The Letter And The Spirit

As a part of a spread of compromising liberal teachings in many churches in recent years, some churchgoers have tried to use the mention of “the letter” and “the Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 3:6, Romans 2:29 and 7:6 as an excuse for some disobediences to God’s commands and for various teachings which are contrary to His written Word. I have heard some people argue that these three verses teach there are correct interpretations of the Word of God which are not inspired by the Holy Spirit. They call these supposedly uninspired correct interpretations of the Word of God “the letter of the Word” and regard these interpretations as a type of legalism.

Such people do not realise they have a false liberal unbiblical understanding of the nature of legalism. Also they wrongly assume the Holy Spirit now often gives special “revelations” of His Word involving interpreting verses in literal or symbolic ways which:

- supposedly justify various sinful man-made exceptions to God’s commands and instructions.
- are different from how He inspired His Biblical authors to write them in their original contexts and/or
- are contrary to what He inspired His authors to write in other verses on the same topic.

It is true that the Holy Spirit must reveal the meanings of His written Word to us for us to understand it correctly (see John 14:26, 16:8-11, 16:13 and 1 John 2:27). Luke 24:45 shows Jesus Christ opened the disciples’ minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 2:10 and 12-13 says: “But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God…Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

It is also good to ask God for wisdom when reading His Word (see James 1:5-8) and to pray for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (see Ephesians 1:16-17). But it is nonsense to suggest the Spirit would give believers today special revelations of verses in His written Word contrary to the meaning of the surrounding verses 1 and other verses on the same topic in other parts of the Bible, all of which He Himself inspired.

In addition, the Holy Spirit does not lead believers into making exceptions to God’s commands unless these exceptions are already written in the Word of God. The Holy Spirit does not change His mind about what He has already said in His written Word is true, false, right and wrong.

The compromising liberal definition of legalism tries to change God’s absolute commands into just flexible guidelines which we only have to obey approximately and which we can constantly adjust according to human reasonings and practical considerations. But this is

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1 If it is true that Jesus and the Apostles interpreted a few Old Testament verses out of context, they had God’s authority and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to do so. But we do not have this authority and inspiration.
similar to how Adam, Eve, Moses, Aichan, Gideon, Eli, King Saul, Solomon, Uzzah and King Uzziah wrongly treated God’s commands in particular situations. Walking in the Holy Spirit does not mean knowingly disobeying God’s will like these Old Testament characters did in the verses listed below in footnote 2.

This liberal understanding of legalism is a convenient human excuse for those who wish to justify themselves or others being involved in abortion, marijuana smoking, euthanasia, homosexuality, sex outside marriage, watching movies with nude sex scenes and/or other sins.

The letter is the Mosaic Law and not a method of interpretation

Also, note 2 Corinthians 3:6, Romans 2:29 and 7:6 are not teaching us some special key about how to interpret the written Word of God. Instead these three verses teach other important truths.

2 Corinthians 3:6 teaches that the letter cannot impart eternal life, we are under a sentence of death for breaking it and only the Holy Spirit can impart eternal life: “He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” The expression “the letter” above refers to the Law of Moses. The surrounding context – 2 Corinthians 3:6-18 proves Paul is contrasting the Mosaic and New Covenants and not a supposed “letter of the Word” and “Spirit of the Word”.

In 2 Corinthians 3:7, Paul refers to the Mosaic Covenant as “the ministry of death in letters engraved on stone”. In Greek, the expression “of the letter” in verse 6 and “letters” in verse 7 are two forms of the word “gramma”. The forms of “gramma” used in 2 Corinthians 3:6, Romans 2:29 and 7:6 mean “the law” or “any kind of written document, whether in book or manuscript form with focus upon the content.”

In 2 Corinthians 3:7, the plural form of “gramma” refers to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet which were written and engraved on the two tablets of stone to form the words of the Ten Commandments. This plural form of “gramma” is translated “letters” in the New American Standard Bible and “written” in the New King James Version.

In 2 Corinthians 3:8-16, Paul compares the ministry of death found in the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant and the latter’s accompanying ministry of the Spirit which imparts glory and liberty to New Covenant believers.

The written Word is living and supported by the Holy Spirit

In fact, there is no such thing as a “letter of the Word” versus a “Spirit of the Word”. The Word itself is the sword of the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 6:17). In John 6:63, Jesus says the Spirit gives life but also emphasises that His Words themselves are spirit and life: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”

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3 Bauer, page 165.
4 Louw and Nida, page 395.
The Word of God is not dead or lifeless. Hebrews 4:12 states the following about the Word or “Logos” of God: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword…” Our false interpretations and false theological theories about the Word of God are dead and lifeless, but true interpretations of the Word are not.

