

# LAW

THE

THE LAW (AS RECORDED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT) IS STILL APPLICABLE, STILL AUTHORITATIVE, STILL GOOD AND STILL INDISPENSABLE FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE TODAY.



**SOUTHLAND**  
CHURCH

# The Law (as recorded in the Old Testament) is still applicable, still authoritative, still good and still indispensable for the Christian life today.

## Table of Contents

<b>Part 1 – What the Bible says about the Old Testament Law .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Chapter 1 - The Point of this Paper .....	3
Chapter 2 - 2 sets of passages? An overview of the New Testament as a whole and what it says about the Law .....	4
Chapter 3 - Does the Bible contradict itself? Bringing unity to Paul’s ‘competing’ statements about the Law .....	6
Chapter 4 - The New Covenant did NOT abolish the Law, rather, it empowers people to live out the Law .....	9
Chapter 5 - The Law & the Gospel are a team: 4 fundamental continuities between the Law & the Gospel .....	11
Chapter 6 - The whole New Testament teaches that obedience to the Law is mandatory for all Christians.....	23
Chapter 7 - 2 Corinthians 3:4-11: The relationship between the Law and the Spirit.....	30
Chapter 8 - What is the purpose of the Law for modern-day believers?.....	34
<b>Part 2: Which Old Testament Laws apply today and which do not?.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Chapter 1 - Four types of laws.....	41
Chapter 2 - Applying the Law, part 1: The Ceremonial Laws have all been CANCELLED .....	43
Chapter 3 - Applying the Law, part 2: The Separation Laws have all been CANCELLED .....	50
Chapter 4 - Applying the Law, part 3: The Civil Laws – some have been cancelled, but others must be adapted.....	53
Chapter 5 - Applying the Law, part 4: All of the Moral laws are still BINDING on Christians today.....	69
Chapter 6 - What about the Sabbath? And other controversial laws (Tattoos, head-coverings and sex).....	79
<b>Part 3: Bible Study – A close look at some Antinomian (anti-Law) proof-text passages.....</b>	<b>93</b>
Chapter 1 - Romans 6:14 – Not under law but under grace?.....	93
Chapter 2 - 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 – ‘To those outside the law I become as one outside the law.’ .....	102
Chapter 3 - 2 Corinthians 3:4-11 – ‘The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.’ .....	103
Chapter 4 - Ephesians 2:15 – Did Jesus abolish the law and the commandments?.....	106
Chapter 5 - Galatians chapters 2 & 3 – No longer under the guardianship of the Law?.....	107
Chapter 6 - James 2:10 & Galatians 5:3 – Are the Moral and Ceremonial laws an indivisible whole? .....	114
Chapter 7 - Luke 16:16 – ‘The Law and the Prophets were until John . . .’ .....	117
Chapter 8 - John 1:17 – The Law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ....	119
Chapter 9 - Hebrews 8:6-7 – The New Covenant is a better covenant. ....	120
<b>Part 4: Debunking Antinomian Theology .....</b>	<b>122</b>
Chapter 1 - What Antinomianism is and why it is dangerous .....	122
Chapter 2 - The impossibility of actually doing away with the Old Testament Law (and the absurdity of trying to).....	135



# Part 1 – What the Bible says about the Old Testament Law

## Chapter 1 - The Point of this Paper.

- It is the purpose of this paper to prove that the Law (as recorded in the Old Testament) is still applicable, still authoritative, still good and still indispensable for the Christian life today. Of course, as I will show later in this paper, there are some major portions of the Law – the Ceremonial aspects primarily – which no longer apply to us (for example, we no longer need to sacrifice animals). But the Law as a whole is still 4 things for us:
  1. **Applicable** – by this I mean that God still intends for us to apply the Law to our lives today, just as He expected the Israelites to apply it to their lives way back in Old Testament times (though of course, it will often look different since the context has changed);
  2. **Authoritative** – by this I mean that the Law is still binding on Christians today. Just as it was sin for the Israelites to break the Law's commandments under the Old Covenant, it is still sin for Christians to break the Law's commands under the New Covenant (Matt 5:17-20). Also, in the same way that God brought judgment on law-breakers in Old Testament times, He likewise judges (and will judge) law-breakers under the New Covenant (Matt 5:29-30; Heb 10:26-29). The standard by which He will judge believers will be the Law as revealed in the Old Testament (James 2:12);
  3. **Good** – by this I mean that the Law is not (and was never) a legalistic, bad, harsh or hurtful thing (as many Christians today seem to think of it). It was good and wonderful and intended as a blessing when God first gave it to the Israelites (Deut 4:6-8; 30:11-16; Ps 19:7-11), and it continues to be good, wonderful and a blessing for Christians trying to pursue God today (Rom 7:12; 7:22; James 1:25);
  4. **Indispensable** – by this I mean that obedience to the Law is essential for any Christian who desires to love God wholeheartedly (John 14:15-24; 15:10; 1 Jn 5:3), to be saved (Matt 7:21; 1 Jn 2:3-6; 3:4-10), to live a holy life (Deut 6:24-25; Rom 7:12) and to be rewarded by God in eternity (Matt 5:19; 19:16-21; James 1:25).
- **Introduction:** Many Christians today are confused about the Old Testament. They don't know what to do with it. Are its commands still binding on us today? Can we build important doctrines on Old Testament passages? Which parts apply to us and which ones don't? Is the Old Testament no more good to us than as a collection of interesting stories? Has the New Testament replaced the Old Testament? The end result of this confusion is that an alarming number of Christians now ignore the Old Testament (with the possible exception of the Psalms and Proverbs), neither reading nor studying it any longer. A number of prominent pastors are contributing to this problem by teaching that the New Testament has cancelled out the Old and that Grace has annulled the Law. Some go so far as to say that we as Christians are no longer bound by the Law (as recorded in the Old Testament) and that it is harmful for Christians today to even attempt to follow and obey the Law.

Into this culture of confusion, the most important question we can ask is, *What does the Bible, itself, tell us about the Law?* According to Scripture, what role does the Mosaic law have in the life of the modern believer? Of course, the preachers who say that the Law is no longer binding for the Christian life have their handful of proof-texts; a few verses, taken from Paul's writings, which seem to say that the Law no longer applies to our lives. But the answer really isn't that simple because, as I will show shortly, there are many other passages in the New Testament which clearly state the opposite. We cannot arrive at a God-glorifying and theologically correct answer to our questions about the Law unless we take into account both sets of passages: the ones which seem to say that the Law has been annulled and the ones which say it hasn't. Preaching one group of passages, while ignoring the other, is a sure path to theological destruction and false doctrine. Let us now turn our attention to the passages in question.

## Chapter 2 - 2 sets of passages? An overview of the New Testament as a whole and what it says about the Law.

1. **Negative: New Testament passages which seem to be negative towards the Law.** Some passages in the New Testament definitely do seem to speak of the Old Testament Law in a negative fashion, and even appear to dismiss it. Paul declares *“I died to the law so that I might live for God”* (Gal 2:19 ESV). He also describes himself as not being *“under the law”* (1 Cor 9:20 ESV). In another passage he makes this point even more strongly, saying that his readers *“are not under law but under grace”* (Rom 6:14 ESV) – indeed, *“we [have been] released from the law”* (Rom 7:6 ESV). Elsewhere Paul says that Christ abolished *“the law with its commandments and regulations”* (Eph 2:15 NIV), and in yet another passage he calls the Law *“the ministry of death”* (2 Cor 3:7 ESV).
  - ◇ We know that everything the Bible says is both true and important, so in some way each of these passages is vital to the Gospel message. In our attempt to explain the role of the Law in the life of a modern believer we cannot (and will not) ignore these passages.
2. **Positive: New Testament passages which are positive towards the Law.** In seeming opposition to the passages just quoted, however, there are a veritable mountain of passages in the New Testament which testify positively about the Old Testament Law and to its continued authority in the believer’s life. It is interesting to note that every one of the NT passages which seems to be negative about the Law comes from Paul’s writings, whereas the positive passages come both from Paul *and* all of the other New Testament writers.
  - a) **Positive passages in Paul’s writings.** Did Paul think that grace had annulled the Law, as some modern-day pastors preach? Paul would answer ‘Never!’ On the contrary, through faith *“we uphold the law”* (Rom 3:31 ESV). In Romans chapter 2, Paul states that only those who obey the law are justified before God; *“For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified”* (Romans 2:13 ESV). Clearly Paul does not want us to interpret the ‘negative’ passages listed above (which seem to dismiss the Law), as cancelling the Law in the believer’s life. Elsewhere Paul asks the question, *“Is the law then contrary to the promises of God?”* (Gal 3:21 ESV) – ie. Is the Law incompatible with grace? – and then answers his own question *“Certainly not!”* (Gal 3:21 ESV). In other words, any theology which attempts to use Paul’s writings to dismiss the Law from the Christian life cannot look to the Scriptures for comfort or support.
    - ◆ Furthermore, Paul affirms that *“the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good”* (Rom 7:12 ESV); and he often cites the Old Testament Law as the authoritative basis for his ethical judgments (eg. 1 Cor 9:9; Eph 6:1-2). In yet another place he writes, *“I delight in the law of God, in my inner being”* (Rom 7:22 ESV).
    - ◆ In another passage, Paul clearly teaches that obedience to the Law is vitally important to the Christian life: *“For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision [Ceremonial laws], but KEEPING the commandments of God [the Moral laws]”* (1 Corinthians 7:19 ESV).
    - ◆ And in yet another passage Paul states that because of Christ we have been saved from law-lessness which, if language means anything, fully implies that we have been saved for law-fulness; *“For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so NOW [after becoming a believer] present your members as slaves to righteousness [lawfulness – see Ps 119:172] leading to sanctification”* (Rom 6:19 ESV).
    - ◆ Paul repeats this same thought two chapters later, *“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does NOT submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom 8:7-8 ESV). According to this passage, people whose minds are set on their sinful flesh will *not* submit to the Law – the implication, of course, is that those whose minds are set on the Spirit *will* submit to the Law.
    - ◆ **Conclusion:** Certainly Paul does not think that believers should ignore the Law!

b) **Positive passages about the Law from the rest of the New Testament writers.**

1) **The Gospels.** The most explicit, comprehensive and authoritative statement about the Law in the entire New Testament comes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." – Matt 5:17-19 (ESV)*

- No other statement in the New Testament is as comprehensive or explicit in its treatment of the Law. Jesus says clearly (twice) that He did not come to abolish the Law, and then adds the fact that, until heaven and earth pass away (which hasn't happened yet), not even an iota nor a dot would pass from the Law. Jesus goes on to say that anyone who 'relaxes one of the least of these commandments' (ie. dismisses the importance of the Law from the life of the believer) will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but that whoever obeys the Law and teaches the commandments in it will be called 'great in the kingdom of heaven.' This one passage alone is enough to refute anyone who wishes to argue that Grace has annulled the Law, or that the New Testament has replaced the Old Testament. But there are many other New Testament passages which speak positively about the Law as well . . .

2) **James.** James teaches that his readers would do well to fulfill "*the royal law*" and warns us against breaking any one point of it (James 2:8-10). According to him Christians are supposed to be doers of the Law (4:11-12). Elsewhere James calls the Old Testament Law "*the law of liberty*" (1:25), quite in contrast to the modern-day preachers who teach that the Law is 'death' and 'condemnation' to the believer. In that same passage he goes on to say that the believer who perseveres in studying ("*looking into*") the Law and obeying what it says will be "*blessed in his doing*" (1:25).

3) **John.** The apostle John repeatedly identifies keeping the Law with both knowing and loving God (1 John 2:3-4; 5:3; 2 John 6). Like James (and unlike many modern-day preachers) his take on the Law is that its commands "*are not burdensome*" (1 John 5:3).

- Furthermore, John states that the very definition of sin is to break the Law: "*Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness*" (1 John 3:4 NIV). This proves that the Law has not been cancelled by the New Covenant, since God still regards breaking the Law as sin.

4) **Peter.** The apostle Peter also considered the Law to still have authority in the lives of believers, appealing to it as his authority for calling Christians to holy living; in 1 Peter 1:15-16 he quotes Leviticus 11:44, "*You shall be holy, for I am holy*".

- ◇ The purpose of this section was not to list every passage in the New Testament which speaks positively about the Law (there are many others), but rather to show that it is un-Scriptural for Christians to summarily dismiss the Old Testament Law from their thinking and living simply by quoting a few easy proof-texts from Paul's writings.

### Chapter 3 - Does the Bible contradict itself? Bringing unity to Paul's 'competing' statements about the Law:

***Paul's seemingly negative statements about the Law were not about the Law itself, but about the improper and self-righteous Pharisaical use of the Law.***

- We know that the Bible does not (in fact *cannot*) contradict itself. So whatever hermeneutic (system of interpretation) we apply to these passages must bring out the unity of ALL the passages. We cannot be lazy in our interpretation of Scripture, as some are, by interpreting certain passages of Scripture in such a way as to cancel out other passages.

#### 1. **The Law is good, but it must be used *lawfully*.**

a) The apparent conflict between New Testament passages concerning the Old Testament Law begins to find its clarification and resolution when Paul declares in 1 Timothy 1:8, "*Now we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully*" (ESV).<sup>1</sup> In this one statement Paul gives us a key to bridging the seeming disparity between the two sets of New Testament passages concerning the Law. On the one side he affirms that the Law itself is indeed good; but on the other side he states that the Law's goodness is dependent ('if') on its being used properly ('lawfully'). This statement obviously implies that people can misuse the Law – can interpret it and put it to a use that is contrary to God's purposes for it. Such a misuse of the Law would pervert what was otherwise intended by God to be a blessing (good for us), into something harmful (a bondage to us).

- ◆ I will now show that it is this *misuse* of the Law which lies at the heart of many of Paul's negative statements about the Law, not the Law itself. The book of Romans is an excellent place to start.

#### 2. **In the book of Romans Paul is speaking to proud and self-righteous Pharisees who were relying on their knowledge of the Law (and their ability to obey it) for salvation, rather than humbly trusting in Jesus for salvation and relying on His Holy Spirit for the power to live righteously.**

a) The book of Romans contains a number of Paul's seemingly contradictory statements about the Law. On the negative side, we learn in Romans chapter 7 that believers "*have died to the law*" (7:4), and two verse later, that believers have been "*released from the law, having died to that which held us captive*" (7:6). Confusingly though, in the same chapter, Paul states both that, "*the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good*" (7:12) and that he himself "*delights in the law*" (7:22)! Obviously the word 'law' cannot mean the same thing for Paul in all four verses, or he would be contradicting himself. Especially when you consider Romans 3:31 and Romans 2:13. Romans 3:31 says, "*Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law*" (ESV); while Romans 2:13 states "*For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified*" (Romans 2:13 ESV).

- ◆ It is clear that in the first two passages (7:4 & 7:6) Paul is not speaking about the Law itself, but rather about some misuse of the Law. In other words, in verses 4 and 6 he is not saying that believers should die to the Law itself, but rather, that believers should die to a particular *misuse* of the Law which was holding them in bondage.

b) **What was the misuse of the Law Paul was warning against?** Romans chapter 2 gives us a clear glimpse of the context into which Paul is speaking in the book of Romans, giving us important information about the type of people Paul is speaking to and the kind of problems he is dealing with. Understanding this context is essential for making sense of his comments about the Law later in the book. Romans chapter 2 is addressed to an

---

<sup>1</sup> Some may argue that I am taking this passage out of context and cannot use it to say that there is a lawful use of the Law for Christians, since the very next verse states, "*understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers . . .*" (1 Tim 1:9 ESV). But I am not using 1 Timothy 1:8 to state what, exactly, is a lawful use of the Law. I am only using 1 Timothy 1:8 to show that there is a lawful use of the Law and an unlawful use of it. Furthermore, 1 Timothy 1:9 cannot rule out the possibility of *any* lawful use of the Law for Christians since Paul himself declares that he 'delights' in the Law (Rom 7:22), proving at least one lawful use of it ('delight'), and James teaches that believers will be blessed for studying and obeying the Law (James 1:25), thus proving at least a second lawful use of it (study and obedience).

element, within the church at Rome, of Jewish believers (Rom 2:17) who were filled with incredible pride and self-deception. This pride and self-deception caused them to “*rely on the law*” and to be confident that they possessed “*in the law the embodiment of knowledge*” that made them self-righteous teachers of others (Rom 2:17-21), when in fact they who were “*boast[ing] in the law*” were notoriously guilty of transgressing the Law and dishonoring God (vv. 23-24).

- ◆ We learn more about the background of this group of people when we take into account the history of earliest days of the Christian church. In those days there was tremendous tension within the Church as the apostles struggled to discern the implications of Christ’s death for the Law and for their old way of life, as well as to figure out whether or not Gentiles needed to become Jewish in order to become Christians (see Acts 10-11:18; 15:1-35; Gal 2:11-15). In those days there arose, within the Church, a party from among the Pharisees (Acts 15:5) who attempted to revive within the Church some of the past abuses of that party and who walked in the same spirit of self-righteousness and legalism that Jesus had condemned in them earlier. These people (Judaizers) wanted to compel the Gentiles to live “*like the Jews*” (Gal 2:14 ESV) and insisted that the Gentiles could not be saved without becoming circumcised and observing Jewish customs and festivals (Acts 15:1,5).
- ◆ Paul was no stranger to this type of thinking – it had been his own mind-set before his conversion. He was brought up as a Pharisee concerning the Law (Phil 3:5), and at the feet of Gamaliel (a leading Pharisee) he was “*thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers*” (Acts 22:3 NIV). His testimony was: “*I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers*” (Gal 1:14 ESV). He knew what it was to make his boast in the Law (cf. Rom 2:17-23). From the perspective of a man who is spiritually dead, Paul once claimed that as far as “*legalistic righteousness*” was concerned, he was “*faultless*” (Phil 3:6 NIV). That is, like many of the Pharisees, he had once been so self-deceived as to think that he was spiritually alive and righteous. Only under the influence of God’s convicting Holy Spirit did the commandment finally come home to his consciousness and kill his self-righteous complacency: *I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died*” (Romans 7:9 ESV).

c) **3 ways the Pharisees misused the Law.** Because of their proud, legalistic and self-righteous spirit these Pharisaical Christians (Judaizers) were misusing the Law in at least 3 ways:

- 1) Instead of using the Law selflessly, as a means for pursuing, loving and knowing God more (John 14:15-21; 15:10; 1 John 2:3; 3:22-24; 5:3, etc.), they were using the Law selfishly to puff themselves up and to justify themselves before men (Rom 2:17-24, see also Lk 16:15);
  - 2) Instead of humbly allowing the Holy Spirit to use the Law to convict them of their sinfulness (see Rom 3:20 “*through the law comes knowledge of sin*”; and Rom 7:7 “*if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin*”), they were proudly using the Law as a means to boast about themselves – ie. to show-off (Rom 2:17-24);
  - 3) Instead of gratefully relying on Jesus for salvation and depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit for the ability to live righteously before God, they were instead relying on their own human effort for salvation and sanctification (Rom 2:17-24; 9:30-32). They were relying on their knowledge of the Law, as well as their ability to obey the Law, for their justification before God. This fact is confirmed later in Romans when Paul says this about his fellow Jews, “*being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness*” (10:3).
- ◆ **Conclusion:** It is to these self-reliant Pharisees and to their *misuse* of the Law – not the Law itself – that Paul is speaking when he makes his negative comments about the Law in Romans 7:4 and 7:6 (about how people need to ‘die’ to the Law and be ‘released’ from it). Their *misuse* of the Law had perverted what God

intended for good into a bondage from which they needed to be released.

3. **Obedience to the Law is NOT bondage (and never has been).** In stark contrast to the bondage of the Pharisees, however, it is essential to realize that the rest of the Bible is very clear that the *proper* use of the Law – humble obedience founded on dependence on God – has never been a bondage to anyone, either before or after Christ. In fact, James called the Law ‘liberty’ and stated that obeying it was a blessing (James 1:25). The apostle John stated that obeying the commandments was “*not burdensome*” (1 Jn 5:3). These passages directly contradict Romans 7:4 and 7:6 unless Paul was talking about the self-reliant and legalistic misuse of the Law in those verses and not the Law itself. When Moses first gave the Law to the children of Israel he said this; “*For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it” (Deut 30:11-14 ESV). In the next verse he went on to say that the Law is “*life and good*” (Deut 30:15 ESV).*
- ◇ Or consider King David’s words about the Law in Psalm 19: “*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;<sup>8</sup> the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup> the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:7-11 ESV). What is an Antinomian to do with this passage? David said that the Law ‘revives the soul,’ that God’s rules are ‘sweeter than honey’ and that there is ‘great reward’ for keeping God’s commands. If the Law was so sweet and reviving in Old Testament times, how did it suddenly become burdensome and deathly in New Testament times, as Antinomians teach? Was King David lying? Was King David wrong? If the Law wasn’t bondage to godly people in the Old Testament, it can’t have suddenly become death to godly people in New Testament times either.*
- **Conclusion to this section: The Law is bondage in the hands of proud and self-righteous people but life and liberty to humble Christ-followers who trust in God.**

## Chapter 4 - The New Covenant did NOT abolish the Law, rather, it empowers people to live out the Law.

- As was stated earlier, some modern-day preachers are teaching that the Old Testament Law is dead for people who believe in Jesus Christ. They are teaching that Jesus' death on the cross abolished the Law and all of its commandments, and that Christians are now under Grace instead of Law. But this is not what the Bible itself says about the relationship between the New Covenant and the Law.
- In the Old Testament God told the prophets about a coming New Covenant, which would replace the Old Covenant they were living under, and clearly explained to them what that New Covenant was going to do. Reading these prophecies makes something very clear – God never intended to get rid of the Law in the New Covenant; in fact, His intention for the New Covenant was to empower people to actually be able to live the Law out, by the power of His indwelling Spirit. Look at the following passages:
  1. *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,<sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.<sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my LAW within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people”* (Jeremiah 31:31-33 ESV).
    - ◇ According to God, what is the biggest difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant? Is it that the New Covenant does away with the Law? No! God spoke to Jeremiah very clearly and said that in the New Covenant He would actually put His Law ‘within’ people and write His Law on people’s ‘hearts’ (v.33). The difference between the Old and New Covenants is not that the Law gets abolished in the New, but rather, that in the New Covenant God changes people’s hearts so that they have both the *power* to obey the Law and the *desire* to do it. Rather than cancelling the Law, the New Covenant actually empowers people to live it! [Note: this obviously does not include the Ceremonial aspects of the Law, like sacrificing animals, as will be discussed later.]
  2. Speaking to Ezekiel of this same New Covenant, God said: *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.<sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes [the Law!] and be careful to obey my rules [the Law!].<sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.<sup>29</sup> And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.* (Ezekiel 36:26-29 ESV)
    - ◇ This passage is very clear – God never intended to get rid of the Law in the New Covenant. His point in making the New Covenant was to put His Spirit inside of people so that they could actually succeed in living out the Law. Obeying the Law – otherwise known as *holiness* – is just as central to life under the New Covenant as it was to life under the Old (v. 27). Antinomian (means *anti-Law*, see footnote below<sup>2</sup>) preachers teach that the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant because in the Old Covenant people were under the Law, while in the New Covenant modern-day believers are under Grace instead of the Law. False! The Law is not opposed to Grace. The New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant because under it (1) Jesus’ blood provides real forgiveness for sins (v. 29), as opposed to the partial covering for sins provided by the blood of animals under the Old Covenant; and (2) because under the New Covenant provision is made for the Holy Spirit to actually move in and in-dwell believers, thus providing the power and ability to live out God’s commands and laws.
  3. **Objection: But didn’t Paul say that Christ ‘abolished the law of commandments and ordinances’ in Ephesians 2:15?**

A: Yes he did. But he obviously could not have been talking about the whole Law, or else he would have directly contradicted what God said in the above two passages we just examined (not to mention Matt 5:17-19). In fact, it is clear from the context of Ephesians 2 that Paul was talking only about the ceremonial aspects of the Law, laws which separated Jews from Gentiles. For example, laws concerning circumcision and animal sacrifice have, indeed,

---

<sup>2</sup> **Antinomianism:** The word *antinomianism* comes from the Greek word meaning *lawless*. In Christian theology it is the title given to those streams of doctrine which teach that Christians are not obligated to obey the Moral law as revealed in the Old Testament. Antinomian doctrine is extremely imbalanced in that it focuses only on God’s Grace and Forgiveness, to the exclusion of His Judgment, Wrath and Holiness. Antinomianism has been around since the days of the early church and is increasingly popular today.

been abolished under the New Covenant. I will deal with the Ephesians 2:15 passage more in-depth later in this paper, but some other important issues must first be studied. In the next section I will show that not only is the Law not opposed to Grace, it is, in fact, an *administration* of God's Grace.

