

Law and Grace

Distinctions between the Old and New

John 1:17

For the Law was given through Moses;
grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. NASB

What is the Law?

For a glossary of **terms** used in this study, see the appendix “*glossary.*”

Definition and Terminology

The **Law** is most commonly used to speak of God’s moral standard by which He judges righteousness among mankind, both in people’s relationship to God and people’s relationship to neighbor, as outlined in the writings of Moses. It may have reference to a certain section of Scripture, or may be in general a reference to God’s standards for general or specific things. Many times it is used to refer to the **Decalogue** (10 Commandments), or the **Torah** (The Pentateuch or the first 5 books of the Bible), or even the entire Old Testament. It is helpful to make the distinctions of **moral, civil, and ceremonial**. That is the law was really threefold: the **Moral Law**, as summed up in the Decalogue, the **Ceremonial Law**, prescribing the ritual and all the typical (shadow) enactments, and what might be called the **Civil Law**, that relating to the people in their national, political life. The distinction is not closely observed, though sometimes the reference emphasizes one aspect, sometimes another, but generally the whole Law without any discrimination is contemplated. Sometimes the Law means the whole Old Testament Scriptures, as in John 10:34; 12:34; 15:25. At other times the Law means the Pentateuch, as in Luke 24:44.

The **Law** is a major theme in both Old and New testaments. Because God is the Judge of all mankind (Gen 18:25, Psa 94:2, Heb 9:27, 12:23), He judges according to the righteous standard of His holy Law. In this judgment, God expects perfect righteousness, as He has subjected all mankind in His Law to the standard which the Law puts forth (Rom 3:19-20). Therefore, when one transgresses God’s Law, it is called **sin**, and act of lawlessness or a transgression of God’s Law. This standard is consistent with God’s own moral character (Rom 7:19) and explains how that moral character is implemented and carried out in our human existence and relations with both God and neighbor.

The **Law** can also be referred to as the **Mosaic Covenant**, which is the covenant that God made with Israel after He delivered them by His grace from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. In this sense we also refer to it as the **Old covenant**. Generally speaking, and looking back from a New Testament perspective, we refer to the Law in the same sense that we do as the Old or Mosaic Covenant. At times, we may refer to the whole Old Testament as the old covenant or the Law, but when doing so, one must give some context to this as these terms can be easily misconstrued or confusing.

In the **New Testament**, we look back at the Old Testament and see that its fulfillment has come in Christ. In this way, much of New Testament teaching is seen in contrast to the Law, or the old

covenant, or even the entire Old Testament. Context is always important in these matters, but generally, the New Testament holds forth a **distinction between the Law and the Gospel**. The **Law** being Gods' righteous standard of the Old Covenant which all people have violated (Rom 3:23,5:12, Gal 3:22, 1 John 1:8), and have thus become sinners worthy of judgment and death (Gen 2:17, Eze 18:4, Rom 6:23, Jam 1:15), and the **Gospel** being what God has done in the person and work of Christ (Rom 3:21-24) to deliver the believer from sin and death (Rom 8:1-4). This distinction between Law and Gospel is the very heart of the Christian Faith and the most important message in the Bible because it is the heartbeat of God's redemptive work the history of Creation and mankind.

The word "**law**" in the Bible is used in several different ways. It is used as a term to describe;

- **regulations** for a society (Est 1:19, 3:8, Dan 6:12, 15, 7:25, 1 Cor 6:4, 6)
- as a **general principle** (Rom 3:27, 8:2)
- as a specific reference to **the Word of God** (Psa 1:2, 19:7, 119:72, 77, John 10:34,12:34, 15:25)
- most commonly it is a reference to the Old Testament **Mosaic Law** (Josh 8:31-32, Isa 42:21, Matt 5:17-18, Rom 8:1-4, Gal 2:16,19, Phil 3:5-56, Heb 7:19, 9:19, 10:1).

The Mosaic Covenant Law

In both Old and New Testaments, the **Law** most commonly refers to the commands and regulations of the **Mosaic Covenant**. These are contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Although the word "**Law**" in the Bible is usually referring to **Torah** as a whole, which also includes the book of Genesis. These first five books of the Bible are also referred to as the **Pentateuch**. Usually when it is used in this common way, it is capitalized, "**Law**," and this is because it is a formal rendering referring to the Mosaic Covenant Law delivered by God to Moses at Mount Sinai. It is often referred to as "**the Law of Moses.**"

Joshua 8:32 - 32 And he wrote there on the stones a copy of **the law of Moses**, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. NASB

Nehemiah 8:1 - 8 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring **the book of the law of Moses** which the Lord had given to Israel. NASB

Luke 24:44 - 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** must be fulfilled." NASB

Hebrews 10:28-29 - 28 Anyone who has set aside **the Law of Moses** dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. NASB

As the "**Law of Moses**," it was a strict moral code that God gave to govern the society of the Israelites, God's chosen people. It was instructive, teaching them how to treat one another in a Theocracy (a society governed by God), and this aspect of the **Law** is commonly called the **Moral Law**. It also gave them regulations for how God was to be worshipped, through the means of a Priesthood, an altar for blood and grain sacrifices, performed at a Tabernacle, and these are commonly referred to as the **Ceremonial Law**. It also contained laws, both perceptive requirements as well as penal sanctions, that were meant to bring authoritative *order* to the entire Israelite assembly. This aspect of the **Law** is commonly called the **Civil Law**. This means that God, as Lawgiver and Judge, would command for people to do certain things (preceptive requirements), and NOT to do other certain things for which there were penalties which could be even as severe as death (penal sanctions). Therefore the governance of this Israelite society was seen as a matter of the authority of God their ruler and King, under His holy **Law** as their Lawgiver, by which the people would be judged in His court as their Judge.

The Nelson's Bible Dictionary gives some helpful insight here.... "Biblical law is more than a record of human law. It is an expression of what God requires of man. It rests on the eternal moral principles that are consistent with the very nature of God Himself. Therefore, biblical law (the Ten Commandments) is the summary of moral law. As such it sets forth fundamental and universal moral principles..... Moreover, the biblical concept was that law comes from God, issues from His nature, and is holy, righteous, and good. Furthermore, at the outset of God's ruling over Israel at Sinai, God the great King gave His laws. These laws were binding on His people, and He upheld them. In Israel all crimes were crimes against God (1 Sam 12:9-10). Consequently, He expected all His people to love and serve Him (Amos 5:21-24). As the final judge, He disciplined those who violated His law (Ex 22:21-24; Deut 10:18; 19:17). The nation or community was responsible for upholding the law and insuring that justice was done (Deut 13:6-10; 17:7; Num 15:32-36). God's law, unlike those of other nations of the ancient world, also viewed all human life as especially valuable because man is created in God's image. Thus, biblical law was more humane. It avoided mutilations and other savage punishments. Victims could not inflict more injury than they had received. Neither could criminals restore less than they had taken or stolen simply because of a class distinction. Everyone was equal before God's law. The "eye for eye" requirement of the Mosaic Law was not a harsh statement that required cruel punishment. Instead, it was a mandate for equality before the law (Ex 21:24). Each criminal had to pay for his own crime (Num 35:31). Under the law codes of some pagan nations, the rich often could buy their way out of punishment. God's law especially protected the defenseless orphan, widow, slave, and stranger from injustice (Ex 21:2,20-21; 22:21-23). What is often called the civil law includes those specific laws in the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) that regulate civil and social behavior. All such laws are fundamentally religious since God is the lawgiver and ruler over everything. There are eight distinct categories of civil law in the Old Testament: (1) laws regulating leaders, (2) laws regulating the army, (3) criminal laws, (4) laws dealing with crimes against property, (5) laws relating to humane treatment, (6) laws about personal and family rights, (7) laws about property rights, and (8) laws regulating other social behavior. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)."

And so the **Law** is generally referred to in the Bible as the totality of this "**Law of Moses.**" It was an instructive and amazingly beneficial system of law and order, which was particularly moral and righteous, and if obeyed would also bring about the blessing and favor of God. It was filled with wise instructions for God's people. It is also often associated with terms such as "**commandment, statute, precept or ordinances.**"

Nehemiah 9:13-14 - 13 "Then Thou didst come down on **Mount Sinai**, And didst speak with them from heaven; Thou didst give to them just **ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.** 14 "So Thou didst make known to them Thy holy sabbath, And didst lay down for them **commandments, statutes, and law, Through Thy servant Moses.** NASB

Deuteronomy 4:6-8 - 5 See, I have taught you **statutes and judgments** just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. 6 **So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding** in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' 7 "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? 8 "Or what great nation is there that has **statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law** which I am setting before you today? NASB

This is because the **Law** is filled with such “*commandments and precepts.*” As such, there is an emphasis many times on these “*commandments*” and the teaching of the commandments which are to be practiced and obeyed. Thus the **Law** is normally referring to what God has commanded people to **do** and is often linked with words like, “*keep, do and obey.*” There are at least 613 commandments in the Torah, and these are summarized in 10 commandments given on the two tablets of stone to Moses on Mount Sinai. The first tablet contained 4 laws dealing with man’s relationship to God, the second tablet contained 6 laws dealing with man’s relationship to his neighbor. The **two tables of the Law** are summarized by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22...

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.**" 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**' 40 "**On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.**" NASB

Thus, Jesus summarized “*the whole Law and the Prophets,*” (terms referring to the entire Old Testament), under the **two tables of the Law**. To love God and love your neighbor was the Messiah’s interpretation of the entire **Law** and Prophets. This is a profound and simple commentary from God Himself on the *meaning* of the Old Testament **Law**. Christian, you will do well to memorize these verses and understand that the **Law** is fulfilled in and through God’s Love, expressed toward Him first, and then to our neighbor.

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and **if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** NASB

This idea then, is a helpful principle in *understanding* and *applying* the **Law** as a New Testament Christian. If it is not an expression of true biblical love, then it is most likely being misapplied. The general nature of the Law is love, because it is God’s Law, and His nature is love.

The Law is an expression of the character and nature of God

Because the Law is an expression of God’s will and desire for mankind, it flows out of the very nature of God Himself. *The very nature of God’s Law is entirely consistent with God’s nature* for God, who is goodness and truth, would never command what violates His nature.

Romans 7:12 - 12 So then, **the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.** NASB

Deuteronomy 4:8 – 8 "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments **as righteous as this whole law** which I am setting before you today? NASB

Nehemiah 9:13 - 13 "Then Thou didst come down on Mount Sinai, And didst speak with them from heaven; **Thou didst give to them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.** NASB

Because the Law is an expression of true moral virtue as it reflects God’s character and nature, it therefore gives very specific definition to what sin is, or what violates God’s nature. Therefore the Law gives us clear insight into the nature of sin, making us conscious of sin.

Romans 3:19-20 - 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; **for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.** NASB

Romans 7:7-8 - 7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, **I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."** NASB

Because the Law also categorizes different types of sin, sin against God, and various types of sin against people, it also helps us to see the severity of certain types of sin. *Much of the Civil Law is very moral in nature* and with the penal sanctions there are penalties attached to certain crimes, even as severe as death. There are also provisions made for restitutions to be made in many cases to the offended party. This helps us to see what kinds of sins are more severe than others, by the severity of the penalty or restitution that must be made. In this also we see clearly what the perfect measure of justice is for criminal activity.

Leviticus 24:19-21 - 19 'And if a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: 20 **fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him.** 21 'Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death. NASB

Exodus 22:1-4 - 22 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. 2 If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. 3 But if the sun has risen on him, **there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.** 4 If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, **he shall pay double.** NASB

Because the Law is an expression of God's holy and perfect character, people cannot not fully obey it. People have a natural inability to obey God's Law because they are sinners by nature and therefore transgress God's Law and sin.

Romans 3:23 - 23 for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** NASB

Romans 5:12 - 12 Therefore, **just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned** NASB

Now as redemptive history has progressed, God has placed the Law in history to show people's sinfulness very clearly and their guilt before God because of their many sins. The Law shows us in very specific terms exactly where and how we transgress God's nature and this makes our guilt crystal clear.

Romans 5:19-21 - 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. 20 And **the Law came in that the transgression might increase;** but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

Romans 7:13 - 13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be!

Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. NASB

At this point we should also mention the very negative and accusatory language of the New Testament in regard to God's Law. The Law is many times in the New Testament seen as that *"which brings about wrath, kills us and condemns us, holds us in bondage, is our enmity between us and God, is the power of sin, a certificate of debt against us and hostile to us, that which is weak, useless and obsolete,"* because of the Law's consequence for sin.

Romans 4:15 - 15 for **the Law brings about wrath,** but where there is no law, neither is there violation. NASB

Romans 7:9-12 - 9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but **when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died;** 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, **taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.** NASB

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law;** 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

Galatians 4:3-5 - 3 So also we, while we were children, were **held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.** 4 But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. NASB

Ephesians 2:14-17 - 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh **the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances**, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, **by it having put to death the enmity**. NASB

Colossians 2:13-14 - 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out **the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us**; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. NASB

Hebrews 7:18-19 - 18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a **former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect)**, and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. NASB

Hebrews 8:13 - 13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made **the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear**. NASB

In this sense we are made to see the very severe nature of our guilt and sin because of the very pure nature of God and His Law. There is therefore a severe tension upon us because of sin and guilt which is relieved by the grace of God in Christ through the Gospel. In this sense the NT looks at the Law in negative terms but with the purpose of driving us to Christ. See then, that God has added the Law for this very specific purpose. The Law was added to make our guilt to be clearly seen and our inability to be righteous in and of ourselves so that we will be driven to seek God for mercy. And this mercy God has provided in Christ. *The Law was given as a schoolmaster or tutor to lead us to Christ.*

Galatians 3:19-26 - 19 **Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions**, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But **the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe**. 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore **the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith**. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. NASB

Now consider that even though the Law is very severe in its condemnation of our sins which perfectly reflects God's attitude toward our sins in His holiness and wrath, it does so in order to lead us to the grace of God in Christ, which is also a reflection of God's nature of grace and mercy. See in this thought then both the severity and the kindness of God.

Romans 11:22-23 - 22 Behold then **the kindness and severity of God**; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. NASB

Continuity and Discontinuity

It is important to understand that the **New Covenant** has now come and as a result, the **Old Covenant** has been **abrogated**. This is to say that it has been annulled, replaced and fulfilled so that its purpose as a covenant with God's people Israel, has come to its fulfillment in the person and work of Christ, who is the fulfillment of all that the Old Covenant typed and shadowed, and is Himself the reality and substance of all that is represented. Therefore we see that *the Old Covenant has accomplished its place in the history of redemption* and by this realize that it was only *temporal*, remaining in place until its fulfillment, and has now become *obsolete* (Heb 8:13) and *ineffectual* (Heb 7:18). If we maintain that there is a **New Covenant** that makes the **Old Covenant** temporal, obsolete and ineffectual, then we ask; was the old covenant truly redemptive for those who worshipped in its era? And if so, in what way was it redemptive? This brings up the question of **continuity and discontinuity** between the Old and New covenants. If the substance of the New Covenant is of grace, and the Old of Law, how then can the Old be

redemptive since no one has ever been able to keep the Law perfectly and thereby be justified in that obedience? Are the Old and New very different, or very much the same if they are both redemptive? Is there a continuity or a discontinuity in the two? The answer to this question is that even though the outward nature of the Old Covenant was obedience to all of its commands and precepts, the **moral, civil and ceremonial** aspects of the Law, its true **redemptive substance** was **grace**. Its **moral** aspects simply give broad and clear definition to the will of God for His holy people to live and act in accordance with his holy nature. The **ceremonial** aspects of the Law gave a very clear pattern of the true worship of the living God, who Himself defines how He is to be worshipped as He is the creator and sustainer of all things. The **civil** aspects of the Law were necessary because God had called the whole nation out as a separated community or society of people who were to be governed by God as a people set apart and holy unto the Lord, demonstrated (at least in one very obvious way), by the wise and discerning Law that governed them, given to them by their God, Jehovah. But even the **civil Law** is a very **gracious** benefit to those who live under its wise precepts, for it contained promises of great blessing and privilege for those who would obey it.

The **Old Covenant** was **redemptive** for the Israelites (and Gentiles who joined themselves to Judaism), but in a **practical typological** form of worship, the carrying out of the Ceremonial Law. The typological form (types of Christ in the ceremonies), was carrying out divinely appointed worship, by practices and rituals, which was entirely redemptive for those Jews and Gentiles who were circumcised in heart and by faith truly trusting in God alone for righteousness. This is because at this point in redemptive history, the Law was the divinely appointed means of worship unto God for His special covenant people Israel. But the true substance of redeeming grace was and always has been faith in God and in His mercy toward His people according to His own self-revelation (given in greater fullness over time), and individuals have been known and recognized by the obedience of faith throughout every age of redemptive history, but always according to the level of God's revelation for them in these different ages. This can be seen in the entire storyline of Scripture, starting with Adam and the Patriarchs in Genesis, and moving through the whole Bible with Israel and the Church, continuing until the time of the consummation of the ages in the New Heavens and Earth. Therefore, when considering the Law or the Old Covenant with Israel, it must be understood according to its place in redemptive history. It had a **practical typological** form of worship, the carrying out of the Ceremonial Law. These **types** were the means of expressing the obedience of faith in Jehovah, and the faithful Jew was very concerned to follow the Law as best they could. This can be clearly seen in the era of the kings when the Scripture would speak of a certain king who "***did what was right in the sight of the Lord,***" as compared to those kings who would do "***evil in the sight of the Lord.***" The one signifies those who were obedient to both the **ceremonial** (in some degree), and in the **moral** and **civil** aspects of the Law, and the other wicked kings who disregarded God's Law and worshipped and served other Gods in various wicked ways. Moreover, those who were obedient received the favor of God's blessing and the privilege of deliverance from their enemies, whereas the evil kings would be overcome in all manner of calamity and put to the sword by their enemies. Nevertheless, for the generations of the Jews and some number of Gentiles, faithful obedience to the Law was the means of expressing truly devoted worship unto God, in the manner He had prescribed for them, which was an expression of God's redemptive work in them. But this salvation's substance was God's grace through faith, the sovereign work of God, expressed in their obedience to God, and always fulfilled only in the person and work of

Christ. In this sense the Old Covenant was much like the New and in this way we can see continuity. There is a **continuity** between the **Old and New Covenants** in their **redemptive substance, grace and faith**. There is an outward **discontinuity** in the **ceremonial and civil** aspects of worship in the Old Covenant, which have been **abrogated** by the **New Covenant**. Nevertheless, in both covenants the moral aspects of God's Law remain as our guide and teacher, revealing God's will and character, as well as our inability to be righteous before God, driving us to Christ as a schoolmaster. These moral aspects of the Law, of which the Decalogue is a summary, are established and upheld in both the Old and the New Covenants, and are the clearest form of **continuity** between the two.

JV Fesko writes in "The Law is not of Faith" pg 43.... "*Under the Law, grace was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come.... Under the Gospel, when Christ, the substance of the OT was exhibited, it was done with greater fullness, simplicity, and outward glory. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.*" Surely the Mosaic Covenant is unique because of its legal nature, but it demonstrated man's inability to fulfill the demands of the Law and thus drives people to Christ. But in terms of its place in redemptive history it paints a *prophetic* picture, a **typical prophecy with its types and shadows** of the sufficient and completed salvation to come in the person and work of Christ. Under the Law, the Ceremonies pointed forward to Christ. Under the Gospel, we celebrate the fullness that has come in Him with a simple remembrance of His accomplished work.

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 **things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.** NASB

Hebrews 10:1 - 1 For **the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things,** can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. NASB

But in both covenants, we are commanded to obedience to the **Moral** aspects of the **Law**. These are **forever binding** on us because they are an expression of God's character and nature, whom we worship and seek to emulate. When we say that the Moral Law is "binding," what is it that we mean by this? Binding for what purpose? Well it certainly is not a requirement of perfect obedience in order to be saved, for no person can accomplish this even in the New Covenant age with the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling. Therefore we mean that it is the imperative commandment of God to which we are bound to keep, as an expression of true devoted worship unto Him. It serves as our **guide** as to what pleases Him and how it is that we conform to Him practically in our lives.

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "**Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.** 18 "For truly I say to you, **until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.** 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. NASB

Romans 3:31 - 31 Do we then **nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.** NASB

Romans 13:8-11 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, **it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** 11 **And this do,** knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. NASB

James 2:8, 12 - 8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.....12 So speak and so act**, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. NASB

Moreover, God has threatened discipline to those who will not adhere to His moral law and also warned that the constant practice of violating it could be an expression of one's being outside of His Kingdom and absent from His saving covenant.

Hebrews 12:4-8 - 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; 6 **For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."** 7 **It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons;** for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. NASB

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 - 9 Or **do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. NASB

Galatians 6:7-8 - 7 Do not be deceived, **God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption**, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. NASB

God's character expressed in the **Moral Law** instructs us concerning the knowledge of His will, and is therefore forever our **guide**. We see the fullness of the moral character of the Law carried out in the person and work of Jesus, so that He has become for us a **"living Word"** from the Father, demonstrating in human terms the very substance of the Moral Law in His life and death. He is the supreme expression of God's holy Law, the very Word of God made flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14). Further, this profound incarnation of God in Christ Jesus has brought about the ability for the indwelling presence of God within us by the Holy Spirit. This indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is what makes the New Covenant **effectual** and **eternal**. The very power of God has transformed our nature in regeneration and brought God's very life and immortality to live inside of us who are His very temple, the place where God is worshipped is now in the very heart and soul of man, in Spirit and in truth. This provides necessary power for the practical and transformational sanctification of God's people causing it to be **effectual**, actually effecting to great degree God's holiness practically in the lives of His saints. And because the New Covenant's place in redemptive history, it has brought about the fullness of God's redemptive work in the person and work of Christ, which shall never be changed or abrogated, but rather it has fulfilled God's eternal purpose in Christ, and has reached its climax in the Gospel, bringing **eternal** life and immortality to all who will trust in Christ for salvation.

Ephesians 3:8-11 - 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and **to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God**, who created all things; 10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 **This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord** NASB

Therefore **there is both continuity and discontinuity** between the Old and the New Covenants. Brenton Ferry writes in "The Law is not of Faith" pg 83.... *"The abrogation of the civil and ceremonial aspects of the old covenant law accounts for the discontinuity between the old and the new covenants, while the continuation of the moral law accounts for their continuity."* The beauty lies not in saying there is a discontinuity, or a continuity, but rather in seeing both the discontinuity and continuity in the distinct and yet harmonious relation of both.

The Old and the New

In the New Testament, the **Law** is sometimes referred to as the “old covenant,” as it is contrasted with the New Covenant (Heb 7-10). In fact, many see the entire Old Testament as the “Old Covenant” and the New Testament as the “New Covenant.” This concept however is not entirely correct as the Old Testament contains more than just the Old Covenant Mosaic Law that God made with Israel. It also contains the **historical narratives**, even beginning in Genesis and running through Ezra, as well as the **Prophets, Psalms** and **Wisdom** literature. Nevertheless, there certainly is an **Old Covenant**, which is now “*old*,” and a **New Covenant** which is forever “*new*.” But what are the key differences between the Old and the New? What makes the Old Covenant “*old*” and what makes the New Covenant “*new*”? If the **new** replaces the **old**, how then should we view the old? And what about the entire Old Testament Scriptures, in what ways, if any, does the Old Testament apply, and how do we see it in light of the New Testament?

These questions are really the focus of this entire study and will be addressed in some detail as we examine biblical passages. But let us suffice here to give a brief answer to the general thrust of these questions.

The key differences between the two covenants relate to the fact that God has placed them in the history of redemption in order to accomplish His eternal purpose in Christ. Therefore the Old Covenant was put in place in the course of redemptive history to accomplish several preparatory matters and establish a legal basis for the condemnation of sin and a righteous justification by the Mediator whom God would send. This justification would then establish the basis for the New Covenant blessings and promises.

Galatians 3:19-22 - 19 **Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions**, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, **until the seed should come** to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But **the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe**. NASB

The Old Covenant was given to show the nature of worship unto God, proper relationship to Him as His covenant people, proper relationship to one another and most importantly to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin in order to drive people to Christ as a schoolmaster, instructing us that we are in great need of a Savior. This is primarily seen in the Ceremonial portions of the Old Covenant and typified in the blood sacrifices, Aaronic Priesthood and temple worship. The Old Covenant was therefore **temporary** and **ineffectual** in regard to salvation, pointing the way to Messiah who would come and “*save*” His people from their sins by being the fulfillment of that sacrificial system and bringing in **the new eschatological age of Messianic Salvation**. This is the age of the New Covenant that God now makes with His people through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This New Covenant brings the blessed power of the indwelling Spirit to produce God’s desired work of sanctification in the believer. Moreover, the New Covenant provides the finished work of justification for the believer and holds forth the promise of eternal life with Christ and the hope of glorification when we die. The New Covenant is therefore both **effectual** and **eternal**. We are eternally saved and sanctified by Christ in position, even though for now we are practically sanctified through our sufferings and strivings with the fallen world and our natural sinful bodies. Therefore we wait in hope for our glorification as we live out our new purpose of glorifying and enjoying God in this life. We have partaken of the Age to come in the indwelling

power of the Spirit, but we have not yet reached the climax of our transformation until the Resurrection. This is called **realized eschatology** and is a benefit of the New Covenant. We have realized the power of the eschatological (last days) age now in some degree, but not yet in its fullness. We, like the Kingdom of God, have **already** partaken of the eschatological age of Messianic Salvation, but **not yet** in its ultimate expression. That will come at the Resurrection which takes place at the *parousia* or Second Coming of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:22-24 - 22 For as in Adam all die, so also **in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,** 24 then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. NASB

1 Corinthians 15:50-57 - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; **for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.** 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

Matthew 24:29-31 - 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds,** from one end of the sky to the other. NASB

Therefore the Old Covenant has served its place in redemptive history and ushered in the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus Christ the God-man, who has powerfully broken into this Age bringing the necessary sacrificial work and active obedience to the Law to justify ungodly sinners and bring them into favor with God. Therefore the **OLD** Covenant is "*obsolete*" and has been replaced by the **NEW** Covenant. Christ has fulfilled the Law's preceptive requirements in **active obedience** and has paid its penalties in His **passive obedience** at the cross, a fulfillment of the sacrificial system.

Galatians 4:3-5 - 3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. 4 **But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.** NASB

Colossians 2:13-14 - 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out **the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us;** and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. NASB

Hebrews 7:18-19 - 18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a **former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect),** and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. NASB

Hebrews 8:13 - 13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made **the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.** NASB

On this basis the **Ceremonial Law** has been fulfilled in Christ's person and work and *abrogated*. The **Civil Law** has been *abrogated* on the basis of the fact that God has now called people from within every race or ethnic nation, every class of people (rich, poor, slave, free), and no longer has a covenant community of peoples who live together under a societal structure of civil laws, but rather live under the new principal of the Law of Christ, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This New Covenant people are told to live in the love and forgiveness of Christ no matter what nation, community or society they find themselves in. See in this **abrogation** of the

Ceremonial and Civil Law the **discontinuity** between OLD and NEW. But realizing the Moral Law of God is an expression of His character and is a necessary guide into the knowledge of His will, and will always abide with us until all is fulfilled in the Messianic Age of salvation.

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. NASB

The Moral Law then, being an expression of God's character, is the exhortation to our obedience, not as a rule or condition for salvation, but as a gracious response to what God has done in Christ to save us. The New Covenant is still a covenant with the element of obedience, whereby the truly redeemed covenant people of God express their obedience as a grateful response to God for His saving acts. However, now the believer is empowered by union with Christ *through* the Holy Spirit in order to achieve what we were powerless to do under the Law, because of the weakness of the flesh. And even though perfect obedience is still something beyond our grasp, God's purpose now in our sanctification is being fulfilled according to His gracious work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we seek to glorify and enjoy Him all of our days. All of this we do, having all our sins cancelled and forgiven and the Law no longer looms over us with a guilty condemnation, but rather we live in the newness and freedom of forgiven sins.

Romans 8:1-4 - 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 **For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,** 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. NASB

This then, is the **effectual** and **eternal** blessing of the New Covenant we now live under because of God's free grace to us, and because of Christ's finished work.

Lutheran, Reformed, and Dispensational Views

Lutheran and Reformed Christians have long held distinctions between Law and Gospel as a fundamental element in their worship. They have taught that the Law continues to serve a vital purpose for both sinner and saint and that the Gospel frees any person from the condemnation of the Law and grants eternal salvation to those who believe. Both Lutheran and Reformed traditions have upheld that there are three uses of the Law in the New Covenant age.

Lutheran view – From the Lutheran *Formula of Concord*.

1. **Curb** - that "thereby outward discipline might be maintained against wild, disobedient men [and that wild and intractable men might be restrained, as though by certain bars]"
2. **Mirror** - that "men thereby may be led to the knowledge of their sins"
3. **Guide** - that "after they are regenerate. . .they might. . .have a fixed rule according to which they are to regulate and direct their whole life"

Reformed view - In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the Reformer John Calvin likewise distinguished three uses in the Law. Calvin wrote: "That the whole matter may be made clearer, let us take a succinct view of the office and use of the Moral Law. Now this office and use seems to me to consist of three parts."

1. **Mirror** - By "exhibiting the righteousness of God, — in other words, the righteousness which alone is acceptable to God, — it admonishes every one of his own unrighteousness, certiorates, convicts, and finally condemns him."

2. **Curb** - It acts “by means of its fearful denunciations and the consequent dread of punishment, to curb those who, unless forced, have no regard for rectitude and justice.”
3. **Guide** – “The third use of the Law. . .has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already flourishes and reigns. ... For it is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what that will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this knowledge...”

Dispensational view – The Dispensational view of the Law has undergone a bit of revision from the Classic Dispensationalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, yet its basic precepts have remained in modern times under the common Progressive Dispensationalism of today. They see a more sharp division between the Old and New Covenants and their applications because these two covenants exist in two separate **dispensations** in God’s redemptive program. Therefore they would say that the **Mosaic Law is NOT binding on Christians** in any way because it was a covenant that God made specifically with Israel and therefore has now been replaced by the **Law of Christ**, which is defined specifically in the New Testament by commands given therein. Depending on which dispensational writer you read, you see some easing on this sharp distinction in how the Law is to be applied. Some would say specific commands are binding because they have been repeated in the New Testament, and others would say the Old Covenant is completely *abrogated*, but because God’s nature is fleshed out in the Moral Law, the moral portions of the Law bear a very consistent nature to the Law of Christ expressed in the New Testament.

It is apparent to me that even though these positions seem to be in contrast to one another, that the application of the Moral Law is effectively the same in all 3 views. In other words, **the way that these different Christians apply the Moral Law is effectively the same**. With respect to the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Law, all would agree that these have been abrogated, except for those sects of Christianity that try to maintain, in varying degree, certain aspects of the Ceremonial and Civil Law, such as Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Reconstructionists, and certain forms of Messianic Judaism. This is also true of non-Christian cults like the new Liberalism of the mainline denominations of the 19th-20th centuries (antinomianism), Armstrongism, and certain forms of Messianic Judaism. It is my opinion that these differences are easily reconciled and properly applied by the Reformed and Baptist confessions of the late 17th Century. These hold a balanced view and speak to a correct application of the whole of the Mosaic Law and the Old Covenant.

