

The Rock

February and March 2019

St. Andrew's website

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The Law and the Spirit

God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was an awesome occasion. The mountain shook violently and smoke billowed from it as God spoke. Even Moses trembled with fear.

These commandments, along with much of the rest of the law given through Moses served as a foundation stone of western civilisation for centuries.

Some believe that God gave the law so that we may be justified through obedience to it, for God said 'Do these things and you will live.' God set his standard before the people, and if they were to be declared righteous, they would have to comply with it.

Jesus himself declared that he had not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it. He also said that not a single stroke of the pen would be removed from the law. So we may be forgiven for believing that the law was given so that we could justify ourselves by obeying it, but this is not so.

The apostle Paul describes the Ten Commandments as a glorious ministry, in that it revealed the righteous character of God, but the result was not to bring life to its hearers, but death! How so? Because no one has been able to keep them. As the purpose of the law was not to save us, but rather to reveal to us the reality of our sin.

We tend to live under the illusion that we are by nature good people, primarily because we have replaced God's standards with our own. The Pharisees of Jesus' time were utterly convinced of their own goodness, partly because they put more emphasis on their traditions than on God's commands.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus reveals the hidden spiritual law concealed in the Ten Commandments. As he does this we are left with two options. Either we admit that we are law breakers or we refuse to accept the authority of Christ, for it is evident that we have not obeyed.

Jesus declares "You have heard it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." He reinterpreted murder saying that anyone who is angry with his brother is in danger of judgment. The apostle John says that anyone who hates his brother is a murderer.

Furthermore Jesus tells us to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us, to turn the other cheek when struck (either verbally or physically), to lend without demanding repayment. Paul declares that God will judge the secret motives of men's hearts, so we will be judged not only for what we have done but for the reasons behind our actions.

With this in mind the prophet Isaiah declares 'All our righteous acts are as filthy rags before the Lord.' So we see that when the commandments are spiritualised, our problems do not go away but are intensified.

Ah, you may think, no one is living up to this, it's unreasonable, ridiculous. Yes it is, if you are going to apply fallen human reason and the sinful nature of man to the teaching.

Nobody in their natural state is able to uphold the standards God sets, no one by their own conduct will be able to justify themselves before God. We may think that this doesn't matter, that we will not be held to account, but God has declared that man is destined to die and then give an account of the deeds done whilst in the body.

We die because Adam ignored the first command in the Garden of Eden, but God has warned of the second death, which is the reality of the danger of hell. So, what are we to do? We cannot meet his standards, we have already broken his laws and as such are destined to die the second death on the day of judgment. Oh that the Lord would open our eyes to the reality of these things!

Jesus as man was born under the law, he had flesh and blood just like us, but unlike us, he was born without sin, for the Spirit of God came upon the Virgin Mary and what she conceived was the miracle of the incarnation.

God in the flesh. He came to do battle on our behalf, to live the perfect sinless life, to keep the law that we could not keep and to overcome the power of Satan who rules over mankind through the power of sin, which leads to death.

Jesus' life personified the sermon on the mount. Jesus never hated his brother, rather he loved his enemies. He knew that Judas would betray him, he'd known it from the beginning, but for three years he loved the Judas in his midst.

Never once did he falter in this, for at the last supper, whilst greatly troubled he declared 'I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.' The disciples were at a loss to know which of them it was, don't you find that remarkable? Never once had Jesus given any indication as to who the betrayer in the inner circle was. Who could keep that up for three years?

When asked by John whom he meant, Jesus said "It's the one to whom I will offer this morsel when I've dipped it in the dish." For the head of the banquet to offer you food in this way was considered to be a particular honour.

Judas was being offered a final opportunity to change his mind, but Judas had hardened his heart against the love of God and was determined to exchange that love for temporal gain.

Even his most devoted disciples fell away: as Jesus said, this was to fulfil the prophecy which stated ‘I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.’ This displayed the weakened state of even the best of men, for Peter later called down curses on himself declaring ‘I don’t know the man!’ when questioned about knowing Jesus who had been arrested.

