Law and Grace
Distinctions between the Old and New
John 1:17
For the Law was given through Moses;
grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. NASB

What is the Law?

For a glossary of terms used in this study, see the appendix “glossary.”

Definition and Terminology
The Law is most commonly used to speak of God’s moral standard by which He judges righteousness among mankind, both in people’s relationship to God and people’s relationship to neighbor, as outlined in the writings of Moses. It may have reference to a certain section of Scripture, or may be in general a reference to God’s standards for general or specific things. Many times it is used to refer to the Decalogue (10 Commandments), or the Torah (The Pentateuch or the first 5 books of the Bible), or even the entire Old Testament. It is helpful to make the distinctions of moral, civil, and ceremonial. That is the law was really threefold: the Moral Law, as summed up in the Decalogue, the Ceremonial Law, prescribing the ritual and all the typical (shadow) enactments, and what might be called the Civil Law, that relating to the people in their national, political life. The distinction is not closely observed, though sometimes the reference emphasizes one aspect, sometimes another, but generally the whole Law without any discrimination is contemplated. Sometimes the Law means the whole Old Testament Scriptures, as in John 10:34; 12:34; 15:25. At other times the Law means the Pentateuch, as in Luke 24:44.

The Law is a major theme in both Old and New testaments. Because God is the Judge of all mankind (Gen 18:25, Psa 94:2, Heb 9:27, 12:23), He judges according to the righteous standard of His holy Law. In this judgment, God expects perfect righteousness, as He has subjected all mankind in His Law to the standard which the Law puts forth (Rom 3:19-20). Therefore, when one transgresses God’s Law, it is called sin, an act of lawlessness or a transgression of God’s Law. This standard is consistent with God’s own moral character (Rom 7:19) and explains how that moral character is implemented and carried out in our human existence and relations with both God and neighbor.

The Law can also be referred to as the Mosaic Covenant, which is the covenant that God made with Israel after He delivered them by His grace from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. In this sense we also refer to it as the Old covenant. Generally speaking, and looking back from a New Testament perspective, we refer to the Law in the same sense that we do as the Old or Mosaic Covenant. At times, we may refer to the whole Old Testament as the old covenant or the Law, but when doing so, one must give some context to this as these terms can be easily misconstrued or confusing.

In the New Testament, we look back at the Old Testament and see that its fulfillment has come in Christ. In this way, much of New Testament teaching is seen in contrast to the Law, or the old
covenant, or even the entire Old Testament. Context is always important in these matters, but generally, the New Testament holds forth a **distinction between the Law and the Gospel**. The **Law** being God's righteous standard of the Old Covenant which all people have violated (Rom 3:23, 5:12, Gal 3:22, 1 John 1:8), and have thus become sinners worthy of judgment and death (Gen 2:17, Eze 18:4, Rom 6:23, Jam 1:15), and the **Gospel** being what God has done in the person and work of Christ (Rom 3:21-24) to deliver the believer from sin and death (Rom 8:1-4). This distinction between Law and Gospel is the very heart of the Christian Faith and the most important message in the Bible because it is the heartbeat of God's redemptive work the history of Creation and mankind.

The word “law” in the Bible is used in several different ways. It is used as a term to describe:

- **regulations** for a society (Est 1:19, 3:8, Dan 6:12, 15, 7:25, 1 Cor 6:4, 6)
- as a **general principle** (Rom 3:27, 8:2)

**The Mosaic Covenant Law**

In both Old and New Testaments, the **Law** most commonly refers to the commands and regulations of the **Mosaic Covenant**. These are contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Although the word “**Law**” in the Bible is usually referring to **Torah** as a whole, which also includes the book of Genesis. These first five books of the Bible are also referred to as the **Pentateuch**. Usually when it is used in this common way, it is capitalized, “**Law**,” and this is because it is a formal rendering referring to the Mosaic Covenant Law delivered by God to Moses at Mount Sinai. It is often referred to as **“the Law of Moses.”**

### Joshua 8:32 - 32 And he wrote there on the stones a copy of the **law of Moses**, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. NASB
### Nehemiah 8:1 - 8 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the **book of the law of Moses** which the Lord had given to Israel. NASB
### Luke 24:44 - 44 Now He said to them, ”These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” NASB
### Hebrews 10:28-29 - 28 Anyone who has set aside the **Law of Moses** dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. NASB

As the **“Law of Moses,”** it was a strict moral code that God gave to govern the society of the Israelites, God’s chosen people. It was instructive, teaching them how to treat one another in a Theocracy (a society governed by God), and this aspect of the **Law** is commonly called the **Moral Law**. It also gave them regulations for how God was to be worshipped, through the means of a Priesthood, an altar for blood and grain sacrifices, performed at a Tabernacle, and these are commonly referred to as the **Ceremonial Law**. It also contained laws, both perceptive requirements as well as penal sanctions, that were meant to bring authoritative orders to the entire Israelite assembly. This aspect of the **Law** is commonly called the **Civil Law**. This means that God, as Lawgiver and Judge, would command for people to do certain things (perceptive requirements), and NOT to do other certain things for which there were penalties which could be even as severe as death (penal sanctions). Therefore the governance of this Israelite society was seen as a matter of the authority of God their ruler and King, under His holy **Law** as their Lawgiver, by which the people would be judged in His court as their Judge.
The Nelson’s Bible Dictionary gives some helpful insight here. “Biblical law is more than a record of human law. It is an expression of what God requires of man. It rests on the eternal moral principles that are consistent with the very nature of God Himself. Therefore, biblical law (the Ten Commandments) is the summary of moral law. As such it sets forth fundamental and universal moral principles. Moreover, the biblical concept was that law comes from God, issues from His nature, and is holy, righteous, and good. Furthermore, at the outset of God’s ruling over Israel at Sinai, God the great King gave His laws. These laws were binding on His people, and He upheld them. In Israel all crimes were crimes against God (1 Sam 12:9-10). Consequently, He expected all His people to love and serve Him (Amos 5:21-24). As the final judge, He disciplined those who violated His law (Ex 22:21-24; Deut 10:18; 19:17). The nation or community was responsible for upholding the law and insuring that justice was done (Deut 13:6-10; 17:7; Num 15:32-36). God’s law, unlike those of other nations of the ancient world, also viewed all human life as especially valuable because man is created in God’s image. Thus, biblical law was more humane. It avoided mutilations and other savage punishments. Victims could not inflict more injury than they had received. Neither could criminals restore less than they had taken or stolen simply because of a class distinction. Everyone was equal before God’s law. The “eye for eye” requirement of the Mosaic Law was not a harsh statement that required cruel punishment. Instead, it was a mandate for equality before the law (Ex 21:24). Each criminal had to pay for his own crime (Num 35:31). Under the law codes of some pagan nations, the rich often could buy their way out of punishment. God’s law especially protected the defenseless orphan, widow, slave, and stranger from injustice (Ex 21:2,20-21; 22:21-23). What is often called the civil law includes those specific laws in the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) that regulate civil and social behavior. All such laws are fundamentally religious since God is the lawgiver and ruler over everything. There are eight distinct categories of civil law in the Old Testament: (1) laws regulating leaders, (2) laws regulating the army, (3) criminal laws, (4) laws dealing with crimes against property, (5) laws relating to humane treatment, (6) laws about personal and family rights, (7) laws about property rights, and (8) laws regulating other social behavior. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

And so the Law is generally referred to in the Bible as the totality of this “Law of Moses.” It was an instructive and amazingly beneficial system of law and order, which was particularly moral and righteous, and if obeyed would also bring about the blessing and favor of God. It was filled with wise instructions for God’s people. It is also often associated with terms such as commandment, statute, precept or ordinances.

Nehemiah 9:13-14 - 13 “Then Thou didst come down on Mount Sinai. And didst speak with them from heaven; Thou didst give to them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. 14 “So Thou didst make known to them Thy holy sabbath. And didst lay down for them commandments, statutes, and law, Through Thy servant Moses. NASB

Deuteronomy 4:6-8 – 5 See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. 6 So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ 7 "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? 8 "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? NASB
This is because the Law is filled with such “commandments and precepts.” As such, there is an emphasis many times on these “commandments” and the teaching of the commandments which are to be practiced and obeyed. Thus the Law is normally referring to what God has commanded people to do and is often linked with words like, “keep, do and obey.” There are at least 613 commandments in the Torah, and these are summarized in 10 commandments given on the two tablets of stone to Moses on Mount Sinai. The first tablet contained 4 laws dealing with man’s relationship to God, the second tablet contained 6 laws dealing with man’s relationship to his neighbor. The two tables of the Law are summarized by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22…

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And 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." NASB

Thus, Jesus summarized “the whole Law and the Prophets,” (terms referring to the entire Old Testament), under the two tables of the Law. To love God and love your neighbor was the Messiah’s interpretation of the entire Law and Prophets. This is a profound and simple commentary from God Himself on the meaning of the Old Testament Law. Christian, you will do well to memorize these verses and understand that the Law is fulfilled in and through God’s Love, expressed toward Him first, and then to our neighbor.

Romans 13:8-10 - 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; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. NASB

This idea then, is a helpful principle in understanding and applying the Law as a New Testament Christian. If it is not an expression of true biblical love, then it is most likely being misapplied. The general nature of the Law is love, because it is God’s Law, and His nature is love.

The Law is an expression of the character and nature of God

Because the Law is an expression of God’s will and desire for mankind, it flows out of the very nature of God Himself. The very nature of God’s Law is entirely consistent with God’s nature for God, who is goodness and truth, would never command what violates His nature.

Romans 7:12 - 12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. NASB

Deuteronomy 4:8 - 8 "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? NASB

Nehemiah 9:13 - 13 "Then Thou didst come down on Mount Sinai, And didst speak with them from heaven; Thou didst give to them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. NASB

Because the Law is an expression of true moral virtue as it reflects God’s character and nature, it therefore gives very specific definition to what sin is, or what violates God’s nature. Therefore the Law gives us clear insight into the nature of sin, making us conscious of sin.

Romans 3:19-20 - 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. NASB

Romans 7:7-8 - 7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." NASB
Because the Law also categorizes different types of sin, sin against God, and various types of sin against people, it also helps us to see the severity of certain types of sin. **Much of the Civil Law is very moral in nature** and with the penal sanctions there are penalties attached to certain crimes, even as severe as death. There are also provisions made for restitutions to be made in many cases to the offended party. This helps us to see what kinds of sins are more severe than others, by the severity of the penalty or restitution that must be made. In this also we see clearly what the perfect measure of justice is for criminal activity.

*Leviticus 24:19-21* - 19 'And if a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: 20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him. 21 'Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death. NASB

*Exodus 22:1-4* - 22 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. 2 If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. 3 But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double. NASB

Because the Law is an expression of God’s holy and perfect character, people cannot not fully obey it. People have a natural inability to obey God’s Law because they are sinners by nature and therefore transgress God’s Law and sin.

*Romans 3:23* - 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. NASB

*Romans 5:12* - 12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. NASB

Now as redemptive history has progressed, God has placed the Law in history to show people’s sinfulness very clearly and their guilt before God because of their many sins. The Law shows us in very specific terms exactly where and how we transgress God’s nature and this makes our guilt crystal clear.

*Romans 5:19-21* - 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. 20 And **the Law came in that the transgression might increase**; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

*Romans 7:13* - 13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. NASB

At this point we should also mention the very negative and accusatory language of the New Testament in regard to God’s Law. The Law is many times in the New Testament seen as that “**which brings about wrath, kills us and condemns us, holds us in bondage, is our enmity between us and God, is the power of sin, a certificate of debt against us and hostile to us, that which is weak, useless and obsolete.**”

*Romans 4:15* - 15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. NASB

*Romans 7:9-12* - 9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but **when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died**; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, **taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.** NASB

*1 Corinthians 15:56-57* - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law**; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

*Galatians 4:3-5* - 3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. 4 But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. NASB
Ephesians 2:14-17 - 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. NASB

Colossians 2:13-14 - 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. NASB

Hebrews 7:18-19 - 18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. NASB

Hebrews 8:13 - 13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. NASB

In this sense we are made to see the very severe nature of our guilt and sin because of the very pure nature of God and His Law. There is therefore a severe tension upon us because of sin and guilt which is relieved by the grace of God in Christ through the Gospel. In this sense the NT looks at the Law in negative terms but with the purpose of driving us to Christ. See then, that God has added the Law for this very specific purpose. The Law was added to make our guilt to be clearly seen and our inability to be righteous in and of ourselves so that we will be driven to seek God for mercy. And this mercy God has provided in Christ. The Law was given as a schoolmaster or tutor to lead us to Christ.

Galatians 3:19-26 - 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. NASB

Now consider that even though the Law is very severe in its condemnation of our sins which perfectly reflects God’s attitude toward our sins in His holiness and wrath, it does so in order to lead us to the grace of God in Christ, which is also a reflection of God nature of grace and mercy. See in this thought then both the severity and the kindness of God.

Romans 11:22-23 - 22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God: to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. NASB

Continuity and Discontinuity
It is important to understand that the New Covenant has now come and as a result, the Old Covenant has been abrogated. This is to say that it has been annulled, replaced and fulfilled so that its purpose as a covenant with God’s people Israel, has come to its fulfillment in the person and work of Christ, who is the fulfillment of all that the Old Covenant typed and shadowed, and is Himself the reality and substance of all that is represented. Therefore we see that the Old Covenant has accomplished its place in the history of redemption and by this realize that it was only temporal, remaining in place until its fulfillment, and has now become obsolete (Heb 8:13) and ineffectual (Heb 7:18). If we maintain that there is a New Covenant that makes the Old Covenant temporal, obsolete and ineffectual, then we ask; was the old covenant truly redemptive for those who worshipped in its era? And if so, in what way was it redemptive? This brings up the question of continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New covenants. If the substance of the New Covenant is of grace, and the Old of Law, how then can the Old be
redemptive since no one has ever been able to keep the Law perfectly and thereby be justified in that obedience? Are the Old and New very different, or very much the same if they are both redemptive? Is there a continuity or a discontinuity in the two? The answer to this question is that even though the outward nature of the Old Covenant was obedience to all of its commands and precepts, the moral, civil and ceremonial aspects of the Law, its true redemptive substance was grace. Its moral aspects simply give broad and clear definition to the will of God for His holy people to live and act in accordance with his holy nature. The ceremonial aspects of the Law gave a very clear pattern of the true worship of the living God, who Himself defines how He is to be worshipped as He is the creator and sustainer of all things. The civil aspects of the Law were necessary because God had called the whole nation out as a separated community or society of people who were to be governed by God as a people set apart and holy unto the Lord, demonstrated (at least in one very obvious way), by the wise and discerning Law that governed them, given to them by their God, Jehovah. But even the civil Law is a very gracious benefit to those who live under its wise precepts, for it contained promises of great blessing and privilege for those who would obey it.

The Old Covenant was redemptive for the Israelites (and Gentiles who joined themselves to Judaism), but in a practical typological form of worship, the carrying out of the Ceremonial Law. The typological form (types of Christ in the ceremonies), was carrying out divinely appointed worship, by practices and rituals, which was entirely redemptive for those Jews and Gentiles who were circumcised in heart and by faith truly trusting in God alone for righteousness. This is because at this point in redemptive history, the Law was the divinely appointed means of worship unto God for His special covenant people Israel. But the true substance of redeeming grace was and always has been faith in God and in His mercy toward His people according to His own self-revelation (given in greater fullness over time), and individuals have been known and recognized by the obedience of faith throughout every age of redemptive history, but always according to the level of God’s revelation for them in these different ages. This can be seen in the entire storyline of Scripture, starting with Adam and the Patriarchs in Genesis, and moving through the whole Bible with Israel and the Church, continuing until the time of the consummation of the ages in the New Heavens and Earth. Therefore, when considering the Law or the Old Covenant with Israel, it must be understood according to its place in redemptive history. It had a practical typological form of worship, the carrying out of the Ceremonial Law. These types were the means of expressing the obedience of faith in Jehovah, and the faithful Jew was very concerned to follow the Law as best they could. This can be clearly seen in the era of the kings when the Scripture would speak of a certain king who “did what was right in the sight of the Lord,” as compared to those kings who would do “evil in the sight of the Lord.” The one signifies those who were obedient to both the ceremonial (in some degree), and in the moral and civil aspects of the Law, and the other wicked kings who disregarded God’s Law and worshipped and served other Gods in various wicked ways. Moreover, those who were obedient received the favor of God’s blessing and the privilege of deliverance from their enemies, whereas the evil kings would be overcome in all manner of calamity and put to the sword by their enemies. Nevertheless, for the generations of the Jews and some number of Gentiles, faithful obedience to the Law was the means of expressing truly devoted worship unto God, in the manner He had prescribed for them, which was an expression of God’s redemptive work in them. But this salvation’s substance was God’s grace through faith, the sovereign work of God, expressed in their obedience to God, and always fulfilled only in the person and work of
Christ. In this sense the Old Covenant was much like the New and in this way we can see continuity. There is a **continuity** between the **Old and New Covenants** in their **redemptive substance, grace and faith**. There is an outward **discontinuity** in the **ceremonial and civil aspects of worship in the Old Covenant**, which have been **abrogated** by the **New Covenant**. Nevertheless, in both covenants the moral aspects of God’s Law remain as our guide and teacher, revealing God’s will and character, as well as our inability to be righteous before God, driving us to Christ as a schoolmaster. These moral aspects of the Law, of which the Decalogue is a summary, are established and upheld in both the Old and the New Covenants, and are the clearest form of **continuity** between the two.

JV Fesko writes in “The Law is not of Faith” pg 43…. “*Under the Law, grace was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshowing Christ to come….* Under the Gospel, when Christ, the substance of the OT was exhibited, it was done with greater fullness, simplicity, and outward glory. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.” Surely the Mosaic Covenant is unique because of its legal nature, but it demonstrated man’s inability to fulfill the demands of the Law and thus drives people to Christ. But in terms of its place in redemptive history it paints a **prophetic picture**, a **typical prophecy with its types and shadows** of the sufficient and completed salvation to come in the person and work of Christ. Under the Law, the Ceremonies pointed forward to Christ. Under the Gospel, we celebrate the fullness that has come in Him with a simple remembrance of His accomplished work.

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore let no one 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**. NASB

Hebrews 10:1 - 1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. NASB

But in both covenants, we are commanded to obedience to the **Moral aspects of the Law**. These are **forever binding** on us because they are an expression of God’s character and nature, whom we worship and seek to emulate. When we say that the Moral Law is “binding,” what is it that we mean by this? Binding for what purpose? Well it certainly is not a requirement of perfect obedience in order to be saved, for no person can accomplish this even in the New Covenant age with the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling. Therefore we mean that it is the imperative commandment of God to which we are bound to keep, as an expression of true devoted worship unto Him. It serves as our **guide** as to what pleases Him and how it is that we conform to Him practically in our lives.

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. NASB

Romans 3:31 - 31 Do we then **nullify the Law through faith?** May it never be! On the contrary, we **establish the Law**. NASB

Romans13:8-11 - 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; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. 11 And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. NASB
James 2:8, 12 - 8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." you are doing well……12 So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. NASB

Moreover, God has threatened discipline to those who will not adhere to His moral law and also warned that the constant practice of violating it could be an expression of one’s being outside of His Kingdom and absent from His saving covenant.

Hebrews 12:4-8 - 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; 6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives." 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. NASB

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 - 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. NASB

Galatians 6:7-8 - 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. NASB

God’s character expressed in the Moral Law instructs us concerning the knowledge of His will, and is therefore forever our guide. We see the fullness of the moral character of the Law carried out in the person and work of Jesus, so that He has become for us a “living Word” from the Father, demonstrating in human terms the very substance of the Moral Law in His life and death. He is the supreme expression of God’s holy Law, the very Word of God made flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14). Further, this profound incarnation of God in Christ Jesus has brought about the ability for the indwelling presence of God within us by the Holy Spirit. This indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is what makes the New Covenant effectual and eternal. The very power of God has transformed our nature in regeneration and brought God’s very life and immortality to live inside of us who are His very temple, the place where God is worshipped is now in the very heart and soul of man, in Spirit and in truth. This provides necessary power for the practical and transformational sanctification of God’s people causing it to be effectual, actually effecting to great degree God’s holiness practically in the lives of His saints. And because the New Covenant’s place in redemptive history, it has brought about the fullness of God’s redemptive work in the person and work of Christ, which shall never be changed or abrogated, but rather it has fulfilled God’s eternal purpose in Christ, and has reached its climax in the Gospel, bringing eternal life and immortality to all who will trust in Christ for salvation.

Ephesians 3:8-11 - 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; 10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord

Therefore there is both continuity and discontinuity between the Old and the New Covenants. Brenton Ferry writes in “The Law is not of Faith” pg 83…. “The abrogation of the civil and ceremonial aspects of the old covenant law accounts for the discontinuity between the old and the new covenants, while the continuation of the moral law accounts for their continuity.”

The beauty lies not in saying there is a discontinuity, or a continuity, but rather in seeing both the discontinuity and continuity in the distinct and yet harmonious relation of both.
The Old and the New

In the New Testament, the Law is sometimes referred to as the “old covenant,” as it is contrasted with the New Covenant (Heb 7-10). In fact, many see the entire Old Testament as the “Old Covenant” and the New Testament as the “New Covenant.” This concept however is not entirely correct as the Old Testament contains more than just the Old Covenant Mosaic Law that God made with Israel. It also contains the historical narratives, even beginning in Genesis and running through Ezra, as well as the Prophets, Psalms and Wisdom literature. Nevertheless, there certainly is an Old Covenant, which is now “old,” and a New Covenant which is forever “new.” But what are the key differences between the Old and the New? What makes the Old Covenant “old” and what makes the New Covenant “new”? If the new replaces the old, how then should we view the old? And what about the entire Old Testament Scriptures, in what ways, if any, does the Old Testament apply, and how do we see it in light of the New Testament?

These questions are really the focus of this entire study and will be addressed in some detail as we examine biblical passages. But let us suffice here to give a brief answer to the general thrust of these questions.

