

Quarrels About the Law

Patrick J. Griffiths

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Waukesha Bible Church
S53 W24079 Glendale Road
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www.waukeshabible.org

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Titus 3:9-11

⁹ But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and **quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.**

¹⁰ As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,

¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

An Introduction

The early church often failed in properly understanding the proper place of the Law in the life of the believer. They struggled in correctly considering the single nature of the biblical *Story*. These same misunderstandings exists in the church today.

As one reads Paul's letters to both Timothy and Titus, it becomes apparent there is a persistent and consistent problem within the churches. Regardless of the unique expression of the problem based on locations and personalities, the problems all seem to deal with issues of the Law. Part of this problem is rooted in the interpretation and application of the Law to those who believe in Jesus the Messiah. Moreover, if one reads the *Story* correctly, there is a logical reason as to why this would be a problem. The progression of the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15) and Blood Picture (Gen. 3:21) comes to the nation of Israel, then through Israel to the world. The flavoring and coloring of the Scriptures are Jewish. The dominant texture of the Bible is to the Jew, by the Jew, for the Jew. Yet, the nation of Israel is only the womb that carried the Seed Promise. The *Story* does not have Israel as the center, but Jesus. In addition, a primary marker within the nation is the Law given through Moses to the Jews. Yet, the Law is only a piece, an element, a slice of the whole. The Law plays a role, a part in God's grand narrative, but only a role. The Law is not the whole.

With that said, if one is to read the New Testament correctly and follow the flow of the *Story*, one must read it through Jewish eyes. One cannot dismiss the Jewish nature of the *Story* nor be dismissive toward the role of the nation in the narrative. It is equally problematic to assign a role of

importance to the Law that exceeds its intent.

This short read seeks to make sense of how the early church struggled with and then understood its relationship to the Law. We will look to address this idea from what we read in the Apostle Paul's Pastoral Letters to Timothy and Titus.

The Law in the Pastorals

Four times in the pastorals the word “Law” occurs. Not a whole lot, but significant in the way it occurs.

Notice the common language used in the pastorals to describe this theological aberration and its mutated fruit.

- ³“As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men **not to teach strange doctrines,** ⁴ **nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation** rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. ⁵ But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶For some men, straying from these things, **have turned aside to fruitless discussion,** ⁷ **wanting to be teachers of the Law,** even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. 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 person, 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” (1 Tim. 1:3-11).
- ³“If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴ he is conceited and understands nothing; but he **has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words,** out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵ and **constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth,** who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Tim. 6:3-5).
- ²²“Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith,

love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³ **But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.** ²⁴ The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:22-26).

- **“But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless”** (Titus 3:9, cf. 3:13)

Just as they struggled, so also do we. We seem to struggle in our understanding of the Old Testament Law’s rule in the New Testament Christian. In what way does the Law work in the Christian’s life? Listen to the “fruit” of this struggle as expressed in the Pastoral Letters.

- “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him” (Titus 1:16).
- “holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (2 Tim. 3:5).
- “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7).

FAITH	FRUIT
Profess to know God	by their deeds they deny Him
A form of godliness	they have denied its power
Always learning	never able to come to knowledge of the truth.

Somehow, their understanding of Christ and the Christian Life were producing an unwanted oddity that damaged the church. We recognize the need for change, but fail to see how the gospel causes this change. In our attempt to correct a perceived problem, we turn to the Law as the means of

producing gospel fruit, thus resulting in a tension between one's profession of Jesus and one's conduct in life. Notice the same type of language occurring in the Gospels. Jesus called these individuals blind guides, hypocrites, and whitewashed tombs.

- ²⁴“You **blind guides**, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! ²⁵Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. ²⁶You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. ²⁷ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like **whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.** ²⁸ So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matt. 23:24-28).

The Gospel they claimed was incapable of converting the condemned. James also picks up this same idea in his letter.

- ¹⁴“What use is it, my brethren, if someone 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.** ¹⁸ **But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."** ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that **faith without works is useless?** ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when

she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?
²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also **faith without works is dead**" (James 2:14-26).

If we step back and see the larger picture, we will see how the Scripture says the same thing over and over again but perhaps in different ways and from different perspectives.

We often trip over James and his presentation of faith and works. Verse 17 is expecting a negative response to both statements. We can no more show our faith without works than we can prove our faith by our works. Faith and works are always working together and are inseparable, but not equals or reversible. James is saying the same thing as Paul in Titus 1:16.

- "They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him" (Titus 1:16).