Have you ever wondered why Christ continued at this point? Why when all men had forsaken him does he give the testimony that he is the Christ, the Son of God? Why do that now? All it is going to bring is the wrath of the Pharisees and the condemnation of the Sanhedrin, the only reward will be death by crucifixion.

Why not just say, ‘No you’re mistaken, I’m no more a son of God than you are, there’s been a mistake.’ If he had done that he could have walked away, but he could never do that for he is the way, the truth and the life.

Again when falsely accused before Pilate, why does he not speak up? For Pilate, a highly political individual recognised that it was out of envy that the Pharisees were demanding his death. Pilate knew, and testified that Christ had done nothing wrong, so why wouldn’t this Jesus speak up and say something against these scheming liars?

Pilate could not understand why Jesus refused to help himself, but Jesus did not deny his accusers for he was about to take upon himself more heinous crimes than any they accused him of. He was about to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins. I urge you to meditate upon this.

Do not be deceived: God will not and cannot forgive your sins or mine outside of faith in Christ; if he could, that would mean that the Son whom he loved was crucified for nothing!

Consider the awesome consequences of sin, for if God did not spare his own Son when he became sin, what will become of those who refuse to accept the offer of mercy? There’s a verse in the Old Testament that says ‘They flatter themselves too much to hate or detect their own sin.’

This is how Satan, the deceiver, keeps us from seeking salvation. He deceives us into believing that we're good enough as we are, but look at Christ and you will see what it takes to be good. In the light of the sermon on the mount can you declare yourself to be good?

God has set the bar way above our ability to jump, for we are to be saved by faith in the finished work of Jesus. He himself is our righteousness, therefore I can stand before God as Christ because Christ came before God as me, on the cross.

Just because the world and much of the church has lost sight of the reality of eternal judgment do not imagine that God has, for a thousand years are like a day and a day like a thousand years in his sight.

He has not forgotten the sight of the Son, whom he loves, hanging battered and naked on a cross, whilst crying out 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' I know that it is possible to hear these things and remain hard hearted and unmoved, for that is the natural disposition of the human heart.

This is why I am praying that the Holy Spirit comes, for when he does he will convict us of guilt with regard to sin. When that happens we will cry out for a saviour, and when that happens God will come in power, for the truth is that the blood of Jesus was shed for the forgiveness of sins, hallelujah!

A Believer

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)

1. Have no other Gods besides me.
2. Do not make or worship any manmade idols.
3. Do not misuse the name of God by cursing or speaking irreverently.
4. Keep the Sabbath day Holy (Sunday).
5. Honour your father and mother.
6. Do not commit murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not lie or give false testimony.
10. Do not lust after the spouse or possessions of others.

Twentieth Century Judges Who are your Heroes?

There is a book in the Bible full of heroes and heroines. They are not perfect, far from it, but they achieved great things, inspired others and changed history. It is called *Judges* but it is not really about legal eagles or people in wigs. I was asked: 'What about the modern equivalents to those ancient greats. Who are they?'

I produced a series of sermons which I called *20th Century Judges*. Once a month we looked at a pair of great believers from the last century who had made a real difference in our world. Of course, it is a personal selection and there are many, many more but a few months ago I described Nurse Edith Cavell and Chaplain Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy from the Great War. Here are another two of those I described and these were both Christian authors who were tested in the furnace of the Soviet Union.

Richard Wurmbrand was born in Bucharest, Romania in 1909 and grew up in a Jewish family, one of four boys. He was sent to Moscow as a teenager to study Marxism. For some reason he was imprisoned for a few months. He must have impressed his captors because when he returned to Romania he had been co-opted, and was working as a secret agent for Russia.

In October 1936 he married Sabina and in 1938 they met a man called Christian Wolfkes. He was a Christian carpenter and through him they came to believe in Christ the Messiah and joined a Church's Ministry to the Jews fellowship group. They kept a low profile through the War but Richard was ordained as an Anglican Priest.

When the Soviet Union occupied Romania, in 1944, he printed Bibles and handed them to the soldiers! He became a Lutheran Pastor. When they tried to control churches he went underground.

He bravely challenged the atheist soviet policy. So he was arrested and imprisoned in 1948. As a strong believer he was hard to break so he passed through 7 prisons spending 3 years in solitary confinement. They

used a special cell with no light and no sound. He endured many terrible beatings, but kept his sanity by composing and preaching over 350 sermons. Many were later written up in a book: *Sermons in Solitary Confinement*.