The Word of God is living and active in its original God-intended meanings. This is why you can have a preacher, who is not born again of the Holy Spirit and is spiritually dead, mention certain true aspects of the Gospel from the written Word of God and have unsaved people in the congregation turn in saving faith to Jesus Christ by God’s grace and through the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The preacher is spiritually lifeless, but the Holy Spirit uses His Word to save.

As 1 Peter 1:23-25 reveals, we are born again through the Word or “Logos” of God which lives and remains forever: “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’” In the original Greek, the usage of “Word” in verse 23 is “logos” and the two usages of “Word” in verse 25 is “rhema”. It is possible that “logos” in this context refers to the living “Logos” – Jesus Christ. But considering Christ is never called the “rhema” in the New Testament, it is more likely “logos” in verse 23 refers to the written Word of God about Jesus Christ.

Note 1 Peter 1:23 refers to the Word of God as incorruptible seed. It is true Galatians 3:16 calls Christ Abraham’s “seed”. But note Luke 8:11 refers to the Word or “logos” of God as seed. This is in the context of the Word of God which is heard and done. In Luke 8:12, 13, 15 and 21, Christ spoke of “logos” which is heard and in Luke 8:21 of “logos” which is done. In each of these instances, He was referring to the written Word.

Philippians 1:15-18 shows Paul rejoiced even when the Word about Jesus Christ is preached by spiritually lifeless individuals with sinful motives: “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”

The reason Paul said this is He knew God’s Words and not false interpretations and wrong theories about them, are supported by the Holy Spirit. This applies even when the written Word is shared by those who are not filled and led by the Holy Spirit. As Isaiah 55:11 mightily declares: “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

Wrong interpretations of the Word are spiritually lifeless and are not supported by the Holy Spirit. But right interpretations of the Word are anointed with God’s life and are supported by the Holy Spirit.

The real meaning of “the letter”

The “letter” or forms of the Greek word “gramma” used in Romans 2:27, 2:29, 7:6 and 2 Corinthians 3:6 mean “the Mosaic Law in writing”. In Acts 28:21, a form of the word “gramma” or “letter” is used in relation to a written letter sent to correspond with other people.
In the original Greek of 2 Timothy 3:15, a form of the word “gramma” is used to refer to all the written Old Testament Scriptures. The relevant form of “gramma” is translated “writings” in the New American Standard Bible and “Scriptures” in the New King James Version.

In John 5:47, Jesus uses a form of the word “gramma”, which is translated as “writings”, to mean the Old Testament writings of Moses: “But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” In this verse, Jesus speaks of Jews having faith in the letter or Law of Moses. Christ does not say here that having faith in the letter is wrong or sinful. In fact, He criticised the Jews who did not believe in Him for not also believing in the letter.

As can be seen earlier in John 5:10-16, these same Jews had twisted the God-intended meaning of the letter or written Law about the Sabbath to fit in with their false revelations or man-made religious traditions. Also as John 15:45-46 reveals, these Jews did not believe the true God-intended meanings of those parts of the letter or written Law of Moses which referred to Christ.

In Romans 2:17-29, Paul did not rebuke the Jews for having the letter or written Law and obeying it in its original God-intended meanings. Instead, he reprimanded them for disobeying it and then trying to be justified by God through a combination of:

- their mere knowledge of the Mosaic Covenant and Law.
- the rite of circumcision – their outward sign of participation in the Mosaic Covenant
- their privileges (or “rights”) under the Mosaic Covenant and
- their imperfect obedience to the Mosaic Law.

Ancient Roman jurists originated the distinction

The people who originated the courtroom distinction between the concepts of “the spirit of the law” and “the letter of the law” were ancient pagan Roman jurists, such as Ulpian and Marcian. For example, Ulpian wrote “The expression ‘according to the laws’ must be interpreted as ‘according to the spirit of the laws’ as well as ‘according to the letter of the laws’. ”

Ulpian was born in Tyre at the end of the 100’s A.D. and died in 228 A.D. He became the chief advisor of Roman Emperor Alexander Severus (reigned A.D. 222-235). Ulpian wrote about 280 books on laws, legislation and constitutions. Ulpian wrote one-third of the – “Digest” – the massive collection of Roman laws which were later collated by legal scholars commissioned by Roman Emperor Justinian (reigned 527-565 A.D.).