The key differences between the two covenants relate to the fact that God has placed them in the history of redemption in order to accomplish His eternal purpose in Christ. Therefore the Old Covenant was put in place in the course of redemptive history to accomplish several preparatory matters and establish a legal basis for the condemnation of sin and a righteous justification by the Mediator whom God would send. This justification would then establish the basis for the New Covenant blessings and promises.

Galatians 3:19-22 - 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. NASB

The Old Covenant was given to show the nature of worship unto God, proper relationship to Him as His covenant people, proper relationship to one another and most importantly to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin in order to drive people to Christ as a schoolmaster, instructing us that we are in great need of a Savior. This is primarily seen in the Ceremonial portions of the Old Covenant and typified in the blood sacrifices, Aaronic Priesthood and temple worship. The Old Covenant was therefore temporary and ineffectual in regard to salvation, pointing the way to Messiah who would come and “save” His people from their sins by being the fulfillment of that sacrificial system and bringing in the new eschatological age of Messianic Salvation. This is the age of the New Covenant that God now makes with His people through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This New Covenant brings the blessed power of the indwelling Spirit to produce God’s desired work of sanctification in the believer. Moreover, the New Covenant provides the finished work of justification for the believer and holds forth the promise of eternal life with Christ and the hope of glorification when we die. The New Covenant is therefore both effectual and eternal. We are eternally saved and sanctified by Christ in position, even though for now we are practically sanctified through our sufferings and strivings with the fallen world and our natural sinful bodies. Therefore we wait in hope for our glorification as we live out our new purpose of glorifying and enjoying God in this life. We have partaken of the Age to come in the indwelling
power of the Spirit, but we have not yet reached the climax of our transformation until the Resurrection. This is called realized eschatology and is a benefit of the New Covenant. We have realized the power of the eschatological (last days) age now in some degree, but not yet in its fullness. We, like the Kingdom of God, have already partaken of the eschatological age of Messianic Salvation, but not yet in its ultimate expression. That will come at the Resurrection which takes place at the parousia or Second Coming of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:22-24 - 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. NASB

1 Corinthians 15:50-57 - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality, 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

Matthew 24:29-31 - 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. NASB

Therefore the Old Covenant has served its place in redemptive history and ushered in the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus Christ the God-man, who has powerfully broken into this Age bringing the necessary sacrificial work and active obedience to the Law to justify ungodly sinners and bring them into favor with God. Therefore the OLD Covenant is “obsolete” and has been replaced by the NEW Covenant. Christ has fulfilled the Law’s preceptive requirements in active obedience and has paid its penalties in His passive obedience at the cross, a fulfillment of the sacrificial system.

Galatians 4:3-5 - 3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. 4 But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. NASB

Colossians 2:13-14 - 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. NASB

Hebrews 7:18-19 - 18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. NASB

Hebrews 8:13 - 13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. NASB

On this basis the Ceremonial Law has been fulfilled in Christ’s person and work and abrogated. The Civil Law has been abrogated on the basis of the fact that God has now called people from within every race or ethnic nation, every class of people (rich, poor, slave, free), and no longer has a covenant community of peoples who live together under a societal structure of civil laws, but rather live under the new principal of the Law of Christ, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This New Covenant people are told to live in the love and forgiveness of Christ no matter what nation, community or society they find themselves in. See in this abrogation of the
Ceremonial and Civil Law the discontinuity between OLD and NEW. But realizing the Moral Law of God is an expression of His character and is a necessary guide into the knowledge of His will, and will always abide with us until all is fulfilled in the Messianic Age of salvation.

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. NASB

The Moral Law then, being an expression of God’s character, is the exhortation to our obedience, not as a rule or condition for salvation, but as a gracious response to what God has done in Christ to save us. The New Covenant is still a covenant with the element of obedience, whereby the truly redeemed covenant people of God express their obedience as a grateful response to God for His saving acts. However, now the believer is empowered by union with Christ through the Holy Spirit in order to achieve what we were powerless to do under the Law, because of the weakness of the flesh. And even though perfect obedience is still something beyond our grasp, God’s purpose now in our sanctification is being fulfilled according to His gracious work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we seek to glorify and enjoy Him all of our days. All of this we do, having all our sins cancelled and forgiven and the Law no longer looms over us with a guilty condemnation, but rather we live in the newness and freedom of forgiven sins.

Romans 8:1-4 - 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. NASB

This then, is the effectual and eternal blessing of the New Covenant we now live under because of God’s free grace to us, and because of Christ’s finished work.

Lutheran, Reformed, and Dispensational Views

Lutheran and Reformed Christians have long held distinctions between Law and Gospel as a fundamental element in their worship. They have taught that the Law continues to serve a vital purpose for both sinner and saint and that the Gospel frees any person from the condemnation of the Law and grants eternal salvation to those who believe. Both Lutheran and Reformed traditions have upheld that there are three uses of the Law in the New Covenant age.

Lutheran view – From the Lutheran Formula of Concord.

1. Curb - that “thereby outward discipline might be maintained against wild, disobedient men [and that wild and intractable men might be restrained, as though by certain bars]”
2. Mirror - that “men thereby may be led to the knowledge of their sins”
3. Guide - that “after they are regenerate...they might...have a fixed rule according to which they are to regulate and direct their whole life”

Reformed view - In his Institutes of the Christian Religion, the Reformer John Calvin likewise distinguished three uses in the Law. Calvin wrote: “That the whole matter may be made clearer, let us take a succinct view of the office and use of the Moral Law. Now this office and use seems to me to consist of three parts.”

1. Mirror - By “exhibiting the righteousness of God, — in other words, the righteousness which alone is acceptable to God, — it admonishes every one of his own unrighteousness, certiorates, convicts, and finally condemns him.”
2. **Curb** - It acts “by means of its fearful denunciations and the consequent dread of punishment, to curb those who, unless forced, have no regard for rectitude and justice.”

3. **Guide** – “The third use of the Law...has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already flourishes and reigns. ... For it is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what that will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this knowledge...”

**Dispensational view** – The Dispensational view of the Law has undergone a bit of revision from the Classic Dispensationalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, yet its basic precepts have remained in modern times under the common Progressive Dispensationalism of today. They see a more sharp division between the Old and New Covenants and there applications because these two covenants exist in two separate dispensations in God’s redemptive program. Therefore they would say that the Mosaic Law is NOT binding on Christians in any way because it was a covenant that God made specifically with Israel and therefore has now been replaced by the Law of Christ, which is defined specifically in the New Testament by commands given therein. Depending on which dispensational writer you read, you see some easing on this sharp distinction in how the Law is to be applied. Some would say specific commands are binding because they have been repeated in the New Testament, and others would say the Old Covenant is completely abrogated, but because God’s nature is fleshed out in the Moral Law, the moral portions of the Law bear a very consistent nature to the Law of Christ expressed in the New Testament.

It is apparent to me that even though these positions seem to be in contrast to one another, that the application of the Moral Law is effectively the same in all 3 views. In other words, the way that these different Christians apply the Moral Law is effectively the same. With respect to the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Law, all would agree that these have been abrogated, except for those sects of Christianity that try to maintain, in varying degree, certain aspects of the Ceremonial and Civil Law, such as Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Reconstructionists, and certain forms of Messianic Judaism. This is also true of non-Christian cults like the new Liberalism of the mainline denominations of the 19th-20th centuries (antinomianism), Armstrongism, and certain forms of Messianic Judaism. It is my opinion that these differences are easily reconciled and properly applied by the Reformed and Baptist confessions of the late 17th Century. These hold a balanced view and speak to a correct application of the whole of the Mosaic Law and the Old Covenant.

**Summary**
We have seen then that the Old Covenant is that covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai through Moses, and was served as a specific work of God in the course of redemptive history to accomplish certain things in the plan of God in order to establish a legal basis for judgment and justification, and to bring to light the knowledge of sin to the whole of humanity, and established a pattern for the true worship of God in the Priesthood, tabernacle/temple worship and ceremonial laws. Because of this we see that the Old Covenant was temporary and ineffectual in regard to salvation having fulfilled its place in redemptive history. This was all a preparatory, laying the groundwork for the New Covenant age of Messianic salvation which was a mystery under the Old Covenant but has now come in the person and work of Christ, and is both eternal and effectual having accomplished the salvation of all of God’s people of every age.
What Does the Bible Say?

Old Testament
The Law first appears in the Old Testament in the book of Exodus in chapter 20, after God had graciously delivered His people Israel from the bondage of slavery under Pharaoh, having destroyed the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. After feeding them manna, quail and water from the rock, God then meets with them at Sinai and gives them “the covenant” there. The Lord first delivers the Decalogue (10 Commandments) on two tablets of stone (Exodus 20), and then goes onto to give both Civil (Exodus 21-22) and Ceremonial Laws (Exodus 23-31) as the narrative history of the Exodus unfolds. The historical narrative continues through the books of Leviticus and Numbers in which God gives additional Civil and Ceremonial Laws throughout. Then the book of Deuteronomy is a summarizing of the whole of the Law, and a reaffirmation of the covenant, and the continuation of the historical narrative wherein the role of leadership is passed from Moses to Joshua.

The Old Covenant is contained in this section of the Old Testament, Exodus through Deuteronomy, and outlines God’s covenant with His chosen nation Israel. It is under this covenant that God will unfold the course of redemptive history all the way through the Old Testament narrative up until the time of the arrival of the Messiah and the New Covenant Age. Joshua through Esther give a historical narrative covering approximately 1000 years through the time of the Exile and return to Palestine under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. During that portion of history, the Wisdom and Poetry literature was written, as well as the major and minor Prophets were written at various times in the course of that historical narrative.

Here see that the Old Covenant was a specific covenant that God made with Israel, (and not the Church), that served its place in redemptive history to establish the basis for everything that God would accomplish in Christ and prepare the way for the New Covenant blessings that have now come in the Kingdom of God. It is important to see however, that the blessings of the Messianic Age of salvation were a mystery in the Old Testament period and not realized or fully understood by the people of that age. This accounts for the typological role of the Old Covenant worship which laid the necessary foundation for all that God has brought to pass in Christ, ushering in the Kingdom of God through Him.

Romans 16:25-27 - 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. NASB

Ephesians 3:4-7 - 4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, NASB

See then that New Testament outlines a view of the Old Covenant which sees it as temporary and preparatory in order to fully establish a basis for what God would do in the New Covenant Age of Messianic salvation. Although this is true, the Old Covenant is filled with tremendous revelation about God’s character and nature, his redemptive purposes in the world, a pattern for the true worship of God and requirements of worship based on God’s holy character. It is also filled with instructions about how mankind is to love one another and what that looks like
practically in a society through the Civil Law. It is a bright shining light that leads us to see the will of God for how He is to be worshipped and how we are to treat each other according to His holy character in this fallen world.

Texts and Contexts – Moses and the Prophets

The Making and Breaking of the Covenant
The Mosaic Covenant, or Old Covenant was made by God with Israel at Mount Sinai, 3 months after their deliverance and Exodus from Egypt, the tyrannical oppression of slavery under Pharaoh king of Egypt. After leading them through the desert, the Israelites come to Sinai and there God meets with them and makes a Covenant with them.

Exodus 19:1-8

19 In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. 2 When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. 3 And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 5 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." 7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. 8 And all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.

NASB

Here God mentions the “Covenant” He will make with the people, and they agree that they will keep it. One of the great purposes of the Old Covenant is mentioned here, that God desires to make Israel a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” so that they would be a people set apart unto God to reflect His holiness to the watching world. During a terrifying meeting with God at Sinai in Exodus 19:9-24, the Lord God Himself speaks the words of the Decalogue, the 10 Commandments, in Exodus 20:1-17. With the people in great fear at the thunder and lightning, fire and smoke from the presence of the Lord on the mountain, He further delivers and expands the Law in Exodus 20:22-23:19. Then in Exodus 23:20-33, the Lord gives a prophecy and direction for the Israelites to enter into the promised land of Canaan, and the conquest of the wicked Canaanites who lived there. All of this Conquest will be accomplished by a supernatural deliverance by God and at His sovereign direction and timing. All of these words are written down by Moses (Ex24:4, 7) who is given special privilege to go up on the mountain in the presence of the Lord. In this section of text, Exodus 20:1-23:33, the whole Law is summarized and in it Moral, Civil and Ceremonial precepts are given in summary form. This summary of the Covenant is later expanded on greatly in Exodus through Deuteronomy in many diverse ways.

After the Lord had spoken the words of the Covenant, He gathers Moses, the priests, and the elders of Israel together at the base of the mountain, and the people being present but farther away, with blood sacrifice for cleansing, He reads the whole “book of the Covenant” in the hearing of the people. Here the people formally hear the summary of the whole Covenant and agree to do as the Lord has spoken.

Exodus 24:7-8

7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" 8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." NASB
Here see that God made the Old Covenant with Israel at Sinai. And this He did so that Israel would be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" belonging to the Lord, as His own possession, a people set apart unto God to reflect His holiness to the watching world, both in their generation AND in the annals of recorded history (in the Bible), for all the generations of humanity to see.

It is worth noting here that Moses then goes up on the mountain for forty days and nights to receive the Law and the Covenant from God, during this time, God gives a portion of the Ceremonial Law in great detail which includes instruction on the forming of the Tabernacle and the Priesthood, along with the Sabbath instructions. The Sabbath is set forth here as the perpetual SIGN of the Covenant between God and Israel, which is for all their future generations.

Exodus 31:12-17 - 12 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 13 "But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. 14 Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. 16 So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' 17 "It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever;" NASB.

See here that the Sabbath is specifically set apart by God as a SIGN of the Old Covenant that He made specifically with Israel, and explains that this sign is specifically for them, and all there future generations, the physical ethnic line of Israelites. This is clearly set forth in Exodus 31:16-17 - “So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’ 17 "It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever;" NASB.

For an excellent and detailed study of this matter, see the study written by Greg Ferreri, “The Sabbath – Shadow and Substance,” published on the HCF website here; http://www.heritageabq.org/library/details/the_sabbath_shadow_and_substance/

This is followed by the tragic breaking of the Covenant by Israel just a few short days after these great events. As Moses is up on the mountain receiving the Decalogue on two stone tablets, written by the “finger of God” (Ex 31:18), Israel goes astray from God and breaks the Covenant by forging an idol of a golden calf and bowing down to worship it, calling it their god. This they did indulging in immorality and drunkenness, “pagan revelry OR rose up to play” in celebration of this god, which was really no god at all, but only an image formed by the art and craft of man. The words “rose up to play” (v-32:6) in Hebrew have sexual connotations, and verse 25 speaks of them being severely “out of control.”

Exodus 32:3-8 - 3 Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." 5 Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.” 6 So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. NASB.

See here the weakness of the flesh to uphold and obey the Law of God! Israel quickly broke the commandments and in a very overt and antagonistic way they even broke the first, second and
third commandments. At this the Lord was angry enough to wipe them off the face of the earth, but Moses successfully entreats God to forgive them, Exodus 32:7-14. Then as Moses heads down the mountain to admonish and correct the straying idolaters, carrying the two stone tablets of the Covenant, he throws them down in anger and breaks them in a symbolic act of significance. Here see that Israel was quick to “break the Covenant” that the Lord made with them, and along with the breaking of the tablets comes the destruction of the idol and false God they had made.

The Renewal of the Covenant
After a lengthy discourse with the Lord, they replace the stone tablets with new ones in a symbolic act of “renewing the Covenant.” This takes place in Exodus 34:1-28.

Exodus 34:27-28
27 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel," 28 So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments, NASB

At this time, God reaffirms His command for the Israelites to go up and conquer the land of Canaan, and commands the Israelites to move forward with the plans to erect the tabernacle and consecrate the Priests and implement the Ceremonial worship. From this time forward in the narrative, from the latter chapters of Exodus all the way through Deuteronomy, the Scripture traces Israel’s journey up to the east side of the Jordan, before entering into Canaan. Many more precepts and regulations for Ceremonial worship and civil government are given in the texts of Leviticus and Numbers, and then Deuteronomy is really a reiterating or repetition of the Law. In fact, the word Deuteronomy means, “repetition of the Law.” In Deuteronomy the Covenant of the Law is restated and clearly set forth.

Deuteronomy 26:16-19
16 “This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. 17 You have today declared the Lord to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. 18 And the Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; 19 and that He shall set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken.” NASB

This restating of the Covenant is to charge Israel from this generation forward to always obey the Lord and walk in His ways. All of this happens on the on the east side of the Jordan before they cross into Canaan. It is there where Moses dies and Joshua leads them into the promised land of Canaan.

Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil Law
As we have stated, the Bible nowhere deliberately makes distinctions in the different aspects of the Law, but rather the Law is seen as one whole body of precepts. Nevertheless, it is obvious from an overview of the Law, the Mosaic Covenant contained in the Torah, that there are three major categories of precepts addressing Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil aspects of God’s Covenant with Israel. These threefold precepts are:

- **Moral Law** - as summed up in the Decalogue, the 10 Commandments, Exodus 20:1-17
- **Ceremonial Law** - prescribing the ritual and all the typical (shadow) enactments associated with the Tabernacle and the Priesthood explaining how God was to be worshipped through Ceremony and Rite
• **Civil Law** – precepts relating to and governing the people in their national, political and social life for the purpose of establishing justice and order in their society

Since these distinctions are not deliberately pointed out, they simply serve as a way to understand and categorize the Law for purpose of study and close examination. Having already discussed this at length earlier in this study, we will only briefly look at some texts which bear these distinctions out, and discuss the general application of them.

**Moral Law – Eternal moral principles from an eternal and moral God**

The Moral Law outlines what God requires of His people who are to be “**holy**” and set apart unto Him. It gives specific guidelines about how Israel is to relate both to God and to their fellow man. All of these moral requirements are eternal moral principles and an expression of God’s nature in such a way that they define holiness in a practical way. As such it sets forth fundamental and universal moral principles.

- **Exodus 20:7 - 7** *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. NASB
- **Leviticus 19:1-4 - 19** Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. 3 'Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the Lord your God. 4 'Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the Lord your God. NASB
- **Exodus 22:20-24 - 20** "He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed. 21 And you shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. 23 If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; 24 and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. NASB

These laws would many times also set forth a punishment for the violation of them. These punishments, (which could range from a simple restitution or blood sacrifice to the death penalty), typically show the severity of the crime.

**Ceremonial Law - The Priesthood, Tabernacle and the Temple**

The Ceremonial Law put forth regulations for the worship of God which was to be a continual and perpetual tradition and formal custom among them from generation to generation. These were to be carried out at a Tabernacle, a “**tent of meeting**” where the people would meet with God. This Tabernacle was built according to specific instructions and ornate features and furniture that God had given instructions for the creation.

- **Exodus 25:1-9 - 25** Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. 3 And this is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, 4 blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, 5 rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, 6 oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 7 onyx stones and setting stones, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 8 And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. 9 According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it. NASB

In the Ceremonial Law God directed certain daily, weekly, monthly, and annual rites and ceremonies which were to be observed as a matter of ceremonial worship unto God. This was both for the glory and fame of God’s name and the good and well-being of the people.

- **Exodus 29:38-46 - 38** "Now **this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs each day, continuously.** 39 The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; 40 and there shall be one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a libation with one lamb. 41 And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it the same grain offering as the morning and the same libation, **for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the Lord.** 42 It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your
generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. 43 And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. 44 And I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. 45 And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. 46 And they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God. NASB

These were to be overseen and directed by the Levites, the sons of Levi (one of Jacob’s sons), whom God had set apart as priests. This Levitical Priesthood has special rights and privileges among Israel and also worked as a law enforcement and medical authority in many cases. Exodus 23:14-17 - 14 "Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. 15 You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. 16 Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field. 17 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God. NASB

These Ceremonial Laws we given by very specific and direct instructions from God, who appointed the ways and means of how He was to be worshipped. They even included dietary restrictions for God’s holy people. Thus these Ceremonial Laws touched every aspect of Israelite society. In them was a very beautiful and elaborate array of rites and practices which were to be seen as holy, solemn and carefully guarded and carried out by well trained and consecrated priests who were also appointed by God.

Civil Law – A wise rule from the wise God to govern His own people
The Civil Law includes those specific laws that regulate civil and social behavior. All such laws are fundamentally religious since God is the lawgiver and ruler over everything. These civil laws are scattered throughout the entire Law and provide for the well-being of the Israelite people by giving a very orderly and humane set of laws and guidelines for the public governance of their nation. There are eight distinct categories of civil law in the Old Testament: (1) laws regulating leaders, (2) laws regulating the army, (3) criminal laws, (4) laws dealing with crimes against property, (5) laws relating to humane treatment, (6) laws about personal and family rights, (7) laws about property rights, and (8) laws regulating other social behavior.

Exodus 22:1-5 - 22 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. 2 If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. 3 But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double. NASB

The Civil Law was very broad and touched every aspect of Israelite life. It was a just and righteous means to govern their public life and reflect the character of the holy God they worshipped.

Thus see in the whole of God’s Law a well ordered and upright society of people who were to be set apart and governed by God. God's people were to preserve and study God’s Law, revere His name, be grateful and thankful, and obey, love, and serve their redeemer God.

Deuteronomy 10:12-14 - 12 “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? 14 “Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. NASB
Deuterononomy 11:13-15 - 13 "And it shall come about, **if you listen obediently to my commandments** which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, 14 **that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil.** 15 And He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied. NASB

The Promise of a New Covenant
It is also worth noting that in the course of redemptive history and throughout the storyline of Scripture, that God had promised a future Messianic Age of salvation that would come upon the whole world, through His anointed One, the Messiah. These promises came through the Messianic prophecies contained in the Torah and also later, in the Poetry literature and in the Prophets.