## Chapter 5 - The Law & the Gospel are a team: 4 fundamental continuities between the Law & the Gospel.

- Many Christians today are caught up in an either/or deception concerning the Gospel (the good news of salvation in Jesus, as revealed in the New Testament) and the Law, thinking that these are two opposing entities which cannot coexist. They think that the Old Testament Law is all about works, with a spirit of legalism, whereas the New Testament Gospel is all about grace, with a spirit of forgiveness. As a result, many Christians mistakenly think that since Christ's death on the cross, the Gospel message has now conquered and replaced the Law so that they no longer need to pay attention to it.
  - This mistake is being compounded and intensified by a number of popular preachers today who have an Antinomian (anti-Law) agenda and who are propagating, in various parts of the Church, a false gospel in which holiness and obedience to God's commands are not important for the Christian life. In their efforts to support this false doctrine (which they call 'grace' but which would more accurately be termed 'lawlessness') they have set up a theological straw man as a foil, in order to make it look like the New Testament cancelled the Law. Here is how their straw man is set up, with its 2 premises and 1 conclusion:
    1. The Law was a works-based covenant (a false premise, see Romans 9:30-32 and argumentation below);
    2. Salvation in the New Covenant is a faith-based covenant (true);
    3. Conclusion – therefore, by (1) & (2), the Law no longer has any place in a believer's life, since the New Covenant is based on faith and the Law is based on works.
  - This is a false conclusion, based on a false premise, and which is leading many people astray. There is a mountain of Scripture to refute it, and the first thing I will show is that premise (1) is completely false – God never intended the Law to be a works-based covenant, although the Jewish religious establishment eventually did pervert it into that. From the beginning, however, God's intention had always been that the covenant of the Law would be founded on FAITH (Rom 9:30-32) *just like* the New Covenant. Once we have proven that point it will become obvious to the reader that the Law is not opposed to Grace, and that the two actually work together hand-in-hand; and once the reader understands that, it will be easy to show from Scripture that believers are still under the authority of the Law. The Law still matters! We should study it (Josh 1:7-8), love it (Ps 119:97, 113, 163,165) and obey it (Deut 6:1-4) because we will be judged according to it (Matt 5:19; James 2:12).
1. **Important Point: the Old Testament Law is a manifestation of God's grace – not legalism – and works together with the Gospel to bring people to Jesus Christ.** Though there are some definite differences between life under the New Covenant and the life the Israelites lived under the Old Covenant (more on those differences later) it is absolutely essential to realize that the two covenants are not opposed to each other (ie. the common stereo-type of works vs. grace). Far from being a works-based covenant, the Bible asserts emphatically that the Old Covenant Law was itself an administration of grace because, like the New Covenant Gospel, it provided a means for people to draw close to God through *faith*.
- ◆ Consider the following passage: *“For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did [speaking of the children of Israel when they received the Law]; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith”* (Hebrews 4:2 NIV). This passage may come as a shock to many because of the two points the author of Hebrews makes in it: (1) That the Old Testament Israelites who received the Law *also* received in it the Gospel; and, (2) That just as the Gospel (New Covenant) requires faith for salvation (instead of works) – same with the Law!
  - ◇ **In fact, Paul learned of his need to die to legalism in the Law itself!** Here is something remarkable, something that Christians must not miss if they want to understand correctly God's purposes for the Old Covenant and the Law. As discussed earlier, Paul teaches continuously throughout his epistles that believers need to die to legalism, which is the misuse of the Law as a means of self-merit and justification through works. But just how and where did Paul learn this crucial lesson? Listen to Galatians 2:19: *For THROUGH the law I died to the law, so*

that I might live to God. It was the Law itself that taught Paul not to seek righteousness and God's acceptance through human self-effort and self-righteous works of the Law! In other words, the Old Testament Law was never legalistic in character or intention – the Pharisees only perverted it to that self-serving end. They simply did not understand, as the New Testament writers did, that the purpose of the Law was to point them to *faith in Jesus* (John 5:39; Lk 24:27; Matt 5:17-19; Rom 10:4), not enable them to justify themselves before God. For this reason, Paul lamented that “to this day, when they read the old covenant . . . whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts” (2 Cor 3:14-15 ESV) – they had missed the whole point of the Law, which was salvation by grace in Jesus Christ. And many Christians today are also missing the point of the Law, though in a different manner, when they throw it out completely, thinking that it is opposed to the Gospel of Grace.

- ◇ That the Law has always been about faith and grace, and never about legalistic works-salvation is confirmed in many different places in Scripture. Here are just 3 examples from Paul's writings (Romans 9, Ephesians 2 and Galatians 3):
  - a) **Romans 9.** Romans chapter 9 explicitly states that the Law was always about faith and never about works: “What shall we say, then? . . . Israel pursued a law that would lead to righteousness [but] did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:30-32 ESV).
    - ◆ What do the Antinomian (anti-Law) preachers of today teach? That the Law was a works-based covenant. False! In this amazing passage Paul states that though the Israelites pursued the Law they did not succeed in reaching it. Why? Because they pursued it *as if it were based on works* instead of faith. Paul could not be more explicit; the Law is (and always has been) a faith-based covenant. And this being true, it becomes a much more difficult task for the Antinomian preachers of our day to so readily dismiss the Law from the life of believers. Law and Grace are not opposed to each other – in fact, as we will see in a later point, the Gospel actually builds upon the Law.
  - b) **Galatians 3.** That this is true is made even clearer in Galatians, where Paul says – “Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? [ie. the Gospel] Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law” (Galatians 3:21 NIV).
    - ◆ Could Paul make himself any clearer? This passage states categorically that the Law is not opposed to the Gospel (here called ‘the promises of God,’ see next point). Furthermore, in this verse Paul states that the Law was never intended to give people life or righteousness, which proves that the Law was always meant to point people to the Messiah for salvation (more on this below – see also John 5:39; 5:45-47; Luke 24:27; Matt 5:17-19), rather than provide a means of salvation-by-works in itself. The Law and the Gospel work together to bring us to Jesus, they are not at cross-purposes to each other!
  - c) **Ephesians 2.** This point about the Law being another administration of God's grace, not a legalistic works-covenant at cross-purposes with the Gospel, is confirmed in the book of Ephesians. In Ephesians chapter 2 Paul says, “Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles . . . were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants [plural] of promise [singular], having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:11-12 ESV).
    - ◆ According to this passage the Old Testament ‘covenants’ (plural),<sup>3</sup> which God made with the Israelites, all worked towards one ‘promise’ (singular); that promise being the promise of the New Covenant and all of its

---

<sup>3</sup> There are 4 different covenants within the Old Testament: (1) **The Noahic covenant** (Gen 9:8-17; 8:20-22), where God promised never to flood the earth again; (2) **The Abrahamic covenant** (Gen 15, see especially v.18; Gen 17:1-8; Gen 12:1-3) where God promised to make Abraham into a great nation and to give the land of Israel to his descendants (the Jews) forever, as well as to bless all the world through him (Gen 12:3) which was a promise that the Christ would come from Abraham; (3) **The Mosaic Covenant** (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), which was established at Mount Sinai where God gave the Jews the Law with its Moral, Ceremonial and Civil commandments through Moses; (4) **The Davidic Covenant** (2 Sam 7:9-16; see also Ps 89:28-29, 35-36; 1 Chron 22:10) where God promised that David's descendent (referring to Christ) would sit on the throne of Israel forever.

attendant benefits and blessings: the forgiveness of sins (Jer 31:31-34); the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32); eternal life (Jn 3:16); etc., etc.. This promise was originally given to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 15:18; 17:1-8, see also Gal 3:17-18) and was inaugurated by Jesus at His death and resurrection.

- ◆ Why is this important? Because the Old Testament covenants (plural) that Paul here refers to would include the Mosaic Covenant, which is the Law. Thus, according to this passage, the Law is *itself* a covenant ‘*of*’ the Gospel ‘promise’ – an assertion which goes completely against the common assumption of our day, that the Law is opposite of the Gospel.
- ◆ And if the Law is a covenant ‘*of*’ the Gospel ‘promise,’ how can Antinomian (anti-Law) preachers argue that the Law was a legalistic salvation-based-on-works covenant that is opposed to the Gospel and has been annulled by Grace? They can’t. The two covenants are *both* administrations of God’s promise (grace)! The primary difference between the Old and New covenants is not that one was based on works and the other on grace, but rather, that the Old Covenant contained only a *partial* fulfillment of the ‘promise’ that was originally given to Abraham, while the New Covenant contains the *full* fulfillment.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ In the next section I will show that not only does the New Covenant not cancel out the Law, it actually builds upon and works with the Law to bring people to Jesus.

## 2. The spirit and goals of the Law are identical to the spirit and goals of the Gospel; four fundamental continuities between the Law and the New Covenant.

- ◇ As stated before, there are some definite dissimilarities between life under the Old Covenant and life under the New (we will get there yet), but this point about the fundamental *continuities* between the two covenants must first be hammered home. Only then will we be able to see not only that the Gospel and the Law are not opposed to each other, but that the Gospel actually builds upon, and works with, the Law to bring people into a proper relationship with Jesus Christ. Once this point about the fundamental continuities between the Law and the Gospel is demonstrated it becomes easy to accept what the Scriptures so plainly tell us – that believers today are *still* under the authority of the Law and will one day be judged according to it. Speaking of this fact, James 2:12 admonishes us to “*Speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty*” (‘Law of liberty’ is one of the apostle James’ labels for the Old Testament Law, see also James 1:22-25).
- ◇ Because of the strong biases many Christians today have against the Law, some people will no doubt feel at this point like they are reading heresy. But that is only because they completely misunderstand the spirit of the Law and the goals of the Law; it is time for Western Christians to open their eyes realize that the spirit of the Law is the same as the spirit of the New Covenant, and that the goals of the Law are the same as the goals of the New Covenant.
- ◇ This truth can be seen clearly in 4 specific continuities between the Law and the New Covenant:
  - a) Both covenants have as their most important goal for human behavior *love* – love for God and for your fellow man;
  - b) Both covenants emphasize that righteousness is a gift from God, not something anyone can earn;
  - c) Both covenants require faith for salvation;
  - d) Both covenants point to Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation.
- ◇ 4 important and fundamental continuities between the Law and the New Covenant:
  - a) ***Important Continuity #1: The highest priority in both covenants is love – love for God and love for your fellow man.***
    - ◆ Almost every Christian knows that the most important commandment is love – love God and love your neighbor. Jesus stated this point explicitly: “*The most important [commandment] is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord*

---

<sup>4</sup> Though even now we do not enjoy the full benefits of the New Covenant (we still die and we still sin, for example), and won’t, until the Second Coming when Jesus returns to earth and sets up His kingdom.

our God, the Lord is one.<sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’<sup>31</sup> The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” – **Mk 12:29-31 (ESV)**

- ◆ Where many Christians go wrong, however, is in thinking that love only became the most important commandment in the New Covenant; they have this idea that love was an unimportant, or at least, a less important value in the Old Covenant than in the New Covenant. Many Christians have this distinction in their minds, where they think the New Covenant is all about love and mercy, while the Old Covenant is all about rules and judgment. Wrong!
- 1) First of all, when Jesus made His famous ‘Greatest Commandment’ statement (see passage above as well as Matt 22:34-40 & Lk 10:25-28) He was actually quoting the Old Covenant Scriptures! He wasn’t making up something new, He was teaching something old – from the Law itself; specifically, the following two Old Testament passages:
  - i) *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*<sup>5</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. – **Deut 6:4-5 (ESV)**
  - ii) *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.* – **Lev 19:18 (ESV)**
- The Great Commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength – and to love your neighbor as yourself – isn’t a New Covenant distinctive, it is the heart of the Old Covenant Scriptures (the Law). The New Covenant does not cancel the Old Covenant, it simply fulfills it and makes it possible to live out, by the power of Jesus’ blood and the Holy Spirit living inside of us (Ez 36:26-27)!
- 2) That the Old Testament Law was all about love, not rules and judgment as many Christians today suppose, is repeatedly affirmed by the New Testament writers and Jesus. Here are several examples:
  - i) *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.<sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment.<sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend ALL the Law and the Prophets.”* – **Matt 22:36-40 (ESV)**

In this passage Jesus clearly states that everything written in the Law and the Prophets (‘all’ v.40) depends on loving God and loving your neighbor. It doesn’t get any clearer than this: the Law and the New Covenant are BOTH based on love. The goals and spirit of both covenants are the same.
  - ii) Elsewhere Jesus said, *So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them* [The Golden Rule], *for this IS the Law and the Prophets.* – **Matt 7:12 (ESV)**

The Law isn’t a legalistic burden to people (as some preachers today teach), it is designed to show us how to treat people with respect and love. How can the Antinomian preachers of our day then say that the Law is now cancelled under the New Covenant? Has treating people with respect, love and dignity – the Golden Rule – been cancelled under the New Covenant?
  - iii) Paul said this same thing in a number of different places. *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*<sup>9</sup> *For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are SUMMED UP in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*<sup>10</sup> *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* – **Rom 13:8-10 (ESV)**

Antinomian preachers say that Paul teaches that the Law has been cancelled. Really? Because it’s clear from this passage that Paul wants us to fulfill the Law. And how do we fulfill the Law? By loving people. According to this passage, each of the individual commandments in the Law serve to give us specifics as to how to love people (v.9). [Note: of course, this does not mean we need to go

back to the ceremonial aspects of the Law, like the sacrifice of animals, but more on that later.]

Has love been cancelled under the New Covenant? No! Then neither has the Law because the Law shows us *how* to love.

iv) Paul repeated this point in Galatians: *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” – Gal 5:14 (ESV)*

v) James said it this way: *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. – James 2:8 (ESV)*

Here again we have a New Testament writer quoting Leviticus 19:18 and telling us to fulfill the Law. The New Testament consistently affirms two things: (1) that loving God and people is the most important thing we can do as believers; and (2) that the Law gives us specific rules and guidelines as to *how* to love other people. Therefore, it is clear that the Law continues to be binding on Christians today.

Some Antinomian preachers today teach that Jesus will judge believers by some ambiguous ‘law of love,’ instead of by the Old Testament Law. What they don’t realize is that the Old Testament Law IS the law of love, as so clearly taught throughout the New Testament!

◆ **Objection: *Doesn’t the Old Testament teach an ethic of ‘eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth’ – which is not loving – while the New Testament Gospel ethic teaches ‘turn the other cheek?’***

1) Many people may here be wondering, “But doesn’t the Old Testament teach an ethic of ‘eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth,’ and didn’t Jesus cancel out just that type of eye-for-eye thinking in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7)?” Matthew 5:38-41, in particular, is the passage which various people throughout history have (mis)understood to mean exactly this – here is what it says: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ [quoting Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21].<sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.<sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.<sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” – Matt 5:38-41 (ESV)*

- Generally, people who believe that the New Covenant has cancelled out the Law interpret the above passage to be teaching three things:
  - i) That the spirit the Old Testament Law is one of justice and retribution, and that the whole Law can be summed up by the statement ‘eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth;’
  - ii) Secondly, that Jesus cancels out the ‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’ law in this passage, instituting in its place a New Testament ethic of love and turning-the-other-cheek;
  - iii) Lastly, because of statements i) and ii) above, Jesus is therefore cancelling out the entire Old Testament Law in this passage.
- Each of these three statements is demonstrably false, yet many Christians today accept them as fact. Why is this? It is because of modern Christianity’s shallow reading and shocking ignorance of the Old Testament. In response to the above three statements consider the following:
  - i) As we just finished proving, in the points previous to dealing with this objection, the Old Testament Law can be summed up by one statement, ‘love your neighbor as yourself’ (Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18), *not* ‘an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth.’ This point about the Old Testament is repeatedly confirmed, and explicitly taught, in the *New Testament* (Matt 7:12; 22:36-40; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8), so it is beyond dispute;
  - ii) Secondly, Jesus did not cancel out the ‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’ law in Matthew 5:38-41, He merely *corrected a mis-application of it* by the Jewish people (more on this below);

- iii) Therefore, the conclusion that Jesus cancels out the entire Old Testament Law in Matthew 5:38-41 is completely unwarranted – especially in light of the fact that, earlier in the same chapter, He explicitly states that He did not come to cancel out the Law (Matt 5:17-19)!
- A question may now have raised itself in the mind of the reader: *How can the New Testament teach that the Old Testament Law is summed up by ‘love your neighbor as yourself,’ when that same Law includes the law of Retribution: ‘eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth?’ Isn’t that a contradiction?* In answer to that question consider the following point . . .
- 2) **The Old Testament contains different kinds of laws.** The first thing a person needs to understand is that the Old Testament contains different kinds of laws: some laws governed the behavior of individuals, while others governed the religious and civil life of the nation (more on these different types of laws in part 2 of this paper). Solving the potential contradiction between the Old Testament laws of ‘eye for an eye’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself,’ is as easy as realizing that the ‘eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth’ law was not a law which was intended to govern individual behavior, but a law which was to be applied by the Jewish courts/leaders in penalizing criminals. Consider the following 3 points:
- i) The Law explicitly teaches individuals not to take vengeance into their own hands;
  - ii) Turning-the-other-cheek is not a New Testament distinctive – it’s found in the Old Testament too;
  - iii) The Law clearly intended ‘eye for an eye’ to apply only to the Jewish courts when penalizing criminals – not to individuals in their day-to-day relationships and life.
- ◆ The 3 points in detail:
- 1) **#1: The Law explicitly teaches that individuals are NOT to take vengeance into their own hands.** In other words, the Law teaches that individuals are not to return an ‘eye for an eye’ in any situation where another person has wronged them. Consider the following passages contained in the Law:
- i) *You shall NOT take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.* – **Lev 19:18 (ESV)** So much for those who think that the Old Testament Law teaches ‘eye for an eye,’ while the New Testament teaches love for your neighbor. Wrong! The Old Testament teaches ‘love your neighbor as yourself’ AND ‘do not take vengeance,’ just like the New Testament.
  - ii) *Do NOT say, “I will repay evil”; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.* – **Prov 20:22 (ESV)** According to this Old Testament passage, individuals were not to take vengeance into their own hands (‘eye for an eye’), but wait on the Lord for deliverance. What the Old Testament actually teaches is exactly opposite from what many Christians today *think* it teaches.
  - iii) *Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips.* <sup>29</sup> *Do NOT say, “I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.”* – **Prov 24:28-29 (ESV)** Can it be any clearer than this? The Old Testament does not teach people to have a revengeful spirit whereby they return an ‘eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ to whomever hurts, harms or insults them; in fact it teaches the opposite.
- That this is true is further confirmed by king David himself, the man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22), in the story of Nabal and Abigail (found in 1 Samuel chapter 25). In that story David, who is on the run from Saul, sends men to a man named Nabal in order to ask for food (25:5-8); in response to David’s request, however, Nabal insults David (25:10-11), which enrages David so much that he decides to kill him (25:12-13, 21-22). Before David can carry out his vengeance, though, Nabal’s wife Abigail comes out to meet David and apologizes on behalf of her husband (25:23-25). This apology assuages David’s anger, which then leads him to make a very clear statement about his understanding of the wrong-ness of taking revenge: *And David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!”* <sup>33</sup> *Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have*

*kept me this day from bloodguilt AND from AVENGING myself with my own hand! . . . [10 days later God struck down Nabal] When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Blessed be the LORD who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from WRONGDOING. The LORD has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head.” Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife. – 1 Sam 25:32-33, 39 (ESV)* From this story it is clear that David knew that taking revenge into his own hands (‘eye for an eye’) was a sin. This is significant because David was a man who loved the Old Testament Law (Ps 119:113; 163; 165) and studied it extensively (Ps 1:2; 119:48; 52; 97). If the Law had taught an ethic of people taking vengeance into their own hands, and returning ‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’ to everyone who insulted and harmed them, David would certainly have known that and would not have considered avenging himself on Nabal to be wrong. But, as this story illustrates, David *did* know that taking revenge was wrong – and he will have known this fact from the Law because one of his life goals was to obey the Law (Ps 119:34; 44; 60; 129; 167; 168).

- The Law gives a very important reason as to why individuals are not to take vengeance into their own hands (‘eye for eye’) – because vengeance belongs to God, and God alone. As Moses clearly wrote in the Law, “Vengeance is MINE [God says], and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.’<sup>36</sup> For the LORD will vindicate his people . . . (Deut 32:35-36 ESV). This point, that vengeance and retribution belong to God alone, and therefore not to individuals, is repeated in many different Old Testament passages (1 Sam 24:12; Ps 18:47; 94:1; Jer 11:20; 15:15; 20:12; Na 1:2).

