

THE BELIEVER AND THE MOSAIC LAW:

How Do They Relate? (Pt. 2)

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What the Law Could Not Do

The Law cannot produce life. The Law cannot generate righteousness. Nor were these ever God's intent, as we have already shown. The Scriptures are adamant and clear:

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Galatians 2:21) #9;

... if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law. (Galatians 3:21)

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. (Romans 8:3)

Herein is the problem: the unbeliever is dead in trespasses and sin (Eph. 2:1). There is no one righteous, not even one (Rom.3:10). THE TWO VERY THINGS THAT EVERY UNBELIEVER NEEDS, LIFE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, CANNOT BE PRODUCED BY THE LAW. No one can be righteous before God on the basis of law-works and no one can be regenerated or born again

on the basis of law-works. When viewed from Divine perspective, one then would not look to the Law for life or righteousness. And anyone who does is simply ignorant of, or confused about, God's purposes in His Law.

Many of my personal friends who favor Reformed theology would agree: but the Scriptures make a similar application to sanctification (the believer in second-phase-Christianity, the first phase being justification or initial faith in the Gospel). The Law in no way edifies or promotes the growth-sanctification process in the believer. In fact, Paul speaks of the Moral Law – the Ten Commandments – both as a ministry of death (the opposite of life) and condemnation (the opposite of righteousness). Hear what Paul says:

But if the ministration (ministry, NASV) of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious... how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather (more, NASV) glorious? If the ministration of condemnation be glory, how much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. (2 Cor. 3:7-9)

In these verses, Paul refers to the Law as both a ministry of death and condemnation. But did you note which portion of the Law he is referring to – moral, civil, or ceremonial? There is no question: that which was engraved in stone, the Ten Commandments, the Moral Law! By Divine design, the Moral Law produces death and condemnation, NOT LIFE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. Do not expect the Ten Commandments to stimulate your sanctification experience. They are very effective in pointing out your shortcomings and failures and creating a sense of condemnation, but they simply cannot produce life and growth.

So why hang the Ten Commandments in your living room? To create a sense of sin? Fine. To mark or highlight our failure before God? Fine. To create a sense of moral responsibility? Fine. But may I suggest that you

also prominently display a pointed verse like Romans 6:23, "*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" For a believer to seek to be "spiritual" by fulfilling the Ten Commandments or by living up to the Moral Law is to practice self-defeat! Spirituality and practical righteousness are realized solely by proper relationship to the Holy Spirit, who himself is the Spirit of life and righteousness and who dwells in every believer.

We Are Not UNDER THE LAW, but UNDER GRACE... meaning – ?

The following verses clearly demonstrate that the believer is not under the Law.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

This verse not only teaches the deliverance of the believer from the Law, it also clearly demonstrates the dominion sin has over the individual that seeks to walk by a law system.

But after that the faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster [the Law, compare 3:24]. (Galatians 3:25)

Ye are also become dead to the law... (Rom. 7:4)

But now we are delivered from the law, having died to that (the Law) wherein we were held. (Romans 7:6)

To be *delivered from the law*, to be *dead to the law*, not to be *under the law* means that the believer is freed from the condemnation of the Law and separated from it as a mode of operation. The Law is not a means of spiritual success; it is, in fact, just the opposite.

To be *under grace* means that the believer is under the

dynamic and regulatory controls that the grace of God supplies. These largely, if not totally, center in the ministries of the Holy Spirit to the believer in this age: indwelling, guiding, gifting, convicting, interceding, assuring, anointing/teaching, filling/controlling, comforting, and sealing. The key ingredient under grace is LIFE, the LIFE of the Spirit, the very eternal life that God gives at the moment of regeneration (the new birth). Note the emphasis on LIFE in the following verses.

The law of the Spirit of **life** in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2)

You are become dead to the law through the body of Christ that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead (i.e., to the Alive-One]. (Romans 7:4)

*If there had been a law which could have given **life**, verily righteousness should have been by law. (Galatians 3:21)*

*But the Spirit is **life** because of righteousness. (Romans 8:10)*

Deliverance from the Law does not mean that believers are left without principles. Consider the following New Testament uses of the word *law* as distinct from the Mosaic Law: in every case, the word can be equated with *principle* or *principles*.

... the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free... (Romans 8:2)

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. (Romans 9:31,32)

...being not without law to God, but being under the law to Christ. (I Corinthians 9:21)

Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

So speak ye and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12)

Believers, though not under the Law, are not left without principles. Even the most perverted mentality would have trouble seeing the *Holy Spirit* who indwells believers as being less than holy and/or without principles. The point is this: one does not have life by trying to live up to a set of principles, whether Old or New Testament principles. Believers have life because they have been made alive in Christ Jesus. That life came from the Spirit of God.

