

Quarrels about the Law

Titus 3:9-11

Paul's Letter to Titus

A Proper View of the Law

1. The Law is part of the overarching narrative/ *Story* of Scripture. You must know the Law to know the *Story*. The Law is a “layer” within the biblical *Story*.
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 “became” a Jew had to put themselves under the Law.
3. 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; see 2 Cor. 1:20].
4. Those who initially believed were Jewish and continued to “keep the Law.” They 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.
5. The early Gentile Church did not keep the Law simply because they were not Jewish nor were they required to keep the Law. The only reason they would keep certain aspects of the Law was not to offend their Jewish brothers and sisters.
6. The Law and Grace are not antithetical. One can have a graceless law and a lawless grace, but such expressions are mutations and deformities. The Old Covenant [Testament] is graceful and the New Covenant [Testament] is lawful.
7. 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, 7).
8. Christians are under the reign of grace. 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). 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, it is seen that 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?”).
9. 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.” Once, prior to Jesus, I was a Law breaker. Now, in Christ, I am a commandment keeper. Such obedience is not Law or rule based, but gospel and Spirit based (Gal. 5).
10. This is the difference between work’s righteousness and gospel fruit. Work’s righteousness is what you do based on Law/law obedience, and it is a work of the flesh. Gospel fruit is what He does based on His finished work, and is a work of the Spirit.

Does it Really Matter? Where does this leave us?

1. Stop looking to rules and regulations 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.
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.