2) **#2: Turning-the-other-cheek is NOT a New Testament distinctive – it’s in the Old Testament too!**

Something that many Christians are not aware of is the fact, that, in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus makes His statement about ‘turning the other cheek,’ He is in fact alluding to passages in the Old Testament! Consider the following Old Testament passages:

- I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. – Isa 50:6 (ESV)*
  - It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.<sup>28</sup> Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him;<sup>29</sup> let him put his mouth in the dust— there may yet be hope;<sup>30</sup> LET HIM GIVE HIS CHEEK to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults. – Lam 3:27-30 (ESV)*
- How can people argue that the New Testament has cancelled out the Old Testament when it is clear that the ethic, spirit and goals of both are the same?

3) **#3: The Law clearly intended ‘eye for an eye’ to apply only to the Jewish courts when penalizing criminals, not to individuals in their day-to-day relationships and life.**

- Here are the 3 Old Testament passages in which the ‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’ law is stated:
  - When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman’s husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine.<sup>23</sup> But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life,<sup>24</sup> eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,<sup>25</sup> burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. – Ex 21:22-25 (ESV)*
  - Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death.<sup>18</sup> Whoever takes an animal’s life shall make it good, life for life.<sup>19</sup> If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him,<sup>20</sup> fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him. – Lev 24:17-20 (ESV)*

iii) *A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.*<sup>16</sup> *If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing,*<sup>17</sup> *then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.*<sup>18</sup> *The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely,*<sup>19</sup> *then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.*<sup>20</sup> *And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.*<sup>21</sup> *Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.* – **Deut 19:15-21 (ESV)**

- A quick reading of these three passages makes it immediately clear that all three are prescribing penalties and procedures for the Jewish *court system*, not outlining an ethic of behavior for *individuals* in their every-day relationships and lives. Notice the references to ‘judges’ in both the Exodus and Deuteronomy passages (Ex 21:22; Deut 19:17; 18), as well as the repeated references to witnesses, and the procedures for weighing their testimony, in the Deuteronomy passage (verses 15-19). Yet, somehow, modern Christians have taken these passages to mean that the Old Testament teaches people to live out a nasty life ethic of ‘getting people back whenever they hurt or insult you.’ That is not at all what the Old Testament teaches.
- **The ‘eye for eye’ law is, in fact, a MERCIFUL law.** The fact that God prescribed the principle of ‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’ for the Jewish court system actually exhibits His tremendous mercy, because it protected law-breakers from having to face punishments which were disproportionate to their crimes. Think about this; in Muslim countries today it is possible for a person to have their hand cut off for stealing a piece of fruit, or for a woman to receive lashes from a whip for being dressed indecently<sup>5</sup> – are these proportional punishments? In the United States it is possible for a person to spend 25 years in prison for theft if that crime constitutes a third felony offence – is that a proportional punishment (in one case in California a man got 25 years for stealing a set of golf clubs, in another case, a person got 25 years for stealing a slice of pizza)<sup>6</sup>? Throughout the history of Western civilization there have been many instances of laws which applied brutally harsh punishments (flogging, lengthy prison sentences and the death penalty) to relatively petty crimes.
- Yet here in the Old Testament Law – more than 3000 years old! – we have God setting down the principle of proportionality; that the punishments Jewish courts were to enforce were to be in proportion to the crime(s) committed. Thus, if a man stole another man’s ox, he was to return the ox, plus pay four more as punishment (Ex 22:1) – simple justice, yet with mercy. Notice that the penalty for stealing an ox was not to cut off the thief’s hand, or to lock him in jail for decades at a time, thereby ruining his entire life! Oxen for ox. And, if a man were to hit another man and knock out his tooth, then his punishment from the Israelite court would be to have his own tooth knocked out as well (Deut 19:21) – not sue him for thousands of dollars, or lock him in jail for years at a time. Tooth for tooth. What simplicity, what justice and what mercy!
- ◆ **Conclusion: So what, then, was the problem Jesus was addressing in Matthew 5:38-41?** In light of the above points it is clear that in Matthew 5:38-41 Jesus was not implying that the Old Testament teaches a life-ethic of ‘eye for an eye,’ nor was He inaugurating the sweeping replacement of the entire Old Testament Law with some new and vague ‘Law of Love’ (‘turn the other cheek’). As we have seen, the Old Testament Law IS ITSELF the Law of Love, a truth that Jesus Himself taught (Matt 22:36-40; 7:12). When Matthew 5:38-

<sup>5</sup> See article called ‘Taliban treatment of women’ on Wikipedia:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban\\_treatment\\_of\\_women#Punishments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban_treatment_of_women#Punishments) (accessed Jan 13, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> See article called ‘Three strikes law’ on Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_strikes\\_law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_strikes_law) (accessed Jan 13, 2011).

41 is read in this context it becomes clear that some Jews in Jesus' day were misapplying the 'eye for eye' law to the every-day interactions of life. They were going through life looking to get back at people who hurt them – looking to get even – and teaching others to do the same, using the 'eye for eye' law as the basis for their teaching and living. Jesus' point in Matthew 5:38-41 was to rebuke them for that life-ethic; the 'eye for eye' law was never meant to govern human relationships, it was meant to serve as the foundation of the criminal justice system.

b) **Important Continuity #2: Both the Old Covenant Scriptures and the New Covenant Scriptures emphasize that righteousness is not something one can earn through works, but a gift given by God.**

- ◆ This point has been made repeatedly already in this paper, but its opposite is so deeply ingrained in such a large number of Christians today that it must be explicitly made once more: the Old Testament Law was never a works-based covenant in which people could earn righteousness before God by their works. Righteousness has always only ever been a gift which could be freely given by God, and this was just as true under the Old Covenant (the Law) as it is in the New Covenant. Let me prove this to you using just a few passages from the Old Covenant Scriptures themselves:
  - 1) Genesis 15:6 states clearly that Abraham *“believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness”* (NIV). Doesn't this sound a lot like the New Covenant, though? Abraham *believed* and so God *credited* to him – a gift! – righteousness. This is the reality of how God has always operated. Righteousness has never been by works, not even in the Old Covenant. It was only perverted into that by the Pharisees, which caused Paul to make some negative statements about their misuse of the Law, which statements in turn, have created much confusion among modern-day Christians who think that the Law was a works-based covenant that has now been annulled by the Gospel.
  - 2) The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah stated very clearly that people could only be saved by trusting in God, not in themselves and their works – *Thus says the Lord: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. . . .”*<sup>7</sup> *“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.* (Jeremiah 17:5-7 ESV) Having to trust in God for salvation is not a New Covenant distinctive, it was the core of the Old Covenant message as well.
  - 3) Psalm 106:31 is another example of an Old Covenant Scripture which teaches that righteousness is a gift from God. This passage refers back to the time of Phinehas, who in his zeal for the Lord, put a man and his Moabite concubine to death (Num 25:7-8), saying; *“But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was checked. This was credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come”* (NIV). Once again we see the phrase *‘credited to him as righteousness,’* which demonstrates again that even under the Old Covenant righteousness was not something which could be earned, but something which was given as a gift by God.
  - 4) Recognizing that in God's sight no human being could ever be justified or found righteous (Ps 143:2), the Old Covenant – like the New – promised justification for people based in the righteousness of God Himself: *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch [the Messiah] . . . And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord IS our righteousness’”* (Jer 23:5-6 ESV).
  - 5) This point, that even under the Old Covenant righteousness was not to be found in human works but in the Lord is made even more explicit in Isaiah: *“But IN the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult”* (Isaiah 45:25 NIV). Just a few chapters later, Isaiah says this; *“In righteousness you shall be established . . . This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication from me, declares the Lord”* (Isaiah 54:14-17 ESV).
- c) Many more Old Covenant Scriptures could be cited, but the ones listed above are enough to demonstrate that the Law was never intended to be a legalistic, based-on-works covenant. Even under the Law righteousness

was understood to be a gift given to people by God. And to which people did God give this gift of righteousness? That is the topic of the next point which demonstrates another fundamental similarity between the Law (also known as the Mosaic, or Old, Covenant) and the New Covenant . . .

**3. Important Continuity #3: In both the Old and New Covenants faith is the means of attaining to salvation (ie. righteousness before God), not works.**

◆ Many Christians today think that there is a difference in the way of salvation between the Old and New Covenants. They rightly understand that faith is the means of attaining to salvation for all people under the New Covenant, but they mistakenly think that people under the Old Covenant Law had to earn their salvation through works. Not so! The Bible is abundantly clear that the Old Testament saints were saved by faith too. Here are just 2 sample passages which prove this point (Hebrews 11 and Romans 9):

- 1) **Hebrews 11.** *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old [all the people living before the New Covenant] received their commendation” (11:1-2 ESV).* How did people under the Old Covenant ‘earn’ commendation (ie. salvation) from God? By works? No – by faith! Just like under the New Covenant. The rest of Hebrews 11 cites numerous examples of how people who lived before the New Covenant were justified by faith and not by works, here are just a few:
- i) *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous . . . ; (v. 4)*
  - ii) *By faith Enoch was . . . commended as having pleased God; (v. 5)*
  - iii) *By faith Noah . . . became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith; (v. 7)*
  - iv) *By faith Abraham obeyed . . . By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive . . . These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (vv. 8-13)*
  - v) *By faith Isaac . . . By faith Jacob . . . By faith Joseph . . . ; (vv. 20-22)*
  - vi) *By faith Moses . . . [chose] rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (vv. 24-26)*

This is an important passage because it states that Moses was already putting his faith in Christ some 1400 years before Jesus was even born, a point which is confirmed in John 5:45-47 and Luke 24:27. And this same thing is true of all the Old Testament saints; though they did not have the revelation of Jesus that we have now, they were already putting their faith in the Messiah beforehand. Salvation has always been by faith in Jesus – even for people living under the Old Covenant!
  - vii) *And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy— wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended THROUGH their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (vv. 32-40)*

- 2) **Romans 9.** As discussed earlier, Romans chapter 9 explicitly states that the Law was always about faith and never about works. Since this passage was already discussed, I will not comment on it further. *“What*

shall we say, then? . . . Israel pursued a law that would lead to righteousness [but] did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:30-32 ESV).

**b) Important Continuity #4: Both the Old and New Covenants point to Jesus as the only way of Salvation.**

- ◆ In this section we are proving that the Law is not opposed to the Gospel by showing four important and fundamental continuities between the Old and New Covenants. The fourth important continuity between the Law and the New Covenant is that both covenants point to Jesus as the only way of salvation (see footnote below).<sup>7</sup> This comes as a shock to many Christians today who are steeped in the idea that the Law provided people with a means of attaining salvation through works, which is the opposite of salvation in Jesus. But the Old Testament writings (the Law and the Prophets) never taught that a person could be saved by works; everything in them always pointed to the need for Messiah in order to be saved.
- ◆ Consider the following passages:
  - 1) The prophet Isaiah, who was living under the Mosaic Covenant, made this very clear: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him [the coming Messiah, Jesus] the iniquity of us all”* (Isaiah 53:6 ESV).
  - 2) King David, living almost a thousand years before Jesus would inaugurate the New Covenant prophesied explicitly about Christ many times in the Psalms. Look at how clear he was about the necessity of trusting in Jesus, in order to be saved, in the following prophecy: *“I [Jesus] will declare the decree: The LORD [Yahweh – God the Father] has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You [Speaking of Jesus being born into the world through a woman – see John 3:16].<sup>8</sup> Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.<sup>9</sup> You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”* [Speaking of Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming when He will conquer the nations and rule the entire world.]<sup>10</sup> *Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth.<sup>11</sup> Serve the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling.<sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son [the Son of God, who is Jesus], lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.* (Psalms 2:6-12 NKJV)
    - Blessed are all those who put their trust in who? Jesus! If you quoted the last line of this prophecy “Blessed are all those who put their trust in (the Son of God),” to most Christians today and asked them to identify whether the quote is taken from the New Testament or the Old Testament, almost all of them would guess the New Testament. That’s because most Christians have this idea that the Old Testament teaches salvation by works, and the New Testament teaches salvation in Jesus Christ. False! The Old Testament is very clear that salvation could only come through the Messiah, the Son of God, whom we now know to be Jesus.
  - 3) Jesus repeatedly affirmed this point that the Law pointed people to salvation in Himself (not to salvation by works as some people interpret it):
    - **John 5:39-40** – *You search the Scriptures [the Old Covenant Scriptures – the Law] because you think that in them you have eternal life* [the Pharisees thought they could have eternal life based on their

---

<sup>7</sup> It is important to establish these fundamental continuities because so many Christians today are convinced that the Old and New Covenants are opposing, mutually exclusive covenants. The prevailing idea among many churches today is that the New Covenant has cancelled out the Law: they believe that the New Covenant is about Grace, while the Law is about legalism; they believe that the New Covenant is about faith, while the Law is about rules; they believe that the New Covenant is about salvation in Jesus, while the Law is about salvation by works. But this belief is nothing more than a caricature; the only fundamental differences between the Old and New Covenants are that Jesus’ blood in the New Covenant has replaced the need for the ceremonial sacrifices in the Old, and that the Holy Spirit has been provided in the New Covenant to empower people to actually be able to obey (and enjoy) the Law. Other than these two things, the fundamental spirit and goals of both the Law and the New Covenant are the same.

works]; *and it is they that bear witness about me* [The Law was never intended to point people to works, but to Jesus], *yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* (ESV)

- **John 5:45-47** – *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?* (ESV)

In this passage Jesus states twice that Moses wrote about Jesus. What books did Moses write? The books of the Law – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. So, according to Jesus, the Law is all about Him. With this truth in mind how can modern-day preachers assert that the Law is about works and that it has now been cancelled by Grace? The Law is about Jesus, and it is meant to point people to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

- **Luke 24.** After Jesus' Resurrection, in one of the greatest Bible studies of all time, Jesus took two of His disciples through the Law and the Prophets (the Old Covenant Scriptures), while walking to a village named Emmaus, and showed them all the things in those Scriptures which pointed to Himself (Luke 24:27). Why was He able to do that? Because they (the Law and the Prophets) actually are all about Him – not about works.
- **Matthew 5:17-20** – *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.* <sup>18</sup> *For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.* <sup>19</sup> *Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* <sup>20</sup> *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* (ESV)

In this famous passage Jesus clearly states that He is the fulfillment of the Law. In other words, He is basically the Law in the flesh; the embodiment of all of the Law's commands, principles and spirit. When a person who desires to know God studies the Law and obeys it, they end up finding Jesus because He is the fulfillment of that Law.

- 4) And of course, as discussed earlier, Paul stated this point explicitly – the Law was never meant to provide people with a means of salvation through works instead of faith in God: *“What shall we say, then? . . . Israel pursued a law that would lead to righteousness [but] did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works”* (Rom 9:30-32 ESV).

4. **Conclusion to this section about the 4 important continuities between the Law and the New Covenant.** The Law is not opposed to Grace; in fact, the Law is a manifestation of God's grace and works with the Gospel to point people to salvation in Jesus Christ. That the Law is not opposed to Grace is attested to by four important continuities between the Old and New Covenants: (1) Both covenants have as their most important goal for human behavior *love* – love for God and for your fellow man; (2) Both covenants emphasize that righteousness is a gift from God, not something anyone can earn; (3) Both covenants require faith for salvation; and, (4) Both covenants point to Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation.

- ◇ In the next section we will examine the overwhelming body of evidence within the New Testament that obeying the Law is a vital aspect of the Christian life . . .

## Chapter 6 - The whole New Testament teaches that obedience to the Law is mandatory for all Christians.

- Aside: before proving this point, know the following – people cannot be saved by obeying the Moral Law. That was the self-righteous mistake of the Pharisees. Salvation is a *gift* which cannot be earned, and which comes by faith alone (Eph 2:8), when one believes in Jesus Christ and confesses Him as Lord (Rom 10:9-10). Furthermore, no human being is capable of perfectly obeying the Law – we all sin (Rom 3:23; 1 John 1:8) and we all go astray (Isa 53:6).
- Having said all that, however, the Scriptures are clear that ‘by their fruit you will know them’ (Matt 7:15-20). A person who is truly saved will produce works of righteousness (fruit) in keeping with their true repentance (Matt 3:8; Acts 26:20). So what are the works which show that a person is saved? One key fruit which shows that a person is saved is that they obey the Moral Law (which does not include the sacrificial and ceremonial laws, see part 2 of this paper), as outlined in the Old Testament.
- The consistent teaching of the entire New Testament is that the Old Testament Law still matters and that Christians must obey it if they want to love God and be saved from Hell.
- Consider the following 5 points:
  1. The New Testament defines sin as any action which breaks one of God’s Moral laws;
  2. The New Testament teaches that people who flippantly disregard God’s Moral laws are not saved;
  3. The New Testament defines wicked and ungodly people as lawless;
  4. The New Testament defines love for God as obedience to His Moral laws;
  5. Jesus Himself taught that obedience to God’s Moral laws is a key component of salvation.
- **The 5 points in detail:**
  1. ***The New Testament defines sin as any action which breaks one of God’s Moral laws.***
    - ◇ If the New Testament anywhere states that breaking the Law is sin, then the debate about whether or not the Law still applies to Christians today is effectively over, since breaking the Law can only be a sin if the Law still has authority. To state this another way, if the Law has been cancelled by the Gospel, as some preachers today are teaching, then the Law no longer matters – and if the Law no longer matters, it cannot be sin to break its commands! This is so obvious that it seems ridiculous even to have to state it.
    - ◇ The question to answer then, is, Does the New Testament anywhere teach that breaking the Law is sin? And the answer is, Yes – in many places! Consider the following two examples:
      - a) *Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. – 1 John 3:4 (NIV)*
        - ◆ How can Antinomian preachers teach that the Law no longer applies to believers in light of passages such as the above? Impossible! If the Law no longer applies, why does God still count it as sin when people disobey it?!?
      - b) *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the LAW as transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. <sup>11</sup> For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the LAW. <sup>12</sup> So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the LAW of liberty. – James 2:8-12 (ESV)*
        - ◆ In this passage James states unequivocally that transgressing the law is sin (v. 9; 11). He also states that Christians will be judged under the ‘law of liberty’ (v.12), which is his label for the Old Testament Law (see also James 1:22-25 and 4:11). Clearly James considered the Law to be a binding authority for the life of every Christian.

## 2. *The New Testament teaches that people who flippantly disregard God's Moral laws are not saved.*

◇ Consider the following passages:

a) *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father [obedience] who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" – **Matt 7:21-23 (ESV)***

◆ In this passage Jesus makes it clear that the crucial indicator of a person's salvation is obedience – that they do the will of the Father. And what is the Father's will, so that we may obey it? A big chunk of God's will is revealed to us in His laws, many of which are found in the Old Testament. This point is confirmed at the end of the passage when Jesus calls the people who are not saved 'workers of lawlessness.' So according to Jesus, the very definition of an unsaved person is one who is law-less; someone who doesn't follow God's laws, and doesn't care to follow His laws.

◆ Some Antinomian (anti-Law) advocate will no doubt attempt to argue, here, that this passage is not referring to the Old Testament Law. Alright then, to which Law is this passage referring? The Antinomian advocate responds, "The New Testament Law of Love." And how is this New Testament Law of Love defined? Do Antinomian advocates define this New Testament Law of Love by the principle, "Do unto other what you would have them do unto you?" If so, then according to Jesus the most loving thing anyone can do is to obey all of the Moral commands in the Old Testament Law, since that's what those laws are all about (Matt 7:12). As discussed before, Paul clearly instructs believers to obey all the commands of the Law in order to love people better (Rom 13:8-10; see also Rom 3:31). In fact, Jesus stated that the entire Old Testament Law could be summed up by the phrase "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:36-40).

◆ So now Antinomian advocates are trapped: if they admit that Matthew 7:21-23 refers to the Old Testament Law, then a key indicator of a person's salvation is that they obey the Moral Law as outlined in the Old Testament; but if they argue that Matthew 7:21-23 refers instead to some vague New Testament Law of Love, they're right back at the same place, since the New Testament itself defines the Old Testament Law as being the Law of love.

b) *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? [Who are the 'unrighteous'? Law-breakers . . .] Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. – **1 Cor 6:9-10 (ESV)***

c) *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. – **Gal 5:19-23 (ESV)***

◆ Notice in both the above passages how Paul defines the 'unrighteous' (ie. the unsaved); in both cases he defines them by a list of broken *laws*, NOT, as many Western Christians today would assume, by a list of wrong *beliefs*. In other words, there may be people who have right beliefs (ie. believe in Jesus), but who will 'not inherit the kingdom of God' (ie. go to heaven) because they nonetheless lived their lives in defiance of God's laws (see also Matt 7:21-23 above).

◆ That Paul in these passages is defining unrighteousness (what he also calls 'works of the flesh') as disobedience to the Law, is confirmed by the curious statement he makes about the fruits of the Spirit at the end of the Galatians passage: "*against such things there is no law*" (Gal 5:23). Why would he say such a thing about the fruits of the Spirit? Precisely because he is trying to contrast the fruits of the Spirit with the fruits of the flesh, which are by *definition* in his mind, things that are contrary to God's laws. It is clear that in

Paul's mind, law-breakers are not 'saved.'

