

## Christian Growth Week 6: God's Law

### Introduction

As Christians, what is our relationship with God's law?

On the one hand . . .

**Rom. 6:14** Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

**Rom. 7:1-6** Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup> For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. <sup>3</sup> So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

<sup>4</sup> So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. <sup>5</sup> For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup> But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

**Gal. 2:19** For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.

On the other hand . . .

**Rom. 13:8-10** Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law. <sup>9</sup> For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

**1 Cor. 7:19** Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.

**1 Cor. 9:21** To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.

These two sets of verses are *not* contradictory.

## No longer under the Old Testament law

The Old Testament law (or the law of Moses) was given to the nation of Israel for three distinct purposes:

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Can you distinguish these three kinds of laws in this passage?

**Lev. 19:23-34** <sup>23</sup> When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. <sup>24</sup> In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. <sup>25</sup> But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God. <sup>26</sup> Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it. Do not practice divination or sorcery. <sup>27</sup> Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. <sup>28</sup> Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD. <sup>29</sup> Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness. <sup>30</sup> Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD. <sup>31</sup> Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God. <sup>32</sup> Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD. <sup>33</sup> When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. <sup>34</sup> The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

The Bible clearly teaches that the law of Moses was a *temporary* arrangement until the Messiah came.

**Jer. 31:31-34** “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

**Heb. 7:18,19** For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness <sup>19</sup> (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.

Now that Jesus has come, He has changed the way we relate to each aspect of the Law. (See “Three Aspects of Old Testament Law” chart.)

The *civil* laws (Lev. 19:23,25):

Christians are not commanded \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus and Paul taught that Christians should \_\_\_\_\_.

**Matt. 22:21 “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”**

**Rom. 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.**

RELEVANCE:

The *ceremonial* laws (Lev. 19:24,26a,27,28,30):

The New Testament teaches very clearly that \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus’ death fulfilled most of these rituals.

**Col. 2:16,17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

**Heb. 8:4-6,13 If he (Jesus) were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. <sup>5</sup> They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” <sup>6</sup> But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises . . . <sup>13</sup> By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.**

This explains the striking difference between Old Testament Judaism and New Testament Christianity over the role of rituals:

- \_\_\_\_\_ of Old Testament rituals have been replaced with only \_\_\_\_\_ New Testament rituals (baptism and communion).
  
- The \_\_\_\_\_ for Old Testament rituals have been replaced by \_\_\_\_\_ for baptism and communion.
  
- Whereas the Old Testament rituals looked \_\_\_\_\_ to a future sacrifice, the New Testament rituals \_\_\_\_\_ the salvation that Jesus has already purchased for us.

RELEVANCE:

The *moral* laws (Lev. 19:29,30-34)



**Gal. 3:24\* The Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.**

The law as our “tutor” (*paidagogus*):

When Jesus was dealing with people who knew they were guilty sinners, He told them about the gift of God’s forgiveness that He offered freely (cf. Jn. 3:16). But when He was dealing with self-righteous people, He pressed them with God’s moral law.

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Many non-Christians are self-righteous and don’t believe they need forgiveness. In situations like that, these scriptures can help them see where they stand before a righteous God.

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## Christians are no longer under God's moral law

*We are freed from the judgment decreed by it because of Christ's atoning sacrifice.*

**Gal. 3:25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

*It shows us that we cannot serve God \_\_\_\_\_*

**Rom. 7:6** 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.

Unfortunately, many believing churches teach, or imply, that although Christians are no longer under the law for their justification, they remain under the law for their sanctification—they must obey God's moral law by their own moral will-power.

Paul's struggle with the Law: Romans 7

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**Rom. 7:7** 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." 8 But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead . . . 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, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

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**Rom. 7:14** For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For what 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 . . . 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not . . . 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 our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

Only after this painful realization does Paul cast himself on Christ to liberate him from the power of his sinful nature to do God's will (7:24).

Morally sensitive Christians can relate to Paul's experience!