**Genesis 3:15** - And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed;

**Genesis 12:3** - 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.** NASB

**Psalm 22:16-18** - 16 For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; **They pierced my hands and my feet.** 17 I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; 18 **They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.** NASB

**Isaiah 11:9** - 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, **For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea.** NASB

**Isaiah 53:5-6** - 5 But **He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.** 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; **But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.** NASB

Even though there are many Messianic prophecies will make direct reference to the coming Messiah, like the ones above, there are also many types and shadows which reflect His coming and His work. The Old Testament is filled with these typical prophecies. A few for example are;

- **Abraham** and God’s command to **sacrifice his son** on Mount Meriah (also called Mount Zion or Mt Calvary) is a type of God sacrificing His Son at that same place some 2000 yrs later and that place was called “on the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided”

- the life of **Joseph** is a type of Israel (Christ’s brothers) rejecting His God appointed authority over them only to find in the end that **God has highly exalted Him** above them and uses Him to save them in a time of desperate need

- **Moses the deliverer** of the people of God from slavery to the ruler of the world Pharaoh, is a type of Christ delivering God’s people from slavery to sin under Satan the god of this world

- The **blood of the Passover Lamb** on the doorpost of the household saving its inhabitants from the death angel is a type of Jesus our Passover Lamb saving us from spiritual and eternal death

The Old Testament is filled with this kind of imagery and shadows of all kinds of New Covenant realities. But what it all points to in “shadow” Christ and the New Covenant age are in **“substance.”** He has brought the promised age of Messianic Salvation. It is in the context of this coming Messianic salvation that God also promised a New Covenant with His people. Therefore, the reality of a New Covenant to come was only a matter of time, which has in fact come to fruition under Jesus the promised Messiah.

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** - 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "**when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.** 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, "declares the Lord. 33 "**But this is the covenant**
which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."' NASB

Ezekiel 11:19-20 - And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. NASB

Ezekiel 36:23-28 - 23 "And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. 24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 "And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God." NASB

It is worth noting that the character of this New Covenant is that its elements are fulfilled by God alone. It is “not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it" (Jer 31:32-33). God does a powerful regenerating work in the New Covenant that affects what it commands. God does this by “writing the law on the heart,” a reference to the new birth or regeneration of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. This is the power of the New Covenant, that is, that the Holy Spirit now raises us from our spiritually dead state (Eph 2:1-6), opening our spiritual eyes to our great need for a Savior showing us Christ as the provision that God has made to save us, and powerfully re-creates our nature (2 Cor 5:17) so that He even comes to live and dwell in us to work His ministry of sanctification (Rom 8:1-14) in order to glorify Christ in and through us. God says, “I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,” speaking of the work of regeneration. And the result is a new obedience that this brings about in our lives, “that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them” (Eze 11:19-20). This is even clearer in Eze 36:27; “And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” Here God says “I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” See here the powerful effect of the New Covenant power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

One might object at this point because in the context of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 11 & 36 the people who are promised this New Covenant are the people of Israel. This is clearly seen in…

Ezekiel 36:38 - “28 And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.” NASB

This is of course a valid objection, but is clearly answered by the fact of the “mystery” of Gentile salvation under the New Covenant which was “kept secret for long ages past but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith” (Rom 15:26).
Romans 16:25-27 - 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past. 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith. 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. NASB

As we have pointed out on page 14, this New Covenant unfolds in the course of history and in the New Testament as the “mystery of Christ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” This mystery of Christ is inclusive of all the Gentile nations.

Ephesians 3:4-6 - 4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, NASB

And even though the New Covenant is inclusive of the Gentile nations, it does in fact still include those in Israel who will believe in Christ, their promised Messiah, and receive the blessing of the New Covenant age, eternal salvation and union with Christ and God through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is the subject of Romans chapters 9-11 where Paul explains that God has current and future plans for the ethnic nation of Israel which He will fulfill in the course of history.

Romans 11:1-5 - 1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." 4 But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. NASB

Paul goes on to explain that even though the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah and brought swift destruction upon themselves, and that this brought the New Covenant blessings to the Gentiles, that God has a yet future day when He will again gather Israel together and supernaturally regenerate them and make them partakers of the New Covenant blessing and power, and “graft them back in” to the true covenant people. This he also calls a “mystery.”

Romans 11:23-26 - 23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? 25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and thus all Israel will be saved: just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” NASB

Of this future Israelite salvation, the prophets also testify in many places. It is said that Israel will be gathered back into the land from all the nations where they scattered and there God will supernaturally deliver them from hostile nations and settle together in the land, and there rule over them in peace and safety, according to the promises that he made to the forefathers. These promises are in the context of the New Covenant verses of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 & 37.

Ezekiel 36:24-26 - 24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you"; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. NASB
Revering and Loving the Law
We have seen that the Old Covenant Mosaic Law has been fulfilled in Christ and replaced by the New Covenant. The **Old Covenant has fulfilled its place in the history of redemption** and has laid the **necessary groundwork** for the Messiah to come and bring in the **New Covenant age of Messianic Salvation**. Moreover, we have acknowledged that the Law continues to fulfill some very important roles for us as a **curb, mirror, and guide** (pgs 12-13). Now in acknowledging these roles of the Law for us, let us understand and affirm that the Old Covenant Law is in fact the very words of God, along with all of the Old Testament, and it holds the **highest place** of reverence for us along with all of **the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments**. We are not to think that the Old Testament has somehow been relegated to a lesser place in our hearts and minds, but does in fact hold the highest place of reverence as it is in fact God’s very words, and a clear declaration for us of His character and nature, as well as a solid guide into His will and His ways and His plans for redemptive history. We simply must understand how to read and apply the Law, in light of the fact that the Messiah has come and fulfilled it and given much instruction, along with the Apostles, on how to rightly understand, interpret and apply it. This we are going to learn in further detail as we begin to look at the New Testament passages that deal with the Law in the coming weeks. But let us understand that the Law should uphold and support in our hearts as a mighty foundation, the very throne of the great King Jesus, and as such, should be the object of much of our attention and affection. It should serve as a bright and shining light in showing and teaching us about our holy God and His ways. Let us use it therefore, for the things that God intended it for. If the Law makes us conscious of sin, then let it therefore do its work. As we read it and meditate on it, let it make our sin manifest to us and convict us. Let it be that schoolmaster that continually reminds us of our great need for Christ.

**Romans 3:20** - **20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.** NASB

**Galatians 3:24** - **24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.** NASB

Of course the great good news is, as we read the Law and learn again of our sin, we rejoice in the greatness of the salvation of God in Christ which has delivered us from the terror of the Law and made us sons and daughters in God’s family, forgiven and blessed forever. The Law then motivates greater faith and gratitude, as we see its holy terrors and realize even more how blessed we are to be forgiven and adopted! We can then learn to love the Law, and the conviction it brings, as it will do its work in teaching who God is and in learning his ways. It should occupy, along with the prophets much of our love and affection. We can learn to delight in the conviction it brings, and even long to be conformed to its holy standard, even as our precious Lord was perfectly conformed to it.

**Psalm 1:2** - **2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.** NASB

The Law’s own testimony is that it is perfect and sure, giving wisdom and restoring the soul. Its precepts are right and bring joy even as its commandments are pure and give light to the eyes. It is clean and enduring, and its judgments are true and altogether righteous. Yes the Law is sweeter than honey and more desirable than fine gold.

**Psalm 19:7-10** - **7 The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.** NASB
It is not that the Law is able to save sinners, only Jesus can do that. But it surely can enlighten us and teach us about our glorious God and impart His wisdom and knowledge to us. This is what we love about the Law. We love how it shows us the holiness of God. We love the way it convicts us as if to drive the sin out of our hearts and minds as we learn what pleases and displeases our God and Father. We treasure the Law for these reasons and we therefore allow it to work its God intended good work in us!

Psalm 119:1-12 - 119 How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the Lord. 2 How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart. 3 They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways. 4 Thou hast ordained Thy precepts, That we should keep them diligently. 5 Oh that my ways may be established To keep Thy statutes! 6 Then I shall not be ashamed When I look upon all Thy commandments. 7 I shall give thanks to Thee with uprightness of heart, When I learn Thy righteous judgments. 8 I shall keep Thy statutes; Do not forsake me utterly! 9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word. 10 With all my heart I have sought Thee; Do not let me wander from Thy commandments. 11 Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee. 12 Blessed art Thou, O Lord; Teach me Thy statutes. NASB

The Lutheran Formula of Concord is absolutely right in when it says, “We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith” (Epitome 6.2). Preachers must preach the Law without embarrassment. Parents must insist on obedience to its moral aspects without shame. The Law can, and should, be urged upon true believers—not to condemn, but to correct and promote Christlikeness. Both the indicatives of Scripture and the imperatives are from God, for our good, and given in grace. You see then that there is much profit even for us born again New Covenant believers in reading and studying and preaching the Law. The Belgic Confession says about the law, “we continue to use the witnesses drawn from the law and prophets to confirm us in the gospel and to regulate our lives with full integrity for the glory of God, according to his will” (Art. 25) This is why Paul says…

Romans 3:31 - 31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. NASB

Through the moral aspects of the Law, we establish the goodness of God and the holiness of God in our hearts and minds so that we may learn of our shortcomings and sin, acknowledge the goodness of God and seek to conform to it. As we see God’s goodness, we long to be like Him as the Spirit creates this godly desire in us. As we see our sin, we loathe and hate it and long to put it off. But this leads us to deeper faith in Christ as we realize our utter inability to conform to it and therefore run for refuge to our Savior, who has covered and washed and atoned for all of our failures. We therefore rejoice in the great salvation that Christ is for us and this cycle sanctifies us in greater and greater measure as the Spirit slowly but surely changes us from glory to glory. This is exactly how Paul reasons in Romans 7 and 2 Corinthians 3.

Romans 7:12 - 12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Romans 7:14 -18 - 14 For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. NASB

Romans 7:22-25 - 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man. 23 But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. NASB

2 Corinthians 3:18 - 18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. NASB
It is important to make a distinction here between the moral and the ceremonial/civil aspects of the Law. When we speak about preaching the Law, we are speaking about bringing the moral aspects of the Law to bear upon the hearer’s conscience. We are talking about our conformity to the character and nature of God which is made manifest in the moral aspects of the Law. This is not to say that the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Law do not have any place in preaching or teaching us, surely they do. But they are not a system of legal obedience as a requirement to somehow please God. In the New Covenant age the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Law simply give us an understanding of the nature of God and the nature of the worship of God as it was expressed through the Old Covenant with Israel. But now something far greater has come in the person and work of Jesus that has fulfilled the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Law. This is the main point in the New Testament book of Hebrews chapters 1-10.

Therefore let us see that the Law surely does have a place in the life of a New Testament Christian. This is especially true of the moral aspects of the Law as a matter of obedience and pleasing God in response to the great salvation and forgiveness of sins that He has provided for us in Christ. Not only this, but even the New Testament is filled with imperatives that command us to behave in certain ways and to do certain things. It also forbids us from doing many things. These New Testament commands sound much like the moral commandments in the Law.  

Ephesians 4:25-32 - 25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger. 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. 28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 - 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. 

1 Peter 2:13-17 - 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. 

The Law then does have its place in our Christian Faith. But it should never be set forth as a system of legal achievement in order to be saved, but rather a grateful response to the salvation that God gives as a free gift in Christ. Salvation comes by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law, as a free gift from God, by His free grace, because of the merits of Christ. 

Romans 3:21-24 - 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 

Romans 3:28 – 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. 

Galatians 2:16 - 16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.
As we survey the texts of the New Testament, we see the Old Covenant Mosaic Law used many times and in many ways. Primary among these is the very way in which the Law is spoken of as being temporary and preparatory, having reached a point of fulfillment and thus now serving only as a basis and foundation for the Age of Messianic Salvation that has now come in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This new age is frequently referred to in the New Testament as the “Kingdom of God.” This temporary and preparatory nature of the Law is seen in clear statements by the Lord Jesus.

Matthew 11:13 - 13 "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. NASB
Luke 16:16-17 - 16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one is forcing his way into it.17 "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail. NASB

Jesus contrasted the Law with the “gospel of the Kingdom of God,” the new age that had now arrived, which was first preached by John, the forerunner of the Christ. Even though these two are held in contrast, Jesus still maintained that the Law could “not fail,” but rather explained that He came to fulfill it. He maintains therefore that what the Law has established is sound and true, and will remain until the consummation of the ages, but has now reached a time of fulfillment and ushered in a new age, an age He refers to as the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven. These two terms are synonymous in the Gospels.

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. NASB

Therefore as Jesus would speak about the Law, He continually held forth this idea that the what the moral aspects of the Law had established, was true and righteous and a standard by which we appraise what is good and evil, just and unjust. Nevertheless He would maintain that it had reached a time of fulfillment and that the religious leaders of His day had badly misunderstood it. At times, He had scathing words for them and would correct them and point them to the true meaning of the Law.

Matthew 23:23-24 - 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 24 "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! NASB

He would hold Himself out as a judge and interpreter of the very Law itself. As He did this, He would frequently show Himself to be the sum total of the Law and the very fulfillment of it Himself, and claim to be greater than the most revered objects in the Law such as the Temple.

Matthew 12:1-8 - 12 At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." 3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; 4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? 5 "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? 6 "But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. 7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. 8 "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." NASB

Even though the Law may condemn a woman caught in adultery in John chapter 8, Jesus could stand as a mediator between her and the condemnation of the Law and offer her forgiveness. And this He would do silencing the religious hypocrites who show themselves to be equally as sinful as the very woman whom they would condemn.
John 8:2-11 - 2 And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. 3 And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 6 And they were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground. 7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9 And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. 10 And straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" 11 And she said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more." NASB

We see in this a powerful picture of the transition that has come in redemptive history in the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ stands as a mediator between sinners and a holy God, the terror of the His Law and the wrath of God which it brings to all men because of sin, and offers forgiveness to the sinner. In Jesus Christ, who Himself is the living Word of God, grace and truth have arrived and been realized and this good news of forgiveness and eternal life is preached to all the nations. This is the testimony of the Gospel accounts. Jesus Himself is the very fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He was the Word of God now come in the very flesh.

John 1:14-18 - 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" 16 For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 18 No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. NASB

The Gospels paint the picture that Jesus Himself is the fulfillment of all that the Law and Prophets spoke of, and that now in Him a new age of Messianic Salvation had arrived. They testify to the fact that a massive transition in redemptive history has taken place in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who Himself is the fulfillment of the Law.

Luke 24:44-49 - 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 "You are witnesses of these things. 49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." NASB

Now even though Jesus portrayed Himself as the very fulfillment of the Law itself, He surely did not suggest that the Law was insufficient as a guide and mirror for us to learn of God and His ways and means. In fact He upheld the Law as our guide, teaching us to see in the Law and the Prophets both the nature of God and wise instruction for life which has come from God Himself. He would summarize the Law in brief statements that were profound and powerful, and then explain how this was in fact wisdom from God on how we should live, obey God and fulfill our purpose in life.

Matthew 7:12 - 12 "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." NASB

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And 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." NASB

It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus fully intended us in the Kingdom Age to see the Law and Prophets as a means of instruction and rule for life, informing us of God’s will and our duty towards Him and our neighbor.
In the book of Acts, the Apostles are clearly setting forth Jesus and the Gospel as the dawning of the new Messianic Age of salvation. They continually uphold and Jesus as the very Christ, and His resurrection as proof of God’s deliverance from death through Him, proclaiming that Jesus is in fact the only way to be forgiven and saved.

Acts 2:22-24 - 22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — 23 this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 "And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Acts 2:29-36 - 29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 "And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. 32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. 34 "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, 35 Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet. ’' 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified."

As a means of receiving this salvation, which was testified to by the Old Testament Scriptures, the Apostles implemented the ordinance we now know of in the church of baptism. They insisted that a repentant faith was the means of receiving the salvation of Christ, and that public baptism was the public profession and demonstration of one’s faith in Christ. Moreover, that upon exercising such repentant faith, that individuals would receive the promised Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the Old testament Prophets (Acts 2:17-21).

Acts 2:37-39 - 37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."

As they preached this Gospel, they were continually holding forth Jesus as the Christ, and the cross and the resurrection as the central focus of His work, and repentance and faith as the means of receiving this blessing of the Lord, in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Acts 3:13-21 - 13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. 16 "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. 17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you. 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time."

They were making a clear contrast between the old way of Judaism and the new Messianic way of salvation. In fact, they were reproving the Jewish leaders for putting their own Christ to death. In this reproof, they were still proclaiming that they could be forgiven and reconciled to God through Jesus the Christ, remaining as Jews, but surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. As they
proclaimed this message, they sure to make it clear that ONLY through Christ could this reconciliation and salvation from sin come.

Acts 4:5-12 - 5 And it came about on the next day, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. 7 And when they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. 12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." NASB

For this message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they were severely persecuted and even put to death. This clearly proves the nature of transition from the Old Covenant age, which was firmly resisted by the religious Jews, and the New Covenant age of salvation which had come in and through Christ. For this Gospel the Apostles and early Christians were willing to suffer and die.

Nevertheless, they continued to clarify and proclaim the Gospel and make clear the contrast between Old Covenant Judaism and New Covenant Christianity, or if you will, a contrast between Law and Gospel. In this contrast they clearly made the point that the Law could not “free” anyone, but the Gospel was the way of forgiveness, freedom and salvation. Notice here how the Law is seen as temporary and ineffectual, and the Gospel as eternal and effectual.

Acts 13:38-39 - 38 “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. NASB

As the Gospel of the Kingdom is unfolding in the transitional age between Judaism and Christianity, the debate over justification by faith alone is highlighted in a disagreement between Paul and the Judaizers. The central issue at stake in this debate was whether obedience to certain aspects of the Ceremonial Law were a legal requirement for salvation. This doctrinal issue is heard and judged by the Jewish Christian Apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

Acts 15:1-5 - 15 And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 4 And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." NASB

This controversy is highlighted and intensified by believing Pharisees in Jerusalem who also hold to the doctrine of the Judaizers, claiming obedience to certain aspects of the Ceremonial Law were a legal requirement for salvation. As the Apostles and elders heard the matter they clearly affirmed salvation by grace through faith in Christ, apart from obedience to the Law.

Acts 15:6-11 - 6 And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which
As they discuss the matter further, they not only affirm Gentile salvation apart from Jewish Law customs, they also affirm that the Old Testament Scriptures affirm that this day of Gentile salvation would arrive. They also give a short list of issues they deem important for Gentiles to observe in their new faith, which were a radical departure from the sinful Gentile culture.

Acts 15:12-21 - 12 And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 "And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it, 17 In order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' 18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old. 19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." NASB

See here a ruling by the Apostles and Jewish elders of the church on the controversy of what is essentially necessary for Christian Faith in regard to obedience to the Old Covenant Mosaic Law. It is of particular import here to see that the issue at hand, a ceremonial issue of circumcision, was in no way acknowledged by the Apostles as necessary, but rather they lay down a few brief maxims which were of particular importance in the debate at hand. Primarily, these issues of idolatry, fornication, and the eating of blood were rampant among the Gentiles to the point of being part of the sinful cultural lifestyle in the Greco-Roman world. Secondarily, these particular sins, being essential parts of the moral Law were of an offensive nature to the Jewish Christians living in these Gentile regions. Therefore, the Gentiles would minimize conflict with the Jewish Christian brothers by abstaining from these particular sins. More importantly, the Apostles uphold the import of obedience to the Moral Law as an expression of true saving faith, and require none of the Ceremonial or Civil aspects of the Law, which were abrogated in the Gospel.

Here then is a general summary of the Old Covenant Mosaic Law in the Gospels and Acts. The Law is seen as the true religious expression of the worship of God UNTIL the arrival of the Messiah whom it promised would come and restore all things. It is seen as the holy words of God Himself, the Scriptures, which expressed the true form of worship that God intended for His covenant people Israel, in all three aspects of its nature, Moral, Ceremonial and Civil. Jesus taught that He came both to fulfill and to interpret the Law, and usher in a New Covenant age of Messianic salvation which was to remain as God’s final and eternal purpose for the whole world of people, both Jew and Gentile alike. In this, His person and work ushered in the Kingdom of God, the radical in-breaking of the eschatological and eternal age of life and immortality. Therefore, His Person (King, Messiah, Savior) and His Work (substitutionary atonement and legal obedience), become not only the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets, but an entirely new and eternal form of worship focused on His Person and Work, which was received by grace, through faith, in Christ alone. This faith was then expressed practically in obedience to the moral precepts of the Law. Ceremony and ritual gave way to genuine and heartfelt conformity to God’s holy will, by a radical regeneration of the Holy Spirit. This eternal and effectual New Covenant age of Messianic salvation is ushered in by the preaching of the Gospel, in which the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, eternal life and immortality is proclaimed. The book of Acts bears out this exact pattern as the Apostles carry this good news of the Gospel to the Gentile nations.
As we survey the General Epistles, we find the Old Covenant Mosaic Law as a main topic of discussion in the book of Hebrews. Therein it is contrasted with the new age of Messianic salvation that has dawned in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, very much like we saw in the Gospels and Acts. Of this discussion in Hebrews Thomas Schreiner writes; “The author to the Hebrews engages a sustained argument against reverting to the Aaronic priesthood and the Levitical sacrificial cultus. He does not claim that the Mosaic Covenant was somehow a mistake from its inception. Instead, he hangs his argument on salvation-historical realities. Now that Christ has arrived as the Melkizedekian priest, a return to the Levitical priesthood would constitute a denial of Christ’s sacrifice. The Aaronic priesthood and the Old Testament sacrifices are not rejected wholesale, they are viewed typologically. The Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices pointed to and anticipated the sacrifice of Christ. They are shadows. He is the substance. The brute beasts offered in the Old Testament sacrifices cannot ultimately forgive, but Christ’s sacrifice is atoning since He is a willing and sinless victim. The repetition of Old Testament sacrifices reveals that they do not actually forgive sin, whereas the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ definitively and finally atones for sins.” These statements are clearly seen to be true in the text of Hebrews. The writer maintains that the Levitical priesthood was unable to atone for sins and looked forward typologically to Christ, His sacrifice, His priesthood, and to a New and better covenant at time later in history.