### 3. ***The New Testament defines wicked and ungodly people as lawless.***

- ◇ This is an important point. According to the Antinomian advocates of our day, believers who come under the blood of Jesus are 'freed' from the Law, which is to say, the Law no longer applies to their life or has any authority over their life. If this was true the New Testament would define believers as law-less, since they are the ones who are no longer under the Law. But the New Testament doesn't define believers as law-less, quite the opposite, it defines wicked and ungodly people as law-less! In fact, Paul goes so far as to say that Jesus saved us from lawlessness (Titus 2:14). This is the exact opposite of what Antinomian advocates teach – they say that Jesus saved us from the Law. Wrong; Jesus saved us from always having to *break* the Law ('lawlessness')! Because of His death we now have the power to *obey* the Law, which brings life and goodness and blessing to our lives (Ps 1:1-2; 119:1).
- ◇ Consider the following passages:
  - a) *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,<sup>12</sup> training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,<sup>13</sup> waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,<sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. – Titus 2:11-14 (ESV)*
    - ◆ This passage could not be more clear – Jesus did not save us from the Law, rather, He saved us from lawlessness, which is law-breaking.
  - b) *And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,<sup>16</sup> as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.<sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. – 2 Pet 3:15-17 (ESV)*
    - ◆ One of the problems which beset the early Church was that certain groups of people twisted the apostle Paul's teachings about the grace of God into a license for sin (Rom 3:5-8; 6:1; 2 Pet 3:15-17). Paul himself rebuked these people repeatedly (Rom 3:8), but in this passage it is the apostle Peter who is warning the church about this error. His wording is instructive – he defines the people propagating this false teaching as 'lawless.' Why would he use this term? Because sin is law-breaking (1 John 3:4).
    - ◆ In other words, according to this passage, people who teach that the Grace of God has nullified the need for obedience to the Law are in 'error' (v. 17) and are 'twisting' the Scriptures (v. 16), which is leading them on a path to 'destruction' (v. 16).
  - c) *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;<sup>5</sup> if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;<sup>6</sup> if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;<sup>7</sup> and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked<sup>8</sup> (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);<sup>9</sup> then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,<sup>10</sup> and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones . . . – 2 Peter 2:4-10 (ESV)*
    - ◆ In this passage the apostle Peter contrasts 'righteous' people like Noah and Lot, with 'lawless' people like the people of Sodom. Throughout the New Testament we see this contrast made again and again – wicked

people are lawless, while righteous people are upheld as law-abiding. In light of this New Testament fact, how is it that certain preachers today can get away with teaching that believers are no longer under the Law?

#### 4. **The New Testament defines love for God as obeying His Moral laws.**

- a) What is the most important commandment in the entire Bible? Jesus said, *“The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’<sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”* – **Mk 12:29-30 (ESV)**
- ◆ So the most important commandment in the entire Bible is to love God wholeheartedly. But what does that mean? What does wholehearted love for God look like? How does the Bible itself define love for God? The Bible is very clear in its answer – loving God means obeying God’s laws. This is the very definition of what it means to love God. Consider the following passages:
    - 1) *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.*<sup>3</sup> *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.* – **1 John 5:2-3 (ESV)**
    - 2) *Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.* – **John 14:21 (NIV)**
    - 3) *Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,<sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:<sup>6</sup> *whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.* – **1 John 2:4-6 (ESV)***
    - 4) *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* – **1 John 3:24 (ESV)**
    - 5) *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.* – **John 14:15 (ESV)**
    - 6) *If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.* – **John 15:10 (NIV)**
- b) In light of these passages how can anyone argue that Christians no longer need to think about the Law? The most important thing any Christian can do is love God wholeheartedly, and these passages clearly show that the way to do that is by obeying His laws.
- ◆ The only argument which can here be offered by Antinomian proponents is that the ‘commandments’ talked about in these passages are referring to something different than the commandments which made up the Old Testament Law. Here are two reasons why this argument has no merit:
    - 1) **Reason #1: Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the Old Testament laws are consistently referred to as the ‘commandments.’**
      - The word ‘commandment(s)’ is used 181 times (ESV version) in the Old Testament alone. In the vast majority of those cases it is used to describe a law, or laws, in the Old Testament Law (eg. Lev 4:22; Deut 19:9; 26:17-18).
      - In the New Testament this usage continues.
        - i) Jesus clearly used the word ‘commandments’ to refer to the Old Testament Law in Matthew 5:19 (see 5:17-19), 15:3-9, 19:17-19, 22:36-40 and all of the corresponding parallel stories in Mark, Luke and John.
        - ii) Paul clearly used the word ‘commandments’ to refer to the Old Testament Law in Romans 7:8-13, 10:5, 13:9, Ephesians 2:15, 6:2, and Hebrews 7:5, 18, 9:19.
      - Clearly, the word ‘commandments’ was generally used in the New Testament to refer to the commandments contained in the Old Testament Law. Thus, ‘keeping’ and ‘obeying’ ‘the

commandments' means keeping and obeying the Old Testament Law. This is one important way in which we love God.

- **Objection: *But didn't Jesus say He was giving us a 'NEW commandment' when He said we are 'to love one another'?*** Yes He did (John 13:34), and Antinomian (anti-Law) proponents have seized on this verse as proof of their doctrine that the Old Testament Law has been replaced by a new law, the Law of Love. This interpretation, however, exposes a shallow understanding of both the Old and New Testaments.

First of all, Jesus could not have meant in John 13:34 that His command to 'love one another' was brand new in the sense of *never-before-been-heard-of*, since the identical commandment was clearly stated in the Old Testament Law (Lev 19:18). Jesus *Himself* taught this fact, that loving one's neighbor was an old command, when He directly quoted the Old Testament Law in His teachings on loving one another (Matt 22:36-40; Mk 12:28-31).

So what, then, did Jesus mean when He said that He was giving His disciples a 'new' commandment in John 13:34? He could not have meant that the command itself was new, only that He was introducing a new standard (ie. raising the bar). The old commandment was 'love your neighbor *as yourself*' (Lev 19:18); but the 'new' commandment for followers of Jesus is that we are to love our neighbor as *Jesus loves us* (John 13:34b). That's a higher standard, but still the same old law. This interpretation is confirmed by the apostle John in 1 John 2:7-8 when he states that the command to love is both 'old' and 'new.'

Thus, in John 13:34 Jesus was not cancelling out the Old Testament Law in order to replace it with a new 'Law of Love,' but quite the opposite – He was raising the standard of the Old Testament Law to new heights. Which brings me to my next point . . .

2) **Reason #2: The Old Testament Law IS ITSELF the Law of Love.** [Note: this argument is exactly copied from earlier in this paper – but is essential to this argument and so is repeated here. Readers who have already read it may wish to skip ahead.]

- Antinomian proponents teach that the Old Testament Law has been replaced with "The New Testament Law of Love." But how, exactly, do they define this thing called 'love?' Do they define love by the principle "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you"? If so, then according to Jesus the most loving thing anyone can do is to obey *all* of the commands in the Old Testament Law, since that's what those commandments are all about (Matt 7:12). As discussed earlier, Paul clearly instructs believers to obey all the commands of the Law in order to love people better (Rom 13:8-10; see also Rom 3:31). If the Antinomian propagates of our day truly are sincere in their desire to see Christians following the 'law of love,' they should stop teaching them that the commands of the Old Testament Law have been cancelled since those laws can be summed up by saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:36-40; Gal 5:14).
- Once a person accepts the New Testament teaching that the Old Testament laws are simply specific stipulations showing us *how* to love God and people better, it quickly becomes obvious that the statement, 'The law of love has cancelled out the Old Testament Law' is a contradiction. How can the general 'law of love' cancel out the specific laws which define love? It makes no sense to say that we must follow the general New Testament command to 'love our neighbors as ourselves' (Matt 22:39), but that it is unimportant whether I obey the specific Old Testament stipulation not to place a stumbling block before a blind man (Lev 19:14). To trip the blind man is precisely to show a lack of love.

5. **Jesus Himself clearly taught that obeying the Old Testament Moral Law was an essential component of Salvation.**

◇ Antinomian preachers are teaching that believers are no longer obligated to obey the Law. This is quite the opposite of what Jesus taught, however. Jesus taught that obeying God's Moral Law was an essential component of salvation.

a) Consider the following passage: *And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"<sup>17</sup> And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments."<sup>18</sup> He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness,<sup>19</sup> Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>20</sup> The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?"<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."<sup>22</sup> When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. – **Matt 19:16-22 (ESV)***

◆ Several things to notice from this famous story:

1) When the rich man asks Jesus what he must do in order to inherit eternal life, Jesus tells him "Keep the commandments" (v.17), and then goes on, in verses 18-19, to spell out five of the Ten Commandments as well as the 'love your neighbour as yourself' commandment from Leviticus 19:18. This response is both an affront and a shock to the modern-day North American Evangelical mindset, which holds that good works and obedience to the Law have nothing to do with salvation. Really?!? The Saviour Himself here states that anyone who wants to enter into eternal life must 'keep the commandments.' The apostle James confirms this point at length in James chapter 2:14-26, saying in verse 24 "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:24 ESV).

- Of course we recognize that no person can be saved by works of the Law, alone, either (Rom 3:20; 9:31-32; 10:8-10). The point of what Jesus is saying to the rich man is not that he must first do works of the Law, in order to be saved; the point is that no one can consider themselves to have entered into salvation (eternal life) if there isn't some fruit (proof) in their life of obedience to God's Moral Law.

2) Evangelicals have been right to stress from this passage, that there is much more to salvation than obedience to the Law – as the rich man himself found out directly from Jesus. Salvation requires much more than obedience to the Law, it most importantly requires a leaving of everything in order to follow Jesus (v. 21). This submission to Jesus leads to a quality of life that is eternal.

- Evangelicals have been wrong, however, in teaching that obedience to the Law is unimportant in the salvation process. Obedience to the Old Testament Law is still a key component of entering into eternal life, as Jesus Himself here teaches. Anyone who spurns the Old Testament Moral Law and lives a life of lawlessness is NOT SAVED, regardless of what they believe and profess about Jesus (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-23).<sup>8</sup> This fact is confirmed in two passages in the book of Revelation, as this next paragraph will make clear . . .

b) **Salvation is made up of two components: (1) faith in Jesus, AND (2) obedience to God's commands.**

◆ Evangelicals have taken up the following mantra with regards to salvation – "By faith alone!" This doctrine has become so engrained in Evangelical thinking that it is considered by most to be unassailable and incontestable; and any person who says otherwise is instantly labeled a heretic. And yet it is unbiblical. As

---

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps a clarifying statement about salvation and works is here required. A person does not need to *first* do any good works in order to be saved; salvation is a free gift from God, and the worst of sinners can be forgiven of an infinite number of the worst of sins, by Jesus' blood. BUT, a person who is truly saved will then produce some proof of their salvation through the good fruit (works) which begins to be produced in their life. Thus, a lawless person with no good fruit is not saved.

was just shown above, the apostle James himself did not agree that salvation was by faith alone, stating clearly that people are saved by faith and works (James 2:24). The book of Revelation also makes this clear. Consider the following two passages:

1) *Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God AND their faith in Jesus. – Rev 14:12 (ESV)*

- Who are the saints according to this passage? Those whose faith is in Jesus Christ? Incomplete! The correct answer, according to this passage, is, those whose faith is in Jesus Christ *AND* who keep the commandments of God. Once again we see that obedience to the Moral Law as revealed in the Old Testament is an essential component of salvation.

2) *Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring [the saints], on those who keep the commandments of God AND hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea. – Rev 12:17 (ESV)*

- Once again, how does the apostle John define the saints? Those who believe in Jesus? Incomplete! The correct answer, according to this passage, is, those who 'hold to the testimony of Jesus' (ie. believe in Jesus) *AND* keep the commandments of God.

- **Conclusion:** The consistent testimony of the entire New Testament is that the Old Testament Law still matters in the life of believers. According to the New Testament, anyone who wants to love God and be saved from Hell must submit to the Law. We see this point made throughout the New Testament in 5 ways:

1. The New Testament defines sin as any action which breaks one of God's Moral laws;
2. The New Testament teaches that people who flippantly disregard God's Moral laws are not saved;
3. The New Testament defines wicked and ungodly people as lawless;
4. The New Testament defines love for God as obedience to His Moral laws;
5. Jesus Himself taught that obedience to God's Moral laws is a key component of salvation.

## Chapter 7 - 2 Corinthians 3:4-11: The relationship between the Law and the Spirit (the Law does not kill people and the Spirit does not kill the Law).

- There are several passages in the New Testament which seem to imply that since Christians have the Holy Spirit, they no longer need the Law. These same passages also seem to imply that the Law actually kills people, whereas the Spirit gives life to people. Antinomians have picked up on these passages and used them to 'prove' that the Law and the Spirit are opposed to each other, and that Christians who attempt to obey the Law will die spiritually. This is a horrendous misuse of the texts and I will now deal (in two parts) with the primary passage Antinomians use for this purpose, which is 2 Corinthians 3:4-11. The truth of the matter is (as I will now show) that the Law and the Spirit are inseparable: one cannot obey the Law apart from the filling of the Spirit, and one cannot be full of the Holy Spirit unless one is serious about obeying the Law.
1. **Part 1: verses 4-6.** *Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, <sup>6</sup> who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (ESV)*
  - a) Truth from this passage: 'the letter (speaking of the Law) kills, but the Spirit gives life.' I do not wish to dispute this fact, since the apostle Paul so clearly states that it is so. Therefore it must be so. My question is, however, *In what way does the letter kill?* Antinomians interpret this passage to mean that the Law brings death to any Christian who tries to keep it. They believe that preachers who teach the Law are actually bringing spiritual death to their hearers, and that Christians who study the Law and attempt to obey it cannot experience the abundant Spirit-life spoken of in the Gospels. But is that really what Paul is saying here? If so, we have a problem because then this passage directly contradicts a number of other passages in Scripture (here is just a tiny sampling of examples):
    - 1) For example, Matthew 5:19-20, where Jesus states explicitly that anyone who teaches and does the Law will be called 'great' in the kingdom of heaven, but that anyone who is 'relaxed' in their obedience to the Law, and/or teaches others to do the same, will be called 'least' in the kingdom of heaven;
    - 2) Then there's Romans 8:4-7 where Paul states clearly that the mind of the flesh does not submit to the Law (v. 7), but that the mind of the Spirit obeys it (v. 4);
    - 3) And Romans 3:31 where Paul teaches explicitly that Christians are supposed to 'uphold the Law;'
    - 4) And Romans 7:21-25, where Paul states both that he 'delights in the Law' (v.21) and that he 'serves the Law' (v. 25);
    - 5) And James 1:25, where James calls the Law 'liberty' and promises blessing for all those who 'persevere' in studying and obeying it;
    - 6) And 1 John 5:1-4, where John states clearly that one of the primary ways in which believers show their love for God is by obeying His commandments (found in the Law), and that those laws are 'not burdensome;'
    - 7) And there are the many passages, as well, in the Psalms, where the Psalmists expounded on the blessings of studying and obeying the Law, as well as the life it brought to their relationship with God (eg. Ps 1:1-2; 19:7-11; 40:8; 112:1; 119:1; 48; etc., etc.);
    - 8) And of course there are God's promises to both Moses and Joshua of blessing and success to all those who study and obey the Law (Josh 1:7-8; Deut 17:18-20; 30:9-10).
  - ◆ **Conclusion:** 2 Corinthians 3:6 CANNOT be teaching that obeying the Law will kill a Christian's spiritual life, nor that teaching others to obey the Law will kill their spiritual life, because it would then contradict many other passages of Scripture.

b) **The question then is, in what sense DOES the ‘letter kill but the Spirit give life’ with respect to the Law?**

◆ **Answer: *In the same way that the letter of anything, without the spirit and heart of that thing, is dead.***

- 1) The important thing to realize is that the Law is much *more* than just a bunch of words (‘letters’) on a piece of paper (or tablets of stone); the heart behind it is love (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8), and its purpose is to point people to *faith* in Jesus Christ (Lk 24:27; John 1:45; 5:46; Rom 9:31-32). If you remove the heart, which is love, and the purpose, which is faith in Christ, then of course the letters that are left will not be able to bring life. And this is what the Jewish religious establishment of Paul’s day had done; they turned the Law into a dry and lifeless set of rules, void of love and faith; they followed the rules legalistically without actually bothering to be loving towards other people and without feeling the need to actually trust in God. That kind of loveless rule-following is indeed death! But it doesn’t mean that the rules themselves *cause* death; just that following the rules *without* love and faith is death. Nor does it mean that the rules are unimportant – the rules provide a framework around which love and faith can grow.
  - **Eg.** For example, consider the human body: a skeleton without heart, organs and flesh is dead. But that doesn’t mean that the skeleton itself *causes* death, does it? No! Nor does it mean that the skeleton is unimportant, since a heart, organs and flesh that do not have a skeleton are mush! Conversely, if you strip a body of its heart, organs and flesh, leaving only the skeleton, it will die. So also with the Law; the Jewish leaders had stripped the Law of its heart and spirit, and that kind of lifeless religiosity kills – but the fault lay with their hearts NOT with the Law.
  - A big problem with the Antinomian movement of today is their mis-diagnosis of the fatal disease which had infected the Jewish religious establishment of Paul’s day: the Law is not what was killing them, lack of faith was. The Law was always meant to operate hand-in-hand with faith (Rom 9:30-32).
- 2) **‘The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.’** This same principle holds for many things, not just the Old Testament Law. Consider, for example, the case of a parent who makes rules to keep their children safe. Imagine this family lives on a busy street, complete with sidewalks and boulevards; now imagine that the parents of this family lay down a firm rule for all the children “No one is allowed to set so much as one foot on the boulevard.” The point of the rule, obviously, is to keep the children from wandering out onto the street where they could be badly hurt, or even killed. Everyone would agree that this rule is a good one – it has the children’s best interests in mind. Imagine for a moment, however, that the children decide to obey the letter of this rule, but not its spirit. What good is that? Imagine that one rebellious but enterprising youngster hops on his bike and smugly *drives* onto the boulevard the moment his parents are not watching; he has not technically broken the letter of the law in this case, since he has not physically set his *feet* onto the actual boulevard, but he has most certainly broken the *spirit* of the Law, and could bring death upon himself should he happen to fall into the street – which is what his parents were attempting to prevent by making the rule in the first place. Or imagine that another child, also rebellious and enterprising, decides to pole-vault across the boulevard and directly onto the street using an improvised pole of some kind. Again, this child has kept the *letter* of the law, by not setting his actual feet onto the boulevard, but has blatantly disobeyed the *spirit* of the law, and could be killed because of it due to a passing car.
  - Notice that in both of these examples the rule itself is not the problem – the children’s disobedient and rebellious hearts are the problem. In fact, the rule is necessary and any children that obey it will experience life as a result. BUT, in order to enjoy the benefits of the rule, the children must obey it both in letter *and* in spirit – the letter itself will kill. Same with the Old Testament Law!
- 3) **Conclusion:** God never meant the Law to be an end in itself; from the very beginning He always intended the Law to be obeyed in *partnership* with His Spirit, by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 9:30-32). This is why He

promised in the *Old* Testament, that under the coming New Covenant He would write His laws on people's hearts (Jer 31:31-34; Ez 36:26-29). Thus, the New Covenant does not cancel out the Law, rather it consummates the partnership between God's Spirit and God's laws by putting God's laws into people's hearts. What this means is that because of God's indwelling Spirit, believers under the New Covenant have the power and desire to actually obey the Law properly (ie. *want* to, as opposed to *have* to – see Phil 2:13). This is life! The Spirit and the Law are not opposed to each other, so that somehow the Spirit gives life to people, but the Law kills people – no! Paul said the Law is 'good' (Rom 7:12). It's just that the Law was always meant to be obeyed *IN* the Spirit, and so apart from the Spirit it brings death.

- **The Law and the Spirit work hand-in-hand together.**

- i) **Q:** What is the fruit of the Spirit? **A:** Love (Gal 5:22).

- ii) **Q:** And what do all the Moral laws contained in the Old Testament Law define? **A:** What it means to love! (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8)

- iii) **Conclusion:** Therefore, the Spirit and the Law cannot be opposed to each other since the One loves and the other defines the boundaries of what love looks like; thus the Spirit Himself loves to obey the Law, and so will all those who have the Spirit operating inside of them.

2. **Part 2: verses 7-11.** *Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end,<sup>8</sup> will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?<sup>9</sup> For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it.<sup>11</sup> For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. – 2 Cor 3:4-11 (ESV)*

a) **'The ministry of death, carved in letters of stone.'** Antinomians often point to this phrase as proof that the Law has been cancelled for believers, since it is a 'ministry of death.' But again, as has been proven repeatedly throughout this paper, Paul's point is not that the Law itself brings death to people (Remember that Paul called the Law 'good' (Rom 7:12) and stated that Christians must continue to 'uphold' it (Rom 3:31)), but rather that trying to obey the Law by human effort alone, *without God's indwelling Spirit*, brings death to people. The point is that we need God's Spirit, not that we don't need the Law!

◆ **A car without an engine.** Perhaps an illustration will help: imagine that you have a car sitting in your driveway that doesn't have an engine. This car may be a good-quality car in excellent condition, but without an engine it's not going to take you anywhere – it is, for all intents and purposes, 'dead.' What that car needs is an engine (a power supply) and some fuel – then it could really take you places. But what would you say if a friend brought a powerful engine over to your house and said, "Now you don't need the car, let's take this engine for a ride!" You'd think that was ridiculous. Why? Just because a car without an engine is 'dead' doesn't mean that if you have an engine you don't need the car! Both the engine and the car are needed. Yet this is the same mistake Antinomians make concerning the Law and the Spirit: they think that because believers under the New Covenant now have God's indwelling Spirit that they no longer need to pay attention to the Law. Absurd! God's Law and God's Spirit work hand-in-hand together – and how could they not? God's Law is simply an expression of His Character; and His Character and His Spirit are not at odds with each other!

b) **What then does Paul mean by calling the Law – apart from the indwelling Spirit of God – a 'ministry of death'?**

◆ It is the province of the Law to do two things:

- 1) Define the responsibilities of human beings according to the character of God ('Be holy as I am holy' – 1 Pet 1:15-17; Lev 19:2);

2) Define penalties for falling short of those responsibilities.

- ◆ The problem is, of course, that we human beings are all born sinful and prone to sin – therefore, apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, we regularly fall short of what God’s goodness demands (the Law) and it is the Law’s job, then, to condemn us (ie. prescribe the penalties for falling short). It is in this sense that the Law is a ‘ministry of death.’ This does not mean, however, that the Law is bad; the Law has always been good (Rom 7:12) because God is good and the Law defines what goodness looks like. The problem lies not with the Law, but with people (Rom 7:13) – the Law is good, but people are bad, and the Law condemns badness. What is needed is *not* for people to get rid of the Law (the Antinomian solution), which is good, but for people to overcome their badness by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus live (Rom 8:1-11). A life of obedience to the Law in the power of the Holy Spirit is the abundant life indeed (see Psalm 19:7-11).