Summary

We have seen then that the Old Covenant is that covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai through Moses, and was served as a specific work of God in the course of redemptive history to accomplish certain things in the plan of God in order to establish a legal basis for judgment and justification, and to bring to light the knowledge of sin to the whole of humanity, and established a pattern for the true worship of God in the Priesthood, tabernacle/temple worship and ceremonial laws. Because of this we see that the Old Covenant was **temporary** and **ineffectual** in regard to salvation having fulfilled its place in redemptive history. This was all a preparatory, laying the groundwork for the New Covenant age of Messianic salvation which was a mystery under the Old Covenant but has now come in the person and work of Christ, and is both **eternal** and **effectual** having accomplished the salvation of all of God’s people of every age.

What Does the Bible Say?

Old Testament

The Law first appears in the Old Testament in the book of Exodus in chapter 20, after God had graciously delivered His people Israel from the bondage of slavery under Pharaoh, having destroyed the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. After feeding them manna, quail and water from the rock, God then meets with them at Sinai and gives them “the covenant” there. The Lord first delivers the Decalogue (10 Commandments) on two tablets of stone (Exodus 20), and then goes onto to give both Civil (Exodus 21-22) and Ceremonial Laws (Exodus 23-31) as the narrative history of the Exodus unfolds. The historical narrative continues through the books of Leviticus and Numbers in which God gives additional Civil and Ceremonial Laws throughout. Then the book of Deuteronomy is a summarizing of the whole of the Law, and a reaffirmation of the covenant, and the continuation of the historical narrative wherein the role of leadership is passed from Moses to Joshua.

The **Old Covenant** is contained in this section of the Old Testament, **Exodus through Deuteronomy**, and outlines God’s covenant with His chosen nation Israel. It is under this covenant that God will unfold the course of redemptive history all the way through the Old Testament narrative up until the time of the arrival of the Messiah and the New Covenant Age. Joshua through Esther give a historical narrative covering approximately 1000 years through the time of the Exile and return to Palestine under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. During that portion of history, the Wisdom and Poetry literature was written, as well as the major and minor Prophets were written at various times in the course of that historical narrative.

Here see that the **Old Covenant** was a specific covenant that **God made with Israel**, (and not the Church), that served its place in redemptive history to establish the basis for everything that God would accomplish in Christ and prepare the way for the New Covenant blessings that have now come in the Kingdom of God. It is important to see however, that the blessings of the Messianic Age of salvation were a **mystery in the Old Testament period** and not realized or fully understood by the people of that age. This accounts for the typological role of the Old Covenant worship which laid the necessary foundation for all that God has brought to pass in Christ, ushering in the Kingdom of God through Him.

Romans 16:25-27 - 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you **according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past**, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, **has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith**; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. NASB

Ephesians 3:4-7 - 4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight **into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit**; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, NASB

See then that New Testament outlines a view of the Old Covenant which sees it as **temporary** and **preparatory** in order to fully establish a basis for what God would do in the New Covenant Age of Messianic salvation. Although this is true, the Old Covenant is filled with tremendous revelation about God’s character and nature, his redemptive purposes in the world, a pattern for the true worship of God and requirements of worship based on God’s holy character. It is also filled with instructions about how mankind is to love one another and what that looks like

practically in a society through the Civil Law. It is a bright shining light that leads us to see the will of God for how He is to be worshipped and how we are to treat each other according to His holy character in this fallen world.

Texts and Contexts – Moses and the Prophets

The Making and Breaking of the Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant, or Old Covenant was made by God with Israel at Mount Sinai, 3 months after their deliverance and Exodus from Egypt, the tyrannical oppression of slavery under Pharaoh king of Egypt. After leading them through the desert, the Israelites come to Sinai and there God meets with them and makes a Covenant with them.

Exodus 19:1-8 - 19 In **the third month** after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. 2 When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. 3 And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 5 'Now then, **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'** These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." 7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. 8 And all the people answered together and said, **"All that the Lord has spoken we will do!"** And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.

NASB

Here God mentions the **“Covenant”** He will make with the people, and they agree that they will keep it. One of the great purposes of the Old Covenant is mentioned here, that God desires to make Israel a **“kingdom of priests and a holy nation”** so that they would be a people set apart unto God to reflect His holiness to the watching world. During a terrifying meeting with God at Sinai in Exodus 19:9-24, the Lord God Himself speaks the words of the Decalogue, the 10 Commandments, in Exodus 20:1-17. With the people in great fear at the thunder and lightning, fire and smoke from the presence of the Lord on the mountain, He further delivers and expands the Law in Exodus 20:22-23:19. Then in Exodus 23:20-33, the Lord gives a prophecy and direction for the Israelites to enter into the promised land of Canaan, and the conquest of the wicked Canaanites who lived there. All of this Conquest will be accomplished by a supernatural deliverance by God and at His sovereign direction and timing. All of these words are written down by Moses (Ex24:4, 7) who is given special privilege to go up on the mountain in the presence of the Lord. In this section of text, **Exodus 20:1-23:33, the whole Law is summarized** and in it Moral, Civil and Ceremonial precepts are given in **summary** form. This summary of the Covenant is later expanded on greatly in Exodus through Deuteronomy in many diverse ways.

After the Lord had spoken the words of the Covenant, He gathers Moses, the priests, and the elders of Israel together at the base of the mountain, and the people being present but farther away, with blood sacrifice for cleansing, He reads the whole **“book of the Covenant”** in the hearing of the people. Here the people formally hear the summary of the whole Covenant and agree to do as the Lord has spoken.

Exodus 24:7-8 - 7 Then **he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"** 8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, **"Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you** in accordance with all these words." NASB

Here see **that God made the Old Covenant with Israel at Sinai**. And this He did so that Israel would be a *“kingdom of priests and a holy nation”* belonging to the Lord, as His own possession, a people set apart unto God to reflect His holiness to the watching world, both in their generation AND in the annals of recorded history (in the Bible), for all the generations of humanity to see.

It is worth noting here that Moses then goes up on the mountain for forty days and nights to receive the Law and the Covenant from God, during this time, God gives a portion of the Ceremonial Law in great detail which includes instruction on the forming of the Tabernacle and the Priesthood, along with the Sabbath instructions. **The Sabbath is set forth here as the perpetual SIGN of the Covenant between God and Israel**, which is for all their future generations.

Exodus 31:12-17 - 12 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 13 "But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for **this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations**, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. 14 'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. 16 **'So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.'** 17 **"It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever;** for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed." NASB

See here that **the Sabbath is specifically set apart by God as a SIGN of the Old Covenant that He made specifically with Israel**, and explains that this sign is specifically for them, and all there future generations, the physical ethnic line of Israelites. This is clearly set forth in

Exodus 31:16-17 - "So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' 17 **"It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever;"** NASB.

For an excellent and detailed study of this matter, see the study written by Greg Ferreri, **“The Sabbath – Shadow and Substance,”** published on the HCF website here;

http://www.heritageabq.org/library/details/the_sabbath_shadow_and_substance/

This is followed by **the tragic breaking of the Covenant by Israel** just a few short days after these great events. As Moses is up on the mountain receiving the Decalogue on two stone tablets, written by the *“finger of God”* (Ex 31:18), Israel goes astray from God and breaks the Covenant by forging an idol of a golden calf and bowing down to worship it, calling it their god. This they did indulging in immorality and drunkenness, *“pagan revelry OR rose up to play”* in celebration of this god, which was really no god at all, but only an image formed by the art and craft of man. The words *“rose up to play”* (v-32:6) in Hebrew have sexual connotations, and verse 25 speaks of them being severely *“out of control.”*

Exodus 32:3-8 - 3 Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he took this from their hand, and **fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."** 5 Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." 6 **So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.** NASB

See here the weakness of the flesh to uphold and obey the Law of God! Israel quickly broke the commandments and in a very overt and antagonistic way they even broke the first, second and

third commandments. At this the Lord was angry enough to wipe them off the face of the earth, but Moses successfully entreats God to forgive them, Exodus 32:7-14. Then as Moses heads down the mountain to admonish and correct the straying idolaters, carrying the two stone tablets of the Covenant, he throws them down in anger and breaks them in a symbolic act of significance. Here see that Israel was quick to “break the Covenant” that the Lord made with them, and along with the breaking of the tablets comes the destruction of the idol and false God they had made.

The Renewal of the Covenant

After a lengthy discourse with the Lord, they replace the stone tablets with new ones in a symbolic act of “renewing the Covenant.” This takes place in Exodus 34:1-28.

Exodus 34:27-28 - 27 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write down these words, for **in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.**" 28 So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And **he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.** NASB

At this time, God reaffirms His command for the Israelites to go up and conquer the land of Canaan, and commands the Israelites to move forward with the plans to erect the tabernacle and consecrate the Priests and implement the Ceremonial worship. From this time forward in the narrative, from the latter chapters of Exodus all the way through Deuteronomy, the Scripture traces Israel’s journey up to the east side of the Jordan, before entering into Canaan. Many more precepts and regulations for Ceremonial worship and civil government are given in the texts of Leviticus and Numbers, and then Deuteronomy is really a reiterating or repetition of the Law. In fact, the word Deuteronomy means, “repetition of the Law.” In Deuteronomy the Covenant of the Law is restated and clearly set forth.

Deuteronomy 26:16-19 - 16 "This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. 17 **You have today declared the Lord to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. 18 And the Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession,** as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; 19 and that He shall set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken." NASB

This restating of the Covenant is to charge Israel from this generation forward to always obey the Lord and walk in His ways. All of this happens on the on the east side of the Jordan before they cross into Canaan. It is there where Moses dies and Joshua leads them into the promised land of Canaan.

Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil Law

As we have stated, the Bible nowhere deliberately makes distinctions in the different aspects of the Law, but rather the Law is seen as one whole body of precepts. Nevertheless, it is obvious from an overview of the Law, the Mosaic Covenant contained in the Torah, that there are three major categories of precepts addressing **Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil** aspects of God’s Covenant with Israel. These threefold precepts are:

- **Moral Law** - as summed up in the Decalogue, the 10 Commandments, Exodus 20:1-17
- **Ceremonial Law** - prescribing the ritual and all the typical (shadow) enactments associated with the Tabernacle and the Priesthood explaining how God was to be worshipped through Ceremony and Rite

- **Civil Law** – precepts relating to and governing the people in their national, political and social life for the purpose of establishing justice and order in their society

Since these distinctions are not deliberately pointed out, they simply serve as a way to understand and categorize the Law for purpose of study and close examination. Having already discussed this at length earlier in this study, we will only briefly look at some texts which bear these distinctions out, and discuss the general application of them.

Moral Law – Eternal moral principles from an eternal and moral God

The Moral Law outlines what God requires of His people who are to be “*holy*” and set apart unto Him. It gives specific guidelines about how Israel is to relate both to God and to their fellow man. All of these moral requirements are eternal moral principles and an expression of God’s nature in such a way that they define holiness in a practical way. As such it sets forth fundamental and universal moral principles.

Exodus 20:7 - 7 "**You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain**, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. NASB

Leviticus 19:1-4 - 19 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, '**You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.** 3 '**Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the Lord your God.** 4 '**Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods;** I am the Lord your God. NASB

Exodus 22:20-24 - 20 "**He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed.** 21 And **you shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him,** for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 **You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.** 23 If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; 24 and **My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword;** and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. NASB

These laws would many times also set forth a punishment for the violation of them. These punishments, (which could range from a simple restitution or blood sacrifice to the death penalty), typically show the severity of the crime.

Ceremonial Law - The Priesthood, Tabernacle and the Temple

The Ceremonial Law put forth regulations for the worship of God which was to be a continual and perpetual tradition and formal custom among them from generation to generation. These were to be carried out at a **Tabernacle**, a “*tent of meeting*” where the people would meet with God. This Tabernacle was built according to specific instructions and ornate features and furniture that God had given instructions for the creation.

Exodus 25:1-9 - 25 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "**Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution.** 3 And this is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, 4 blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, 5 rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, 6 oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 7 onyx stones and setting stones, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 8 **And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.** 9 **According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.** NASB

In the Ceremonial Law God directed certain daily, weekly, monthly, and annual rites and ceremonies which were to be observed as a matter of ceremonial worship unto God. This was both for the glory and fame of God’s name and the good and well-being of the people.

Exodus 29:38-46 - 38 "Now **this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs each day, continuously.** 39 The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; 40 and there shall be one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a libation with one lamb. 41 And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it the same grain offering as the morning and the same libation, **for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the Lord.** 42 **It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your**

generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. 43 And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. 44 And I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. 45 **And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God.** 46 And they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God. NASB

These were to be overseen and directed by the Levites, the sons of Levi (one of Jacob's sons), whom God had set apart as priests. This **Levitical Priesthood** has special rights and privileges among Israel and also worked as a law enforcement and medical authority in many cases.

Exodus 23:14-17 - 14 **"Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me.** 15 You shall observe the **Feast of Unleavened Bread;** for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. 16 Also you shall observe the **Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits** of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the **Feast of the Ingathering** at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field. 17 **Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.** NASB

These Ceremonial Laws were given by very specific and direct instructions from God, who appointed the ways and means of how He was to be worshipped. They even included dietary restrictions for God's holy people. Thus these Ceremonial Laws touched every aspect of Israelite society. In them was a very beautiful and elaborate array of rites and practices which were to be seen as holy, solemn and carefully guarded and carried out by well trained and consecrated priests who were also appointed by God.

Civil Law – A wise rule from the wise God to govern His own people

The Civil Law includes those specific laws that regulate civil and social behavior. All such laws are fundamentally religious since God is the lawgiver and ruler over everything. These civil laws are scattered throughout the entire Law and provide for the well-being of the Israelite people by giving a very orderly and humane set of laws and guidelines for the public governance of their nation. There are eight distinct categories of civil law in the Old Testament: (1) laws regulating leaders, (2) laws regulating the army, (3) criminal laws, (4) laws dealing with crimes against property, (5) laws relating to humane treatment, (6) laws about personal and family rights, (7) laws about property rights, and (8) laws regulating other social behavior.

Exodus 22:1-5 - 22 **"If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.** 2 If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. 3 But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. **He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.** 4 If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double. NASB

The Civil Law was very broad and touched every aspect of Israelite life. It was a just and righteous means to govern their public life and reflect the character of the holy God they worshipped.

Thus see in the whole of God's Law a well ordered and upright society of people who were to be set apart and governed by God. God's people were to preserve and study God's Law, revere His name, be grateful and thankful, and obey, love, and serve their redeemer God.

Deuteronomy 10:12-14 - 12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, **but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,** 13 **and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?** 14 "Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. NASB

Deuteronomy 11:13-15 - 13 "And it shall come about, **if you listen obediently to my commandments** which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, 14 **that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil.** 15 **And He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied.** NASB

The Promise of a New Covenant

It is also worth noting that in the course of redemptive history and throughout the storyline of Scripture, that God had promised a future Messianic Age of salvation that would come upon the whole world, through His anointed One, the Messiah. These promises came through the Messianic prophecies contained in the Torah and also later, in the Poetry literature and in the Prophets.

Genesis 3:15 - And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; **He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.**" NASB

Genesis 12:3 - 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**" NASB

Psalms 22:16-18 - 16 For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; **They pierced my hands and my feet.** 17 I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; 18 **They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.** NASB

Isaiah 11:9 - 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, **For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea.** NASB

Isaiah 53:5-6 - 5 But **He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.** 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; **But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.** NASB

Even though there are many Messianic prophecies will make direct reference to the coming Messiah, like the ones above, there are also many types and shadows which reflect His coming and His work. The Old Testament is filled with these typical prophecies. A few for example are;

- **Abraham** and God's command to **sacrifice his son** on Mount Meriah (also called Mount Zion or Mt Calvary) is a type of God sacrificing His Son at that same place some 2000 yrs later and that place was called "on the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided"
- the life of **Joseph** is a type of Israel (Christ's brothers) rejecting His God appointed authority over them only to find in the end that **God has highly exalted Him** above them and uses Him to save them in a time of desperate need
- **Moses the deliverer** of the people of God from slavery to the ruler of the world Pharaoh, is a type of Christ delivering God's people from slavery to sin under Satan the god of this world
- The **blood of the Passover Lamb** on the doorpost of the household saving its inhabitants from the death angel is a type of Jesus our Passover Lamb saving us from spiritual and eternal death

The Old Testament is filled with this kind of imagery and shadows of all kinds of New Covenant realities. But what it all points to in "**shadow**" Christ and the New Covenant age are in "**substance.**" He has brought the promised age of Messianic Salvation. It is in the context of this coming Messianic salvation that God also promised a New Covenant with His people. Therefore, the reality of a New Covenant to come was only a matter of time, which has in fact come to fruition under Jesus the promised Messiah.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 - 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, **"when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,** 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 **"But this is the covenant**

which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." NASB

Ezekiel 11:19-20 -19 "And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. NASB

Ezekiel 36:23-28 - 23 "And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. 24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 "And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. NASB

It is worth noting that the character of this New Covenant is that its elements are fulfilled by God alone. It is *"not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, "declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it"* (Jer 31:32-33). God does a powerful regenerating work in the New Covenant that affects what it commands. God does this by *"writing the law on the heart,"* a reference to the new birth or **regeneration of the Holy Spirit** in the New Testament. This is the power of the New Covenant, that is, that the Holy Spirit now raises us from our spiritually dead state (Eph 2:1-6), opening our spiritual eyes to our great need for a Savior showing us Christ as the provision that God has made to save us, and powerfully re-creates our nature (2 Cor 5:17) so that He even comes to live and dwell in us to work His ministry of sanctification (Rom 8:1-14) in order to glorify Christ in and through us. God says, *"I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,"* speaking of the work of regeneration. And the result is a new obedience that this brings about in our lives, *"that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them"* (Eze 11:19-20). This is even clearer in Eze 36:27; *"And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."* Here God says *"I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."* See here the powerful effect of the New Covenant power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

One might object at this point because in the context of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 11 & 36 the people who are promised this New Covenant are the people of Israel. This is clearly seen in...

Ezekiel 36:38 - "28 And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God." NASB

This is of course a valid objection, but is clearly answered by the fact of the *"mystery"* of Gentile salvation under the New Covenant which was *"kept secret for long ages past but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith"* (Rom 15:26).

Romans 16:25-27 - 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you **according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past**, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, **has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith**; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. NASB

As we have pointed out on page 14, this **New Covenant** unfolds in the course of history and in the New Testament as the ***“mystery of Christ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”*** This mystery of Christ is inclusive of all the Gentile nations.

Ephesians 3:4-6 - 4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight **into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit**; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, NASB

And even though the New Covenant is inclusive of the Gentile nations, it does in fact still include those in Israel who will believe in Christ, their promised Messiah, and receive the blessing of the New Covenant age, eternal salvation and union with Christ and God through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is the subject of Romans chapters 9-11 where Paul explains that God has current and future plans for the ethnic nation of Israel which He will fulfill in the course of history.

Romans 11:1-5 - 1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! **For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin**. 2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." 4 But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 **In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice**. NASB

Paul goes on to explain that even though the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah and brought swift destruction upon themselves, and that this brought the New Covenant blessings to the Gentiles, that God has a yet future day when He will again gather Israel together and supernaturally regenerate them and make them partakers of the New Covenant blessing and power, and ***“graft them back in”*** to the true covenant people. This he also calls a ***“mystery.”***

Romans 11:23-26 - 23 And they also, **if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again**. 24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? 25 **For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and thus all Israel will be saved**; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob." NASB

Of this future Israelite salvation, the prophets also testify in many places. It is said that Israel will be gathered back into the land from all the nations where they scattered and there God will supernaturally deliver them from hostile nations and settle together in the land, and there rule over them in peace and safety, according to the promises that he made to the forefathers. These promises are in the context of the New Covenant verses of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 & 37.

Ezekiel 36:24-26 - 24 **“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. 25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you**; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. NASB

Revering and Loving the Law

We have seen that the Old Covenant Mosaic Law has been fulfilled in Christ and replaced by the New Covenant. The **Old Covenant has fulfilled its place in the history of redemption** and has laid the **necessary groundwork** for the Messiah to come and bring in the **New Covenant age of Messianic Salvation**. Moreover, we have acknowledged that the Law continues to fulfill some very important roles for us as a **curb, mirror, and guide** (pgs 12-13). Now in acknowledging these roles of the Law for us, let us understand and affirm that the Old Covenant Law is in fact the very words of God, along with all of the Old Testament, and it holds the **highest place** of reverence for us along with all of **the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments**. We are not to think that the Old Testament has somehow been relegated to a lesser place in our hearts and minds, but does in fact hold the highest place of reverence as it is in fact God's very words, and a clear declaration for us of His character and nature, as well as a solid guide into His will and His ways and His plans for redemptive history. We simply must understand how to read and apply the Law, in light of the fact that the Messiah has come and fulfilled it and given much instruction, along with the Apostles, on how to rightly understand, interpret and apply it. This we are going to learn in further detail as we begin to look at the New Testament passages that deal with the Law in the coming weeks. But let us understand that the Law should uphold and support in our hearts as a mighty foundation, the very throne of the great King Jesus, and as such, should be the object of much of our attention and affection. It should serve as a bright and shining light in showing and teaching us about our holy God and His ways. Let us use it therefore, for the things that God intended it for. If the Law makes us conscious of sin, then let it therefore do its work. As we read it and meditate on it, let it make our sin manifest to us and convict us. Let it be that schoolmaster that continually reminds us of our great need for Christ.

Romans 3:20 - 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; **for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.** NASB

Galatians 3:24 - 24 Therefore **the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.** NASB

Of course the great good news is, as we read the Law and learn again of our sin, we rejoice in the greatness of the salvation of God in Christ which has delivered us from the terror of the Law and made us sons and daughters in God's family, forgiven and blessed forever. The Law then motivates greater faith and gratitude, as we see its holy terrors and realize even more how blessed we are to be forgiven and adopted! We can then learn to love the Law, and the conviction it brings, as it will do its work in teaching who God is and in learning his ways. It should occupy, along with the prophets much of our love and affection. We can learn to delight in the conviction it brings, and even long to be conformed to its holy standard, even as our precious Lord was perfectly conformed to it.

Psalm 1:2 - 2 But **his delight is in the law of the Lord.** And in His law he meditates day and night. NASB The Law's own testimony is that it is perfect and sure, giving wisdom and restoring the soul. Its precepts are right and bring joy even as its commandments are pure and give light to the eyes. It is clean and enduring, and its judgments are true and altogether righteous. Yes the Law is sweeter than honey and more desirable than fine gold.

Psalm 19:7-10 - 7 The **law of the Lord is perfect**, restoring the soul; The **testimony of the Lord is sure**, making wise the simple. 8 The **precepts of the Lord are right**, rejoicing the heart; **The commandment of the Lord is pure**, enlightening the eyes. 9 **The fear of the Lord is clean**, enduring forever; **The judgments of the Lord are true**; they are righteous altogether. 10 **They are more desirable than gold**, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. NASB

It is not that the Law is able to save sinners, only Jesus can do that. But it surely can enlighten us and teach us about our glorious God and impart His wisdom and knowledge to us. This is what we love about the Law. We love how it shows us the holiness of God. We love the way it convicts us as if to drive the sin out of our hearts and minds as we learn what pleases and displeases our God and Father. We treasure the Law for these reasons and we therefore allow it to work its God intended good work in us!

Psalm 119:1-12 - 119 How blessed are those whose way is **blameless, Who walk in the law of the Lord.** 2 How blessed are those **who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart.** 3 They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in **His ways.** 4 Thou hast ordained **Thy precepts,** That we should keep them diligently. 5 Oh that **my ways may be established To keep Thy statutes!** 6 Then I **shall not be ashamed When I look upon all Thy commandments.** 7 I shall give thanks to Thee with uprightness of heart, When I **learn Thy righteous judgments.** 8 I shall keep Thy statutes; Do not forsake me utterly! 9 **How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word.** 10 **With all my heart I have sought Thee;** Do not let me wander from Thy commandments. 11 **Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.** 12 Blessed art Thou, O Lord; Teach me Thy statutes. NASB

The **Lutheran Formula of Concord** is absolutely right in when it says, “*We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith*” (Epitome 6.2). Preachers must preach the Law without embarrassment. Parents must insist on obedience to its moral aspects without shame. The Law can, and should, be urged upon true believers—not to condemn, but to correct and promote Christlikeness. Both the indicatives of Scripture and the imperatives are from God, for our good, and given in grace. You see then that there is much profit even for us born again New Covenant believers in reading and studying and preaching the Law. The **Belgic Confession** says about the law, “*we continue to use the witnesses drawn from the law and prophets to confirm us in the gospel and to regulate our lives with full integrity for the glory of God, according to his will*” (Art. 25) This is why Paul says...

Romans 3:31 - 31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, **we establish the Law.** NASB

Through the moral aspects of the Law, we establish the goodness of God and the holiness of God in our hearts and minds so that we may learn of our shortcomings and sin, acknowledge the goodness of God and seek to conform to it. As we see God’s goodness, we long to be like Him as the Spirit creates this godly desire in us. As we see our sin, we loathe and hate it and long to put it off. But this leads us to deeper faith in Christ as we realize our utter inability to conform to it and therefore run for refuge to our Savior, who has covered and washed and atoned for all of our failures. We therefore rejoice in the great salvation that Christ is for us and this cycle sanctifies us in greater and greater measure as the Spirit slowly but surely changes us from glory to glory. This is exactly how Paul reasons in Romans 7 and 2 Corinthians 3.

Romans 7:12 - 12 So then, **the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.**

Romans 7:14 -18 - 14 For we know that **the Law is spiritual;** but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for **I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.** 16 But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, **I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good.** 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; **for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.** NASB

Romans 7:22-25 - 22 **For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,** 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. NASB

2 Corinthians 3:18 - 18 But we all, with unveiled face **beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,** just as from the Lord, the Spirit. NASB

It is important to make a distinction here between the moral and the ceremonial/civil aspects of the Law. When we speak about preaching the Law, we are speaking about bringing the moral aspects of the Law to bear upon the hearer's conscience. We are talking about our conformity to the character and nature of God which is made manifest in the moral aspects of the Law. This is not to say that the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Law do not have any place in preaching or teaching us, surely they do. But they are not a system of legal obedience as a requirement to somehow please God. In the New Covenant age the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Law simply give us an understanding of the nature of God and the nature of the worship of God as it was expressed through the Old Covenant with Israel. But now something far greater has come in the person and work of Jesus that has fulfilled the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Law. This is the main point in the New Testament book of Hebrews chapters 1-10.

Therefore let us see that the Law surely does have a place in the life of a New Testament Christian. This is especially true of the moral aspects of the Law as a matter of obedience and pleasing God in response to the great salvation and forgiveness of sins that He has provided for us in Christ. Not only this, but even the New Testament is filled with imperatives that command us to behave in certain ways and to do certain things. It also forbids us from doing many things. These New Testament commands sound much like the moral commandments in the Law.

Ephesians 4:25-32 - 25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.** 26 Be angry, and yet **do not sin**; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. 28 **Let him who steals steal no longer**; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. 29 **Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth**, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other**, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 - 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that **you abstain from sexual immorality**; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. NASB

1 Peter 2:13-17 - 13 **Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors** as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. 17 **Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.** NASB

The Law then does have its place in our Christian Faith. But it should never be set forth as a system of legal achievement in order to be saved, but rather a grateful response to the salvation that God gives as a free gift in Christ. Salvation comes by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law, as a free gift from God, by His free grace, because of the merits of Christ.

Romans 3:21-24 - 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being **justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

Romans 3:28 - 28 For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.** NASB
Galatians 2:16 - 16 nevertheless knowing that **a man is not justified by the works of the Law** but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since **by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.** NASB

New Testament Texts and Contexts – The Gospels and Acts

As we survey the texts of the New Testament, we see the Old Covenant Mosaic Law used many times and in many ways. Primary among these is the very way in which the Law is spoken of as being **temporary** and **preparatory**, having **reached a point of fulfillment** and thus now serving only as a basis and foundation for the Age of Messianic Salvation that has now come in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This new age is frequently referred to in the New Testament as the “Kingdom of God.” This temporary and preparatory nature of the Law is seen in clear statements by the Lord Jesus.

Matthew 11:13 - 13 "For all **the prophets and the Law prophesied until John**. NASB

Luke 16:16-17 - 16 "**The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached**, and every one is forcing his way into it. 17 "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than **for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail**. NASB

Jesus contrasted the Law with the “*gospel of the Kingdom of God*,” the new age that had now arrived, which was first preached by John, the forerunner of the Christ. Even though these two are held in contrast, Jesus still maintained that the Law could “*not fail*,” but rather explained that He came to fulfill it. He maintains therefore that what the Law has established is sound and true, and will remain until the consummation of the ages, but has now reached a time of fulfillment and ushered in a new age, an age He refers to as the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven. These two terms are synonymous in the Gospels.

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "**Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill**. 18 "For truly I say to you, **until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished**. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in **the kingdom of heaven**. NASB

Therefore as Jesus would speak about the Law, He continually held forth this idea that the what the moral aspects of the Law had established, was true and righteous and a standard by which we appraise what is good and evil, just and unjust. Nevertheless He would maintain that it had reached a time of fulfillment and that the religious leaders of His day had badly misunderstood it. At times, He had scathing words for them and would correct them and point them to the true meaning of the Law.

Matthew 23:23-24 - 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have **neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness**; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 24 "**You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!**" NASB

He would hold Himself out as a judge and interpreter of the very Law itself. As He did this, He would frequently show Himself to be the sum total of the Law and the very fulfillment of it Himself, and claim to be greater than the most revered objects in the Law such as the Temple.

Matthew 12:1-8 - 12 At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. 2 **But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."** 3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; 4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? 5 **"Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent?** 6 **"But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. 7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. 8 **"For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."** NASB**

Even though the Law may condemn a woman caught in adultery in John chapter 8, Jesus could stand as a **mediator** between her and the condemnation of the Law and offer her forgiveness. And this He would do silencing the religious hypocrites who show themselves to be equally as sinful as the very woman whom they would condemn.

John 8:2-11 - 2 And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. 3 And **the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst,** 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 6 And they were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground. 7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "**He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.**" 8 And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9 And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. 10 And straightening up, **Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?"** 11 And she said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "**Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more.**"] NASB

We see in this a powerful picture of the transition that has come in redemptive history in the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ stands as a **mediator** between sinners and a holy God, the terror of the His Law and the wrath of God which it brings to all men because of sin, and offers forgiveness to the sinner. In Jesus Christ, who Himself is the living Word of God, grace and truth have arrived and been realized and this good news of forgiveness and eternal life is preached to all the nations. This is the testimony of the Gospel accounts. Jesus Himself is the very fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He was the Word of God now come in the very flesh.

John 1:14-18 - 14 And **the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,** and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" 16 For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 **For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.** 18 No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. NASB

The Gospels paint the picture that Jesus Himself is the fulfillment of all that the Law and Prophets spoke of, and that now in Him a new age of Messianic Salvation had arrived. They testify to the fact that a massive transition in redemptive history has taken place in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who Himself is the fulfillment of the Law.

Luke 24:44-49 - 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, **that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**" 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "**Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.**" 48 "You are witnesses of these things. 49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." NASB

Now even though Jesus portrayed Himself as the very fulfillment of the Law itself, He surely did not suggest that the Law was insufficient as a guide and mirror for us to learn of God and His ways and means. In fact He upheld the Law as our guide, teaching us to see in the Law and the Prophets both the nature of God and wise instruction for life which has come from God Himself. He would summarize the Law in brief statements that were profound and powerful, and then explain how this was in fact wisdom from God on how we should live, obey God and fulfill our purpose in life.

