

Saved, Purified and Powered by Grace

Legal Confusion

I asked students in our college Bible study group, "Are we as believers supposed to keep none, part or all the Law? The answers were equally divided between the first two, none or part. The correct defense for keeping none of the law was given. "Christ is the end of the *law* for righteousness to everyone that believeth."¹ Another reasoned that we are to keep the nine commandments repeated by Jesus, Sabbath being the omission.

Is the Law in three categories or one?

One extensive study shows that Christians on average believe they are responsible to obey about 28% of the Law of Moses.² Why only 28%? They reason that the "Law" is separated into three categories; civil, ceremonial and moral. Only the Israelite citizens had to keep their civil or nation's laws. Then they reason that men who were NOT Levites were exempt from the laws for priests, the laws for women and for slaves. So if you are not a priest, a woman or a slave that leaves you with only 245 out of the 613 laws according to one orthodox Jewish young man I was talking with recently. I said to Omir, forget about the 613 or the 245, "**how are you doing with the 10 commandments?**" in checkmate he dropped his head with a grin. So if you are not a Jew, only about 170 moral laws remain or about 28%.

One Israeli asked a great question, "So if Jesus was Jewish and Christians follow Jesus then why don't Christians keep the Law of Moses? I said "Gentiles were not invited to that meeting God called at Sinai...we didn't get the memo." I rubbed it in a little and said, "So we are free to eat pork, shrimp, ...lobster. He asked this while riding in a van on the Sabbath going to our shooting range. I wanted to ask, "So why are you breaking the Sabbath?"

The "Law of Moses" has been separated into three categories for theological study; but these divisions are not found in Scripture. "The Law" is always referred to as monolithic. Breaking a Law is like dropping a ceramic vase on a stone floor. The whole vase is shattered. Jesus emphasized the cohesive inspiration of the entire law. "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."³ Paul a former Pharisee in Judaism referencing the Old Testament said, "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."⁴ **Moses said God expected Israel's obedience to all the Laws.** Deut. 31:12 "Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, **and thy stranger that is within thy gates**, that they may ...**observe to do all the words of this law**" **Who was to obey? All the residents of Israel** "men, women and children." **But nowhere in Old Testament scripture were gentiles who lived physically outside of the jurisdiction of the nation of Israel commanded to keep the 613 or the 245 or the 170.** Yet as sinful Jewish and gentile humans looking into the same mirror of the Law which perfectly reflects God's holiness, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law..." Paul goes on to say "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:19,23 There are those of the seed of Abraham under a covenant of the Law of Moses but all humanity has come short of the righteousness of God.

Are Gentiles under the Law of Moses?

Paul explains in Romans 1 & 2, that all gentiles had a God given knowledge of Creation, therefore a Creator and a God given conscience of law or right and wrong. Even when our 5 year old grandson takes a toy from our 3 year old granddaughter, she not only knows that it's wrong but lets everybody in 3 blocks know it's wrong. The world over the most remote tribes with no Bible or knowledge of God have rules and consequences.

¹ Romans 10:4

² The Law Then and Now: What About Grace, John B. Metzger, Grace Acres Press, p. 80

³ Matthew 5:18

⁴ James 2:10

Rom. 2:14 “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)” If they can accuse or excuse they have God’s law in their conscience. Eve excused her action and accused the serpent and she never heard of the Ten Commandments much less Moses. **For Jews or Gentiles, who lived before the Law, during the Law and since the Law, one thing is sure - all are guilty of violating the laws of our holy creator God.**

Paul in Romans 3:9 for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 12Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: **Any way you figure how many laws which group must keep it comes done to the same number.** 3:12 **“there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”** 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So why was the Law Given to Israel?

1. To provide atonement and access to God that foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. Hebrews 10:1-15
2. To keep them pure as a channel through which the promised seed of Messiah would come. Galatians 3:19 The promise of a redeeming Son was first given to Eve and then through Abraham.⁵

The identity of Jews before the age of Grace was rightly the character of Jehovah by observance of the Law of Moses. It determined that what they wore, ate, how they worked, wealth, worship and that their relationships would make them stand out as different from the pagan gentiles and dedicated to their God.

Deut, 14:2 For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

Are there any common denominators in the Law for Jews and Christians?

No but there are UN-common Denominators

Unless we literally interpret the Gospels in a **dispensational context**, the scriptures about the observance of the Law of Moses cannot be rightly divided. Dispensational interpretation of scripture clarifies the distinct differences.