Hebrews 10:1-4 - 1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. NASB

Hebrews 10:9-12 - He takes away the first in order to establish the second. 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, NASB

Hebrews 9:8-10 - 8 The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing. 9 which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, 10 since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. NASB

Hebrews 9:11-16 - 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. NASB

Hebrews 8:6-7 - 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. NASB

Hebrews 8:13 - 13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. NASB

The writer maintains that when the priesthood changes, it also changed the law that governed it.
order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. NASB

The Melchizedekian priesthood succeeded the Levitical priesthood as the eternal and once-for-all mediation prescribed by God Himself.

Hebrews 7:23-28 - 23 And the former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, 24 but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. 25 Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. NASB

Therefore the Levitical Priesthood and the Ceremonial Law are seen as typological in a Redemptive-Historical sense. This is to say that they fit into a specific time period in redemptive history to be fulfilled at a later time and in a greater way. The Old gives way to the New and better plan of fulfillment that God has as the ages progress ever nearer to the consummation.

Hebrews 9:23-25 - 23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; NASB

Learn here then from the letter to the Hebrews, the clear abrogation of the Ceremonial Law, including the Levitical Priesthood, the temple sacrifices, the washings and consecrations and the other outward and ceremonial rites related to it. The Ceremonial aspects of the Law were only temporary and ineffectual. More than this, see that Christ is the actual long awaited substance of God’s ultimate plan in history that was only a shadow in the Mosaic Covenant. It was Christ who provided a perfect mediation between God and man as the divinely appointed High Priest, whose once-for-all sacrifice is effectual to atone for sins to the uttermost, and whose Priesthood is eternal, for “He ever lives to make intercession for us.” In Christ a New and better covenant has dawned which stands on better promises and provides complete atonement and eternal forgiveness for “those who draw near to worship God through Him.”

The letter by James, the brother of Jesus and a leader of the Jerusalem council of elders, does mention the Law, and has a significant discussion about it. James does draw significantly from the Old Testament to drive home his points as the recipients of his letter are clearly identified as Jews. Although this is true, we must understand that James never mentions the ceremonial Law, circumcision, the Sabbath or food laws. Instead he has a particular focus on obedience to the moral aspects of the Law and an emphasis on obedience to it. For example he maintains that if you violate one portion of the Law, you have transgressed the entire Law.

James 2:10-12 - 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. NASB

Therefore James exhorts his hearers to obedience to the moral aspects of the Law. He has a particular focus on partiality, a bridled tongue, godly wisdom, rich oppression of the poor, and the care of orphans and widows. See in these James clearly drawing from the moral principles contained in the Old Testament and applying them to our life as a guide for walking in and doing God’s will. In fact, this is the key to seeing how James views the Law. Apparently, He sees the Law as having been fulfilled in Christ, which has brought about a salvation of the soul, through the Gospel, “the word of truth” (v-1:18), and “the implanted word” (v-1:21). This “implanted”
“word of truth” is an obvious illusion to the promise of the New Covenant foreseen in the Prophets, and which has produced a new life and divinely inspired obedience for believers.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 - 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, "declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." NASB

Ezekiel 11:19-20 - 19 "And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. NASB

Ezekiel 36:25-27 - 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. NASB

Thus when James refers to the Law, he sees the Law as the fulfilled Law in Christ which has freed us from sin by regeneration and conversion, a Gospel reality that has now dawned in the age of the New Covenant. Therefore he does not minimize the Law but rather sees it as a guide and a mirror (1:23), clearly informing us of God’s will so that we are freed from the shackles of human sin in order to become doers of the Word and thus please God, be blessed by Him, and avoid sinning against Him (1:22-25). Thus James refers to the Law as the “Law of liberty.”

James 1:25 - 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed. NASB

Now all of this may seem as though James is exhorting us to obedience to the Law as if we were under the Law. However the discussion in James 2:14-26 clearly focuses on the life of faith, where James makes the point that the kind of faith that “saves,” is the true and genuine kind of faith that produces good works.

James 2:14-17 - 14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man 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. NASB

James emphasis on obedience to the Law and producing good works as a result of faith, is designed to drive home the point that obedience to God is an essential part of born again faith, and mere professors are in fact “merely hearers who delude themselves” (1:22). He speaks of a salvation by “faith” (2:14) and also a salvation by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, where he clearly testifies of an “implanted word” which “is able to save your souls.”

James 1:18 - 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. NASB

James 1:21 - 21Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. NASB

Therefore, James clearly sees the freedom that has come to us now in the Gospel, the “faith” that “saves” by an “implanted word of truth,” which produces a visible obedience. In this he exhorts us to continued obedience to the moral aspects of the Law. He sees this as the way of freedom from human sin and as freedom to obey by a newly empowered and born again life. We now obey the Law because God is empowering us, and this is the way of true freedom from the human shackles of sin.
In the epistles of 1 and 2 John there is a reference to the Law by way of the word “commandments.” John never mentions the ceremonial Law, circumcision, the Sabbath or food laws. Rather, John sees the commandments in terms of love for God and for neighbor. In this see that John exhorts obedience to the moral aspects of the Law, and sees the “commandments” as having been fulfilled in Christ as the new age of the Gospel has dawned, and the indwelling Spirit is a reality that allows us to “abide in Him.”

1 John 3:23-24 - 23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. 24 And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. NASB

See here that “believing in Jesus” and “loving one another,” are identified with each other. Consider how the second table of the Law is closely tied to the Gospel or believing in Jesus Christ. This emphasis on faith and love is a major theme in 1 and 2 John. Thus see that the “commandments” cannot be restricted to Old Testament “commandments” but are identified with the Gospel. Therefore, born again Spirit empowered faith that manifests itself in the obedience of love, is John’s theme, showing the heart of Christian life in the new gospel age.

1 John 4:7-8 - 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. NASB

1 John 4:13-14 - 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. NASB

1 John 4:20-21 - 20 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. NASB

Much like James, John explains that true saving faith manifests itself in obedient love for God and neighbor. Notice the two tables of the Law shining brightly here. But the Law here is empowered by the indwelling Spirit which is identified with the new Gospel age and faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. As John summarizes his letter in chapter 5, he connects these two themes of loving God and neighbor with being “born of God.”

1 John 5:1-3 - 1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

Then he clearly explains that being “born of God” is a direct result of “believing that Jesus is the Son of God,” which he identifies as “the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.”

1 John 5:4-5 - 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. 5 And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? NASB

See then the use of the Law in the General Epistles is much like its use in the Gospels and in Acts. The moral Law is seen as God’s eternal guide and mirror for us, but Jesus has brought a new Messianic age of life and immortality to light through the Gospel. The Ceremonial Law is seen as temporary and in contrast to the Person and Work of Christ, who is the fulfillment thereof, which has brought about a radical new born again age of faith. In this new Spirit empowered age, God has regenerated us and written the Law on our hearts. This has resulted in a faith towards Jesus the Christ. This faith is then expressed practically in loving obedience to God in the moral precepts of the Law, loving God and neighbor. Ceremony and ritual have given way to genuine and heartfelt conformity to God’s holy will, by a radical regeneration of the Holy Spirit. This is the eternal and effectual New Covenant age of Messianic salvation.
New Testament Texts and Contexts – Pauline Epistles

There is no other writer in the New Testament who clarifies the discussions of the Old Covenant Law in light of the New Covenant as does the Apostle Paul. Paul has much to say in regard to the Law being himself a zealous and studied rabbi and Pharisee. Having received the Gospel by personal revelation from the Lord Jesus Himself, Paul is well qualified to explain to us the most intricate details when it comes to distinctions between the Old and New Covenants and the nature of the Law in light of the Gospel.

Paul’s letter to the Romans is no doubt the most comprehensive New Testament treatment of the Law. In it Paul uses the word Law no less than 78 times. In chapter 1 Paul begins by telling us that “the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all those who believe” (v-16) and that all of humanity is under the just penalty of God’s wrath, (v-18), and this in spite of the fact that God has revealed Himself sufficiently to all mankind (v-20), and yet mankind persists in their rebellion against God and have thus come under the wrath of God and are “worthy of death,” (vs-22-32). In chapter 2 Paul lays out the fact that all of humanity will eventually face God in judgment, as “his Gospel declares” (v-16), both Jew and Gentiles alike, all of them will face God in judgment and are subject to both their consciences as well as the very Law of God (vs-12-29). In chapter 3 Paul explains the fact both Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin and judgment (v-9), that there is no one righteous in all the world (v-9-10), and that the “whole world will be accountable to God” for their deeds and that no one will be justified in the sight of God on the basis of their deeds, according to the Law (v-19-20). It is here where Paul begins to draw out a contrast between the Law and the Gospel.

Romans 3:19-20 - 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. NASB

Having clearly stated that all will be “accountable to God” and judged by God’s perfect standard in the Law, he clearly exposes the purpose of the Law in judgment is to reveal “the knowledge of sin” and provide a standard of judgment, against which no one will be able to stand.

Romans 3:21-23 - 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God NASB

The contrast between Law and Gospel is highlighted by Paul’s statement that the “righteousness of God has now been manifested apart from the Law.” In this he is no doubt referring to the Person and Work of Jesus being that “righteousness” that “has now been manifested.” See here then Paul extolling a “righteousness apart from the Law,” yet saying that this righteousness is “witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.” Paul is explaining that the Law itself testifies of a righteousness of God that is “apart from the Law.” Paul will go on here to describe this as the Person and Work of Christ which is a “gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” The contrast is further highlighted by his statement that this righteousness is made available “through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.” See here in these statements a contrast between the “works of the Law” (v-20) and “faith” (v-22).

Romans 3:24-26 - 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to
demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

It is here where Paul brings up the legal term “justified” and describes a justification which is by faith and provides the righteousness of God apart from the works of the Law. This justification is:

- A gift by grace
- It comes through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus
- Merited by a propitiation in His blood
- Laid hold of by faith in Jesus
- A demonstration of God’s righteousness
- Redemptive-Historical - Passed over sins previously committed under the Law, for righteousness in the present time

In this is seen the most profound and revealing contrast between the Old Covenant Law and the New Covenant Faith. Paul clearly has made the point thus far in Romans that people cannot be justified before God on the basis of the works of the Law, but rather the Law is what condemns and brings the knowledge of sin, being God’s perfect standard of righteousness that will convict the whole world. He therefore presents the only way of justification before God’s judgment which is the Gospel of salvation, by grace, through faith, in Christ alone.

Romans 3:27-30 - 27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. NASB

He further draws this contrast out, using the word law here as a principle and not referring to the Old Testament Law. This new “law of faith” is what brings justification in contrast to the “works of the Law.” Moreover, he makes it clear that circumcision is not the means of justification because God will also justify the uncircumcised by faith. This also ends the controversy of whether God requires circumcision for salvation, for here Paul states that faith in Jesus is that which justifies both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. See here in Romans the contrast between Law and Gospel is brought to a bright and clear conclusion. The Gospel brings a justification before God that the Law cannot provide. This comes by grace, through faith, in Christ alone. This idea is further expanded and nailed down by Paul in chapter 4 where Paul describes the nature of the works-faith contrast in the example of Abraham.

Romans 4:2-5 - 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? ”And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, NASB

Paul makes the point that Abraham was not justified by works, but was rather “reckoned righteous” by “believing God.” Paul denounces being justified by works and clearly re-states that God justifies by faith when he says, “but to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.”

Romans 4:13-16 - 13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; 15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. 16 For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, NASB
Here Paul has made the point that both Jew and Gentile alike are justified by grace alone and through faith alone. Because the Law can only “bring wrath,” God must justify by grace through faith “not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham.” See here then the circumcised and the uncircumcised can be justified in only one way which is apart from human works and comes only as a gift of grace to those who have faith in Christ. This is the meaning of the Law and Gospel contrast. The Gospel of the Person and Work of Christ brings justification and righteousness before God that the Law only exposes the need for and cannot provide since all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glorious judgment by the Law. It is by grace, through faith, in Christ alone that salvation from sin and righteousness before God can be attained.

Now to further the discussion and describe the role and purpose of the Law, Paul gives a brief sketch of redemptive history in regard to sin and death, Law and grace in Romans 5:12-21. It is here where he highlights the concept of sin entering the world through one man’s disobedience and spreading therefore to all humanity, and grace being a gift through the obedience of one man and spreading to those who receive it.

Romans 5:19-21 - 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. 20 And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. 21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

Here Paul clearly states that the purpose of the Law was to “increase transgression.” This is to say that through the definitive guidelines of the Law, sin has been clarified and shown to be exactly what it is, as we have seen “through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). It is here then that Paul highlights God’s purpose in redemptive history to bring a massive transition by grace through faith in Christ in order to conquer sin and death so that “grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is here where Paul shows the purpose of the Law and Grace by introducing two new contrasts. These of course are the Flesh-Spirit contrast and the Law-Spirit contrast. He does this by contrasting the effects of the Old and the New Covenant ages. He explains that we have died to sin by faith with Christ so that we can walk in newness of life. These are references to the effects of the NEW Gospel age we have entered, in contrast to OLD Law age we have been delivered from by grace.

Romans 6:4-14 - Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. NASB

Paul insists that since “our old self was crucified with Him,” that now we have become “alive from the dead” because we “are not under the Law, but under grace.” Because of this new Gospel reality Paul insists that we are to “consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” He therefore contrasts the OLD way of sin reigning in death with the NEW
way of being “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Therefore the Gospel has brought a “newness of life” (v-4), because we have “died with Christ” (v-8), and so we must “no longer let sin reign in our mortal body” (v-12), because “sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace” (v-14). See here the transition that has taken place in the Gospel which Paul describes as “not under law but under grace.” Now in chapter 7 & 8 of Romans Paul then furthers his discussion by showing that the Law reveals the struggle with “sin in our mortal body” by showing us the true nature of the flesh, our old crucified self, and driving us to faith in Christ, and the great dependence we have on the Gospel and the power that is brought to us by the Spirit. In this he contrasts the OLD way of being “bound” to the Law which bore “fruit for death” (v-5), with the NEW way of dying “to the Law” (v-4) and being “released from the Law” (v-6), so that we “bear fruit for God” (v-4), and “serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (v-6).

Romans 7:4-6 - 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. NASB

See again the contrast between the OLD and the NEW in that we were bound by the Law, “but now have been released from the Law” and this has brought about the “newness of the Spirit” in contrast to the “oldness of the letter.” See here Paul describing the OLD ineffectual way of the Law compared to the NEW effectual way of the Spirit. He explains that the Law’s purpose is to show us the holy nature of God and our utter inability to overcome sin because of the exceeding weakness of the flesh, so that the Law brings death and kills us (v-11).

Romans 7:10-11 - 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. NASB

In this he explains that the Law is “holy and righteous and good,” but because of the weakness of the flesh and indwelling sin, we are shown to be utterly sinful as we see ourselves in the mirror of the Law.

Romans 7:12-13 - 12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. 13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. NASB

Through the Law then, seeing the sin which is in us, he then explains the great war and struggle between the flesh and the Law of God in the inner man.

Romans 7:22-23 - 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. NASB

He shows that the Law can only bring despair and condemnation and we must have a deliverer from this bondage which in fact is provided in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this brings us to the good news of the Gospel and the victory that it brings through Christ and the Spirit. It is this discussion that Paul highlights in chapter 8.

Romans 8:1 - 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. NASB

Notice here the “therefore” of chapter 8 verse 1. Here Paul refers to the entire scope of all that he has explained thus far in Romans, and not just the immediate preceding verses. This is the crescendo of the symphony of Gospel truths that has been laid out before us, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Chapters 1 thru 3 layout the
condemnation of the whole world before God because of sin, and that sin is clear because of the holiness of God’s Law. And then in chapter 3 verse 21 and following Paul argues that “justification” has been affected by the manifestation of “the righteousness of God,” and that righteousness is a “gift by His grace,” because of the sacrifice of “Jesus Christ,” which is received “by faith.” Then in chapter 4 he makes the point that if righteousness is by believing and not by works, then the circumcised and the uncircumcised can be “justified” in only one way which is apart from human works and comes only as a gift of grace to those who have faith in Christ. This is the meaning of the Law and Gospel contrast. Then in chapter 5 he argues that in the same way that “sin entered the world through the disobedience of one man Adam,” and we have all sinned in the likeness of Adam, that all who are “in Christ” shall be “made righteous through the obedience of the One” man Jesus. Through Him “grace reigns” and brings “eternal life” in Christ. In chapter 6 Paul reasons therefore that the OLD self has “died with Christ” so that we now live in “newness of life,” for we are “not under Law but under grace,” and been given the free gift of eternal life, “for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And even though our mortal body with its imperfect sinful nature is still “weak” according to the perfect standard of the Law, and this causes a huge struggle for our sanctification between the Law and the weakness of the flesh, as chapter 7 exposes, we see in this our great need of the deliverer from sin and death, namely Jesus Christ the Savior. Here then Paul draws the great conclusion of all that has been said in Romans 8:1. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Charles Hodge explains, “Since men, being sinners, cannot be justified by works; since by the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ, the many are made righteous; and since through him, and not through the law, deliverance from the subjective power of sin is effected, therefore it follows that there is no condemnation to those who are in him.... Those who are in Christ are not just presently not condemned, but placed beyond the reach of condemnation permanently, they shall never be condemned, because Christ has procured for them eternal life, and they shall “never be separated from His love” chapter 8:39.” Paul then explains why it is that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ.

Romans 8:2-4 - 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. NASB

Paul now explains the great reality of the massive transition that has come in the Gospel age. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” That is the NEW principle in the Gospel of the justification and regeneration of “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” has delivered us from the OLD principle of sin resulting in death made crystal clear by the holy standard of the Law. Now here is good news, we have been “set free” from the “law of sin and death” by what Christ has already done. He explains the NEW and OLD contrast by saying that “what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” Because the flesh is so weak and cannot obey the Law which results in death, God cancelled out by “sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin” and thus He condemned and punished sin in Christ. This glorious work that Jesus has done already has resulted in a NEW effectual life principle, “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” And this new result shows forth the power of the Gospel that Jesus has accomplished in those who have been delivered by Him. Paul explains “in order that the
requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” The meaning here is that since the “requirement of the Law” has been fulfilled in Christ, and we have received Him by faith and are now under grace by the Spirit, the result is a sanctified life. Again Charles Hodge explains, “Sin was condemned in Christ, in order that the sentence of justification might be fulfilled, or carried into effect in us….The Gospel is not antinomian. Those that are justified are sanctified. Holiness is the fruit and evidence of reconciliation with God.”

See here Paul again describing the OLD ineffectual way of the Law compared to the NEW effectual way of the Spirit. And this is his purpose in all that follows in chapter 8. He labors to describe the NEW effectual way of the Spirit in contrast to the flesh. Those who have been delivered by Christ into this NEW life principle have their “minds set on the things of the Spirit,” and the result is “life and peace.” In contrast, those who are not in Christ have their “minds set on the flesh,” and they are “hostile toward God” and “not able to subject themselves to the Law of God, cannot please God,” and the result is “death.”

Romans 8:5-11 - 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. NASB

Even better, those who are in Christ have the indwelling presence of the Spirit and they are “alive because of righteousness.” And this state of being “alive” gives them the great hope of glorification, that is, that Christ will “give life to our mortal bodies through the Spirit.”

Romans 8:9-11 - 11 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. NASB

These Gospel promises were never heard of in the OLD Covenant age of the Law, but have now come to light in the NEW age of the Gospel. See here the effectual power of life in the Spirit, causing our progressive sanctification, and resulting in our glorification, the very resurrection of our mortal bodies. Life and immortality have come to us in the Gospel because of the great things that God has done in Christ. Paul then reasons if these indicatives of our NEW position in Christ are true, then we must see how this demands the imperative of our zealous obedience because of the newness of life that we live in, driven by the power of the indwelling Spirit. This he says is our “obligation,” to the Spirit and “not to the flesh.”

Romans 8:12-13 - 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. NASB

In the rest of chapter 8, Paul goes onto to describe some of the great promises we possess because of our eternal position in Christ. He says we are “sons led by the Spirit” (v-14), and that the Spirit helps and aids us in our struggle until we enter into glory (v-18-27), that “God causes all things to work together for our good because we have being foreknown, predestined, called and justified” (v-28-30), and all of this because “God is the One who justifies” us and will ultimately glorify us (v-30-34). Then He sums up chapter 8 with much assurance as He describes our eternal security in God’s love because of God’s eternal purpose to save us which He has already fully accomplished in Christ, and that nothing “will be able separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (v- 39).
In chapters 9 through 11 there is a discussion of the ethnic nation of Israel whom God had also chosen to be His covenant people through His unconditional election of them, and that He is perfectly free and just to do so (v-9:1-24). Paul uses this discussion to highlight the massive transition which has now come in the NEW covenant age. He labors to show that God has intended to save the Gentiles “by faith,” and that God has expanded His saving covenant to include the Gentiles, as He had promised in the Old Testament (v-9:22-29).

Romans 9:22-26 - 22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. 25 As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'" 26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, ' you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." NASB

Then there is a discussion about Israel and their failure to attain the righteousness of God because they did not pursue His righteousness according to faith, but rather by works.

Romans 9:30-10:4 - 30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." 1 Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

NASB

He shows the utter ineffectual way of seeking to be justified by the works of the Law as a “way of righteousness,” and explains that Christ has brought about a definitive transition in the plan of redemption by becoming the fulfillment and “end of the Law” and providing an effectual way of righteousness by faith in Him.

Romans 10:4 - 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. NASB

He explains that in this NEW way of righteousness in Christ, that God is concerned with the inner reality of faith “in your heart,” in contrast to an outward conformity to the Law by works, as Israel had tried to achieve (v-9:30-33).

Romans 10:8-13 - 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; 13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." NASB

He affirms then, that in this transition in history, that God is making no distinction between Jew and Gentile, but is in fact saving both Jew and Gentile through the preaching of the Gospel (v-10:14-17), and that He is still “calling” out His “elect” people as He always has “by grace” through faith, apart from works, highlighting the glory of His electing grace.