The Problem

How does this relate to the Law? Whomever these teachers were that Paul was addressing in his Letter to Titus, they fixated on the application or role of the Law to the New Testament believer. They were either separating gospel fruit from the Jesus Seed or they thought the fruit could produce the Seed. Law obedience is intrinsic to the Jesus Seed. No one who confesses Jesus lives a lawless life. But the obedience reflecting the Law is not and cannot be produced by works righteousness. It is only produced by the indwelling Spirit who is given at the moment of one's justification. They talked of obedience without faith, without Jesus.

In light of this, how do we look at our own relationship to the Law and obedience? Are we bearing gospel fruit or is our "work" simply us working to will Law obedience?

Might we assume that the Law speaks to "doing?" Yet throughout Titus, we hear speech concerning "deeds." What is the difference between the "doing" produced by the Law and the "deeds" produced by the Gospel?

The Solution

We would argue that Paul's word to Titus concerning "good works" is nothing less or more than when he speaks of "love being the fulfillment of the Law" (Rom. 13:8-10) or Jesus saying "the entire Law can be summarized in this way, love God and love one another" (Matt. 22:36-40). This idea will form the content of our answer to the problem.

It is interesting to see the idea of good works and gospel fruit against the backdrop of a twisted application of the Law to the believing. Believers are no longer under the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic code is Israel specific. The Mosaic code has/had a distinct role in the one *Story*, but that role is temporal, not permanent. It is not universal or normative for everyone, everywhere, at all times. **No Christian should appeal to the Mosaic Law as a means of achieving morality or holiness.**

Our appeal is not to the Law, but to JESUS. However, this does not mean we are lawless or transgressors. The JESUS SEED always produces a GOSPEL FRUIT and that fruit looks like Law obedience.

Those who put us under the Law are looking to achieve through human will and effort what God gives to us and the Holy Spirit works in us and through us to those around us. **The Law cannot make us moral or holy. Only Jesus can and does.** Because we are in union with Him and have the abiding Holy Spirit, we are moral and holy and will live moral and holy lives. It is inevitable. We fail to understand and trip over the ideas expressed in 1 John 3:4-10. Christians cannot *practice* sin. We can have point-in-time failure, but no Christian can practice immorality or live an ungodly life. However, that particular idea would require us to take more time than we have in this short study. (cf. *Sin and 1 John* booklet)

Part of our ongoing problem is failing to see how our obedience affects our horizontal relationships, not our vertical relationship with God. **Our obedience is not reaching up in the vertical, but reaching out in the horizontal.** “Let your light shine” (Matt. 5:13). It is God reaching in us and through us to those around us. That is why the emphasis in the New Testament is on “loving one another.”

- ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷And 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” (Matt. 22:36-40).
- 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; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:8-10).
- “ For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘**YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF**’” (Gal. 5:14).
- “If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘**YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,**’ you are doing well” (James 2:8).

All the commands [613 in the Old Testament] that make up the Law can be summarized by the one commandment to “love God” with the inevitable result that we “love one another.” This idea is just as true in all the moral and ethical

commands of the New Testament. Some might suggest that such reduction minimizes the ethical call in the New Testament. This proverbial straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel (Matt. 23:24) is what is choking out the gospel in the New Testament church.

I would have to think Jesus Himself caused quite a stir when He taught the *Sermon on the Mount*. He departed from the prevailing thoughts on Law interpretation and application. He exposed their hypocrisy and taught as one who had authority, not as the scribes (Matt. 7:28, 29). When we fixate on the Letter of the Law and not the Spirit of the Law, we fail. When we choke on the “jot and tittle,” we are missing the point.

Thus, there is a sense in which obedience to the Law is really loving your neighbor on the horizontal. If that is the Law simplified and really reduced to what it actually is, or at least its meaning and application, then what went wrong?

What went wrong is that we have added to the text. We have become fixated on the minutia and have attempted to micromanage what this fruit looks like. We have created a significant amount of biblical “white noise.” How do we hear the Spirit’s voice in a room with competing voices? If the structure of any passage or book or the entire Bible reveals the emphasis, and the emphasis is what the Spirit is saying, then perhaps we might conclude that we have made a royal mess of things.

When the early church received a Letter like Titus, they perhaps read it and then the preacher or congregation would comment on it. In time, those comments were perhaps written down and eventually became equal to or above the text. We know that there were many prominent “preachers” called the

Ante-Nicene Fathers in the initial centuries following the apostles. Many wrote extended devotionals, and like today, those devotionals became binding in the reading of the biblical text. We know this is what happened within Judaism when their commentaries, the Talmud, Mishnah, and Gemara, embellished or added oral traditions concerning the Old Testament text. The commentary took precedence over the text. This is what Jesus references in Mark 7 concerning traditions. Their traditions negated the very Word of God. The “white noise” choked out the authority of the biblical text. It put a strangle hold on the text and cut off its air flow.

