacks from the devil. This is what Paul called a perversion of the gospel:

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Gal 1: 6-7 NKJV)*

## **Not Even a Little Bit of Law!**

A person who claims that others must adhere to even one regulation stated in the Old Covenant Law is bound by the whole law:

*And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised [a stipulation of one of the laws] that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. (Gal 5:3 NKJV, annotations added)*

Someone cannot just choose to adhere to one (or some) law and not adhere strictly to all the others, as this would literally demonstrate Pharisaic hypocrisy. But by simply putting our faith in Jesus who obeyed all the laws on our behalf, our sin (sinful condition) is imputed (carried over or given) to Him and His righteousness is given to us as a free gift!

## **Romans 3:23**

Many people also love to quote Romans 3:23 out of context to try and make God's children feel guilty and conscious of their mistakes:

*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:23 NKJV)*

But this verse seems quite different when it's actually read it in the context of the verses around it. Let's read from verse 21 to 24:

*<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom 3:21-24 NKJV, emphasis added)*

This means that now the Father doesn't just see us as if we had never sinned, He sees us as if we had also obeyed all the laws our entire life! Jesus took upon Himself what we deserved (our punishment) and gave as a free gift to us what He deserved (the Father's approval and blessings for 100% complete obedience). Now that's a pretty good deal, hallelujah!

Below is a paraphrased version of Romans 3:21-24 (compare it to the original verses above). May the joy and jubilation of a soul set at liberty flood anybody that reads this. Praise God for the FREE GIFT of righteousness!

*<sup>21</sup> But one day in the “court” of Heaven, the Law and the Prophets will stand up; point their finger to every person who has believed in Jesus and say: “That person is righteous! <sup>22</sup> By putting their faith in Jesus, everyone that believes is given the same righteousness as God!” <sup>23</sup> For although they were once called “sinners” and fell short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> they were justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom 3:21-24, author’s paraphrased version)*

Amen.

# So You Want to Preach the Law?

The only people Jesus talked “law” with were those who were heavy handed with the law. He spoke harshly with the Pharisees and the scribes who were the religious rulers of the day.

*Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. (Matt 23:1-4 NKJV)*

Jesus wasn’t trying to get the people (including the Pharisees) to obey laws and rules more; instead He was showing the Pharisees their hypocrisy for teaching others to keep all the rules while they themselves did so poorly at keeping them.

Like many preachers today, these religious rulers were actually preaching a “watered down” version of the law, making it almost possible for them to be able to obey their own man-made rules! In reality the law is actually far more stringent than what people preach it to be! Let’s take a good look at what the law actually says to people who break the law:

*“Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. And your Heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the Heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away. The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you. You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but shall not gather its grapes. (Deut 28:19-30 NKJV)*

Actually the list goes on - take some time to read Deuteronomy 28 from verse 15 onwards. Now if people who still want to preach the law today were to actually preach the law to its full extent, they should be including all these curses as well! If a modern day preacher wanted to preach that we still have to obey the 10 Commandments, they

should include in their sermon that all these curses will come upon us if we don't obey *all* the laws 100% of the time!

This is why the grace message sounds so radical to most people, but actually it is no more radical than the law as we can clearly see from the above verses. It's just that the law has been preached at a much reduced level and mixed up with a little bit of grace to make it sound "nice" and acceptable. But how can we ever think we can mix up or try to balance two things that are so extremely different from each other?

The Pharisees and scribes preached that people should live holy, be obedient to the laws of Moses and they also *acted* as though they were doing it themselves, but their hearts were full of evil. The Pharisees preached that as long as someone didn't commit the act of adultery, or if they weren't angry with their brother without a reason, then that person didn't break the law. But Jesus then told them that the standard of the law was actually much higher and if a person even by accident insulted their brother or entertained a single lustful thought, they were guilty of breaking *all* the other laws as well and the penalty was death. Jesus then showed them that if they wanted to preach the law, they should actually preach it to its full extent and also include all the horrifying consequences for breaking even a single law, such as death, having their hands cut off, their eyes plucked out, stoning someone who has sinned, etc. This is what Jesus meant when He made the following statements:

*But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matt 5:22 NKJV)*

*"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matt 5:27-30 NKJV)*

But Jesus through the cross made an end to the law, destroying forever its constant demands of correct "behavior" and making us free to live for God because we love Him, not because we fear punishment.

*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18 NKJV)*