In his “Criminal Proceedings, Book 1”, the Roman jurist Marcian wrote: “If anyone does not let go an adulterer but keep him (by him), as it might be a son (caught) with his stepmother or a freedman or a slave with his wife, he is punished according to the spirit of the law, even though by its letter (the adulterer) who is retained, is not covered.”

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5 Justinian, “Digest”, 50. 16.6.
7 Ibid.
8 Justinian, “Digest” 48. 34.1.
Over the centuries, many theologians, preachers and churchgoers have naively wrongly interpreted Paul’s Holy Spirit-inspired concepts of the Spirit and the letter according to a Roman law rather than a Biblical understanding.

“Letter of the Law” and “Spirit of the Law” are not Biblical concepts

Secular lawyers sometimes talk about “the letter of the law” contrasted with “the spirit of the law” in relation to their nations’ legal system. This may be suited to secular human laws. But such a distinction when applied to the written Word of God is often advocated by those who follow poor Biblical interpretation principles and/or by those who have much loved pet heresies they wish to defend.

The expression “letter of the Law” is not found in the original Greek New Testament. In Romans 2:27, 2:29, 7:6 and 2 Corinthians 3:6, the New Testament uses the word “letter” meaning the written Law. The word “letter” in these verses does not refer to the literal sense of the Law in comparison to some supposedly higher type of symbolic or figurative or spiritual sense of the Law.

The New American Standard Bible wrongly uses the expression “the letter of the Law” in Romans 2:27 but puts “of the Law” in Italics to show this expression is not in the original Greek. The King James Version just uses “the letter” in this verse.

The letter or written Mosaic Law is spiritual itself (see Romans 7:14), even though it cannot by itself impart eternal life (see Galatians 3:21). The Holy Spirit is the One who imparts God’s eternal life. Romans 8:2 calls the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of life”.

The Bible never refers specifically to the concept of the “Spirit of the Word”. This notion of the “Spirit of the Word” is usually advocated by those who teach unbiblical heretical ideas which are based on verses taken out of context and which are contrary to other verses in the written Word of God on the same topic. They twist and distort the commands and teachings of the Word of God like Peter warned many do with Paul’s writings and other Scriptures.

2 Corinthians 3:9 does not say “the Spirit of the Law gives life” or “the Spirit of the Word gives life”. It says “the Spirit gives life”. Romans 7:6 does not refer to serving “in the newness of the Spirit of the Law” or “in the newness of the Spirit of the Word”, but “in the newness of the Spirit.”

Romans 13:8-10 says: “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another, has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.”

Romans 13:8 and 10 are spoken of in the context of loving others being a fulfillment of the moral commandments of the Mosaic Law. But note these verses do not teach we can love others in some mystical spiritual sense which supposedly fulfills the Law but which still allows us literally to commit adultery, murder, steal, lie and covet in practice.
Serving God in the Spirit and not the letter

In Romans 7:6, Paul states: “But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” Here Paul is not saying we should serve God in the Holy Spirit in ways contrary to the commands and teachings of His written Word in contrast to serving God without the Holy Spirit but in obedience to the commands and teachings of His written Word.

The surrounding context of Romans 7:6 makes it obvious Paul is saying New Covenant believers have been delivered from the Law of Moses and the associated Mosaic Covenant and have died to its condemnation of them in relation to their sin. This is the “oldness of the letter” from which New Covenant believers are liberated.

In surrounding verses 1, 4, 5 and 6-13, Paul refers to the Law of Moses and Paul and/or others trying to serve God under the Mosaic Law. Romans 7:5 and 7:11 reveal the Law by itself produces the fruit of death in those who try to serve God by it alone. Romans 7:11 speaks similarly of the Ten Commandments: “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.” Paul’s usage of the expression “killed” here is similar to his comment in 2 Corinthians 3:6: “for the letter kills”.

In Romans 7:14-24, Paul goes on to emphasise how a person who tries to obey God’s Law without relying on the Lord Jesus Christ and His Spirit will fail continually. This is similar to Paul’s words in Romans 7:6 about serving in the “oldness of the letter”.

Serving “in the newness of the Spirit” means:

- daily trusting and relying on the Holy Spirit to empower us to obey God’s commands and teachings in His written Word and
- not to being a mystical Gnostic-like “spiritual fruitcake” who claims to be filled and led by the Holy Spirit but is continually deliberately disobedient to God’s commands and teachings.

In Romans 7:1-24, Paul is not saying that the Words of God found in the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Mosaic Law are unspiritual, uninspired by the Holy Spirit, unholy and bad in some sense. In Romans 7:14, Paul stressed: “For we know that the law is spiritual…” In Romans 7:12, Paul emphasised: “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” The Law is spiritual, set apart to God and good in its original God-intended meanings.