Romans 11:1-6 - 1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew..... 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. NASB

Because Israel, as a corporate group, was seeking to attain their own righteousness by the works of the Law instead of by faith, God has set them aside as a corporate group, in order to expand His saving grace to all the Gentile nations. This resulted in a “partial hardening of
See then that God has a **progressive purpose** through the course of redemptive history to bring about His own saving purposes. He gifted and called Israel in order to fulfill His purpose through the OLD covenant age with them, ushering in the Messiah through them, and through the Law and sacrificial system, to promise and fulfill Messianic salvation which has now blossomed and come to fulfillment through the Person and Work of Christ. In this, God has brought about the **NEW covenant age of Messianic salvation** in which He is saving both Jew and Gentile including people from every nation, and language, and tribe, and people, by the preaching of the Gospel. In fact in the course of redemptive history God has **“shut up all in disobedience,”** (that is all kinds of people…race, class, language, gender) from every nation, including Jew and Gentile, that He might **“show mercy to all”** (v-32). See then how God has planned the OLD to fill its functions and the NEW to be the **eternal** reality with the global purpose of salvation for men of every nation, and this to bring about a **NEW effectual** and powerful salvation that not only **saves** from sin, but **sanctifies** until it ultimately **glorifies** with eternal life and immortality.

It is important to point out here that even the **NEW covenant age** will progress through redemptive history and accomplish more purposes of God. Paul here speaks of the national salvation of the gifted and called people of Israel, and how they have received a **“partial hardening”** from God while He is at the business of saving the **“fullness of the Gentiles.”** This **“partial hardening”** happens **UNTIL** **“the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”** Paul reasons that they will be **“grafted back in”** (v-23-24), to the true vine of God’s saving people as a corporate group. The fact that Paul is referring to Israel as a corporate group in contrast to the Gentiles who are being saved is quite obvious from the language of the context where they are held in contrast with the **you-they, you-them, you-those** language of verses 11:11-32. In these verses the **“you”** is the Roman Gentiles to whom the letter is addressed and the **[they, them, those, their]** is the Jews who were **“cut off”** and **“partially hardened.”** See then Paul’s conclusion that **[they, them, those, their]**, whom he calls **“all Israel,”** will eventually be **“saved”** when the **“fullness of the Gentiles”** has come in. So God has a yet further purpose in the course of redemptive history to **save the whole corporate group of Jews**. He makes it very clear that this happens at the second coming of Christ in verses 26-27 when he says **"The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob."** 27 **"And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins. "** Learn here, that the corporate group of ethnic Israel will be saved at the second coming of Christ as a further purpose of God in redemptive history. Of course we know that this will be the time of fulfillment of all of God’s promises to ethnic Israel of land, seed, blessing and King/Kingdom that will be granted them in the Millennial Kingdom. Therefore the OLD and NEW contrast through redemptive history
comes to fulfillment in God’s purpose to save not only Gentiles from every nation, but also to save the entire corporate group of Israel as He has promised.

This concludes Paul’s treatment of the OLD and NEW contrast in Romans except for the application of the moral use of the Law and how we should understand and apply the Law as New Covenant Christians in Romans 13 and 14. We will treat this section of text below as we discuss Legalism, License and Liberty. Paul does bring up the OLD and NEW contrast in a few other sections of text which are important to note.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul mentions his own relation to the Law in the context of his evangelism efforts. He states “though not being myself under the law.” Of course Paul had stated this in Romans where we saw that we are “no longer under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Paul is here simply restating that he is freed from the Law and therefore free to live and interact in different cultural situations in order to benefit those whom he seeks to evangelize “win” for Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 - 19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. 20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. 23 And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it. NASB

He also here states “though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ.” Notice how even though Paul states in this passage that he is “not under the law,” he also here says that he is “not being without the law.” Paul maintains the fact that the law cannot bind him in any situation, it nevertheless serves to inform him continually of the will of God. He further adds though that he is bound “under the law of Christ.” This of course is a reference to the new commandment that Christ gave His disciples to “love one another” (John 13:34). Paul sees himself obligated to love others (Rom 13:8) and thus being “under the law of Christ” and fulfilling the Law’s ultimate goal.

Galatians 6:2 - 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. NASB
Romans 13:8 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. NASB

Paul has an extensive treatment of the Law in the book of Galatians. There he is writing to refute the Judaizers who were falsely teaching that one must be circumcised and keep certain Jewish customs on order to be saved. In chapter 2 Paul treats the doctrine of justification by faith alone in a very similar way to Romans chapter 3. Galatians 2:16 is one of the clearest statements of justification by faith in Holy Writ.

Galatians 2:16 - 16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. NASB

He goes on to make plain that he has in fact been convicted by the Law, and sought justification in Christ and therefore has begun a new life free from sin and living “to God.” This new life is a life empowered by union with Christ and lived “by faith in the Son of God.”

Galatians 2:17-21 - 17 “But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! 18 “For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for
me. 21 "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." NASB

Having been “crucified with Christ,” Paul shows that he is then in fact living by “the grace of God,” and by “faith in the Son of God,” and therefore in “righteousness,” (right standing with God) which has not come “through the Law;” but rather by grace through faith in Christ. This of course is the thrust of Paul’s whole argument in Galatians. He labors to show that righteousness does not come “through the law;” but rather “by faith” in Christ. In fact in chapter 3 he shows that seeking to be justified by the works of the law puts one “under a curse,” because the law demands perfect blameless obedience to which no one can conform.

**Galatians 3:5-10** - 5 Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 6 Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. 10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." NASB

Contrasting then “the works of the law” with “faith,” he explains that “no one is justified by the law,” but rather “the righteous man shall live by faith.” He explains that the “Law is not of faith,” because it will demand perfect obedience in order for one to “live by them.” Instead he maintains that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.” See yet again the Law being contrasted with faith, “the Law is not of faith.” What the Law could not do, God did (Rom 8:3) through Christ. Christ bore the “curse of the Law,” for us, that we might “receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

**Galatians 3:11-14** - 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith." 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" — 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. NASB

See here the great contrast of the OLD and NEW. The Law brings the “curse” of sin and death, but faith brings “the promise of the Spirit.” Paul then explains what the purpose of the Law was in the course of redemptive history.

**Galatians 3:19-21** - 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. NASB

See here “the Law was added because of transgressions” so that we could clearly see the nature of sin and how far short of righteousness we really fall, and further, that “righteousness” is not “based on the Law,” nor can it “impart life.”

**Galatians 3:22-25** - 22 But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed, 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. NASB

Therefore in the course of history, “the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Christ might be given to those who believe.” Before the “faith” of the New Covenant came, “we were kept in custody under the Law,” awaiting the freedom that would come in the “faith that was later to be revealed.” In this way then “the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.” And now that we have come to
Christ and been justified by “faith,” then “we are no longer under a tutor.” The Law then was temporary and intended to show the nature of our sin and our utter inability to be in right standing with God UNTIL, in the course of redemptive history, Christ would come and we could be justified by faith in Him, an eternal benefit. See here the OLD Covenant and NEW Covenant contrast in crystal clear terms.

Paul then has a lengthy discussion on how the Law is rightly understood and applied in this new age of faith in chapter 5. He urges the Galatians that returning to the Law to be justified would be “subject again to a yoke of slavery” and explains then that Christ has set us free from the constant and unending demand of the Law.

Galatians 5:1-2: 
It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you NASB

In verses 13-24 he shows that love is the fulfillment of the Law and that now believers are to live governed by love for one another. This he calls the “Law of Christ” in chapter 6:2. Effectively he explains that Christians are now “led by the Spirit” v-18 and therefore “not under the Law.” He sets out a contrast between the Spirit and the flesh, which are at enmity with each other, much like Romans 8:5-8. We therefore strive to “walk by the Spirit” and in love for one another and so fulfill the Law.

Galatians 5:13-24: 
13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. NASB

He explains then that walking in and being led by the Spirit truly, we bring forth “the fruit of the Spirit” (v-22-23) in contrast to the “deeds of the flesh” (v-19-21). This is in fact the reality of the true Christian life wherein all true Christians “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” See then the freedom of the Spirit that Christians now live under where being led by the Spirit we learn to fulfill the Law and love one another.

The OLD and NEW contrast is the main argument of chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians. There Paul is seeking to explain the ineffectual and temporary nature of the Old Covenant in contrast to the effectual and eternal nature of the New Covenant. In this discussion, he employs the contrast of letters written on “human hearts” opposed to the “stone tablets” of the Law, and also of the letter and Spirit. In these he negatively portrays the ineffectual “stone tablets” of the Law as a “ministry of death” v-7, and a “ministry of condemnation” v-9, and he positively portrays the effectual Spirit as a “ministry of righteousness” with a “glory that surpasses” v-10, “for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life” v-6. He contrasts the temporary nature of the Old which “fares away” with the eternal nature of the New that “remains” in verse 11.

2 Corinthians 3:2-11: 
2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. 4 And such confidence we have
through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, 8 how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. 10 For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

He continues negatively portraying the “reading of the old covenant” as a “veil that lies over their heart” that “remains unlifted,” which when one “turns to the Lord” is “removed in Christ,” and “taken away.” See here the ineffectual nature of the Old contrasted with the effectual nature of the New, which freedom one receives when he/she turns personally to Christ.

Paul makes a few specific statements in various other places about the effect of Christ and His Gospel on the Law which he says in 1 Corinthians is the power of sin.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 - 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

These kinds of statements are usually contrasting with the freedom and victory which God has given us in Christ through the Gospel. For example in Ephesians chapter 2 Christ is seen as “our peace” who has “abolished in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances.” See here that Christ has bridged the “enmity” between Jew and Gentile and become “our peace” and granted us both “access in one Spirit to the Father.”

Ephesians 2:14-19 - 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. NASB

Paul makes a similar statement in Colossians chapter 2 where he explains that although we were “dead in our transgressions and sins,” that God has “made us alive together with Him having forgiven us all our transgressions,” and this He has done by a powerful effectual work at the “cross” of Christ.

Colossians 2:13-14 - 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. NASB
See here that Paul has shown the ineffectual nature of the Law as it was “hostile to us” and was a “certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us” and he then has explained the effectual work of the Gospel in contrast to the Law. What negative enmity our transgressions were because of the Law, God has positively overcome by the Gospel “nailing them to the cross.”

Here then, in the Pauline corpus, we have seen the Apostle show a definitive contrast between the temporary and ineffectual nature of the OLD Covenant and the eternal and effectual nature of the NEW Covenant. Let us then see clearly how to understand and apply the Law as a New Covenant Christian, as a curb, mirror and guide for us, clearly showing the will of God for our lives. Let us therefore press on to our heavenward call in Christ by the effectual and glorious transforming power of the Spirit, because of the freedom that has been granted to us in Christ through the Gospel.

The Role of the Law for Christians

The Issues and Challenges
Well now that we have spent some time looking at the text of Scripture and understood the contrast between the Old Covenant Law and the New Covenant Gospel, let us consider what role then that the Law does in fact serve for us. If in fact the Christ has cancelled the debt of the Law for us, being the fulfillment of the sacrificial system and priesthood contained in the Law, do the moral commandments of the Law still bind us to strict obedience and make us vulnerable to threatening’s that the Law holds forth for disobedience? And if not, does the New Covenant then hold forth any requirement of obedience for us? And if so, then do we have a new set of laws that bind us to obedience, and is then not a legalistic system of righteousness before God?

Of course the answers are that we have entered into a state of grace wherein the debt of our sins, past, present and future has been cancelled and we have been set free from the principle of sin and death, because of Christ. Nevertheless, the grace that has come to us in the Gospel is not apart from imperatives to so live and act in such a way as to please God and seek to fulfill His will for our lives. In fact, the New Testament is filled with exhortations and imperatives to live in a manner worthy of the calling to grace and faith that we have received. The Gospel is not antinomian. No rather, in the midst of the complete forgiveness and wonderful promises that the Gospel holds forth for us [indicatives], are the instructions and directives that accompany living in grace and walking by the Spirit [imperatives]. We are exhorted to put off the old man of sin who was crucified with Christ, and to put on the new man who has been created in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:17-24 - 17 This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. NASB

Colossians 3:5-11 - 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.
8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him NASB

If then we have been set free from the legalistic demands of the Law and its threatening’s by the grace of the Gospel, then isn’t the New Testament imperatives yet a new system of legal bondage? Well of course the answer is by all means no, the Gospel sets us free. But it sets us free FROM sin, it does not set us free TO sin. Therefore, we live in the freedom and grace of forgiven sins because of the complete forgiveness and atonement that Christ has provided for us, and we having embraced this glorious truth by faith, are by this same faith motivated to pursue life of separation from sin in order to please God in every way. Because of the wonderful grace of forgiven sins that we have by faith in Christ, the wonderful loving union with Christ and the Father that we enjoy by the Spirit, and the hope of immortality in the age to come, we now by this same faith, hope and love, seek to do God’s will and please Him. In short the glory of grace motivates us to live for Christ.

**Indicative and Imperative**

In the Gospel, we have been justified by grace, through faith in Christ alone. This justification we could not have achieved by legal obedience to the Law. He has merited God’s favor for us, we have laid hold of it by faith, and Christ’s life, death and resurrection have sufficiently covered all of our sins and provided perfect righteousness for us. These are the indicatives which indicate the fullness of the grace that we now stand in. Nevertheless, in the Gospel we have been commanded by Christ to repent of our sins, to trust in Him fully for righteousness, and to go and sin no more, pursuing a life pleasing to God which expresses both love toward God and love toward our neighbor. These are the imperatives that are non-negotiable commands to both continually repent of sins and also to do good works. These things are BOTH true. We have been set free from legal obedience for justification and righteousness, and yet we have been commanded to live a life of love toward God and neighbor.

However, the imperatives are the fruit of having benefitted from the indicatives. They are the proper expression of the powerful grace of God that changes us into the ever increasing likeness of Christ. This is clearly taught in the New Testament.

**Titus 2:11-14**

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. NASB

Grace has appeared and brings us salvation, this is indicative. But notice that this grace “instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires” and to “live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age.” This is an imperative.

**2 Corinthians 6:18-7:1**

18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty. 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. NASB

God will be a father to us, and we will receive all the benefits of having the Almighty as our father. This is indicative. But Paul reasons, “having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” This is an imperative. This idea appears many places in the New Testament. If we have been given such great and precious promises, then our proper response is one of conformity to God’s will.
It is important then to understand that a right **balance** must be navigated continually between **indicative** and **imperative**. It is important to emphasize indicatives. The indicatives are the fuel and motivation for the imperatives. Kevin DeYoung comments on this; “We ought to positively glory in the indicatives of the gospel. The indicatives ought to fuel our following of the imperatives. Our obedience must be grounded in the gospel. Sanctification is empowered by faith in the promises of God. We need to be reminded of our justification often and throughout our Christian lives. Our pursuit of personal righteousness will not go anywhere without a conviction that we are already reckoned positionally righteous in Christ. So let’s be passionately and repetitively gripped by the gospel of free grace.”

But equally important is to insist on the imperatives that flow out of the indicatives. The **“grace of God instructs us to deny ungodliness.”** They go together and work for our sanctification. DeYoung comments further; “Imperatives must be rooted in indicatives. The question, however, is whether we betray the indicatives by insisting directly and explicitly for Christians to work hard at obeying the imperatives. No one denies that obedience to the imperatives is crucial. But can we demand obedience to those imperatives? Or is that falling back on law? The central question in this discussion is not just a matter of emphasis between the indicatives and imperatives, but whether emphasizing the indicatives accomplishes the goal of the imperatives without ever insisting upon them. Or to put it another way, is sanctification by faith alone in our justification by faith alone? I think not. The last thing I want is to be the guy who says “stop making the gospel so important.” I never want to encourage people to emphasize the gospel less. But it is possible to emphasize the gospel in a wrong way. The Reformed confessions understand that obedience to God’s commands—which we all want—is not accomplished merely by insisting on indicatives, but also by insisting directly and explicitly on the imperatives that flow from them.”

Let us see then that a healthy understanding of the grace of God in all of its promise and fullness is important and should be constantly emphasized in our Christian life. But equally important is the desire for God’s people to be holy and conform practically to God’s will and desire for our lives. This also then addresses the issue of the role of the Law for us. The Law is holy and good and rightly used when it is given to inform us of God’s will and also of His character. It helps us to understand who He is and what His purposes are for us in the world. DeYoung comments on this as well; **Let’s not be afraid to land on law—never as the means of meriting justification, but as the proper expression of having received it.**...The Lutheran Formula of Concord is absolutely right in when it says, “We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith” (Epitome 6.2). Preachers must preach the law without embarrassment. Parents must insist on obedience without shame. The law can, and should, be urged upon true believers—not to condemn, but to correct and promote Christlikeness. Both the indicatives of Scripture and the imperatives are from God, for our good, and given in grace.”

Hear then is an application of using the Law in its proper role now to inform us of the will of God that we might conform to it. The Law leads us to a knowledge of God’s will, as does the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. The Old is of course understood in light of the New, the
Law is interpreted from the perspective of the Gospel. It therefore has a glorious and sanctifying role of leading us to the knowledge of God’s will when **rightly understood and applied**. And so we then seek to understand what the will of the Lord is and have our minds renewed with this knowledge so that we might please Him in every way.

Romans 12:1-2 - I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And **do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.** NASB

Colossians 1:9-12 - For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. NASB

Ephesians 5:15-17 - Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, **but understand what the will of the Lord is**. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 - Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; NASB

See here that the New Testament explains that it is necessary for us to pursue an understanding of God’s will for our lives as He has commanded us in these passages. But it also explains that the **Old Testament Scriptures are given for our learning** as well. The word for “Scripture” in 2 Timothy 3:16 is [graphe 1124](https://www.blueletterbible.org/bible/?v=2th&v=16&t=graphe) and it means the Old Testament Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. NASB

2 Peter 1:19-21 - And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. NASB

To put this another way, the **New Testament prescribes that we use the Old Testament for teaching**, encouragement and correction in godliness. It was a common practice of the Apostles to refer to the Old Testament as a means of discerning God’s will and how it should be applied and understood.

Romans 15:3-4 - For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me." 4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. NASB

1 Corinthians 9:8-11 - I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? **Or does not the Law also say these things?** 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? 10 **Or is He speaking altogether for our sake?** Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the threshers to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. 11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? NASB
Notice that these passages are not merely typology pointing to some greater New Testament reality, but historical narratives of God’s dealings with His people teaching and warning us about His nature and applying it to us in a very similar way that it applied to them.

1 Corinthians 10:5-13 - Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. 6 Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. 7 And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. NASB

Notice Paul’s application from Israel’s wanderings in the desert to the Corinthians and also to us. “We should not crave evil things as they also craved and do not be idolaters, as some of them were.” Paul is not making nice suggestions for us to consider if we like, no indeed, he is giving strict instruction and warning to the church to abstain from lust and also from idolatry and immorality. He then reasons with indicatives explaining that “God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.” See here the Old Testament Law preached and applied to New Testament Christians by the Apostle Paul. Peter does something similar.

2 Peter 2:6-9 - 6 and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment. NASB

See here then the importance of understanding the Word of God, both Old and New Testaments so that we can rightly discern the will of the Lord and apply it to our lives so that we walk in a manner pleasing to Him. And this does in fact include imperative commandments that are repeated and applied to us of which God expects ready obedience from us. It is NOT legalism for the church to preach obedience to explicit commandments from Scripture, when rightly applied. Rather it is the duty of pastors and teachers to bring imperatives consistent with the Word to bear upon our lives and our consciences. However it is extremely important that these imperatives not be confused with the indicatives of the Gospel. Imperatives are now the proper expression of worship and godliness as a RESULT of our justification, and never a means to it. We are not saved by the works of the Law, or even obedience to New Testament commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone. He is Himself our righteousness before God. Therefore, the indicatives are where we rest by faith in the sovereign work of God through Christ and the Spirit for our righteousness and assurance of salvation. And the imperatives are the obedience which God fully expects of those of us He has called, saved and justified as an expression of the fact that we have indeed been saved and justified.

Colossians 3:12 - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience: NASB

Legalism, License and Christian Liberty

So how do we wade through the water of imperatives without it seeming like they somehow merit our justification or right standing with God? After all, they are imperatives, they are necessary and mandatory. And what is legalism and how do we avoid the trappings and snares of
religious hypocrisy and self-righteousness? And what about our sin as Christians, how does God see this? After all, we all sin rather frequently. Is it possible to be so libertine as to live in license and lose our justification? In order to answer these questions, let us first define a few terms.

**What is legalism?**
Legalism is anything we do or don’t do to earn favor with God that we or others insist or impress upon us. This can either be the favor of justification in salvation or a lesser form of favor in regard to God’s will for daily living and sanctification. It is a sinful way of either self-righteously exalting self or controlling and demeaning others.

**First** and in its worst abuse, legalism is the idea that one can be saved by the works of the Law. As we have seen in Romans 3:19-28, salvation come by grace, through faith, in Christ alone. No one can be justified in God’s sight by the works of the Law (Rom 3:20, Gal 2:16). This kind of legalism then is a violation of essential Christian orthodoxy. In this sense we speak about a dangerous and damning heresy concerning salvation. This is a destructive and Gospel denying form of legalism. It is the Galatian heresy of the Judiazers, the first century heretics who taught that one must be circumcised in order to please God and be saved. CJ Mahaney comments on this legalism… “Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God, justification before God, and acceptance by God, through our obedience to God. In other words, a legalist is anyone who behaves as if he or she can earn God’s approval and forgiveness through performance. At its heart legalism is self-atonement for the purpose of self-glorification and ultimately self-worship. Many of us (and I include myself here) can approach legalism casually. But legalism is serious and it is deadly.” We most certainly divide with any so called Christian who maintains this kind of doctrinal position and who will not be swayed when carefully shown the biblical basis for justification by grace, through faith, in Christ alone.