## Chapter 8 - What is the purpose of the Law for modern-day believers? What are we to do with it?

- The Law has three primary purposes for believers today: (1) to show us what righteousness looks like; (2) to give us insight into what God's character is like; and (3) to act as the standard by which we will be measured on Judgment Day.
1. **To show us what righteousness looks like.** Though they have fallen out of fashion with many Christians today, holiness and righteous living are essential components of the Gospel message. Believers are supposed to passionately desire and vigorously apply themselves to the attainment of holy and virtuous character. As the apostle Paul twice exhorted Timothy, "pursue righteousness" (1 Ti 6:11; 2 Ti 2:22). The writer of Hebrews stated, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:4 NIV).
    - a) We see what righteousness looks like by contemplating two things: (1) the Old Testament Law; and, (2) the person of Jesus. Those two, together, show us how to live a righteous life; the Law shows us the *principles and precepts* of righteousness and Jesus shows us the *spirit* behind those principles and precepts.
    - b) **Practical application:** Believers today should regularly read and meditate on the Old Testament Law (Deut 17:18-20; Josh 1:8; Ps 1:1-2). In doing so, they will grow in personal holiness as they learn about the many things which please God and the many things which displease Him. For example, when a person comes across Leviticus 19:32 and reads, "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD" (NIV), they will be convicted of the fact that one of God's requirements for holy living is that His children show respect towards elderly people. Or when a person comes across Leviticus 19:13 and reads, "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until morning" (ESV), they will be convicted of their responsibility before God to pay their hired workers fairly and promptly, lest they incur God's wrath and judgment.
      - ◆ The problem today is that many Christians fail to live according to laws such as these because they do not take the time to meditate on God's righteous commands, as revealed in the Old Testament Law. Ignorance is no excuse! God has given us His Word so that we can know what pleases and displeases Him.
    - c) Meditating on the Old Testament Law (Genesis – Deuteronomy) is one essential component for living a holy life, and the Bible promises many blessings for those who meditate on it. Consider the following verses:
      - 1) And when he [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of *this law* [speaking specifically of the Pentateuch; Genesis – Deuteronomy], approved by the Levitical priests.<sup>19</sup> And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by *keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them,*<sup>20</sup> that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel. –  
**Deuteronomy 17:18-20 (ESV)**
      - 2) This *Book of the Law* [speaking specifically of the Pentateuch; Genesis – Deuteronomy] shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall *meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* –  
**Joshua 1:8 (ESV)**
      - 3) *Blessed is the man* who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;<sup>2</sup> but his *delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.* –  
**Psalms 1:1-2 (ESV)**
      - 4) *I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.* – **Psalms 40:8 (ESV)**
      - 5) *Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!* – **Psalms 112:1 (ESV)**

6) *I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.* –  
**Psalm 119:48 (ESV)**

2. **Purpose #2 of the Old Testament Law: To give us insight into God's character.** It is sad that so many Christians today completely ignore the Old Testament, because one of the wonderful benefits of studying the Old Testament Law is that it gives us tremendous insights into God's holy character. For example, when a person meditates on the law in Leviticus 19:9-10 which says, "*When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God*" (ESV), they will be given a profound insight into the heart of God – God *really* cares about poor people, strangers, foreigners and outcasts. He cares so much about them that He put in place laws in Old Testament Israel to ensure that they be fed and taken care of.

◇ Or when a person comes across the law in Leviticus 25:35-38 which says, "*If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you.* <sup>36</sup> *Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you.* <sup>37</sup> *You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit.* <sup>38</sup> *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God*" (ESV), they will again be given a profound insight into the love and compassion of God, and how He expects us to treat people who are struggling and/or in crisis.

3. **Purpose #3 of the Old Testament Law: To act as the standard by which we will be judged on Judgment Day.**

◇ Many Christians today are under the illusion that believing in Jesus saves a person from having to face judgment, and so live carelessly, not realizing that the blood of Jesus has not absolved them of responsibility for their actions. This belief has led to much licentiousness in the Western Church, and has caused many Christians to ignore the Law, thinking of it as irrelevant. This not what the Gospel message is about. Let me here state three important truths, which I will then prove from Scripture:

- a) Every person must someday stand before God to give an account of the deeds done while in the body – *including Christians*;
- b) Forgiveness of sins is available, but actual repentance is required;
- c) The Law is the standard by which we will be judged.

◇ In detail:

a) **Every person must someday stand before God to give an account of the deeds done while in the body – *including Christians*.**

◆ It is the consistent testimony of Scripture that every person must someday stand before God and be accountable for the deeds done while in this life. Believing in Jesus does not exempt a person from accountability. Consider the following passages seriously:

1) *Therefore you [the Christians in Rome, see 1:7] have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.* <sup>2</sup> *We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.* <sup>3</sup> *Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?* <sup>4</sup> *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?* <sup>5</sup> *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself [remember, these are Christians he is speaking to, not non-Christians!] on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.* <sup>6</sup> *He will render to each one according to his works:* <sup>7</sup> *to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and*

honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. <sup>9</sup> There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, <sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For God shows no partiality. – **Rom 2:1-11 (ESV)**

- **Verse 6:** This passage is very clear that being a Christian does not exempt one from facing wrath and judgment. Verse 6 states clearly that all people, including Christians, will be judged or rewarded ‘according to their works.’ In other words, people will be judged according to what they *DO*, not what they *BELIEVE*. This is very important to realize because many Christians today have fallen under the spell of Antinomian preachers, who say that believing in the blood of Jesus rescues us from all judgment and wrath. Wrong! If belief in Jesus does not lead a person into righteous living, than that belief cannot save that person from judgment (James 2:14-26)!
  - **Verses 4-5:** Mere belief in Jesus does not save a person from judgment – repentance does. True belief in Jesus will lead a person to repentance, assuredly, and is a key component of repentance, but it is the *repentance* that saves us from God’s wrath (see above Rom 2:4-5). What is repentance? Three things: (1) to feel remorse over one’s sins; (2) to confess one’s sins; and most importantly, (3) to TURN AWAY from one’s sins.
  - **Verse 7:** Who will inherit eternal life? Most Christians today would answer “Whoever professes faith in Jesus Christ.” But this verse clearly gives a different answer: “*those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give eternal life.*” Right living is the key to eternal life, not right believing (see also James 2:19). Someone will object, “But this contradicts what Paul says about believing and being saved in Romans 10:10.” No it does not. In the modern-day Western mindset we think of the word ‘belief’ as a mental assent, or agreement with, a particular truth or doctrine. Thus, we would say that anyone who thinks in their mind that Jesus is the Son of God is a believer. But in the Bible ‘belief’ does not merely denote thoughts that occur in the mind, it denotes a conviction that translates into what a person does and changes how they live. Thus, true belief is not merely agreeing in one’s mind that Jesus is the Son of God, but actually living as if that is true.
- 2) *For we [Christians] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.* – **2 Cor 5:10 (ESV)**
- This passage is clear: every Christian must someday stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be held accountable for their actions in this life. The blood of Jesus does not magically forgive people so that they can live however they please!
- 3) *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, <sup>37</sup> for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.* – **Matt 12:36-37 (ESV)**
- This is Jesus Himself speaking; people will be accountable on judgment day even for the words they speak!
- 4) *For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.* – **Matt 16:27 (ESV)**
- Too many preachers today are teaching nonsense, that the blood of Jesus causes God to see people as perfect, even when they aren’t. He isn’t blind! Each person will be repaid by Jesus according to what they have *done*.
- 5) *Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will ALL stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup> for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” <sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.* – **Rom 14:10-12 (ESV)**

6) *And all the churches will know that I [Jesus] am He who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you [speaking to Christians] as YOUR WORKS deserve. – Rev 2:23 (ESV)*

- ◆ **Conclusion:** These passages give sobering reminders of the importance of righteous living, because we will each have to someday stand before God and give an account of how we lived our lives.

b) **There is complete forgiveness to be had through the blood of Jesus, for any and all sins, but they must be TURNED FROM (ie. repented of).**

- ◆ Some people may be moved to despair by the above point, thinking that they are now doomed to face judgment for past wrongs which they cannot undo. This is not the case. It is possible to have past sins cleaned so as not to face future judgment . . . and that is what this point is about. Consider the following passages:
  - 1) *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. – Psalm 32:1-2 (ESV)*
  - 2) *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.<sup>9</sup> He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.<sup>10</sup> He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.<sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;<sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. – Psalm 103:8-12 (ESV)*
  - 3) *Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.<sup>19</sup> He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. – Micah 7:18-19 (ESV)*
  - 4) *But as it is, he [Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. – Heb 9:26 (ESV)*
- ◆ How can both these sets of passages be true? The first set of passages (paragraph a) above) clearly teach that each person – including Christians – will someday give an account before God of how they lived their lives, and will be repaid by God according to what they have done, both good and bad. But this second set of passages clearly teaches that God can forgive sin so thoroughly that it is not counted against a person. It seems like there is a contradiction between the two sets of passages, does it not? Are we accountable for all of our actions, or are we forgiven for all of our actions? If God holds a Christian accountable for the wrong deeds they have done (Matt 16:27) and wrong words they have spoken (Matt 12:36-37), how can that person be said to have been forgiven (Heb 9:26; Ps 103:12)?
  - Many modern-day evangelical Christians have solved this problem by ignoring the first set of passages (about accountability) and focusing only on the second set (the ones about forgiveness). As a result of this, a large number of Christians today have come to assume that all of their sins have been completely forgiven merely because they believe in Jesus (with their minds), and call themselves ‘Christians.’ This, in turn, has led to a shocking apathy towards holiness in the Western Church, as most Western Christians do not fear consequences from God regarding their sinful choices – they blithely believe that Jesus’ death on the cross has *automatically* forgiven them of all their sins, past and future, regardless of the actual state of their heart.
  - But the Bible teaches differently – and any interpretation of Scripture which ignores such a large number of passages cannot be true. The true interpretation of Scripture in this matter will take into account both the passages about accountability and the passages about total forgiveness. So here is the truth of the matter: ***our actions and God’s forgiveness are closely tied together***. Let me explain . . .

- ◆ **HOW TO RECEIVE COMPLETE FORGIVENESS.** A person is not forgiven of all their sins merely because they believe in Jesus with their mind (James 2:19-20), or because they once prayed a prayer to ‘ask Jesus into their heart’ (though both of these things are good). According to the Bible people are only forgiven by God when they REPENT. Unfortunately, Western Christians have reduced repentance to an intellectual transaction, rather than a physical turning away from one’s sins. Though true repentance will most certainly include belief in Jesus and, quite probably, a prayer to receive Him as Saviour, the fruit of true repentance in a person’s life is that, out of their remorse for the bad things they have done, and out of their need for God, they turn to God and away from their old deeds. In other words, when a person truly repents their *actions* will change, not just their *beliefs* – they will move (over time) from wickedness to righteousness in their behaviour, words and attitudes.
  - This is a sobering definition of repentance because it means that many people who think of themselves as Christians, but who are indifferent to the need for holiness and godly character, and who are either ‘dabbling’ or consumed with various besetting sins, are actually not forgiven for these many sins, though they once ‘asked Jesus into their heart;’ these Christians will someday face God’s judgment for their sinful actions – either judgment to Hell (Matt 7:21-23; Heb 10:26-27), or severe discipline involving intense pain and loss in this lifetime (1 Cor 11:27-30) and/or intense pain and loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:15).
  - Consider the following verses which prove that forgiveness follows repentance, rather than a simple change of belief:
    - i) *IF my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, THEN I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* – **2 Chron 7:14 (ESV)**
    - ii) *He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.* – **Prov 28:13 (NIV)**
    - iii) *Bear fruit [actions] in keeping with repentance.* – **Matt 3:8 (ESV)**
    - iv) *Therefore, O King Agrippa, I [Paul] was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,<sup>20</sup> but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, PERFORMING DEEDS in keeping with their repentance.* – **Acts 26:19-20 (ESV)**
    - v) *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and DO THE WORKS you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.* – **Rev 2:5 (ESV)**
  - Notice the importance in each of these passages of true repentance in order to receive forgiveness, the fruit of which, in each case, means that a person’s actions and behavior change. This realization about the importance of holy living and deeds should lead us to the following conviction: *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.* – **2 Cor 7:1 (ESV)**
- ◆ Someone may here argue – **“Does this mean that I must first do good works in order to be forgiven and/or saved?”** No, all you must do is confess and repent and at that moment you will be forgiven – *IF* your repentance is real (see Jesus’ answer to the thief on the cross, Lk 23:43). How will you know if your repentance is real? Several things: (1) You will feel remorse over the wrong deeds you are repenting of; (2) you will hate the deeds you are repenting of and war against them; (3) good works will begin to follow because you will begin turning from the old way of behaving to a new way of behaving.
- ◆ **Repentance is not a one-time thing.** Some popular teachers of our day have gotten this notion into their heads that because Jesus’ death was sufficient for all of mankind’s sins – past, present and future – a person

only needs to confess and repent once in their lifetime. This is nonsense; we need to confess our sins and repent of them every time we fail, which for us fallen human beings means *quite regularly!* As 1 John states, *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. IF we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*<sup>10</sup> *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”* – **1 John 1:8-10 (ESV)**

- ◆ One further thing needs to here be said about repentance: a person may genuinely repent of their deeds, but then later return to those same deeds; such a person will not be forgiven of his (or her) deeds on the Day of Judgment. This is a sobering thought, but consider the clear teaching from God in the following two passages: Ezekiel 18: 21-32 and Ezekiel 33:12-20.

c) **Love is the standard against which we will be judged, and the Law defines what love is. Therefore, we will be judged according to the Law.**

- ◆ So far in this section we have established the following two points: (1) that God will someday hold every person accountable for the deeds they did in this lifetime; (2) that God only forgives those who truly repent of their wicked deeds and turn towards deeds of righteousness.
- ◆ The important question then is, What are the good deeds of righteousness which God requires of us? Several important passages must be here be examined:
  - 1) *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* – **Mic 6:8 (ESV)**
  - 2) *And behold, a man came up to him [Jesus], saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”*<sup>17</sup> *And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.”*[speaking of the Old Testament Law]<sup>18</sup> *He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness,*<sup>19</sup> *Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* – **Matt 19:16-19 (ESV)**
  - 3) *And one of them, a lawyer, asked him [Jesus] a question to test him.*<sup>36</sup> *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”*<sup>37</sup> *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.*<sup>38</sup> *This is the great and first commandment.*<sup>39</sup> *And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.*<sup>40</sup> *On these two commandments depend ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.* – **Matt 22:35-40 (ESV)**
- ◆ The clear teaching of Scripture is that the most important requirement God has of all people is to love – to love Him and to love others. Thus it is certain that love will be the defining standard by which every person’s actions will be judged on Judgment Day. The important question, then, is how will love be defined on that Day? Many people today (Christian and non-Christian) mistakenly think of themselves as loving (‘good’) people because they judge themselves according to our culture’s false and sappy definitions of love. But that is not the definition of love that God uses. As the above passages make clear (and other passages like Matt 7:12 and Rom 13:8-10) God has a robust definition of love that is defined by the commandments contained within the Old Testament Law – not by Hollywood’s cheap sentimentality. This definition of love includes, among many other things, such commands as ‘don’t lie,’ ‘don’t cheat’ and ‘don’t steal’ (Lev 19:11), as well as ‘don’t covet’ (Deut 5:21) or lust (Deut 5:18; cf. Matt 5:27-30). When people compare themselves to this standard of love, as revealed in the Old Testament Law, their reaction is more likely to include remorse, repentance and humility, than the self-satisfaction and smug apathy that is so prevalent today (ie. ‘I’m a good person’).
- ◆ **Conclusion:** Since love is the standard by which all people will be judged on the Day of Judgment, and since the Old Testament Law defines what true love looks like, it is clear that all people (including Christians) will

be judged by God, in large part, according to the commands contained in that Law. This is, in fact, the point that is made in James 2:8-12, which passage ends by saying, “*So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty*” (James 2:12 ESV). [Note: The ‘law of liberty’ is what James calls the Old Testament Law, see James 1:25 and 4:11-12.]

# Part 2: Which Old Testament Laws apply today and which do not?

## Chapter 1 - Four types of laws.

- In Part 1 of this paper we established the fact that the Law is still binding on Christians today. The question which now needs to be addressed in Part 2 of this paper is, *Which parts?* Obviously there is some discontinuity between the commands contained in the Old Testament Law and our lives today. We no longer sacrifice animals in our day and age (Lev ch.3-4, 7, 9); we no longer feel obligated to circumcise our sons (Gen 17:11); and very few believers today bother to obey the command to put a railing around their roof (Deut 22:8). On the other hand, the purpose of this entire paper is to prove that the New Covenant has not abolished the commands of the Law in the life of believers today. So which commands apply to our lives and which ones do not?

1. **Cancelled, unless explicitly restated in the New Testament?** The predominant view among many Christians today is that believers do not have to worry about this problem since every commandment in the Old Testament Law is to be considered automatically cancelled, unless explicitly upheld or restated in the New Testament. But this view has serious problems: for example, is bestiality still a sin? Almost every Christian would answer 'yes.' The Law clearly states that it is in Leviticus 20:15-16, but this command is nowhere repeated or explicitly upheld in the New Testament. So then, if one operates on the assumption that only commandments which have been explicitly upheld or restated in the New Testament are binding on Christians today, then bestiality should not be considered a sinful act by modern-day believers. Such a conclusion is obnoxious and obviously wrong!

Or consider another example: Is it wrong to curse a deaf person or to trip up a blind person? The Law in the Old Testament clearly says that it is: *"You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord"* (Lev 19:14 ESV). Another Old Testament Law passage says *"Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road"* (Deut 27:18 ESV). But neither of these commandments is explicitly upheld or repeated in the New Testament. Of course, Antinomian (anti-Law) proponents will vociferously argue that this is a misrepresentation of their position and that obviously such actions as cursing the deaf, and tripping and misleading the blind are sinful.

On what basis, though, do they make this claim, since they consider all of the Old Testament laws to be cancelled unless expressly repeated in the New Testament? (see footnote below)<sup>9</sup> On the basis, they may answer, of the 'law of love,' which is the guiding law of the New Covenant. But how, exactly, do they define this thing called 'love?' Do they define love by the principle "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you"? If so, then according to Jesus the most loving thing anyone can do is to obey *all* of the commands in the Old Testament Law, since that's what those commandments are all about (Matt 7:12). As discussed earlier, Paul clearly instructs believers to obey all the commands of the Law in order to love people better (Rom 13:8-10; see also Rom 3:31). If the Antinomian propagators of our day truly are sincere in their desire to see Christians following the 'law of love,' they should stop teaching them that the commands of the Old Testament Law have been cancelled since all of those laws can be summed up by saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:36-40; Gal 5:14).

Once a person accepts the New Testament teaching that the Old Testament laws are simply specific stipulations showing us *how* to love God and people better, it quickly becomes obvious that the statement, 'The law of love has cancelled out the Old Testament Law' is a contradiction. How can the general 'law of love' cancel out the specific laws which define love? It makes no sense to say that we must follow the general New Testament command to

---

<sup>9</sup> Note: in this one paragraph I am repeating an argument I made in part 1, which the reader may already have read, unless they skipped directly to part 2. The argument is extremely important as a foundation for part 2, which deals with the application of the Law, so I include it again.

'love our neighbors as ourselves' (Matt 22:39), but that it is unimportant whether I obey the specific Old Testament stipulation not to place a stumbling block before a blind man (Lev 19:14). To trip the blind man is precisely to show a lack of love.

And yet, as stated before, there are indeed some laws in the Old Testament which we no longer are obligated to follow. How do we discern which laws to follow and which ones not to follow? That is the topic of the next section.

## 2. 4 types of laws.

- ◇ The Old Testament is not just a book of moral guidelines written to individuals to use in their personal life – if it had been, it would be a lot simpler for us to understand and apply to our lives today. The Old Testament, however, was written to instruct and guide the life of an entire *nation* – the ancient people of Old Testament Israel. As a result, it contains a wide breadth of different types of laws; not only laws to govern individual behavior, but also laws to guide the allotment of land in ancient Israel, laws to govern their hunting and farming practices, laws to govern their religious worship, laws to govern their court system and many other types of laws. When you also consider the fact that pieces of the Old Testament were already being written 3000 – 4000 years ago, and that massive technological and societal changes have swept the earth in the centuries and millennia since then, it's not surprising that some of the laws in the Old Testament have become obsolete, while others must be adapted in order to be obeyed today. Furthermore, since the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, massive changes have been wrought in the religious life of God's people. As a result of these factors, as well as some others which will also be examined, the Old Testament contains a mixed bag of laws, some which must still be obeyed by believers today, others which *cannot* be obeyed (ie. the requirements are impossible to fulfill, for whatever reason, in our modern society), still others which *should not* be obeyed (eg. animal sacrifice), and still others which must be *adapted* before they can be obeyed (eg. building a railing around the roof of your house, Deut 22:8 – more on this example later on). Sorting these laws out, and deciphering which ones still apply to our lives today, may seem like a daunting task – but it's not. The Bible itself actually gives us quite clear guidelines as to which laws still must be followed today, and which ones need not be. These clear guidelines, when mixed with some Holy Spirit-inspired intuition, make navigating the Old Testament surprisingly easy once you get the hang of it.
- ◇ The first step in applying the Old Testament Law to our lives is to recognize the four different types of laws contained within it (these different types of laws will be explained and explored in much more detail in the points following – but first, a brief overview and definition):
  - a) **Moral Laws:** The Moral Law is the foundation upon which the entire Old Testament is built. It is made up of all the commands that are rooted in the character and nature of God, and which define what righteousness looks like. To break any of these commands is to sin (1 Cor 7:19; 1 John 2:3-4; 3:22-24; 5:2-3) – in fact, the very definition of sin is to break these laws (Matt 13:41; Rom 3:30; 7:7-9; 1 John 3:4). These commandments are eternal because God's character is eternal and unchanging; thus, they are applicable to all people, at all times, in all places, for all eras, throughout all eternity (Matt 5:17-20). We are bound by these laws today, obviously, and will be judged by God according to our obedience of them (Matt 13:41; James 2:8-12). Some examples of the laws which make up the Moral Law would include the commandments forbidding murder, stealing, adultery and lying (Ex 20:13-16), as well as the command to 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Lev 19:18), and the command not to put a stumbling block in front of a blind person (Lev 19:14).
  - b) **Ceremonial Laws:** The Ceremonial Law is made up of all the commands and regulations which governed the Israelite sacrificial system, their worship in the Temple and the various priestly duties of the Levites. All the Ceremonial laws have been cancelled by the inauguration of the New Covenant and the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

- c) **Jewish Separation Laws:** Because of His Covenant with the Jewish people, God gave the Jews a set of laws which were to serve as signs of that covenant, visibly marking them as distinct from the Gentile nations around them (kind of like how a wedding ring acts as a sign of the wedding covenant made by its wearer). Circumcision would be a prime example of one of these laws. Laws like this, pertaining to the separation of Jews and Gentiles, do not apply to Gentile believers today and need not be obeyed by them.
- d) **Civil Laws:** There is a vast body of commandments in the Old Testament regulating the every-day life and institutions of the nation of Israel (property laws, building code, penal code, etc.) – this body of laws forms what is generally known as the Civil Law (more on these below). There are different types of Civil laws; some can be ignored and some are no longer applicable, but others are based on universal Moral principles and must be followed, though they must be adapted to fit our culture today.
- In the next section we will go through each of these types of laws in more detail and explore specific laws, discerning which ones are moral and binding, which ones have been explicitly cancelled (so far as the life of a modern-day Gentile believer is concerned) and which ones still apply, but must be culturally adapted to our situation today. The section is broken up into 4 parts:
    1. The Ceremonial laws have been CANCELLED;
    2. The Separation laws have been CANCELLED;
    3. The Civil laws: some of these can be ignored, but others must be ADAPTED;
    4. The Moral laws are still BINDING on us today;

**Chapter 2 - Applying the Law, part 1: The Ceremonial Laws have all been CANCELLED. *All the Ceremonial laws have been cancelled by the inauguration of the New Covenant and the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.***

1. **2 main types of laws in the Law: Ceremonial & Moral.**<sup>10</sup> In order to understand the Scriptures properly it is essential to recognize that the Old Testament contains two contrasting sets of commandments. One set of laws defines the righteousness of God that is to be emulated by human beings (thus being moral in nature), while the other set of laws defined the way of forgiveness and salvation for the unrighteous through sacrifices and rituals (these were ceremonial in nature). For example, the law forbidding us to steal (Ex 20:15) shows us what righteousness looks like, whereas the law stipulating animal sacrifice shows what must be done by a thief, who has already stolen something, in order to obtain forgiveness (Lev 6:1-7).
  - ◇ This distinction between Ceremonial and Moral laws was well understood by the Jews and proverbially expressed by the statement, *“To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice”* (Proverbs 21:3 ESV). In other words, the Moral laws were/are much more important than the Ceremonial laws. God Himself repeatedly affirmed this fact throughout the Old Testament: *“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings”* (Hosea 6:6 NIV; see also 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; Isa 1:11-17; Mic 6:6-8).
  - ◇ Jesus clearly recognized a distinction within the Law between the more important Moral laws and the less important Ceremonial laws: *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin [Ceremonial laws having to do with the Temple], and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness [Moral laws]. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others”* (Matthew 23:23 ESV).
  - ◇ Paul, too, made it abundantly clear that he recognized a difference between two types of commandments in the Law: *For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God”* (1

---

<sup>10</sup> Though we have identified 4 different types of laws, there are 2 primary, contrasting types – Ceremonial and Moral. The Separation laws can be found to fit under the umbrella of the Ceremonial laws without too much effort, while the Civil laws make up a less important category all their own.

