

A Scripture Research **WhitePaper**

A topical study from God's Word

Is Any of the Old Testament Law Still Valid Today?

Many Believers fight for the right to display the Ten Commandments in public places, believing that the Commandments are what God requires from all people today. Many fight to keep business establishments closed on Sundays, believing that God requires the Sabbath to be observed. Many hold up every requirement in the Old Testament as requirements for Believers today. But is the Old Testament Law still valid for Believers today?

Distinction between “Moral Law” and “Sacrificial Law”?

Some say that while the ceremonial aspects of the Law were fulfilled and completed by Christ, the moral requirements of the Law are still in force. Some point to Galatians 3 in making this distinction.

“What, then, is the law? On behalf of transgressions was it added, until the Seed should come to Whom He has promised...” (Galatians 3:19)

Emphasis is placed upon the word “added,” insisting that the Sacrificial Law was added to the already existing Moral Law ... until a different and more perfect sacrifice could be provided for atonement. But this would seem to read much into Scripture. There appears to be no clear Biblical argument for making a distinction between Moral Law and Ceremonial Law.

THE GIVING OF THE LAW

The Law was given to Israel, not to the Gentiles

“He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: And as for His judgments, they have not known them.” (Psalm 147:19-20)

“For whenever they of the nations that have no law ...” (Romans 2:14)

The first Commandment is evidence that the Law was given only to the nation of Israel, for only they were brought up out of the land of Egypt. (See Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6)

How do we within the Body of Christ claim the Law as our own, when it was given specifically to Israel?

Did the Law pre-date Israel?

Some claim that the Ten Commandments were in effect from the earliest days in Genesis, and were then formally codified later at Mount Sinai.

We observe that there were certain requirements in place well before the giving of the Law, such as God's command to Noah not to eat flesh containing blood ... and not to shed man's blood (Genesis 9). But as we will see, God imposed specific requirements in specific eras that were not necessarily valid in all eras. We must consider how God is speaking to various groups of mankind in various ages ... rightly dividing, or “correctly cutting” the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15). We will consider this point more fully a bit later, when looking specifically at God's Word for the Body of Christ.

Furthermore, the aforementioned passages state very clearly that the Law was given to Israel, and not to the nations, which “have no law.” (Romans 2:14)

Purpose of the Law: Recognition of sin

What was the Law’s purpose? It is thru the Law that we have a recognition of sin (Romans 3:20).

Purpose of the Law: To demonstrate man’s futility

“Why, then, are you now trying God, by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we are strong enough to bear?”
(Acts 15:10)

Despite many earnest attempts by the Israelites to obey, they were not strong enough to bear the yoke of the Law. Still, their inability to obey served a purpose ... to demonstrate man’s dependence upon God, and the futility of earning favor with God thru behavior. Perhaps this is why Paul refers to the Ten Commandments as “the dispensation of death.” (2 Corinthians 3:7)

The Law, then, did not display what man was ABLE to do ... but what he was UNABLE to do.

Purpose of the Law: An “escort”

“Now before the coming of faith we were garrisoned under law, being locked up together for the faith about to be revealed. So that the law has become our escort to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. Now, at the coming of faith, we are no longer under an escort, for you are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:23-26)

The purpose of the Law, then, was to “escort” man to Christ ... that we may be justified by faith. That purpose, then, was accomplished when God determined the time had come for Christ to be revealed.

“Now I am saying, for as much time as the enjoyer of an allotment is a minor, in nothing is he of more consequence than a slave, being master of all, but is under guardians and administrators until the time purposed by the father. Thus we also, when we were minors, were enslaved under the elements of the world. Now when the full time came, God delegates His Son, come of a woman, come under law, that He should be reclaiming those under law, that we may be getting the place of a son.” (Galatians 4:1-6)

[NOTE: Some argue that the need for an escort did not exist only in Paul’s day, but there continues to be the need for an escort to bring us to Christ in this present age ... and the Law is only abolished for those in Christ. We read in 1 Timothy 1:8-9 ... “the law is ideal if ever anyone is using it lawfully, being aware of this, that law is not laid down for the just, yet it is for the lawless and insubordinate, the irreverent and sinners ... and if any other thing is opposing sound teaching, in accord with the evangel of the glory of the happy God, with which I was entrusted.” So some believe that all the world is under the Law, except for Believers who are under a different Law ... Christ’s Law ... which will be discussed a bit later.]

The temporary nature of the Law

“What, then, is the law? On behalf of transgressions was it added, until the Seed should come to Whom He has promised, being prescribed through messengers in the hand of a mediator.” (Galatians 3:19)

“For Christ is the consummation of law for righteousness to everyone who is believing.” (Romans 10:4)

So the Law was added **UNTIL** the Seed should come. And the Seed has come. The “escort” has accomplished its purpose.

The “Law of God”

When referring to the Law given thru Moses, the “law of God” is used interchangeably with the “law of Moses” and that of the Lord.

