

The Law of God

Doctrine ... how relevant is doctrine? Is Christian doctrine a subject best left to theological students and a special breed of people who 'want to explore the faith more deeply'. Even the word *doctrine* sometimes turns Christians off. But doctrine is the necessary foundation of our faith, - what you believe makes the type of Christian you are. Someone has said, "The conduct of our lives is the true mirror of our doctrine". ... Sound doctrine is something Paul stressed over and over again (e.g. I Tim. 1:10; II Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1).

Indeed, doctrine makes demands. I like the quotation from A.W. Tozer, "Christianity [*i.e. doctrine*] has been watered down until the solution is so weak that if it were poison it would not hurt anyone and if it were medicine it would not cure anyone! ... The unattended garden will soon be overrun with weeds; the heart that fails to cultivate truth and root out error will shortly be a theological wilderness."

One of the subjects many Christians despise is the doctrine of the law of God. They consider it as an old out-of-date and obsolete issue that has no bearing on the believer today. The subject of the law was addressed *only* to the Old Testament children of Israel; it no longer applies today, because we as believers are not under the Law, but under grace. Christ came to free us from the restraints of the Law and give to us *liberty*. ... But "bathwater" and "baby" come to mind here.

There is a term in theology known as "antinomianism"; it is the idea that "members of a particular religious group are under no obligation to obey the laws of ethics or morality as presented by religious authorities. Antinomianism is the polar opposite of legalism, the notion that obedience to a code of religious law is necessary for salvation". In other words, if it feels right for you, go ahead and do it ... and God won't mind, for He has given you this spiritual 'freedom'!

Three examples of this stick out in my mind. The first one relates to a close charismatic friend who influenced me in that direction when I was a teenager and exploring these things. He sat with me one day and led me to believing I had the 'gift of tongues' and he came across as particularly spiritual. He had a great liking for a particular young girl ... and the more I got to know him the more open he became about how he would like the relationship to develop.

His language became coarse and he told me that he planned to move in with her. "But surely that would be a sin ... what the Bible calls 'fornication'?" No, he replied, the ceremony of marriage is plainly and simply legal, he explained; the 'real' marriage takes place in the eyes of God in the bed, - when the two become one, - regardless of whether a ceremony takes place or not. You see, he wasn't under the law, but under his perception of what God's grace meant. (!)

Another example is the one about the pastor from another country who didn't believe in paying his road tax ... because he too was under grace and not under the law!

Another example ... on the Sunset Strip neighbourhood in San Francisco there were a group of 'evangelical' prostitutes. After committing the act with their 'clients' they witnessed to them. They felt that they could influence these people for God in this, their type of 'ministry'.

... And in the early New Testament Church the *antinomians* tried to argue away the rigidity of the Old Testament law because it was too restrictive and did not belong to the freer, more open (as they saw it) dispensation of grace. Grace and Law were in opposition, they said. As far as they were concerned, they believed the New Testament Gospel taught that they were now under grace alone ... saved by grace, kept by grace ... and therefore they had total liberty/freedom in Christ (Gal. 2:4).

Yes, today we have *an explosion* of antinomianism among many who claim to belong to Christ. They resent the old-fashioned Biblical and Christian values and have adopted the values of the world and they live their so-called profession within these ungodly parameters.

Since they are not under the law, they don't have any necessity to uphold it. The Lord's Day has no special meaning; cohabitation is acceptable; doing the lottery presents no problem, etc. etc. They are under grace, - they can't lose their salvation, - and free to do whatsoever they choose ... now that they are saved(!).

On the other side of the argument were the *Judaizers*, Christians who mistakenly taught that you had to become a Jew first and uphold the Jewish law. They were 'tight' in its observance and they basically made Christianity to look as if it was another 'department' within the fold of Jewish life.

Today also we have “Judaizers”, ... people who lay down ‘laws’ that you must live by as a Christian, or you lose your ‘Christianity’. These laws are often man-made and so restrictive that they do damage to the concept of our liberty in Christ.

Now, let’s consider this subject of the Law of God carefully so that we don’t mismanage it and fall into the hole along with the Judaizers, or be too lax and share the “Vanity Fair” of the antinomians.

THE RELEVANCE OF GOD’S LAW

- * God’s holy law is relevant for all mankind. He makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile, concerning their observance of it.
- * It comes as a surprise to many that Adam and Eve were not Jews! Abraham, the father of Israel had not been born; Moses had not brought the Commandments and the Law to the Israelites ... but yet God had already set out before our first parents laws and regulations.
- * Even before the Garden of Eden God had His laws that He judged by in Heaven; Peter wrote, *II Pet. 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.*
- * Similarly in the time of Noah, *v.5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.*
- * Sodom and Gomorrah were equally responsible before God’s holy law; Peter wrote again, *v.6 turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation [behaviour] of the wicked.*
- * Yes, of course God’s Law given to Moses condemned and prohibited sin in all its guises, - e.g. Lev. 18:6-23, incest, polygamy, adultery, child sacrifice, profaning the Lord’s Name, homosexuality, bestiality, - but God’s Law even pre-dated the inscriptions of the tablets of stone on Mount Sinai.
- * Even when the Law of Moses was instituted, God’s word is unambiguous about the accountability of the Gentiles to the Law: *but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Deut. 9:4-5). ...*

- * The very law which God was revealing to Israel was *the same law* that also brought divine punishment upon the outside nations for transgressing it. Israel and the Gentiles were under the same moral law, and they both would suffer the *same penalty* for the defilement which comes with violating it.
- * God does not have one law for the saved and another law for the unsaved! The unsaved are equally responsible to keep the Lord's Day, the Bible's teaching on marriage, the Bible's teaching on honouring the Name of God and every other teaching of the Word of God ... just as the born-again believer is too.
- * God is fair and just, and His Law is the same for all! **The relevance of the Law of God** is to all mankind.