Corinthians 7:19 ESV). This is an important verse for understanding the Law. Paul says that it no longer matters whether or not people keep the commandment to be circumcised, as previously prescribed in the Law (Gen 17:11; Lev 12:3) – but then he turns around and says that keeping the commandments of God is still important. The only way this verse is not a contradiction is if Paul had a distinction in his mind between two types of commandments: (1) Ceremonial laws, like circumcision, which have been cancelled because of Christ's work on the cross; and (2) Moral laws, which continue to be binding on believers and which must still be obeyed.

**2. The purpose of the Ceremonial laws was to point people to the coming Messiah and to His redemptive work.**

**After Jesus died and rose again they became obsolete and have now all been cancelled.** The Ceremonial laws were always considered by God to be inferior to the Moral Laws because they were only temporary in nature. The sacrifices and rituals were never able to permanently accomplish the forgiveness of sins or to change people's hearts; their primary purpose was to act as a picture of the redemptive work Jesus was planning to do in the future, in the interim period before He actually came to earth. This is why these laws were called 'copies,' 'shadows,' 'symbols,' 'pictures,' and 'illustrations' in various passages of Scripture. Now that Jesus – the real thing – has come to earth and actually accomplished God's plan of redemption, the symbols, illustrations and copies are not needed anymore. Consider the following passages from Hebrews:

- ◇ **Hebrews 8:3-6** *For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices [the Ceremonial laws]; . . . <sup>5</sup> They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. (ESV)*
- ◇ **Hebrews 9:8-10** – *The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. <sup>9</sup> This is an ILLUSTRATION for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered [the Ceremonial laws] were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. <sup>10</sup> They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order [the New Covenant]. (NIV)*
- ◇ **Hebrews 10:1** – *The law is only a SHADOW of the good things that are coming--NOT the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. (NIV)*

Some Christians misuse this passage to say that the WHOLE Law, Moral and Ceremonial, is only a 'shadow of the good things that are coming,' but the context clearly says otherwise. Read Hebrews chapters 7 through 10; these chapters explicitly talk only about the Ceremonial laws – the priestly administration, the rules for Temple worship and the regulations for sacrifices, offerings and washings – never about the Moral laws. Consider the rest of Hebrews chapter 10: <sup>2</sup> *If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. <sup>3</sup> But those sacrifices [Ceremonial laws] are an annual reminder of sins, <sup>4</sup> because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

<sup>5</sup> *Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering [Ceremonial laws] you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; <sup>6</sup> with burnt offerings and sin offerings [Ceremonial laws] you were not pleased. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" <sup>8</sup> First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings [Ceremonial laws] you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). <sup>9</sup> Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. <sup>11</sup> Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties [Ceremonial laws]; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. <sup>13</sup> Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, <sup>14</sup> because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

<sup>15</sup> *The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: <sup>16</sup> "This is the covenant I will make with them after*

that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts [the Moral laws], and I will write them on their minds."<sup>17</sup> Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."<sup>18</sup> And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin [Ceremonial laws]. (NIV)

Verse 17 is very important. It states that under the New Covenant all of the sacrificial laws (ie. Ceremonial laws) have now been cancelled.

**3. The purpose of the Moral laws is to show us what righteousness looks like and how to love our neighbor as ourselves. The Moral laws are permanent and eternal because they are rooted in the very character of God.**

- a) **The Moral laws are permanent.** In contrast to the Ceremonial laws which were temporary in nature, symbols of the realities which were to come, the Moral laws are eternal and permanent in nature because they are rooted in the very character of God. This is why Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."<sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." – **Matt 5:17-18 (ESV)**
- ◆ The first thing to notice in this passage is that Jesus must have a distinction in His mind between 'the Law' and the Ceremonial laws, which are also contained within the Old Testament Law, since the book of Hebrews clearly teaches that the Ceremonial laws have now been cancelled. But Jesus clearly teaches here that not an iota or a dot 'will pass from the Law' until 'heaven and earth pass away.' Do Jesus and the book of Hebrews contradict each other? No! The only way to reconcile these passages is to recognize that when Jesus says 'the Law' He doesn't mean 'everything written in the Old Testament,' but rather, He is referring to the Moral Law, which forms the backbone and heart of the Old Testament. He did not come to abolish one iota of that Moral Law, though He did, of course, most certainly come to abolish the Ceremonial laws and sacrifices.
  - ◆ The second thing to notice is that Jesus came to 'fulfill' the Law. How did He do that? By living it out perfectly. How was He able to do that? Jesus was able to live out the Law perfectly because the Law isn't a random collection of meaningless rules – it is a reflection of God's very character and what He is like. Because Jesus is God, the Law just naturally spilled out of Him while He lived because that Law is simply a mirror image of Who He is. Thus, Jesus 'fulfilled' the Law.
- b) **The Moral laws show us what righteousness looks like; they are rooted in God's character.** The Bible is very clear that God alone is 'holy' (Rev 15:4), that God alone is 'good' (Mk 10:18) and that God alone is 'righteous' (Prov 21:12, 1 Pet 3:18). Yet Paul states clearly that "the LAW is holy, and the COMMANDMENT is holy and righteous and good" (Rom 7:12 ESV). This can only be true because the Moral Law is rooted in the very character of God. The laws contained within the Moral Law show us God's heart, how God behaves and how we need to behave in order to emulate God (righteous living).
- c) **The Moral laws show us what love looks like.**
- ◆ [Note: There is a whole section which extensively examines the fact that the Law shows us how to love, see section F.2.a) above. In this section I am only making a distinction between the Moral and Ceremonial laws and showing that it is only the Moral Law which shows us how to love, not the Ceremonial.]
  - ◆ Jesus and Paul both clearly taught that the whole point of the Moral Law is to show us how to love people:
    - 1) **Jesus:** You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.<sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment.<sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. – **Matt 22:36-40 (ESV)**
    - 2) **Paul:** Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.<sup>9</sup> For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You

*shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are SUMMED UP in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. – Rom 13:8-10 (ESV)*

- ◆ Nowhere in the Bible are the terms ‘Moral Law’ or ‘Ceremonial Law’ used. But the above passages only make sense if there is such a difference, because the Ceremonial laws (circumcision, the various sacrificial laws, etc.) clearly did not help a person to love their neighbor. Why else did God say, “*For I desire mercy [Moral laws – ‘love your neighbor’], not sacrifice [Ceremonial laws], and acknowledgment of God [Moral laws – ‘love God’] rather than burnt offerings [Ceremonial laws]*” (Hosea 6:6 NIV; see also 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; Isa 1:11-17; Mic 6:6-8)?
- ◆ Thus, when Paul and Jesus make statements to the effect that all ‘the Law’ is summed up by love, they cannot mean ‘everything written in the Old Testament.’ They must be referring only to the Moral laws, which are permanent (Matt 5:17-19), while excluding the sacrificial laws, which were temporary (Heb 9:8-10; 10:1-17). Otherwise the Bible has a bunch of contradictions with regards to what it says about the Law.
- ◆ This is why God said, “*To do righteousness and justice [the Moral laws] is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice [the Ceremonial laws]*” (Proverbs 21:3 ESV). Paul, too, obviously made a distinction between Moral and Ceremonial laws, as proven by the following statement: “*For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God*” (1 Corinthians 7:19 ESV). Keeping the commandments (Moral Law) is very important to Paul because, according to him, love is the most important Christian trait (1 Cor 13) and the Moral Law = Love (Rom 13:8-10). However, the Ceremonial laws (like circumcision) do not need to be obeyed anymore; primarily, because Jesus’ death has made them unnecessary with regards to the forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:8-10; 10:1-17); and secondly, because they do not serve to help people love one another.

4. **Objection: Isn’t the Law one unified whole, which can’t be broken into different categories like Moral & Ceremonial? (A study of James 2:10 and Galatians 5:3).** Antinomian teachers have a favorite argument they like to fall back on when making their case that believers are no longer under the Law. It’s another straw man (see section 5 ‘The Law is not opposed to Grace’ for another one of their straw men) composed of two premises, one faulty, which of course leads to a false conclusion. Here is their straw man:

- a) Premise 1: The Law is a unified whole, which cannot be divided up into different types of laws, like Moral and Ceremonial. If one part of the Law is cancelled, ALL of the laws must be cancelled. If one part of the Law is not cancelled, then NONE of the laws may be cancelled. (False Premise.)
  - b) Premise 2: We know, obviously, that all of the sacrificial laws have been cancelled. (True)
  - c) Conclusion: Therefore, by 1) & 2), ALL of the Law, including the Moral laws (10 Commandments, etc.), has been cancelled for believers.<sup>11</sup>
- ◇ But the argument advanced here proves too much – even for its most zealous advocate. The argument that the Law is an indivisible unity can be used against this position, because the same Law of Moses that gave us the commands and regulations for righteous living also gave us the promises talked about by Paul in Galatians 3:21 and Ephesians 2:12. Think about this carefully: Antinomian teachers argue that the Law cannot be divided up into two categories – Moral and Ceremonial – because there isn’t a verse anywhere in Scripture which explicitly states that the Law can be divided up that way.<sup>12</sup> But by this same logic, they cannot separate out all of the *promises* contained within the Law, because there is not one verse in Scripture which explicitly states that the Law can be

<sup>11</sup> Note: Their only exception would be that they would most likely say that if a law is explicitly repeated or upheld in the New Testament, then that particular law has not been cancelled – though this breaks their own rule, from Premise 1. I suppose they feel it is okay to have their rules broken when it is them doing the breaking!

<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, neither is there a verse anywhere in Scripture which explicitly states the doctrine of the Trinity – but no serious Christian doubts that doctrine! Antinomian teachers are really grasping at straws when they make this argument.

divided into those two categories – promises and commandments – either. This is a devastating critique of the Antinomian position, because even the most ardent Antinomian teacher would not be willing to say that the promises contained within the Law have been cancelled (see footnote below for some of the promises contained in the Law),<sup>13</sup> along with the sacrifices.

◆ So now Antinomian teachers are caught on the horns of a dilemma:

1) They can concede that the Law is NOT an indivisible unity and that it can be broken up into various categories, such as (1) Moral laws; (2) Ceremonial laws; (3) Promises, etc. etc., in which case they lose one of their primary arguments for claiming that the Moral laws have been cancelled, along with the Ceremonial laws, under the New Covenant;

OR

2) They can continue to insist that the Law is an all-or-nothing indivisible unity which cannot be broken up into various categories, in which case they must then concede that all of the promises contained within the Law have also been cancelled, along with the Ceremonial (sacrificial) laws, under the New Covenant. What a preposterous conclusion (and awful), since the New Covenant itself is one of the promises contained within the Law (Deut 30:6-8)!

◇ Of course, Antinomian advocates will not give up so easily. They believe that their position is biblical, and they have two verses they (mis)use in order to prove their point that the Law is an indivisible whole: the first verse is James 2:10 and the second is Galatians 5:3. We will now examine those two passages individually:

a) **James 2:10.** James 2:10 states, “*For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it*” (ESV). Antinomian teachers understand from this verse that the Ceremonial and Moral Laws cannot be separated into two different categories of laws, since no one ‘point’ of the Law can be separated out from the whole of the Law. They say that this passage teaches that if you want to follow any one point of the Law you have to actually follow all of it, including the sacrifices, because you will then become accountable for all of it. Thus, they actually use this passage in James to argue that believers are no longer under any part of the Law.

◆ Such a conclusion would have been astonishing to James, however, who repeatedly argued throughout his short letter that believers were supposed to study, obey and do the Law! (James 1:22-25; 2:12; 4:11-12)

◆ In light of James’ many statements about the importance of doing and studying the Law, it is clear that James 2:10 cannot be used by anyone to build a doctrine where the Law is cancelled in the life of the believer. So what does the context of James chapter 2 really say? Read the chapter for yourself. The whole point of James chapter 2 up to verse 13 is to stop Christians from showing partiality to wealthy people over poor people. In verses 8 – 13, James argues that the *reason* it is bad to show partiality is because the Law tells us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (v.8). Certainly James is not cancelling out the Moral Law in this passage, since the Law is his standard for why partiality is bad! Breaking the Law in James’ mind is a sin (v.9; 11) – which means he still thinks that believers are bound by the Law. He even states clearly that Christians will be judged by the Law (v. 12), which he calls ‘liberty’ (v. 12), thus proving even more conclusively that he does not want Christians to think that the Law has been cancelled in their lives.

◆ **So what is James *really* saying in verse 10?** Let’s break this up into 4 logical steps:

---

<sup>13</sup> The Law contains many promises from God, which Christians everywhere hold to be eternal – here is just a sampling:

1. The promise to Noah, never to flood the earth again (Gen 9:8-17; 8:20-22);
2. The promise to Abraham, to bless all nations through his seed (Gen 12:1-3), which was a promise of the Messiah;
3. The promise to crush Satan’s head (Gen 3:14-15), a promise of the Messiah, partially fulfilled at Jesus’ 1<sup>st</sup> Coming, won’t be fully fulfilled until Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming;
4. The promise of the New Covenant to ‘circumcise’ Israel’s hearts so that they would love to do God’s will (Deut 30:6-8) – this verse began to be fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross, but won’t be fully fulfilled until His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

1) All of James chapter 2, from verses 1-13, constitutes one point James is making – essentially, ‘Do not show partiality (favoritism) to rich people over poor people.’

2) In making this point James states that the ‘royal law’ can be summed up in one word “love your neighbor as yourself” (v.8).

What is this ‘royal law’ James is talking about? James is just re-iterating what Jesus said in Matthew 22:36-40, and Paul said in Romans 13:8-10 & Galatians 5:14, that all of the laws in the Law can be summed up by one over-arching law (the ‘royal law’) – “love your neighbor as yourself.”

3) In James’ mind whenever anyone breaks any one of the commandments like ‘don’t murder,’ ‘don’t commit adultery’ (v.11), don’t show partiality (v.9), or any other law, they are actually all breaking the same law, the law to “love your neighbor as yourself.” This is an important point because it is easy for Christians to fall into the trap of thinking of some sins as ‘small’ (like showing partiality) and others as ‘big’ (like murder and adultery).<sup>14</sup> The truth is that when you break *any* law, you break the most important one, which is “love your neighbor as yourself.”

4) **Conclusion:** Thus, when James says, “*For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it*” (v.10) his whole point is that showing partiality is a serious sin because it breaks the law of love. Since each of the laws in the Law reveals an aspect of “love your neighbor as yourself,” and since the whole Law can be summed up by “love your neighbor as yourself,” then breaking any one of the laws makes a person accountable to God for not loving their neighbor, which is the whole law. Thus, anyone who fails in any one point of the law becomes accountable for all of it, which is to say, accountable for not loving their neighbor as themselves.

b) **Galatians 5:3.** A second passage that Antinomian advocates try to use in order to make their point that the Law is an indivisible whole, which has been cancelled in its entirety and which cannot be broken up into categories like Moral and Ceremonial, is Galatians 5:3; in it Paul states, “*I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law*” (ESV). Antinomians have taken this verse to what they think is its logical conclusion – that thus, if a Christian does not accept circumcision he is free from having to obey any of the laws.

◆ Notice the subtle step, however, that Antinomians have jumped in coming to this conclusion, something most people never stop to think about. They have ASSUMED that the following two statements are logically connected; that if (1) *Anyone who accepts circumcision is obligated to keep the whole law* (what Paul actually says) is true, then its CONVERSE must also true, that (2) *Anyone who does not accept circumcision is not obligated to keep any of the laws* (what Antinomians want it to say, since then Christians are freed from all the Law). But this is a very big assumption to make, because in that case what Paul is teaching here is that a person who doesn’t accept circumcision would then be free from the ‘obligation’ of obeying such commands as ‘Don’t murder’ (Ex 20:13), ‘Don’t have sex with animals’ (Lev 20:15-16) and ‘Don’t put a stumbling block before the blind’ (Lev 19:14). How awful – then uncircumcised people could do whatever they pleased! And not at all the point Paul is trying to make in this passage.

◆ What this is, then, is a failure of logic. Follow closely: it does not automatically follow that the statement *Anyone who accepts circumcision is obligated to keep the whole law*, is the same as its converse statement

---

<sup>14</sup> Note: this is not to say that God doesn’t see a difference between the various crimes. All law-breaking is serious, but some law-breaking is more serious. Just because all law-breaking essentially boils down to one thing – not loving one’s neighbor as oneself, doesn’t mean that some crimes aren’t more serious than others. All one has to do is look at the differences in punishment God meted out for various crimes in the Law, to see that not every sin is equally bad. Compare, for example, the crimes of murder and theft: for the crime of murder the Law prescribes death (Num 35:30), but for the crime of theft the Law prescribes paying back double the value of what was stolen (Ex 22:4). Clearly God views murder as a more serious crime than theft, since loss of life is a much more severe and costly penalty than the restitution of goods.

that *Anyone who does not accept circumcision is not obligated to keep any of the law*. Let me illustrate with a simple example: If a parent with a 3-year old child says at supper time, *“If you take one bite of your dessert, you are obligated to eat all of your vegetables as well,”* it does NOT automatically follow that the parent also intends to enforce the converse statement, *“If you don’t take one bite of your dessert you don’t have to eat any of your vegetables either.”* Right? Even if the child eats none of their dessert, the parent may still force the child to eat all or some of their vegetables. The point this illustration makes is obvious; the converse statements about vegetables and dessert are not equal because the two types of food – vegetables and dessert – are not equal. Most parents want their children to eat their vegetables, but don’t care whether or not their children eat their dessert.

- ◆ Same with Paul’s statement about the Law in Galatians 5:3. In order for the statement *Anyone who accepts circumcision is obligated to keep the whole law* (what Paul actually says) to be equal to the converse statement *Anyone who does not accept circumcision is not obligated to keep any of the law* (which is what Antinomians want it to say) then one has to first assume that there are not different types of laws within the Law, and that all the laws in the Old Testament are equal in God’s eyes, from the animal sacrifices (what we call the ‘Ceremonial Law’) to the Ten Commandments (what we call the ‘Moral Law’). But that assumption is exactly what Antinomian proponents are trying to use this verse to prove! And it is circular reasoning to assume your point in order to prove your point. Furthermore, it is patently false, as we have already proven, since the Bible repeatedly makes distinctions between the Ceremonial Laws (animal sacrifices) and the Moral laws (‘love your neighbor as yourself’), consistently teaching that God views obedience to the Moral laws as much more important than obedience to the Ceremonial laws (Prov 21:3; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8; Matt 23:23; 1 Cor 7:19), which have now been cancelled anyway.
- ◆ **Conclusion: So what is Paul saying in Galatians 5:3?** This passage only makes sense when you realize that there *are*, in fact, different types of laws within the Law – Ceremonial and Moral (as we proved earlier in this paper). Then what this passage is teaching is not the indivisibility of the Law, but the indivisibility of the *Ceremonial* Law. Thus, if a person decides that circumcision is essential for salvation, that person needs to be prepared to obey all the other ceremonial laws, too, including animal sacrifice and everything else, because circumcision is part of the Ceremonial laws and you can’t enforce one without enforcing them all. But since Jesus’ death the Ceremonial laws have all been cancelled, which includes circumcision. In contrast to circumcision, however, the Moral laws continue to be binding on Christians today, as Paul so clearly taught elsewhere: *“For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision [Ceremonial laws], but keeping the commandments of God [the Moral laws]”* (1 Corinthians 7:19 ESV). This verse only makes sense if there are two types of laws: Moral and Ceremonial, one which is permanent, and one which was temporary and has now been cancelled.