This same kind of problem exists today in our study Bibles and the plethora of available commentary online by popular speakers. We are in many ways, just like the early church, rallying around personalities and positions. As Protestants, we balk at the idea of a pope who holds such power as to determine meaning. But as evangelicals with all of our conferences surrounding personalities, we are really no different. We have our evangelical “popes” who pontificate and all present bow down and pay them homage. For me, it is ludicrous. **We are bound by the book. It is the Spirit of God who takes the Word of God and does a sure work in the People of God.** What God does in and through others has a place. But at the end of the day, it is you and God and the text.

So when we attempt to come back to the simplicity of the text, we struggle trying to figure out its meaning and application when it is actually quite simple: Love God and love one another.

As it relates to the application or role of the Law in the life of the Christian, it really is simple. What follows is a proper view of the Law in the Bible and for the New Testament church.

A Proper View of the Law

1. First, the Law is part of the overarching narrative/*Story* of Scripture.

We must know the Law to know the *Story*. The Law is a “layer” within the biblical *Story*. It is like looking at a beautiful panoramic scene and in that scene there is this little house sitting on the horizon. The house is not the “view.” If we focus on the house, we will fail to see and enjoy the view. The Law is the house, but the real thrill is when we walk into that house and see how the house is arranged.

As a whole, we do not live on the outside of our houses; we live on the inside. The outside might be its “curb appeal,” but the real gem is what awaits us on the inside and perhaps what is about to be served for dinner. When you and I understand the Law as part of the whole and its purpose or intent, we can begin to enjoy the meal.

2. The Law, as a subset of Old Testament revelation, is Israel specific.

It is *their governing document*. Until the fulfillment of that Law and the inauguration of the New Covenant, any Gentile who converted to Judaism had to put themselves under the Law.

In our panoramic view we see the house, but what we fail to see is a fence running through the property separating it from us. Perhaps we might belly up to the fence and stand on our tip toes to peak over the fence, but that house isn't ours.

3. Those who initially believed were Jewish and continued to “keep the Law.”

The apostles and early disciples did not come out of Judaism. Those who believed saw Jesus as the fulfillment of Judaism. Jesus, the twelve, and Paul were all practicing Jews. They kept the Law.

4. The early church, being Jewish, kept ethical aspects of the Law simply because they were Jewish and it was their culture.

Those who believed saw Jesus as the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies, pictures, and promises. They saw Jesus as the culmination of all their longings. He is “Amen” to all of the Old Testament.

“For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory” (2 Cor. 1:20).

5. The early Gentile Church did not need to keep the Law simply because they were not Jewish. The only reason they would keep certain aspects of the Law was not to offend their Jewish brothers and sisters (Acts 15:1ff).
6. The Law was never meant to be an end, not even a means to the end.

It pointed to Jesus. Much like John the Baptist; “It must decrease and Jesus must increase . . .” (John 3:30).

7. The Law is a filter, a lens through which the Old Testament Believer passed or looked through.

8. The Law does not get us to God. The Law invites us to look through it, to God and His world.
9. The Law and Grace are not mutually exclusive. One can have a graceless law (John 1:17) and a lawless grace, but such expressions are mutations and deformities.

The Old Covenant [Testament] is graceful and the New Covenant [Testament] is lawful. There is only one *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is Jesus.

10. Jesus fulfilled the Law's intent (Matt. 5:17, 18; Rom. 10:4). **He is the perfect sacrifice for imperfect people. What the Law shadows, Jesus fulfills.**

Jesus is the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies, pictures, and promises. The fulfillment of the Law by Jesus simply means Jesus is the next thing after Law. He is the "3" to the Law's "2." He is the "next" or as Hebrews says, "Better." **What the Law is in shadow, Jesus is in substance.** When the New Testament author cites the Old Testament text, it is often cited as, "This is that." What we have in Jesus is the fulfillment of what was spoken of in the Old Testament text. When the word for Law [nomos; cf. Appendix A] occurs, it is not used negatively, but does occur in the context of fulfillment (Rom. 7:14). The New Testament author speaks of the Law as something that is no longer applicable to the New Testament believer (2 Tim. 1:3-11).