When we walk according to the Spirit:

- We are free from \_\_\_\_\_
- We focus on \_\_\_\_\_
- We then can view God's moral law in a positive light:

**Rom. 13:8 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; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**

Christians who walk according to the Spirit are \_\_\_\_\_

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**1 Tim. 4:12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe . . . 15 Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.**

**1 Tim. 11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.**

**2 Tim. 2:22 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.**

### Living under law vs. under grace

Area	Legalistic/Under Law	Under Grace
<b>View of the Law</b>	A set of detailed obligations that I must keep to “be good” or to guarantee I receive the blessings I want	A description of the lifestyle that glorifies God & loves other people
<b>View of self</b>	I am regenerate, and therefore I am able to keep the law	I am regenerate, but I can't keep the law by my own power
<b>View of others</b>	A threat to my acceptability if they are more righteous than me An excuse for self-righteousness if they are less righteous than me	I don't compare myself to others for identity &/or validation Others are opportunities to give God's love, and sometimes a means through which God gives His love to me
<b>View of the Holy Spirit</b>	Little practical understanding of the Spirit's ministries	I depend increasingly on the Holy Spirit for power, motivation, and direction
<b>View of the “means of growth”</b>	Ways to appear spiritual to others &/or to get/keep the blessings I want	Avenues through which I receive the life-changing grace of God
<b>The “key” to spiritual growth</b>	Moral will-power OR . . . Special experiences	Self-effort is futile. As I walk by the Spirit, God will gradually change me. I welcome healthy spiritual experience, but do not depend on dramatic experiences as quick-fixes.
<b>Mental focus</b>	What do the rules require? What am I allowed/not allowed to do?	Walking by the Spirit: focusing on God's love for me & giving God's love to others
<b>Motivation</b>	Guilt & fear of God's punishment Self-aggrandizement Human approval/praise Duty (“I have to”)	Confident gratitude for God's grace Servanthood Compassion for people's needs Privilege (“I get to”)
<b>Reaction to trials</b>	Interpret as God's retribution Anger toward God if I've “been good;” guilt feelings if I've “been bad”	Interpret as God's loving discipline & anticipate the good it will produce
<b>Reaction to spiritual failure</b>	Surprised and distressed Rationalizations, minimization, blame-shifting, and self-recrimination  Vows to do better	Concerned, but not surprised Confident of God's acceptance & therefore can admit sins to myself & others Repentance & return to walking by the Spirit
<b>Reaction to spiritual success</b>	Boastful (overtly or covertly) Condescending & intolerant of others less successful “I have arrived”	Humbly grateful—credit goes to God and others. Still able to empathize with those who fail  “I need continued growth”

<b>Reaction to others' offenses</b>	Retributive through lashing out, withdrawal, writing off, silent treatment, etc.	Willing to forgive because God forgave me Constructive correction for their good
<b>Ethical priorities</b>	Emphasizes external, humanly-keepable commands &/or prohibitions	Emphasizes love, honesty, sexual purity, forgiveness, generosity, etc.
<b>Extra-biblical rules</b>	Justifies them in order to protect myself/others from sinning	Rejects their authority, but willing to forego freedoms out of love for others
<b>Expectation of moral improvement</b>	Often perfectionistic with myself &/or others Hyper-critical; impossible to please	Hopeful about improvement, but not perfectionistic with self or others Thankful for progress
<b>Focus in ministry</b>	My efforts &/or others' response to my efforts Proud over fruit & easily discouraged	God's promises to convict, lead, empower, etc. Grateful for fruit & faithful
<b>Long-term result</b>	External, superficial conformity, but increasing internal defeat & hypocrisy which leads to: Cynicism & giving up OR . . . Self-righteous self-deception	Gradual transformation into a person who focuses on Christ & enjoys increasing victory over sin A more humble, grateful, other-centered person

## Memory Verses

Gal. 3:24,25\* - God's moral Law leads non-Christians to see their need for faith in Christ by exposing their sins. Once we put our faith in Christ, we are no longer under the Law.

Romans 7:7-25\*\* - God's moral Law leads Christians to see their need to trust the Holy Spirit to transform them by exposing their sin and moral impotence.

## Assignment

McCallum, *Walking In Victory*, pp. 53-61

Refer to the "Under Law Diagnostic Questions" handout:

- Write which area(s) of "under law" you are currently wrestling with.
- Write what step(s) you plan to take in that area(s) to get more under grace