“the precepts and just statutes of the Lord” (Luke 1:6)

“according to the law of Moses, they brought Him up into Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (according as it is written in the law of the Lord...)” (Luke 2:22ff)

“And, as they accomplish all according to the law of the Lord...” (Luke 2:39)

There is not scriptural warrant for the “law of God” being distinct from “the law of Moses” in these references.

FREEDOM FROM THE LAW

“For freedom Christ frees us! Stand firm, then, and be not again enthralled with the yoke of slavery. Lo! I, Paul, am saying to you that if you should be circumcising, Christ will benefit you nothing. Now I am attesting again to every man who is circumcising, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Exempted from Christ were you who are being justified in law. You fall out of grace. For we, in spirit, are awaiting the expectation of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is availing anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith, operating through love.” (Galatians 5:1-6)

Paul warns against putting ourselves under ANY of the Law. Doing so would make us a debtor to the ENTIRE Law ... not just the Ten Commandments, but all 600+ laws in the Torah!

He refers to the Law as a “yoke of slavery” that man was once under ... but no longer.

And he equates placing ourselves under the Law once again to falling out of grace. Grace has been given, yet the Galatians were falling out of that grace as they placed themselves back under the Law.

The Sabbath

Let us look at just one element of the Law that is enforced by many churches today ... the Sabbath. Many argue for the setting aside of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. None should work. Businesses should be closed. Christians should attend a church to worship. This is to be a day of rest.

First ... the Sabbath requirement was given to Israel, not to the Gentiles or to the Body of Christ. And Israel’s Sabbath was to be observed on the seventh day ... Saturday. There is nothing to be found in Scripture that would move the Sabbath to Sunday.

Some argue that the Sabbath was a requirement long before the Law, and it applies therefore not only to Israel but to all mankind.

“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.” (Genesis 2:2-3)

But we do not find here a **requirement** that all men observe the seventh day in any manner. It is not until the Law is given through Moses, to Israel, that observance of the Sabbath became a requirement.

“Contrary to popular tradition, the idea of this passage is not that since man was constituted in such a way that he would need one day a week for ‘rest’ as well as for pondering the ways of his Creator, God made such a day for his sake, resting upon it Himself to set us an example that we should do the same. Such a notion is sheer fable, based upon mistranslation and human sentiment.”
(Unsearchable Riches, Volume 80, page 263-272)

Paul is the apostle of the nations (Romans 11:13). Let us see what he has to say concerning the Sabbath.

“One, indeed is deciding for one day rather than another day, yet one is deciding for every day. Let each one be fully assured in his own mind.”
(Romans 14:5-6)

“... how are you turning back again to the infirm and poor elements for which you want to slave again anew? Days are you scrutinizing, and months and seasons and years.” (Galatians 4:9-10)

“Beware that no one shall be despoiling you through philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with human tradition, in accord with the elements of the world, and not in accord with Christ...” (Colossians 2:8)

“Let no one, then, be judging you in food or in drink or in the particulars of a festival, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths, which are a shadow of those things which are impending – yet the body is the Christ’s.” (Colossians 2:16-17)

“If, then, you died together with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as living in the world, are you subject to decrees: ‘You should not be touching, nor yet tasting, nor yet coming into contact...’ (Colossians 2:20-22)

What, then, was the original purpose for the Sabbath requirement for Israel? The Sabbath was a shadow of a higher truth that was later revealed. The real purpose of the Sabbath is not concerned with an outward physical rest one day in seven. It has to do with **ceasing** from our works 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Furthermore, if we insist on observing the Sabbath day (and all other holy days), should we not also still be offering sacrifices? If we do not offer sacrifices because the “type” has been fulfilled by Christ, why do we still observe the other “types” that Christ has fulfilled (such as the Sabbath)?

“The law was a wise provision for God’s earthly people and many of its enactments are fraught with physical and moral benefits which may profit us. To rest one day in seven is undoubtedly a good plan and well worth observing as a rule of health, provided it be kept out of the domain of lawkeeping. It is the motive that matters.” (Unsearchable Riches, Volume 64, pages 267-271)

The Sabbath requirement for Israel was a part of the Law that had a temporary purpose (an escort to Christ) that has now been fulfilled. To turn back to a legal observance of the Sabbath, or any part of the Law, is to return to the “infirm and poor elements.” An attempt to enforce a Sunday Sabbath for all of society, or even for the Body of Christ, is to enslave us to the Law. But in fact Christ has freed us from the Law! Why do we seek to place ourselves under the Law again?

Tithing

Another commonly proclaimed legal requirement today is tithing ... again a part of the Law given to Israel. The purpose of the tithe was to support the Temple and the Priesthood, also a part of the requirements placed upon Israel. But what does Paul say about giving?

“... each according as he has proposed in his heart, not sorrowfully, nor of compulsion, for the gleeful giver is loved by God.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Under the Law one gave under compulsion, as a requirement. Paul states that giving is not of compulsion, but “each according as he has proposed in his heart.”

So again, that which was a part of the Law for Israel is not so for the Body of Christ, in accordance with Paul’s teachings.