As Paul shows above in Romans 7:14, the problem in this context is not the Law itself but us with our carnality or fleshliness. Romans 8:3 refers to the same problem: “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh…” Because of our flesh, we cannot fulfil the demands of God’s Law.

When in Hebrews 4:12, the writer says that the Word or “Logos” of God is living and active, he is including here the Mosaic Law.

Note when Jesus said in Matthew 4:4: “It is written; Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God”, He was quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3 which is a part of the Mosaic Law. In its original context, the Words Jesus was referring to in Deuteronomy 8:3, are the commandments of the Law mentioned in Deuteronomy 8:2. God’s Word is not just limited to the Mosaic Law. But note the Mosaic Law is a part of God’s Word, even though New Covenant believers are not today under the Mosaic Law.
The Mosaic Law condemns all humans (except Jesus Christ) to a sentence of death. But this does not mean that the Law or any other part of the Word of God is in itself dead or lifeless.

More obedient Pharisaic Jews versus less obedient believers?

In Romans 2:25-29, Paul states: “For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

One view claims Romans 2:25-29 contrasts Pharisaic Jews who supposedly exhibited a high level of literal obedience to the commands of the Old Testament Word of God but at the same time were stubborn rebels against the Holy Spirit’s work in their lives, with Jews and non-Jews who were supposedly born-again of the Holy Spirit but did not obey God’s commands anywhere near the level of the above-mentioned Pharisaic Jews. These Bible teachers argue the Pharisaic Jews were under what these teachers call “the letter of the Law” and the second far-less-obedient group were under the “Spirit of the Law”.

The above involves dreadful interpretation of Romans 2:25-29 as shown by the surrounding context of these verses. In Romans 2:1-5 and 2:17-29, Paul reveals he was referring to Jews who were circumcised outwardly (see verse 25), had been instructed in the Law (see verse 18), knew God’s will from the Law (see verse 18) and even shared with others what the Law teaches (see verses 19-21), but who regularly did not do what it commanded. ⁹

In Romans 2:1-3 and 2:21-24, Paul is not referring to unsaved Jews who were more obedient to God’s Word than saved regenerated Jews and non-Jews.

In Romans 2:25, Paul reveals that these Jews who do not perfectly keep or obey the Law were regarded by God as uncircumcised. Being regarded as uncircumcised is the same as being declared condemned sinners. Romans 2:27 emphasises that those Jews with the letter or Law did not fully obey it.

Also when in Romans 2:26-27, Paul refers to non-Jews – the uncircumcised – who obey the Law, he may be referring to hypothetical and not actual people. This is because no non-Jew has ever perfectly obeyed the Law, as Paul stresses in Romans 3:9-20. Romans 3:9-10 and 3:20 declare: “…For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no not one’…Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

⁹ Romans 2:1-3 states: “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgement of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgement of God?” Romans 2:21-24 declares: “You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law? For “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.”
In Romans 2:26-27, Paul may be referring to a hypothetical type of non-Jew who does not in real life exist, in order to show that both Jews and non-Jews are judged and condemned by the same standard. This standard is any disobedience to God’s Law.

Jews are privileged in being circumcised, instructed in the Law and knowing God’s will more clearly than non-Jews who only have His Law written on their consciences. But Paul was teaching both Jews and non-Jews will all be condemned on the basis of the same Law of God. In Romans 2:11-15, Paul said: “For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them).”

In Romans 2:26-27, Paul is not referring to a non-Jew who just obeys some supposed “Spirit of the Law” while at the same time disobeying some of the Law’s specific commandments written on the latter’s conscience.

**A modern equating of godly obedience with legalism**

Related to this false understanding of “the letter” and “the Spirit” is a wrong view of legalism. I have heard some modern Christians claim that one type of legalism involves interpreting God’s New Testament commands about sex before marriage, homosexuality, murder (in relation to abortion and euthanasia), stealing, lying, divorce, nudity and so on in ways:

- which permit only Bible-approved specifically stated exceptions to these commands.
- which do not allow the Biblical teachings on love and grace to excuse certain disobediences to God’s New Testament commands.

For example, these Christians argue that it is legalistic to say that God the Holy Spirit does not on some occasions approve of:

- some couples who “love” each other living in de-facto marriages and having sex with each other.
- abortion if the girl has been raped or involved in incest or is only 12 years old. (Babies produced in such situations should not be murdered. Instead they can be adopted if the girl is unable to raise it. Rape plus murder is worse than rape alone.)
- churchgoers watching nude sex scenes on television or going to nude beaches.