Matthew 7:12 - 12 "Therefore, **however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.** NASB

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "**You shall love the Lord your God** with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**' 40 "**On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.**" NASB

It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus fully intended us in the Kingdom Age to see the Law and Prophets as a means of instruction and rule for life, informing us of God's will and our duty towards Him and our neighbor.

In the book of Acts, the Apostles are clearly setting forth Jesus and the Gospel as the dawning of the new Messianic Age of salvation. They continually uphold and Jesus as the very Christ, and His resurrection as proof of God's deliverance from death through Him, proclaiming that Jesus is in fact the only way to be forgiven and saved.

Acts 2:22-24 - 22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: **Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst**, just as you yourselves know — 23 this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 "And **God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.** NASB

Acts 2:29-36 - 29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 "And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to **seat one of his descendants upon his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. 32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.** 34 "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 35 Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet. " 36 "**Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified.**" NASB

As a means of receiving this salvation, which was testified to by the Old Testament Scriptures, the Apostles implemented the **ordinance** we now know of in the church of **baptism**. They insisted that a **repentant faith was the means of receiving the salvation of Christ**, and that **public baptism was the public profession** and demonstration of one's faith in Christ. Moreover, that upon exercising such repentant faith, that individuals would receive the promised Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the Old testament Prophets (Acts 2:17-21).

Acts 2:37-39 - 37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "**Brethren, what shall we do?"** 38 And Peter said to them, "**Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is for you and your children**, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself. NASB

As they preached this Gospel, they were continually holding forth Jesus as the Christ, and the cross and the resurrection as the central focus of His work, and repentance and faith as the means of receiving this blessing of the Lord, in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Acts 3:13-21 - 13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, **the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up**, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but **put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. 16 "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. 17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,** 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. NASB

They were making a clear contrast between the old way of Judaism and the new Messianic way of salvation. In fact, they were reproofing the Jewish leaders for putting their own Christ to death. In this reproof, they were still proclaiming that they could be forgiven and reconciled to God through Jesus the Christ, remaining as Jews, but surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. As they

proclaimed this message, they sure to make it clear that ONLY through Christ could this reconciliation and salvation from sin come.

Acts 4:5-12 - 5 And it came about on the next day, **that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.** 7 And when they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this name this man stands here before you in good health.** 11 "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. 12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." NASB

For this message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they were severely persecuted and even put to death. This clearly proves the nature of transition from the Old Covenant age, which was firmly resisted by the religious Jews, and the New Covenant age of salvation which had come in and through Christ. For this Gospel the Apostles and early Christians were willing to suffer and die.

Nevertheless, they continued to clarify and proclaim the Gospel and make clear the contrast between **Old Covenant** Judaism and **New Covenant** Christianity, or if you will, a contrast between **Law** and **Gospel**. In this contrast they clearly made the point that the Law could not “free” anyone, but the Gospel was the way of forgiveness, freedom and salvation. Notice here how the Law is seen as **temporary** and **ineffectual**, and the Gospel as **eternal** and **effectual**.

Acts 13:38-39 - 38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.** NASB

As the Gospel of the Kingdom is unfolding in the transitional age between Judaism and Christianity, the debate over **justification by faith alone** is highlighted in a disagreement between Paul and the Judaizers. The central issue at stake in this debate was whether obedience to certain aspects of the Ceremonial Law were a legal requirement for salvation. This doctrinal issue is heard and judged by the Jewish Christian Apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

Acts 15:1-5 - 15 And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, **"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."** 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them **should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.** 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 4 And when they arrived at Jerusalem, **they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders,** and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, **"It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."** NASB

This controversy in highlighted and intensified by believing Pharisees in Jerusalem who also hold to the doctrine of the Judaizers, claiming obedience to certain aspects of the Ceremonial Law, were a requirement for Christians. As the Apostles and elders heard the matter they clearly affirmed **salvation by grace through faith in Christ, apart from obedience to the Law.**

Acts 15:6-11 - 6 And **the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.** 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 **"And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.** 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which

neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 "**But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.**" NASB

As they discuss the matter further, they not only affirm Gentile salvation apart from Jewish Law customs, they also affirm that the Old Testament Scriptures affirm that this day of Gentile salvation would arrive. They also give a short list of issues they deem important for Gentiles to observe in their new faith, which were a radical departure from the sinful Gentile culture.

Acts 15:12-21 - 12 And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 "**And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it, 17 In order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,'** 18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old. 19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that **we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.** 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." NASB

See here a ruling by the Apostles and Jewish elders of the church on the controversy of what is essentially necessary for Christian Faith in regard to obedience to the Old Covenant Mosaic Law. It is of particular import here to see that the issue at hand, a ceremonial issue of circumcision, was in no way acknowledged by the Apostles as necessary, but rather they lay down a few brief maxims which were of particular importance in the debate at hand. Primarily, these issues of **idolatry, fornication, and the eating of blood** were rampant among the Gentiles to the point of being part of the sinful cultural lifestyle in the Greco-Roman world. Secondarily, these particular sins, being essential parts of the moral Law were of an offensive nature to the Jewish Christians living in these Gentile regions. Therefore, the Gentiles would minimize conflict with the Jewish Christian brothers by abstaining from these particular sins. More importantly, the Apostles uphold the import of obedience to the Moral Law as an expression of true saving faith, and require none of the Ceremonial or Civil aspects of the Law, which were *abrogated* in the Gospel.

Here then is a general summary of the Old Covenant Mosaic Law in **the Gospels and Acts**. The Law is seen as the true religious expression of the worship of God **UNTIL** the arrival of the Messiah whom it promised would come and restore all things. It is seen as the holy words of God Himself, the Scriptures, which expressed the true form of worship that God intended for His covenant people Israel, in all three aspects of its nature, Moral, Ceremonial and Civil. Jesus taught that He came both to **fulfill** and to **interpret** the Law, and usher in a New Covenant age of Messianic salvation which was to remain as God's **final** and **eternal** purpose for the whole world of people, both Jew and Gentile alike. In this, His person and work ushered in the Kingdom of God, the radical in-breaking of the eschatological and eternal age of life and immortality. Therefore, His **Person** (King, Messiah, Savior) and His **Work** (substitutionary atonement and legal obedience), become not only the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets, but an entirely new and eternal form of worship focused on His Person and Work, which is received by grace, through faith, in Christ alone. This faith was then expressed practically in obedience to the moral precepts of the Law. Ceremony and ritual gave way to genuine and heartfelt conformity to God's holy will, by a radical regeneration of the Holy Spirit. This **eternal** and **effectual** New Covenant age of Messianic salvation is ushered in by the preaching of the Gospel, in which the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, eternal life and immortality is proclaimed. The book of Acts bears out this exact pattern as the Apostles carry this good news of the Gospel to the Gentile nations.

New Testament Texts and Contexts – General Epistles

As we survey the **General Epistles**, we find the Old Covenant Mosaic Law as a main topic of discussion in the book of **Hebrews**. Therein it is contrasted with the new age of Messianic salvation that has dawned in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, very much like we saw in the Gospels and Acts. Of this discussion in **Hebrews** Thomas Schreiner writes; *“The author to the Hebrews engages a sustained argument against reverting to the Aaronic priesthood and the Levitical sacrificial cultus. He does not claim that the Mosaic Covenant was somehow a mistake from its inception. Instead, he hangs his argument on salvation-historical realities. Now that Christ has arrived as the Melkizedekian priest, a return to the Levitical priesthood would constitute a denial of Christ’s sacrifice. The Aaronic priesthood and the Old Testament sacrifices are not rejected wholesale, they are viewed typologically. The Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices pointed to and anticipated the sacrifice of Christ. They are shadows, He is the substance. The brute beasts offered in the Old Testament sacrifices cannot ultimately forgive, but Christ’s sacrifice is atoning since He is a willing and sinless victim. The repetition of Old Testament sacrifices reveals that they do not actually forgive sin, whereas the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ definitively and finally atones for sins.”* These statements are clearly seen to be true in the text of Hebrews. The writer maintains that the Levitical priesthood was **unable to atone** for sins and **looked forward typologically** to Christ, His sacrifice, His priesthood, and to a **New and better covenant** at time later in history.

Hebrews 10:1-4 - 1 For **the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things**, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**. NASB

Hebrews 10:9-12 - He takes away the first in order to establish the second. 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, **which can never take away sins**; 12 but He, having **offered one sacrifice for sins for all time**, sat down at the right hand of God, NASB

Hebrews 9:8-10 - 8 The **Holy Spirit is signifying this**, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, 9 **which is a symbol for the present time**.

Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, 10 since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body **imposed until a time of reformation**. NASB

Hebrews 9:11-16 - 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, **He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption**. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more **will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this reason **He is the mediator of a new covenant**, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. NASB

Hebrews 8:6-7 - 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as **He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises**. 7 **For if that first covenant had been faultless**, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. NASB

Hebrews 8:13 - 13 When He said, "**A new covenant,**" **He has made the first obsolete**. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. NASB

The writer maintains that when the priesthood changes, it also changed the law that governed it.

Hebrews 7:11-12 - 11 Now **if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the**

order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? **12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.** NASB

The Melchizedekian priesthood succeeded the Levitical priesthood as the **eternal** and **once-for-all mediation** prescribed by God Himself.

Hebrews 7:23-28 - 23 And the former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, 24 but He, on the other hand, **because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. 25 Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him**, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, **because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.** NASB

Therefore the Levitical Priesthood and the Ceremonial Law are seen as typological in a Redemptive-Historical sense. This is to say that they fit into a specific time period in redemptive history to be **fulfilled at a later time** and in a **greater way**. The Old gives way to the New and better plan of fulfillment that God has as the ages progress ever nearer to the consummation.

Hebrews 9:23-25 - 23 Therefore it was necessary **for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.** 24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, **a mere copy of the true one**, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; NASB

Learn here then from the letter to the Hebrews, the clear **abrogation** of the **Ceremonial Law**, including the Levitical Priesthood, the temple sacrifices, the washings and consecrations and the other outward and ceremonial rites related to it. The Ceremonial aspects of the Law were only **temporary** and **ineffectual**. More than this, see that Christ is the actual long awaited **substance** of God's ultimate plan in history that was only a **shadow** in the Mosaic Covenant. It was Christ who provided a perfect mediation between God and man as the divinely appointed **High Priest**, whose once-for-all sacrifice is **effectual** to atone for sins to the uttermost, and whose Priesthood is **eternal**, for **"He ever lives to make intercession for us."** In Christ a New and better covenant has dawned which stands on better promises and provides complete atonement and eternal forgiveness for **"those who draw near to worship God through Him."**

The letter by **James**, the brother of Jesus and a leader of the Jerusalem council of elders, does mention the Law, and has a significant discussion about it. James does draw significantly from the Old Testament to drive home his points as the recipients of his letter are clearly identified as Jews. Although this is true, we must understand that **James never mentions the ceremonial Law, circumcision, the Sabbath or food laws.** Instead he has a particular focus on obedience to the moral aspects of the Law and an emphasis on obedience to it. For example he maintains that if you **violate one portion** of the Law, you have transgressed the **entire Law**.

James 2:10-12 - 10 For **whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.** 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. NASB

Therefore James exhorts his hearers to obedience to the moral aspects of the Law. He has a particular focus on partiality, a bridled tongue, godly wisdom, rich oppression of the poor, and the care of orphans and widows. See in these James clearly drawing from the moral principles contained in the Old Testament and applying them to our life as a guide for walking in and doing God's will. In fact, this is the key to seeing how James views the Law. Apparently, He sees the Law as having been fulfilled in Christ, which has brought about a **salvation of the soul**, through the Gospel, **"the word of truth"** (v-1:18), and **"the implanted word"** (v-1:21). This **"implanted"**

“*word of truth*” is an obvious illusion to the promise of the New Covenant foreseen in the Prophets, and which has produced a new life and divinely inspired obedience for believers.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 - 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah," 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." NASB

Ezekiel 11:19-20 -19 "And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. NASB

Ezekiel 36:25-27 - 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. NASB

Thus when James refers to the Law, he sees the Law as **the fulfilled Law in Christ** which has freed us from sin by regeneration and conversion, a Gospel reality that has now dawned in the age of the New Covenant. Therefore he does not minimize the Law but rather sees it as a guide and a mirror (1:23), clearly informing us of God’s will so that we are freed from the shackles of human sin in order to become **doers** of the **Word** and thus please God, be blessed by Him, and avoid sinning against Him (1:22-25). Thus James refers to the Law as the “*Law of liberty.*”

James 1:25 - 25 But one who looks intently at **the perfect law, the law of liberty**, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but **an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed** in what he does. NASB
Now all of this may seem as though James is exhorting us to obedience to the Law as if we were under the Law. However the discussion in James 2:14-26 clearly focuses on the life of faith, where James makes the point that the kind of faith that “*saves,*” is the true and genuine kind of faith that produces good works.

James 2:14-17 - 14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has **faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?** 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 **Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.** NASB

James emphasis on obedience to the Law and producing good works as a result of faith, is designed to drive home the point that obedience to God is an essential part of born again faith, and mere professors are in fact “*merely hearers who delude themselves*” (1:22). He speaks of a salvation by “*faith*” (2:14) and also a salvation by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, where he clearly testifies of an “*implanted word*” which “*is able to save your souls.*”

James 1:18 - 18 In the exercise of His will **He brought us forth by the word of truth**, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. NASB

James 1:21 - 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.** NASB

Therefore, James clearly sees the freedom that has come to us now in the Gospel, the “*faith*” that “*saves*” by an “*implanted word of truth,*” which produces a visible obedience. In this he exhorts us to continued obedience to the moral aspects of the Law. He sees this as the way of freedom from human sin and as freedom to obey by a newly empowered and born again life. We now obey the Law because God is empowering us, and this is the way of true freedom from the human shackles of sin.

In the epistles of **1 and 2 John** there is a reference to the Law by way of the word “*commandments*.” John **never mentions the ceremonial Law, circumcision, the Sabbath or food laws**. Rather, John sees the commandments in terms of **love for God and for neighbor**. In this see that John exhorts obedience to the moral aspects of the Law, and sees the “*commandments*” as having been fulfilled in Christ as the new age of the Gospel has dawned, and the **indwelling Spirit** is a reality that allows us to “*abide in Him*.”

1 John 3:23-24 - 23 And **this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another**, just as He commanded us. 24 And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that **He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us**. NASB

See here that “*believing in Jesus*” and “*loving one another*,” are identified with each other. Consider how the second table of the **Law is closely tied to the Gospel** or believing in Jesus Christ. This emphasis on **faith and love** is a major theme in 1 and 2 John. Thus see that the “*commandments*” cannot be restricted to Old Testament “*commandments*” but are identified with the Gospel. Therefore, born again Spirit empowered faith that manifests itself in the obedience of love, is John’s theme, showing the heart of Christian life in the new gospel age.

1 John 4:7-8 - 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God**. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. NASB

1 John 4:13-14 - 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because **He has given us of His Spirit**. 14 And we have beheld and bear witness that **the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world**. NASB

1 John 4:20-21 - 20 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And **this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother** also. NASB

Much like James, John explains that true saving faith manifests itself in obedient love for God and neighbor. Notice the two tables of the Law shining brightly here. But **the Law here is empowered by the indwelling Spirit** which is identified with the new Gospel age and faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. As John summarizes his letter in chapter 5, he connects these two themes of loving God and neighbor with being “*born of God*.”

1 John 5:1-3 - 1 **Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God**; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when **we love God and observe His commandments**. 3 **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments**; and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

Then he clearly explains that being “*born of God*” is a direct result of “*believing that Jesus is the Son of God*,” which he identifies as “*the victory that has overcome the world, our faith*.”

1 John 5:4-5 - 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and **this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith**. 5 And who is the one who overcomes the world, **but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** NASB

See then the use of the Law in the **General Epistles** is much like its use in the Gospels and in Acts. The moral Law is seen as God’s eternal guide and mirror for us, but Jesus has brought a new Messianic age of life and immortality to light through the Gospel. The Ceremonial Law is seen as **temporary** and in contrast to the **Person and Work of Christ**, who is the fulfillment thereof, which has brought about a radical new age of regenerate faith. In this new Spirit empowered age, God has regenerated us and written the Law on our hearts. This has resulted in a faith towards Jesus the Christ. This faith is then expressed practically in loving obedience to God in the moral precepts of the Law, loving God and neighbor. Ceremony and ritual have given way to genuine and heartfelt conformity to God’s holy will, by a radical regeneration of the Holy Spirit. This is the **eternal and effectual** New Covenant age of Messianic salvation.

New Testament Texts and Contexts – Pauline Epistles

There is no other writer in the New Testament who clarifies the discussions of the **Old Covenant Law** in light of the **New Covenant** as does the Apostle Paul. Paul has much to say in regard to the Law being himself a zealous and studied rabbi and Pharisee. Having received the Gospel by personal revelation from the Lord Jesus Himself, Paul is well qualified to explain to us the most intricate details when it comes to **distinctions** between the **Old** and **New Covenants** and the nature of the **Law** in light of the **Gospel**.

Paul's letter to the **Romans** is no doubt the most comprehensive New Testament treatment of the Law. In it Paul uses the word **Law** no less than **78 times**. In chapter 1 Paul begins by telling us that *"the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all those who believe"* (v-16) and that all of humanity is under the just penalty of God's wrath, (v-18), and this in spite of the fact that God has revealed Himself sufficiently to all mankind (v-20), and yet mankind persists in their rebellion against God and have thus come under the wrath of God and are *"worthy of death,"* (vs-22-32). In chapter 2 Paul lays out the fact that all of humanity will eventually face God in judgment, as *"his Gospel declares"* (v-16), both Jew and Gentiles alike, all of them will face God in judgment and are subject to both their consciences as well as the very Law of God (vs-12-29). In chapter 3 Paul explains the fact both Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin and judgment (v-9), that there is no one righteous in all the world (v-9-10), and that the *"whole world will be accountable to God"* for their deeds and that no one will be justified in the sight of God on the basis of their deeds, according to the Law (v-19-20). It is here where Paul begins to draw out a **contrast** between the **Law** and the **Gospel**.

Romans 3:19-20 - 19 Now we know that **whatever the Law says**, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and **all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.** NASB

Having clearly stated that all will be *"accountable to God"* and judged by God's perfect standard in the Law, he clearly exposes the purpose of the Law in judgment is to reveal *"the knowledge of sin"* and provide a standard of judgment, against which no one will be able to stand.

Romans 3:21-23 - 21 But now **apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,** 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for **all have sinned and fall short** of the glory of God NASB

The **contrast** between **Law** and **Gospel** is highlighted by Paul's statement that the *"righteousness of God has now been manifested apart from the Law."* In this he is no doubt referring to the Person and Work of Jesus being that *"righteousness"* that *"has now been manifested."* See here then Paul extolling a *"righteousness apart from the Law,"* yet saying that this righteousness is *"witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."* Paul is explaining that the Law itself testifies of a righteousness of God that is *"apart from the Law."* Paul will go on here to describe this as the Person and Work of Christ which is a *"gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."* The **contrast** is further highlighted by his statement that this righteousness is made available *"through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe."* See here in these statements a **contrast** between the *"works of the Law"* (v-20) and *"faith"* (v-22).

Romans 3:24-26 - 24 being **justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;** 25 whom God displayed publicly as **a propitiation in His blood through faith.** This was to

demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He **passed over the sins previously committed**; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the **present time**, that He might be just and **the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**.

It is here where Paul brings up the legal term *“justified”* and describes a **justification** which is by **faith** and provides the righteousness of God apart from the works of the Law. This justification is;

- A **gift by grace**
- It comes through the **redemption** which is in Christ Jesus
- Merited by a **propitiation** in His **blood**
- Laid hold of by **faith in Jesus**
- A **demonstration** of God’s righteousness
- Redemptive-Historical - Passed over sins **previously** committed under the Law, for righteousness in the **present time**

In this is seen the most profound and revealing **contrast** between the **Old Covenant Law** and the **New Covenant Faith**. Paul clearly has made the point thus far in Romans that people cannot be justified before God on the basis of the works of the Law, but rather the Law is what condemns and brings the knowledge of sin, being God’s perfect standard of righteousness that will convict the whole world. He therefore presents the only way of justification before God’s judgment which is the **Gospel of salvation, by grace, through faith, in Christ alone**.

Romans 3:27-30 - 27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. **By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.** 28 **For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.** 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed **God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith** is one. NASB

He further draws this contrast out, using the word law here as a principle and not referring to the Old Testament Law. This new *“law of faith”* is what brings **justification** in contrast to the *“works of the Law.”* Moreover, he makes it clear that **circumcision is not the means of justification** because God will also justify the uncircumcised by faith. This also ends the controversy of whether God **requires circumcision for salvation**, for here Paul states that faith in Jesus is that which justifies both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. See here in Romans the **contrast** between **Law** and **Gospel** is brought to a bright and clear conclusion. The Gospel brings a justification before God that the Law cannot provide. This comes **by grace, through faith, in Christ alone**. This idea is further expanded and nailed down by Paul in chapter 4 where Paul describes the nature of the **works-faith contrast** in the example of Abraham.

Romans 4:2-5 - 2 For **if Abraham was justified by works**, he has something to boast about; but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "And **Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.**" 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But **to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.** NASB

Paul makes the point that Abraham was not justified by works, but was rather *“reckoned righteous”* by *“believing God.”* Paul denounces being justified by works and clearly re-states that God justifies by faith when he says, *“but to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.”*

Romans 4:13-16 - 13 For **the promise to Abraham** or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world **was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.** 14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; 15 **for the Law brings about wrath**, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. 16 For **this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace**, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, **not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham**, who is the father of us all, NASB

Here Paul has made the point that both Jew and Gentile alike are justified by grace alone and through faith alone. Because the Law can only “*bring wrath*,” God must **justify by grace through faith** “*not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham*.” See here then the circumcised and the uncircumcised can be justified in only one way which is apart from human works and comes only as a gift of grace to those who have faith in Christ. This is the meaning of the Law and Gospel contrast. The Gospel of the Person and Work of Christ brings justification and righteousness before God that the Law only exposes the need for and cannot provide since all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glorious judgment by the Law. It is by grace, through faith, in Christ alone that salvation from sin and righteousness before God can be attained.

Now to further the discussion and describe the role and purpose of the Law, Paul gives a brief sketch of redemptive history in regard to sin and death, Law and grace in Romans 5:12-21. It is here where he highlights the concept of sin entering the world through one man’s disobedience and spreading therefore to all humanity, and grace being a gift through the obedience of one man and spreading to those who receive it.

Romans 5:19-21 - 19 For as through the **one man’s disobedience** the many were made sinners, even so through the **obedience of the One** the many will be made righteous. 20 And **the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more**, 21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

Here Paul clearly states that the purpose of the Law was to “*increase transgression*.” This is to say that through the definitive guidelines of the Law, sin has been clarified and shown to be exactly what it is, as we have seen “*through the Law comes the knowledge of sin*” (Rom 3:20). It is here then that Paul highlights **God’s purpose in redemptive history to bring a massive transition by grace through faith in Christ** in order to conquer sin and death so that “*grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*.” It is here where Paul shows the purpose of the Law and Grace by introducing two new contrasts. These of course are the **Flesh-Spirit** contrast and the **Law-Spirit** contrast. He does this by contrasting the effects of the Old and the New Covenant ages. He explains that we have died to sin by faith with Christ so that we can walk in newness of life. These are references to the effects of the **NEW** Gospel age we have entered, in contrast to **OLD** Law age we have been delivered from by grace.

Romans 6:4-14 - Therefore we have **been buried with Him through baptism into death**, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might **walk in newness of life**. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that **our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin**. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body** that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, **for you are not under law, but under grace**. NASB

Paul insists that since “*our old self was crucified with Him*,” that now we have become “*alive from the dead*” because we “*are not under the Law, but under grace*.” Because of this new Gospel reality Paul insists that we are to “*consider ourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus*.” He therefore contrasts the **OLD** way of sin reigning in death with the **NEW**

way of being *“dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”* Therefore the Gospel has brought a *“newness of life”* (v-4), because we have *“died with Christ”* (v-8), and so we must *“no longer let sin reign in our mortal body”* (v-12), because *“sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace”* (v-14). See here the transition that has taken place in the Gospel which Paul describes as *“not under law but under grace.”* Now in chapter 7 & 8 of Romans Paul then furthers his discussion by showing that the Law reveals the struggle with *“sin in our mortal body”* by showing us the true nature of the flesh, our old crucified self, and driving us to faith in Christ, and the great dependence we have on the Gospel and the power that is brought to us by the Spirit. In this he contrasts the **OLD** way of being *“bound”* to the Law which bore *“fruit for death”* (v-5), with the **NEW** way of dying *“to the Law”* (v-4) and being *“released from the Law”* (v-6), so that we *“bear fruit for God”* (v-4), and *“serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter”* (v-6).

Romans 7:4-6 - 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to **die to the Law through the body of Christ**, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might **bear fruit for God**. 5 For **while we were in the flesh**, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to **bear fruit for death**. 6 **But now** we have been **released from the Law**, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we **serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter**. NASB

See again the contrast between the **OLD** and the **NEW** in that we were bound by the Law, *“**but now have been released from the Law**”* and this has brought about the *“newness of the Spirit”* in contrast to the *“oldness of the letter.”* See here Paul describing the **OLD ineffectual** way of the **Law** compared to the **NEW effectual** way of the **Spirit**. He explains that the Law’s purpose is to show us the holy nature of God and our utter inability to overcome sin because of the exceeding weakness of the flesh, so that the Law brings death and kills us (v-11).

Romans 7:10-11 - 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, **proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me**. NASB

In this he explains that the Law is *“holy and righteous and good,”* but because of the weakness of the flesh and indwelling sin, we are shown to be utterly sinful as we see ourselves in the mirror of the Law.

Romans 7:12-13 - 12 So then, **the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good**. 13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment **sin might become utterly sinful**. NASB

Through the Law then, seeing the sin which is in us, he then explains the great war and struggle between the flesh and the Law of God in the inner man.

Romans 7:22-23 - 22 For **I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members**. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. NASB

He shows that the Law can only bring despair and condemnation and we must have a deliverer from this bondage which in fact is provided in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this brings us to the good news of the Gospel and the victory that it brings through Christ and the Spirit. It is this discussion that Paul highlights in chapter 8.

Romans 8:1 - 1 There is **therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. NASB Notice here the *“therefore”* of chapter 8 verse 1. Here Paul refers to the entire scope of all that he has explained thus far in Romans, and not just the immediate preceding verses. This is the crescendo of the symphony of Gospel truths that has been laid out before us, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Chapters 1 thru 3 layout the

condemnation of the whole world before God because of sin, and that sin is clear because of the holiness of God's Law. And then in chapter 3 verse 21 and following Paul argues that "**justification**" has been affected by the manifestation of "**the righteousness of God,**" and that righteousness is a "**gift by His grace,**" because of the sacrifice of "**Jesus Christ,**" which is received "**by faith.**" Then in chapter 4 he makes the point that if righteousness is by believing and not by works, then the circumcised and the uncircumcised can be "**justified**" in only one way which is apart from human works and comes only as a gift of grace to those who have faith in Christ. This is the meaning of the **Law and Gospel contrast**. Then in chapter 5 he argues that in the same way that "**sin entered the world through the disobedience of one man Adam,**" and we have all sinned in the likeness of Adam, that all who are "**in Christ**" shall be "**made righteous through the obedience of the One**" man Jesus. Through Him "**grace reigns**" and brings "**eternal life**" in Christ. In chapter 6 Paul reasons therefore that the OLD self has "**died with Christ**" so that we now live in "**newness of life,**" for we are "**not under Law but under grace,**" and been given the free gift of eternal life, "**for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" And even though our mortal body with its imperfect sinful nature is still "**weak**" according to the perfect standard of the Law, and this causes a huge struggle for our sanctification between the Law and the weakness of the flesh, as chapter 7 exposes, we see in this our great need of the deliverer from sin and death, namely Jesus Christ the Savior. Here then Paul draws the great conclusion of all that has been said in Romans 8:1. "**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**" Charles Hodge explains, "*Since men, being sinners, cannot be justified by works ; since by the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ, the many are made righteous; and since through him, and not through the law, deliverance from the subjective power of sin is effected, therefore it follows that there is no condemnation to those who are in him.... Those who are in Christ are not just presently not condemned, but placed beyond the reach of condemnation permanently, they shall never be condemned, because Christ has procured for them eternal life, and they shall **never be separated from His love***" chapter 8:39." Paul then explains why it is that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ.

Romans 8:2-4 - 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not **walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.** NASB

Paul now explains the great reality of the massive transition that has come in the Gospel age. "**The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.**" That is the **NEW** principle in the Gospel of the justification and regeneration of "**the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**" has delivered us from the **OLD** principle of sin resulting in death made crystal clear by the holy standard of the Law. Now here is good news, we have been "**set free**" from the "**law of sin and death**" by what Christ has already done. He explains the **NEW** and **OLD** contrast by saying that "**what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.**" Because the flesh is so weak and cannot obey the Law which results in death, God cancelled out by "**sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin**" and thus He condemned and punished sin in Christ. This glorious work that Jesus has done already has resulted in a **NEW effectual** life principle, "**the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.**" And this new result shows forth the power of the Gospel that Jesus has accomplished in those who have been delivered by Him. Paul explains "**in order that the**

requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” The meaning here is that since the “*requirement of the Law*” has been fulfilled in Christ, and we have received Him by faith and are now under grace by the Spirit, the result is a sanctified life. Again Charles Hodge explains, “*Sin was condemned in Christ, in order that the sentence of justification might be fulfilled, or carried into effect in us....The Gospel is not antinomian. Those that are justified are sanctified. Holiness is the fruit and evidence of reconciliation with God.*”

See here Paul again describing the OLD **ineffectual** way of the **Law** compared to the NEW **effectual** way of the **Spirit**. And this is his purpose in all that follows in chapter 8. He labors to describe the NEW **effectual** way of the **Spirit** in contrast to the **flesh**. Those who have been delivered by Christ into this NEW life principle have their “*minds set on the things of the Spirit,*” and the result is “*life and peace.*” In contrast, those who are not in Christ have their “*minds set on the things of the flesh,*” and they are “*hostile toward God*” and “*not able to subject themselves to the Law of God, cannot please God,*” and the result is “*death.*”

Romans 8:5-11 - 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 **For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.** 7 because the mind set on **the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so;** 8 and those who are in **the flesh cannot please God.** NASB

Even better, those who are in Christ have the indwelling presence of the Spirit and they are “*alive because of righteousness.*” And this state of being “*alive*” gives them the great hope of glorification, that is, that Christ will “*give life to our mortal bodies through the Spirit.*”

Romans 8:9-11 - 11 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.** But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 And **if Christ is in you,** though the body is dead because of sin, yet **the spirit is alive because of righteousness.** 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.** NASB

These Gospel promises were never heard of in the OLD Covenant age of the **Law**, but have now come to light in the NEW age of the **Gospel**. See here the **effectual power** of life in the Spirit, causing our progressive **sanctification**, and resulting in our **glorification**, the very resurrection of our mortal bodies. Life and immortality have come to us in the Gospel because of the great things that God has done in Christ. Paul then reasons if these **indicatives** of our NEW position in Christ are true, then we must see how this demands the **imperative** of our zealous obedience because of the newness of life that we live in, driven by the power of the indwelling Spirit. This he says is our “*obligation,*” to the Spirit and “*not to the flesh.*”

Romans 8:12-13 - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation, not to the flesh,** to live according to the flesh, 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. NASB

In the rest of chapter 8, Paul goes onto to describe some of the great promises we possess because of our eternal position in Christ. He says we are “*sons led by the Spirit*” (v-14), and that the Spirit helps and aids us in our struggle until we enter into glory (v-18-27), that “*God causes all things to work together for our good because we have being foreknown, predestined, called and justified*” (v-28-30), and all of this because “*God is the One who justifies*” us and will ultimately glorify us (v-30-34). Then He sums up chapter 8 with much **assurance** as He describes our eternal security in God’s love because of God’s eternal purpose to save us which He has already fully accomplished in Christ, and that nothing “*will be able separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (v- 39).