TURNING BACK TO THE LAW ALWAYS A TEMPTATION

Perhaps the biggest problem Paul faced as he proclaimed his message of grace was the tendency to go back under the Law ... and those who forced other Believers to do so. When Paul returned to Jerusalem late in his ministry, his enemies were not just Unbelievers.

“You are beholding, brother, how many tens of thousands there are among the Jews who have believed, and all are inherently zealous for the law?”
(Acts 21:20)

And the problem that prompted Paul to write to the church at Galatia was the attempt to go back under the Law.

“But then, indeed, having no perception of God, you were slaves of those who, by nature, are not gods. Yet now, knowing God, yet rather being known by God, how are you turning back again to the infirm and poor elements for which you want to slave again anew?” (Galatians 4:8-9)

There were those who sought to place all of the Believers back under the Law.

“They are jealous over you, not ideally, but they want to debar you that you may be jealous over them.” (Galatians 4:17)

Paul admonished the Galatians not to return to the Law.

“Tell me, you who want to be under law, are you not hearing the law?”
(Galatians 4:21)

“For freedom Christ frees us! Stand firm, then, and be not again enthralled with the yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1)

The evangel (“gospel” ... good news) that Paul proclaimed was being distorted by those who attempted to mix-in requirements from the Law.

“I am marveling that thus, swiftly, you are transferred from that which calls you in the grace of Christ, to a different evangel, which is not another, except it be that some who are disturbing you want also to distort the evangel of Christ. But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema!” (Galatians 1:6-8)

This message brought by others may have seemed to be similar to Paul’s message, but Paul stresses that it is not “another” message of the same kind, but is a “different” message ... a “distortion” of the evangel of Christ.

And it is this “different” evangel ... this “distorted” evangel ... this incorporation of the Law into Paul’s evangel ... that is being preached and taught in many churches today! Turning back to the Law has always been a temptation. It was so in Paul’s day. It is the same today.

SO IS THERE NO CONSEQUENCE FOR BEHAVIOR?

Many think that when we become Believers, since we are saved by grace thru faith, we will not thereafter be evaluated by God based on our actions. And if we are not under the Law, there would be no consequences for bad behavior.

But there will be an evaluation of Believers.

The dais of Christ

“For all of us must be manifested in front of the dais of Christ, that each should be required for that which he puts into practice through the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

“Now, why are you judging your brother? Or why are you also scorning your brother? For all of us shall be presented at the dais of God ... Consequently, then, each of us shall be giving account concerning himself to God. By no means, then, should we still be judging one another, but rather decide this, not to place a stumbling block for a brother, or a snare.” (Romans 14:10-13)

So while Believers are not under the Law, there is a standard of conduct ... and there will be an accounting at the dais of Christ. (A dais is a raised platform ... as a judging stand in a race.)

Our allotment in the eons to come

Furthermore, our obedience is necessary if we are to have an allotment in God’s reign during the eons to come.

“... no paramour at all or unclean or greedy person, who is an idolater, has any enjoyment of the allotment in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” (Ephesians 5:5)

“... the unjust shall not be enjoying the allotment of God’s kingdom...” (1 Corinthians 6:9)

“... if we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also...” (2 Timothy 2:12)

This “allotment” is not referring to our salvation ... our life in the eons to come ... as that is entirely dependent upon God’s grace. We will live within God’s kingdom in the eons to come, but our allotment ... our reigning ... is at stake.

There is nothing we can **DO** to gain eonian life, and there is nothing we can do to lose it. Speaking to the ecclesia (and not just those who persevere relative to behavior), Paul said:

“We all, indeed, shall not be put to repose, yet we all shall be changed, in an instant, in the twinkle of an eye, at the last trump. For He will be trumpeting, and the dead will be roused incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51ff)

We note that while our salvation or our justification are not in jeopardy as it pertains to behavior (since they are dependent only upon God’s grace) ... our allotment, our reigning in the eons to come, and our rewards or loss of rewards are all dependent upon our behavior in this present eon.

HOW IS BEHAVIOR EVALUATED WITH NO LAW?

If man is freed from the Law, what governs his behavior? Most definitely Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, frequently spoke of the importance of appropriate behavior. But without the Law, how do we function? What guides our behavior? How do we make decisions as to right or wrong?

Conscience

While Israel was given the Law, those of the nations were not left without any guidance.

“For whenever they of the nations that have no law, by nature may be doing that which the law demands, these, having no law, are a law to themselves, who are displaying the action of the law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying together and their reckonings between one another, accusing or defending them...” (Romans 2:14ff)

Even without the Law, all men have a conscience that guides them. But without the intervention of God ... conscience, like the Law, is unable to guide man into righteousness.

“... knowing God, not as God do they glorify or thank Him, but vain were they made in their reasonings, and darkened is their unintelligent heart.” (Romans 1:21ff)

“And according as they do not test God, to have Him in recognition, God gives them over to a disqualified mind, to do that which is not befitting...” (Romans 1:28ff)

Whether it be Israel under the Law, or the remainder of humanity guided by conscience, the result is the same.