Moreover, that life does not mature by trying to live up to a set of law principles. Any human effort for deliverance from sin is contrary to the grace system and always leads to frustration. The regenerated life of the believer grows by fellowship with the Holy Spirit and quality time spent in the Word of God. And that growth or maturation expresses itself in a love of God, His will, His Word, and a love of one's neighbor. Thus the Law and its ultimate intent are fulfilled in the believer by agape love; the mental and overt expression of the essence of the Spirit of God within.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law: for this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law. (Romans 13:8-10)

Legalism and Antinomianism

Consequently, Christianity is not legalism, nor is it antinomian. Legalism is a formal arrangement of the external matters of one's life in order to appear righteous. With some, it could include misdirected effort to gain righteousness (as though the imputed righteousness of Christ was not sufficient!). Legalism is a fleshly attitude that seeks to regulate behavior by conformity to a code. It then equates spirituality with the degree of that conformity. Legalism concerns itself with externals and appearances.

Legalism is not the existence of a rule, the observance of a principle or command, or a refraining from certain activities. The issue is the motivation that prompts the obedience: pride, self-glorification, false humility, and approbation-lust will make one an eminent legalist.

The New Testament expresses the will of God for the believer by the use of imperative commands (using the imperative mode). Believers are not legalists because they desire to obey these imperatives. *Be not conformed to this world* (Rom. 12:2); *husbands love your wives* (Eph. 5:25); *bear ye one another's burdens* (Gal. 6:2); *pray for one another* (Jas. 5:16), etc. Believers are not legalists because they submit to such commands unless they do so for carnal purposes like seeking the approbation of others, desiring to appear super-pious, or desiring personal gain or perhaps a position of power that such appearances might produce. Be careful: carnality is a subtle motivator of every legalist.

Christianity is not antinomian ("against law"); it simply clarifies the purposes of the Law. It does embody some do's and don'ts. It most certainly has principles. The point is that these principles or commands or strictures are not fulfilled by human effort. Indeed, they are fulfilled totally through the indwelling Spirit of Christ and/or the grace provision of God. As a result, human merit and boasting are totally excluded. Gospel works are motivated by love and faith.

Conclusion

Believers are in no way connected to the Mosaic Law, nor to any law system. Paraphrasing Paul, "We have no need of the bondage elements of such a pedagogue!" Believers are to walk confidently in the Holy Spirit. He indwells us in order to teach, empower, lead, guide, convict, and develop in us the graces of Christ. The ministries of the Holy Spirit cannot be legalized.

Regarding Dominion-Theonomy-Reformed Brethren

Theocracy, though God's design for Israel in Old Testament times, is not God's plan for the Church. Wherever and whenever a church or a church body has sought to establish a theocracy, it has failed. Theocracy did not work

- in Calvin's Geneva in the 16th century,
- in New Anglia (New England) in America in the 17th century,
- in Cromwell's England in the middle to late 17th century,
- and in South Africa under the Dutch Reformed and English in more recent times.

Theocracy is simply not God's intent for this age. Therefore, any theocratic attempts by Theonomists, Dominionists, or any other well meaning persons are doomed to fail. And when taken to its logical end, Reformed theology, with its law-oriented emphasis and failure to distinguish between the Church and Old Testament Israel, leads to theocracy. These brethren have totally missed the Divine intent of our God in giving His holy Law. ¢

Footnotes:

15 The sentence is a first class condition: Paul and his readers are to assume the "if" clause to be true. There are no articles with either of the words "law"; the idea is any law, any set of rules, anything that qualifies or has the character of law. The point is this: the righteousness which God demands could never be produced in human beings by any type of law system.

16 The text literally reads "...not lawless (relative to) God, but inlawed to Christ." Though Paul had clearly broken with the Mosaic Law, he did not see himself as lawless to God, and he did see himself inlawed to or responsible to Christ's law/principles.

17 For John Calvin's views on civil government and church-state relations, see his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV., ch.xx., "The Political Administration." Calvin saw offences against the Church as offences against the State and vice-versa. These were worthy of punishment by fines, imprisonment, exile, and even death, all to be executed by the State. Thus Calvin actively participated in the burning at the stake of Servetus, the antitrinitarian heretic, on Oct.27,1553, and his subsequent defense of his actions. His arguments are chiefly drawn from Old Testament theocratic texts and the Mosaic code, all wrongly applied to the Church.

18 In applying the term "theocracy" to the 17th century society established in Massachusetts, I am referring to the inordinate influence that the Church exercised over civil government. For an excellent treatment of this subject, see *The Puritan Oligarchy* by Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker (Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1947), particularly Ch.II, "The Bible State." Puritan views reflected those of John Calvin.

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