In chapters 9 through 11 there is a discussion of the ethnic nation of Israel whom God had also chosen to be His covenant people through His unconditional election of them, and that He is perfectly free and just to do so (v-9:1-24). Paul uses this discussion to highlight the **massive transition** which has now come in the **NEW** covenant age. He labors to show that God has intended to save the Gentiles **“by faith,”** and that God has expanded His saving covenant to include the Gentiles, as He had promised in the Old Testament (v-9:22-29).

Romans 9:22-26 - 22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, **which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.** 25 As He says also in Hosea, **"I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"** 26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' **There they shall be called sons of the living God.**" NASB

Then there is a discussion about Israel and their failure to attain the righteousness of God because they did not pursue His righteousness according to faith, but rather by works.

Romans 9:30-10:4 - 30 What shall we say then? That **Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.** They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." 1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For **not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.** NASB

He shows the utter **ineffectual** way of seeking to be justified by the works of the Law as a **“way of righteousness,”** and explains that Christ has brought about a **definitive transition in the plan of redemption** by becoming the fulfillment and **“end of the Law”** and providing an **effectual** way of righteousness by faith in Him.

Romans 10:4 - 4 For **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.** NASB

He explains that in this **NEW** way of righteousness in Christ, that God is concerned with the inner reality of faith **“in your heart,”** in contrast to an outward conformity to the Law by works, as Israel had tried to achieve (v-9:30-33).

Romans 10:8-13 - 8 But what does it say? **"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,** 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness,** and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." 12 **For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him;** 13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." NASB

He affirms then, that in this transition in history, that God is making no distinction between Jew and Gentile, but is in fact **saving** both Jew and Gentile through the **preaching** of the **Gospel** (v-10:14-17), and that He is still **“calling”** out His **“elect”** people as He always has **“by grace”** through faith, apart from works, highlighting the glory of His electing grace.

Romans 11:1-6 - 1 I say then, **God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite,** a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 **God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.....** 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be **at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works,** otherwise grace is no longer grace. NASB

Because **Israel, as a corporate group,** was seeking to attain their own righteousness by the works of the Law instead of by faith, God has set them aside as a corporate group, in order to expand His saving grace to all the Gentile nations. This resulted in a **“partial hardening of**

Israel” in the plan of God to therefore reach the Gentiles which He had promised in the Old Testament, **until** the full number of Gentiles is brought into faith and salvation, **at which time** God will again return and save all of Israel in the course of redemptive history.

Romans 11:25-32 - 25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of **this mystery**, lest you be wise in your own estimation, **that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in**; 26 and thus **all Israel will be saved**; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob." 27 "And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins." 28 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. 32 For **God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.** NASB

See then that God has a **progressive purpose** through the course of redemptive history to bring about His own saving purposes. He gifted and called Israel in order to fulfill His purpose through the OLD covenant age with them, ushering in the Messiah through them, and through the Law and sacrificial system, to promise and fulfill Messianic salvation which has now blossomed and come to fulfillment through the Person and Work of Christ. In this, God has brought about the **NEW covenant age of Messianic salvation** in which He is saving both Jew and Gentile including people from every nation, and language, and tribe, and people, by the preaching of the Gospel. In fact in the course of redemptive history God has **“shut up all in disobedience,”** (that is all kinds of people...race, class, language, gender) from every nation, including Jew and Gentile, that He might **“show mercy to all”** (v-32). See then how God has planned the OLD to fill its functions and the NEW to be the **eternal** reality with the global purpose of salvation for men of every nation, and this to bring about a NEW **effectual** and powerful salvation that not only **saves** from sin, but **sanctifies** until it ultimately **glorifies** with eternal life and immortality.

It is important to point out here that even the NEW covenant age will progress through redemptive history and accomplish more purposes of God. Paul here speaks of the national salvation of the gifted and called people of Israel, and how they have received a **“partial hardening”** from God while He is at the business of saving the **“fulness of the Gentiles.”** This **“partial hardening”** happens **UNTIL “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”** Paul reasons that they will be **“grafted back in”** (v-23-24), to the true vine of God’s saving people as a corporate group. The fact that Paul is referring to Israel as a corporate group in contrast to the Gentiles who are being saved is quite obvious from the language of the context where they are held in contrast with the **you-they, you-them, you-those** language of verses 11:11-32. In these verses the **“you”** is the Roman Gentiles to whom the letter is addressed and the **[they, them, those, their]** is the Jews who were **“cut off”** and **“partially hardened.”** See then Paul’s conclusion that **[they, them, those, their]**, whom he calls **“all Israel,”** will eventually be **“saved”** when the **“fulness of the Gentiles”** has come in. So God has a yet further purpose in the course of redemptive history to **save the whole corporate group of Jews.** He makes it very clear that this happens at the second coming of Christ in verses 26-27 when he says **“The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.”** 27 **“And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”** Learn here, that the corporate group of ethnic Israel will be saved at the second coming of Christ as a further purpose of God in redemptive history. Of course we know that this will be the time of fulfillment of all of God’s promises to ethnic Israel of land, seed, blessing and King/Kingdom that will be granted them in the Millennial Kingdom. Therefore the OLD and NEW contrast through redemptive history

comes to fulfillment in God's purpose to save not only Gentiles from every nation, but also to save the entire corporate group of Israel as He has promised.

This concludes Paul's treatment of the OLD and NEW contrast in Romans except for the application of the moral use of the Law and how we should understand and apply the Law as New Covenant Christians in Romans 13 and 14. We will treat this section of text below as we discuss **Legalism, License and Liberty**. Paul does bring up the OLD and NEW contrast in a few other sections of text which are important to note.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul mentions his own relation to the Law in the context of his evangelism efforts. He states *"though not being myself under the law."* Of course Paul had stated this in Romans where we saw that we are *"no longer under the law, but under grace"* (Rom 6:14). Paul is here simply restating that he is freed from the Law and therefore free to live and interact in different cultural situations in order to benefit those whom he seeks to evangelize *"win"* for Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 - 19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. 20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; **to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law;** 21 to those who are without law, as without law, **though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ,** that I might win those who are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. 23 And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it. NASB

He also here states *"though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ."* Notice how even though Paul states in this passage that he is *"not under the law,"* he also here says that he is *"not being without the law."* Paul maintains the fact that the law cannot bind him in any situation, it nevertheless serves to inform him continually of the will of God. He further adds though that he is bound *"under the law of Christ."* This of course is a reference to the new commandment that Christ gave His disciples to *"love one another"* (John 13:34). Paul sees himself obligated to love others (Rom 13:8) and thus being *"under the law of Christ"* and fulfilling the Law's ultimate goal.

Galatians 6:2 - 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill **the law of Christ.** NASB

Romans 13:8 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; **for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law** NASB

Paul has an extensive treatment of the Law in the book of Galatians. There he is writing to refute the Judaizers who were falsely teaching that one must be circumcised and keep certain Jewish customs in order to be saved. In chapter 2 Paul treats the doctrine of **justification by faith alone** in a very similar way to Romans chapter 3. Galatians 2:16 is one of the clearest statements of justification by faith in Holy Writ.

Galatians 2:16 - 16 nevertheless knowing that **a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.** NASB

He goes on to make plain that he has in fact been convicted by the Law, and sought justification in Christ and therefore has begun a new life free from sin and living *"to God."* This new life is a life empowered by **union with Christ** and lived *"by faith in the Son of God."*

Galatians 2:17-21 - 17 "But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! 18 "For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 **"For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by **faith in the Son of God,** who loved me, and delivered Himself up for

me. 21 "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." NASB

Having been "*crucified with Christ*," Paul shows that he is then in fact living by "*the grace of God*," and by "*faith in the Son of God*," and therefore in "*righteousness*," (right standing with God) which has not come "*through the Law*," but rather **by grace through faith in Christ**. This of course is the thrust of Paul's whole argument in Galatians. He labors to show that righteousness does not come "*through the law*," but rather "*by faith*" in Christ. In fact in chapter 3 he shows that seeking to be justified by the works of the law puts one "under a curse," because the law demands perfect blameless obedience to which no one can conform.

Galatians 3:5-10 - 5 Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, **do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** 6 Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, **be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.** 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that **God would justify the Gentiles by faith**, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." 9 **So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.** 10 **For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse;** for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." NASB

Contrasting then "*the works of the law*" with "*faith*," he explains that "*no one is justified by the law*," but rather "*the righteous man shall live by faith*." He explains that the "*Law is not of faith*," because it will demand perfect obedience in order for one to "*live by them*." Instead he maintains that "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us*." See yet again the Law being contrasted with faith, "*the Law is not of faith*." What the Law could not do, God did (Rom 8:3) through Christ. Christ bore the "*curse of the Law*," for us, that we might "*receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*."

Galatians 3:11-14 - 11 **Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."** 12 **However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them."** 13 **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us** — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" — 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so **that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.** NASB

See here the great contrast of the OLD and NEW. The Law brings the "*curse*" of sin and death, but faith brings "*the promise of the Spirit*." Paul then explains what the purpose of the Law was in the course of redemptive history.

Galatians 3:19-21 - 19 **Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions**, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 **Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.** NASB

See here "*the Law was added because of transgressions*" so that we could clearly see the nature of sin and how far short of righteousness we really fall, and further, that "*righteousness*" is not "*based on the Law*," nor can it "*impart life*."

Galatians 3:22-25 - 22 But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 **But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.** 24 **Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.** 25 **But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.** NASB

Therefore in the course of history, "*the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Christ might be given to those who believe*." Before the "*faith*" of the New Covenant came, "*we were kept in custody under the Law*," awaiting the freedom that would come in the "*faith that was later to be revealed*." In this way then "*the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith*." And now that we have come to

Christ and been justified by “*faith*,” then “*we are no longer under a tutor*.” The Law then was **temporary** and intended to show the nature of our sin and our utter inability to be in right standing with God **UNTIL**, in the course of redemptive history, Christ would come and we could be justified by faith in Him, an **eternal** benefit. See here the OLD Covenant and NEW Covenant contrast in crystal clear terms.

Paul then has a lengthy discussion on how the Law is rightly understood and applied in this new age of faith in chapter 5. He urges the Galatians that returning to the Law to be justified would be “*subject again to a yoke of slavery*” and explains then that Christ has set us free from the constant and unending demand of the Law.

Galatians 5:1-2 - 5 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you NASB

In verses 13-24 he shows that love is the fulfillment of the Law and that now believers are to live governed by love for one another. This he calls the “*Law of Christ*” in chapter 6:2. Effectively he explains that Christians are now “*led by the Spirit*” v-18 and therefore “*not under the Law*.” He sets out a contrast between the Spirit and the flesh, which are at enmity with each other, much like Romans 8:5-8. We therefore strive to “*walk by the Spirit*” and in love for one another and so fulfill the Law.

Galatians 5:13-24 - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, " You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** **15** But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. **16** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. **17** For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. **18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.** **19** Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21** envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; **against such things there is no law.** **24** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. NASB

He explains then that walking in and being led by the Spirit truly, we bring forth “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (v-22-23) in contrast to the “*deeds of the flesh*” (v-19-21). This is in fact the reality of the true Christian life wherein all true Christians “*have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*.” See then the freedom of the Spirit that Christians now live under where being led by the Spirit we learn to fulfill the Law and love one another.

The OLD and NEW contrast is the main argument of chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians. There Paul is seeking to explain the **ineffectual** and **temporary** nature of the Old Covenant in contrast to the **effectual** and **eternal** nature of the New Covenant. In this discussion, he employs the contrast of letters written on “*human hearts*” opposed to the “*stone tablets*” of the Law, and also of the letter and Spirit. In these he negatively portrays the **ineffectual** “*stone tablets*” of the Law as a “*ministry of death*” v-7, and a “*ministry of condemnation*” v-9, and he positively portrays the **effectual** Spirit as a “*ministry of righteousness*” with a “*glory that surpasses*” v-10, “*for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life*” v-6. He contrasts the **temporary** nature of the Old which “*fades away*” with the **eternal** nature of the New that “*remains*” in verse 11.

2 Corinthians 3:2-11 – 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; **3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.** **4** And such confidence we have

through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 **who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.** 7 **But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory,** so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, 8 **how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?** 9 **For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.** 10 **For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it.** 11 **For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.** NASB

He continues negatively portraying the *“reading of the old covenant”* as a *“veil that lies over their heart”* that *“remains unlifted,”* which when one *“turns to the Lord”* is *“removed in Christ,”* and *“taken away.”* See here the **ineffectual** nature of the Old contrasted with the **effectual** nature of the New, which freedom one receives when he/she turns personally to Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18 - 12 Having therefore such a hope, **we use great boldness in our speech, 13 and are not as Moses,** who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away. 14 **But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.** 15 **But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; 16 but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.** 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, **with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,** just as from the Lord, the Spirit. NASB

In verses 17 and 18 he explains that we now live in the *“liberty”* of the Spirit, where we *“behold in as in a mirror”* the *“unveiled face”* of Christ where we see the *“glory of the Lord,”* and from this glorious vision are *“being transformed”* into His very *“image.”* This Paul explains is the **effectual** ministry of the Spirit, *“just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”* See then the OLD and NEW contrast once again made very clear by the teaching of the Apostle Paul.

Paul makes a few specific statements in various other places about the effect of Christ and His Gospel on the Law which he says in 1 Corinthians is the power of sin.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 - 56 **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;** 57 but thanks be to God, **who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** NASB

These kinds of statements are usually contrasting with the freedom and victory which God has given us in Christ through the Gospel. For example in Ephesians chapter 2 Christ is seen as *“our peace”* who has *“abolished in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances.”* See here that Christ has bridged the *“enmity”* between Jew and Gentile and become *“our peace”* and granted us both *“access in one Spirit to the Father.”*

Ephesians 2:14-19 - 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 **by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances,** that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; 18 for **through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.** NASB

Paul makes a similar statement in Colossians chapter 2 where he explains that although we were *“dead in our transgressions and sins,”* that God has *“made us alive together with Him having forgiven us all our transgressions,”* and this He has done by a powerfully effectual work at the *“cross”* of Christ.

Colossians 2:13-14 - 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 **having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way,** having nailed it to the cross. NASB

See here that Paul has shown the **ineffectual** nature of the Law as it was “*hostile to us*” and was a “*certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us*” and he then has explained the **effectual** work of the Gospel in contrast to the Law. What negative enmity our transgressions were because of the Law, God has positively overcome by the Gospel “nailing them to the cross.”

Here then, in the Pauline corpus, we have seen the Apostle show a definitive contrast between the **temporary** and **ineffectual** nature of the OLD Covenant and the **eternal** and **effectual** nature of the NEW Covenant. Let us then see clearly how to understand and apply the Law as a New Covenant Christian, as a curb, mirror and guide for us, clearly showing the will of God for our lives. Let us therefore press on to our heavenward call in Christ by the effectual and glorious transforming power of the Spirit, because of the freedom that has been granted to us in Christ through the Gospel.

The Role of the Law for Christians

The Issues and Challenges

Well now that we have spent some time looking at the text of Scripture and understood the contrast between the Old Covenant Law and the New Covenant Gospel, let us consider what **role** then that the Law does in fact serve for us. If in fact the Christ has cancelled the debt of the Law for us, being the fulfillment of the sacrificial system and priesthood contained in the Law, do the moral commandments of the Law still bind us to strict obedience and make us vulnerable to threatening's that the Law holds forth for disobedience? And if not, does the New Covenant then hold forth any requirement of obedience for us? And if so, then do we have a new set of laws that bind us to obedience, and is then not a legalistic system of righteousness before God?

Of course the answers are that we have entered into a state of grace wherein the debt of our sins, past, present and future has been cancelled and we have been set free from the principle of sin and death, because of Christ. Nevertheless, the grace that has come to us in the Gospel is not apart from imperatives to so live and act in such a way as to **please God** and seek to **fulfill His will** for our lives. In fact, the New Testament is filled with exhortations and imperatives to live in a manner worthy of the calling to grace and faith that we have received. The Gospel is not antinomian. No rather, in the midst of the complete forgiveness and wonderful promises that the Gospel holds forth for us [**indicatives**], are the instructions and directives that accompany living in grace and walking by the Spirit [**imperatives**]. We are exhorted to put off the old man of sin who was crucified with Christ, and to put on the new man who has been created in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:17-24 - 17 This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, **that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk**, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, **in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and **put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.** NASB

Colossians 3:5-11 - 5 Therefore **consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.** 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

8 **But now you also, put them all aside:** anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since **you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge** according to the image of the One who created him NASB

If then we have been set free from the legalistic demands of the Law and its threatening's by the grace of the Gospel, then isn't the New Testament imperatives yet a new system of legal bondage? Well of course the answer is by all means no, the Gospel sets us free. But **it sets us free FROM sin, it does not set us free TO sin.** Therefore, we live in the freedom and grace of forgiven sins because of the complete forgiveness and atonement that Christ has provided for us, and we having embraced this glorious truth by faith, are by this same faith motivated to pursue life of separation from sin in order to please God in every way. Because of the wonderful grace of forgiven sins that we have by **faith** in Christ, the wonderful **loving** union with Christ and the Father that we enjoy by the Spirit, and the **hope** of immortality in the age to come, we now by this same **faith, hope and love**, seek to do God's will and please Him. In short the glory of grace motivates us to live for Christ.

Indicative and Imperative

In the Gospel, we have been justified by grace, through faith in Christ alone. This justification we could not have achieved by legal obedience to the Law. He has merited God's favor for us, we have laid hold of it by faith, and Christ's life, death and resurrection have sufficiently covered all of our sins and provided perfect righteousness for us. These are the **indicatives** which indicate the fullness of the grace that we now stand in. Nevertheless, in the Gospel we have been commanded by Christ to repent of our sins, to trust in Him fully for righteousness, and to go and sin no more, pursuing a life pleasing to God which expresses both love toward God and love toward our neighbor. These are the **imperatives** that are non-negotiable commands to both continually repent of sins and also to do good works. These things are BOTH true. We have been set free from legal obedience for justification and righteousness, and yet we have been commanded to live a life of love toward God and neighbor.

However, the **imperatives** are the fruit of having benefitted from the **indicatives**. They are the proper expression of the powerful grace of God that changes us into the ever increasing likeness of Christ. This is clearly taught in the New Testament.

Titus 2:11-14 - 11 For **the grace of God has appeared**, bringing salvation to all men, **12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,** 13 looking for the blessed **hope** and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and **purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.** NASB

Grace has appeared and brings us salvation, this is **indicative**. But notice that this grace ***"instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires"*** and to ***"live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age."*** This is an **imperative**.

2 Corinthians 6:18-7:1 - 18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. 7:1 **Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** NASB

God will be a father to us, and we will receive all the benefits of having the Almighty as our father. This is **indicative**. But Paul reasons, ***"having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."*** This is an **imperative**. This idea appears many places in the New Testament. If we have been given such great and precious promises, then our proper response is one of conformity to God's will.

It is important then to understand that a right **balance** must be navigated continually between **indicative** and **imperative**. It is important to emphasize indicatives. The indicatives are the fuel and motivation for the imperatives. Kevin DeYoung comments on this; *“We ought to positively glory in the indicatives of the gospel. The indicatives ought to fuel our following of the imperatives. Our obedience must be grounded in the gospel. Sanctification is empowered by faith in the promises of God. We need to be reminded of our justification often and throughout our Christian lives. Our pursuit of personal righteousness will not go anywhere without a conviction that we are already reckoned positionally righteous in Christ. So let’s be passionately and repetitively gripped by the gospel of free grace.”*

But equally important is to insist on the imperatives that flow out of the indicatives. The **“grace of God instructs us to deny ungodliness.”** They go together and work for our sanctification. DeYoung comments further; *“Imperatives must be rooted in indicatives. The question, however, is whether we betray the indicatives by insisting directly and explicitly for Christians to work hard at obeying the imperatives. No one denies that obedience to the imperatives is crucial. But can we demand obedience to those imperatives? Or is that falling back on law? The central question in this discussion is not just a matter of emphasis between the indicatives and imperatives, but whether emphasizing the indicatives accomplishes the goal of the imperatives without ever insisting upon them. Or to put it another way, is sanctification by faith alone in our justification by faith alone? I think not. The last thing I want is to be the guy who says “stop making the gospel so important.” I never want to encourage people to emphasize the gospel less. But it is possible to emphasize the gospel in a wrong way. The Reformed confessions understand that obedience to God’s commands—which we all want—is not accomplished merely by insisting on indicatives, but also by insisting directly and explicitly on the imperatives that flow from them.”*

Let us see then that a healthy understanding of the grace of God in all of its promise and fullness is important and should be constantly emphasized in our Christian life. But equally important is the desire for God’s people to be holy and conform practically to God’s will and desire for our lives. This also then addresses the issue of the role of the Law for us. The Law is holy and good and rightly used when it is given to inform us of God’s will and also of His character. It helps us to understand who He is and what His purposes are for us in the world. DeYoung comments on this as well; *Let’s not be afraid to land on law—never as the means of meriting justification, but as the proper expression of having received it....The Lutheran Formula of Concord is absolutely right in when it says, “We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith” (Epitome 6.2). Preachers must preach the law without embarrassment. Parents must insist on obedience without shame. The law can, and should, be urged upon true believers—not to condemn, but to correct and promote Christlikeness. Both the indicatives of Scripture and the imperatives are from God, for our good, and given in grace.”*

Hear then is an application of using the Law in its proper role now to inform us of the will of God that we might conform to it. The Law leads us to a knowledge of God’s will, as does the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. The Old is of course understood in light of the New, the

Law is interpreted from the perspective of the Gospel. It therefore has a glorious and sanctifying role of leading us to the knowledge of God's will when **rightly understood and applied.** And so we then seek to understand what the will of the Lord is and have our minds renewed with this knowledge so that we might please Him in every way.

Romans 12:1-2 - 1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And **do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.** NASB

Colossians 1:9-12 - 9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that **you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects,** bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. NASB

Ephesians 5:15-17 - 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, **but understand what the will of the Lord is.** NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 - 4 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us **instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification;** that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; NASB

1 Peter 4:1-2 - 1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 **so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.** NASB

See here that the New Testament explains that it is necessary for us to pursue an understanding of God's will for our lives as He has commanded us in these passages. But it also explains that the **Old Testament Scriptures are given for our learning** as well. The word for "*Scripture*" in 2 Timothy 3:16 is [*graphe 1124*] and it means the Old Testament Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - 16 **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;** 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. NASB

2 Peter 1:19-21 - 19 And so we have **the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,** until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 20 But know this first of all, that **no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.** NASB

To put this another way, **the New Testament prescribes that we use the Old Testament for teaching,** encouragement and correction in godliness. It was a common practice of the Apostles to refer to the Old Testament as a means of discerning God's will and how it should be applied and understood.

Romans 15:3-4 - 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me." 4 For **whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures** we might have hope. NASB

1 Corinthians 9:8-11 - I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? **Or does not the Law also say these things?** 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? 10 **Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written,** because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. 11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? NASB

Notice that these passages are not merely *typology* pointing to some greater New Testament reality, but **historical narratives of God's dealings with His people teaching and warning us** about His nature and applying it to us in a very similar way that it applied to them.

1 Corinthians 10:5-13 - Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. **6 Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved.** 7 And **do not be idolaters**, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." 8 **Nor let us act immorally**, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 **Nor let us try the Lord**, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 **Nor grumble, as some of them did**, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now **these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.** NASB

Notice Paul's application from Israel's wanderings in the desert to the Corinthians and also to us. *"We should not crave evil things as they also craved and do not be idolaters, as some of them were."* Paul is not making nice suggestions for us to consider if we like, no indeed, **he is giving strict instruction and warning to the church to abstain from lust and also from idolatry and immorality.** He then reasons with **indicatives** explaining that *"God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."* See here the Old Testament Law preached and applied to New Testament Christians by the Apostle Paul. Peter does something similar.

2 Peter 2:6-9 - 6 and **if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter;** 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), 9 **then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.** NASB

See here then the importance of understanding the Word of God, both Old and New Testaments so that we can **rightly discern the will of the Lord** and apply it to our lives so that we walk in a manner pleasing to Him. And this does in fact include **imperative** commandments that are repeated and applied to us of which God expects ready obedience from us. It is NOT **legalism** for the church to preach obedience to explicit commandments from Scripture, when rightly applied. Rather it is the duty of pastors and teachers to bring imperatives consistent with the Word to bear upon our lives and our consciences. However it is **extremely important that these imperatives not be confused with the indicatives** of the Gospel. Imperatives are now the proper expression of worship and godliness as a RESULT of our justification, and never a means to it. We are not saved by the works of the Law, or even obedience to New Testament commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone. He is Himself our righteousness before God. Therefore, the **indicatives** are where we rest by faith in the sovereign work of God through Christ and the Spirit for our righteousness and assurance of salvation. And the **imperatives** are the obedience which God fully expects of those of us He has called, saved and justified as an expression of the fact that we have indeed been saved and justified.

Colossians 3:12 - 12 And so, **as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** NASB

Legalism, License and Christian Liberty

So how do we wade through the water of imperatives without it seeming like they somehow merit our justification or right standing with God? After all, they are imperatives, they are necessary and mandatory. And what is legalism and how do we avoid the trappings and snares of

religious hypocrisy and self-righteousness? And what about our sin as Christians, how does God see this? After all, we all sin rather frequently. Is it possible to be so libertine as to live in license and lose our justification? In order to answer these questions, let us first define a few terms.

What is legalism?

Legalism is anything we do or don't do to earn favor with God that we or others insist or impress upon us. This can either be the favor of justification in salvation or a lesser form of favor in regard to God's will for daily living and sanctification. It is a sinful way of either self-righteously exalting self or controlling and demeaning others.

First and in its worst abuse, **legalism** is the idea that one can be **saved by the works** of the Law. As we have seen in Romans 3:19-28, salvation come by grace, through faith, in Christ alone. No one can be justified in God's sight by the works of the Law (Rom 3:20, Gal 2:16). This kind of legalism then is a violation of essential Christian orthodoxy. In this sense we speak about a dangerous and damning heresy concerning salvation. This is a destructive and Gospel denying form of legalism. It is the Galatian heresy of the Judiazers, the first century heretics who taught that one must be circumcised in order to please God and be saved. CJ Mahaney comments on this legalism... *"Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God, justification before God, and acceptance by God, through our obedience to God. In other words, a legalist is anyone who behaves as if he or she can earn God's approval and forgiveness through performance. At its heart legalism is self-atonement for the purpose of self-glorification and ultimately self-worship. Many of us (and I include myself here) can approach legalism casually. But legalism is serious and it is deadly."* We most certainly divide with any so called Christian who maintains this kind of doctrinal position and who will not be swayed when carefully shown the biblical basis for justification by grace, through faith, in Christ alone.

Second, legalism is the making of **man-made religious rules** or requirements that we or others expect and insist conformity to. This is a less lethal form of legalism, but still nonetheless destructive and sinful. It is usually a list of do's and don'ts, or church traditions or rules that are even at times, unspoken or vague. This kind of legalism is how other people think we should live instead of how the Bible tells us to live, or at least how they think the Bible says we should live. This kind of legalism is also sinful and can cause Christians to live under huge burdens of guilt, create hurtful conflict between Christians, and cause many forms of resulting sins. It can also discourage unbelievers by misrepresenting true Christianity as it casts a dark shadow on the grace of the Gospel.

It can also become complicated when people use the Bible to support the man-made religious rules or requirements they have made, causing us to discern whether or not the Scriptures are being rightly applied. This is because we do desire to please God and live according to His clearly revealed will in the Bible, to maintain our holiness and sanctification and to please Him in every way. But the Bible tells us not to let others hypocritically judge us or put us under bondage, and to maintain and defend our freedom. It also tells us to be careful not to judge one another hypocritically and to exercise wisdom and grace as we serve one another in love. It exhorts us to bear with the failings of those who have weak faith, and to be careful not to offend our dear family in Christ out of a pure heart of love toward them. We will examine the Scriptures concerning these principles below in Romans 13 & 14, Colossians 2, and 1 Corinthians 8 & 10.

What is license or licentiousness?

License is an **abuse** of the **free grace** of God in order to indulge the sinful nature. Jerry Bridges comments... *“It is the attitude that, since God’s grace is unconditional, I may live as I please; I may sin as much as I want because God will still love me and forgive me. That is license. It results from focusing exclusively on liberty and denigrating God’s Law.”* This has historically been called **cheap grace** and also **antinomianism** meaning, *“without the law, or against the law.”* In its extreme form license is basically doing what is right in your own eyes, apart from any constraining influence of God’s Word, thinking that God’s grace, love and forgiveness is broad enough to cover all willful sin that one might commit. Of course the Bible emphatically rejects this kind of thinking and acting. Rather it implores us to pursue a life of separation from sin and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Romans 6:1-2 - 1 What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be!** How shall we who died to sin still live in it? NASB

Romans 6:12-15 - 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body** that you should obey its lusts, 13 and **do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness;** but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. 15 What then? **Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!** NASB
2 Corinthians 7:1 - 1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** NASB

This license of course comes in less lethal forms as well. Many Christians have an attitude of license in order to justify sinful behavior. They reason that they are “free in Christ” and have a rather loose sense of how this applies to their pursuit of holiness and separation. Or even worse, because they lack spiritual disciplines in their Christian walk, they have a very weak knowledge of God’s will and weak or even unholy influences from others and this causes them to live in ways that are largely displeasing to God and in varying degrees, rather sinful. This of course is very destructive, provokes God’s fatherly discipline, and results in an ineffective, unproductive and a largely unsanctified Christian life. It taints the purity of our worship of God. It’s a miserable place to be. Of course the Bible warns against this as well.

Galatians 5:13 - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; **only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh,** but through love serve one another. NASB

1 Peter 2:16 - 16 Act as free men, and **do not use your freedom as a covering for evil,** but use it as bondslaves of God. NASB

Many Christians are so weak in this regard, they do not even realize the low degree of biblical conformity that they are living in and are in desperate need of discipling and restoring influence from some godly Christians (Gal 6:1-2).

Liberty - Called to be free

There exists then the wonderful reality that we **have been set free from sin** and death by Christ, and yet at the same time our defining life purpose has become living in union with Christ and seeking to be like Him and please Him with our whole life and in every area of our life. We have been set free from the penalty of every sin we will ever commit and yet we press onto to **live a life of separation from sin.**

Galatians 5:1 - **It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again** to a yoke of slavery. NASB

Galatians 5:13 – 13 For **you were called to freedom, brethren;** only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another.** 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. NASB

We must learn then to walk in the wisdom of the Word, empowered by the Spirit to live a fruitful life that pleases God. As a part of this, we must learn to **enjoy our freedom** while at the same time **being careful not to offend others** by practices that violate their conscience and also not allow the convictions of others to be our guiding influence, but rather we must be **guided by the Word of God**. Ultimately we seek to **please God, not men**. This does not mean we walk over others convictions, but that we do not let others put us under bondage with their convictions, but we allow the Word of God to define what our faith and practice shall be.