He was released in 1956 after 8½ years and told not to preach, but he continued. He was arrested again in 1959 and sentenced to 25 years. He was held under a false name, totally out of contact with anyone and subjected to extreme torture. His wife, Sabina, was told he was dead.

In 1964 he received an amnesty. Missionary organisations paid a ransom of \$10,000 for his release. He left Romania and began to speak out for persecuted Christians. He spoke boldly in Norway, England & USA. (On one occasion at Great St Mary's, Cambridge, to a full church.) He wrote 22 books and formed *Voice of the Martyrs*, a charity supporting persecuted believers.

Richard died in 2001 aged 92, a few months after his wife. His body bore the gruesome marks of his many tortures and abuse. To great surprise he was voted one of the ten greatest Romanians ever.



Richard Wurmbrand



Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. His father died before he was born in 1918. He was raised by his mother and an aunt who encouraged his literary and scientific interests and his Orthodox faith. He read *War and Peace* at 10 years old. He studied at Rostov State University and met and married Natalia, a Chemistry student. At this stage he never questioned the superiority of the Soviet System.

In WW2 he commanded an artillery battery in the Red Army and was twice decorated. However in February 1945 he was arrested for writing derogatory comments about the conduct of the war, and Stalin, in letters to friends. He was taken to the Lubyanka prison in Moscow, beaten and interrogated, and finally sentenced to 8 years in a labour camp.

He ended up in a Special Camp for political prisoners and worked as a miner, bricklayer and foundry foreman. It provided much raw material for his books. In 1953 his sentence expired and it was during this time that he rejected Marxism and adopted a Christian philosophy. After President Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' against Stalinism he was allowed back into Russia and taught in a school while writing secretly at night.

A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich was published in Russia with Khrushchev's explicit approval and was a sell out: it included the statement: "There's a Stalinist in each of you; there's even a Stalinist in me. We must root out this evil." It was followed by five other challenging novellas in the 1960s.

When Khrushchev was deposed in 1964 the rules were strengthened and Solzhenitsyn was no longer acceptable. In 1969 he was expelled from the Union of Writers. But in 1970 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. *The Gulag Archipelago*, his greatest work, was still a closely guarded secret manuscript hidden in a friend's house.

On 12 February 1974, he was arrested and on the next day was deported from the Soviet Union to Frankfurt, West Germany and stripped of his Soviet citizenship. The KGB had found the manuscript for the first part of *The Gulag Archipelago* and, less than a week later, his friends suffered reprisals for their support of Solzhenitsyn. In his *Gulag Archipelago* he

observed that: “it would be nice if we could neatly divide the world between the insidiously evil and the obviously good. But it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the stirrings of good... Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either— but right through every human heart...”

“And since that time I have come to understand the falsehood of all the revolutions of history: they destroy only those carriers of evil contemporary with them. And they then take to themselves as their heritage the actual evil itself, magnified still more. And that is why I turn back to the years of my imprisonment and say, sometimes to the astonishment of those about me: “Bless you, prison!”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn eventually moved to the USA and continued his writing with a history of Russia *The Red Wheel*. He had criticisms of the west too. And was no admirer of the materialism and ‘weakness’ he found here. After communism fell, his nationality was restored and he returned to live in west Moscow in 1994.

He said: “Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: ‘*Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.*’ Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: *Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.*”

He died of heart failure near Moscow on Sunday 3 August 2008, at the age of 89. A burial service was held at Donskoy Monastery, Moscow, on Wednesday, 6th. Russian and world leaders paid tribute to him, his life, thoughts and writings.

Canon Stephen Leeke

A new year, a new You?

This slogan appears in the media at the beginning of every year and invites us to change any bad habits and start on new regimes, usually healthy eating, exercise and dieting.

Why not apply this advice to our spiritual health, feed on the Word of God for it is an excellent energiser, exercise our prayer muscles and cut out the bad stuff in our daily 'diet'.

Maybe come along and join a home group, a prayer group or a teaching/discussion group?