11. The Law is not the problem; Sin is (Rom. 7:7).

Some might argue that in the absence of the Law we would not know right from wrong. We would have no moral absolutes. This, however, is a failure to understand who Jesus is. **Jesus as fulfillment is not less than Law.** It isn't as if Jesus is a "pass" to the Law's judgment. If one were to look at the *Sermon on the Mount* in Matthew 5-7, Jesus takes murder to thoughts of harm and adultery to thoughts of lust. Jesus exposes the true intent of the Law. Thankfully, Jesus is the answer to the Law's question (Psalm 19:12, 13, "Who can stand before this righteous judge?" - Cf. "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God" WHY JESUS MATTERS).

12. The New Testament writers spoke of Jesus as fulfilling the Old Testament's intent. Part of that which He fulfilled is the Law (Matt. 5:17, Luke 24:44).

13. As Christians we are not under the Law's authority or jurisdiction.

We are citizens of another country. This does not make Christians lawless. Rather, it simply means we are under a different Law or reign (Rom. 5:20, 21; 7:1ff).

14. Christians are under the reign of grace (Rom. 5:20, 21).

In the Old Testament section of the *Story*, Law instructed and taught. Now in the New Testament section of the *Story*, grace teaches, trains, and instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (Titus 2:11).

15. Because Christians have the imputed righteousness of God embodied in the Holy Spirit who now dwells within them, they are by *de facto* Law-keepers who live out Law-abiding lives (Rom. 8:1ff).

It is for this reason the Bible will say, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Once, prior to Jesus, we were Law-breakers; now in Christ we are commandment-keepers. Such obedience is not Law or rule-based, but gospel and Spirit-based (Gal. 3:1-5).

16. This is the difference between works righteousness and gospel fruit. **Works righteousness is what you do; it is a work of the flesh. Gospel fruit is what He does and is a work of the Spirit.**

Jesus speaks to this idea in Matthew 6:1 when He says, "*Practicing* your righteousness" and the contrasting statement in 7:23, "Depart from me, you *workers* of lawlessness." This is the continued tension when we speak of "works righteousness" and "good works." One is the work of the flesh and the other is the fruit of the Spirit.

An Improper View of the Law

So, in light of this, what was the problem in the churches of Ephesus and Crete and within the early church as it related to the Law?

1. There was a problem of making the commentary and personality more important and binding than the biblical text (Cf. pages 10, 11).
2. There was a refusal to believe the consequences of the gospel mattered. There is a genuine impact or effect produced by the gospel that must be embraced. The New Testament writers speak of this as “commandment keeping, obey, fruit, and good deeds.”
3. There was a refusal to let the Law have its day, but to let it go in the present. This is an example of pouring new wine into old wineskin. The Law served its purpose, but was now past. Some desired to give it a role in the church and this was not proper or feasible.
4. There was the belief that obedience to such rules and regulations caused holiness, when actually the change was always from the inside out. They wanted to believe that by *acting* righteous they would *be* righteous rather than believing *being* righteous internally caused *righteous acts* externally. (Cf. Appendix A - Nomos in the NT)
5. There was the belief that the Law could do what only the gospel can do. This is legalism/moralism. There

is nothing we can do to undo what has been done and there is nothing we can do to earn [achieve] by works what has been given by grace. And there is nothing we can do to maintain by works what has been freely appropriated by faith (Gal. 3:1-5).

Does It Really Matter?

Where does this leave us?

1. Stop looking to rules and regulations for your salvation from sin and death, and start looking to Jesus who is the author and finisher of faith.
2. Stop looking to rules and regulations to secure an imaginary end of holiness or godliness and start looking to Jesus who is your righteousness, holiness, and godliness (Col. 2:16, 17).
3. Stop thinking Jesus is necessary but not enough and start thinking that Jesus is both necessary and enough in this life and in the life to come.
4. Stop seeing the Law as a usurper, competitor, or opponent to grace and start seeing Law-keeping as the rightful fruit of grace. In Adam, we were Law Breakers, but now in Christ, we are Commandment Keepers.
5. Stop looking at the trail and fixating on the minutia [but, but, but, but, but] and start walking with an upward gaze and seeing the panorama of God's redemptive work. Remember, the first commandment.
6. Do not have a graceless law nor a lawless grace. It is only when you understand the proper relationship of these two ideas in the context of the single *Story* with Jesus at the center that you and I will live gospel rich lives.

7. Perhaps you are stuck in “rules & regulations.” The fatigue is a result of a graceless Law, not a lawless grace.
8. Turn your back on your ability to perform and turn your face toward the finished work of Jesus Christ and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.
9. Stop wrangling over what you do and start resting in what He did.
10. Let your life flow from the abundance of His work, not the absence of yours.
11. Friends, if this work is not finished, then we are of all people most miserable and to be pitied.

