

Does Grace Do Away With the Law of God?

Are there Commandments to be kept in the New Covenant of Grace?

Are the Covenant of the Law and the Law of God the same thing or are they different?

Does the Law of God and the Commandments of God still apply to the Church, or are they eliminated by the Cross?

By Rev. D. Earl Cripe, Ph.D.

St. Paul poses a question: **“Do we then make void the Law through faith?”** His answer is: **“God forbid: yea, we establish the Law.”**

There are two things respecting the Law and how faith bears on it, at which we want to look. The eliminating of the Old Covenant as the means of finding righteousness does not mean that God made it totally meaningless as to its time, its purpose, and its place. The greater part of the Old Testament was prophetic of the coming of Jesus Christ . The prophets predicted the Messiah and that the Nation of Israel was to bring Christ into the world through the lineage of David . Christ was to come and fulfill all the types and shadows that existed for men in the old days. These prophetic and messianic types existed in antiquity so that they too could have faith in Jesus Christ before the fact (They may not have known it was Jesus Christ in whom they were placing their faith, but they knew that it was God’s sacrificial plan of redemption). The New Testament has fulfilled all of that. It has exonerated the prophets, the allegories of the tabernacle and its ceremony, the feast days and holy days, and all of those ordinances by fulfilling the symbols that were

projected there. This has reference to the legitimate symbols. There have been many illegitimate claims for which God cannot and will not be held responsible. But the legitimate prophetic predictions have all found their fulfillment in Christ.

And then, there has always been an aspect of the Ten Commandments that makes reference to the Moral Law. The Law of God stood, stands, and always will stand, as long as the earth lasts. God through Jesus Christ has not removed the Moral Law. It was never God's intention to take away the Moral Law and say that there is no longer a need for man to love God or to love his neighbor. What God has done through Jesus Christ is to give us the ability now through Christ to live by the spirit of that Moral Law. We can live in a condition and manner that is right toward God and toward one another. This was the purpose of the Law to begin with. It was *not the projected or predicted goal* of the Covenant of the Law. The failure of the *Old Covenant* was predicted far in advance. But the *Law of God* is immutable. It stands for the righteousness of God Himself. And so, we find that in Jesus Christ the spirit of the Law of God is established; not destroyed. The Law of God is upheld by the achievements of Christ and of grace. It has in no way been taken away.

St. Paul did not get this Gospel from religious teachers. When he was taught at the feet of Gamaliel he was not taught this Gospel or any part of it. He was taught Old Testament religion; Jewish custom and tradition; the ceremonies of the Old Testament prophets. But when he was taught the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he was not taught it by Gamaliel. He was not taught it by St. Peter or St. James or St. John or any of the Jewish Christians of the early Church in Jerusalem. God did something entirely different here. He brought truth from a new direction. God deliberately did not bring it to this Apostle to the Gentiles through the Jewish Christians and the early Church in Jerusalem. God could have done that, but He did not. He did not want to it because He wanted to make this division clear. He did not want anybody to be

confused about the fact that there are two Testaments or Covenants in history that they were never the same, and they are not to be looked upon as the same. They have nothing in common—absolutely nothing—not even the Ten Commandments. The “Christian Right” so-called, is fighting to get the ten commandments back on school walls; but the Church has not been under the authority of the ten commandments for two thousand years. The New Covenant has its own new commandments and they are not the same as the Ten Commandments in all respects, nor are they given for the same purpose. Moreover, the spirit of the Law, which is what the new commandments are, is as different from the letter of the law as life is from death. How do I know? Because that is what the Bible says. We are able ministers of the New Testament, not in the letter but in the Spirit, of the letter kills but the spirit giveth life. Certainly you can view the Ten Commandments in the light of New Testament truth; but when you do that they are not the commandments of the Old Testament any more, but the new commandments of the New Testament. This is what St. John said. Listen carefully to it:

I John 2:7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

I John 2:8 Again, a *new* commandment I write unto you, *which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*

The commandment to love your neighbor as yourself is worded the same in the New Testament as in the Old. Not only that, but it focuses on the same relationship and commands the same response. And yet it is entirely new now because the darkness of humanism under the Covenant of the Flesh is past and the child of God, being born again with the mind of Christ and with the

Holy Spirit of God indwelling, can see what he could not see and do what he could not do.