### Chapter 3 - Applying the Law, part 2: The Separation Laws have all been CANCELLED. *Laws pertaining to the separation of Jews and Gentiles do not apply to Gentile believers today.*

- In this section (**section H**) we are endeavoring to answer the question, *Which laws from the Old Testament still need to be obeyed by believers today, and which do not?* In part 1 of our answer we discovered that the Old Testament Law can be broken down, primarily, into two basic categories: Ceremonial laws, which have been cancelled because of Jesus' work on the cross; and Moral laws, which continue to be binding on God's people today. In this next section I want to briefly examine a subset of laws from within the Ceremonial laws, having to do with the separation between Jews and Gentiles.
- Someone may ask, "If all of the Ceremonial laws have been cancelled, why write a separate point about some of the laws within the Ceremonial laws that have also been cancelled? Isn't it redundant?" Well, yes. But the reason I feel it is necessary to write a separate point about this subset of Ceremonial laws is because this group of laws does not look like the rest of the Ceremonial laws, and so could easily be mistaken by some people for being Moral laws, which still need to be observed.
- Most of the Ceremonial Laws in the Old Testament are obviously ceremonial in nature; rules about priestly functions, sacrifices and Temple worship obviously do not need to be obeyed today in the Church Age. But within the Ceremonial laws there is a subset of laws which are not obviously ceremonial in nature because they have nothing to do with the priests, the Temple or the sacrifices. I am here referring to the laws which symbolically taught Israel to be separate from the Gentile world. Like the rest of the Ceremonial laws, these laws were not rooted in the Moral character of God, so they are not morally binding on Gentile believers today. Their only purpose was to symbolize the separation of God's people from the world and to differentiate Jewish people from Gentiles. Since Jesus' death these laws, like the rest of the Ceremonial laws, have ceased to have any authority in the lives of believers (Eph 2:15) because, like the rest of the Ceremonial laws, they were merely symbols pointing to a greater reality.

1. **Examples:** Circumcision is the primary example of a law which was given as a sign separating Jews from Gentiles. Most of the rest of the examples have to do with dietary laws (see, for example, Lev 20:22-26) and calendar observances (festivals and holidays).

a) **Circumcision has been cancelled:** *And God said to Abraham . . . <sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. – Genesis 17:9, 11 (ESV)*

- ◆ Notice that circumcision was a 'sign.' It was not a moral requirement, rooted in God's eternal nature – it was a temporary symbol. This is why Paul could so confidently say, after Christ's death, that circumcision had been cancelled; *"For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God"* (1 Corinthians 7:19 ESV). Elsewhere Paul stated, *"Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. <sup>3</sup> I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law [ie. all the rest of the Ceremonial laws, including the sacrifices too]. <sup>4</sup> You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. <sup>5</sup> For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. <sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love"* (Galatians 5:2-6 ESV).

b) **Food – we no longer need to make a distinction between clean & unclean animals.** The entire chapter of Leviticus 11 is devoted to distinguishing which animals were clean and which were unclean for the Israelites in the Old Testament. The clean ones could be eaten, but the unclean ones could not. Though some health-conscious Christians continue to live by these laws today (and there may be some health merit in it), there is no moral reason to do so. These laws were not rooted in God's holy character and, therefore, are not morally binding on Christians today; their only purpose was to separate between Jews and Gentiles.

- ◆ That these laws were not moral in nature, and that they served only to separate the Jews from Gentiles, can be seen in the fact that God specifically applied these laws only to the Jewish people, while stating that

Gentiles could break them without sinning. Consider the following example found in Deuteronomy 14:21 – “You [Jewish people] shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner [Gentile] who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner [Gentile]. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. “You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk” (ESV). If these laws were Moral in nature they would have applied to the Gentiles, too.

- ◆ The New Testament makes clear that these dietary laws no longer apply to believers. This point was first made to the apostle Peter in Acts 10:9-16, when God showed him a vision with a blanket full of unclean food and told him to ‘eat.’ At first Peter refused but God rebuked him, saying “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean” (Acts 10:15 NIV).
- ◆ Later, Paul would make this point even more clear, saying “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. . . .<sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking [dietary laws] but of righteousness [obeying the Moral laws – see Ps 119:172] and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:14-17 ESV).

c) **Old Testament festivals, holidays and observances need not be observed by believers today.** The Old Testament is full of instructions for the Jews concerning special holidays and festivals which they were obligated to observe (eg. Passover, Festival of Booths, etc.). These laws never applied to Gentiles, and the New Testament confirms that they do not apply to believers today:

- ◆ *But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?*<sup>10</sup> *You observe days and months and seasons and years!* [speaking of the Old Testament festivals and holidays]<sup>11</sup> *I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.* – **Gal 4:9-11 (ESV)**
- ◆ *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.*<sup>17</sup> *These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.* – **Col 2:16-17 (ESV)**
- ◆ Note: Although Christians today are not obligated to observe the Old Testament festivals, we still have much to learn from the festivals. Many deep spiritual truths are hidden within the festivals and observances of the Old Testament, which any dedicated student of the Bible can discover for themselves, with a little help from the Holy Spirit.

2. **Conclusion to this section: the meaning of Ephesians 2:15.** Since Christ’s death all of the laws which served symbolically to separate Jews and Gentiles have been torn down, since Gentiles have now been brought into the family of God. This is Paul’s whole point in Ephesians 2: *Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision [the Jewish people], which is made in the flesh by hands—*<sup>12</sup> *remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*<sup>13</sup> *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*<sup>14</sup> *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*<sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, *that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,*<sup>16</sup> *and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.* – **Eph 2:11-16 (ESV)**

- ◇ Many Antinomian teachers today are using Ephesians 2:15 to say that the entire Law has been cancelled. Wrong! Such an interpretation directly contradicts many of Paul’s other statements that believers still need to obey the Law (see Rom 3:31; 1 Cor 7:19). The context of Ephesians 2:15 is that Paul is making a point about how Christ’s death brought the Gentiles into the family of God. Because the Gentiles have now been brought in to the family

of God, there is no longer any need for the laws which separated Jews and Gentiles – thus, all of *those* laws and ‘ordinances’ have now been abolished.

- ◇ That this is the correct interpretation of Ephesians 2:15 can be confirmed by comparing it with a passage of Scripture we just looked at, Romans 14:17 – “*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness [obeying the Moral laws – see Ps 119:172] and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (ESV). The laws concerning ‘eating and drinking’ formed the core component of laws which separated the Jews from the Gentiles. In this Romans passage Paul clearly states that those laws no longer matter, but that obeying the Moral laws – ‘righteousness’ – still does matter. This makes a perfect fit with our interpretation of Ephesians 2:15.

## Chapter 4 - Applying the Law, part 3: The Civil Laws – some have been cancelled, but others must be adapted.

*There are different types of civil laws – some can be ignored and some are no longer applicable, but others are based on universal Moral principles and must be followed, though they must be adapted to fit our culture today.*

- In this section (section G) we are endeavoring to answer the question, *Which laws from the Old Testament still need to be obeyed by believers today, and which do not?* Here's what we have covered so far:
  1. The Moral laws (eg. 'Don't murder,' 'Don't steal,' 'Love your neighbor as yourself') are rooted in the eternal, unchanging nature of God and are permanent laws for all of eternity which continue to be binding on Christians today – to break any one of these commands is to sin;
  2. The Ceremonial laws and the Separation laws, however, are not moral in nature. They were only temporary laws meant to serve as symbols of greater realities which would be inaugurated in the New Covenant, and since Christ's death they have all been cancelled;
  3. The Civil laws will be the focus of this next section . . .
  
- **What are the 'Civil' laws?** The Civil laws are that group of laws which governed and regulated the 'civilian' affairs of the nation of Israel in Old Testament times. The Civil laws regulated everything from government affairs to the penal code, to estate laws, to the allotment of land, to farming practices and even mandated safe building practices.
  - ◇ For the purposes of clarity and understanding, here is a small sampling of just some of the laws that make up the Civil Code in the Old Testament (It should be noted that nowhere in the Old Testament are these laws organized so conveniently by these headings – all the laws, Moral, Ceremonial and Civil are simply mixed together in the Old Testament, without headings or breaks or divisions of any kind):
    - a) Sample laws from the Civil Code that regulated Government affairs:
      - 1) Only an Israelite could be king of Israel – no foreigners (Deut 17:15);
      - 2) Kings were not supposed to accumulate massive amounts of wealth, wives or horses for themselves (Deut 17:16-17).
    - b) Sample laws from the Civil Code that dealt with penal sanctions:
      - 1) A person who murders someone must be put to death – a minimum of 2 witnesses are required (Num 35:30);
      - 2) A person who accidentally kills someone else must stay in a city of refuge, where he will be safe, until the death of the currently living high priest (Num 35:22-29);
      - 3) A person who steals an ox must pay back 5 oxen; a person who steals a sheep must pay back 4 sheep (Ex 22:1-4).
    - c) Sample laws from the Civil Code that dealt with farming practices:
      - 1) Farmers were not to plant a field with two types of seed (Deut 22:9);
      - 2) When a farmer would plant a tree he was to refrain from harvesting its fruit for 3 years (Lev 19:23);
    - d) Sample law dealing with building practices: Anyone who builds a house must put a fence around the roof to ensure that no one gets hurt falling off (Deut 22:8).
  - ◇ A quick perusal of these Civil laws makes obvious the fact that, unlike the Moral laws, many of these laws are not universal and no longer need to be exactly obeyed in our day and age. Some of them can't even be obeyed in our day and age (eg. The cities-of-refuge law). In the next section we will explain which of the civil laws can be ignored, and why.

- **Four basic types of civil laws within the Old Testament Civil Code (and whether they are binding on us today):<sup>15</sup>**
  1. ***Laws which apply universal Moral principles to some culture-specific aspect of life;***
    - ◇ ADAPT: The moral principles behind these laws must still be obeyed today, but the specific regulations contained in these laws must be appropriately adapted to work in today's modern society.
  2. ***Laws which prescribe penalties for breaking universal Moral laws;***
    - ◇ NON-BINDING: Modern societies are not obligated to enforce the penalties prescribed in the Old Testament Law (eg. stoning for adultery) for reasons that will be explained below.
  3. ***The Stewardship Laws – laws which apply wisdom to various sectors of life (like hunting, farming, the making of clothes, etc.);***
    - ◇ NON-BINDING: Though there is much wisdom to be gained from studying these laws, these laws are not morally binding for Christians.
  4. ***The Mixing Laws;***
    - ◇ NON-BINDING: These laws are not morally binding on Christians today.
- **See Table next page.**

---

<sup>15</sup> Don't get confused – there are four types of laws overall: Moral, Ceremonial, Separation and Civil, and then WITHIN the Civil Law there are these four sub-types.

**Table: The various kinds of laws found in the Old Testament**

Moral laws	Ceremonial laws	Separation laws	Civil laws								
Still apply to believers today	CANCELLED – no longer apply	CANCELLED – no longer apply	Some not binding/some adapted								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These laws are eternal and can be summed up by ‘love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8). It is sin to break these laws.</li> <li>• Sample laws: ‘do not murder,’ ‘do not commit adultery,’ ‘do not lie.’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These laws were temporary and their primary purpose was to act as a picture of the redemptive work Jesus was planning to do on the cross, in the interim period before His first coming (Heb 8:3-6; 9:8-10; 10:1-17).</li> <li>• Sample laws: the laws for animal sacrifice, and for priestly duties in the Temple.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The primary purpose of these laws was to keep the children of Israel separate and distinct from the Gentile peoples.</li> <li>• Sample laws: the food and dietary laws, as well as circumcision.</li> </ul>	<p>4 types of civil laws:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1. Laws which apply universal Moral principles to a culturally-specific aspect of life.</td> <td>ADAPT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Laws which prescribe penalties for breaking Moral laws.</td> <td>NOT BINDING</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Stewardship laws (hunting, farming, industry, etc.)</td> <td>NOT BINDING</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. The Mixing laws.</td> <td>NOT BINDING</td> </tr> </table>	1. Laws which apply universal Moral principles to a culturally-specific aspect of life.	ADAPT	2. Laws which prescribe penalties for breaking Moral laws.	NOT BINDING	3. Stewardship laws (hunting, farming, industry, etc.)	NOT BINDING	4. The Mixing laws.	NOT BINDING
1. Laws which apply universal Moral principles to a culturally-specific aspect of life.	ADAPT										
2. Laws which prescribe penalties for breaking Moral laws.	NOT BINDING										
3. Stewardship laws (hunting, farming, industry, etc.)	NOT BINDING										
4. The Mixing laws.	NOT BINDING										

- Let's look at each of the 4 types of Civil Law in detail:

1. **The Old Testament Civil laws, type 1: *Laws which apply universal Moral principles to some culture-specific aspect of life.***

- a) A perfect example of a law like this is the law that Moses gave to the Israelites that they must each build a fence around the roof of their house (Deut 22:8). Here is the passage in its entirety: *“When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it”* (Deut 22:8 ESV).
- ◆ The reason given for this law is clear – safety (‘that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it’). In Old Testament times houses were built with flat roofs, and people would use their roof as extra living space – kind of like the 2<sup>nd</sup> story of a modern-day home. The purpose of this law was to prevent loss of life due to accidents and negligence. Therefore, this Civil law was based on two universal Moral laws:
    - 1) Love your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:18); and,
    - 2) You shall not kill (Ex 20:13 – Note: the Hebrew word for kill (*‘ratsach’*) covered not just murder but also death through carelessness or negligence.<sup>16</sup>)
  - ◆ The Moral laws of ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ and ‘You shall not kill’ are universal – they are always true, for all people, at all times. It is just as wrong to murder a person today, in modern times, as it was thousands of years ago in Bible times.
  - ◆ **But what about the specific regulation to put a fence around your roof?** That regulation is obviously not universal. Most modern houses are built with sloped roofs (at least in North America) and that fact, combined with culture and climate, mean that the vast majority of people never spend time on their roof. We do not use our roofs as living space, therefore there is no point in building a fence around our rooftops.
- b) **Conclusion: *When reading the Civil laws look for universal principles beneath the culture-specific applications.*** So in the case of the fence-around-the-roof, the Moral laws on which the Civil law is based are universal, but the Civil law itself is a cultural application which is no longer relevant in our day and age. This is not to say, however, that studying these Civil laws is a waste of time. On the contrary, we can derive important principles from these culture-specific laws, even if we can no longer apply them, exactly, in our own culture. The underlying principle behind the fence-around-your-roof law, is that in all areas of life we should ensure that reasonable precautions are taken to keep people safe. Human life is important to God and it should be important to us. So, for example, we should ensure that our church buildings (and other public buildings) have enough fire exits and that our houses have proper smoke detectors and things like that, etc., etc..

---

<sup>16</sup> See the footnotes on Exodus 20:13 in the English Standard Version of the Bible (The ESV Classic Thinline Edition, Copyright 2002 Crossway Bibles.)

## 2. The Old Testament Civil laws, type 2: *Laws which prescribe penalties for breaking universal Moral laws.*

- a) Moral laws define what is right and wrong. This second type of the Civil laws prescribes what to do with someone (the penalty) who has broken one of the Moral laws. For example, 'Do not steal' is a Moral law. Where the Civil Law comes in is to apply penalties to the thief. The Moral Law is universal – that means that if a 4-yr old girl steals a candy, worth 5 cents in Azerbaijan, it is just as wrong as if a teenager steals a toy worth 5 cents in Mexico. No matter where a person lives, or when, stealing is always wrong. The penalty prescribed (civil law) for stealing (moral law), however, is not universal – it should be culture-specific and situation-specific.
- ◆ For example, consider the following two situations.
    - 1) Situation 1: a ship is driven ashore on a deserted island. The captain knows that if he can keep everyone alive for 3 to 4 weeks they will have a good chance of being rescued, so he decides to ration what is left of the food, to ensure that nobody starves. He tells everyone unequivocally that anyone caught stealing so much as an orange will be shot. Why? Because in this situation, food-stealing could lead to starvation, endangering the lives of everyone on the island, not to mention the panic and fighting it could cause.
    - 2) Situation 2: a mischievous boy pockets an orange in a busy supermarket, and attempts to leave without paying for it. Should he be shot too? Obviously not!
  - ◆ Both situations involve stealing, which is universally wrong, so both require some kind of penalty. But the situations dictate that the two penalties should not be the same. This proves the point I am making: Moral laws are universal, but the Civil penalties for breaking those laws are not universal – they may vary according to country, culture, time-period and situation.
  - ◆ Jesus Himself taught this very truth: *"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. <sup>48</sup> But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked"* (Lk 12:47-48 NIV). In this passage Jesus clearly teaches that two people can do wrong (ie. break a universal Moral Law) but be given different punishments (ie. Civil penalty), depending on the situation.
- b) **The place of the Old Testament Penal Code in modern society.** The Old Testament prescribes penalties for many things ranging from murder (murderers must be put to death, Num 35:16) to stealing (thieves must pay restitution 2, 4 or 5 times depending on what was stolen, Ex 22:1,7); from adultery (death to the adulterers, Lev 20:10) to accidental property loss (various levels of restitution, depending on culpability, Ex 21:28-36, 22:5-14). Are we obligated to enforce these penalties, exactly as prescribed in the Bible, in today's society? No. But the reason for this is not what many Christians think. Many Christians think that the Old Testament penalties have been cancelled simply because the whole Old Testament Law has been cancelled by the New Covenant. Wrong! As we've been proving in this paper, the New Covenant has not cancelled out the Old Testament Law, though certain elements of that Law (the Ceremonial laws in particular) have now been eliminated. The reason we no longer need to enforce the Penal Code of the Old Testament is because God never intended for those penalties to be universal – they were situation-specific to the Israelite nation in Old Testament times (much like the fence-around-the-roof law we looked at earlier).
- c) **Three major differences between the Old Testament Israelite nation and modern society.** It is obvious that the penalties for sin prescribed in the Old Testament are more severe (eg. death for adultery Lev 20:10, death for rebellion Deut 21:18-21, etc.) than the penalties most Christians would consider appropriate in modern society. Part of the reason for this no doubt includes the fact that many Christians in the West have become too tolerant towards sin. That aside, however, no serious Christian would think it proper to enforce a penalty of death on adulterers in today's day and age. The reason for this is that the situation in modern society has

changed from that of Old Testament Israel (Note: God has not changed – just the situation has.) The situation between Old Testament Israel and modern Gentile society has changed in three very significant ways:

- 1) The physical presence of God's Glory resided in Old Testament Israel, unlike in any place on earth today;
- 2) God's kingdom in Old Testament Israel was highly political, whereas His kingdom in the Church Age is completely non-political;
- 3) The entire nation of Israel entered into a binding contract with God, something no other nation has ever done.

d) **Situation Change #1 from OT Israel to modern society: The presence of God's Glory in OT Israel.**

One reason for the severity of the penalties in the Old Testament is not because God was more severe in the Old Testament, it's because His Glory was more near. In the Old Testament, the manifestation of God's Glory was physically present in the midst of the Israelite nation (Ex 24:16-17; Ex 40:34-38; Lev 9:23; 2 Chron 7:1-2),<sup>17</sup> which meant that it was imperative that all sin be dealt with severely and immediately, since God's Glory and sin cannot mix. But God's Glory no longer resides anywhere on earth like it did in the midst of Israel in Old Testament times. With the inauguration of the New Covenant God has radically changed the mode of His habitation with people – instead of His Glory residing in a *Temple*, in the midst of the nation of Israel, His Spirit now dwells inside of every *believer*, both Jew and Gentile (Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 3:16).

This difference is huge with respect to the consequences of sin for people. When sin comes into contact with God's Glory, the result is always an outbreak of wrath and judgment where people die (see Lev 10:1-3; Num 16:41-50; 21:4-9; 25:1-11; Ex 32:21-29 for examples). This is why God repeatedly warned Moses that though it was a tremendous blessing for Israel that He would dwell in their midst, there was also grave danger (Ex 33:3; Lev 10:6; Deut 6:15). As was just stated, sin and God's Glory cannot mix.

Though God's *Glory* cannot come into contact with sin without killing people, God's *Spirit* most certainly can. God's Spirit can be in a place where there is sin and not immediately break out in judgment by killing people. This must be true – otherwise God's Spirit would have to immediately withdraw from every place on planet earth; either that, or every person on earth would be dead. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is tolerant of sin – far from it! As a member of the God-Head, the Holy Spirit hates sin as passionately as the Father and the Son do; He is grieved by sin (Eph 4:30) and His activity in a person's life can be quenched (1 Thess 5:19) because of sin. God is One (Deut 6:4), which also means that the Holy Spirit is in full agreement with the Father and the Son about all of God's judgments on sin. The point, here, is not that the Holy Spirit is lenient with sin – He isn't – but only to show that the Holy Spirit can be present around sinful people *without those sinners having to immediately die*, which is quite unlike the situation when God's Glory is present in a place. The nearer God's Glory comes to a place, the more dangerous sin becomes, because sin cannot exist in the presence of God's Glory.

- ◆ **What does this have to do with the severity of the Old Testament Law?** Everything. With God's Glory physically present in the Israelite camp – separated from the people only by the curtains which made up the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle – sin could not be allowed to run amok because disobedience by any one person could endanger the entire nation by causing an outbreak of God's wrath (eg. Achan, see Joshua 7; see also Deut 6:15, Moses' speech to Aaron in Leviticus 10:6 and God's comment to Moses about the danger of His presence in Exodus 33:3). Thus, sins like murder, adultery, blasphemy and rebellion all had to be punished by death. It was better that the community put the perpetrator to death, than that many others in the community die because of an outbreak of God's holy anger against sin (eg. Lev 10:1-3; Num 16:41-50; 21:4-9; 25:1-11; Ex 32:21-29).

---

<sup>17</sup> Because of the persistent sin of the Jewish people it finally left, see Ezekiel 10.