May God enable us to see Jesus only, even as we live full lives surrounded by competing voices.

Appendix A

The following chart traces the usage of the Greek word Law [nomos] in the New Testament. The intent is not exhaustive. However, even a casual reading will show how the New Testament authors viewed the Law. It is never cited as negative, neither is it seen as something to be imposed on the New Testament believer. New Testament believers are no longer under the Old Testament Law. New Testament believers are under the New Testament "law."

Nomos in the NT			
Mt 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.			
Book	Nomos	OT Quotes	Summary
Romans	51 Verses	153	3:20 by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified 6:14 for ye are not under the law, but under grace 13:10 therefore love is the fulfilling of the law
1 Corinthians	7 Verses	115	15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
2 Corinthians	NA	57	NA
Galatians	25 Verses	28	2:16 a man is not justified by the works of the law 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.
Ephesians	1 Verse	46	2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances
Philippians	3 Verses	15	3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:
Colossians	NA	9	[nomos] NA; 2:16 Therefore no one is to 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.

1 Thessalonians	NA	16	NA
2 Thessalonians	NA	16	NA
1 Timothy	2 Verses	22	1:8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,
2 Timothy	NA	7	NA
Titus	NA	12	3:9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.
Philemon	NA	0	NA
Hebrews	13 Verses	210	10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.
James	7 Verses	51	2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: 10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.
1 Peter	NA	72	NA
2 Peter	NA	14	NA
1 John	NA	10	NA
2 John	NA	10	NA
3 John	NA	1	NA
Jude	NA	17	NA
Revelation	NA	605	NA [More OT quotes and allusions than any other NT book]

The relationship of the Law to the Old Testament is symbiotic. The New Testament writers see the Old Testament Law as fulfilled in Christ and implanted in and through the New Testament Believer.

Appendix B

Chart of Jesus as New Israel and Hebrews “Better”

FOR EXAMPLE	
MATTHEW	HEBREWS
Jesus is the NEW ISRAEL [1-4]	Christ Is Better Than Angels (Heb. 1:1-2:18)
Jesus is the NEW LAW GIVER [5-7]	Christ Is Better Than Moses (Heb. 3:1-4:13)
There is a NEW MISSION / CONQUEST [10]	Christ Is A Better High Priest (Heb. 4:14-7:28)
There is a NEW WISDOM [13]	Christ Is Mediator Of A Better Covenant (Heb. 8:1-9:28)
There is a NEW PEOPLE [18]	Christ Provides A Better Sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-39)
Jesus is the NEW PROPHET [22, 23]	Christ Is The Author Of A Better Salvation (Heb. 11:1-13:25)
There is a NEW CAPTIVITY [24, 25]	
Jesus is the NEW DELIVERER [26-28]	
Jesus is the NEW KING [28:18-20]	

Appendix C

ANTINOMIANISM

- Antinomianism [“against law”] is NOT lawlessness.
- It is a response to the “3rd use of the Mosaic Law” as a means of sanctification in the Christian life. This labeling began in the 1500’s during the Reformation. [See Appendix D and E.]
- The Law of Moses is composed of three parts: Ceremonial, Civil, and Moral. However, Scripture never separates these three parts from each other. The Law is one undivided whole (James 2:10). Today’s evangelical never questions that the ceremonial sacrifices have come to an end. They never question that the civil code was the governmental structure of ancient Israel. Why then is the third moral component suddenly applicable to the modern day Christian as defined by the Mosaic Code. It is not.
- Each of the above “divisions” are fulfilled in Christ. He becomes for us what the Law could never do.
- Gospel/Jesus/Spirit-only people do not dismiss the role of the Law in the *Story* of God, but do dismiss the use of the Law in the Christian life as a guide or means of sanctification.
- The Law is a beautiful thing in the one *Story* of God with Jesus at the center.
- BUT the Law should not be applied to the believer as a guide or means to sanctification and holiness.
- The NT Letters clearly teach the place of the Law in the

NT believer.

- NT Christians properly understand the NT to teach that they are under the Gospel as their means or guide to sanctification or holiness.
- The NT refers to this “law” as the royal law.
- This royal law is NOT the Mosaic Law.
- The standard for morality does not come from the Law, but from God. The Law given to Israel is the cataloguing or codifying of God’s Character/Conduct.
- The morality reflected in the Law preceded the Law (pre-Moses) and extends beyond the giving of the Law. God is moral and He is the standard for our morality, not the Law.
- Thus, to think that apart from the Law there is no morality is unfortunate.
- Jesus exceeds the morality stated in the Law (Matt. 5).
- Those who still look to the Law to instill morality or achieve sanctification actually have a very low view of the Law. They think they can achieve some measure of success (according to their self-defined standards). Those who see Christ as fulfilling the Law have a high view of the Law. The bar is so high it cannot be reached and therefore our only hope is the imputed righteousness of Christ.
- Like the NT writers, I do not see any application of the Law for guiding or sanctifying the believer. All of this is done IN CHRIST. This, however, does not make NT Christians LAWLESS. That is a poor caricature of the issue.
- The means of sanctification, guidance, or holiness is all answered in Christ.