Then combine all this with getting to know your brothers and sisters in Christ a bit better; there are wonderful stories and testimonies to be heard for encouraging and supporting one another, bringing all into the unity of the Body of Christ.



Wednesdays 10.00 a.m. in the hall: Christianity Explored

We are continuing the Wednesday morning series of meetings with this study course. Like Alpha, this series is for everyone, whether looking at faith for the first time or wanting to go deeper with God.

Last term many found it enjoyable, exciting and just so good to be talking about faith together. Why not come along and try it, maybe bring someone with you.

Thoughts from the Vicarage

I recently came across a broken chisel in my tool box and was reminded of a complaint that my father used to make to my mother, namely, that she was in the habit of using his chisels as screw drivers. The result, inevitably, was that she broke the chisel and didn't succeed in doing up the screw.

In the same sense, reason is the enemy of faith. They are both valid tools but need to be used in the right category, or you get nowhere.

We have two worlds, the material and physical world that we access by common sense and this is usually driven by intellectual curiosity. Then there is the unseen spiritual world, also all around us, and this is accessed by faith.

Faith comes to us by revelation from Jesus who perfectly straddles both worlds; for He is both fully God and fully man. When it comes to faith intellectual curiosity is ruled out and moral obedience takes its place, here our common sense faculties are no use and we shall get nowhere with them.

We cannot see God or taste God, we cannot get to Him by our senses at all. All that we can do with our senses is to understand that there is a God, because it is obvious as we look around at His stupendous creation.

How are we then to get at God and to come into contact with Him? We must humble ourselves before Him, and receive the gift of faith which comes when the Holy Spirit acts on the human spirit and we receive revelation.

Faith is different to belief. Belief is something that I acquire through common sense observation of the world around me and experience of life. But faith is on a deeper level: it is a gift of Jesus and comes as I wait on Him and read His word or hear it.

“Without faith, it is impossible to please God” we read in the Bible. The Christian life has to be all about what God accomplishes in me.

It cannot be about what I, out of self effort, do for God, so that in some way He is indebted to me and owes me something such as eternal life because I have earned it by my good deeds.

As time goes by Jesus reveals Himself more to us as we seek Him and live in His presence. Faith increases and we understand and lay hold of what He wants to do in us and through us.

We are to get into such a relationship with Jesus that the mainspring of our actions and motives will be our faith and without even thinking about it we will be expressing the life of Jesus within us. The impulse in our lives will not be our own judgments or desires but those of Jesus.

Prayer, for example, will not be aimed at getting things from God. Anyway He knows what we want before we ask. But it will be mainly getting into perfect communication with God.

Spending time with Him that we may know Him better, so that His Spirit may accomplish His purposes in us. It is all about Jesus not me! Let us also remember that our Father is keenly interested in us.

The conflict for the Christian is to learn to live by faith, out of His Spirit rather than living by reason out of his own natural life.

“You cannot serve God and mammon” says Jesus. What is mammon? It is the system of good living which organises itself without really considering God.

There needs to be in the Christian life a dominant, personal and passionate devotion to Jesus. God breaks us from our ties to this world, for this world is passing away and the world of the Spirit is eternal, without darkness or death and therefore in every way superior.

Jesus perfectly straddles these two worlds, as I have mentioned, and as our own focus on Him increases, so does our life. Without Jesus we end up with nothing, we may have had a great time and achieved a great deal, but we shall end up with nothing. Better to have our own treasure in heaven, as Jesus said.

James Alexander

From the Registers

Baptisms on Sunday 9th December 2018 of:

Daniel Stamp

Samuel Manwell

David Manwell.

We welcome them into the Church family.

Tuesday Talk and Tea

Our thanks to the school choir's wonderful singing - it helped to make our Christmas party such a success.

We would like to invite you to join us this year and enjoy our company plus English tea.

12th February Holiday memories from two of our members.

12th March History & activities of the Salvation Army from Captain Rob Simons.

Both meetings at Oakington School Hall 2.45 p.m.

Belated wishes for a good year.

Joan Pettit chairperson

Church Life

St. Andrew's has a lively and vibrant midweek programme for those who wish to join in Christian fellowship outside Sunday worship. Phone or email the contacts or just turn up to any of the meetings listed (except during August). There will always be a warm welcome.