“Not one is just – not even one. Not one is understanding. Not one is seeking out God.” (Romans 3:10)

Add God's spirit to the equation

Conscience, then, is no real help. Man left to himself is helpless. But add God's spirit to the equation and things are different.

"Yet you are not in flesh, but in spirit, if so be that God's spirit is making its home in you." (Romans 8:9)

"For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again, but you got the spirit of sonship, in which we are crying, 'Abba, Father!' The spirit itself is **testifying together with our spirit** that we are children of God." (Romans 8:15ff)

Man is made up of three parts ... body, soul and spirit. It appears that the conscience is within the realm of the spirit. When God's spirit is given to the believer, and testifies together with man's spirit, a conscience detecting proper or improper behavior is the result.

"One, indeed, is deciding for one day rather than another day, yet one is deciding for every day. **Let each one be fully assured in his own mind.**" (Romans 14:5)

A part of what guides the behavior of the believer, then, is conscience ... the testimony of God's spirit with our spirit. But God has also given us, thru His spirit, the Scriptures that reveal His will to us.

Is there still "a Law" that Believers are under?

While Believers are not under "The Law" (i.e. the Ten Commandments or the Old Testament Law), is there still "a Law" in force?

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the precepts of God." (1 Corinthians 7:19)

So while the requirement of circumcision is out, Paul does mention "precepts" that remain in effect for Believers. What are these precepts?

The "Law of Christ"?

Some hold that a new Law was ushered-in by Christ, as a replacement for the old Mosaic Law. Some interpret that the new Law ... the "Law of Christ" ... is comprised of the entire New Testament. It is the "new covenant" ... which replaces the "old covenant" (and the Law).

It is noted that Christ CHANGED the Law as He taught ... especially in Matthew 5-7 where He quotes from the Law of Moses point by point and then replaces each commandment with His own new Law. For example, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" has been replaced by Christ's higher Law against lusting in one's heart (Matthew 5:28). One can be carnal, or fleshly, while refraining from murder or adultery. But one cannot refrain from hate and lust while remaining carnal.

So do the words of Christ as found in the Gospel accounts, or perhaps the entire New Testament, become a new Law ... replacing the Law of Moses? Could this be what is referred to as the "Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2) and the "spirit's law" (Romans 8:2)? Could these be the "precepts" Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 7:19?

All Scripture is FOR us ... but not all is directed specifically TO us

We remember that all scripture, including the Law, is FOR us in that it is in some way beneficial to us.

“All scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

But not all scripture is directed specifically TO us, and as we study God’s Word we must ensure that we handle it properly.

“Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Consider the Law. We have already noted that it was specifically given to Israel. How can we, who are not Israel, claim that the Law was intended for us? Consider the times when Jesus spoke specifically to the “sheep of Israel.” How can we, who are not Israel, claim that His words were spoken to us?

“I was not commissioned except for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 15:24)

“The twelve Jesus commissions, charging them, saying, ‘Into a road of the nations you may not pass forth, and into a city of the Samaritans you may not be entering. Yet be going rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’” (Matthew 10:5ff)

And consider when, in the book of Acts, Peter and the others spoke specifically to Israel. How can we, who are not Israel, claim that their words were spoken to us?

“Let all the house of Israel know...” (Acts 2:36)

“...let it be known to you all and to the entire people of Israel...” (Acts 4:10)

“Those indeed, then, who are dispersed from the affliction which is occurring over Stephen, passed through as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews only.” (Acts 11:19ff)

Can we claim that the entire New Testament, or even the words of Christ, have become our “Law” for this day ... when those words were directed specifically to the “sheep of Israel?”

Paul’s evangel

Thru Paul, God called the Body of Christ ... comprised of Jew and Gentile alike with no distinction. Can we assume that every word previously spoken to Israel, even that which is found in the New Testament prior to Paul, pertains directly to us?

If we make this assumption, we are not “correctly cutting the word of truth.”

Paul is the apostle of the nations (Romans 11:13). And it is important to remember that Paul did not simply learn proper doctrine from the Twelve, so as to preach the same message.

“For I am making known to you, brethren, as to the evangel which is being brought by me, that it is not in accord with man. For neither did I accept it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:11-12)

This is why Paul could refer to his message as “my evangel” (or gospel), and not “the evangel.” (See Romans 2:16; 16:25-26)

Paul proclaimed the evangel of the Uncircumcision ... whereas Peter had been entrusted with the evangel of the Circumcision. (See Galatians 2:7) We cannot assume these evangels were the same. As a matter of fact, a close study will reveal definite differences.

And Paul was chosen by God for a very special purpose ... to COMPLETE the Word of God.