What About Antinomianism?

by Mockingbird on Oct 21, 2015 • 4:00 pm

The second appendix to our Law and Gospel: A Theology for Sinners (and Saints) book addresses a popular (religious) objection to its contents:

There's an accusation which sometimes gets leveled against those who stress Christian freedom and forgiveness in lieu of behavior-modification, and who downplay 'spiritual progress' as a burdensome distraction from the indiscriminate compassion of grace. The charge is that such people denigrate God's law, or cast it as 'bad.' The formal name for this charge is 'antinomianism' (*anti*=against, *nomos*=law). The common picture of the antinomian is someone who thinks that, because of Christ's forgiveness, they can (and will) do whatever they want: self-indulgence, sexual deviancy, substance abuse, lewd music, and the like. A few points to make:

1. If you're not being accused of antinomianism occasionally, you're probably not preaching the Gospel. St. Paul himself had to answer criticism on precisely this point.
2. Paul evidently thought a lot about the antinomian gripe, and responded in no uncertain terms: "Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?" He imagines a satire of his message going. "By no means!" he replies. "How can we who have died to sin go on living in it?" (Rm 6:1-2). To the extent that we have died to sin, it's simply impossible to go on living in it. Of course, none of us have died to sin entirely, or even mostly.

3. Which is why antinomians (in the hedonistic sense) don't really exist. The specter of a depraved hedonist sustained by a fervent belief in the Gospel is just that, a specter – there aren't real people who live that way. There may be real people who use forgiveness as an excuse to keep on doing bad stuff – but if there are, it's not as though the gospel of behavior-modification would've gotten them in the church's door instead. In fact, their self-indulgence itself is often a response to the law rather than a (fictional) disregard of it, rebellion and conformity being flip sides of the same coin. As John D. Koch and Simeon Zahl wrote:

“Martin Luther once made a remarkable comment about antinomianism. He called it a drama put on in an empty theater. What he meant essentially was that antinomianism doesn't really exist. That is, sure you can say you are an antinomian, and you can have behavior to match, but no one can ever really be free of the Law like that. It is built into the world, built into our lives. No one can outrun every 'ought,' however much they might like to, not even the most libertine of us all. This is why antinomianism has been called an 'impossible heresy.'”

4. The true antinomian is the one who tries to distort the Law. The one who reads “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48) as “Do your best, that's all anyone can ask.” Or who read “Sell what you own, and give the money to the poor” as “Tithe ten percent” or “Contribute what you reasonably can.” The very people who accuse others of antinomianism are usually the ones who are themselves denigrating the Law. Because if you want measurable spiritual progress or spiritual accomplishment, you're going to have lower God's standard quite a bit.

5. The antidote to antinomianism, therefore, is not to sell people on linear, measurable sanctification, but to preach the Law in all its fullness. The condemning voice of conscience should not be smoothed over by developing good habits, but should be echoed in the pulpit and taken to its extreme, as Christ does in Matthew 5. *The only genuine way to relate to the Law is to be utterly condemned by it.* Anything less—including using it for exhortation—risks real antinomianism.

Appendix D

I have included this short blog read because it echoes what I have attempted to say. I've included this only to say, "I'm not crazy." Although many would agree with Thomas Schreiner, his viewpoint [and mine] are not often heard from the pulpit. I trust this will help clarify what I have attempted to present.

Schreiner, the Threefold Division, and the Law of God

<http://thecripplegate.com/schreiner-the-threefold-division-and-the-law-of-god/>

With all the discussion surrounding the legitimacy of the use of law in evangelism, one of the issues that surfaces time and again is whether the Mosaic Law should be divided into three parts. I don't think anyone disagrees with the notion that the tripartite division of the Law into moral, civil, and ceremonial components is a helpful informal categorization of the various commandments God has given to Israel. Where theologians part ways is whether to make such categories *theological constructs* by which to build one's doctrine of the Old Covenant Mosaic Law's relationship to the New Covenant believer in Yahweh.