When the New Testament came on, it brought a change; an entirely different mentality, basis, and concept. One of the major changes was away from man and his traditional religion and toward dependency upon God and truth that is revealed by the Spirit.

The One Age-long Covenant of the Religious Humanist

The cry of universal world wide religion—whether it comes from Calvinism, Reform Theology or the pseudo Christian movements such as Seventh the old Day Adventists, the Reconstructionists, and the Theonomists, or non-Christian religions such as Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, British Israelism, New age or some other errant doctrine—is this that the New Testament is nothing different from the Old in kind. Faith, it says, always meant to believe the Word of God and to obey the commandments of God; and faith never comprehended anything more than that. The Law was Grace and Grace is Law. And so while we have a development—while we have an evolution of Biblical religion down into the modern and more enlightened times, we have no basic change. It is the same thing all the way through.

Æsopian Language

That is what the Judaisers where attempting to impose on the churches of Galatia.

“This is the same old religion we have had from antiquity. We ought to bring the Old Testament laws, cannons, ceremony, liturgy, and tradition over into the Christian Church because it was the fore runner of, the foundation, and in moral substance it is part and parcel of New Testament truth. In short, grace is ministered to us in keeping the Law of God.”

Many and varied are the theology-of-reason schemes that would bring this to pass from the dictatorial imposition by God's sovereignty of Calvinism, to the stamping of a seal upon us by the Seventh-Day Adventists. The vehicle, each of which is argued as being superior to all others, is not important. All of these have one thing in common: the humanism of salvation by the Old Testament Law.

The Old Is By the New Revealed

St. Paul is telling the Galatians that this is absolutely, unmitigatedly a falsehood. The New Testament, in terms of the theology of what salvation is, how it is acquired, and how man may live in the light and power of it—the New Testament is an utter and absolute contrast to the Old Testament way. And while there were many truths about the New Testament revealed by metaphor, allegory, type, shadow, and Messianic prophecy, it remained for God, in His operation with man and His bringing in of the Scriptures, to reveal solely to the Apostle to the Gentiles the truth concerning the New Testament Gospel of the Covenant of Promise.

Gal 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Gal 3:22 But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Does this mean that the morality of the Covenant of the Law was against God and His truth? Did the Covenant of the Law call upon men to do that which was contrary to God? Was the proposition set forth in the Covenant of Law an immoral or an unholy one?

No, it does not mean any of those things. The Law of God called for righteous behavior. Had man been able to keep his part of the bargain, he would have been rewarded with eternal life just as God had promised. There is nothing at all immoral about man earning what he gets and not getting anything that he does not earn. That was not the problem with the Law. The problem was that it was a failure because it was weak through the flesh. It showed man up for the self-righteous, immoral, proud, haughty, fraud that he is.

The Law of God vs. the Covenant of the Law

There is a heresy that operates on the other side of the circle from the Law Covenant. It is the popular Antinomianism. It is a well established and long anathematized heresy that contends that any mention of law is a contaminant to grace and that any exercise of authority over us is an encroachment upon our individual freedom which grace to the antinomian, is supposed to mean. If anyone is being critical of you, if anyone is trying to organize you, if anyone is making any demands for faithfulness upon you, this is legalism to the antinomian. What such intellectually proud and spiritually sterile gurus fail to realize is that the Covenant of the Law is gone forever, but the Law of God has never gone anywhere, and it never will. Until heaven and earth pass away, Jesus said, not one jot nor title will in any wise pass from the law of God until all be fulfilled. Are there any examples of antinomians to which we can point? Well, of course, there are some notable ones we could name and while I am not averse to blowing the whistle on false prophets, this is perhaps not the time for it. But they are out there and many of you should be able to figure out who they are. To the people who are trapped on the inside of these circles, the messenger may seem to be a person of some depth who is impressive, but to those on the outside of his space pod, the doctrine is as transparent as the ethical influence is shoddy. Followers are taught that a Christian must never go to God to confess sin and ask for forgiveness. Christ has taken all sin away,

past present and future, and there are no laws to break in any case since the law is gone. Thus when St. John tells the Church that those who say they know God in their Christian lives speaking of sanctification, but who do not keep His commandments, this is shined on as begin somehow a message to the unbelievers.