“... in accord with the administration of God, which is granted to me for you, to complete the word of God – the secret which has been concealed from the eons and from the generations, yet now was made manifest to His saints... (Colossians 1:25)

It is certainly not that Paul was superior to Christ. But very clearly God revealed things to Paul that had not been previously revealed. When we read the words of Christ in the gospel accounts, the Word of God being revealed was not yet COMPLETE. It was later assigned to Paul to COMPLETE the Word of God.

So in this present day we must look primarily to Paul’s writings to understand the completed revelation from God. We are to follow the apostle Paul fully in his teachings.

“Now you fully follow me in my teaching, motive, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings...” (2 Timothy 3:10ff)

Behavior is important to Paul

Paul places much emphasis on the importance of the believer’s obedience. He sometimes presents various instructions to us that were first given as laws for Israel in times past, often interpreting them in a fuller sense (e.g. Ephesians 5:31).

Remembering that ALL scripture is beneficial to us in some way, we must acknowledge that Paul provides the completed Word. That which was spoken prior to Paul, often directed to Israel, is not specifically FOR us. But as Paul proclaimed his evangel to the nations we see God’s Word for us today.

Not UNDER Law ... but not without God’s Law

“... without law (not being without God’s law, but legally Christ’s)...”
1 Corinthians 9:20,21

Even though we are not under Law, we are not without God’s “law” (God’s rules of action which concern us).

The “Law of Love”

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is availing anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith, operating through love” (Galatians 5:6)

“For you were called for freedom, brethren, only use not the freedom for an incentive to the flesh, but through love be slaving for one another. For the entire law is fulfilled in one word, in this: ‘You shall love your associate as yourself.’” (Galatians 5:13-14)

So the Law, which was a shadow and which served a temporary purpose, is now reduced to “one word” ... LOVE!

Consider this: If one is guided by this one word ... LOVE ... then the PRINCIPLES of the Law will have been satisfied. Love, then, is a superior law. Love is a law to guide the inner man, and is not simply a means to evaluate or judge the outward behavior of man.

We might say, then, that we are under the “Law of Love” ... or perhaps the “Law of Christ,” as it was Christ who said:

“The foremost precept of all is: Hear Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord. And, You shall be loving the Lord your God out of your whole heart, and out of your whole soul, and out of your whole comprehension, and out of your whole strength. This is the foremost precept. And the second it like it: You shall be loving your associate as yourself. Now greater than these is no other precept.” (Mark 12:30-31)

So Paul’s reference to the “law of Christ” is a reference to LOVE, which is in one word the fulfillment of the Law.

“Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fill up the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

Our freedom from the Law does not mean we can live in reckless abandon, doing whatever we desire. We are freed from the Law, but are not to use our freedom for “an incentive to the flesh.” Instead “through love be slaving for one another.”

Our standard today is LOVE. We use our freedom to SLAVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. The issue is not our own rights, having been freed from the yoke of the Law. The issue is OTHERS! As we make our decisions the principle is, “How will this impact others? How will it help them? How might it hurt them?”

OUR ONLY LAW, THEN, IS THE LAW OF LOVE

All is allowed

“All is allowed me, but not all is expedient. All is allowed me, but not all is edifying. Let no one be seeking the welfare of himself, but that of another.” (1 Corinthians 10:23)

So while we have freedom, and “all is allowed,” all that we might do in exercising our freedom is not expedient, or edifying. And Paul instructs us to seek the welfare not of ourselves, but of OTHERS.

“We are not under law with respect to justification, deliverance, eonian life, and other blessings related to the evangel ... ‘All is allowed me’ as far as justification is concerned because nothing I do changes or even affects the justification that is out of and through the faith of Jesus Christ. Still, we are not, for example, without the rule of action (or ‘law’) that declares, ‘Let him who steals by no means still be stealing’ (Ephesians 4:28). Stealing will have inevitable results ... But we are not under any law which prohibits stealing in the sense that it is required for justification ... Our act of stealing brings a penalty into our present life in perhaps a quenched spirit, and into our future life in matters of loss of reward.” (Unsearchable Riches, Volume 88, pages 187-188)

Knowledge puffs up

When we come to the knowledge that we are freed from the Law and that all is permitted, there is a tendency to be “puffed up” in this knowledge ... to feel superior to others who do not recognize their freedom.

“Now concerning the idol sacrifices: We are aware that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, yet love builds up.” (1 Corinthians 8:1)

“We are aware that an idol is nothing in the world ... But not in all is there this knowledge.” (1 Corinthians 8:4-7)

We have freedom ... but it is possible to sin against Christ

“Now beware lest somehow this right of yours may become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone should be seeing you, who has knowledge, lying down in an idol’s shrine, will not the conscience of him who is weak be inured to the eating of the idol sacrifices?” (1 Corinthians 8:9-10)

While we are not under the Law, it is possible to exercise our “rights” in some circumstances where we are sinning against Christ.

“For the weak one is perishing also by your knowledge; the brother because of whom Christ died. Now in thus sinning against brethren, and beating their weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ. Wherefore, if food is snaring my brother, I may under no circumstances be eating meat for the eon, lest I be snaring my brother.” (1 Corinthians 8:12-13)

In Paul’s example, the eating of all meats is allowed. No meats are prohibited, as was the case under the Law. But there may be situations where eating this meat could be SINFUL ... if in doing so it has an adverse impact on others.