I want to quote generously today from Dr. Tom Schreiner, Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Question 14 of his *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* takes up the issue of the tripartite division, and I find his comments very insightful. Let me say at the outset that I recognize that he is not the authority, but that Scripture alone is. I'll also add that this is not a journal article or a book-length treatment of the

threefold division, so expecting exegetical argumentation for every point will likely leave you frustrated. Nevertheless, I do think we can profit from his comments, and that they will advance the discussion on the believer's relationship to the Mosaic Law.

Moral, Civil, Ceremonial

“The distinction between the moral, ceremonial, and civil law is appealing and attractive. Even though it has some elements of truth, it does not sufficiently capture Paul's stance toward the law. As stated earlier, Paul argues that the entirety of the law has been set aside now that Christ has come. To say that the ‘moral’ elements of the law continue to be authoritative blunts the truth that the entire Mosaic covenant is no longer in force for believers.

“Indeed, it is quite difficult to distinguish between what is ‘moral’ and ‘ceremonial’ in the law. For instance, the law forbidding the taking of interest is clearly a moral mandate (Exod. 22:25^L), but this law was addressed to Israel as an agricultural society in the ancient Near East. As with the rest of the laws in the Mosaic covenant, it is [obsolete] [cf. Heb 8:13^L] now that Christ has come. This is not to say that this law has nothing to say to the church of Jesus Christ today. As Dorsey says, it still has ‘a revelatory and pedagogical’ function” (89–90).

Schreiner goes on to give examples of Mosaic Laws that are no longer in force for believers in this age. He mentions circumcision (Rom 4:9–12^L; Gal 2:3–5^L; 5:2^L; Phil 3:2–3^L; Col 2:11–12^L), the Passover (Rom 14:5–6^L; Gal 4:10^L; Col 2:16–17^L), sacrifices and temple worship (cf. the Book of Hebrews), and food and purity regulations (Mk 7:19^L; Ac 10:15^L; Rom 14:14^L, 20^L; 1Cor 8–10) (90–91). He even

mentions the Sabbath, offering further comment because it's one of the Ten Commandments:

“Believers are not required to observe the feasts, festivals, and special days of the Old Testament calendar. This includes *the Sabbath*, even though the Sabbath is part of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:8-11^L). Such a judgment surprises some but it must be recognized that the entirety of the Old Testament law is [fulfilled] in Christ. Paul clearly teaches that Christians are free in regard to the observance of days. No day, in principle, holds pride of place above another (Rom. 14:5^L). Clearly, the Sabbath is included here; since it was observed weekly, it was **the** day that would naturally come to mind for readers. Colossians 2:16-17^L makes this even clearer. The Sabbath belongs to the shadows of the old covenant and is a matter of indifference now that Christ has come. ... The Sabbath finds fulfillment in the Sabbath rest granted by Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 3:12-4:13^L)” (91-92).

Having thus discussed some of the so-called “ceremonial” laws, Schreiner goes on to address the “civil” laws. I’ll skip that discussion, because unless you’re a theologian, we don’t have to make the case that we shouldn’t be trying to turn our countries into the Israelite theocracy.

All of the Law is Moral

He sums up:

“We have seen thus far that it is overly simplistic to say that the ceremonial and civil law have passed away, while the moral law still retains validity. Instead, the Mosaic law and covenant are no longer normative for believers. And yet at the same time the law finds its fulfillment in Christ. Further, even though the divisions of the ceremonial, civil, and moral have

some cogency, they are not clearly articulated in the New Testament, and the distinction between what is moral, civil, or ceremonial is not always clear.” (93)

I think this is a strong point. We all want to recognize that Christ has fulfilled the Law, and thus is described as “the end of the law” (Rom 10:4^L). But what my brothers who hold to the tripartite division seem to overlook (or at least, not talk about much) is that Christ is the fulfillment of the *whole* Law. If you ask these dear friends why we don’t keep the whole Mosaic Law, but only the so-called moral division of the Law, the answer you’ll generally hear is, “We don’t practice the civil and ceremonial law because they are fulfilled in Christ.” But the thing is: Christ fulfilled the “moral” aspects of the Law too! Jesus is not merely the fulfillment of *part of the Law*. He has fulfilled “*all righteousness*” (cf. Matt 3:15^L).

Besides this, as Schreiner alludes to, *all of the Mosaic Law is moral*. When God gives a command to His covenant people—whether it is, “You shall not murder” (Exod 20:13^L) or “You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together” (Deut 22:11^L)—**disobedience is immoral**. If an Israelite didn’t obey a “ceremonial” commandment, he was still *morally* accountable before God for that disobedience. Schreiner says, “Many of the so-called ‘ceremonial’ laws have a moral dimension that cannot be jettisoned” (94).