**Second,** legalism is the making of man-made religious rules or requirements that we or others expect and insist conformity to. This is a less lethal form of legalism, but still nonetheless destructive and sinful. It is usually a list of do’s and don’ts, or church traditions or rules that are even at times, unspoken or vague. This kind of legalism is how other people think we should live instead of how the Bible tells us to live, or at least how they think the Bible says we should live. This kind of legalism is also sinful and can cause Christians to live under huge burdens of guilt, create hurtful conflict between Christians, and cause many forms of resulting sins. It can also discourage unbelievers by misrepresenting true Christianity as it casts a dark shadow on the grace of the Gospel.

It can also become complicated when people use the Bible to support the man-made religious rules or requirements they have made, causing us to discern whether or not the Scriptures are being rightly applied. This is because we do desire to please God and live according to His clearly revealed will in the Bible, to maintain our holiness and sanctification and to please Him in every way. But the Bible tells us not to let others hypocritically judge us or put us under bondage, and to maintain and defend our freedom. It also tells us to be careful not to judge one another hypocritically and to exercise wisdom and grace as we serve one another in love. It exhorts us to bear with the failings of those who have weak faith, and to be careful not to offend our dear family in Christ out of a pure heart of love toward them. We will examine the Scriptures concerning these principles below in Romans 13 & 14, Colossians 2, and 1 Corinthians 8 & 10.
What is license or licentiousness?
License is an abuse of the free grace of God in order to indulge the sinful nature. Jerry Bridges comments… “It is the attitude that, since God’s grace is unconditional, I may live as I please; I may sin as much as I want because God will still love me and forgive me. That is license. It results from focusing exclusively on liberty and denigrating God’s Law.” This has historically been called cheap grace and also antinomianism meaning, “without the law, or against the law.” In its extreme form license is basically doing what is right in your own eyes, apart from any constraining influence of God’s Word, thinking that God’s grace, love and forgiveness is broad enough to cover all willful sin that one might commit. Of course the Bible emphatically rejects this kind of thinking and acting. Rather it implores us to pursue a life of separation from sin and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Romans 6:1-2 - 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? NASB

Romans 6:12-15 - 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! NASB

2 Corinthians 7:1 - 1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. NASB

This license of course comes in less lethal forms as well. Many Christians have an attitude of license in order to justify sinful behavior. They reason that they are “free in Christ” and have a rather loose sense of how this applies to their pursuit of holiness and separation. Or even worse, because they lack spiritual disciplines in their Christian walk, they have a very weak knowledge of God’s will and weak or even unholy influences from others and this causes them to live in ways that are largely displeasing to God and in varying degrees, rather sinful. This course is very destructive, provokes God’s fatherly discipline, and results in an ineffective, unproductive and a largely unsanctified Christian life. It taints the purity of our worship of God. It’s a miserable place to be. Of course the Bible warns against this as well.

Galatians 5:13 - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. NASB

1 Peter 2:16 - 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondservants of God. NASB

Many Christians are so weak in this regard, they do not even realize the low degree of biblical conformity that they are living in and are in desperate need of discipling and restoring influence from some godly Christians (Gal 6:1-2).

Liberty - Called to be free
There exists then the wonderful reality that we have been set free from sin and death by Christ, and yet at the same time our defining life purpose has become living in union with Christ and seeking to be like Him and please Him with our whole life and in every area of our life. We have been set free from the penalty of every sin we will ever commit and yet we press onto to live a life of separation from sin.

Galatians 5:1 - It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. NASB

Galatians 5:13 – 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. NASB
We must learn then to walk in the wisdom of the Word, empowered by the Spirit to live a fruitful life that pleases God. As a part of this, we must learn to **enjoy our freedom** while at the same time **being careful not to offend others** by practices that violate their conscience and also not allow the convictions of others to be our guiding influence, but rather we must be **guided by the Word of God**. Ultimately we seek to **please God, not men**. This does not mean we walk over others convictions, but that we do not let others put us under bondage with their convictions, but we allow the Word of God to define what our faith and practice shall be.

As Christians we are free to do what we will in life, provided that we do not transgress God’s clearly defined will in Scripture. We are free to enjoy God and all the good things in the world in every way, provided that we do not sin against God in our freedom. **We are free from sin but NOT free to sin.** This would be an abuse of the free grace of God. We are free to serve and obey God, not free to transgress Him. Suffice to say that there is **liberty to live how you will**, provided that you;

1) fulfill what Scripture requires or prescribes
2) do not violate what Scripture forbids.

It is important to **discern between** the first form of **heretical legalism** and the second less lethal form of legalism regarding **man-made religious rules**. When a dispute arises regarding the first form of **legalism regarding our justification** before God, this is a very **serious matter** that demands our diligent attention and unwavering commitment to Scripture to guide convictions in the matter. We must be willing to divide with so called Christians who demand that we must do some sort of religious work or duty in order to be justified, rather than simply trusting in Christ by faith to be justified and given blood bought eternal favor with God. Remember that Paul called down a curse on the works driven Judaizers of his day.

**Galatians 1:9** - 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. NASB

Salvation is based on Christ’s ability to justify us before God and solely on Him and His work, and NOT on anything that we do apart from a repentant faith to receive it. A wrong decision here could be a tragic mistake that leads you and your family down a very destructive road with many spiritual casualties.

When a dispute arises regarding **man-made religious rules** concerning how we worship or live the Christian life, there is much more latitude on how we can address these issues. In these matters we must be guided by wisdom and love for our family in Christ. For example, you may decide to conform to someone else’s desire in order to please them out of a sincere love and desire for peace in your relationship. This would be your prerogative to decide which way you will choose, but we must be guided by a sincere desire to love and serve one another being careful not to bite and devour one another with our judgments and convictions.

**Romans 14:19-21** - 19 So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. 20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. 21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. NASB

**1 Corinthians 8:13** - 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble. NASB

We will see that the Bible addresses these issues comprehensively in Romans 14 below, but we must be careful not to let others put us in bondage. We must at times, defend our freedom and “stand firm” in it, not allowing others convictions to define our faith, but be convinced in our
own mind what pleases God. While at the same time seeking to please God and be guided by the Word, we must take into account all the dynamics that go into a given situation, sincerely desiring to please our brother for his good.

Lastly, it is important to always keep the Gospel in focus when considering freedom issues. We must never forget the depth of sin and depravity from which we have been forgiven, and the debt that Christ paid for us which we could never have paid apart from eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. We must never forget the amazing love of God expressed to us through the self-sacrificing passion of Christ, and His sincere desire to pay the ultimate price for us because of His great love for us. Let this love of God in Christ be the motivation for our sincere desire to please God first, then others, insomuch as that is possible.

Christian Liberty and the Mosaic Law

It is imperative to remember as New Covenant Christians that the Old Covenant Mosaic Law has been fulfilled in Christ. The Old Covenant was a temporary covenant that God made with the ethnic nation of Israel at Sinai, and not with the church. It is through the Old Covenant that God has now brought about the amazing mystery of the Gospel through Jesus Christ, who was and is the fulfillment of every Old Covenant type and shadow, and the very substance of all that God has intended both for Israel and the church, whom He has now made one in Christ. God has now instituted a New Covenant which is not like the Old Covenant He made with Israel, whereby He is now calling out a people from every tribe and language and nation and people. He is not choosing people from only one ethnic background and not prescribing that they live in a given location with civil laws to govern, but rather is gathering a remnant of called and chosen people from every civil government and ethnic tribe across the entire globe. In this New Covenant He has prescribed for us a new and living way He is to be worshipped in the Spirit through Christ, and has granted the transforming power of regeneration by the Holy Spirit in order to write the Law upon our hearts and transform us in the inner man. This powerful transformation of the new creation in Christ also then molds and shapes us into His character and image as the Holy Spirit now continues to work sanctification in us, transforming us from glory to glory as we become like Jesus through the Word by the Spirit.

Therefore in regard to the Old Covenant Mosaic Law, we are not bound to keep either the Ceremonial or the Civil Law that God prescribed for Israel at Sinai. We do not serve in the “oldness of the letter,” but in the “newness of the Spirit.” Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament sacrifices and priesthood contained in the Law perfectly and completely. Christians have “died to the Law through the body of Christ” and have been “released from the Law” in order that we might “bear fruit for God” by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

As we discussed earlier in our lesson, this does not set us free from the moral aspects of the Law. The same God that commanded Israel to live in a morally appropriate way as they worshipped Him in the Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant, is also the same God that commands us Christians to live in a morally appropriate way as we worship Him in the New Covenant. Therefore we Christians are indeed bound by the moral aspects of the Law, a fact that is

Romans 7:4-6 - 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. NASB
clearly taught and implemented by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament. Therefore we Christians are free from the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Law. John MacArthur comments on this freedom; “It is crucial that you understand the nature of Christian liberty. As a Christian, you are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14). Freedom from the law certainly does not mean that the principles of righteousness revealed in the Old Testament law are now nullified. It does not mean that the Ten Commandments have no application to your present life. It does not mean that you can subjugate God’s holy standards to personal preference. It obviously does not mean you are free from any moral requirements. What does it mean? It means that Christians are not bound to observe Old Testament ritual. We don’t have to sacrifice animals, observe the laws of ceremonial cleanness, and celebrate all the new moons and feasts and sacrifices. We don’t have to follow the dietary laws given to Israel through Moses. We are free from all that.” Of course this freedom from Mosaic laws and rituals is clearly taught by Jesus and the Apostles. This is very obvious when it comes to the once for all sacrifice of Christ as our Passover lamb, and the fulfillment of the Priesthood by Christ. This is the comprehensive subject of the book of Hebrews. But what about the other issues of feasts, festivals and unclean foods? These rites are all part of the Ceremonial aspects of the Law which are all now fulfilled in Christ, and are not anywhere repeated in the New Testament as a requirement for godly living. Rather they are referred to by typology in the New Testament, and we are instructed not to allow others to judge us on the basis of conformity to these rites.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - 7 Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. NASB

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore let no one 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. NASB

In fact, some of the Ceremonial aspects of the Law are completely changed to reflect a whole new practice in the worship of God. As a brief example, look at the issue of unclean foods. Jesus clearly taught that all foods were clean. This was also taught and implemented by the Apostles.

Mark 7:18-23 - 18 And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? "(Thus He declared all foods clean.) 20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." NASB

Romans 14:14 - 14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. NASB

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore let no one 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. NASB

Hebrews 13:9-10 - 9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings: for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited. 10 We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. NASB

The statement and response given by the Apostles in response to the controversy over the Judaizers in Acts 15 is crystal clear testimony as to what the Apostles required of Gentile believers in regard to the entire Old Covenant Law. See pages 10-13, and 29-30 of this study for a more comprehensive discussion of this issue and passage. We see then that the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Old Covenant have been abrogated in the New Covenant age and fulfilled by Christ. We now live under grace (Rom 6:14) in regard to these and ruled by love (Rom 13 & 14).
The Conscience and Liberty
It is clear then that we are indeed seeking to live a life of separation from sin and live holy lives that are fully pleasing to God, guided by the Word and empowered by the Spirit, all of this living in the freedom that we have being under grace. But how then do we seek to maintain a purity of life and faith, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God, and yet navigate the many cultural practices and worldly enjoyments that Christians face in every era of time? How do we make decisions about things that the Bible is silent about? And how do we live and relate to one another in our local churches and among our Christian friends who may have different convictions than we do about certain traditions or cultural practices? After all, the paths we walk in our daily lives in our cultures in the world weave their way through minefields of sin and disgraceful practices. Especially in our media driven culture of the 21st century we face a massive set of challenges in regard to such matters as;

- **Leisure and Lifestyle issues** - smoking, drinking, gluttony, clothing & dress, piercings, tattoos, make-up & jewelry, women in workplace, birth control
- **Entertainment issues** - internet, movies, television, books, music, dancing, gambling, art
- **Church practice issues** - church denominations/traditions/affiliation, women in leadership, giving, Sabbath keeping, church attendance, second level separation

Indeed the issues we face can be daunting. Let us not lose heart as the New Testament clearly defines how we are to relate to our cultures and maintain the purity of our worship. We must learn to discern between what are clearly moral issues and amoral issues, and develop convictions that are pleasing to God based on a thorough contemplation of the Word. Many times there is a fine line between freedom and sin and we must be guided by Biblical principles in these areas being careful to maintain a pure life and not offend or grieve the Holy Spirit who lives in us and so defame the name of our glorious God or trample the grace of our loving Savior. Ultimately we seek to please God, not men, especially not ourselves in regard to sin, as self-denial is the way we follow the Master (Matt 16:24-25). We must have firm convictions developed from the Word that inform our consciences how to maintain the purity of our lives for we serve a holy God who is worthy of our complete devotion.

**Biblical principles of discernment on matters of liberty**
The New Testament gives clearly defined principles on how we are to relate to the world around us as well as relating to our Christian church family and friends. Romans 13, 14, and 15 gives some of the clearest instruction on the matters. Here we will do an exposition of these texts and gather some supporting verses from 1 Corinthians 6-8, Colossians 2, and a few others.

In **Romans 13:8-14** Paul establishes clear guidelines in view of the glorious Gospel of grace he has expounded throughout the book of Romans. Here he maintains that love is to be our guide in relation to pleasing God and others, and in doing this we actually fulfill the Law of God.

**Romans 13:8-10** - 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; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. NASB

**Galatians 5:13-24** - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one...
another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. NASB

He suggests that our eschatology ought to motivate us to godly living, and our union with Christ is a powerful antidote for victory over sin in our daily life.

Romans 13:11-14 - 11 And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. NASB

As we live out the Christian life, we will indeed run into issues of religious conviction and tradition which vary between Christians. Many of these issues arise simply from practical matters and do not have specific guidelines in Scripture that govern our practice. At times, even though there are sufficient guidelines in Scripture, some Christians hold certain convictions either from something they have been taught or practiced, or they have strong convictions about for one reason or another. Therefore it becomes incumbent upon us to develop convictions about these kinds of issues on the basis of principle, since there may not be very specific guidelines in Scripture, or for whatever reason we are unable to come to agreement with others and we want to be careful to preserve unity among us, insofar as it is possible. This no doubt then can and does cause situations where our beliefs and convictions clash with that of others Christians. What then shall we do? The section in Romans 14 deals with this very issue and Paul gives us principles by which to deal with these differing “opinions.” The words for “opinions” in Romans 14:1 is also translated as “disputable matters” or “disputations.” We must be careful to discern between issues of essential Christian orthodoxy and secondary or even tertiary issues. To be clear, these guidelines in Romans 14 deal more with less important issues of faith rather than essential issues as we do not sacrifice essential doctrinal issues for the sake of unity, but rather we must guard the essentials of the faith even if we stand as one man against the whole world (ex. Martin Luther).

Romans 14:1-4 - 1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2 One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Paul clearly admonishes Christians to accept one another in the case of disputes. He explains further that we are not to “accept” them “for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.” He explains further that we are not to “regard them with contempt” for holding convictions over issues like whether or not they eat meat or not. This is not the kind of issue that Christians should divide over according to Paul. Rather we should “accept” others and “not regard them with contempt” who have such convictions. The obvious reason for this Paul states, “for God has accepted him.” He then points out that God will receive such a person by faith and justify them, who then are we to judge the person God has approved? He makes the point that each individual Christian stands before God on their own, and their own faith is regarded by God as sufficient, for “the Lord is able to make them stand” on the basis of Christ’s merit. He continues with this theme, of unity, acceptance and judgment bringing up the issue of special or holy days such as the Sabbath. He then puts the two issues of holy days or eating meat or vegetables only on the same par with each other by lumping them together as issues by which we are to accept one another over.
Romans 14:5-6 - 5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. NASB

See here that Paul lays down the same principle as earlier, “let each man be fully convinced in his own mind,” again appealing to the fact that each person is accountable to God personally for their own convictions. This an imperative, that is, that Christians must develop convictions about worship and the Christian life in order to be fully pleasing to God. Paul commands, “let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.” But one cannot escape the fact that Paul brings up the keeping of certain holy days, like the Sabbath or a feast, as an example of a disputable matter and one over which we are not to judge each other but rather accept each other. This is a loud commentary on the issue of Sabbath keeping because Paul clearly accepts the fact that some Christians do not keep holy days at all and that is totally acceptable in his view. This is clear by the statement “one man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike, but let each one be fully convinced in his own mind.” See here that Paul gives full acceptance to the idea that some Christians do not regard any holy days, and this he says is perfectly acceptable in the sight of God. This is also a loud commentary on the fact that the 4th commandment must therefore be seen as an issue of ceremonial Law and not a moral issue, and therefore a secondary issue of which we are free to keep it or not. This is Paul’s teaching regarding this matter elsewhere in the New Testament as well.

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 Therefore let no one 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.

Paul clearly says again here in Colossians 2 that we are not to judge one another regarding the issue of the keeping of holy days or Sabbath keeping. But notice how, by commanding each Christian not to allow others to judge them about such matters. Again see God’s imperative for us to develop our own convictions and to be fully convinced before God and not come under the burden of other people’s convictions but rather see ourselves with direct accountability to God on disputable matters. Moreover, these statements clearly show the nature of the Old Covenant Law as having been abrogated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their ceremonial aspects like the keeping of holy days which were commanded as ceremonial imperatives in the OT Law. This of course is Paul’s teaching throughout the New Testament.

Galatians 6:13-15 - 13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. 14 But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. NASB

In these matters he clearly sets forth the fact that systems of legal obedience created by man-made religious rules, or even the reimplementation of OT ceremonial rituals are not regarded with apostolic authority but rather have no ability to impact the heart and Christian conscience because these legal rules set up false boundaries that “are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”

Colossians 2:18-23 - 18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. 20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using) — in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure,
He also taught in other places that such things as man-made rules or even any kind of amoral boundaries that we establish really have no true heart changing moral power because rules about things like the eating or not of certain foods, (for example because they have been sacrificed to an idol), do nothing to impact our real relationship before God because they are amoral and God is concerned with the matter of our heart before him regarding love toward Him and toward our neighbor. Things like food are amoral and really have no religious value, unless they cause us to be unloving toward our brother, something God is very concerned about.

1 Corinthians 8:4-13 - 4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. 7 However not all men have this knowledge: but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8 But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. 9 But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? 11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. 12 And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble. NASB

Notice then, that each one has his own conviction before God, and each of us is to respect him for it in regard to man-made religious rules or any kind of amoral issues. This respect we give by not judging harshly but rather accepting them in regard to their practice, and also being careful not to offend them by violation of their practice in their presence. Learn here, each man is accountable to God concerning his own Christian life, and we must be very careful about judging others in regard to man-made religious rules or any kind of amoral issues.

Romans 14:7-9 - 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. NASB

It is important at this point to mention that in regard to moral issues it is in fact very important for Christians to make judgments in our Christian relations. This is because moral issues are issues of sin and purity before God. We are in fact our brother’s keeper in regard to sin issues and commanded to bring judgment in the church (1 Cor 5:1-12), and even serious discipline in the church (Matt 18:15-20, 2 Thess 3:6-15), when a Christian brother lives in the continual practice of sin (1 John 3:4-10) and will not be persuaded to repentance (Gal 6:1-2). In this way, concerning moral issues, we are not only accountable to God, but also to the entire Christian church.

But concerning man-made religious rules and amoral issues, each person is accountable to God concerning his/her own Christian life, and we must be very careful about judging others in regard to man-made religious rules or any kind of amoral issues.

Romans 14:10-12 - 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.” 12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. NASB
See then how important it is to allow love toward God and neighbor (the summation of the Law), to be the **guiding principle** in Christian relations and practice, being careful not to offend others, yet holding our own convictions before God.

**Romans 14:13-18** - 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this — **not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.** 14 I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that **nothing is unclean in itself;** but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15 For if **because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love.** Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore **do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;** 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. NASB

Here Paul makes several key points. First, he restates the fact we are **“not to judge one another anymore”** about these kinds of issues, as he did in verse 1, 3, 4, 10. Second, he points out that instead judging, we should **“not put an obstacle or stumbling block in a brother’s way.”** By this he means, be careful not give a brother or sister cause to judge or condemn you by violating his personal convictions. This Paul says in verse 15 is **“walking according to love.”** Third, he points out that **“nothing is unclean in itself.”** By this he means that inanimate physical objects, like food and drink, are in and of themselves amoral, meaning it has no positive or negative moral value. He adds to the depth of this statement by saying that food and drink are not the nature of the **“kingdom of God” but rather “the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”** However, if you use your food or drink in an inappropriate way, it can become an unclean and moral issue. In this context and elsewhere Paul commands that we be **careful not to offend the convictions** of our weaker brother or sister by doing things that violate their personal convictions. This Paul calls sin and points out that it is unloving.

**1 Corinthians 8:8-9,12-13** - 8 But **food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.** 9 But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak…. 12 And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble. NASB

The point is clear. In regard to eating and drinking and other amoral issues, **have your own convictions** that clearly define your faith before God, allowing the clear teaching of Scripture to inform your convictions. But do not allow your convictions to bring hurtful offense to or disrupt peace between you and your Christian brother or sister. Paul restates this again to emphasize **how important it is not to cause your brother to stumble,** because this is surely an issue of moral importance to God, that we maintain **“peace, joy and righteousness”** in His kingdom.

**Romans 14:19-22** - 19 So then let us **pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.** 20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. 21 **It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.** NASB

Christians should also **“pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”** See here we are to be a person that builds others up, not tears them down. Let us judge ourselves by this wise rule.

**Romans 14:22-23** - 22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who **does not condemn himself in what he approves.** 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin.** NASB

Here, in verse 22, **“faith”** is used to mean the content of our entire doctrinal understanding of our relationship to God. Paul restates the importance of defining our faith with our own convictions before God. Then he makes another important point. We must be careful to have convictions that do not condemn us before God. This is clear from the statement **“Happy is he who does not condemn himself by what he approves.”** We understand from this that it is very important to have our convictions informed by the Word of God lest we define our practice by things that
violate God’s will and sin against Him. This is clear from this context when Paul explains that our Christian life practices are to always be motivated and defined by our faith because, “whatever is not from faith is sin.” This of course is true because the whole of our Christian life is lived out of and through the righteousness which comes by faith in Christ, which results in a healthy submission to His lordship, being careful to live pure and holy lives untainted by sin in our worship, practices, and lifestyle. Paul taught elsewhere that we should only do that which glorifies God and this of course is what the mind and heart of faith will always do.