As Christians we are free to do what we will in life, provided that we do not transgress God's clearly defined will in Scripture. We are free to enjoy God and all the good things in the world in every way, provided that we do not sin against God in our freedom. **We are free from sin but NOT free to sin**. This would be an abuse of the free grace of God. We are free to serve and obey God, not free to transgress Him. Suffice to say that there is **liberty to live how you will**, provided that you;

- 1) fulfill what Scripture requires or prescribes
- 2) do not violate what Scripture forbids.

It is important to **discern between** the first form of **heretical legalism** and the second less lethal form of legalism regarding **man-made religious rules**. When a dispute arises regarding the first form of **legalism regarding our justification** before God, this is a very **serious matter** that demands our diligent attention and unwavering commitment to Scripture to guide convictions in the matter. We must be willing to divide with so called Christians who demand that we must do some sort of religious work or duty in order to be justified, rather than simply trusting in Christ by faith to be justified and given blood bought eternal favor with God. Remember that Paul called down a curse on the works driven Judaizers of his day.

Galatians 1:9 - 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man **is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed**. NASB

Salvation is based on Christ's ability to justify us before God and solely on Him and His work, and NOT on anything that we do apart from a repentant faith to receive it. A wrong decision here could be a tragic mistake that leads you and your family down a very destructive road with many spiritual casualties.

When a dispute arises regarding **man-made religious rules** concerning how we worship or live the Christian life, there is much more latitude on how we can address these issues. In these matters we must be guided by wisdom and love for our family in Christ. For example, you may decide to conform to someone else's desire in order to please them out of a sincere love and desire for peace in your relationship. This would be your prerogative to decide which way you will choose, but we must be guided by a sincere desire to love and serve one another being careful not to bite and devour one another with our judgments and convictions.

Romans 14:19-21 - 19 So then **let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another**. 20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. 21 **It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles**. NASB

1 Corinthians 8:13 - 13 Therefore, **if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble**. NASB

We will see that the Bible addresses these issues comprehensively in Romans 14 below, but we must be careful not to let others put us in bondage. We must at times, defend our freedom and "stand firm" in it, not allowing others convictions to define our faith, but be convinced in our

own mind what pleases God. While at the same time seeking to please God and be guided by the Word, we must take into account all the dynamics that go into a given situation, sincerely desiring to please our brother for his good.

Lastly, it is important to always **keep the Gospel in focus** when considering freedom issues. We must never forget the depth of sin and depravity from which we have been forgiven, and the debt that Christ paid for us which we could never have paid apart from eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. We must never forget the amazing love of God expressed to us through the self-sacrificing passion of Christ, and His sincere desire to pay the ultimate price for us because of His great love for us. Let this love of God in Christ be the motivation for our sincere desire to please God first, then others, inasmuch as that is possible.

Christian Liberty and the Mosaic Law

It is imperative to remember as New Covenant Christians that the **Old Covenant Mosaic Law** has been **fulfilled in Christ**. The Old Covenant was a **temporary** covenant that God made with the ethnic nation of Israel at Sinai, and not with the church. It is through the Old Covenant that God has now brought about the amazing mystery of the Gospel through Jesus Christ, who was and is the fulfillment of every Old Covenant type and shadow, and the very substance of all that God has intended both for Israel and the church, whom He has now made one in Christ. God has now instituted a New Covenant which is not like the Old Covenant He made with Israel, whereby He is now calling out a people from every tribe and language and nation and people. He is not choosing people from only one ethnic background and not prescribing that they live in a given location with civil laws to govern, but rather is gathering a remnant of called and chosen people from every civil government and ethnic tribe across the entire globe. In this New Covenant He has prescribed for us a new and living way He is to be worshipped in the Spirit through Christ, and has granted the transforming power of regeneration by the Holy Spirit in order to write the Law upon our hearts and transform us in the inner man. This powerful transformation of the new creation in Christ also then molds and shapes us into His character and image as the Holy Spirit now continues to work sanctification in us, transforming us from glory to glory as we become like Jesus through the Word by the Spirit.

Therefore in regard to the **Old Covenant Mosaic Law**, we are **not bound to keep either the Ceremonial or the Civil Law** that God prescribed for Israel at Sinai. We do not serve in the *“oldness of the letter,”* but in the *“newness of the Spirit.”* Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament sacrifices and priesthood contained in the Law perfectly and completely. Christians have *“died to the Law through the body of Christ”* and have been *“released from the Law”* in order that we might *“bear fruit for God”* by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Romans 7:4-6 - 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to **die to the Law through the body of Christ**, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might **bear fruit for God**. 5 For **while we were in the flesh**, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to **bear fruit for death**. 6 **But now** we have been **released from the Law**, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we **serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter**. NASB

As we discussed earlier in our lesson, this does not set us free from the moral aspects of the Law. The same God that commanded Israel to live in a morally appropriate way as they worshipped Him in the Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant, is also the same God that commands us Christians to live in a morally appropriate way as we worship Him in the New Covenant. Therefore we **Christians are indeed bound by the moral aspects of the Law**, a fact that is

clearly taught and implemented by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament. Therefore we Christians are free from the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Law, John MacArthur comments on this freedom; *"It is crucial that you understand the nature of Christian liberty. As a Christian, you are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14). Freedom from the law certainly does not mean that the principles of righteousness revealed in the Old Testament law are now nullified. It does not mean that the Ten Commandments have no application to your present life. It does not mean that you can subjugate God's holy standards to personal preference. It obviously does not mean you are free from any moral requirements. What does it mean? It means that Christians are not bound to observe Old Testament ritual. We don't have to sacrifice animals, observe the laws of ceremonial cleanness, and celebrate all the new moons and feasts and sacrifices. We don't have to follow the dietary laws given to Israel through Moses. We are free from all that."* Of course this freedom from Mosaic laws and rituals is clearly taught by Jesus and the Apostles. This is very obvious when it comes to the once for all sacrifice of Christ as our Passover lamb, and the fulfillment of the Priesthood by Christ. This is the comprehensive subject of the book of Hebrews. But what about the other issues of feasts, festivals and unclean foods? These rites are all part of the Ceremonial aspects of the Law which are all now fulfilled in Christ, and are not anywhere repeated in the New Testament as a requirement for godly living. Rather they are referred to by typology in the New Testament, and we are instructed not to allow others to judge us on the basis of conformity to these rites.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - 7 Clean out the **old** leaven, that you may be a **new** lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For **Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven,** nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. NASB

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore **let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day** — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. NASB

In fact, some of the Ceremonial aspects of the Law are completely changed to reflect a whole new practice in the worship of God. As a brief example, look at the issue of unclean foods. Jesus clearly taught that all foods were clean. This was also taught and implemented by the Apostles.

Mark 7:18-23 - 18 And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that **whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him;** 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? **"(Thus He declared all foods clean.)** 20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." NASB

Romans 14:14 - 14 I know and am **convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself;** but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. NASB

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore **let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day** — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. NASB

Hebrews 13:9-10 - 9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; **for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited.** 10 We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. NASB

The statement and response given by the Apostles in response to the controversy over the Judaizers in Acts 15 is crystal clear testimony as to what the Apostles required of Gentile believers in regard to the entire Old Covenant Law. See *pages 10-13, and 29-30* of this study for a more comprehensive discussion of this issue and passage. We see then that the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Old Covenant have been abrogated in the New Covenant age and fulfilled by Christ. We now live under grace (Rom 6:14) in regard to these and ruled by love (Rom 13 & 14).

The Conscience and Liberty

It is clear then that we are indeed seeking to live a life of separation from sin and live holy lives that are fully pleasing to God, guided by the Word and empowered by the Spirit, all of this living in the freedom that we have being under grace. But how then do we seek to maintain a purity of life and faith, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God, and **yet navigate the many cultural practices and worldly enjoyments that Christians face in every era** of time? How do we make decisions about things that the Bible is silent about? And how do we live and relate to one another in our local churches and among our Christian friends who may have different convictions than we do about certain traditions or cultural practices? After all, the paths we walk in our daily lives in our cultures in the world weave their way through minefields of sin and disgraceful practices. Especially in our media driven culture of the 21st century we face a massive set of challenges in regard to such matters as;

- **Leisure and Lifestyle issues** - smoking, drinking, gluttony, clothing & dress, piercings, tattoos, make-up & jewelry, women in workplace, birth control
- **Entertainment issues** - internet, movies, television, books, music, dancing, gambling, art
- **Church practice issues** - church denominations/traditions/affiliation, women in leadership, giving, Sabbath keeping, church attendance, second level separation,

Indeed the issues we face can be daunting. Let us not lose heart as **the New Testament clearly defines** how we are to **relate to our cultures** and maintain the purity of our worship. We must learn to discern between what are clearly **moral** issues and **amoral** issues, and develop convictions that are pleasing to God based on a thorough contemplation of the Word. Many times there is a **fine line between freedom and sin** and we must be guided by Biblical principles in these areas being careful to maintain a pure life and not offend or grieve the Holy Spirit who lives in us and so defame the name of our glorious God or trample the grace of our loving Savior. Ultimately we seek to **please God, not men**, especially **not ourselves** in regard to sin, as self-denial is the way we follow the Master (Matt 16:24-25). We must have firm convictions developed from the Word that inform our consciences how to maintain the purity of our lives for we serve a holy God who is worthy of our complete devotion.

Biblical principles of discernment on matters of liberty

The New Testament gives clearly defined principles on how we are to relate to the world around us as well as relating to our Christian church family and friends. Romans 13, 14, and 15 gives some of the clearest instruction on the matters. Here we will do an exposition of these texts and gather some supporting verses from 1 Corinthians 6-8, Colossians 2, and a few others.

In **Romans 13:8-14** Paul establishes clear guidelines in view of the glorious Gospel of grace he has expounded throughout the book of Romans. Here he maintains that **love is to be our guide** in relation to pleasing God and others, and in doing this we actually fulfill the Law of God.

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except **to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.** 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** NASB

Galatians 5:13-24 - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 **For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, " You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 15 But if you bite and devour one

another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.** NASB

He suggests that our eschatology ought to motivate us to godly living, and our union with Christ is a powerful antidote for victory over sin in our daily life.

Romans 13:11-14 - 11 And this do, **knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.** 12 **The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand.** Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh** in regard to its lusts. NASB

As we live out the Christian life, we will indeed run into issues of religious conviction and tradition which vary between Christians. Many of these issues arise simply from practical matters and do not have specific guidelines in Scripture that govern our practice. At times, even though there are sufficient guidelines in Scripture, some Christians hold certain convictions either from something they have been taught or practiced, or they have strong convictions about for one reason or another. Therefore it becomes incumbent upon us to develop convictions about these kinds of issues on the basis of principle, since there may not be very specific guidelines in Scripture, or for whatever reason we are unable to come to agreement with others and we want to be careful to preserve unity among us, insofar as it is possible. This no doubt then can and does cause situations where our beliefs and convictions clash with that of others Christians. What then shall we do? The section in Romans 14 deals with this very issue and Paul gives us principles by which to deal with these differing “*opinions.*” The words for “*opinions*” in Romans 14:1 is also translated as “*disputable matters*” or “*disputations.*” We must be careful to discern between issues of essential Christian orthodoxy and secondary or even tertiary issues. To be clear, these guidelines in Romans 14 deal more with less important issues of faith rather than essential issues as we do not sacrifice essential doctrinal issues for the sake of unity, but rather we must guard the essentials of the faith even if we stand as one man against the whole world (ex. Martin Luther).

Romans 14:1-4 - 1 Now **accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.** 2 One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 **Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.** 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Paul clearly admonishes Christians to accept one another in the case of disputes. He explains further that we are not to “*accept*” them “*for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.*” He explains further that we are not to “*regard them with contempt*” for holding convictions over issues like whether or not they eat meat or not. This is not the kind of issue that Christians should divide over according to Paul. Rather we should “*accept*” others and “*not regard them with contempt*” who have such convictions. The obvious reason for this Paul states, “*for God has accepted him.*” He then points out that God will receive such a person by faith and justify them, who then are we to judge the person God has approved? He makes the point that each individual Christian stands before God on their own, and their own faith is regarded by God as sufficient, for “*the Lord is able to make them stand*” on the basis of Christ’s merit. He continues with this theme, of unity, acceptance and judgment bringing up the issue of special or holy days such as the Sabbath. He then puts the two issues of holy days or eating meat or vegetables only on the same par with each other by lumping them together as issues by which we are to accept one another over.

Romans 14:5-6 - 5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. NASB

See here that Paul lays down the same principle as earlier, “*let each man be fully convinced in his own mind,*” again appealing to the fact that each person is accountable to God personally for their own convictions. This an **imperative**, that is, that Christians must develop convictions about worship and the Christian life in order to be fully pleasing to God, Paul commands, “*let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.*” But one cannot escape the fact that Paul brings up the keeping of certain holy days, like the Sabbath or a feast, as an example of a disputable matter and one over which we are not to judge each other but rather accept each other. This is a loud commentary on the issue of Sabbath keeping because Paul clearly accepts the fact that some Christians do not keep holy days at all and that is totally acceptable in his view. This is clear by the statement “*one man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike, but let each one be fully convinced in his own mind.*” See here that Paul gives full acceptance to the idea that some Christians do not regard any holy days, and this he says is perfectly acceptable in the sight of God. This is also a loud commentary on the fact that the **4th commandment** must therefore be seen as an issue of ceremonial Law and **not a moral issue**, and therefore a secondary issue of which we are free to keep it or not. This is Paul’s teaching regarding this matter elsewhere in the New Testament as well.

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Paul clearly says again here in Colossians 2 that we are not to judge one another regarding the issue of the keeping of holy days or Sabbath keeping. But notice how, by commanding each Christian **not to allow others to judge them** about such matters. Again see God’s imperative for us to develop our own convictions and to be fully convinced before God and not come under the burden of other people’s convictions but rather see ourselves with direct accountability to God on disputable matters. Moreover, these statements clearly show the nature of the Old Covenant Law as having been **abrogated** by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their ceremonial aspects like the keeping of holy days which were commanded as ceremonial imperatives in the OT Law. This of course is Paul’s teaching throughout the New Testament.

Galatians 6:13-15 - 13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. 14 But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 **For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.** NASB

In these matters he clearly sets forth the fact that systems of legal obedience created by man-made religious rules, or even the reimplementation of OT ceremonial rituals are not regarded with apostolic authority but rather have no ability to impact the heart and Christian conscience because these legal rules set up false boundaries that “*are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.*”

Colossians 2:18-23 - 18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. 20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, **why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,** 21 “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using) — **in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?** 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, **the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and**

self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

NASB

He also taught in other places that such things as man-made rules or even any kind of **amoral boundaries** that we establish really have no true heart changing moral power because rules about things like the eating or not of certain foods, (for example because they have been sacrificed to an idol), do nothing to impact our real relationship before God because they are amoral and God is concerned with the matter of our heart before him regarding love toward Him and toward our neighbor. Things like food are amoral and really have no religious value, unless they cause us to be unloving toward our brother, something God is very concerned about.

1 Corinthians 8:4-13 - 4 Therefore **concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world**, and that there is no God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. 7 **However not all men have this knowledge**; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and **their conscience being weak is defiled**. 8 But **food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat**. 9 **But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak**. 10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? 11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. **12 And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ**. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble. NASB

Notice then, that each one has his own conviction before God, and each of us is to respect him for it in regard to man-made religious rules or any kind of **amoral** issues. This respect we give by **not judging harshly but rather accepting** them in regard to their practice, and also being **careful not to offend** them by violation of their practice in their presence. Learn here, each man is accountable to God concerning his own Christian life, and we must be very careful about judging others in regard to man-made religious rules or any kind of **amoral** issues.

Romans 14:7-9 - 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 **for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's**. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. NASB

It is important at this point to mention that in regard to **moral issues** it is in fact very important for Christians **to make judgments** in our Christian relations. This is because moral issues are issues of sin and purity before God. We are in fact our brother's keeper in regard to sin issues and commanded to bring judgment in the church (1 Cor 5:1-12), and even serious discipline in the church (Matt 18:15-20, 2 Thess 3:6-15), when a Christian brother lives in the continual practice of sin (1 John 3:4-10) and will not be persuaded to repentance (Gal 6:1-2). In this way, concerning moral issues, we are not only accountable to God, but also to the entire Christian church.

But concerning man-made religious rules and amoral issues, **each person is accountable to God concerning his/her own Christian life**, and we must be very careful about judging others in regard to man-made religious rules or any kind of **amoral** issues.

Romans 14:10-12 - 10 But you, **why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God**. 11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." 12 So then **each one of us shall give account of himself to God**. NASB

See then how important it is to allow love toward God and neighbor (the summation of the Law), to be the **guiding principle** in Christian relations and practice, being careful not to offend others, yet holding our own convictions before God.

Romans 14:13-18 - 13 Therefore **let us not judge one another anymore**, but rather determine this — **not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way**. 14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that **nothing is unclean in itself**; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15 For **if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love**. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore **do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil**; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. NASB

Here Paul makes several key points. First, he restates the fact we are **“not to judge one another anymore”** about these kinds of issues, as he did in verse 1, 3, 4, 10. Second, he points out that instead judging, we should **“not put an obstacle or stumbling block in a brother’s way.”** By this he means, be careful not give a brother or sister cause to judge or condemn you by violating his personal convictions. This Paul says in verse 15 is **“walking according to love.”** Third, he points out that **“nothing is unclean in itself.”** By this he means that inanimate physical objects, like food and drink, are in and of themselves **amoral**, meaning it has no positive or negative moral value. He adds to the depth of this statement by saying that food and drink are not the nature of the **“kingdom of God” but rather “the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”** However, if you use your food or drink in an inappropriate way, it can become an unclean and moral issue. In this context and elsewhere Paul commands that we be **careful not to offend the convictions** of our weaker brother or sister by doing things that violate their personal convictions. This Paul calls sin and points out that it is unloving.

1 Corinthians 8:8-9,12-13 - 8 But **food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat**. 9 But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a **stumbling block to the weak.....** 12 And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their **conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ**. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that **I might not cause my brother to stumble**. NASB

The point is clear. In regard to eating and drinking and other amoral issues, **have your own convictions** that clearly define your faith before God, allowing the clear teaching of Scripture to inform your convictions. But do not allow your convictions to bring hurtful offense to or disrupt peace between you and your Christian brother or sister. Paul restates this again to emphasize **how important it is not to cause your brother to stumble**, because this is surely an issue of moral importance to God, that we maintain **“peace, joy and righteousness”** in His kingdom.

Romans 14:19-22 - 19 So then let us **pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another**. 20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. 21 **It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles**. NASB

Christians should also **“pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”** See here we are to be a person that **builds others up**, not tears them down. Let us judge ourselves by this wise rule.

Romans 14:22-23 - 22 The faith which you have, have as your **own conviction before God**. Happy is he who **does not condemn himself in what he approves**. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin**. NASB

Here, in verse 22, **“faith”** is used to mean the content of our entire doctrinal understanding of our relationship to God. Paul restates the importance of defining our faith with our own convictions before God. Then he makes another important point. We must be careful to have convictions that do not condemn us before God. This is clear from the statement **“Happy is he who does not condemn himself by what he approves.”** We understand from this that it is very important to have our convictions informed by the Word of God lest we define our practice by things that

violate God's will and sin against Him. This is clear from this context when Paul explains that our Christian life practices are to always be motivated and defined by our faith because, "*whatever is not from faith is sin.*" This of course is true because **the whole of our Christian life is lived out of and through the righteousness which comes by faith in Christ**, which results in a healthy submission to His lordship, being careful to live pure and holy lives untainted by sin in our worship, practices, and lifestyle. Paul taught elsewhere that we should only do that which glorifies God and this of course is what the mind and heart of faith will always do.

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 - 31 Whether, then, **you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.** 32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as **I also please all men in all things**, not seeking my own profit, but **the profit of the many, that they may be saved.** NASB

One more important fact to consider is that our Christian life can preach a loud sermon to **unbelievers** around us. We must therefore be careful how we walk before the unbelieving world so as not to bring unnecessary harm to our witness for the **sake of the Gospel**. This is why Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 10:33 "*I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.*" The principle then of not offending our brother also applies for our witness before the unbelievers. We must be careful not to do anything that casts doubt in the mind of unbelievers on the nature of our faith in regard to its ethical purity and moral quality as we are **ambassadors of Christ** who carry His message of reconciliation to the unbelieving world (2 Cor 5:18-20). Of course you cannot always please men, but inasmuch as it is possible for us, we must strive for peace and for mutual edification toward all men, and especially those who believe.

Romans 15:1-7 - 1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and **not just please ourselves.** 2 **Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.** 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me." 7 Wherefore, **accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.** NASB

See here that Paul explains that the Christian lives in a certain sense in self-denial so as to bear with the weaknesses of those around him in order to build them up. He uses the life of Christ as an illustration to show this very truth. Let us therefore live our Christian life in a way that builds others up, is careful not to offend them, and all of this for the glory of God.

I think it is important at this point to say a few things about the kinds of moral and amoral issues we face in the 21st century as Christians, and how some of these principles from Romans 13-15 apply. Specifically, concerning things that can be **moral** or **amoral** depending on the **nature** of them. An example would be **instrumental music**. In and of itself it has no moral value. But when **music** has *lyrical* content, it can become, by degree, **increasingly more or less moral**. Lyrics which give glory to God by exalting the beauty of His creation are certainly positively moral, but lyrics which describe morally sinful or glorify sinful activity are clearly morally negative and sinful to indulge. It can be more difficult to discern between the content of other things related to entertainment such as **art, TV, movies, and books**. The difficulties are compounded by the fact that many times the motive of the heart can be the matter, and when issues are portrayed with all the impact of emotional drama, musical beauty, and the dynamic details of situational ethical matters, it can be very difficult to wade through and have firm convictions about these kinds of things. Moreover, other issues can be difficult to assess. Is it sinful to consume **alcohol** in any degree? Of course not, if so the Lord Jesus and the Apostles would be guilty of this sin. However, the Bible draws a clear line between the **use of alcohol** and the **abuse of alcohol**, which it describes as **drunkenness**. When one loses control of his faculties and no longer has self-control, he sins against God. Therefore substances that cause us to lose control of our faculties must be carefully controlled and their use **restrained**. The problem here is **excess** and

the **abuse** of substances. When an alcoholic beverage is used properly it is cause to give God glory and thanksgiving (Deut 14:26, Eccl 9:7), like Jesus at the last supper (John 22:17). Godly people in the Bible use alcohol in a way that glorifies God (John 2:6-11, 1 Cor 10:31, 1 Tim 5:23). But when it is used in excess, it becomes sinful, unwise, and dangerous to yourself and others. **Drunkenness** and **gluttonous excess** are seen in the Bible as **ungodly** and **sinful** (Prov 19:28, 23:20-21, 30-35, Isa 5:11-12, 22, 56:12).

Is it sinful to use **tobacco**? What about **prescription medications**, or what about the **overeating of food** to the point of an unhealthy physical body? The problem here again is **excess** and the **abuse** of substances, even food. In the case of tobacco and prescription medications (or any kind of chemical substance including alcohol, illegal drugs or legal drugs), they can be **addictive** and become a **controlling** substance. Not only do you begin to **lose control** of you own faculties and appetites when these are abused, but they begin to define your lifestyle and cause you to plan your life around the use of these substances and they can become very damaging to yourself and others in many varied and diverse ways. The same can be said for the **abuse or excess of food** which can become like an **addiction** and become a **controlling influence** in your life. These kinds of controlling abuses are sinful because they in some degree (less or more depending on the abuse), take away from the Lordship of Christ and the dominating influence of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life. A Christian should exercise **self-control** and be in control of his or her own desires and appetites, and use their bodies to glorify and serve God. Self-control is a virtue which is to be sought and possessed by Christians, and a lack thereof a vice for which unbelievers are chided and warned in Scripture.

Acts 24:24-25 - 24 But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he was discussing **righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come**, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you." NASB

1 Corinthians 6:12-13 - 12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but **I will not be mastered by anything**. 13 Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body. NASB

Galatians 5:22-24 - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, **self-control**; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. NASB

2 Peter 1:5-7 - 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, **self-control, and in your self-control**, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. NASB

2 Timothy 3:1-5 - 1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, **without self-control**, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. NASB

It is important when thinking through these issues and develop your own convictions to have very specific biblical support for your positions so that you are **careful to glorify God and please Him** in every way. As Paul had said in Romans 14:22, "**happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.**"

Romans 14:22-23 - 22 The faith which you have, have as your **own conviction before God**. Happy is he who **does not condemn himself in what he approves**. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin**. NASB

Much more could be said about developing convictions that are informed by the Word of God. We can have many differing opinions when it comes to these matters, but the Word of God addresses many issues by way of principle and we should be convinced of our own convictions as we have seen.

Romans 14:5-6 - 5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. **Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.** 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. NASB

These things we do recognizing that our lives and bodies **belong to the Lord**, who alone is our judge, and to whom we have offered our lives in service to. After all, we have lost our own lives to follow Christ and for His sake.

Matthew 16:24-25 - 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** 25 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; **but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.** NASB

We are his slaves and servants and our life and bodies are not our own, they belong to Him to do with as He desires. (Luke 17:5-10, Rom 6:17-19)

Romans 14:7-9 - 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 **for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.** 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. NASB

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and **that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.** NASB

Let the principles of loving our neighbor and glorifying God be the motivation for all that we do.

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except **to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.** NASB

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 - 31 Whether, then, **you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.** 32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as **I also please all men in all things,** not seeking my own profit, but **the profit of the many, that they may be saved.** NASB

List of principles w-scripture proofs

Here then are few principles from this study that can help us in the use of our Christian liberty.

- 1) **Love** must be central in our motivation and the guiding principle (Rom 13:8-10, 15:1-3, Gal 5:13-24)
- 2) We are not **to harshly judge, condemn or hold in contempt** other Christians over amoral issues or disputable matters (Rom 14:1, 4, 10-13, 15:1-3, Col 2:16)
- 3) Each **individual** Christian stands before God on their own and is commanded to have their own **personal convictions** before God about their practice, and commanded not to let others be their judge or speak evil of their practices (Rom 14:1-11, Col 2:16-23)
- 4) **Humility** is a key element in Christian relations because we are all mutually accountable to God (Rom 14:4,10-12, 19-21, 1 Cor 8:13)
- 5) Be **careful not to offend** the convictions of others for this would be unloving (Rom 14:15, 1 Cor 8:9-13)
- 6) Whatever practice we do can be assessed by this rule; does it glorify God and is it consistent with **love for our neighbor.** (Rom 13:8-10, 14:15, Gal 5:13, 1 Cor 10:31)

Understanding and Applying The Law

The Law in the Confessions

As we come to this section of “*Understanding and Applying the Law*,” we want to take a brief look at some **Historical Theology**. Historical Theology is the study of the interpretation of Scripture and the formulation and development of doctrine by the church of the past. When it comes to issues of Law and Gospel, these doctrines don’t become really clearly formulated, developed and summarized until the Reformation period of Church History. The Reformers however did do considerable work at summarizing, understanding and applying the Law to us as New Testament Christians, and therefore we can look to their excellent summaries to learn much about how the Law should be applied to us who are partakers of the New Covenant age of Messianic Salvation in Christ. There is an almost universal agreement among Bible believing Christians since the Reformation that there is a basic **Discontinuity** in the **Ceremonial** and **Civil** aspects of the Law, and **Continuity** in the **Moral** aspects of the Law. There are some Bible believing Messianic Christian groups who do co-mingle Ceremonial, Civil, and Moral aspects of the Law into either necessary or, non-necessary but preferred, elements in their doctrine and worship, but these would be the exception and make up a small minority (see page 13 for more on this). In fact, the categorizing of the Law into these Ceremonial, Civil, and Moral categories is clearly highlighted by some of the Reformers in one way or another in their confessions of faith, doctrinal statements and catechisms. Let us take a look at a few of these.

Westminster Confession, 1689 London Baptist Confessions & Savoy Declaration

The Westminster Confession of Faith is a Reformed confession of faith, drawn up by the 1646 **Westminster Assembly**. In 1643, the English Parliament called upon "learned, godly and judicious Divines", to meet at Westminster Abbey in order to provide advice on issues of worship, doctrine, government and discipline of the Church of England. Their meetings, over a period of five years, produced the **Westminster Confession of Faith**, as well as a **Larger Catechism** and a **Shorter Catechism**. For more than three centuries, various churches around the world have adopted the confession and the catechisms as their standards of doctrine, subordinate to the Bible. The Westminster Confession of Faith was modified and adopted by **Congregationalists** in England in the form of the **Savoy Declaration (1658)**. Likewise, the **Baptists of England** modified the Savoy Declaration to produce the **Second London Baptist Confession (1689)**. English Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists would together (with others) come to be known as **Nonconformists**, because they did not conform to the **Act of Uniformity (1662)** establishing the Church of England as the only legally approved church, though they were in many ways united by their common confessions, built on the Westminster Confession. [modified from Wikipedia]

When we look at the **Westminster Confession**, we see a very clearly summarized view of how to understand and apply the Law in the New Covenant age. It is an excellent statement on the issue. Further, we will note here that the **Savoy Declaration** and the **1689 Second London Baptist Confession**, both excellent documents, do not alter the wording on the Law of God at all. They are very much built on the Westminster and use the exact wording in much of them, except for some issues on Ecclesiology concerning baptism and such. The Westminster Divines knew their Bible well. We will use some of their statements to highlight some discussion to help us get a grasp on the issues.

Westminster Confession of Faith
Chapter XIX - Of the Law of God

I. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which He bound him and all his posterity, to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

II. This law, after his fall, continued to be a **perfect rule of righteousness**; and, as such, was **delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables**: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.

III. Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to **give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament.**

IV. To them also, as a **body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging under any now, further than the general equity thereof may require.**

V. The **moral law does forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither does Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.**

VI. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a **rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law: and not under grace.**

VII. Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.

See here now how **they understood and applied the Law**. They explain of the Discontinuity and temporary nature of the Law which was for the State of Israel, yet maintain the Continuity of the **Moral Law as a binding teacher and guide informing us of God's will**, not only in our Christian lives, but for all men as well. You'll remember that **Calvin** and **Luther** had a similar understanding; ie...**Curb, Mirror, Guide** from page 12 & 13. Let us consider some of these statements to see how we can properly understand and apply the Law for us today.

I. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which He bound him and all his posterity, to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it. See here now the divines were much in the way of covenant theology holding a Covenant of Works (which is stated here, which Adam broke) and a Covenant of Grace (which Jesus brought and offers through the Gospel, having fulfilled the Covenant of Works in Adam's stead). The general thrust of this statement is that although Adam had the ability to obey, he willfully sinned and brought death upon the human race. [Gen 1:26,2:17,Rom 2:14,5:12,19,10:5,Gal 3:10,Ecc 7:29]

II. This law, after his fall, continued to be a **perfect rule of righteousness**; and, as such, was **delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables**: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.

A. **Perfect rule of righteousness** – See here how they see the Law as the **standard and measuring rule** of righteousness with God. And that is what the Law is, a **perfect** measure of righteousness, according to God Himself. For did not God in all of His perfection bring forth this Word from **His own righteous mouth** as the very rule and standard by which His holy people would govern their life and worship before Him? Indeed He did. It therefore stands to reason that this whole Law is indeed a **perfect rule of righteousness**.