Law of God vs. Law of Moses

So wait. I’m putting the moral and civil/ceremonial laws on the same level, and I’m saying that we are not under the Law. So am I arguing that because it’s OK to mix fabrics, it *is* OK to murder? Am I some kind of rabid antinomian?

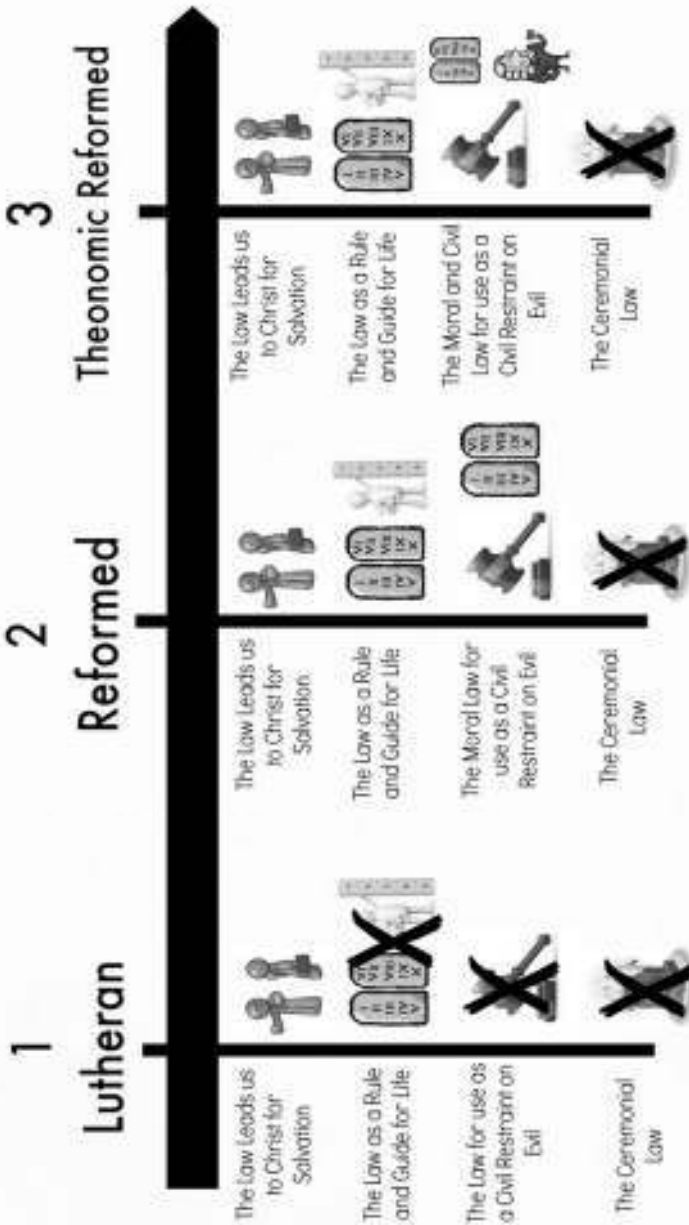
No, I'm not. But how do I account for the continued relevance of many of the so-called moral commands of the Mosaic Law? Schreiner helps here again:

“It is perhaps instructive to note that in most instances Paul does not argue that the moral norms from the Old Testament are authoritative *on the basis of their appearance in the Old Testament*, though in some instances he does cite the Old Testament command (e.g., Rom. 13:9^L; Eph. 6:2-3^L). ... They are not normative merely because they appear in the Mosaic covenant, for that covenant has passed away. It seems that *they are normative because they express the character of God*. We know that they still express God's will for believers because they are repeated as moral norms in the New Testament. It is not surprising that in the welter of the laws we find in the Old Testament (613 according to the rabbis) that some of those laws *express transcendent moral principles*. Still, the mistake we make is trying to carve up neatly the law into moral and nonmoral categories.” (93-94).

Here Schreiner gets to the heart of the matter. The reason that certain Old Testament commandments are normative for believers today is not merely because they show up in the Old Testament. Murder isn't wrong because it's in the Law of Moses, because, again, a prohibition of mixing fabrics is also in the Law of Moses, and we don't argue that *that* is wrong for believers today. No, the reason that certain Old Testament commandments are normative for believers today while others are not, is because those that *are* normative express the transcendent, unchanging character of God. They express the “transcendent moral principles” which make up what the New Testament calls “the law of God” (1Cor 9:21^L), that divine standard of absolute righteousness to which all are universally held accountable.

Appendix E

The Three Views of the Law





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