Midweek Meetings

Home Groups

Contact Richard/Joy Brading 232770 / richardabrading@btinternet.com

Tuesday 7.30-9.30 p.m. Fellowship in St. Andrew's church hall.

Tuesday 7.30-9.30 p.m. Fellowship at 5 Lowbury Crescent.

Wednesday 7.30-9.30 p.m. Fellowship at 35 Coles Lane.

Coffee Plus:

Contact Dorothy Hughes 232800, or Sue 235272 suejhosk@yahoo.co.uk.
for more information.

Wednesday

10.00 a.m. in the church hall.

A DVD course, talks and discussion every week. All are welcome.

*After running a successful and popular Alpha Course, there is now a follow on course called **Christianity Explored**, open to everyone, being run on Wednesday mornings 10.00 to 11.30 a.m. in the church hall.*

Parents and Toddlers

Contact Ben Phillips 07342 945373 &
familyworker@standrewsoakington.co.uk

Tuesday 10.00-11.00 a.m. Happy Feet in the church hall.

Thursday 10.00-11.30 a.m. Little Steps in the church hall.

Midweek Services

Contact Rev. James Alexander 232396

Wednesday 7.00 a.m. Informal Communion in the church hall.

Men's Breakfast

Contact Ben Phillips 07342 945373

Third Saturday of each month. 9.00 a.m. in the church.

Coffee, Cake and Conversation with a slice of prayer.

Contact Sharon Phillips 07588 675621

Fourth Saturday of each month, for women, 3.00 p.m. in the church hall.

Prayer Meetings

Contact John Peters 235919 & johnpete40@gmail.com

Monday

7.00 a.m. Prayer for Revival.

10.00 a.m. Discovery Group Prayer Meeting.

Wednesday

8.00 p.m. Church Prayer Meeting in the church hall.

Thursday

7.00 a.m. Mission Support Prayer Meeting at 40 Longstanton Road.

7.00 p.m. Church Prayer Meeting in the church hall.

Friday

10.15 a.m. Pastoral Care Prayer Meeting at 5 Lowbury Crescent.

First Saturday of each month

9.30 a.m. Wells of Silence in the church. Led by Rev. Jenny Hill.

Bell Ringing

Contact Philip Bailey 07968 788425

Monday 7.00 p.m. Practice in the church.

Visiting and Counselling

Contact Rev. James Alexander 232396

Weekdays Rev. James Alexander

Joint Fellowship Meeting

Tuesday 26 March in the church hall, from 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.

Worship, fellowship and prayer.

Topic: Testimony & Prayer: *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have."*

1 Peter 3:15.

Services February and March & Visiting Preachers

February

Sunday 3rd Holy Communion 8.00 a.m.
Family Communion 10.30 a.m.
Evensong 6.30 p.m. Canon Stephen Leeke

Sunday 10th Holy Communion 8.00 a.m.
Family Service 10.30 a.m.
Evensong 6.30 p.m. Tim Berry

Sunday 17th Sung Communion 9.00 a.m.
Family Service 10.30 a.m.
Evensong 6.30 p.m.

Sunday 24th Holy Communion 8.00 a.m.
Family Service 10.30 a.m.
Evensong 6.30 p.m. Andrew Watts

March

Sunday 3rd Holy Communion 8.00 a.m.
Family Communion 10.30 a.m.
Evensong 6.30 p.m. Canon Stephen Leeke

Wednesday 6th **Ash Wednesday** Evening Communion 7.30 p.m.

Sunday 10th Holy Communion 8.00 a.m. Rev. John Sansom
Family Service 10.30 a.m.
Lent Evensong 6.30 p.m. Rev. Phillip Foster

Sunday 17th Sung Communion 9.00 a.m.
Family Service 10.30 a.m.
Lent Evensong 6.30 p.m. Rev. Steve Clarke

Sunday 24th Holy Communion 8.00 a.m.
Family Service 10.30 a.m.
Lent Evensong 6.30 p.m. Andrew Watts

Sunday 31st Holy Communion 8.00 a.m.
Family Service 10.30 a.m.
Lent Sung Communion 6.30 p.m.