Others

We remember that LOVE is our guide.

“Consequently, then, we are pursuing that which makes for peace and that which is for the edification of one another.” (Romans 14:29)

We seek not to please ourselves, but others. We remember that:

“... the entire law is fulfilled in one word, in this: ‘You shall love your associate as yourself.’ (Galatians 5:13-14)

“Let each of us please his associate, for his good, toward his edification. For Christ also pleases not Himself...” (Romans 15:2)

Love is in actuality the opposite of selfishness. It is being more concerned with others than with self. So the “Law of Love” would naturally turn our focus away from self, and toward others.

To illustrate how the “Law of Love” and our consideration of others has fulfilled the Law, consider the command against adultery. If I am motivated by my love for others, how could I commit adultery? How would the act of adultery affect my wife, or the spouse of the one with whom I commit the act? If I am motivated by the “Law of Love” do I need a specific commandment not to commit adultery?

Giving up our “rights”

As we live seeking the welfare of OTHERS, we may find occasion to voluntarily set aside our “rights” (that which is permitted us).

“For, being free of all, I enslave myself to all, that I should be gaining the more. And I became to the Jews as a Jew, that I should be gaining Jews; to those under law as under law (not being myself under law), that I should be gaining those under law; to those without law as without law (not being without God’s law, but legally Christ’s), that I should be gaining those without law. I became as weak to the weak, that I should be gaining the weak. To all have I become all, that I should undoubtedly be saving some.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Creating stumbling blocks to others

If we are guided by love, and seek the welfare of others ...

“... decide this, not to place a stumbling block for a brother, or a snare.” (Romans 14:13)

“Not on account of food demolish the work of God. All, indeed, is clean, but it is evil to the man who with stumbling is eating. It is ideal not to be eating meat, nor to be drinking wine, nor yet to do aught by which your brother is stumbling, or is being snared or weakened.” (Romans 14:20-21)

“And become not a stumbling block to Jews as well as to Greeks and to the ecclesia of God, according as I also am pleasing all in all things, not seeking my own expedience, but that of the many, that they may be saved.” (1 Corinthians 10:32-33)

“We are giving no one cause to stumble in anything, lest flaws be found with the service, but in everything we are commending ourselves as servants of God...” (2 Corinthians 6:3-4)

Paul has much to say about correct behavior

After making it clear that Believers are not under the “infirm and poor elements” of the Law, Paul proclaims:

“Deaden, then, your members that are on the earth: prostitution, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and greed, which is idolatry, because of which the indignation of God is coming on the sons of stubbornness – among whom you also once walked, when you lived in these things.” (Colossians 3:5-7)

Though not a legal requirement, still Paul presents these principles for living. The Unbeliever will experience God’s indignation (see Revelation) because of these behaviors. Certainly the Believer, who has been rescued from this coming indignation, should not walk in like manner.

“Yet now you also be putting away all these: anger, fury, malice, calumny, obscenity out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, stripping off the old humanity together with its practices, and putting on the young, which is being renewed into recognition, to accord with the Image of the One Who creates it...” (Colossians 3:8-11)

“Put on, then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, pitiful compassions,

kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another and dealing graciously among yourselves, if anyone should be having a complaint against any. According as the Lord also deals graciously.” (Colossians 3:12-13)

So we deal graciously with others, and exhibit these preferred behaviors, not because they are a legal requirement ... **BUT BECAUSE THE LORD DEALS GRACIOUSLY WITH US!**

Our behavior is a response to God’s grace

It is not that the Law requires us to behave in a certain manner. It is because of God’s grace that we live in response to His grace.

“... walk worthily of the Lord, for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work...” (Colossians 1:10)

“I am entreating you, then, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of peace...” (Ephesians 4:1-4)

“Only be citizens walking worthily of the evangel of Christ...” (Philippians 1:27)

“... attesting unto you to be walking worthily of God...” (1 Thessalonians 2:11)

“Then, whether you are eating or drinking, or anything you are doing, do all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

“Now youthful desires flee: yet pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with all who are invoking the Lord out of a clean heart.” (2 Timothy 2:22)

Righteous service is our concern ... motivated by our love for God. Paul announces freedom from the requirements of the Law. But he continually stresses that the Believer should walk worthily of God, seeking to glorify God in all that we do.

It is not a matter of the Law REQUIRING us to live in a particular way. It is that God has called us, and loves us, and has rescued us from darkness, and has bestowed His grace upon us in justifying us when we did nothing to earn that justification ... THEREFORE we seek to please Him and to live worthily.

Our behavior is the fruit of God’s spirit

Furthermore, His grace is “training us” in our behaviors! When we do faithfully serve our Lord, our service is the FRUIT of the salvation that we already have, which God is working in our lives.