Deuteronomy 4:8 - 8 "Or what great nation is there that has **statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law** which I am setting before you today? NASB

Nehemiah 9:13 - 13 "Then Thou didst come down on Mount Sinai, And didst speak with them from heaven; Thou didst give to them **just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.** NASB

Psalms 19:7-10 - 7 The **law of the Lord is perfect**, restoring the soul; The **testimony of the Lord is sure**, making wise the simple. 8 The **precepts of the Lord are right**, rejoicing the heart; The **commandment of the Lord is pure**, enlightening the eyes. 9 The **fear of the Lord is clean**, enduring forever; **The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.** 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. NASB

Psalms 119:172 - Let my tongue sing of Thy word, **For all Thy commandments are righteousness.** NASB

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "**Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.** 18 "For truly I say to you, **until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.** 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. NASB

Romans 7:12 - So then, **the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.** NASB

B. **delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables** - The Lord did in fact come and give this glorious Word to Israel through Moses. He put it in writing as imperative commandments for his people Israel so that they would have a witness and testimony from God Himself for all their successive generations.

Exodus 34:27-28 - 27 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write down these words, for **in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.**" 28 So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And **he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.** NASB

Moreover the Word was given as a rule to govern both people's relationship to God and also to other people. This the divines also mention when they say "the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man." See in article two that **the Law came from God as a righteous rule to guide and govern people in regard to God and**

man, and is therefore, when understood its proper context, a reliable, sure and wise path for us to walk. It gives us clear guidance concerning God's will.

III. Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament.

A. Besides this law, commonly called moral – Now they clearly understood the Decalogue or 10 commandments as the “*moral*” Law. They made a **distinction** between the **Moral** and **Ceremonial** aspects of the Law which is denoted by the words “*besides the law.*”

B. ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; Notice here that they specifically point out “*ceremonial laws*” which were “*typical ordinances*” that were “*prefiguring Christ*” in both His Person and His Work “*His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits.*” See here they understood how the **shadow** of the ceremony was to be rightly understood and applied now that Christ the **substance** has come.

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 **things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.** NASB

Hebrews 10:1 - 1 For **the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things,** can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. NASB

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - 7 Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. **For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.** NASB

C. partly, holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. – They also recognized the overlap between the moral and ceremonial law. That at times even the ceremonial law has moral aspects in it. As a result, we can learn of the righteousness of God, both in His nature and His purposes, through the lens of the ceremonial law. Through the meticulous cleansings and washings and blood sacrifices we learn of the intense holiness of God and His expectation for us to be set apart unto Him as His holy people in all righteousness, without sin or spot or any such thing. We are to wash ourselves of the unclean thing to be set apart unto God even as Israel was under the ceremonial law.

2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1 - "Therefore, **come out from their midst and be separate,**" says the Lord. - "And **do not touch what is unclean;** And I will welcome you. 18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** NASB

D. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament. – Also, they saw the “*ceremonial laws are now abrogated*” and no longer required but rather fulfilled in Christ. They state that these were “*typical ordinances.*” In other words they were seen as **types pointing in shadow** to the true brightness and **substance** of Christ. That in Christ as the New Testament states, these “*commandments contained in ordinances*” were “*abolished in His flesh,*” and that this removed the hostility and “*enmity*” between Jew and Gentile having reconciled us both to God in “*one body through the cross.*” Through Christ who is “*our peace,*” we now both have “*access in one Spirit to the Father.*”

Ephesians 2:14-19 - 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 **by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances**, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; 18 for **through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father**. NASB

This why the New Testament states that we are not to be judged in regard to Old Testament ceremonial laws such as *“food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.”* This is because *“Christ”* the *“substance”* has come and fulfilled the *“shadow.”* In other words the **ceremonial laws** and ordinances are no longer required or a standard by which we are to worship God, they have been **abrogated, under the New Testament.**

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore **let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.** NASB

IV. To them also, as a **body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging under any now, further than the general equity thereof may require.**

A. **body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people;** - Now they also rightly classified the civil law as *“sundry judicial laws”* which were a *“body politic.”* That is they were **political laws** given to **govern** the **State** of Israel (notice the capital “S”), but which *“expired together with the State of that people.”* It is my observation that one can only be deafened by that booming voice of silence in the New Testament about carrying out or implementing any of the civil laws of the Old Testament Mosaic covenant.

B. **not obliging under any now, further than the general equity thereof may require –** When they say not *“obliging under any now,”* they mean that we are **NOT obligated** to any Old Testament **civil** law. What I think is so beautiful about how they understand and apply the Law is seen in the words *“further than the general equity thereof may require.”* What I believe they mean to say by this is; if in the due course of our life it becomes us to engage the wisdom of an Old Testament civil law, that we should be so wise and discerning to apply it as a *“general equity”* or a just and balanced maxim to live by. See how Paul applied it this very way.

1 Corinthians 9:8-11 - 8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? 9 For **it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He?** 10 Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. 11 **If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?** NASB

V. The **moral law does forever bind all**, as well **justified persons as others**, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. **Neither does Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.**

A. **The moral law does forever bind all –** Now as they saw the moral law, they expected that we were *“bound... to the obedience thereof”*, and that *“forever.”* And this is not because it was in the Bible, for the Ceremonial and the Civil law was therein contained as well. But they **rightly understood** the moral aspects of the law as an extension of **God** Himself, an

expression of His **character** and **nature** as they state; *“and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it.”* This of course is how the apostles saw the matter they so clearly explained concerning the Decalogue, that we should be **obligated** to carry out the **moral law**, and that this *“fulfillment of the law”* was the result of simply abiding in the **love** of Christ. John goes on to say that this is how we express our **love toward God**, by keeping *“His commandments.”*

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and **if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** NASB

1 John 5:1-3 - 1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when **we love God and observe His commandments.** 3 **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments;** and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

- B. **as well justified persons as others,** - Now they clearly understood that the moral law applied to *“justified persons,”* that is of course born again Christians. But they also saw its universal application to **curb** the behavior of wicked people in public cultures and political states. Of course we discussed how Calvin and Luther saw it this very same way under the three uses of the law, [**curb, mirror, guide**]. This was of course one way that Paul applied it also, saying that this use as **curb** was *“according to the Gospel.”*

1 Timothy 1:8-11 - 8 But we know that **the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,** 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but **for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane,** for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 11 **according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God,** with which I have been entrusted. NASB

- C. **Neither does Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.** – They understood the teaching of Jesus concerning the moral law well, saying that not only did He in *“any way dissolve,”* but that He *“strengthened”* our *“obligation”* to the obedience of it. This of course is plainly evident in the blessed teaching of our Lord.

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, **until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.** 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; **but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.** NASB

In fact, Jesus would explain that the commandments went further than our outward behavior and applied to the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. Not only would Jesus *“strengthen”* our *“obligation”* of the moral law by applying it to our hearts, but He would also make clear the threatening of the Law by warning that violating it would surely bring the consequence of Hell. This He did to show us our utter and desperate need for His saving grace in the Gospel. Nevertheless He applied the moral law to us with strong exhortation to the obedience of it, even to the correcting of our sinful thoughts and intentions in our hearts.

Matthew 5:21-22 - 21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, **'You shall not commit murder'** and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' 22 **"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court;** and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, **'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.** NASB

VI. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law: and not under grace.

A. true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; - Now they clearly understood the Gospel in that we are not *“justified”* by the works of the Law but rather by faith in Christ.

Romans 3:20-24 - 20 because **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight**; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 **being justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

Romans 3:28 - 28 For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law**. NASB
Galatians 2:16 - 16 nevertheless knowing that **a man is not justified by the works of the Law** but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since **by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified**. NASB

Moreover, that as *“true believers”* we are not *“condemned”* by the Law.

Romans 8:1-2 - 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **has set you free** from the law of sin and of death. NASB

These great promises are ours because we are no longer *“under the Law”* because *“faith has come”* and delivered us *“under grace.”* We have been delivered from the power of sin and death by Christ and stand in Him free from the condemnation of the Law.

Romans 6:11-14 - 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body** that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, **for you are not under law, but under grace**. NASB

Galatians 3:22-25 - 22 But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 **But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed**. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But **now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor**. NASB

Galatians 5:18 - 18 **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law**. NASB

B. great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; - See here how they understand that even though we are not *“under the Law to be justified or condemned,”* the Law has *“great use”* to us believers, as well as to others (unbelievers...to curb them for public order). This *“great use”* is *“as a rule of life informing them of the will of God.”* A *“rule”* here meaning

how we **measure** what “*God’s will*” (or general desire for us as His image bearers) is. As we understand and are “*informed*” what God’s desire for how we should live is through the moral Law, we then are “*directed and bound to walk accordingly.*” See here the **imperatives** (binding commandments) that come with the **indicatives** (free promises) in the Gospel of New Testament. The Apostles made it abundantly clear that we are indeed bound to “*walk according*” to the commandments of the moral Law, now having that Law written on our hearts.

Romans 6:11-14 - 11 Even so **consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** **12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body** that you should obey its lusts, 13 and **do not** go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; **but present** yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. NASB

Romans 8:12-13 - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation, not to the flesh,** to live according to the flesh, 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. NASB

1 John 2:3-6 - 3 And by this **we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.** 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and **does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;** 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. NASB

- C. **discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts and lives; come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience.** – They knew that the Law showed us the “*sinful pollutions*” of our own “*nature, hearts and lives.*” Because the Law is an expression of true moral virtue as it reflects God’s character and nature, it therefore gives very specific definition to what sin is, or what violates God’s nature. Therefore the Law gives us clear insight into our own sinful nature, making us conscious of sin in our hearts and lives, serving as a **mirror** for us to clearly see ourselves according to the “*rule of life*” or measurement of true righteousness expressed in the Law.

Romans 3:19-20 - 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; **for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.** NASB

Romans 7:7-13 - 7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, **I would not have come to know sin except through the Law;** for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.” 8 **But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind;** for apart from the Law sin is dead. 9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 **for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.** 12 **So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.** NASB

Romans 7:22-24 - 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, **waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.** 24 **Wretched man that I am!** Who will set me free from the body of this death? NASB

Together with the Law, the Spirit therefore brings conviction of sin, so we “*come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin.*” For what true believer is not **convicted** of and **humbled** by his/her own sin, coming to a **hatred** of it? This causing us to see even clearer the manifold scope of the grace of God is saving us, and so together with conviction of sin we gain “*a clearer sight of the need*” we “*have of Christ,*” and realize “*the*

perfection of His obedience” that has completely delivered us from sin and death into Life and Immortality! The Law shows us our utter disobedience and inability to please God and thus drives us to Christ for refuge!

- D. **to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law.** – As we come to a knowledge of sin through the Law, and God’s displeasure of it, this produces restraint in us because of the powerful sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in us who have been born again.

Psalm 119:104 - 104 From **Thy precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.** NASB

Psalm 119:127-128 - 127 Therefore I love Thy commandments Above gold, yes, above fine gold. 128

Therefore I esteem right all Thy precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way. NASB

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 - 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But **we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,** just as from the Lord, the Spirit. NASB

When we learn of the “*threatenings*” of the Law what its transgressions “*deserve,*” and what “*afflictions is this life should be expected*” from such sins, we are further restrained by the overwhelming love and grace of God who has “*freed us from the curse thereof threatened in the law.*” This “*grace of God has appeared and instructs*” and trains us, even molds and shapes our hearts from gratitude and love toward God to deny sin and “*to live sensibly, righteously and godly.*”

Titus 2:11-14 - 11 For **the grace of God has appeared,** bringing salvation to all men, **12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,**

13 looking for the blessed **hope** and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;

14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and **purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.** NASB

- E. **show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law: and not under grace.** – Moreover we learn from the Law that **God is pleased** with “*obedience,*” and seeks to bless us for it. This general principle of the Kingdom of God is amply displayed in the Law. This we know He does out of the riches of His grace and not “*due to them by the law as a covenant of works.*” God doesn’t bless us primarily because of obedience, but because He is gracious and filled with lovingkindness. However, even in the New Testament we are told that because of “*God’s approbation of obedience,*” we are therefore blessed.

Psalm 128:1-4 - **How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways.** 2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. 3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. 4 **Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord.** NASB

Luke 11:28 - 28 But He said, "On the contrary, **blesed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it.**" NASB

James 1:25 - 25 But **one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it,** not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, **this man shall be blessed in what he does.** NASB

This obedience and blessing in no way puts us under the yoke of the Law, for we are not under law but under grace. This is why they emphatically restate, “*So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law: and not under grace.*”

VII. Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.

A. **Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it** - Because the Gospel calls us to repentance from sin and ready obedience in following our Lord by loving God and neighbor, it does “*sweetly comply*” with the Law. In fact the whole law is summed up in this love toward God. From page 4 of our lesson... The **two tables of the Law** are summarized by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22...

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.**" 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**' 40 "**On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.**" NASB

Thus, Jesus summarized “*the whole Law and the Prophets,*” (terms referring to the entire Old Testament), under the **two tables of the Law**. To love God and love your neighbor was the Messiah’s interpretation of the entire **Law** and Prophets. This is a profound and simple commentary from God Himself on the *meaning* of the Old Testament **Law**. Christian, you will do well to memorize these verses and understand that the **Law** is fulfilled in and through God’s Love, expressed toward Him first, and then to our neighbor.

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and **if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** NASB

This idea then, is a helpful principle in *understanding* and *applying* the **Law** as a New Testament Christian. If it is not an expression of true biblical love, then it is most likely being misapplied. The general nature of the Law is love, because it is God’s Law, and His nature is love.

B. **Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.** – See here the effectual nature of the New Covenant! By the power of the indwelling Spirit, we are enabled and even cheerfully persuaded to obedience to God’s Law. It is our pleasure now to live for God, by the powerful working of the Spirit in our hearts. Christian is it your longing desire to be obedient to God? Let this be a great assuring witness to your regeneration, for without this work of the Spirit you would still be dead in transgression and sins. But the “*Spirit of Christ subdues and enables our will*” to please God. This is what God promised concerning the New Covenant.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 -19 "And **I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them.** And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 **that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them.** Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. NASB

Ezekiel 36:23-27 - 23 "And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. **Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.** 24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your

idols. 26 "Moreover, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;** and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "**And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**" NASB
Jeremiah 31:31-33 - 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "**when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,**" 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, "declares the Lord. 33 "**But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
 NASB

From page 21 of our lesson... It is worth noting that the character of this New Covenant is that its elements are **fulfilled by God alone**. God does a powerful regenerating work in the New Covenant that affects what it commands. God does this by "**writing the law on the heart,**" a reference to the new birth or **regeneration of the Holy Spirit** in the New Testament. This is the power of the New Covenant, that is, that the Holy Spirit now raises us from our spiritually dead state (Eph 2:1-6), opening our spiritual eyes to our great need for a Savior showing us Christ as the provision that God has made to save us, and powerfully re-creates our nature (2 Cor 5:17) so that He even comes to live and dwell in us to work His ministry of sanctification (Rom 8:1-14) in order to glorify Christ in and through us. God says, "**I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,**" speaking of the work of regeneration. And the result is a **new obedience** that this brings about in our lives, "**that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them**" (Eze 11:19-20). This is even clearer in Eze 36:27; "**And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**" Here God says "**I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**" See here the powerful effect of the New Covenant power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. This power "**enables the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.**" This work begins at **regeneration**, continues in the process of **sanctification** and is ultimately finished at **glorification**.

Belgic Confession

The Confession of Faith, popularly known as the **Belgic Confession**, is a doctrinal standard document to which many of the **Reformed Churches** subscribe. The Confession forms part of the Reformed **Three Forms of Unity**. The confession's chief author was Guido de Bres, a preacher of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, who died a martyr to the faith in 1567. It was written in 1561 but revised at the famous Synod of Dort in 1619. In the Belgic Confession, Article 25 is a statement about the fulfillment of the Law and its application for the church.

Article 25: The Fulfillment of the Law

We believe that **the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ended with the coming of Christ**, and that **all foreshadowings have come to an end**, so that **the use of them ought to be abolished among Christians**. Yet **the truth and substance of these things remain for us in Jesus Christ**, in whom they have been fulfilled. Nevertheless, **we continue to use the witnesses drawn from the law and prophets to confirm us in the gospel and to regulate our lives with full integrity for the glory of God, according to his will**. - Here we see a very similar and also summarized view which is very much like the Westminster. They see "**ceremonies and symbols**" in the law. These have been fulfilled in Christ being only "**foreshadowings**" which

“have come to an end” and should be *“abolished among Christians.”* See here the **categorization** of the Ceremonial Law and the **abrogation** of it. Further, the *“truth and substance of these things remain for us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have been fulfilled.”* See here that Christ is the finished product of the **Ceremonial Law** for us who believe, and He is the fulfillment of the Law for us and in our place.

Romans 10:4 - 4 For **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.** NASB
Hebrews 10:14-18 - 14 For **by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.** 15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: **I will put My laws upon their heart, And upon their mind I will write them,**" He then says, 17 **"And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."** 18 Now **where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.** NASB

This why the New Testament states that we are not to be judged in regard to Old Testament ceremonial laws such as *“food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.”* This is because *“Christ”* the *“substance”* has come and fulfilled the *“shadow.”* In other words the **ceremonial laws** and ordinances are no longer required or a standard by which we are to worship God, they have been **abrogated, under the New Testament.**

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore **let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.** NASB

Nevertheless, **we continue to use the witnesses drawn from the law and prophets to confirm us in the gospel and to regulate our lives with full integrity for the glory of God, according to his will.** – See here that *“the witness drawn from the law and prophets”* is to be *“used”* to *“confirm us in the Gospel and to regulate our lives with full integrity.”* How does the Law and the Prophets confirm us in the Gospel you ask? See how perfectly Christ fits as the fulfillment of the **Priesthood**, the **sacrifice and offering**, how he has **cleansed us** so completely that now the Spirit of God can come to live inside us as His **Temple**, and He has become a **Sabbath rest** for His people from the toil and labor of the Law which can never gain us the righteousness required by the holiness of God. The prophets wrote of this day when God Himself would perform our obedience and save us bringing a forgiveness for our sins and powerfully changing our hearts.

Acts 10:43-44 - 43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name **everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.**" 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, **the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.** NASB

Thus we see Christ’s fulfillment by so many proofs and Old Testament scriptures that our hearts are *“confirmed in the Gospel,”* that He is able to save because He is God’s salvation Himself, sent by God for this very purpose. When this is acknowledged by faith it is *“for the glory of God”* and *“according to His will.”* See here also that the Belgic Reformed churches also saw the Law as a trusty **guide** into the *“will”* of God and a rule to *“regulate our lives with full integrity.”* How does the Law regulate our lives you ask? It teaches us the moral standards of God with which He is pleased and glorified when we heartily obey. It stands as that great light to our path telling us to ever and always love God and to love our neighbor as the rule to measure our conduct, whether or not our actions and words are according to the *“will”* and *“glory of God.”* This the Law does with *“full integrity,”* but without any ability to condemn us when we fail. Moreover, this very Law is now our inward desire as it has been powerfully written on our hearts as our ever indwelling longing and hunger for righteousness in all we do.

Romans 8:3-4 - 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, **God did:** sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 **in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.** NASB

39 Articles of the Church of England

The *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* are the historically defining statements of doctrines of the Church of England with respect to the controversies of the English Reformation. First established in 1563, the articles served to define the doctrine of the Church of England as it related to Calvinist doctrine and Roman Catholic practice. The full name for the articles is commonly abbreviated as the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. The Articles spell out Anglican theology as differing from the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant dissenters, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and Lutherans. As the Church of England found itself caught between the Papacy of Rome and the Protestant Reformers, it recognized the need to set out its general theological position. It is this need that The Thirty-Nine Articles address.

Their statement on the Old Testament offers some profit to our dialogue. It becomes clear as we look through the confessions of those who undertook to understand and apply the Law in church History that there is much consistency in understanding how the Bible addresses the issue.

VII. Of the Old Testament.

The **Old Testament is not contrary to the New**: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, **who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man**. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although **the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth**; yet notwithstanding, **no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral**.

See here a view which we have covered many times. They see a **Continuity** in the Old and New Testaments wherein **Christ** is upheld as the only **sufficient and ultimate Mediator** between God and Man. They see a **Discontinuity** in the **Ceremonial Law**, which does “*not bind any men,*” and the **Civil Law** which need not “*of necessity*” be “*received by any commonwealth.*” However there is a binding **Continuity** in the “*Commandments which are called Moral,*” from which “*no Christian man is free*” from “*the obedience*” thereof.

The Heidelberg Catechism

The **Heidelberg Catechism** is a Protestant confessional document, approved for use in 1563, taking the form of a series of questions and answers, for use in teaching Reformed Christian doctrine. It has been translated into many languages and is regarded as one of the most influential of the Reformed catechisms. The Heidelberg deals with the Law in questions 92-115.

92. Q. What is the law of the LORD?

A. God spoke all these words, saying: Exodus 20:1-17 & Deuteronomy 5:6-21

93. Q. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two parts. The first teaches us how to live in relation to God; the second, what duties we owe our neighbor. *Matt. 22:37-40.*

In question 92 & 93 it deals with the Decalogue, the 10 Commandments or the **Moral Law**, and makes reference to the fact that they are presented in two tablets, and how they deal with the whole scope of relations both to God and to man. Questions 94-133 deal with each of the individual commandments and how they should be applied to us as the **rule or guide for our life and worship**. Question 94 is a good example of how it deals with the first commandment by explaining how we should understand and apply the commandment to our life with scripture proofs.

94. Q. What does the LORD require in the first commandment?

A. That for the sake of my very salvation I avoid and flee all idolatry,[1] witchcraft, superstition,[2] and prayer to saints or to other creatures.[3] Further, that I rightly come to know the only true God.[4] trust in Him alone,[5] submit to Him with all humility[6] and patience,[7] expect all good from Him only,[8] and love,[9] fear,[10] and honour Him[11] with all my heart. In short, that I forsake all creatures rather than do the least thing against His will.[12] - [1] I Cor. 6:9, 10; 10:5-14; I John 5:21. [2] Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12. [3] Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9. [4] John 17:3. [5] Jer. 17:5, 7. [6] I Pet. 5:5, 6. [7] Rom. 5:3, 4; I Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14; Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36. [8] Ps. 104:27, 28; Is. 45:7; James 1:17. [9] Deut. 6:5; (Matt. 22:37). [10] Deut. 6:2; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Matt. 10:28; I Pet. 1:17. [11] Deut. 6:13; (Matt. 4:10); Deut. 10:20. [12] Matt. 5:29, 30; 10:37-39; Acts 5:29.

Questions 114 and 115 speak to the fact that as fallen yet redeemed people, we still cannot perfectly keep this Law, but fall woefully short of it. Nevertheless it is to be our goal and pursuit to carry out these commandments. They explain that the **Moral Law** teaches us to “*know our sinfulness*” and also to “*more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.*”

114 Q. But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?

A. No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience. Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments. [Eccles. 7:20; Rom. 7:14, 15; 1 Cor. 13:9; 1 John 1:8-10, Ps. 1:1, 2; Rom. 7:22-25; Phil. 3:12-16.]

115 Q. No one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly: why then does God want them preached so pointedly?

A. First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness. Second, so that, while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection. [Ps. 32:5; Rom. 3:19-26; 7:7, 24, 25; 1 John 1:9, 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:1-3]

The Heidelberg simply presents the **Moral Law** as not only binding, but the **rule or guide for our life and worship**. This only after there is much instruction given in the first 85 questions concerning our salvation in Christ through the Gospel. In all of the Heidelberg, there is no mention of the Ceremonial or Civil laws of the Mosaic Covenant, but a healthy application of the Moral Law is extensively treated. See then how the Reformed churches of the 16th Century clearly understood the Law and applied it to our life and worship.

The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* is a catechism that was written in the 1640s by English and Scottish divines. The assembly also produced the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and the **Westminster Larger Catechism**. The three documents are considered by many Protestants to be the grandest doctrinal statements to come out of the English Reformation. It was completed in 1647. The purpose of the WSC is to educate lay persons in matters of doctrine and belief. The WSC is in a simple question and answer format to facilitate memorization. Typically, parents and the church would use the shorter catechism to train their children in the ways of the Lord.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism is patterned very much after the Heidelberg in its major sections. In questions 39-82 the Westminster Shorter, like the Heidelberg, gives a full treatment to the Moral Law. In it they explain the Moral law as binding commandments and give treatment to each of the 10 Commandments, explaining how they should be applied to our life. For example....

Q40. What did God at first reveal to man for the **rule** of his **obedience**?

A40. The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the **Moral Law**.

Q41. Where is the Moral Law summarily comprehended?

A41. The **Moral Law** is summarily comprehended in the **Ten Commandments**.

Q42. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

A42. The **sum** of the Ten Commandments is, "to **love the Lord** our God" with all our heart, all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; **and our neighbor** as ourselves.

Q50. What is required in the Second Commandment?

A50. The Second Commandment **requireth** the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in His Word.

Q51. What is forbidden in the Second Commandment?

A51. The Second Commandment **forbiddeth** the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His Word.

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* is patterned very much like the Westminster Shorter Catechism, but is much larger having 196 questions and the WSC having only 107. The Westminster Shorter Catechism was to be "easier to read and concise for beginners" and the Larger Catechism was to be "more exact and comprehensive." It deals with many of the questions at length and is also much longer than the WSC. Compare question 108 below to question 50 above and you'll get a sense of the Larger Catechism's expansiveness.

Q108: What are the duties required in the second commandment?

A108. The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has instituted in his Word; particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; religious fasting; swearing by the name of God, and vowing unto him: as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.

A Simplified View

Through our study, several key themes have emerged that help us to grasp the Law and how it is to be applied.

1. The Old Covenant **Mosaic Law** is the **Word of God** and stands as the **necessary foundation** for the New Testament and the **Gospel**.
2. It is helpful to **categorize** the Law into 3 parts; **Ceremonial, Civil** and **Moral**. There is a **Discontinuity** in the Ceremonial and Civil Law, but a **Continuity** in the Moral Law.
3. The **Ceremonial Law** with its Priesthood, Offerings, Cleansings, Dietary requirements, Rituals, Ceremonies and Feasts has **ended** and is no longer required as these ordinances were only **types** pointing toward Christ. They have been **fulfilled** in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, who Himself has become the **substance** of what each and every Ceremonial symbol is for us.
4. The **Civil Law** was given to the national state of Israel and expired with it. It is filled with general **wisdom** concerning governing societies and measurements of justice and equity.
5. The **Moral Law** is the true substance and foundation of God's revealed will for our conduct and is forever binding upon the people of God in all ages. It is consistent with the Gospel in every respect as a **rule and guide** for our life and conduct as Christians redeemed by the free grace of God. It is never to be a system of works to be justified or condemned, but a light shining on our path to see clearly what pleases and grieves the heart of God concerning His worship and our conduct. The **Holy Spirit** has written this Law on our **hearts** and empowers us to obey it with a much greater degree of obedience.
6. The **Law** stands in **contrast** to the **Gospel** when seen as a system of works to be justified or condemned. This is because true believers in the Gospel are fully and completely **justified by grace, through faith, in Christ alone**. Condemnation and guilt have been completely expiated by Christ at the cross, and sufficiently replaced by perfect righteousness imputed to us by faith. This righteousness is Christ Himself who is for us our High Priest (mediator), Passover lamb (sin offering), cleansing (laver & dietary), Feast (spiritual nourishment) and **every other Mosaic type**.
7. The **Old Covenant Law** was given by God to Israel, pointing forward to the fulfillment in the **Gospel** in the course of Redemptive History. It was therefore only **temporary**. As it has now been realized in the Person and Work of Christ in this **New Covenant Age** of Messianic Salvation, which is **eternal**. The New Covenant is **effectual** because with it comes the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in the believer to bring about a greater degree of obedience. God has purposed to spread the Gospel of salvation to all nations in every part of the earth regardless of race, gender, class. This Gospel is received by grace, through faith believing and trusting in Christ alone for righteousness before God, and evidenced by ongoing repentance.
8. Although **no one can keep the Law perfectly** in this life, it remains for us a rule, guide and fervent goal for God's worship and our conduct toward God and others.

The Church – A Culture of Grace

As we have seen, the Gospel has set us free from the sin and death, something the Law could never do. This **freedom** was purchased for us by the free grace of God, and we received it by faith. Christ has completely removed all condemnation from us, having justified us by His life and death. God gives us the gift of faith in regeneration as the Holy Spirit powerfully transforms us and takes up residence within our very own soul.

Romans 3:21-24 - 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being **justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

Romans 8:1-4 - 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 **For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,** 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. NASB
Ephesians 2:4-10 - 4 But God, being rich in mercy, **because of His great love** with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),** 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 **For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast.** NASB

Now these are very great promises indeed. God has now through Christ and the Holy Spirit created for us a whole new state of grace in which we stand. We are no longer under Law but under grace. Moreover, He has brought us together under the headship of Christ and made us one body together with all the saints, the body of Christ, standing together in the grace of God.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 - 12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and **all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body,** so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For **the body is not one member, but many.** NASB

Now if the body stands together in the grace of God, having received abundant pardon from the gracious hand of God, the result should be a new culture of grace and love produced among us by the Spirit. Should the church be a place of abundant grace and healing for all of us who have been so badly wounded by our lives of sin? Indeed it should be. Let us therefore treat one another in accordance with the love and grace with which we have been pardoned by God.

Hebrews 4:16 - 16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, **that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.** NASB

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 - 4 And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, **encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.** NASB

This powerful culture of love and grace is the continual exhortation of Jesus and the Apostles to the Church. Love is to be the most abiding virtue among us and the motive of our culture together in the Church.

John 13:34-35 - 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that **you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.** 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." NASB

1 Corinthians 16:14 - 14 Let **all that you do be done in love.** NASB

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 - 14 For **the love of Christ controls us,** having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, that **they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him** who died and rose again on their behalf. NASB

Galatians 5:13-15 - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, **but through love serve one another.** 14 For **the whole Law is fulfilled in one**

word, in the statement, " You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. NASB

Ephesians 4:15-16 - 15 but **speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him**, who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, **causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.** NASB

Ephesians 4:32-5:2 - 2 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. 5:1 Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you**, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 - 12 and **may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men**, just as we also do for you; 13 **so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness** before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. NASB

Hebrews 10:24-25 - 24 and **let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds**, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. NASB

1 Peter 1:22-23 - 22 Since you have **in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart**, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. NASB

1 Peter 4:8 - 8 **Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another**, because love covers a multitude of sins. NASB

1 John 4:7-12 - 7 Beloved, **let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God**. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has beheld God at any time; **if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.** NASB

The idea of imparting grace to one another abounds in the New Testament. Consider that the Apostles gave us much encouragement to serve, care and minister to one another. This loving care was to be administered in a spirit of humility and grace.