THE REASON FOR GOD'S LAW

- * Where you don't have law you have disorder and chaos. Habakkuk, [1:4 the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.](#)
- * The reason for God's law is simple, - it is the maintenance of order. Douglas Macmillan said, "In the Ten Commandments we have a transcript of the moral constitution of Deity".
- * Consequently, God's Law shows up sin, - for it is holy! [Rom. 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.](#) There is nothing wrong with the Law of God; on the contrary, it shows up to us our sin. If God, in grace, had not given to us His Law we wouldn't know that we were living contrary to His will.
- * Spurgeon told his congregation, "The heart is like a dark cellar, full of lizards, cockroaches, beetles, and all kinds of reptiles and insects, which in the dark we see not, but the law takes down the shutters and lets in the light, and so we see the evil. Thus sin becoming apparent by the law, it is written the law makes the offence to abound." It shows us how *black* we are!
- * And then what happens? ... The Law mounts the judgement seat, puts on the black cap, and pronounces, [the wages of sin is death! \(Rom. 3:23\) ... Jn. 3:18 he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.](#) Absolute and utter powerlessness!
- * And also, ... if the Law of God was not prevalent over the laws of men we would be living in a state of absolute and perpetual anarchy.
- * Not just a relatively small number of homosexuals would be living in our towns, - they would be in the majority.

- * The paedophiles would be in every town centre and outside every school.
- * Marriage would be a thing of the past and the central hub of society would be replaced by adulterous and unfaithful co-habitations.
- * Financial fraud, abortions, euthanasia would be more rife than they presently are.
- * If God's law did not have the pre-eminence in our world ... *our world would be unliveable!*
- * Social order, ... natural order ... The floods would overwhelm the land; the planets and stars would collide; the mountains would crash into the sea, the sun would burn with a heat that we could not manage ... and the tsunamis, the earthquakes, the natural disasters would be so many the news teams couldn't keep up with it all!
- * And then there are those who teach that at the end times Christ will come back for His Church and along with the Holy Spirit they will leave this earth ... but the Bible clearly teaches that if God was to abandon this world, this world could not continue!
- * Yes, I know our government is bent upon creating laws contrary to the Word of God ... but they don't always get their way.
- * The European Union, Islamic and communist governments, godless powers through this world are out for the downfall of the principles of our faith and the law of God; indeed *we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12) ... but*, said Jesus Christ, *Mt. 16:18 I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ... Paul again, Eph. 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*
- * The reason for God's law is the maintenance of order in His creation for His glory, laid out in accordance of the Law of Almighty God.

THE REWARD FOR KEEPING GOD'S LAW

- * Now none of us would presume to keep all of God's law all of the time. We've all got to confess we sometimes err and stray.
- * The *Confession* says, "as the law forbids sin, it causes the regenerate to fight against the evil inclinations to sin that they find in themselves. Furthermore, the threatenings of the law are of value in showing the regenerate what their sins deserve ...".
- * You see, it is impossible to keep every letter of the law, - if our faith in Christ was to depend *only* upon strict adherence to the law of God our salvation could not last! We would 'fall at the first hurdle'!

- * ... Enter ... *grace*! By God's grace He has lifted us out and in mercy and His good favour He made us His own.
- * God knows our inability to keep His Law so He sent His Son ... so that we no longer depend upon the Law to save us, but upon His Son.
- * We are saved through grace, not through keeping the Law, [Eph. 2:8 it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.](#)
- * But we need to be careful also: the holiness of the Law that God instigated in the Old Testament was not cast to the one side at Calvary; the holy Law continues to be the expression of the holy character of the holy God, and our new standing in Christ enables us to strive towards the faithful observance of His holy Law.
- * The Law is not done away with ... but it is fulfilled in Christ. Yes, there are various aspects of the Levitical laws that are no longer relevant to us (they were specifically for the people of that age), but they have been perfectly fulfilled in Christ!
- * Grace outdoes sin, for it lifts us higher than the place from which we fell! ... And the sentence of the Law may be reversed, but *grace can never be reversed!* [Rom. 8 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. ... 1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.](#)
- * Through grace, the law of God shows us our sin and our fallen state before Him, - what we deserve, - and then He brings us to Himself; ... law and grace working together. John Flavel (17th century Puritan), "The Law sends us to Christ to be justified, and Christ sends us to the law to be regulated". Let's draw it all to a conclusion ...

Conclusion ... The French Reformer and theologian, John Calvin, wrote, "Only if we walk in the beauty of God's law do we become sure of our adoption as children of the Father". You see, the Law of God *is* precious to the true children of God.

- * The Law ... even when it was outside of our grasp, through grace God took the initiative and came and worked it out for the benefit of our souls; Spurgeon explained it like this, "The law is but a schoolmaster, to bring thee to Christ".
- * And here is a final thought from William Secker (Puritan), "The law by which God rules us is as dear to Him as the Gospel by which He saves us". ... As the *Confession* says, "The aforementioned uses of the law of God do not run contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but are most happily in line with it, for the Spirit of Christ subdues the will of man and enables it to do freely and with cheerfulness that which the will of God, as revealed in the law, requires to be done".