“For the saving grace of God made its advent to all humanity, **training us** that, disowning irreverence and worldly desires, we should be living sanely and justly and devoutly in the current eon...” (Titus 2:11ff)

The works of the flesh (see Galatians 5:19-21) are contrary to God’s will. But the FRUIT of the spirit is always in accord with God’s will.

“Now the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control: against such things there is no law.”
Galatians 5:22-23)

We do not act or persevere to escape divine wrath or to make ourselves worthy of future life. Future life has been given to us thru God's grace, and we can do nothing to earn it. We do not act or behave in order to live ... but BECAUSE we live. It is not thru fleshly effort that we manifest the fruit of the spirit (else it would be labelled the fruit of the flesh). It is God's spirit working in us that produce these fruits.

Is the Law “suggestive?”

While the Law is not a requirement for the Believer today, might it be “suggestive” of those things that God approves of, and those that He does not? As we seek to live a life that is pleasing to God, in response to His grace, do we not turn to God's Word to guide us? Even if we are not under Law, is it not possible to find even within the Law the heart of God?

“Law is not laid down for the just, yet it is for the lawless and insubordinate (1 Timothy 1:9), which sometimes includes believers in their practical affairs. We need to be mindful of the rules, that we might be ‘competing lawfully’ (2 Timothy 2:5) ... Even so, law cannot subject the flesh; and, in the measure that we are influenced by the spirit, law becomes redundant.” [Unsearchable Riches, Volume 88 (1997), page 191]

And we must take care to realize that while basic principles can be revealed to us in all of God's Word, the specific precepts and statutes given in any instance cannot be considered timeless righteous requirements with respect to the behavior of all men, in every age, everywhere. The particulars may not be applicable or appropriate for us.

If God would have us know what is pleasing to Him today, He must send an apostle specifically to us. And he has done this very thing thru Paul ... the apostle of the nations. (see Romans 11:13; 16:26)

JUDGING THE BEHAVIOR OF OTHERS

Judging the behavior of others

Not bound by the Law, we do not judge others as to their actions ... nor should we let our actions be judged by others:

“Let no one, then, be judging you in food or in drink or in the particulars of a festival, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths ...” (Colossians 2:16ff)

Each of us must settle these things before God.

“One, indeed, is deciding for one day rather than another day, yet one is deciding for every day. Let each one be fully assured in his own mind.” (Romans 14:5)

Each of us will ultimately give an account to God.

“... each of us shall be giving account concerning himself to God. By no means, then, should we still be judging one another...” (Romans 14:12)

Under the “Law of Love,” then, we are each responsible for moderating our own behavior. But it is possible to cross the line into immoral behavior, in which case the church ... the Body of Christ ... is responsible for judging the offender and taking appropriate action. (See 1 Corinthians 5)

Dealing with immoral behavior within the Body is a study unto itself, and the issue will be taken up in a subsequent study. But as we consider the fact that we are not under the Law, we must recognize that certain behaviors are immoral and must be addressed within the Body of Christ.

HAS THE CHURCH REPLACED ISRAEL?

Some argue that while the Law was given to Israel and not to the Gentiles, the church today has replaced Israel (i.e. “Spiritual Israel”) ... and therefore anything designated to Israel in God’s Word now applies to the church.

“For not that which is apparent is the Jew, nor yet that which is apparent in flesh is circumcision; but that which is hidden is the Jew, and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter...” (Romans 2:28-29)

So fleshly Jews are not the real Jews, and fleshly circumcision is not true circumcision. Does this not, then, give consent to applying all to the church that once belonged to Israel?

“... not all those out of Israel, these are Israel; neither that Abraham’s seed are all children, but ‘In Isaac shall your seed be called.’ That is, that the children of the flesh, not these are the children of God, but the children of the promise is He reckoning for the seed.” (Romans 9:6-8)

“Now if some of the boughs are broken out, yet you, being a wild olive, are grafted among them, and became joint participant of the root...” (Romans 11:16ff)

But while Israel, due to disobedience, has been set aside ... do we have the right to apply all, including the Law, to the church? True, God is now working thru the church as His chosen instrument, and is not today working thru Israel as He once was. But what if God has chosen to work in a specific way with His instrument of old (Israel), while working in a new way ... with a different set of rules ... with His new instrument (the church)?

Furthermore, this setting aside of Israel is not permanent.

“... callousness, in part, on Israel has come, UNTIL the complement of the nations may be entering. And thus all Israel shall be saved...” (Romans 11:25-26)

We have **no biblical authority** for claiming all that was spoken to Israel as now being directed to the church.

- There will come a day when God works once again thru Israel, and the words spoken to Israel will pertain to Israel ... when the Body of Christ has been removed, or “snatched away” (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff).
- In this current era, when Israel is temporarily set aside and as God is working thru the Body of Christ, we look to the writings of Paul ... the apostle of the nations ... for our message; and not to what had been spoken specifically to Israel in times past.

Scripture speaks of God’s dealings with Israel, and Scripture speaks of God’s dealings with the Body of Christ. Mixing together these messages leads only to confusion and error.