What is Dispensationalism? God worked in different ways with people as He progressively revealed more about Himself to man. He expected from Adam and Eve obedience to one command. He gave Noah 7 commands. He gave Moses 10 then the nation of Israel 613. He didn’t expect Noah or Abraham to keep invisible rules that He hadn’t spoken yet. Adam & Eve were in the Dispensation of Innocence, After that there was the Dispensation of Conscience, then the Dispensation of Law. Since Jesus came and kept 100% of the Law and died for the sins of every sinner and offers salvation by Grace through faith, we live in a time period called the Dispensation of Grace. As those living in each Dispensation had a fuller revealed scriptural knowledge of God, He dealt with them according to what He revealed. Obviously we don’t relate to God with animal sacrifices anymore – not because we are more sophisticated. Hebrews 1:11 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; 3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

⁵ Genesis. 3:15; 15:6

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John 1:17⁶ First, we must grasp that the Gospels give the account of things that happened under the final days of the Dispensation of the Law, before the Dispensation or era of Grace. In Galatians 4:4,5 Paul tells them, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, **made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law**”⁷ Being born Jewish, He was “under the law.” He was subject to the law of Moses just like he was subject to Joseph and Mary as a child. His life exhibited His divine ability to “fulfill the law.” Matthew 5:18⁸ **Failure to completely keep the Law of Moses, would have disqualified Jesus as Israel’s Messiah, and our Savior. Therefore when we open up our Bible to the New Testament and read the Gospel accounts of Jesus we are reading about the LAST person to live and die under the Law of Moses. Jesus lived in Old Testament times in the Dispensation of the Law. His disciples were Jews under the Law of Moses. The New era or Dispensation of Salvation by grace began when Jesus’ eyes opened on Resurrection morning.**

Can we apply The Law of Moses for Jews to the Joint-heirs of Jesus?

The identity of Jews before the age of Grace was rightly the character of Jehovah by observance of the Law of Moses. Our identity is in Jesus Christ evidenced by devotion to Him and His Laws. A sharp contrast must be made between law and grace to rightly divide between the Laws of Moses for Jews and laws of Christ for the justified. Because of the abuses of a “lawless grace” by professing Christians or carnal believers far too many have looked to the law as a behavioral restraint thereby letting the Law define the truth about grace, instead of letting grace define the truth about the law. On the other extreme, the failure to grasp the Law of Christ motivated by Grace in the work of sanctification leaves us bound by the task masters of guilt, fear and trying to gain God’s acceptance by keeping enough of the laws to earn His smile and avoid His chastisement. **Under Grace our only acceptance by God is that we are accepted in the beloved son of God.**

Scripture states that we cannot be saved from our sins by keeping the Law of Moses. “by *the deeds of the law* there shall no flesh be justified”⁹ **The law of Moses provided expectations of holiness with no enablement.** The writer of Hebrews stated that the old Mosaic covenant “decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” Hebrews 8:13¹⁰ Jesus’ blood blotted out the demands of the written ordinances and “nailed them to his cross.” Colossians 2:14¹¹

Since the Grace of Christ is our foundation then growing “in Grace” should be our ideal.

This identity comes only through “the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” not by the knowledge of Moses. One Author has identified over 600 commands in the New Testament. Are these new commandments of Jesus just the same old Law minus that “Jewish stuff”? No, the Law of Christ is not just “Torah light” for gentiles. Scripture is clear regarding salvation that “The just shall live by faith.” Are we saved under grace but sanctified by some of the Law? NO. What are the rules that guide new law living? It is evident that the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,¹² Avoidance of the former schoolmaster’s glare, is not a proper motivation.

* Remember meeting a former school teacher for the first time since high school? One of our supporters was my 3rd grade teacher and my Highschool principle. It was intimidating sending her my newsletter the first time. My relationship with her used to depend on grammar, now it depends on her Grace.

Who determined that Moses’ Law became the default setting to guide our sanctified living?

⁶ John 1:17

⁷ Galatians 4:4,5

⁸ Matthew 5:17

⁹ Romans 3:20

¹⁰ Hebrews 8:13

¹¹ Colossians 2:14

¹² Galatians 3:24

When the Pharisees made void the Law of God through their own commandments, they rendered **salvation** a works only equation. When we under Grace substitute Moses' or man's commandments for the law of Christ it renders **sanctification** a "by works only" equation as well. Paul asked, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Jeremiah prophesied that God would give a new covenant "written on their heart". This is not the same old Law just written on a different surface – hearts instead of stone. **If only Grace could save us then only grace can sanctify us.**

If we boast of our freedom from legalistic religious rules and refuse to grow in grace by the knowledge of Jesus, we expose our naked immaturity at best , or at worst our rebelliousness to our Lord. Why call ye me Lord, lord and do not the things I say.