Romans 12:9-16 - 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor**; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 **Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.** NASB

Ephesians 4:29 - 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, **but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.** NASB

Philippians 2:1-6 - 2 If therefore there is **any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion**, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, **maintaining the same love, united in spirit**, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, **but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus**, NASB

Ray Ortlund comments *"Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture. The doctrines of grace create a culture of grace, a social environment of acceptance and hope and freedom and joy. Jesus himself touches us through his truths to create a new kind of community. Without the doctrines, the culture alone is fragile. Without the culture, the doctrines alone appear pointless. Isn't the doctrine-creating-culture dynamic what we find in the New Testament? For example, the doctrine of regeneration creates a culture of humility (Ephesians 2:1-9). The doctrine of*

justification creates a culture of inclusion (Galatians 2:11–16). The doctrine of reconciliation creates a culture of peace (Ephesians 2:14–16). The doctrine of sanctification creates a culture of life (Romans 6:20–23). The doctrine of glorification creates a culture of hope (Romans 5:2) and honor (Romans 12:10). The doctrine of God — what could be more basic than that? — creates a culture of honesty and confession (1 John 1:5-10). If we want this culture to thrive, we can't take doctrinal short cuts. If we want this doctrine to be credible, we can't disregard the culture. **Churches where the doctrines of grace create a culture of grace bear living witness to the power of Jesus.** I think of it very simply like this:

- Gospel doctrine – gospel culture = hypocrisy
- Gospel culture – gospel doctrine = fragility
- Gospel doctrine + gospel culture = power

Don't settle for preaching the truth only. **Build a relational ethos that feels like the gospel. It's powerful.**"

Not only do I believe this to be true, but I would suggest that this is very exhortation given again and again by the Apostles. Consider Paul's letter to the Colossians. In chapter 1 he gives an apologetic for the Lordship and Deity of Christ and explains into chapter 2 that Christ and the Gospel are the foundation and roots of the Christian life. In chapter 2 he also speaks of the Work accomplished in the atonement, and reminds us of our freedom from the world system and judgment and teachings of men. In chapter 3 he addresses the Christian life and culture in the church. Consider this overview of Colossians chapter 3. Here we will find out just "How to Live the Christian Life." Summed up in short....

- **3:1-4** – we are to **THINK** like Christ
- **3:5-11** – we are to **PUT OFF** the old life of sin
- **3:12-17** – we are to **PUT ON** the new life in Christ

3:1-4 – we are to **THINK** like Christ

Here Paul begins by explaining that we must begin to apply spiritual wisdom and understanding to the way we **THINK** about our lives. We are to think about and pursue the great spiritual realities of the Kingdom of God, and not the earthly mundane and temporary **"things that are on earth."**

Colossians 3:1-4 – 1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.** 2 **Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.** 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then **you also will be revealed with Him in glory.**

These things Paul says are the result of having **"died"** [that is to sin], and that our **"life is hidden with Christ in God."** This is further encouraged by the strong **HOPE** of **glorification** that we eagerly look forward to at the Second Coming of Christ.

3:5-11 – we are to **PUT OFF** the old life of sin

Here see the imperatives of the Gospel which are rooted in the Law. **See here how the Law sweetly complies with the Gospel.** Paul preaches the Law in order to show us in a mirror the corruptions of our nature, heart and lives, urging us to put them to death.

Colossians 3:5-11 - 5 Therefore **consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.** 6 For it is on account of these things that **the wrath of God will come,** 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now **you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.** 9 **Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,** 10 and

have **put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him** 11 — a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. NASB

3:12-17 – we are to **PUT ON** the new life in Christ

Even though Paul intently and clearly proclaims both the imperatives and threatening of the Law in verse 5-11, he goes on to exhort the Church to develop a **culture of grace**, acceptance and love. This *culture* was to flourish with all the **virtues** of Christ which are to be our constant pursuit.

Colossians 3:12-17 - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these things **put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And **let the peace of Christ rule** in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful**. 16 **Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. NASB

Consider how pleasant a fellowship of loving saints who pursue these virtues is. Indeed this kind of fellowship imparts a life transforming power like we see in the early church (Acts 2:42-47). When the Church abides in **“compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another in forgiveness,”** there the Gospel is on display in a powerful way. This is the environment we should be experiencing in the church. It is not that we never admonish one another, there is a proper place for that as Paul states, **“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another.”** But admonishment is for the unruly, not for the weak or fainthearted.

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 - 4 And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, **encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men**. NASB

The Word of God is sufficient to expose our hearts to His holiness and give us a heavenly standard of righteousness. This is our constant pursuit and meditation in the Church. It is the main reason why the Word of God takes center stage in the corporate worship of the Church, because in and through the preaching of the Word, God speaks to us in His sovereign authority and stunningly beautiful grace. We need not castigate, censure and chastise one another in an unnecessarily critical manner. After all, isn't the Word of God preached with conviction sufficient to transform God's own people by the power of His indwelling Spirit? Indeed it is. Ray Ortlund comments... *“It's what everyone needs. Everyone. Gospel + safety + time. A lot of gospel + a lot of safety + a lot of time.*

- **Gospel:** *good news for bad people through the finished work of Christ on the cross and the endless power of the Holy Spirit. Multiple exposures. Constant immersion. Wave upon wave of grace and truth, according to the Bible.*
- **Safety:** *a non-accusing environment. No finger-pointing. No embarrassing anyone. No manipulation. No oppression. No condescension. But respect and sympathy and understanding, where sinners can confess and unburden their souls.*
- **Time:** *no pressure. Not even self-imposed pressure. No deadlines on growth. Urgency, but not hurry, because no one changes quickly. A lot of space for complicated people to rethink their lives at a deep level. God is patient.*

This is what our churches must be: gentle environments of gospel + safety + time. It's where we're finally free to grow.” Let us heed these wise words from this wise pastor.

Should Christians keep the Sabbath?

One issue that results from understanding that the Ceremonial Law has been abrogated is how in the New Covenant age the Sabbath is practiced. This is because the Sabbath Law is actually a part of the Moral Law, the **fourth commandment** located on the first table of the Decalogue, it deals with man's relationship to God and how one expresses their love toward God. The obvious issue then is if the Sabbath is part of the **Moral Law**, then there should be a **Continuity** in its practice. And if not, there must be some obvious reason and biblical support for its abrogation.

The Sabbath in its original context

In coming to grips with this issue it is important to understand what the Sabbath was in its original context. It was originally delivered to Israel as a part of the Mosaic Covenant at Sinai.

Exodus 20:8-11 - 8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but **the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work**, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; **therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy**. NASB

Appearing as the **fourth commandment** located on the first table of the Decalogue, it is obviously placed as section of the Moral Law. Located on the first table it is obviously giving instruction concerning man's proper relationship to God and how people's love is expressed toward God. God specifically commands that this "*day*" be "*remembered*" and "*kept holy*." This He says is done by ceasing from the labor of daily work, "*Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.*" Here God hallows this day by having both man and beast cease from their labor, including any servants or foreigners in the land, and by this to remember the Lord and keep this day holy for that purpose. It is a "*Sabbath of the Lord your God*," a weekly day of remembrance for God's holy people who have been set apart to worship Him, to hold God in His Kingship as holy in their sight. This He implemented on the "*seventh*" [Saturday] and last day of the week to rest and cease from labor, and so remember as God's holy people that the day is holy unto God as a constant reminder of the proper worship of God.

Creation mandate?

Moreover, God in giving this commandment makes reference to his having rested on the seventh day from His work of creation.

Exodus 20:11 - 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; **therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy**. NASB

Here God emphasizes the need for rest, not for God but for people who become tired from their labor, in order to remember God as holy. God does not need to remember He is holy, people do. God does not need to rest from His labor, people do. As we shall see, Jesus taught us that the Sabbath was made for man, and not for God (Mark 2:27). In this day of rest "*the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy*." In other words, when the people of Israel rest from their labor and remember the Sabbath to keep it holy in so doing, they will be richly blessed by the constant reminder of ceasing from labor each week, realizing that God is to be worshipped and is more important than even the production of our food and wares. Some have argued that the **Sabbath therefore predates the Mosaic Covenant**, having been instituted before Sinai at **creation**. This however is erroneous in and of the fact that nowhere in Scripture before Sinai, or after in the New Testament, did God ever command such an observance to anyone, nor did He condemn anyone for not doing so. Furthermore, the clear commandment to observe the Sabbath

on the seventh day is a part of the Mosaic Covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai, and not with any other people group in history. It is in fact part of the Old Mosaic Covenant. Nehemiah makes this clear.

Nehemiah 9:13-14 - 13 "Then Thou didst come down on **Mount Sinai**, And didst speak with **them** from heaven; **Thou didst give to them** just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. So **Thou didst make known to them Thy holy sabbath**, And didst lay down for them commandments, statutes, and law, **Through Thy servant Moses**. NASB

More than this, it was God's **covenant sign** with Israel (Eze 20:12-43). The **Sabbath** was God's "**perpetual covenant sign between Him and Israel forever.**"

Exodus 31:12-18 - 12 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 13 "But as for you, **speaking to the sons of Israel**, saying, **'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.**' 14 "Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 "For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. 16 **'So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.'** 17 **'It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever;** for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed." 18 And when He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God. NASB

It is important to realize that the Sabbath is not only a part of the Moral Law, but is uniquely tied to the Levitical Priesthood and Tabernacle/Temple worship. There were burnt offerings given each Sabbath day along with the replacement of the Showbread in the Tabernacle/Temple (Lev 24:8). These were regularly instituted **Ceremonial rites** that were tied to the **covenant sign** of the Sabbath day of rest.

Numbers 28:9-10 - 9 "Then **on the sabbath day two male lambs one year old without defect**, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and its libation: 10 **'This is the burnt offering of every sabbath in addition to the continual burnt offering** and its libation. NASB

When we consider the **Continuity** of the **fourth commandment Sabbath**, it is obvious that we no longer have a Levitical Priesthood or Temple in which to observe these rites. The Priesthood has been once for all fulfilled in the Person of the Lord Jesus and His Work, and He has so cleansed the true believer that we now become the temple of the Holy Spirit by the powerful regenerating work of God. Moreover the very Sabbath itself has been fulfilled in Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath as He has become the holy rest of God for us, as we cease from the labor and toil of sin and rest in His perfect finished work. How then is the Sabbath fulfilled in us, upon whom the New Covenant age of Messianic Salvation has come? We will explore this further as we examine the New Testament teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. Let us suffice to say here that the fourth commandment Sabbath, even though it is located in the Moral Law has a ceremonial element in the keeping of a certain day and prescribed rites in the Temple which have been abrogated in the New Covenant. However, the **Moral character** of the **fourth commandment is still very much alive and in force** in that we are God's holy people, set apart by Him for holiness, through Christ (our Priest and offering for sin) and the continual (24X7) presence of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. **We have through faith in Christ by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, entered the Sabbath rest** of God, **forever**. In this there is a Continuity of the Sabbath commandment, which is related to this last point concerning the **creation mandate**.

Another claim by **Sabbatarians** (people who still keep the Sabbath), is that the **creation mandate** is a **pattern** laid down by God for living in which we work for six days and rest for one, even as God Himself did. The problem here is that when God ceased from His work of

creation, He no longer needed to work on the following day, but was finished creating in the old creation, and rested forever from this work. The pattern then is one of working and then resting, **forever**. This unique pattern has also been displayed in God's work of redemption in the New Creation by Christ. God worked redemption through the ages in Christ, who has now ceased from His labor and sat down at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 12:2 - fixing our eyes on Jesus, **the author and perfecter of faith**, who for the joy set before Him **endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** NASB

Christ having triumphed over His foes has now entered His rest at the throne of God. Similarly, believers fulfill this pattern when they cease from the labor of sin and striving after the Law and come to rest by repentance and faith in Christ and **enter the Sabbath rest of God**. This is the New Covenant fulfillment of the **type** that the fourth commandment **Sabbath** is. This is clear in Hebrews 3 and 4 where the Sabbath rest is discussed.

Hebrews 4:9-11 - **9 There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. 10 For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. 11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest,** lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. NASB

In its context the believers enters into the *“Sabbath rest for the people of God”* by repenting of their sin of self-reliance and trusting in Christ and His High Priestly work alone for righteousness before God. This is the how the **Old Covenant shadow (or type) of the Sabbath** is fulfilled in the New Covenant age. Greg Ferri comments on this in his excellent article, [**The Sabbath: Shadow and Substance.**] Greg writes, *“Hebrew chapters 3 and 4 give the proper place to the theme of “Sabbath rest” which pervades the entirety of the Scriptures. The Author of the letter uses Psalm 95 in comparing and contrasting Israel’s “rest” in the land of Palestine with the believer’s eschatological rest in Christ! Briefly, he writes that the Exodus generation failed to enter into the land because of unbelief and disobedience (3:16-4:4:8). He then goes on to say that a “rest” still stands and that Christians are in a similar position as the Israelites were: they could either persevere in Christ, and therefore enter the rest, or they could stumble, disobey and fall away, thereby not entering in that rest (4:9-13). He even wonderfully gives us a picture of the Gospel, of which the Sabbath is also a picture, in verse 10: “for whoever has entered God’s rest has rested from his works as God did from his”. As Phillip Ryken wonderfully instructs, speaking of God’s rest, “This rest was not a temporary state, but God’s abiding condition...Unlike the other days, this Sabbath day of rest does not end; it is not brought to completion, but goes on forever” (Ryken, 2006, p.119).”*

The question arises then, does the **pattern of one day in seven** have any significance to the worship of God in the New Covenant age. To this I answer that it is not a thing commanded by God to any but Israel. But as the Law is a bright light as a rule and guide for our life, **the regular worship of God every seven days, is a wise and beneficial thing to do**. Many Christians have held this as a binding tradition through Church History. Surely God has set the days in a weekly cycle, and this weekly cycle was laid down at the creation by God. And even as we people are dull and slow of remembrance, we do in fact need a regular practice of worship to hallow the Lord. What a great privilege is ours, even as there is a pattern in the creation and in the Law for a regular weekly worship, this we do as a joy and privilege! The early church obviously employed this observance, but not by way of command but rather of beneficial tradition. The New Testament does not directly command a weekly observance, nor does it judge or condemn those who do not. And this brings us to the discussion of how the early church viewed the Sabbath.

How did Jesus and the Apostles address the Sabbath?

Jesus clearly explained that He Himself was the fulfillment of the Sabbath. He said of Himself that he was “**Lord of the Sabbath**” (Mark 2:28). This was of course an astounding claim in the eyes of the Jews of His day. This happened when they accused Him and His disciples of violating the Sabbath.

Matthew 12:1-8 - 12 At that time **Jesus went on the Sabbath** through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, **Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.**" 3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; 4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? 5 "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? 6 "But I say to you, that **something greater than the temple is here.** 7 "But if you had known what this means, **'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,'** you would not have condemned the innocent. 8 "For **the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**" NASB

But Jesus clearly denounced their claim and showed them the folly of their religious rigor. Not only did He point out that “*something greater than the Temple was here,*” claiming Himself to be “*Lord of the Sabbath,*” but He also explained that God was much more concerned for the acts of mercy and necessity than religious observance. This is because the very substance of true religion before God is love and mercy, not sacrifice. “*But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.*” Jesus sharply rebuked them for their false religion and exposed the sin in their hearts. Matthew goes on to give another example of the same point that God is equally concerned with the welfare and compassion toward the helpless and needy as He is of worship. In fact, works of mercy and necessity are the substance of true worship. Jesus demonstrates this in the **synagogue** on the **Sabbath**.

Matthew 12:9-14 - 9 And departing from there, **He went into their synagogue.** 10 And behold, there was a man with a withered hand. And they questioned Him, saying, "**Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?**" — in order that they might accuse Him. 11 And He said to them, "**What man shall there be among you, who shall have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it, and lift it out? 12 "Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**" 13 Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" And he stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him. NASB

From this we derive two important points concerning the **Sabbath** in the **New Testament**. **Jesus Himself is the fulfillment of the Sabbath** being the “*Lord of the Sabbath,*” and that the **works of mercy and necessity** are equally as important as our regularly weekly worship. Remember that Jesus was continually giving an explanation of the Law, and the Sabbath is no exception. He intended to show that the Sabbath was made for the welfare of man as a regular and proper expression of worship to God.

It is important to note at this point that the **New Testament does not command a weekly observance of the Sabbath**, nor does it judge or condemn those who do not. Of all the **Ten Commandments, nine are repeated** in the New Testament, all but the Sabbath command. In all the lists of vices and sins in the New Testament, [example 1 Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21, Eph 5:3-5, Col 3:5-6, 2 Tim 3:2-5], nowhere is Sabbath breaking listed as a sin. When the **Jewish Apostles** met for the dispute over circumcision in **Acts 15**, they gave clear instructions to the Gentile converts in the church as to what imperatives they were to keep in regard to the OT Law and in offending their Jewish brethren Christians. Here was a perfect opportunity to announce the

imperative of Sabbath keeping to Gentile church but the Apostles do not even mention it. (see pgs 29-30 of this lesson for a closer look at this).

This was clearly the teaching of the **Apostle Paul**. In fact, Paul rebukes the Galatians for thinking that God expected them to observe special days, including the Sabbath.

Galatians 4:9-11 - 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again **to the weak and worthless elemental things**, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? 10 **You observe days and months and seasons and years.** 11 **I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.** NASB

This is also clear from his instruction to the Romans where he describes believers having differences in keeping special days or not. But these he says are not things that we judge one another over, but rather we are to develop our own convictions about such things. He explains that we have liberty in these matters and are not to judge others about the keeping of days.

Romans 14:5-6 - 5 **One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.** 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. NASB

This is a loud commentary on the issue of Sabbath keeping because Paul clearly accepts the fact that some Christians do not keep holy days at all and that is totally acceptable in his view. This is clear by the statement **“one man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike, but let each one be fully convinced in his own mind.”** See here that Paul gives full acceptance to the idea that some Christians do not regard any holy days, and this he says is perfectly acceptable in the sight of God. Paul also told the **Colossians not to let anyone judge them in regard to keeping a Sabbath day**. These things he says are a **“mere shadow of what is to come in Christ.”** Paul is saying the Sabbath observance has come to fulfillment in Christ and has a new application for us in the church.

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore **let no one act as your judge** in regard to food or drink or in **respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day** — 17 **things which are a mere shadow of what is to come;** but the substance belongs to Christ. NASB

Moreover, these statements clearly show the nature of the Old Covenant Law as having been **abrogated** by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their ceremonial aspects like the keeping of holy days which were commanded as **ceremonial imperatives in the OT Law**. This is because what the **Ceremony** was in **shadow** or **type** in the **Old Testament**, is now the **substance** of Messianic salvation in the **New Covenant**.

Hebrews 10:1 - 1 For **the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things**, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. NASB

And this also applies to the **Sabbath, in its ceremonial aspect**. I think this is abundantly clear in the NT texts we have just seen. Remember that Christ IS the fulfillment of the Sabbath for us and therefore **Christians have entered into the Sabbath rest of God** through the High priestly work of Christ. As the writer to the Hebrews said,

Hebrews 4:9-11 - 9 **There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.** 10 **For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.** 11 **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest,** lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. NASB

Therefore by faith we enter that Sabbath. And since we are in this state of rest as an abiding condition, every day is a holy day (even every moment) of remembrance for the Christian. In Christ we have made holy for the purpose of offering our whole lives to Him in worship and service, seven days a week. This is why Paul can say that some Christians regard every day alike.

Romans 14:5 - 5 One man regards one day above another, **another regards every day alike.** Let each man be **fully convinced in his own mind.** NASB

The book of Acts does give a little insight into the discussion about Sabbath keeping. Obviously among the early Jewish Christians Sabbath keeping was practiced as a matter of Jewish tradition, even if the content of worship changed from Judaism to Christianity. Surely in that age of transition between Judaism to Christianity the earliest Jewish Church looked something like modern messianic Judaism. This is because Jews remain Jews by race, even if they become Christians, and many of the customs and religious traditions are a part of everyday life. Of course it was Paul's regular practice on his missionary journeys to enter the synagogues on the Sabbath, the Jewish day of worship, and try to persuade the Jews concerning the Gospel of Christ.

Acts 13:14 – 14 But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and **on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.** NASB

Acts 18:4 - 4 And **he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath** and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. NASB

Even though this is true it appears that the church was meeting regularly on Sunday, rather than on Saturday. Many believe this became the Christian practice early as a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ which took place on the first day of the week, Sunday (Matt 28:1).

Acts 20:7 - 7 And **on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread,** Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. NASB

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 - 1 Now concerning **the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2 On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save,** as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. NASB

This has caused many Christians through Church history to actually move the elements of the original **Saturday Sabbath** to **Sunday** and call it the **Christian Sabbath**. In this practice they would seek to fulfill the fourth commandment, but do it Sunday instead of Saturday. At the very least, Sunday has always been the Christian day of weekly worship, and this is abundantly evident in the teaching of the Church through history, even though some Sabbatarians refute this and say that Sunday worship was not fully instituted until the fourth century. Surely there are some Sabbatarian groups throughout Church history who have kept Saturday Sabbath even until now. But the practice of the **Christian Sabbath**, or the **Lord's Day** has been and remains the practice of many Christians. This was in fact the dominant practice of most Protestant Christians since the reformation period. Although this is true, it is not as a direct result of some New Testament text saying that the Sabbath has changed from Saturday to Sunday, but simply the fact that it became the tradition of the Church in history. Regardless of whether or not we have some passage of Scripture telling us on what day to worship, one thing is really clear in the New Testament, that **the keeping of special days is a matter of preference and not a matter of obedience** to some commandment from God. And even if some Sabbatarian groups want to keep the original Saturday Sabbath for their weekly worship day, they are free to do so and the Bible does not forbid it. However let us be careful and wise in how we judge others who do or do not keep the Sabbath as this matter is clearly addressed in the New Testament.

One thing to note is that there are indeed **practical benefits** from the regular cessation from work on one day in seven. We all need rest, this is necessary for healthy living. Many will point out that without a regular and concentrated day of rest each week, a life of sickness and disorder follows. Not only this, but the **benefits** of such a practice in a nation's culture have been amply displayed in the history of Western Civilization. Let us consider if as God's holy people the practice of ceasing from work and devoting an entire day each week to the worship of God and to rest would be of great benefit to our vibrant faith and our healthy living. And to whatever degree we would, let us commit ourselves to it.

The Sabbath Year

In addition to the weekly Sabbath, God also instituted the **Sabbatical Year** for Israel. Every **seventh year** was to be the Sabbatical Year. During this Sabbath Year the land was to have rest. This applied not only to field crops but also to orchards and groves.

Exodus 23:10-12 - 10 "And you shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, 11 but **on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat.** You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. NASB

During this Sabbath Year the crops and harvest, left to grow without cultivation, were reaped during this year were considered the common possession of all people and animals.

Leviticus 25:1-6 - 25 The Lord then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I shall give you, then **the land shall have a sabbath to the Lord.** 3 'Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, 4 but **during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord;** you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard. 5 'Your harvest's aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; **the land shall have a sabbatical year.** 6 'And all of you shall have the sabbath products of the land for food; yourself, and your male and female slaves, and your hired man and your foreign resident, those who live as aliens with you. 7 'Even your cattle and the animals that are in your land shall have all its crops to eat. NASB

This was especially beneficial to the poor and needy. Also during this Sabbath Year the any money that was on loan to any of their ethnic kinsmen was to be released and forgiven.

Deuteronomy 15:1-3 – 1 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant **a remission of debts.** 2 And this is the manner of remission: every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because the Lord's remission has been proclaimed. 3 From a foreigner you may exact it, but **your hand shall release whatever of yours is with your brother.** NASB

Moreover any ethnic kinsmen that had been sold into slavery were to be released. Not only this but they were to be sent away with full provisions and sustenance.

Deuteronomy 15:12-16 - 12 "**If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free.** 13 And when you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. 14 You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. 15 And **you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you;** therefore I command you this today. NASB

Consider how wise and benevolent these precepts are as they build into the very culture of the people an antidote against tyranny, unnecessarily harsh slavery and debt. But consider the nature of these precepts as part of the Civil Law, more than Ceremonial. They governed how the political state of Israel was to operate and governed even their agricultural practices. See also in this how difficult it would be to enforce or even obey these Civil laws in the Church, with its multi-geographical context and multi-religious framework of modern cultures and nations. See in this the obvious abrogation of the Civil Law.

Jubilee

In addition to the Sabbatical year, God also ordained a **year of national mercy and liberty** called the **Jubilee**.

Leviticus 25:8-12 - 8 'You are also to count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years. 9 'You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. 10 **'You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family.** 11 'You shall have the fiftieth year as a

jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. 12 'For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. NASB

In the Jubilee, all family land allotments were returned to the families which owned them causing the land to revert to its rightful owners, even if the land had been sold. Whenever properties were bought and sold in this time the price was always based on the numbers of years remaining until Jubilee, for then the land ownership would then revert to its original owners.

Leviticus 25:13-17 - 13 'On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property. 14 'If you make a sale, moreover, to your friend, or buy from your friend's hand, **you shall not wrong one another.** 15 '**Corresponding to the number of years after the jubilee, you shall buy from your friend; he is to sell to you according to the number of years of crops.** 16 'In proportion to the extent of the years you shall increase its price, and in proportion to the fewness of the years, you shall diminish its price; for it is a number of crops he is selling to you. 17 '**So you shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God;** for I am the Lord your God. NASB

Nelson's Bible Dictionary comments; "*Part of the reason why God established the Jubilee Year was to prevent the Israelites from oppressing one another (Lev 25:17). One effect of the Jubilee Year was to prevent a permanent system of classes. The Jubilee Year had a leveling effect on Israel's culture; it gave everyone a chance to start over, economically and socially. The Jubilee Year reminds one of God's interest in liberty; God wants people to be free (Luke 4:18-19). It also stands as a witness to God's desire for justice on earth and calls into question any social practices that lead to permanent bondage and loss of economic opportunity.*"

Moreover, it was a time were severe indebtedness, to the point of slavery was remitted and liberty enacted. The Jubilee thus represented God's desire for freedom and justice to prevail among His people. Ungers Bible Dictionary comments; "*Every Israelite who through poverty had sold himself to one of his countrymen or to a foreigner settled in the land, if he had been unable to redeem himself or had not been redeemed by a kinsman, was to go out free with his children (Lev 25:35-43,47-54). Thus ownership of a person was changed into a matter of hire (vv. 40, 53). It would seem that there must have been a perfect remission of all debts in the year of Jubilee from the fact that all persons in bondage for debt were released, and all landed property of debtors was freely returned. Thus the Jubilee year became one of freedom and grace for all suffering, bringing not only redemption to the captive and deliverance from want to the poor, but also release to the whole congregation of the Lord from the sore labor of the earth, representing the time of refreshing (Acts 3:19) that the Lord provides for His people. For in this year every kind of oppression was to cease and every member of the covenant people to find his redeemer in the Lord, who brought him back to his possession and family.*"

See in this **Sabbatical Year** and **Jubilee** a **shadow** pointing to the ultimate freedom from all indebtedness and oppression that comes from sin, finding its **substance** in **Jesus Christ** and the Gospel. Let us see in Jesus the joy of true freedom and understand, as in the words of songwriter Michael Card, that Jesus is the very incarnation of the Year of Jubilee.

What about OT dietary laws?

The Ceremonial Law not only regarded the religious worship of God including the Priesthood, the Tabernacle and sacrificial offerings, the Sabbath and commemorative Feasts, but also the entire lifestyle of the Israelites. It included laws regarding the "**clean**" and "**unclean**" practices for the purpose of **holiness** before God. God had called the people to be set apart (holy), not only in their religious worship, but in the way they lived their lives. As a result, God had given specific laws regarding what was considered pure and holy (clean) in their lifestyle and also what

was considered defiled, or profane (unclean). This regarded their diet with a whole set of **dietary laws**, as well as medical practices and sexual purity in relationships. Through obedience to these Israel would remain ceremonially pure or become defiled by violating these laws. These practices would keep God's people set apart from the surrounding nations who were unclean in the sight of God through their sinful religions and resulting morality and lifestyle.

In regard to the **dietary laws**, God had a whole system for discerning between the clean and unclean animals, which could be eaten and which could not.

Leviticus 11:1 - 1 The Lord spoke again to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, **"These are the creatures which you may eat from all the animals that are on the earth.**" NASB

The Unger's Bible Dictionary gives a good summary; "*four legged animals that do not chew the cud or have cloven feet (Lev 11:4-8; Deut 14:7-8); fish without scales and fins, e.g., eels and all shellfish (Lev 11:9-12); birds of prey and such as feed upon worms and rotting flesh (11:13-19); serpents and creeping insects; insects that sometimes fly and sometimes go upon their feet, with the exception of some of the locust kind (11:20-24,42).* (2) *By the sacrificial ordinances was forbidden the eating of all blood of cattle and birds and bloody flesh (Lev 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; Deut 12:16,23; cf. Gen 9:4; 1 Sam 14:32-34); the fatty portions that, in the sacrifice of oxen, sheep, and goats, were burned upon the altar (Lev 3:17; 7:23,25); also everything consecrated to idols (Ex 34:15).* (3) *For sanitary reasons, doubtless, the following was forbidden as food: the flesh of cattle that had fallen down dead or had been torn by wild beasts (Ex 22:31; Lev 11:39-40; Deut 14:21) as well as food prepared with water on which the dead body of an unclean insect had fallen (Lev 11:31,33-34); also all food and liquids remaining in an uncovered vessel in the tent or chamber of a dying or dead man (Num 19:14-15).*" These **dietary laws** were for the specific purpose of setting God's people apart as holy unto Him. Israel was to be holy unto God by keeping the (Old) Mosaic Covenant. This is how God set Israel apart from the surrounding nations.

Leviticus 20:24-26 - 24 'Hence I have said to you, "You are to possess their land, and I Myself will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey." **I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples. 25 'You are therefore to make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean;** and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that creeps on the ground, which I have separated for you as unclean. 26 **'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.**" NASB

Many Christians throughout Church history have maintained that it is either necessary or preferable to keep these **dietary laws**. In the case of those who prefer them, of course they are free to keep such practices so long as they are not trusting in this tradition as a system of works to be either justified or condemned. But in regard to those who maintain it as a lifestyle which God requires in order to keep one clean or the violation of it makes one unclean, clearly disregard the New Testament teaching and fail to understand the nature of the New Covenant in regard to dietary laws. Both Jesus and the Apostles teach that all foods are clean. Jesus clearly taught that people are not defiled by what goes into them, but rather what proceeds out of them, either words or actions.

Mark 7:14-21 – 14 And after He called the multitude to Him again, He began saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: **15 there is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.** 16 ["If any man has ears to hear, let him hear."] 17 And when leaving the multitude, He had entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. 18 And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do

you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? **"(Thus He declared all foods clean.)"** 20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. NASB

Of course Peter had the vision at the house of Simon concerning all the unclean animals. **"Rise, kill and eat Peter!"** Three times the vision was repeated by God for Peter. God's authoritative command was, **"what God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."**

Acts 10:9-16 - 9 And on the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry, and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; 11 and he beheld the sky opened up, and a certain object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, 12 **and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.** 13 **And a voice came to him, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat!"** 14 **But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."** 15 **And again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."** 16 And this happened three times; and immediately the object was taken up into the sky. NASB

Of course this whole scene happened as God was preparing Peter to preach the Gospel to a house of Gentiles whom He had chosen to regenerate and save and fill with the Holy Spirit, Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:23-48). Nevertheless, the idea that God had made all things clean was trumpeted forth in the vision by God. Could it be that God had now even cleansed the Gentiles, even though they violate all the **dietary laws**? Of course what was just a shadow in the dietary laws was no substance in the Gospel as God offers cleansing to all by grace through faith in Christ alone!

Paul also made this very clear. In fact, Paul went further to rebuke all forms of **"self-made religion"** which is made up of **"the commandments and teaching of men."** He taught that these had no power to change the heart being **"of no value against fleshly indulgence."**

Colossians 2:16-23 - 16 Therefore **let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day** — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. 20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 **"Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"** 22 **(which all refer to things destined to perish with the using) — in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?** 23 **These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.** NASB

Paul, elsewhere explained that what is important is one's own faith and conviction before God, and we are not pass judgment on one another about simply things like eating.