This antinomian heresy is only one example of what is legion in the neo-evangelicalism, charismatic humanism, Nicolaitanism, and libertinism of the modern religious scene. And the biggest single cause is because the would-be leaders of the Church are not willing to stand up against the false prophets, preachers and teachers that have invaded the Church.

St. Paul is anxious that no one in the Galatian Churches get this self-centered, self-seeking, self-oriented view of righteousness by faith and the liberty into which Christ has delivered us. *Self* and *self-seeking* are the bondage. Selflessness in giving to others and giving our lives for others is the freedom. It is for this reason that Jesus said that if any man would come after Him he must first deny himself, then put himself on the Cross daily with Christ and die with Him, and then he was in a position to follow and be a disciple.

Conformity to the Spirit of the Righteousness of God's Law Is Freedom

The concept of the liberty into which Christ has delivered us and the fulfilling of the Laws of God are inseparable. There is no freedom as perfect as being completely submitted to the will of God as expressed in the spirit and truth of the Law of God and there is no bondage so immobilizing as being caught in the trap of carnal and humanistic "freedom." *Liberty* means to serve others out of a heart of desire, using the guidelines of the Law of God to tell us how that is done. It is this to which the Apostle calls the attention of the Galatians.

Gal 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Jesus once encountered a young man who had great riches. This man wanted very much to be saved, and to be a follower of Jesus Christ. He asked Jesus what he needed to do. Jesus told him to do what the Law told him to do. The man professed to have done that. Jesus then said to him that there was only one thing he lacked. He must go sell everything he had, give it to the poor and come and follow him. The young man, who had great possessions, went away because he was unwilling to do that. Was this man close to the Kingdom of God? Did he let one little thing stand between him and eternal life? No, you see, Jesus wanted to show this man what a hypocrite he was. He had not kept the Law at all. The Law requires that a man love the Lord, his God with all his heart, soul, body, and mind. If this young man had loved God as He claimed, he would have been glad to obey Him. And if he had loved his neighbor as himself, he would not have hesitated to give to his neighbor the goods that his neighbor needed and he did not.

Granted that Jesus was teaching Israelites, under the Law Covenant, what they had to do by the law to be saved. Under grace, the method of obtaining salvation changed from earning salvation to receiving it by faith as a gift. But the righteousness of the Law, by which the Child of God is to live his life of sanctification in this world, is the same in principle. It has never changed and it never will. If we will love God, we will obey Him. And if we love God, then we will love our neighbor as ourselves. If we love our neighbor, we will not want to do anything to hurt our neighbor. Thus we see that loving our neighbor is the fulfilling of the Law. We can only love our neighbor if we love God. And if we love God, we will love our neighbor. If we love our neighbor, we will want his good and not his harm. This of course does not remove or moderate the responsibility to blow the whistle on false teachers. In fact, it is out of love for my neighbor, that I warn people against these wolves in sheep's

clothing. Jesus did this. So did St. Paul, and we are required, if we will live up to the demands of leadership, to do the same. Discipline can and should be an act of love. And the exposing of false men is an act of love for those who are being taken in by them.

This passage does not propose to tell us what love is and is not. It proposes to tell us that Christian liberty is righteously expressed in loving and serving one another, not in biting and devouring one and other in order to try to come out on the top of the heap. This is the most foolish thing that any Christian can get caught up in. The moment I, out of carnal envy or competitiveness, begin to try to undermine these who are in my way, I always get entangled in a dog fight that tears me to shreds. That is just the way it works. But we Christians are not supposed to be in it for the carnal glory, to come out on top, to be the most praised, and in the position of most power. That is how the Covenant of the Flesh and the Law worked. Grace, working by faith, has delivered us from that.