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 - 31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. NASB

One more important fact to consider is that our Christian life can preach a loud sermon to unbelievers around us. We must therefore be careful how we walk before the unbelieving world so as not to bring unnecessary harm to our witness for the sake of the Gospel. This is why Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 10:33 “I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.” The principle then of not offending our brother also applies for our witness before the unbelievers. We must be careful not to do anything that casts doubt in the mind of unbelievers on the nature of our faith in regard to its ethical purity and moral quality as we are ambassadors of Christ who carry His message of reconciliation to the unbelieving world (2 Cor 5:18-20). Of course you cannot always please men, but insomuch as it is possible for us, we must strive for peace and for mutual edification toward all men, and especially those who believe.

Romans 15:1-7 - 1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me." ..... 7 Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. NASB

I think it is important at this point to say a few things about the kinds of moral and amoral issues we face in the 21st century as Christians, and how some of these principles from Romans 13-15 apply. Specifically, concerning things that can be moral or amoral depending on the nature of them. An example would be instrumental music. In and of itself it has no moral value. But when music has lyrical content, it can become, by degree, increasingly more or less moral. Lyrics which give glory to God by exalting the beauty of His creation are certainly positively moral, but lyrics which describe morally sinful or glorify sinful activity are clearly morally negative and sinful to indulge. It can be more difficult to discern between the content of other things related to entertainment such as art, TV, movies, and books. The difficulties are compounded by the fact that many times the motive of the heart can be the matter, and when issues are portrayed with all the impact of emotional drama, musical beauty, and the dynamic details of situational ethical matters, it can be very difficult to wade through and have firm convictions about these kinds of things. Moreover, other issues can be difficult to assess. Is it sinful to consume alcohol in any degree? Of course not, if so the Lord Jesus and the Apostles would be guilty of this sin. However, the Bible draws a clear line between the use of alcohol and the abuse of alcohol, which it describes as drunkenness. When one loses control of his faculties and no longer has self-control, he sins against God. Therefore substances that cause us to lose control of our faculties must be carefully controlled and their use restrained. The problem here is excess and
the abuse of substances. When an alcoholic beverage is used properly it is cause to give God glory and thanksgiving (Deut 14:26, Eccl 9:7), like Jesus at the last supper (John 22:17). Godly people in the Bible use alcohol in a way that glorifies God (John 2:6-11, 1 Cor 10:31, 1 Tim 5:23). But when it is used in excess, it becomes sinful, unwise, and dangerous to yourself and others. Drunkenness and gluttonous excess are seen in the Bible as ungodly and sinful (Prov 19:28, 23:20-21, 30-35, Isa 5:11-12, 22, 56:12).

Is it sinful to use tobacco? What about prescription medications, or what about the overeating of food to the point of an unhealthy physical body? The problem here again is excess and the abuse of substances, even food. In the case of tobacco and prescription medications (or any kind of chemical substance including alcohol, illegal drugs or legal drugs), they can be addictive and become a controlling substance. Not only do you begin to lose control of your own faculties and appetites when these are abused, but they begin to define your lifestyle and cause to plan your life around the use of these substances and they can become very damaging to yourself and others in many varied and diverse ways. The same can be said for the abuse or excess of food which can become like an addiction and become a controlling influence in your life. These kinds of controlling abuses are sinful because they in some degree (less or more depending on the abuse), take away from the Lordship of Christ and the dominating influence of the Holy Spirit in a Christian’s life. A Christian should exercise self-control and be in control of his or her own desires and appetites, and use their bodies to glorify and serve God. Self-control is a virtue which is to be sought and possessed by Christians, and a vice for which unbelievers are chided and warned in Scripture.

Acts 24:24-25 - 24 But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you." NASB

1 Corinthians 6:12-13 - 12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body. NASB

Galatians 5:22-24 - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. NASB

2 Peter 1:5-7 - 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. NASB

2 Timothy 3:1-5 - 1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. NASB

It is important when thinking through these issues and develop your own convictions to have very specific biblical support for your positions so that you are careful to glorify God and please Him in every way. As Paul had said in Romans 14:22, “happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”

Romans 14:22-23 - 22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin. NASB
Much more could be said about developing convictions that are informed by the Word of God. We can have many differing opinions when it comes to these matters, but the Word of God addresses many issues by way of principle and we should be convinced of our own convictions as we have seen.

Romans 14:5-6 - 5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind, 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. NASB

These things we do recognizing that our lives and bodies belong to the Lord, who alone is our judge, and to whom we have offered our lives in service to. After all, we have lost our own lives to follow Christ and for His sake.

Matthew 16:24-25 - 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me, 25 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it." NASB

We are his slaves and servants and our life and bodies are not our own, they belong to Him to do with as He desires. (Luke 17:5-10, Rom 6:17-19)

Romans 14:7-9 - 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. NASB

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. NASB

Let the principles of loving our neighbor and glorifying God be the motivation for all that we do.

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. NASB

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 - 31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. NASB

List of principles w-scripture proofs
Here then are few principles from this study that can help us in the use of our Christian liberty.

1) Love must be central in our motivation and the guiding principle (Rom 13:8-10, 15:1-3, Gal 5:13-24)

2) We are not to harshly judge, condemn or hold in contempt other Christians over amoral issues or disputable matters (Rom 14:1, 4, 10-13, 15:1-3, Col 2:16)

3) Each individual Christian stands before God on their own and is commanded to have their own personal convictions before God about their practice, and commanded not to let others be their judge or speak evil of their practices (Rom 14:1-11, Col 2:16-23)

4) Humility is a key element in Christian relations because we are all mutually accountable to God (Rom 14:4,10-12, 19-21, 1 Cor 8:13)

5) Be careful not to offend the convictions of others for this would be unloving (Rom 14:15, 1 Cor 8:9-13)

6) Whatever practice we do can be assessed by this rule; does it glorify God and is it consistent with love for our neighbor. (Rom 13:8-10, 14:15, Gal 5:13, 1 Cor 10:31)
We must learn then to walk in the wisdom of the Word, empowered by the Spirit to live a fruitful life that pleases God. As a part of this, we must learn to enjoy our freedom while at the same time being careful not to offend others by practices that violate their conscience and also not allow the convictions of others to be our guiding influence, but rather we must be guided by the Word of God. Ultimately we seek to please God, not men, especially not ourselves in regard to sin. This does not mean we walk over others convictions, but that we do not let others put us under bondage with their convictions, but we allow the Word of God to define what our faith and practice shall be.

**Elders** – the issue is not the movies, but what is the content of the movie and how/in what way is sin portrayed…. Is it glorified and presented in a deceptive way (like suggesting it has no consequences and is beneficial) or is it discouraged and seen as destructive. XXX movies are under no circumstances tolerable for obvious reasons…. What about movies that portray adultery etc…. above principle applies…

**Curb, mirror, guide**
Based on the above sections, how understand the third use? – Rom 13:11-14,

- The Third Use of the Law

**The Law in the Confessions & Catechisms**
- Westminster/London Baptist 1689/Belgic/Heidelberg

**From Heidelberg**

114 Q. But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?
A. No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience. Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments.

1 Eccles. 7:20; Rom. 7:14, 15; 1 Cor. 13:9; 1 John 1:8-10. 2 Ps. 1:1, 2; Rom. 7:22-25; Phil. 3:12-16.

115 Q. No one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly: why then does God want them preached so pointedly?
A. First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness. Second, so that, while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.

1 Ps. 32:5; Rom. 3:19-26; 7:7, 24, 25; 1 John 1:9. 2 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:1-3.

**A Simplified View**
- How a Christian should understand and apply the Law

**The Law of Love or the Law of Christ**
The **two tables of the Law** are summarized by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22…
Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And 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."

NASB

Thus, Jesus summarized "the whole Law and the Prophets," (terms referring to the entire Old Testament), under the two tables of the Law. To love God and love your neighbor was the Messiah’s interpretation of the entire Law and Prophets. This is a profound and simple commentary from God Himself on the meaning of the Old Testament Law. Christian, you will do well to memorize these verses and understand that the Law is fulfilled in and through God’s Love, expressed toward Him first, and then to our neighbor.

Romans 13:8-10 - 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; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

NASB

This idea then, is a helpful principle in understanding and applying the Law as a New Testament Christian. If it is not an expression of true biblical love, then it is most likely being misapplied. The general nature of the Law is love, because it is God’s Law, and His nature is love.

Contemporary Issues

- The New Perspective on Paul
- Should Christians keep the Sabbath?
- What about OT dietary laws?
- What about the Jewish feasts?
- Should Christians Tithe?
- What is the Law of Christ?
- The Law in Evangelism and Preaching
Glossary - Terms for Law and Grace

**Law** - The Law is most commonly used to speak of God’s moral standard by which He judges righteousness among mankind, both in people’s relationship to God and people’s relationship to neighbor, as outlined in the writings of Moses.

**Grace** – An attribute of God’s nature which is His merciful, patient and loving disposition. The Lord God is “merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth” (Ex 34:6). Therefore, grace is almost always associated with mercy, love, compassion, and patience as the source of help and with deliverance from distress. God’s grace is chiefly expressed in the person and work Jesus, God the Son, and His work to save ungodly sinners from His wrath toward them because of sin.

**Covenant** – An agreement between two people or two groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other. The concept of covenant between God and His people is one of the most important theological truths of the Bible. A covenant, in the biblical sense, implies much more than a contract or simple agreement. A contract always has an end date, while a covenant is a permanent arrangement. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986)

**Mosaic or Old Covenant** – The commands and regulations given to Israel by God, through Moses at Mount Sinai. It was an agreement between God and His holy people Israel, whom He set apart for Himself out of all the nations of the earth. These commands and regulations are contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

**New Covenant** – The covenant that God has now used to fulfill the old covenant which has been established upon the person and work of Christ. In the New Covenant, God powerfully works to save sinners by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit whereby they are given faith as a gracious gift from God. The believing sinner can be justified before God, adopted into His family. In this work, the believer is joined to Christ and indwelled by the Holy Spirit of God forever and moved by God to fulfill His law and serve Him by the power of the indwelling Spirit. This covenant also guarantees eternal life to it beneficiaries.

**Moral Law** – The strict moral code that God gave to govern the society of the Israelites, God’s chosen people. It is summarized in the Decalogue (10 Commandments). It was instructive, teaching them who to treat one another in a Theocracy (a society governed by God).

**Ceremonial Law** – The regulations contained in the Torah for how God was to be worshipped, through the means of a Priesthood, an altar for blood and grain sacrifices, performed at a Tabernacle. It also included the celebration of annual feasts and various rituals for various expressions of worship and devoted life.

**Civil Law** – The laws, both perceptive requirements as well as penal sanctions, that were meant to bring authoritative order to the entire Israelite assembly. This means that God, as Lawgiver and Judge, would command for people to do certain things (perceptive requirements), and NOT to do other certain things for which there were penalties which could be even as severe as death (penal sanctions). Therefore the governance of this Israelite society was seen as a matter of the
authority of God their ruler and King, under His holy Law as their Lawgiver, by which the people would be judged in His court as their Judge, implemented by the priesthood and the people.

**Pentateuch** – The first five books of the Bible all written by Moses. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

**Torah** – The Hebrew word for “law.” It signifies the writings of Moses in the Pentateuch. Many times it is used as a specific reference to the commands of the law of Moses as a whole.

**Continuity** – A term used to describe the similarities between the Old and New Covenants in the Bible. Some people see much similarity between the two. At the heart of the discussion is the question, “Were people in the Old Testament saved in the same way as people in the New Testament?” Many who hold the answer to be “yes” see continuity between the covenants.

**Discontinuity** - A term used to describe the differences and distinctions between the Old and New Covenants in the Bible. Some people see much discontinuity between the two. The extreme form of this view would hold that people in the Old Testament were saved in a completely different way than people under the New Covenant.

**Abrogated** - It is important to understand that the New Covenant has now come and as a result, the Old Covenant has been abrogated. This is to say that it has been annulled, replaced and fulfilled so that its purpose as a covenant with God’s people Israel, has come to its fulfillment in the person and work of Christ, who is the fulfillment of all that the Old Covenant typed and shadowed, and is Himself the reality and substance of all that is represented.
Law and Grace
Distinctions between the Old and New

What is the Law?
Definition and Terminology
- Continuity and Discontinuity
- Lutheran, Reformed, and Dispensational Views

What Does the Bible Say?
Old Testament
- Texts and Contexts – Moses and the Prophets
- Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil Law
- Moral Law and God’s Nature
New Testament
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The Role of the Law for Christians
The Issues and Challenges

The Law in the Confessions
- Westminster/London Baptist 1689/Belgic/Heidelberg

A Simplified View
- How a Christian should understand and apply the Law
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- The New Perspective on Paul
- Should Christians keep the Sabbath?
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- What is the Law of Christ?
- The Law in Evangelism and Preaching
Abrogation - to cancel or revoke formally or officially; repeal; annul

The Law is to be feared
The Law is to be honored

Liberty in Christ
Tuesday, September 06, 2011

It is crucial that you understand the nature of Christian liberty. As a Christian, you are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14). Freedom from the law certainly does not mean that the principles of righteousness revealed in the Old Testament law are now nullified. It does not mean that the Ten Commandments have no application to your present life. It does not mean that you can subjugate God’s holy standards to personal preference. It obviously does not mean you are free from any moral requirements.

What does it mean? It means that Christians are not bound to observe Old Testament ritual. We don’t have to sacrifice animals, observe the laws of ceremonial cleanness, and celebrate all the new moons and feasts and sacrifices. We don’t have to follow the dietary laws given to Israel through Moses. We are free from all that.

Likewise, obviously, we are free from all Gentile religious ceremony and superstition. Whatever our religious background or heritage, in Christ we are free from all the trappings of it. We now live by God’s grace, which has the principle of true righteousness built in.

In other words, our spiritual lives are governed not merely by an external code, but by God’s grace, which operates in us to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (Rom. 8:4).

Grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:12). And grace empowers us to live holy lives.

This tremendous liberty is one of the most remarkable aspects of the Christian life. We have no need to yield to custom or ceremony or human opinion. There are no earthly priests to intercede between us and God: “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man
Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). We don’t need to make a pilgrimage to a temple somewhere to worship; our very bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). We can worship God in spirit and in truth anytime, anyplace (John 4:23, 24). Whatever we ask in Jesus’ name He will do (John 14:13, 14). The Holy Spirit is given to us as our advocate and comforter (vv. 16, 26). All things belong to us, and we are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s (1 Cor. 3:21–23).

A Rejoinder on Sanctification and the Gospel
POSTED BY SEAN LUCAS
If we can recognize that the other “side” holds a legitimate perspective in the Reformed tradition that is largely a matter of emphasis, then we can approach each other with love, respect, and gratitude. We can avoid lumping them into pejorative groups (legalist, neo-nomian, antinomian, cheap grace, moralist), and we can recognize the temptation in our own approach that might lead us to become “imbalanced”—either by overemphasizing indicative to such a point that we fail to say what the Bible says in Colossians 3:5-17; or by overemphasizing the imperative to such a point that we fail to say what the Bible says in Colossians 3:1-4.

Sanctification and the Nature of the Gospel
POSTED BY WILLIAM B. EVANS
The fact of the matter is that the heart of the gospel is not justification. Nor is it sanctification. It is Jesus Christ himself, who is "our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). The Apostle Paul came preaching "Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23) and more often than not he directed Christians, not to their own justification, but to the crucified and risen Christ in whom they are both justified and sanctified. The gospel involves freedom from both the penalty and the power of sin, and the latter is not simply to be collapsed into the former. Only when we begin with Christ and our spiritual union with him will we give both justification and sanctification their proper due.

1. Our Lutheran brothers remind us – rightly, I think – that the Law always accuses. Even as we discuss the third use of the Law, and the necessity of good works, the fact remains that we are sinners (and saints) – and the Law (including the NT imperatives) will continue to show us our sin. I think Romans 7:12-8:4 has to be central in this discussion. Paul affirms that the Law is holy, just, and good – that he delights in the Law according to the inward man. Yet that same Law reveals his remaining sin, drives him to near despair – and then it drives him back to the sweet comfort of the Gospel (8:1-4).

What does this mean practically? I think it means that we should never preach the imperatives of the Law apart from the indicatives of the Gospel. We should follow the apostolic example of always grounding the imperatives in the indicatives of grace, e.g., “And walk in love [imperative], as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us [sweet Gospel indicative]...” (Eph 5:2).

The Reformed confessions also recognize that the Law continues to expose our sin as Christians – even as we strive to obey it – and should drive us back to the Gospel (i.e., HC 114 & 115, WSC 82, 84, & 85, WCF 19.6, etc).
In short, a well-intentioned pastor may intend only to speak the “third use” at a given moment, yet the Law is such that it will continue to expose the sinful failures of the hearers. If Christ is not preached along with those imperatives, some will despair of their failures while others may deceive themselves into thinking “I have kept all these things since my youth” (Lk 18:21).

- Rosenthal, Shane Law & Gospel.
- Using the Third Use: Formula of Concord VI and the Preacher's Task
- Scholarly articles on Law and Gospel from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library

Reformed (Calvinist)

- "Law and Grace", sermon by C. H. Spurgeon
- "God's Law in Man's Heart", sermon by C. H. Spurgeon
- "Law and Grace" by John Murray
- "Law and Gospel", by John Frame
- "Calvin & The Law-Gospel Hermeneutic" by Michael Horton
- "What's Really at Stake?", by Michael Horton
- "Calvin's Third Use of the Law: An Assessment of Reformed Explications of the Ten Commandments" by John Burgess in PDF
- "Michael Horton, John Calvin, and 'Law & Gospel'", by Bill DeJong
- "Mixing 'Law' and Gospel in the Abrahamic Promise", by Mark Horne
- Law and Liberty, Law and Gospel extensive link list at monergism.com
Defining Terms for Law and Grace

**Defining terms**

**Covenant** – The (Acts 2:17, Jam 5:3, 2 Pet 3:3)

**The Law** –

**Redemptive-Historical** – The Second Coming of Christ from the gk. *Parousia*

**Historical-Grammatical** –

**Eschatological** –

**Salvation history** –

**Nomism** –

**Antinomianism** –

**Continuity** –

**Discontinuity** –
Glorying in Indicatives and Insisting on Imperatives

You may have seen Bill Evan’s recap and analysis of the sanctification discussion I’ve been a part over the past months. It’s a helpful summary and raises a number of good points. Later, on the same Ref21 site, Sean Lucas posted a friendly rejoinder. Without necessarily dissenting from Evans, Lucas argues that much of this discussion boils down to a matter of emphasis. This is the paragraph from Lucas that Justin Taylor highlighted on his blog:

I mention all of this to simply say: this is a historical disagreement. It is not recent, not the result of misbegotten, misspent fundamentalist childhoods, not the offshoot of strange Lutheran strains in a pure Reformed stock. I tend to think that the differences are simply matters of emphasis: some lead with imperatives and others lead with indicatives; but both sides hold the indicative-imperative relationship together. If we can recognize that the other “side” holds a legitimate perspective in the Reformed tradition that is largely a matter of emphasis, then we can approach each other with love, respect, and gratitude. We can avoid lumping them into pejorative groups (legalist, neo-nomian, antinomian, cheap grace, moralist), and we can recognize the temptation in our own approach that might lead us to become “imbalanced”—either by overemphasizing indicative to such a point that we fail to say what the Bible says in Colossians 3:5-17; or by overemphasizing the imperative to such a point that we fail to say what the Bible says in Colossians 3:1-4.

That’s a good paragraph. I agree that there is historical disagreement on some of these matters. The Reformed tradition does not always speak with one voice. I also commend Lucas’ exhortation to avoid “lumping” and employing pejorative labels. Finally, I’m sure Lucas is right that part of this debate comes down to a matter of emphasis.

But I’m not sure it’s only a matter of emphasis.

I have no problem with Christians emphasizing the indicatives. I often do. In fact, let me say this as plainly as possible: we ought to positively glory in the indicatives of the gospel. The indicatives ought to fuel our following of the imperatives. Our obedience must be grounded in the gospel. Sanctification is empowered by faith in the promises of God. We need to be reminded of our justification often and throughout our Christian lives. Our pursuit of personal righteousness will not go anywhere without a conviction that we are already reckoned positionally righteous in Christ. So let’s be passionately and repetitively gripped by the gospel of free grace.

I have no problem with that emphasis. Actually, I love it. But my question is whether we can emphasize all the glorious indicatives of Scripture and still insist on obedience to the imperatives. The phrase “insist on obedience” is key. I know that all my friends in this sanctification discussion believe obeying the imperatives is crucial. I know they want Christians to be holy. I don’t doubt for a moment that they think the imperatives of Scripture are really, really important. What I’m not clear on is whether my brothers and sisters in this debate believe we can explicitly and directly insist on obedience to those imperatives.

I’m not sure the issue is just emphasizing one or the other—indicatives or imperatives. There are at least two other issues at play.

1. Should Christians be exhorted to make an effort to obey the commands of Scripture or is the only appropriate exertion the effort to believe more fully the promises of God?
2. Should Christians be exhorted to obey the imperatives or does sanctification so invariably flow from justification that the way to get obedience is *always and only* to bring people back to the gospel?

I think everyone agrees that justification fuels our sanctification (see Rick Phillips’ post for an excellent summary of the differences between the two). Imperatives must be rooted in indicatives. The question, however, is whether we betray the indicatives by insisting directly and explicitly for Christians to work hard at obeying the imperatives. No one denies that obedience to the imperatives is crucial. But can we demand obedience to those imperatives? Or is that falling back on law? The central question in this discussion is not just a matter of emphasis between the indicatives and imperatives, but whether emphasizing the indicatives accomplishes the goal of the imperatives without ever insisting upon them. Or to put it another way, is sanctification by faith alone in our justification by faith alone? I think not.

