

## The Bondage of the Will

By Martin Luther

### EXORDIUM.

#### Section XXXV.

Sect. XXXV. — BUT, since we have been persuaded to the contrary of this, by that pestilent saying of the Sophists, ‘the Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous;’ we are compelled, first of all, to prove that first grand principle of ours, by which all other things are to be proved: which, among the Sophists, is considered absurd and impossible to be done.

First then, Moses saith, (Deut. xvii. 8.) that, ‘if there arise a matter too hard in judgment, men are to go to the place which God shall choose for His name, and there to consult the priests, who are to judge of it according to the law of the Lord.’

He saith, “according to the law of the Lord” — but how will they judge thus, if the law of the Lord be not externally most clear, so as to satisfy them concerning it? Otherwise, it would have been sufficient, if he had said, according to their own spirit. Nay, it is so in every government of the people, the causes of all are adjusted according to laws. But how could they be adjusted, if the laws were not most certain, and absolutely, very lights to the people? But if the laws were ambiguous and uncertain, there would not only be no causes settled, but no certain consistency of manners. Since, therefore, laws are enacted that manners may be regulated according to a certain form, and questions in causes settled, it is necessary that that, which is to be the rule and standard for men in their dealings with each other, as the law is, should of all things be the most certain and most clear. And if that light and certainty in laws, in profane administrations where temporal things only are concerned, are necessary, and have been, by the goodness of God, freely granted to the whole world; how shall He not have given to Christians, that is to His own Elect, laws and rules of much greater light and certainty, according to which they might adjust and settle both themselves and all their causes? And that more especially, since He wills that all temporal things should, by His, be despised. And “if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven,” how much more shall He clothe us? (Matt. vi. 30) — But, let us proceed, and drown that pestilent saying of the Sophists, in Scriptures.

Psalm xix. 8, saith, “The commandment of the Lord is clear (or pure), enlightening the eyes.” And surely, that which enlightens the eyes, cannot be obscure or ambiguous!

Again, Psalm cxix. 130, “The door of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.” Here, it is ascribed unto the words of God, that they are a door, and something open, which is quite plain to all and enlightens even the simple.

Isaiah viii. 20, sends all questions “to the law and to the testimony;” and threatens that if we do not this, the light of the east shall be denied us.

In Malachi, ii. 7, commands, ‘that they should seek the law from the mouth of the priest, as being the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.’ But a most excellent messenger indeed of the Lord of Hosts he must be, who should bring forth those things, which were both so ambiguous to himself and so obscure to the people, that neither he should know what he himself said, nor they what they heard!

And what, throughout the Old Testament, in the 119th Psalm especially, is more frequently said in praise of the Scripture, than that, it is itself a most certain and most clear light? For Ps. cxix. 105, celebrates its clearness thus: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths.” He does not say only — thy Spirit is a lamp unto my feet; though he ascribes unto Him also His office, saying, “Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the land of uprightness.” (Ps. cxliii. 10.) Thus the Scripture is called a “way” and a “path:” that is from its most perfect certainty.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*. If you would like to discuss this article in our online community, please visit our [RPM Forum](#).

### Subscribe to RPM

RPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like RPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [RPM](#), please select this [link](#).