Romans 14:1-9 - 14 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2 **One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.** 3 **Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.** 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, **and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.** 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. NASB

Paul very clearly states that nothing is **"unclean in itself,"** unless in your **conscience** one believes it to be **unclean**. What matters is people's faith before God and explains that out of love

we are to honor one another's convictions and be careful not to offend one another by violating one another's consciences. This he says is important because the ***“kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”***

Romans 14:14-23 - 14 I know and am **convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.** 15 For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. **Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.** 16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for **the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.** 18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then **let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.** **20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.** 21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. 22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But **he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.** NASB

Much more could be said in regard to the dietary laws but let us here suffice to say that as a part of the Ceremonial Law, these were fulfilled in the Person and Work of Christ. Of course they have now been abrogated as we have clearly seen in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. One may choose to keep them for reasons of good health or religious tradition, but certainly not by way of New Covenant obedience.

What about the Jewish Feasts?

Another part of the Ceremonial Law was how God prescribed to be worshipped in Israel by the commemorative **Feasts**. He commanded that they keep seven annual Feast celebrations to commemorate different aspects of their redemption and honor God as His holy people. These Feasts are to happen at a given time each year in order to commemorate some specific feature of God's provision for them. Because of the nature of the Law being filled with types and shadows, there is much **symbolism** to be seen in these Feasts. One interesting aspect to the Feasts is that the type is only specifically fulfilled in Christ's First Advent for 4 of the 7 Feasts, and 3 remain to have a fulfillment. Here is a brief overview of the seven commemorative Feasts.

| Feast | When | Reference | Significance | Status |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Passover | Nisan 14-21 | Ex 12:2-20, Lev 23:5 | Deliverance from Egypt/Slavery | Fulfilled/Christ our Passover |
| Unleavened Bread | Nisan 15-21 | Lev 23:6-8 | Deliverance from Egypt/to Holiness | Fulfilled/Christ-Communion |
| First Fruits | Nisan 16 | Lev 23:9-14 | The Lord provides bountifully | Fulfilled/Christ-Raised from dead |
| Weeks/Pentecost | Sivan 6/count 50 | Ex 23:16, Lev 23:15-21 | Gratitude for harvest | Fulfilled/Holy Spirit Church |
| Trumpets | Tishri 1 | Lev 23:23-25, Num 29:1-6 | Present Israel before the Lord | Future |
| Day of Atonement | Tishri 10 | Lev 23:26-33 | Atonement for Sin/National | Future |
| Booths or Tabernacles | Tishri 15-21 | Lev 23:33-43 | Desert wandering to Canaan's bounty | Future |

These Feasts were inaugurated by God each with a very specific purpose to “**remember**” or commemorate some aspect of **God’s provision**. As with everything in God’s economy, they were meant to give glory unto God for His gracious care and sustenance. The Feasts were a way to incorporate the worship of God into the fabric of the annual life of Israel, and to recall for God’s holy people what God has done and is doing for them as Creator and Redeemer with a national religious Feast of remembrance. The **prophetic typology** of the Feasts has been the subject of much dialogue and controversy. The fulfillment of each Feast obviously points to some aspect of Christ’s life and ministry, either in His first or second Advents.

- **Passover** – The first Feast in the first month, **Spring**. Slaying and eating an unblemished lamb (no broken bones), together with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, in every household, and putting the lamb’s blood on the doorpost to evade the destroying angel come to kill the firstborn, commemorates the deliverance from the slavery of Egypt, **Fulfillment** - Christ was crucified on Passover and referred to in 1 Cor 5:7 as our Passover Lamb, **Salvation, Rest**
- **Unleavened Bread** – Happens on the next night after Passover, **Spring**, begins seven days of sacrificial offerings and eating of unleavened bread only, to remember God’s deliverance from Egypt in haste, **Fulfillment** - Christ was buried just before this feast began-sundown, **Sanctification**, God’s people now set apart as “without sin-leaven” and holy to the Lord with a day of Rest on the first and seventh day
- **First Fruits** – Happens the next day after Unleavened Bread, **Spring**, present a wave offering of the First Fruits of the crops before the Lord to recognize His provision and sovereignty over their agriculture, special lamb burnt offering and grain offering, **Fulfillment** - Christ was raised on this day (Resurrection Sunday) and is called the First Fruits from the dead with a reference to His resurrection (1 Cor 15:20), **Glorification**
- **Pentecost** – To remember with a joyful celebration the **Summer** (early/wheat) harvest, happens on a Sunday seven Sabbaths after Unleavened bread (count 50 days), two wave loaves made with leaven, special sacrificial offerings, field edge gleanings for the poor and needy, **Fulfillment** - the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Church happened on Pentecost, and the Jew-Gentile (two wave loaves-leaven) Church was born, power for Gospel witness Acts 1:8 for the purpose of the Church age – summer Harvest
- **Trumpets** – This **Fall** feast is signified by the blowing of a Shofar (ram’s horn) which was used to call the assembly together to be presented before the Lord with special sacrificial offerings and a day of Rest, **Fulfillment** - apparently has no fulfillment yet but some say that the Rapture (calling of the assembly) will take place on Trumpets... note the trumpets present in some Rapture passages (**Matt 24:31, 1 Cor 15:52, 1 Thes 4:16**)
- **Atonement** – On this **Fall** day the High Priest makes atonement for the sins of the whole nation by sacrifice entering into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat, the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness with the people’s sins, mourning on this solemn day of fasting, **Fulfillment** - apparently has no fulfillment yet but some say that it will be the day of the National Salvation of Israel (**Zech 12:10-13:1**).
- **Tabernacles** – This **Fall** feast is a weeklong joyful harvest celebration to remember the journey from Egypt to Canaan by rejoicing and resting, living in booths or Tabernacles and offering sacrifices, **Fulfillment** - Joy and Rest in the Kingdom Age (**Zech 14:16-19**)

Some of the prophetic aspects of the Feasts are clearer than others, but nevertheless they are a magnificent way that God prescribed for the nation to remember Him as holy and ever and always keep themselves **in faith before the Lord**, woven into the annual life of Israel.

Should Christians Tithe?

One question popular among Christians is the practice of **tithing**. Since the Law prescribed the giving of a *tithe* (**tenth**) of one's income for the support of the Priesthood, many reason that the practice should continue today and be given to either the local church or to some aspect of the Lord's work. How should we view the tithe in light of the New Covenant.

The Tithe in its original context

There are several examples of **tithing** in the Old Testament. Some of these pre-date the Old Covenant Law of Moses. Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils of his war with the Amorite kings to Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem.

Genesis 14:17-20 - 17 Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 **And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.** 19 And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." **And he gave him a tenth of all.** NASB

The writer to the Hebrews quotes this incident to prove the superiority of Melchizedek's Priesthood over the Levitical Priesthood.

Hebrews 7:4-10 - 4 Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, **gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.** 5 And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have **commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people**, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. 6 But **the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham, and blessed the one who had the promises.** 7 **But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.** 8 And in this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. 9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. NASB

Jacob pledged to give God a tenth of all of his increase.

Genesis 28:22 - 22 And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and **of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a tenth to Thee.**" NASB

Some have maintained since these incidents pre-date the Law that tithing is a non-optional practice to be maintained even into the New Covenant age. Surely if this were true we would have specific Apostolic instruction on the matter, describing the custom and manner of it.

In the **Law** it was prescribed that **Israel** was to give a **tithe** or tenth of all their increase from the crops and herds. This tenth was to be given to sustain the Levite priests in return for the service they perform in the Tabernacle/Temple.

Leviticus 27:30-32 - 30 "Thus **all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord.** 31 "If, therefore, a man wishes to redeem part of his tithe, he shall add to it one-fifth of it. 32 "And **for every tenth part of herd or flock, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord.** NASB

Number 18:21 - 21 "And **to the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform,** the service of the tent of meeting. NASB

The Levites in like manner would set aside a tenth of the tithe to give for the support of the High Priest (Num 18:21-28). An **additional tithe** was required every **third year**, but was used specifically for a Festival celebration which was enacted at Jerusalem for a regional feast.

Deuteronomy 14:22-27 - 22 "You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. 23 And you shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, **the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the first-born of your herd and your flock, in order that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.** 24 And if the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring the tithe, since the place where the Lord your

God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when the Lord your God blesses you, 25 then you shall exchange it for money, and bind the money in your hand and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. **26 And you may spend the money for whatever your heart desires**, for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household. 27 Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you. 28 **"At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit it in your town.** 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do. NASB

This practice of festive tithing in the third year was a huge blessing that brought about much national unity as the people would anticipate this feast celebration every third year with much eager expectation and joy. This was especially true for the poor and the fatherless and the widow who would partake is this rich blessing as the nation gathered with overflowing abundance to celebrate before the Lord. Some have argued that they were actually prescribed to give **two tithes each year**, and a **third tithe in the third year**. This is of course very difficult to observe from Scripture and there is much controversy of this particular point. One thing that is very clear is that Israel tithed at least ten percent of their increase each year and a second tithe in the third year. Their giving therefore exceeded ten percent. The Lord warned that this practice of tithing was specifically tied to the material prosperity that he would bless them with. He further explains that not giving the tithe is equal to robbing God and brings down a curse on the people. He adjoins to this a promise of blessing and prosperity for fulfilling the tithe command.

Malachi 3:8-12 - 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings. 9 "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! 10 **"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.** 11 "Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the Lord of hosts. NASB

In the **New Testament** we find **no specific instruction about the practice of tithing**. This because it is a mandate tied specifically to the Old Covenant Law, wherein it was given primarily for the support of the Levites and the Temple worship system. Moreover the third year tithing was celebrated in Jerusalem, a regional celebration for Israel. Such a practice is obviously not required of Christians today, nor is such instruction given in the New Testament. Some have maintained that Jesus commended tithing in Matt 23:23 and Luke 11:42. However his positive words here about the practice of tithing were directed at the Jews of His day which he continually exhorted to obey the Law, including the offering of sacrifices at the Temple with the Levite Priests, which one could hardly see as a requirement by Jesus under the New Covenant. What is remarkable is that nowhere in the rest of the New Testament is tithing ever mandated. In his book *40 Questions about Christians and the Biblical Law*, Thomas Schreiner summarizes, *"Even though tithing is not mandated, there is no call in the New Testament to hoard one's possessions or to live selfishly. Believers are commanded to support those who proclaim the Gospel (Matt 10:10, Luke 10:7, 1 Cor 9:6-14, 1 Tim 5:17-18). Those who are blessed with wealth are to enjoy the good things God has given them, but they are also to be generous to those in need (1 Tim 6:17-19). The New Testament clearly teaches that wealth is dangerous because it can seduce us so that we stray from the Lord. God is our treasure, and **hence believers are to give generously and freely**. For most believers in the West, that means giving more than a tithe. Still, the tithe itself is not mandated by Scripture, and Scripture is our rule and authority rather than a tradition that requires believers to tithe."*

A few principals of giving

I have listed a few principals of New testament giving here. Below we will consider them in context.

- Support of elders who continually preach and teach
- Give to those in need, the poor, widow and orphan
- Give sacrificially, generously, regularly and cheerfully with thanksgiving
- Not grudgingly or under compulsion
- Give humbly (secretly), [Matthew 6:1-4]
- Give of your time, talent and treasure as a stewardship [Rom 12:6-8, 1 Cor 12, 1 Pet 4:10-11]

Let us first consider that the New Testament teaches us **to give regular to the support** of those who minister the Gospel to us **through continual and faithful preaching and teaching**. This certainly includes **pastor-teachers** (elders, overseers, shepherds), but also extends to **evangelists** and of course **Apostles** and **apostolic workers** (missionaries). This was clearly the teaching of Jesus in the context of the sending out of the Apostles to minister the Gospel in their discipleship training. These were later the first elders in the church and received their support from the church.

Matthew 10:10 - 10 or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; **for the worker is worthy of his support**. NASB

Luke 10:7 - 7 "And stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; **for the laborer is worthy of his wages**. Do not keep moving from house to house. NASB

Paul clearly taught that the elders who both **“ruled well”** and **“work hard at preaching and teaching”** should come under the regular support of the church.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 - 17 **Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching**. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and **"The laborer is worthy of his wages."** NASB

This principle is also clearly established in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. His point is that those who serve giving the **“spiritual things”** to the church ought to also **“reap the material things”** from the church.

1 Corinthians 9:6-14 - 6 Or do only Barnabas and I not have a **right** to refrain from working? 7 **Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense?** Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? 8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? 9 **For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing."** God is not concerned about oxen, is He? 10 Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? **Yes, for our sake it was written**, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. 11 **If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?** 12 If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. 13 **Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? 14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.** NASB

Notice how in verse 9-14 above Paul uses a quote from the Old Testament Law and applies it to the church. He says that in the same way that the Levitical priests received their living from the Temple **tithe**, so also should those faithfully pastoring the church should receive their living from the church. Moreover, he ascribes this as coming from the Lord, verse 14 (a reference to Luke 10:7 and Matt 10:10). But Paul also taught that if he wants to reserve his **“right in the Gospel”** to receive wages from the church, that it is his prerogative.

1 Corinthians 9:15-20 - 15 **But I have used none of these things**. And I am not writing these things that it may be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. 16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I

do not preach the gospel. 17 For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. 18 **What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.** 19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. NASB

All of these references give us very certain directives for the care of a specific group of church laborers who have the “*right*” to receive their “*wages*” from the church. Christians should give for the support of their faithful pastors and Gospel workers as defined in the New Testament.

Secondly Christians are told to **give generously** and **to share with those in need**. This obviously includes the poor, but also the widow, the orphan, and those who cannot help themselves. This giving is to be “*generous*” and “*God is pleased*” when we make “*sacrifices*” to share.

Ephesians 4:28 - 28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, **in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.** NASB

1 Timothy 6:17-19 - 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, **but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.** 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, **to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future,** so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. NASB

Hebrews 13:16 - 16 **And do not neglect doing good and sharing;** for with such sacrifices God is pleased. NASB

James 1:27 - 27 This is **pure and undefiled religion** in the sight of our God and Father, **to visit orphans and widows in their distress,** and to keep oneself unstained by the world. NASB

1 John 3:17-19 - 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and **beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?** 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but **in deed** and truth. NASB

Paul taught the Corinthians that they were to give **regularly** so that they would have saved without fail and offering for the poor Christian saints in Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 - 1 Now **concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2 On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.** NASB

More than just giving and sharing is the **heart motivation** that accompanies it. God is concerned that we give not only generously and “*bountifully,*” but “*God loves a cheerful giver.*” He instructs us to give **bountifully** and **cheerfully**, and to do it as we have “*purposed in our heart*” and “*not grudgingly or under compulsion.*” When we must be compelled to give generously to those in need, we are “*closing our heart against*” those in need, and this lacks compassion. This is not good. Christians should give with compassionate hearts that want to give cheerfully.

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 - 6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and **he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.** 7 Let each one **do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.** 8 And **God is able** to make all grace abound to you, that always **having all sufficiency in everything,** you may have an abundance for every good deed; 9 as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever."

10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; 11 **you will be enriched in everything for all liberality,** which through us is **producing thanksgiving to God.** NASB

When we give with much “*liberality,*” cheerfully, out of the overflow of a grateful heart to God, this produces much “*thanksgiving to God.*” God gets the glory when we give to others in need out of the abundance He has provided for us, and when we **thank God** for our ability to give, and those we have given to **thank God** for having their needs met, **God gets the glory**, which is rightfully due Him. He is worthy of all praise because He is the provider of everything we have. For further study, Paul has a lengthy discourse on sacrificial, generous, regular, heart-felt, cheerful and thankful giving in the section of 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15.

Is tithing forbidden?

With the above treatment of the Old Testament practice of **tithing**, it may sound like I am discouraging the **regular giving of a fixed percentage of one's income** altogether. This is not true at all. My main point is to show that tithing as it is defined in its original context in the Old Covenant Mosaic Law has been fulfilled in Christ and Christians are not obligated to that specific Old Covenant practice. In fact we couldn't do it the way the Law prescribed any way because we do not have a Priesthood, or a Temple in which to appropriate it. However, **tithing as defined by giving ten percent of one's income**, can be a very effective way to give as a New Testament Christian. It certainly is a good gauge for effective giving and a disciplined life of giving will prove to be a certain way that our lives become a constant, **bountiful** and fruitful channel of blessing in the church, and to those in need. Moreover if we do it with a **cheerful heart**, we know that God "*loves a cheerful giver*," and we will of course reap a bountiful reward from the Lord in return.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 - 6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and **he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully**. 7 Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; **for God loves a cheerful giver**. NASB

Of course another reason why giving of a fixed percentage of one's income is important is that God commands us to give **regularly** for the **support of our dedicated pastor-teachers** who invest so much of their lives to watch over our souls. Obviously it follows that some kind of regular giving is a foundational part of a well ordered local church.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 - 17 **Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching**. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "**The laborer is worthy of his wages**." NASB

We also see in the New Testament the example of Christians giving for the support of mission's related work which was heartily commended by God. These are some reasons why it is a wise and beneficial practice to give a regular fixed percentage of one's income in support of the local church and to **give generously and to share with those in need**.

Ephesians 4:28 - 28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, **in order that he may have something to share with him who has need**. NASB

1 Timothy 6:17-19 - 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, **but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy**. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, **to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future**, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. NASB

In light of what we have covered, I think it is appropriate to reconsider Tom Schreiner's statement from his book 40 Questions about Christians and the Biblical Law.... "*Even though tithing is not mandated, there is no call in the New Testament to hoard one's possessions or to live selfishly. Believers are commanded to support those who proclaim the Gospel (Matt 10:10, Luke 10:7, 1 Cor 9:6-14, 1 Tim 5:17-18). Those who are blessed with wealth are to enjoy the good things God has given them, but they are also to be generous to those in need (1 Tim 6:17-19). The New Testament clearly teaches that wealth is dangerous because it can seduce us so that we stray from the Lord. God is our treasure, and **hence believers are to give generously and freely**. For most believers in the West, that means giving more than a tithe. Still, the tithe itself is not mandated by Scripture, and Scripture is our rule and authority rather than a tradition that requires believers to tithe.*"

The New Perspective on Paul

There has been a recent firestorm of controversy that has broken out in the evangelical theological world in response to some teaching put forth by several scholars concerning First Century Judaism. These are EP Sanders, Heikki Raisanen, James Dunn and NT Wright (to name a few). The ultimate issues at stake are surrounding the doctrine of **Justification by Faith** and just exactly what Paul was arguing for and against in his defenses of the great doctrine of Justification. Many would classify this as the single **most important doctrine of the Christian Faith** and therefore its biblical and historic defense an ultimate priority.

What is the New Perspective on Paul?

The New Perspective on Paul is a teaching which basically ascribes **First Century Judaism** as much more **grace based religion** that is assumed in Church History, and therefore resets the platform for understanding **how Jesus and Paul interacted with Judaism**. The implications of some of this teaching are very serious indeed and thus the outcry and controversy related to it. To try and summarize what the key issues at stake are, here are a few points put forth by some of the scholars.

- God's **righteousness** is redefined as "**covenant faithfulness**" instead of alien, real, moral, perfect righteousness which is ours "**in Christ**"
- First Century Judaism and the Judaizers were **NOT self-righteous or legalistic** but rather racially motivated toward divine Jewish favoritism
- The **role of works** is seen as the **basis** of our **Justification** at the **final judgment** rather than the traditional view that it is the imputed righteousness of Christ and works as the fruit thereof
- The traditional **Reformed view of Justification** by Faith is a **backlash** against Roman doctrine in the Reformation and distorts the biblical data
- **Imputation** of righteousness is seen as **non-sense** and not necessary

Effectively the Jews of the first century were not really self-righteous or legalistically motivated to the degree that traditional Church History has portrayed them. Therefore what Paul was really arguing against was a racially motivated "**ethnocentric**" desire for some Jews to be exclusive of Gentiles and therefore forcing them to partake of certain Jewish customs like Circumcision, Sabbath keeping and dietary laws. This is because, according to the New Perspective, God's attitude and therefore ours should not be fundamentally different than it was in Judaism, but that the "**works of the Law**" were simply our response to the grace of God in Christ, including us in His elect people according to His covenant faithfulness. Of course all of the controversy therefore centers around whether or not this is true, and what then is "**Justification**" by faith and how central that is to salvation. In fact, some scholars have begun to redefine Justification as not primarily a message about how one comes to salvation, but rather simply the pronouncement that one has been included in God's covenant and therefore will be vindicated at the final judgment. Paul's discourse with the Galatians then is seen as simply a dialogue about the actual fruit of being included in the covenant as "**faith**" in Jesus and not the "**works of the Law.**" Is Paul arguing with the Judaizers over legalistic self-righteousness, or Jewish-Gentile racism and its practical effects?

If this sounds somewhat **ambiguous** and difficult to grasp, it is because that is what really defines the **New Perspective**. It is at best ambiguous and clarity of its implications is not at all

one of its strongpoints. It has not been well proven or clarified and it surely could be very misleading to many who are not fully educated about the biblical doctrine of salvation, and specifically the doctrines of Justification and Imputation, what they are and why they matter. My own assessment is that this is more of a debate for academia and not really for Christian lay people. I do think the controversy is very necessary and I also believe a well-grounded defense and bulwark has already been established against the New Perspective, which I do believe is inaccurate and also misleading. Unless one is enamored by these issues, I wouldn't spend much time chasing the tail of this dog, for you will never quite catch what you chase. What I believe to be far more important is a clear biblical understanding of the traditional Reformed doctrine of Justification by Faith, which is in fact the most important doctrine of the Christian Faith.

What is Justification by Faith and how does Imputation relate to it?

The doctrine of **Justification by Faith** is so important because it deals with the **fundamental elements of salvation**. Namely that people have been alienated from God because of sin and become liable to death, eternal separation from God. Through the life and death of Jesus Christ, God has provided a way for people to be saved from His wrath, sin to be atoned for through the penal substitution of Christ and the imputation of His righteousness to us so that we can be counted or reckoned as righteous in God's sight with God's own righteousness "*in Christ*." This righteousness is foreign, real, moral, and perfect according to God's righteous standard in the Law, and it is received by us with faith, a God-given ability to repent of sin and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ committing one's whole life to Him in faith-worked obedience. In grasping Justification in simple terms, let us have a brief look at the **Westminster Shorter Catechism** on the topic.

Q. What is Justification.

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, (Rom 3:24, Eph 1:7) and accepts us as righteous in His sight (2 Cor 5:21) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, (Rom 5:19) and received by faith alone. (Gal 2:16, Phil 3:9)

Now this statement gets right to the heart of what Justification in the biblical sense really is. It is broken down into four parts as follows....

Justification is an act of God's free grace - God's work, given freely (at no cost to the beneficiary, flowing from the gracious character of God)

wherein he pardons all our sins – It is a legal (forensic) term dealing with Law and includes pardon from sin, God is pictured as Judge

and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us – Righteousness is also a legal (forensic) matter which comes by imputation

and received by faith alone – Faith is seen as the means of reception or appropriation

This description of Justification speaks to us clearly about the basic *elements* of Justification.

They tell us of the nature of Justification, of what it is like and how it functions in God's plan of Redemption. With these elements in mind, let us look a little closer and understand how these are described in the Bible.

Justification is an act of God's free grace – The Scripture clearly ascribes justification as being an act of God.

Romans 8:33 - 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? **God is the one who justifies**; NASB

Galatians 3:8 - 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that **God would justify the Gentiles by faith**, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." NASB

As the Scripture describes this act, it also clearly describes it as flowing from God's gracious character and identifies it as a free gift (at no cost) given to the beneficiary. Justification in the Bible is always free and always associated with God's grace.

Romans 3:24-26 - 24 **being justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 **whom God displayed** publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that **He might be just and the justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus. NASB

Romans 5:16-17 - 16 And **the gift** is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand **the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification**. 17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive **the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. NASB

Titus 3:5-7 - 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, **but according to His mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 **that being justified by His grace** we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. NASB

wherein he pardons all our sins – Justification consists first in God pardoning our sins. It is a legal (forensic) term dealing with Law and God is pictured as the Judge, for sin is transgression of the Law. One of God's attributes is Justice as He is seen as holy and just, ruling over the world with justice! Throughout the Scripture God is seen as the only Lawgiver and Judge.

Genesis 18:25 - 25 "Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"** NASB

Isaiah 33:20 - 2 For **the Lord is our judge, The Lord is our lawgiver**, The Lord is our king; He will save us NASB

James 4:12 - 12 **There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One** who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? NASB

In this sense, our sins are brought ultimately and finally to the authority of the Judge of all the earth to be dealt with in finality. Justification concerning our sins before God then is a legal or forensic proceeding in God's tribunal. It is here where we receive a **pardon from God** which means a release from the *penalty* of our offenses, a free remission of the penalty or consequences of sin. We are therefore set free from the bondage or power of sin, because the consequences of the Law have been foregone by the Lawgiver and Judge.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law**; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

Romans 8:1-2 - 1 There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For **the law of the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus has set you free from **the law of sin and of death**. NASB

This does not mean we are not guilty, but that the consequences of our guilt have been foregone or remitted, paid in full by our Redeemer. This is called **expiation**. Our guilt then can remain no longer, it is removed by way of its penalties and consequences being pardoned by the Judge, having been actually paid by our Substitute. This pardon of justification is a *declarative act* on the part of God. It is a *final* pronouncement of the commuting of the sentence of death and right-standing before Him.

John 8:36 - 36 "If therefore the Son shall make you free, **you shall be free indeed**. NASB

and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us – In addition to the removal of the consequences and subsequently our guilt, we are also credited with a positive righteousness in this Justification. We are said to now possess the righteousness of God. This righteousness means, **right-standing** with God or acceptable in His sight. Because the penalties of sin have been satisfied by Christ's payment at Calvary, we are free from any accusation or blemish of any kind, but also credited with the righteousness of God.

Colossians 1:21-22 - 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to **present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-** NASB

Romans 3:21-22 - 21 But now apart from the Law **the righteousness of God** has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe;** for there is no distinction; NASB

Now this righteousness is the righteousness that God both *requires* and *provides* in Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 - 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, **who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,** 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." NASB

Romans 5:19 - 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so **through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.** NASB

2 Corinthians 5:21 - 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** NASB

Because of Christ's obedience and fulfillment of the Law, we are now *reckoned* or counted as righteous in God's sight. Our righteousness is "*in Him*" (2 Cor 5:21) and "*through Him*" (Rom 5:19). Christ is counted as our Righteousness (1 Cor 1:30), and it is therefore a **foreign** or **alien** righteousness that we possess and is **not** our own, but the real righteousness of Christ Himself.

Philippians 3:9-10 - 9 and may be found **in Him, not having a righteousness of my own** derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in **Christ, the righteousness which comes from God** on the basis of faith, NASB

and received by faith alone – This righteousness then becomes ours by simply trusting in or looking to Christ for it. This believing or trusting is what the Bible calls faith. It is through this faith that this righteousness is imputed or reckoned to us.

Romans 4:5 - 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith is reckoned as righteousness,** NASB

Romans 3:21-24 - 21 But now apart from the Law **the righteousness of God** has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe;** for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a **gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

This very simple concept is portrayed very clearly in Scripture and provides for us, through the merits of Christ, both righteousness (right-standing with God) and justification (declared righteous in His sight).

Romans 10:4 - 4 For Christ is the end of the law **for righteousness to everyone who believes.** NASB

Romans 3:28 - 28 For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith** apart from works of the Law. NASB

Now this treatment of Justification is not to minimize the importance of the other aspects of redemption such as Regeneration, Union with Christ, Election, Adoption, Sanctification or Glorification, to name a few. But **Justification by Faith is in fact the very heart of the Gospel** message and the center of what we preach when we tell people HOW to be reconciled to God. Therefore it is imperative that we rightly understand and tell others that salvation is wholly the work of God, in and through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and that by His life and death we can be saved through faith. After all is said and done, people who are trusting in their own ability to please God and be accepted by Him at the final judgment because they think that they are good people and that God is pleased with their life so as to justify them, and that their own righteousness will be sufficient to save them from God's wrath are believing a terrible lie, and they will be woefully shocked at the judgment when God weighs their life in the balance with His holy Law. They will be found wanting, and it will be a tragic and final day of Judgment and wrath from which they cannot be saved.

Let us and everyone therefore look to **Christ Alone** for righteousness before God, whom He has put forth as both Savior and Lord for people to be saved from death and justified in His sight.

For a bit more insight, consider the profound wording of some statements of Justification from both the **Westminster** and the **1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith**. Both the Westminster and 1689 Baptist Confession read identically. These confessions provide a rich learning experience and are excellent fodder for family Bible study and discussion;

Chapter 11. Of Justification.

1. Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth;^a not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; ⁽⁴⁹⁾ nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them,^b they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.^c

a. Rom 3:24; 8:30. • *b.* Jer 23:6; Rom 3:22, 24-25, 27-28; 4:5-8; 5:17-19; 1 Cor 1:30-31; 2 Cor 5:19, 21; Eph 1:7; Titus 3:5, 7. • *c.* Acts 10:44; 13:38-39; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:7-8; Phil 3:9.

2. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification;^a yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.^b

a. John 1:12; Rom 3:28; 5:1. • *b.* Gal 5:6; James 2:17, 22, 26.

3. Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.^a Yet inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them,^b and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead,^c and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace;^d that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.^e

a. Isa 53:4-6, 10-12; Dan 9:24, 26; Rom 5:8-10, 19; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 10:10, 14. • *b.* Rom 8:32. • *c.* Mat 3:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 5:2. • *d.* Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7. • *e.* Rom 3:26; Eph 2:7.

4. God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect,^a and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification;^b nevertheless, they are not justified until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.^c

a. Rom 8:30; Gal 3:8; 1 Pet 1:2, 19-20. • *b.* Rom 4:25; Gal 4:4; 1 Tim 2:6. • *c.* Gal 2:16; Col 1:21-22; Titus 3:4-7.

5. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified;^a and although they can never fall from the state of justification,^b yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.^c

a. Mat 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2. • *b.* Luke 22:32; John 10:28; Heb 10:14. • *c.* Psa 32:5; 51:7-12; 89:31-33; Mat 26:75; Luke 1:20; 1 Cor 11:30, 32.

6. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.^a

a. Rom 4:22-24; Gal 3:9, 13-14; Heb 13:8.

Preparatory reading for our upcoming class....

Law and Grace **Distinctions between the Old and New**

In order to prepare for the material we will cover in this class, it is important for you to know these Bible passages well so that you will be familiar with the concepts, contrasts and conclusions spoken of in them. Please read these passages through at least once in the upcoming weeks. It is important that you pay *careful attention* to the way in which the Scripture *refers* to, *contrasts*, and *concludes* arguments in these passages concerning.....

- 1) **Covenants** ... Old & New
- 2) **The Law**
- 3) **Promises**
- 4) New Testament references to the *historical development* of God's eternal *plan of salvation/redemption*. How the **New** is *contrasted* with the **Old**.

OT Passages

Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 17:7-8

Genesis 22:16-17

Exodus 20:1-17, 24:1-8

2 Samuel 7:8-17

Isaiah 59:21

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Ezekiel 36:26-27

NT Passages

Matthew 5:17-48

Acts 15:1-35

Romans 3:19-26, 5:12-21, 6:6, 7:1-8:4, 9:4, 10:1-4

Romans 14

1 Corinthians 5:5-8

1 Corinthians 15:56

2 Corinthians 1:20

2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6, 5:17

Galatians 2:16-4:21, 6:15

Ephesians 2:11-22

Colossians 2:16-23

Hebrews 7-10