The last thing I want is to be the guy who says “stop making the gospel so important.” I never want to encourage people to emphasize the gospel less. But it is possible to emphasize the gospel in a wrong way. The Westminster Confession of Faith, after expounding that the law “directs and binds” us explains, “Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it” (WCF 19.7). Likewise, the Larger Catechism says the “moral law” is “of special use” to the regenerate because it shows, among other things, how they ought to take “their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience” (Q/A 97). And the Belgic Confession says about the law, “we continue to use the witnesses drawn from the law and prophets to confirm us in the gospel and to regulate our lives with full integrity for the glory of God, according to his will” (Art. 25). There is no degrading language here about falling back into law or moving beyond justification, no hint that the imperatives are only a concession to our unbelief. The Reformed confessions understand that obedience to God’s commands—which we all want—is not accomplished merely by insisting on indicatives, but also by insisting directly and explicitly on the imperatives that flow from them.
In order to recover the sufficiency of Scripture we must once again learn to
distinguish the Law and the Gospel as the "two words" of Scripture. For the
Reformers, it was not enough to believe in inerrancy. Since Rome also had a
high view of Scripture in theory, the Reformers were not criticizing the
church for denying its divine character. Rather, they argued that Rome
subverted its high view of Scripture by the addition of other words and by
failing to read and proclaim Scripture according to its most obvious sense.

At the heart of the reformation's hermeneutics was the distinction between
"Law" and "Gospel." For the Reformers, this was not equivalent to "Old
Testament" and "New Testament;" rather, it meant, in the words of
Theodore Beza, "We divide this Word into two principal parts or kinds: the
one is called the 'Law,' the other the 'Gospel.' For all the rest can be
gathered under the one or other of these two headings." The Law "is written
by nature in our hearts," while "What we call the Gospel (Good News) is a
doctrine which is not at all in us by nature, but which is revealed from
Heaven (Mt. 16:17; John 1:13)." The Law leads us to Christ in the Gospel by
condemning us and causing us to despair of our own "righteousness."
"Ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel," Beza wrote, "is one
of the principal sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt
Christianity." 1

Luther made this hermeneutic central, but both traditions of the Protestant
Reformation jointly affirm this key distinction. In much of medieval
preaching, the Law and Gospel were so confused that the "Good News"
seemed to be that Jesus was a "kinder, gentler Moses," who softened the
Law into easier exhortations, such as loving God and neighbor from the
heart. The Reformers saw Rome as teaching that the Gospel was simply an
easier "law" than that of the Old Testament. Instead of following a lot of
rules, God expects only love and heartfelt surrender. Calvin replied, "As if we
could think of anything more difficult than to love God with all our heart, all
our soul, and all our strength! Compared with this law, everything could be
considered easy...[For] the law cannot do anything else than to accuse and
blame all to a man, to convict, and, as it were, apprehend them; in fine, to
condemn them in God's judgment: that God alone may justify, that all flesh may keep silence before him." Thus, Calvin observes, Rome could only see the Gospel as that which enables believers to become righteous by obedience and that which is "a compensation for their lack," not realizing that the Law requires perfection, not approximation.

Of course, no one claims to have arrived at perfection, and yet, Calvin says many do claim "to have yielded completely to God, [claiming that] they have kept the law in part and are, in respect to this part, righteous." Only the terror of the Law can shake us of this self-confidence. Thus, the Law condemns and drives us to Christ, so that the Gospel can comfort without any threats or exhortations that might lead to doubt. In one of his earliest writings, Calvin defended this evangelical distinction between Law and Gospel: All this will readily be understood by describing the Law and describing the Gospel and then comparing them. Therefore, the Gospel is the message, the salvation-bringing proclamation concerning Christ that he was sent by God the Father...to procure eternal life. The Law is contained in precepts, it threatens, it burdens, it promises no goodwill. The Gospel acts without threats, it does not drive one on by precepts, but rather teaches us about the supreme goodwill of God towards us. Let whoever therefore is desirous of having a plain and honest understanding of the Gospel, test everything by the above descriptions of the Law and the Gospel. Those who do not follow this method of treatment will never be adequately versed in the Philosophy of Christ.

While the Law continues to guide the believer in the Christian life, Calvin insists that it can never be confused with the Good News. Even after conversion, the believer is in desperate need of the Gospel because he reads the commands, exhortations, threats, and warnings of the Law and often wavers in his certain confidence because he does not see in himself this righteousness that is required. Am I really surrendered? Have I truly yielded in every area of my life? What if I have not experienced the same things that other Christians regard as normative? Do I really possess the Holy Spirit? What if I fall into serious sin? These are questions that we all face in our own lives. What will restore our peace and hope in the face of such questions? The Reformers, with the prophets and apostles, were convinced that only the Gospel could bring such comfort to the struggling Christian.

Without this constant emphasis in preaching, one can never truly worship or serve God in liberty, for his gaze will always be fastened on himself--either in despair or self-righteousness--rather than on Christ. Law and Gospel must both ever be preached, both for conviction and instruction, but the conscience will never rest, Calvin says, so long as Gospel is mixed with Law. "Consequently, this Gospel does not impose any commands, but rather
reveals God's goodness, his mercy and his benefits." Calvin says with Luther and the other Reformers, marks the difference between Christianity and paganism: "All who deny this turn the whole of the Gospel upside down; they utterly bury Christ, and destroy all true worship of God."

Ursinus, primary author of the Heidelberg Catechism, said that the Law-Gospel distinction has "comprehended the sum and substance of the sacred Scriptures," are "the chief and general divisions of the holy scriptures, and comprise the entire doctrine comprehended therein." To confuse them is to corrupt the Faith at its core. While the Law must be preached as divine instruction for the Christian life, it must never be used to shake believers from the confidence that Christ is their "righteousness, holiness and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). The believer goes to the Law and loves that Law for its divine wisdom, for it reveals the will of the One to whom we are now reconciled by the Gospel. But the believer cannot find pardon, mercy, victory, or even the power to obey it, by going to the Law itself any more after his conversion than before. It is still always the Law that commands and the Gospel that gives. This is why every sermon must be carefully crafted on this foundational distinction.

As he watched the Baptist Church in England give way to moralism in the so-called "Down-grade Controversy," Charles Spurgeon declared, "There is no point on which men make greater mistakes than on the relation which exists between the law and the gospel. Some men put the law instead of the gospel; others put gospel instead of the law. A certain class maintains that the law and the gospel are mixed...These men understand not the truth and are false teachers."

In our day, these categories are once again confused in even the most conservative churches. Even where the categories of psychology, marketing and politics do not replace those of Law and Gospel, much of evangelical preaching today softens the Law and confuses the Gospel with exhortations, often leaving people with the impression that God does not expect the perfect righteousness prescribed in the Law, but a generally good heart and attitude and avoidance of major sins. A gentle moralism prevails in much of evangelical preaching today and one rarely hears the Law preached as God's condemnation and wrath, but as helpful suggestions for a more fulfilled life. In the place of God's Law, helpful tips for practical living are often offered. (In one large conservative church in which I preached recently, the sermon was identified in the program as "Lifestyle Perspectives." Only occasionally was one reminded that it was a church service and not a Rotary meeting.) The piety and faith of the biblical characters are often preached as examples to imitate, along with Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin. As in Protestant liberalism, such preaching often fails to hold Christ forth as the divine savior.
of sinners, but instead as the coach whose play-book will show us how to achieve victory.

Sometimes it is due less to conviction than to a lack of precision. For instance, we often hear calls to "live the Gospel," and yet, nowhere in Scripture are we called to "live the Gospel." Instead, we are told to believe the Gospel and obey the Law, receiving God's favor from the one and God's guidance from the other. The Gospel--or Good News--is not that God will help us achieve his favor with his help, but that someone else lived the Law in our place and fulfilled all righteousness. Others confuse the Law and Gospel by replacing the demands of the Law with the simple command to "surrender all" or "make Jesus Lord and Savior," as if this one little work secured eternal life. Earlier this century, J. Gresham Machen declared, "According to modern liberalism, faith is essentially the same as 'making Christ master' of one's life...But that simply means that salvation is thought to be obtained by our obedience to the commands of Christ. Such teaching is just a sublimated form of legalism."  

What good does it do to me to tell me that the type of religion presented in the Bible is a very fine type of religion and that the thing for me to do is just to start practicing that type of religion now?...I will tell you, my friend. It does me not one tiniest little bit of good...What I need first of all is not exhortation, but a gospel, not directions for saving myself but knowledge of how God has saved me. Have you any good news? That is the question that I ask of you. I know your exhortations will not help me. But if anything has been done to save me, will you not tell me the facts?  

Does that mean that the Word of God does not command our obedience or that such obedience is optional? Certainly not! But it does mean that obedience must not be confused with the Gospel. Our best obedience is corrupted, so how could that be good news? The Gospel is that Christ was crucified for our sins and was raised for our justification. The Gospel produces new life, new experiences, and a new obedience, but too often we confuse the fruit or effects with the Gospel itself. Nothing that happens within us is, properly speaking, "Gospel," but it is the Gospel's effect. Paul instructs us, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ..." (Phil. 1:27). While the Gospel contains no commands or threats, the Law indeed does and the Christian is still obligated to both "words" he hears from the mouth of God. Like the Godhead or the two natures of Christ, we must neither divorce nor confuse Law and Gospel.  

When the Law is softened into gentle promises and the Gospel is hardened into conditions and exhortations, the believer often finds himself in a deplorable state. For those who know their own hearts, preaching that tries to tone down the Law by assuring them that God looks on the heart comes
as bad news, not good news: "The heart is deceitful above all things..." (Jer. 17:9). Many Christians have experienced the confusion of Law and Gospel in their diet, where the Gospel was free and unconditional when they became believers, but is now pushed into the background to make room for an almost exclusive emphasis on exhortations. Again, it is not that exhortations do not have their place, but they must never be confused with the Gospel and that Gospel of divine forgiveness is as important for sinful believers to hear as it is for unbelievers. Nor can we assume that believers ever progress beyond the stage where they need to hear the Gospel, as if the Good News ended at conversion. For, as Calvin said, "We are all partly unbelievers throughout our lives." We must constantly hear God's promise in order to counter the doubts and fears that are natural to us.

But there are many, especially in our narcissistic age, whose ignorance of the Law leads them into a carnal security. Thus, people often conclude that they are "safe and secure from all alarm" because they walked an aisle, prayed a prayer, or signed a card, even though they have never had to give up their own fig leaves in order to be clothed with the righteousness of the Lamb of God. Or perhaps, although they have not perfectly loved God and neighbor, they conclude that they are at least "yielded," "surrendered," or "letting the Spirit have his way"; that they are "living in victory over all known sin" and enjoying the "higher life." Deluding themselves and others, they need to be stripped of their fig leaves in order to be clothed with the skins of the Lamb of God. Thus, Machen writes,A new and more powerful proclamation of law is perhaps the most pressing need of the hour; men would have little difficulty with the gospel if they had only learned the lesson of the law. As it is, they are turning aside from the Christian pathway; they are turning to the village of Morality, and to the house of Mr. Legality, who is reported to be very skillful in relieving men of their burdens... 'Making Christ Master' in the life, putting into practice 'the principles of Christ' by one's own efforts--these are merely new ways of earning salvation by one's obedience to God's commands. And they are undertaken because of a lax view of what those commands are. So it always is: a low view of law always brings legalism in religion; a high view of law makes a man a seeker after grace. 13

We must, therefore, recover Law and Gospel, and with such preaching, the Christocentric message of Scripture, or no good will come of our work, regardless of how committed we are to inerrancy. We cannot say that we are preaching the Word of God unless we are distinctly and clearly proclaiming both God's judgment and his justification as the regular diet in our congregations. To recover Scripture's sufficiency we must therefore, like the Reformers, recover the distinctions between Law and Gospel.
NOTES:
1 Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith*, trans. by James Clark (Focus Christian Ministries Trust, 1992), 40-1. Published first at Geneva in 1558 as the *Confession de foi du chretien*.
2 Calvin, 2.7.5 -1536 *Institutes*, trans. by F. L. Battles (Eerdmans, 1975), 30-1; cf. 1559 *Institutes* 2.11.10.
4 Ibid.
5 Battles edition of 1536 edition, op. cit., 365. Delivered by Nicolas Cop on his assumption of the rectorship of the University of Paris; there is a wide consensus among Calvin scholars that Calvin was the author.
6 Ibid., p. 366.
7 Ibid., p. 369.
9 Ibid, p. 2.

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**Perspectives on the Sabbath**

by Christopher John Donato

June 23, 2011 Review by [Fred G. Zaspel](http://example.com)


Not all “perspectives” or “views” books are equally rewarding. Their value hinges on the success of each contributor in representing his position well and arguing his case clearly and persuasively. A failure on this score, even in degree, quickly minimizes the value of the book. Because many of us who pick up a book of this type have already hammered out our position to one degree or another, we hope for good challenges to our thinking from all sides. In all these ways *Perspectives on the Sabbath* must be judged a success. Each of the contributors helpfully presents his case and, therefore, contributes to the Christian cause of learning.
The four contributors are, in order,

- Skip MacCarty, pastor, Pioneer Memorial Church, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, representing the Seventh-day Adventist position;
- Joseph A. Pipa, president and professor of historical and systematic theology, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, representing the “Christian Sabbath” position;
- Charles P. Arand, chairman, department of systematic theology, Concordia Seminary, representing the confessional Lutheran position;
- Craig L. Blomberg, distinguished professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, representing the fulfillment view.

Following the established “views” and “perspectives” approach, each author’s case is presented in turn, followed by responses from the others. One helpful innovation in this book is the space given to the author, then, to give a final word of response, rounding out the discussion well.

Of course arguing a case well and having a good case to argue are two very different things. And besides that, we all inevitably approach such books with a bias already in place, leaving it difficult to appreciate the full weight of every argument presented by each contributor.
Confessing up front my sympathy with Blomberg on this issue, and not wanting to contribute to the degree of emotion and even rancor that has too-often accompanied this particular subject, I will offer some observations that I trust are objective. I will try to limit my comments primarily to exegetical matters.

Recapping and Evaluating the Positions

Blomberg shows an impressive grasp of the New Testament understanding of the Old Testament and in particular the significance of Christ as the “fulfiller” of the Old Testament law. His argument is heavily New Testament-oriented, highlighting the various passages that touch the Sabbath theme. He understands the Sabbath as a type of the rest realized in Christ. As I mentioned, I am in sympathy with this view, and the exegetical grounding Blomberg provides is clearly presented and, to my mind at least, compelling. He helpfully summarizes the arguments for his position, presenting Christ as the fulfiller of the Sabbath within the larger theme of Jesus’ fulfillment of all that was anticipated in the various types and shadows of the Old Testament.

Arand’s chapter surveys Luther’s treatment of the Ten Commandments, which I found to be fascinating and informative reading. Luther’s understanding of the meaning and role of the first command (the first and second in the Reformed and more common evangelical enumeration) within the Decalogue offers valuable insight. And Luther’s emphasis on the role of the Word of God and the gospel preached on Sunday as what makes the day holy, strictly sustainable exegetically or not, is again a valuable insight. Arand’s position is not strictly Sabbatarian, although priority is given to Sunday as the day in which Christians are given opportunity to be sanctified by the preached Word. But at the end of it all, what Arand provides is merely an essay in historical theology and not an exegetical defense of any Sabbath position. Genuinely helpful and enjoyable as it is in itself in many respects (I am sure I will refer to it again in my exposition of the Ten Commandments), it does not constitute a formidable polemic.
MacCarty and Pipa have much in common. MacCarty argues that the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) remains binding on the new covenant believer. Pipa holds a similar view, the primary difference of course being that he holds that the Sabbath has been moved to Sunday, the first day of the week. Both heavily stress the opening verses of Genesis 2—that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day—and present the well-known argument that here God established Sabbath observance as a “creation ordinance,” obligatory to all humanity. The exegetical evidence for this—that God here imposes a Sabbath observance of any kind on humanity—is notoriously thin. And the argument advanced by Pipa that it is not “the seventh day” after all but simply “a day in seven” that is imposed is thinner yet. The text just doesn’t say all that this argument requires of it. At the very least we must admit that there just is not enough here to persuade any but the already convinced.

Similarly, both MacCarty and Pipa appeal to “the alien who is within your gates” clause in the Sabbath command (Ex. 20:8-11) as evidence that the Sabbath is binding on Jews and Gentiles alike. But again, the text just doesn’t say that much. It is a command to Israel concerning the behavior of all those within her community. That it can be broadened to universal application is simply not something expressly warranted. And their argument that the death penalty assigned to the violation of the Sabbath indicates the perpetual character of the command or that sabbatismos in Hebrews 4:9 must refer to a Sabbath (day) observance, again, in context, will not be persuasive but to those already in agreement. And we might say the same in regard to the argument that the Sabbath is “eternal, moral law” because it is part of the Decalogue. These arguments simply lack compelling exegetical strength. Necessary as these arguments are to the case, surely something more weighty is needed to sustain them.

Similarly, in Colossians 2:16-17 and Galatians 4:10-11 Paul’s prohibits Christians to enforce the Sabbath, and when we are told that this refers not to Sabbath day observance but other “Jewish” or “legalistic” observances, we are left wondering if the original readers could have understood him in such a restricted way. The exegesis is just not compelling. So also, interpreting Jesus’ assertion that he is “Lord of the Sabbath” to mean merely that he has the right to interpret Sabbath law seems to fall far short of Jesus’ claim. B. B. Warfield stated it better: “It [the Sabbath] belongs to him. He is the Lord of it; master of it—for that is what ‘Lord’ means. He may do with it what he will: abolish it if he chooses.” To be sure, Jesus does not at this point abolish the Sabbath, but interpreting his claim as something less authoritative leaves the reader suspicious either that the interpreter is unable to accommodate the possible attending implications and/or that the overall argument itself is unable to accommodate all the relevant exegetical data.

On a related score—and this observation edges in to matters of hermeneutics also—the Old Testament emphasis in MacCarty and Pipa is telling. Is it too much, given a Christian Sabbatarianism, to ask that the New Testament provide us with instructions on how to keep the Sabbath in this age? Here Pipa responds to this need, surprisingly, with expositions from Isaiah. Certainly we must not deprecate the older revelation in any way. But again, is it too much to ask for New Testament instruction concerning the keeping of a day that otherwise seems to have been left behind? The specific New Testament teaching given to the church regarding the Sabbath—e.g., Romans 14:5; Colossians 2:16-17; Galatians 4:10-11—seems at first blush, at least, plainly to indicate that Sabbath observance is no longer a Christian duty. We are asked, however,
to understand these passages in ways that are not immediately evident, and this not on the force of a New Testament command but on presuppositions which themselves rest on the thinnest of Old Testament exegesis.

New Testament passages such Matthew 5:17ff and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 point us in a better direction. New covenant believers ought to look first to Christ (and, by extension, his apostles) for the right understanding and application of Moses. In terms of the Sabbath this means that we now understand the Sabbath day to have been a shadow pointing forward to a reality now enjoyed in Christ (Col. 2:16-17). Coming to Jesus we find the rest (Matt. 11:28) that was previously anticipated but not fully realized in the observance of a day (Heb. 3-4)—a theme Blomberg traces out clearly and compellingly.

It might have been helpful to Blomberg’s case if he had addressed more fully the question of why Christians worship on Sunday. He highlights this up front in his article, and in most respects his answer is sufficient. However, more would be helpful for those looking on from a Sabbatarian perspective. There are of course good reasons for “going to church” on Sunday, even if these reasons are not tied to the Sabbath command. It would serve a non-sabbatarian position well to cover this base as thoroughly as possible in order to satisfy questions and concerns Sabbatarians inevitably will have. Indeed, perhaps he could borrow (and tweak) a page from Luther here!

**Weight of Considerations**

_Perspectives on the Sabbath_ is an enjoyable read throughout, certainly the best of the various views available in a single volume. And I think the various representatives generally present the best case possible for their views. But the weight of exegetical considerations in this argument seem clearly to favor the view that Christ soteriologically fulfills the Sabbath—what was previously prefigured only typologically. This book bears out this impression.

I should mention something also in regard to the pleasant tone that prevails in this volume (the only exception to this being the unnecessary charge of “antinomianism” that once made its way into one of the responses). It is, after all, an in-house debate, and the overall courtesy of the authors reflects this well. Their interaction is direct and pointed at times, as it must be in a book like this, but the mutual respect remains. The disagreements among Christians on this issue are not likely to go away, but in this regard the authors helpfully model ongoing discussion. Because of its format and the overall substance and tone of the arguments presented, _Perspectives on the Sabbath_ helpfully contributes to the discussion.

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Preparatory reading for our upcoming class.…

Law and Grace
Distinctions between the Old and New
September 11th  9:30 AM

In order to prepare for the material we will cover in this class, it is important for you to know these Bible passages well so that you will be familiar with the concepts, contrasts and conclusions spoken of in them. Please read these passages through at least once in the upcoming weeks. It is important that you pay careful attention to the way in which the Scripture refers to, contrasts, and concludes arguments in these passages concerning……

1) Covenants … Old & New
2) The Law
3) Promises
4) New Testament references to the historical development of God’s eternal plan of salvation/redemption. How the New is contrasted with the Old.

OT Passages
Genesis 12:1-3
Genesis 17:7-8
Genesis 22:16-17
Exodus 20:1-17, 24:1-8
2 Samuel 7:8-17
Isaiah 59:21
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Ezekiel 36:26-27

NT Passages
Matthew 5:17-48
Acts 15:1-35
Romans 14
1 Corinthians 5:5-8
1 Corinthians 15:56
2 Corinthians 1:20
2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6, 5:17
Galatians 2:16-4:21, 6:15
Ephesians 2:11-22
Colossians 2:16-23  
Hebrews 7-10

This may seem like a lot of reading, but you will benefit much from a good knowledge of these Scriptures.

Looking forward to the class, Shaan