Under grace our motivation of practical righteousness is no longer fear of the fire of Sinai, but the passion of the fire of Pentecost in our hearts. The outcome is active obedience to the commands of Christ to love Him and one another.¹³ Disregarding the laws of love while filled with the Holy Spirit is not an option because He who motivates us does so out of love for the Lord of holiness. Dozens of times we are commanded to "Love one another."¹⁴ Bearing one another's burdens and forgiving one another is love's fruit.¹⁵ We limit our liberty out of love so as not to be a stumbling block to weaker brothers.¹⁶ We should not never use our liberty as a license to sin.¹⁷ **The Spirit of Jesus yearns that we yield to Him as He did to the Father. "I do always those things that please him."**¹⁸ Obedient love to Him fulfills the perfect law of liberty.

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Galatians 4:21¹⁹ Paul also strongly rebuked Peter when he changed his behavior to observe Mosaic kosher laws while Jerusalem believers visited his ministry among the gentiles.²⁰ **The only prevention of the two extremes of the leaven of legalism or of the looseness of license is the Biblical understanding of the superiority of grace over law coupled with discipleship in the Spirit empowered practice of the new law of Christ.** Gal. 5:13 "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself... Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

The differences between law and grace are counterproductive. "In the very nature of Law there is no grace, because a holy God is completely offended by our sin and our depraved hearts. Law is the prosecuting attorney with no one to defend us as we stand before a holy God while the Law correctly accuses man as a sinner. The merit of Messiah's work on the cross of Calvary is the foundation of grace. The blood of Messiah satisfies all the holy, righteous demands of God and thereby gives us, the walking dead men, new life and eternal fellowship with Him. The grace of God cancels out the law of the Mosaic system."²¹

How do we live a sanctified life by grace?

This brings us back to our text John 1:16 "**And of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace.**" Jesus was full of Grace and He is the Truth. Have you received Him as the Way, the Truth and the Life? He fully supplies all you need for salvation upon your faith in Him. He fully supplies all your strength for life. **What does it mean "we received and grace for grace."** Here's a few commentators explanations for the phrase grace for grace, sometimes translated grace upon grace or grace against grace. Colin Brown wrote, "a perpetual and rapid succession of blessings, as though there

¹³ John 14:15,21,23,24

¹⁴ John 13:34

¹⁵ Galatians 6:2

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 8:9

¹⁷ Romans 6:15

¹⁸ John 8:29

¹⁹ Galatians 4:21

²⁰ Galatians 2:11,12

²¹ The Law Then and Now: What About Grace, John B. Metzger, Grace Acres Press, p 109

was no interval in between the arrival of one blessing and the receipt of the next.”²² Another wrote; “Continuously flowing from the God of saving grace is more grace.” 2 Cor 12: 9-12 His grace is sufficient. His power is made perfect in our weakness. Bishop Moule in the late 1800’s illustrated it like standing on the banks of a river. He wrote, “Stand on it’s banks and contemplate the flow of the waters. A minute passes, and another. Is it the same water? No. The old water, had been displaced by the new – “water instead of water.” He pictures a never ending unstoppable flow of grace through our being. The source of that is His saving Grace. It is not only God’s unlimited favor but His supernatural dynamic empowerment. This flow is the grace of sanctification.

Remember Jesus’ words to the woman at the well; “John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. His grace supplied the **power for our salvation**. Like that river water is harnessed by men to produce electrical power, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live Christ’s perfect Law of Liberty through the constant daily flow of God’s **grace for sanctification**. The electricity was turned on by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the moment you were saved. We are **empowered to serve one another in love** by obedience to the Law of Christ - his commandments. Jesus **promised the power to speak** the Gospel to the lost. But ye shall receive power/grace and ye shall be witnesses unto me... We are given a never ending **power to survive persevere**. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Phil. 4:13 I can continue to serve him inspite of persecution or pain, because His grace is sufficient!! Grace for grace means His power is made perfect in our weakness. The just shall live by faith means the justified need to learn to depend on God’s Spirit for the grace/strength to serve Him and others, to speak the Gospel to the lost. Let’s flip the switch and follow Jesus.

²² NIDictionary of NT Theology. P1179