

# MAKE THE MORAL CHOICE

By Rev. Will Nelken

“You cannot legislate morality,” they say. Of course, this is true in the sense that creating a law cannot transform wicked hearts into good hearts.

At the same time, laws are all about morality — identifying what is good and right for individuals and society.

The Law of God is the God-given code of moral behaviors. “Law of God” refers primarily to the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, in which God revealed Himself and gave, through Moses, the rules and regulations of a holy society, which Israel was to be. Many of these regulations have been abandoned, due to constraint or modernization, by most contemporary Jewish people.

However, the followers of Jesus Christ, the Christian Church, have been formally released from many of the particulars of the Law of the First Covenant, on the basis of the Second Covenant, which Jesus established.

Don’t think I am suggesting that the First Covenant Law has no remaining value or purpose. It is still part of the Bible, God’s Word to us, and for more than historical reference. Its letter may no longer apply, but its spirit always shall, as it still represents divine righteousness. Jesus clearly said, “I have not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it.”

Born as a Jew, under the Law, Jesus fulfilled its requirements completely, so that, once fulfilled, it might be set aside and a new Law instituted, one which rules not by the letter but by the spirit (the same Spirit).

So, what purpose did the first Law serve? The New Testament expresses seven purposes for the First Law.

- The Law reveals sin (Romans 3:21).

- The Law provides judgment for sin (Romans 4:15).
- The Law presents a standard of holiness and goodness (Romans 7:12-16).
- The Law cannot make us right, but points us to the Righteous One (Galatians 2:16; Hebrews 7:19).
- The Law acts as a restrainer of human nature (Galatians 3:23-24).
- The Law is for law breakers (1 Timothy 1:9).
- The Law is a preview of things to come (Hebrews 10:1).

In sum, the Law exposes what is sinful in the eyes of God, and warns us of the judgments (and sometimes, the short-term consequences) that will result, thus providing an effective deterrent or restraint, though it is incapable of making us good. It also shows us what real righteousness is like, and the world we have to look forward to when Christ rules.

Clearly, we need to know what is wrong and what it will cost us, and we need to know what is right and what we should hope for. But why do we need to be restrained? Why isn’t the knowledge of right and wrong sufficient?

Entropy is the tendency for everything in nature to come unraveled, to decline, to fall apart. Plainly, the Bible reveals that entropy is also a human condition, not only materially, but also spiritually. Human nature is inclined to decline, to move away from any righteousness which we may possess. This is so dramatically expressed by Apostle Paul:

*Romans 7:14 So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup> I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate. <sup>16</sup> But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is*

good.<sup>17</sup> *So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.*

<sup>18</sup> *And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't.* <sup>19</sup> *I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.* <sup>20</sup> *But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.*

<sup>21</sup> *I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.*

The trouble is with me! We hate restraints. Something in us rebels against them even when we know they are for our good. Human nature continually loosens the restraints. What one generation permits, the next generation expects. Society always tends to unravel.

This is what the Bible calls “the spirit of lawlessness.” It is the seed of anarchy. For this reason, Eugene Peterson, who translated the Bible as *The Message*, refers to the Antichrist as “the Anarchist.” This may help us to get a better grip on his activities.

This evil leader, the embodiment of Satan, will appear in the final years before Jesus returns. His initial method of leadership will be to throw off legal restraints. In the name of tolerance for human rights, he will permit, at least for general society, whatever people want. His ultimate goal will be for every person to become a law unto themselves, which he will justify on the basis of the notion that all people are fundamentally good. Then, once again, as in the days of the Hebrew judges, everyone will begin to do “what is right in their own eyes.” Why would he promote this? Because he knows it will mark humankind’s self-destruction.

What first appears as universal liberty and democracy, will ultimately be our undoing, as

every group becomes an entitled minority, and factions erupt in power struggles, and general chaos can only be contained by the military strength of a dictator. This, too, he will provide, as he seizes global power.

“Science fiction!” you say? Or, is it a “brave new world”?

“How can it happen?” you ask. Because it is *already* happening!

<sup>2</sup> *Thessalonians 2:3* *Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction.* <sup>4</sup> *He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God.*

<sup>5</sup> *Don't you remember that I told you about all this when I was with you?* <sup>6</sup> *And you know what is holding him back, for he can be revealed only when his time comes.* <sup>7</sup> *For **this lawlessness is already at work secretly**, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way.* <sup>8</sup> *Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed, but the Lord Jesus will kill him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the splendor of his coming.*

<sup>9</sup> *This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles.* <sup>10</sup> *He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them.* <sup>11</sup> *So God will cause them to be greatly deceived, and they will believe these lies.*

“This lawlessness is already at work.” Did you see that?

<sup>1</sup> *John 2:18* *Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming,*

**and already many such antichrists have appeared.** *From this we know that the last hour has come.*

Paul and John wrote those words 2000 years ago! What this means for you and I is that this devilish work is well-advanced. It works beneath the radar of most people (unfortunately, even most Christians). It appears as personal liberties, then psychological entitlements, which soon get promoted as civil liberties and protected as human rights. And this is why so many human rights campaigns end up as anti-God campaigns, much to the consternation of the Christian Church.

If human rights are sheltered under the banner of God's love for humanity, that basis will ultimately limit the rights that humans can enjoy for themselves, because God insists on being in charge. So, in the eyes of the "spirit of lawlessness" *all* human rights must be extricated from any connection or reliance on God whatsoever. Only then, can people be truly free to do whatever they want.

My hope in all this is not to frighten you but to awaken your spiritual senses to something that is today already at work in the world, in our nation, in your family, and even in your heart. There is no place where the spirit of lawlessness does not work, except where and when the Spirit of God has control.

It begins with self-willed rebellion, and resists external control, especially socially. It tries to use the process of law to undo the effects of God's Law. And, in spite of the proliferation of legislation it produces, its ultimate aim is anti-law, anarchy and destruction.

You may already be aware of its operations in individual sociopaths and minor hate groups. But what you need to see is how it operates on a much wider scale in the names of "freedom" and "human rights," pressuring legislation that

gradually wipes away normative social mores and restraints. The excuse usually is that some marginalized group deserves human compassion (legal protection) for their sins.

Of course, there are genuine freedoms and rights which ought always to be promoted and protected. But apart from the direct influence of the Word and the Spirit of God, even these good objectives may become attached to and colored by, and eventually skewed and usurped by alternate freedoms that are contrary to the ways of the Lord.

Therefore, as you prepare to cast your vote on Tuesday — whether for candidates or propositions — take time to evaluate their aims in this light: Are they removing necessary restraints or upholding them? Are they fostering greater dependence on God and His ways, or greater license? Do they flatter you with the notion that you are all you need and you are entitled to rights, even those that God did not give?

Inevitably, you *will* vote for morality in America on Tuesday. So, make your vote carefully. Ask, what is the *spirit* of this proposition or candidate? Take the long view before marking your ballot (down the road, could this further our unraveling or restrain it?). Don't vote for who or what is popular. Ignore the polls and pray for wisdom from above. Vote as a Christian should, with the purpose and power of God in mind. Your vote will not guarantee the outcome, but if you vote by the leading of His Spirit, *He* will take care of the outcome.

*Romans 12:2* *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world (don't let the world squeeze you into its mold), but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*