OBSERVING THE “ELEMENTS” VOLUNTARILY

Those who are infirm in the faith may not fully recognize their freedom. We must not scorn them for their failure to appreciate their freedom.

“One, indeed, is believing to eat all things, yet the infirm one is eating greens. Let not him who is eating be scorning him who is not eating. Yet let not him who is not eating be judging him who is eating ...” (Romans 14:2-3)

And if some CHOOSE to observe certain of the “elements” ... not that they feel required to do so, but that they choose to do so, they should not be judged.

“If we may be living in spirit, in spirit we may be observing the elements also. We may not become vainglorious, challenging one another, envying one another.” (Galatians 5:25-26)

“And whoever shall observe the elements by this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, also on the Israel of God.” (Galatians 6:16)

If, for example, one wishes to observe the sabbath, to whatever extent, as a matter of personal preference, so be it. But there should never be a suggestion that their observance somehow makes them more pleasing to God, or that those choosing not to observe the sabbath are displeasing to God. To make such claims would be to place ourselves under the Law.

SUMMARY

The Law was given to Israel, and not to the nations. There may have been certain requirements imposed by God prior to the giving of the Law, and prior to the existence of Israel, but we cannot assume the same requirements are thereby placed upon all people in all eras. We must seek to understand from Scripture which “rules” apply to us in this present day.

The Law did serve several purposes. It enabled man to recognize sin, it demonstrated man’s futility in trying to earn righteousness, and it served as an “escort” to Christ. The Law was added until the Seed should come. And the Seed has come.

When Christ came, the “escort” had served its temporary purpose. Christ initiated a new set of precepts that focused on the inner man, as opposed to the outward behaviors of man.

Paul, the apostle of the nations, proclaimed new truths as God revealed things to him. He announced that Christ freed us from the Law, and he warned against putting ourselves under ANY of the Law. Going back to the Law was a temptation for the Galatians, and it continues to be a temptation for us today.

The fact that we are freed from the Law does not mean our behavior does not result in consequences. We will give account for our actions to Christ before the dais. We stand to forfeit rewards, and our allotment within the kingdom. Our salvation and justification are not in jeopardy based upon our behavior, as they are dependent only upon the grace of God. But rewards and allotment are contingent upon behavior.

We are not under “The Law” but we are today under a new kind of law ... the “Law of Love.” Our standard today is LOVE. We use our freedom to slave for one another. Our only law today is THE LAW OF LOVE.

All may be allowed us in the exercise of our freedom, but it is possible to sin against Christ if we place stumbling blocks before others. We must remember that we are under THE LAW OF LOVE, and we are to be concerned for the welfare of others, before ourselves. We should be prepared to give up our “rights” for the welfare of others.

We serve God not to earn His favor, but because we are living in response to His grace. The grace of God is “training” us, and our outward behavior is a manifestation (fruit) of God’s spirit working in us.

Conscience ... God’s spirit testifying with our spirit ... lets us know when we are behaving consistently with His desires; and convicts us when we are not. And God’s Word provides guidance as we come to understand those behaviors that God desires, and those that He does not.

We are responsible for moderating our own behavior, and are not to judge others as to their exercise of freedom. The exception is if behavior crosses the line and becomes immoral behavior, in which case the Body of Christ is required to take action.

As for those who choose to observe certain of “the elements,” despite their freedom, may peace be upon them.

Originated & edited by Bob Evely
Includes insights from others within the Body of Christ
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A note from the editor

I believe that the Body of Christ must work together to discuss God’s Word, sharing insights so as to gain a more accurate and complete understanding. No individual has all of the insights and understanding. The Body is not comprised of a single member, but many members acting in concert. Those within the very early church disagreed at times concerning their understanding of Scripture, but discussed and worked thru these disagreements in an attempt to discern God’s Word. This is not done today. The understanding and application of Scripture is in the hands of “religion” ... the denominations and the visible traditional “church.” Any who disagree either leave or are asked to leave, and gravitate to another “church” more in line with their understanding. There is no ability to honestly and openly discuss Scripture to learn from other members within the Body. The preservation of the doctrines of each individual denomination or “church” prevents any dissenting voice from being heard.

This White Paper was originally prepared by and is edited by Bob Evely, a minister of our Lord. Comments and insights as submitted from time to time have been considered and incorporated as deemed appropriate so as to provide this current version of the paper. This paper represents, therefore, my understanding of Scripture ... having considered the perspectives of those providing me with their insights and comments. This should be considered a work in process, subject to change as additional insights are gained thru the cooperation of others within the Body.

Any wishing to provide additional input can write via e-mail to bob@GraceEvangel.org or via mail to Grace Evangel Fellowship, P O Box 6, Wilmore, KY 40390. Comments should be kept as brief and to-the-point as possible. My goal is to provide these reviews so as to be useful to the general reader. As editor I reserve the right to include or exclude submitted comments at my discretion.



“Recognizing Christ as the Ultimate Saviour of All!”