But this is a false understanding of legalism. Legalism is not equated with precisely obeying God’s commands by His Spirit’s power.

Those who believe that the Biblical teachings on love and God's grace can be used to justify not precisely obeying His New Testament commands about sex before marriage, murder, homosexuality, nudity and so on are interpreting the Bible according to:
worldly humanistic situational ethics. When referring to the teachings of Fletcher one of the founders of situational ethics, Elwell says: “Fletcher rejects all revealed norms but the command to love...Jesus has no rules or system of values. To break the seventh commandment (about adultery) may be good: it depends whether love is fully served. Sexual intercourse before marriage – if the decision is made ‘Christianly’ – could be right”. When Peter said in 1 Peter 4:8 “love will cover a multitude of sins”, he did not mean love is an excuse to be involved in sexual immorality and other disobediences to God’s commands.

in a way condemned by Jude 4: “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude here warns us of certain people who crept unnoticed into the Church and who turn the teaching about God’s grace into an excuse to practice shameless sexual immorality or “lewdness” and to deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their daily activities.

principles used by many sinful Gnostic groups in the early Church period. Many of the Gnostics invented all types of arguments and excuses to justify them practicing various types of sexual immorality.

of the Biblical interpretation principles of the Pharisees. Many or all of the Pharisees taught many man-made exceptions to God’s commands as though these exceptions were approved of by God (see Mark 7:9-13, Matthew 23:16-22 and Luke 13:10-17).

Karl Barth on supposed errors and inaccuracies in the Bible

In his section “Scripture as the Word of God” in his “Church Dogmatics”, the neo-Orthodox theologian Karl Barth argued there is a “Spirit of the Bible” supposedly inspired by God and a “letter of the Bible” which supposedly contains errors and “historical and scientific inaccuracies”: “But we are completely absolved from differentiating in the Bible between the divine and the human, the content and the form, the spirit and the letter, and then cautiously choosing the former and scornfully rejecting the latter. Always in the Bible as in all other human words we shall meet with both. As we may differentiate between them as we do in the understanding of a human word. But the event in which the word of man proves itself the Word of God is one which we cannot bring about by this differentiation. The Word of God is so powerful that it is not bound by what we think we can discover and value as the divine element, the content, the spirit of the Bible. Again, it is not so powerful that it will not bind itself to what we think we can value lightly as the human element, the form, the letter of the Bible. We are absolved from differentiating the Word of God in the Bible from other contents, infallible portions and expressions from the erroneous ones, the infallible from the fallible, and from imagining that by means of such discoveries we can create for ourselves encounters with the genuine Word of God in the Bible. If God was not ashamed of the fallibility of all the human words of the Bible, of their historical and scientific inaccuracies, their theological contradictions, the uncertainty of their tradition, and, above all, their Judaism, but adopted and made use of these expressions in all their fallibility, we do not need to be ashamed when He wills to renew it to us in all its fallibility as witness, and it is mere self-will and disobedience to try to find some infallible elements in the Bible.”

Tragically many born-again Christians have accepted Karl Barth’s false understanding of the nature of the Bible and have become semi-liberals.

Bible Study Questions


2. The Holy Spirit reveals the meanings of His written Word to us. But what things would the Holy Spirit not do when revealing the meanings of His written Word?

3. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, Romans 2:29 and 7:6, is the “letter” a method of interpreting the Scriptures? If not, what is instead?

4. Which verses reveal that the Word of God is not dead or lifeless?

5. What types of interpretations of the written Word of God are dead and lifeless?

6. Explain what Philippians 1:15-18 teaches us about God’s Word when it is preached to others.

7. What does the Greek word “gramma” mean in:
   a) Acts 28:21,
   b) 2 Timothy 3:15
   c) and John 5:47?

8. Who uses the expressions “the letter of the Law” and “the Spirit of the Law” – the Bible or secular lawyers?

9. What does serving God “in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter” in Romans 7:6 mean?

10. Does the Bible teach that the Mosaic Law is dead, lifeless and unspiritual? Or does the Scripture instead reveal that the Mosaic Law is spiritual and is a part of the living Word of God but it cannot impart eternal life to fallen humans through their obedience to it?

11. Does Romans 2:25-29 teach that Pharisaic Jews were more obedient to God than are born-again Christians? Give Biblical proof for your answer.

12. Explain what is wrong with the modern view which equates godly precise obedience to God’s New Testament commands with legalism.