- ◆ In light of this truth, 2 important things now need to be said in order to bring understanding and balance to this issue:
  - 1) **God’s Moral Standard is universal and unchanged:** God did not view sin as worse in the Old Testament than He does now. Adultery in today’s society is just as bad in God’s eyes as adultery in the Old Testament. Murder is not a less serious offense in God’s eyes today, than it was in the Old Testament. Same with blasphemy, rebellion and all the other sins. God’s Moral Law is universal, eternal and unchanging; His righteousness has not changed, His standards have not changed and His hatred of sin has not changed. All that has changed is the *immediacy* of His judgment against those sins, which brings us to the next point that is . . .
  - 2) **Ultimately, God’s penalties and judgments for sin are ALSO unchanged:** Not only have God’s standards not changed from the Old Testament to now, but neither have His judgments. The wages of sin today are still *death* (Rom 6:23), just like in Old Testament times (for an example of New Testament judgment see footnote below).<sup>18</sup> The only thing which may vary from the Old Testament to now is what a sinner reaps – and how quickly – from their sin in *this lifetime*. On Judgment Day, however, when Old Testament Israelites and 20<sup>th</sup> century Gentiles all stand before God together, the penalties for sin will be identical; on that Day, Old Testament adulterers and murderers will not be judged more harshly than modern-day adulterers and murderers. God is a just Judge and He will not apply different standards to people who lived in Old Testament times than to people who lived in other times.
- ◆ **What, then, has changed from Old Testament times to now?** Only one thing – the nearness of the physical manifestation of God’s Glory. The physical manifestation of God’s Glory no longer resides anywhere on earth in the same way that it did in the Old Testament, and it will not return to earth in levels like in the Old Testament until Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming – at which time God’s Glory will be physically manifested on the earth (Ps 102:15-16; Isa 40:5; Hab 2:14; Rom 8:18; 1 Pet 4:13) more than at any previous time in human history, including the Old Testament. At that time, and during the 1000-yr Millennial Reign of Christ, sin will once again be punished with the same severity and immediacy as in Old Testament times (Ps 2:6-12; 75:7-10; Zech 14:16-19; Rev 3:26-27).
- ◆ **Conclusion:** What this all means is that our modern-day governments no longer need to protect us from outbreaks of the Glory of God by quickly putting to death adulterers, murderers, blasphemers and the like, as the Israelite leaders were commanded to do in the Old Testament. This does not mean that it is no longer a government’s responsibility to protect its citizens, just that governments no longer need to protect their populations from outbreaks of the *Glory of God*, due to the presence of sin.
- ◆ **Caveat:** Some people may take my conclusion too far and decide from it that governments shouldn’t *ever* enforce the death penalty any longer, nor punish their citizens in any way. That would be a false conclusion to draw.<sup>19</sup> The Bible is very clear that God has endowed human governments with authority and that a large

---

<sup>18</sup> God’s glory is just as dangerous towards sin under the New Covenant as it was in Old Testament times. Take, for example, the New Testament story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. The context of the story is the early days of the Church, shortly after Pentecost; the Holy Spirit’s Presence and Power were evident everywhere in the Church, and many powerful signs and wonders were being done among the believers as a result (see Acts 4:31-37 and 5:12-16). In the midst of this mighty outpouring of God’s Spirit the Glory of God was also manifested in the Church, and a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira decided to lie to Peter about the size of an offering they had come to bring. As a result of this lie, God killed them both where they stood (Acts 5:5,10)! Obviously this was not a precedent for what God intended to do every time a Christian would lie in the future – otherwise, the Church today would be very small indeed! The only explanation for this is that the Glory of God was so strong in the Church at that time, that sin could not be tolerated. The nearer God’s Glory comes to a place, the more critical it becomes that the people in that place walk in obedience.

<sup>19</sup> In fact, the Bible states clearly that God expects governments to enforce the death penalty for at least one crime – the crime of pre-meditated murder. Long before the Mosaic Law was given to the Israelites at Sinai, just after the Flood had ended, God gave the following command to Noah as part of the Noahic Covenant: *“And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will*

part of their responsibility is to protect their citizens by punishing wrong-doers (Rom 13:1-6; 1 Pet 2:13-14; Tit 3:1). Any nation whose government refuses to punish wrong-doers is a nation that will quickly descend into anarchy, and its government will be held accountable by God for not discharging this essential aspect of its duty. The only point I am making in this section is that modern-day governments are not morally obligated to enforce the exact same penalties for sin which God prescribed for the Israelites in the Old Testament. A modern-day government may decide to enforce the death penalty for certain crimes ('the sword' Rom 13:4), or it may not; so long as it punishes wrong-doers appropriately it is discharging its duty

---

*require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.* <sup>6</sup> *'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image'*" (Genesis 9:5-6 ESV).

- One very important thing now needs to be said about the Noahic Covenant: the Noahic Covenant (Gen 8:20 – 9:16) is a universal covenant; it was not just made with the Jewish people (who did not yet exist when it was made) but with all human-kind. This means that the stipulations in that covenant are universal – applying to all people, in all nations, for all time. God's language in the Noahic Covenant is very explicit; over and over again He repeats the fact that this covenant is universal, which means it holds true for all people and for all time: *"I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and EVERY LIVING CREATURE of ALL FLESH. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.* <sup>16</sup> *When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and EVERY LIVING CREATURE of ALL FLESH that is on the earth."* <sup>17</sup> *God said to Noah, 'This is the sign [the rainbow] of the covenant that I have established between me and ALL FLESH that is on the earth'* (Genesis 9:15-17 ESV). The Noahic Covenant includes God's promise to never flood the entire earth again, nor to destroy all human and animal life in a catastrophe like the flood. Because of this covenant even God's End-Time judgments, which will occur just before Jesus' return and which will destroy significant percentages of the human population, will not destroy all the human and animal population on earth (Mt 24:22; Mk 13:20) like the Flood of Noah did (with the tiny exception, obviously, of Noah and his family and the animals on the ark). The sign of this covenant is familiar to all human beings everywhere – the rainbow, which often appears in the sky after a rainstorm.
- But the Noahic Covenant includes more than just God's universal promise to never destroy all human life again – it also includes three of God's universal expectations of humanity: (1) that people multiply and fill the earth (9:7); (2) that murder be punished by death (9:5-6); and (3) that people not eat/drink animal blood or eat animals while their blood is still in them (9:4). If God's promise to never send a world-wide flood on the earth is universal – and everyone agrees that it is – on what basis can anyone argue that these three expectations, explicitly included by God in the covenant, are not also universal? Interestingly enough, the universal-ness of these three expectations is confirmed in the New Testament. The book of Acts records an important debate which took place within the early church when the early church leaders were trying to figure out which laws Gentile believers needed to follow, and which ones they did not need to follow. Obviously, all the moral laws like 'don't murder,' 'don't steal,' 'don't commit adultery,' etc., etc. needed to be followed (1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21; Rom 1:29-32; 13:8-9); but the debate centered on the rest of the laws – Which ones are binding on Gentiles and which ones are not? Interestingly enough, the apostles in Acts 15 identified three important ones, one of which was, *Don't eat food with the blood still in it* (Acts 15:29). In light of the fact that all the dietary laws from the Mosaic Covenant were cancelled under the New Covenant (Rom 14:17), it is very interesting that the apostles would include this command in their letter to the Gentiles, since this command would otherwise have seemed to be just another one of the Mosaic food laws which were not meant to be binding on Gentile believers under the New Covenant. But, in fact, this particular commandment is not one of the Mosaic food laws – it comes from the Noahic Covenant, and its inclusion by the apostles in their letter, proves that that they considered the entire Noahic Covenant to be a universal law for all people (even Gentiles), for all time, even under the New Covenant.
- Objection: Someone might argue, "But the apostles did not explicitly tell the Gentile believers to uphold the death penalty, so how can you argue that it is a universal penalty in God's eyes?" Answer: Of course the apostles did not tell the Gentile believers to enforce the death penalty! God has only given that authority to the government ('the sword' Rom 13:4). It's not as though I am advocating that the death penalty be enforced by individual believers or the Church! The fact that the apostles affirmed that not eating animals with their lifeblood in them is a universal principle, which still stands under the New Covenant, just proves that all of the Noahic Covenant is universal; if not eating animals with their lifeblood still in them is a universal principle, on what basis can anyone argue that the death penalty for murder is not also a universal principle?
- It is important to notice the reason God gives for enforcing the death penalty in cases of murder: because 'God made man in His own image.' The reason the death penalty is required for murder lies in the inherent value of people and the reality that each human being bears the stamp of God's image on his/her person. Thus, to kill another person is a grave sin not only against that person, but also against God Himself. Because people are made in God's image, each human being has tremendous eternal worth; the only punishment for murder which takes that human worth seriously enough – and the glory of God seriously enough – is the punishment of death; any lesser punishment for that crime fails to give the victim's life the dignity that it deserves and dishonors the image of God which is stamped on that person. That God was serious about the death penalty for murder is further proven by the number of times in the Old Testament that He repeats it: Ex 21:12; 14; Lev 24:17; Num 35:31; 33.

before God. The reason for this freedom is that the civil penalties God prescribed for Israelite wrong-doers in the Old Testament were predicated on the unique situation those Israelites lived in; those civil penalties were not meant to serve as universal penalties which must be applied by every government, in every nation, in every situation, for all time. The situation the Old Testament Israelites lived in was unique for at least two reasons: (1) the physical presence of the manifestation of God's Glory in their midst; and (2) the political nature of God's kingdom in their nation. This second difference is what we will now look at.

**e) Situation Change #2 from OT Israel to modern society: The Political-ness of God's kingdom in the Old Testament.**

- ◆ A second reason why the penal code in the Old Testament was so severe was because the Old Testament Israelites directly represented God to the other nations of the earth; if they, as a nation, tolerated sin it reflected badly on God's Name and Glory among the other nations of the world. Thus, the penalties for sin in Old Testament Israel had to be more severe than the penalties for sin enforced in modern societies – more was expected of Old Testament Israel, and to whom much is given, much more is expected (Lk 12:48).
- ◆ Unlike today (John 4:21-24; 18:36), God's kingdom in the Old Testament was much more than a spiritual entity – it was also highly political: Israel's political leaders – indeed all of its people – physically represented God to all the other nations of the earth (Deut 4:5-8; Isa 52:5, cf. Rom 2:24); Israel's laws were God's laws; the land of Israel was literally considered to be God's land (Ez 38:16); and Israel's military battles were directly considered to be God's battles (Num 32:20; Josh 11:20; 1 Sam 17:47). Old Testament Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations – Gentiles living in those times were supposed to discover God and be attracted to God by looking at how blessed the nation of Israel was in battle, in prosperity, in morality and in its laws, etc., etc.. No Gentile nation today is the equivalent of Old Testament Israel today; no Gentile nation today is the direct representation of God's kingdom on earth. Today God's kingdom on earth is represented by the Church, rather than any one nation or government. Even if a nation today has a leader who is a Christian, or if that nation purports to be founded on Biblical principles, that nation is still not anything like Old Testament Israel where God Himself directly tied His Name and His reputation to that nation (Isa 52:5, cf. Rom 2:24). For this reason, sin in Old Testament Israel had to be dealt with more severely (via stiffer civil penalties) because the Israelites were directly representing God to all the other nations of the world.

**f) Situation Change #3 from OT Israel to modern society: The entire nation of Israel entered into a contract with God.**

- ◆ A third reason why the penal code in the Old Testament was so severe (more severe than we would consider appropriate in a modern society) is because the entire nation of Israel entered into a covenant (contract) with God. No other nation in history has ever done anything like this, and again, this fact means that God could legitimately expect a higher level of holiness from the nation of Israel than other nations of the world.
- ◆ Think about this: the entire nation of Israel – men, women and children – stood before God (on several different occasions) and consciously entered into a binding agreement with God that they would follow His laws, love Him and obey Him only (Ex 19:1-9; 24:3,7-8; Deut 26:17-19; 29; Josh 24:14-28). There was a tremendous upside, for the Israelites, in doing this: as a result of binding themselves to God, God promised to make them the most blessed of all the nations in the world (Deut 28:1-2; 26:19); their crops would be blessed and they would have an abundance of food (Deut 28:3-5); they would be blessed with overwhelming victory in every battle (Deut 28:7; Lev 26:7-8); they would be blessed with many children (Deut 28:4, 11); they would be blessed with tremendous financial prosperity (Deut 28:12); they would be blessed in everything they set their hands to (Deut 28:12-14); and even the weather over the land of Israel would be blessed (Deut 28:12; 11:14; Lev 26:4). Of course, every contract also comes with penalties in the

case that one of the parties fails to fulfill their contractual obligations. In the contract between God and Israel, the penalties for Israel should Israel stray from loving God and obeying His laws, were spelled out clearly in Deuteronomy 28:16-68; these curses were part of the 'deal' when the Israelites stood before God and bound themselves to Him in covenant. Just as the blessings of the covenant were spectacular, so likewise were the penalties severe. Entering into a covenant with the God of the Universe is not something to be taken lightly.

- ◆ Thus, as part of the nation of Israel's contractual obligation to obey God's laws, the leaders of Israel were expected to punish individual sin within Israel severely, so that the whole nation could continue to be blessed according to the blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1-15 and not cursed according to the curses of Deuteronomy 28:16-68. Though crime still needs to be punished in today's modern Gentile societies, and sin still brings the judgment of God on nations today, the Old Testament nation of Israel had an increased responsibility to punish the sin of its citizens severely, since all of its citizens had knowingly entered into an explicit contract with God.

- ◇ **Conclusion to this section: *Why the penal sanctions of the Old Testament were so severe, and why modern nations are not obligated to enforce those same penalties today.*** The Moral laws contained in the Old Testament are universal; they continue to be binding for all people, everywhere, even today. The Civil laws which prescribe the penalties for breaking those laws, however, are not universal – they do not need to be exactly applied by the governments of modern nations today. The reason for this is that the penalties prescribed in the Old Testament for breaking various Moral laws are situation-specific – and the situation of Old Testament Israel was very different from any of today's modern Gentile societies. The situation was different in at least 3 important ways (1) The physical presence of God's Glory resided in Old Testament Israel, unlike in any place on earth today; (2) God's kingdom in Old Testament Israel was highly political, whereas His kingdom in the Church Age is completely non-political; and (3) The entire nation of Israel entered into a binding contract with God, something no other nation today (or ever) has done. For these 3 reasons, the civil penalties enforced in Old Testament Israel needed to be more severe (ie. more death penalties for more crimes) than in any of today's modern Gentile societies. Today's governments are obligated before God to punish wrong-doing, but they are free, within reasonable limits, to set sensible penalties as they see fit. The only exception to this would be that God does prescribe the penalty of death for pre-meditated murder in all cases. This is a universal law, which dates back to the Noahic covenant God made with all humanity.

3. **The Old Testament Civil laws, type 3: *The Stewardship Laws – laws which apply wisdom to various sectors of life (like hunting, farming, the making of clothes, etc.).***

- ◇ **Review of the Civil laws covered thus far:** In this section we are examining the Civil laws of the Old Testament – specifically, which ones must be applied in the lives of believers today, and which ones need not be. It may be helpful, here, to again review the four different types of Civil laws found in the Old Testament (the first two have now been covered, now we will move on to type 3):
  - a) *Laws which apply universal Moral principles to some culture-specific aspect of life;*
  - b) *Laws which prescribe the penalties for breaking universal Moral laws;*
  - c) *The Stewardship Laws – laws which apply wisdom to various sectors of life (like hunting, farming, the making of clothes, etc.);*
  - d) *The Mixing Laws;*
- ◇ **The Stewardship Laws – laws which apply wisdom to various sectors of life (like hunting, farming, the making of clothes, etc.):** There is another set of Civil laws in the Old Testament and these ones regulated the Israelites stewardship of their resources, laying down rules for farming and hunting practices, as well as such practical concerns such as the way clothing should be made. **These laws are not morally binding on believers today, though we will suffer or succeed according to the attention we pay to their wisdom.** Here are four examples of this type of law:
  - a) *When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you? <sup>20</sup> Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls. – Deut 20:19-20 (ESV)*
    - ◆ This law makes good sense and is good for the environment – it is wisdom applied to a practical law. It is not, however, a universal moral law for us today in the sense that no person anywhere can ever cut down a fruit tree at any time; or in the sense that when a war is fought today that the officers in charge of the armies involved must bend over backwards to avoid killing any fruit trees.<sup>20</sup> There is nothing inherently immoral about cutting down or killing a fruit tree (see, for example, the story of Jesus killing a fruit tree in Matt 21:18-19). But the underlying principle here is that whether we are fighting a war, or expanding a city, or building industry we need to always be careful to steward our natural resources and the environment responsibly – wanton killing of plant and animal life, along with disregard for the environment will only hurt us, hurt our food supply and displease God.
  - b) *“If you come across a bird’s nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. <sup>7</sup> You shall let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long. – Deut 22:6-8 (ESV)*
    - ◆ Here is another law that just makes good sense – when hunting (for meat or for eggs), don’t kill every animal you see: if you do, who will reproduce more animals in order to provide meat and/or eggs for you to hunt and find the following year? If you kill the mother along with her young you kill the golden goose; you may enjoy a little extra meat this year, but there will be much less meat to kill in the years to come. We have very similar laws in our country pertaining to hunting and fishing.<sup>21</sup> This law pertains to good stewardship, as

---

<sup>20</sup> Especially when you consider that wars today are fought very differently than they were in the Old Testament. Today cities are not conquered through sieges, but with aerial bombardments, cruise missiles and special-forces insertions. Like with many of the other Civil laws in the Old Testament (eg. the fence-around-the-roof law), this law cannot be applied directly to our time period today, though the underlying ethical principles beneath it can.

<sup>21</sup> Deer season in Canada, for example, is limited to a few short weeks in fall because deer give birth in spring. If hunters were allowed to shoot deer in the spring, they may kill a doe, but the death of that one deer could have a dominoes effect resulting in the death of

evidenced by the reason God gives for making the law: *“that it may go well with you, and that you may live long”* (v.8). Note that the reason given for this law is not rooted in the nature or holiness of God – it is rooted in our well-being; breaking this law is not the moral equivalent of committing murder or worshiping an idol. That’s because this law is not a universal moral law; it is not as though no person anywhere, could for any reason, ever kill a mother with her young. For example, say a family was starving in the winter and the father came across a family of ducks, mother and young; it would be perfectly fine for him to kill all of the ducks, including the mother, in order to feed his family and help them survive (see, for example, Matt 12:1-4 which records the stories of king David eating food from the Tabernacle, which was forbidden by law, because of his desperate hunger, and also the story of Jesus’ disciples picking grain to eat on the Sabbath – also unlawful – because of their hunger). Again, there is a difference between universal moral laws which are always right or wrong, and these stewardship laws which outline wise principles and which generally provide for our good, but which may be disregarded in specific situations where they actually end up working against our good.

c) *“When you come into the land and plant any kind of tree for food, then you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden to you; it must not be eaten. <sup>24</sup> And in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, an offering of praise to the Lord. <sup>25</sup> But in the fifth year you may eat of its fruit, to increase its yield for you: I am the Lord your God. – Lev 19:23-25 (ESV)*

- ◆ Is this a universal Moral law which must be exactly followed by all believers today, or this is another one of the Stewardship laws? One of the first keys to look for when trying to determine the answer to this question is the reason God gives for making the law. Many of the laws in the Old Testament come with a reason attached, so look to see if the reason for the law is rooted in the eternal, unchanging holiness of God, or if the reason given for the law is for a person’s well-being. If the reason given for a particular law is rooted in God’s unchanging nature and character, then it is always wrong to break that law – for all people, everywhere, at all times (eg. worshiping idols, murder, stealing, etc.). But if the reason given for a particular law is a person’s well-being (wisdom), then the overriding purpose of that law is a person’s well-being, and that law may be altered and/or adapted according to a given situation, in order to best serve the person’s well-being.<sup>22</sup> For example, see the previous paragraph and the example of a starving person who breaks the law not to kill a mother animal with her young, in order to survive (see also similar examples of approved law-breaking in Matt 12:1-3).

---

several other deer as well, since at that time a doe’s young offspring are still dependent on her for survival. By restricting hunting season to fall, our government ensures that any youngsters a doe may have had will be old enough to survive the winter on their own, even if their mother is killed. This is called stewardship.

<sup>22</sup> This was exactly Jesus’ argument to the Pharisees about the Sabbath laws, for example. Old Testament Law explicitly laid down rules concerning the Sabbath: people were not supposed to do any work on that day (Ex 23:12; Deut 5:14), and that included going out to gather food (Ex 16:22-30). Yet Jesus’ disciples picked grain on the Sabbath when they were hungry (Mark 2:23-27), and king David ate outlawed food from the Tabernacle (1 Sam 21:1-6), and Jesus approved of their law-breaking in both cases (Mk 2:25-28) based on the fact that the Sabbath Laws were not rooted in God’s eternal nature, but rather in the well-being of man. His exact words were, *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”* (Mk 2:27). This fact is confirmed in both Exodus 23:12 and Deuteronomy 5:14, where the reason attached to the Sabbath law was not God’s holiness, but rather, man’s need for rest.

Therefore, one of the primary purposes of the Sabbath law was to make sure people got enough rest; that one day a week they would stop and take a breather from work and from the busy-ness of life. Rest is absolutely essential for human well-being. The specific rule ‘don’t go out to gather food’ was designed to stop them from farming and doing life-as-usual on the Sabbath. But it wasn’t intended to be a universal, moral law that any sort of activity, no matter how small – even grabbing a little food to eat while walking along the road – was an affront to God’s holy character. But then the rule took on a life of its own, so that the purpose – people’s well-being – was actually subverted, and now the rules were keeping people from being able to eat when they were hungry, and the rules were themselves becoming a burden, so that people couldn’t even rest properly on the Sabbath because they were so bound by rules. Instead of helping people, the rules were hurting them. So Jesus made a distinction and said that such laws – which were made for human well-being in the first place – always need to serve human well-being. In specific situations where they don’t, they can be ignored.

- ◆ What kind of law, then, is this one in Leviticus 19:23-25, the one about not eating any of the fruit from a fruit tree you plant until the fifth year? Verse 25 gives the reason for the law: *“to increase your yield.”* In other words, this is not a Moral law founded in the eternal nature of God whereby it is, somehow, inherently immoral to eat fruit from a tree in the first four years after it has been planted; no, the purpose of the law was to increase the size of the harvest brought in by Israelite farmers. As Robert Jamieson records in his commentary on this passage in Leviticus: *“The wisdom of this law is very striking. Every gardener will teach us not to let fruit trees bear in their earliest years, but to pluck off the blossoms: and for this reason, that they will thus thrive the better, and bear more abundantly afterwards.”*<sup>23</sup>
  - ◆ This isn’t a universal moral law which must be exactly followed today; fruit-growing experts today are free to do whatever they like in order to obey the underlying principle which is, *Take good care of your trees and get as large a yield as you possibly can (and, secondly, give back to God first, out of what you make on your harvest, v. 24).*<sup>24</sup>
- d) *When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest.*<sup>10</sup> *And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God. – Lev 19:9-10 (ESV)*
- ◆ This law gives further evidence of the love of God in the Old Testament, and the fact that the Law itself is based on love. This law actually required Israelite farmers to make sure that they missed stuff when harvesting their crops – they were to ensure that there were always left-overs in their fields and orchards so that there would be food for the poor to gather, as well as foreigners traveling through the land.
  - ◆ Is this a Moral law which farmers must follow exactly today? No. The *principle* underlying the law is a universal Moral Law – feed and take care of the poor; but the practical out-workings of the law itself, that farmers should take care to leave left-overs in their fields, when harvesting their crops, wouldn’t help poor people in our society anymore, since poor people don’t glean from farmer’s fields any longer (How would they do that in today’s society? And how would they process the food if they did?). So that part of the law is now obsolete. In fact, with the way today’s society works, it is better for the farmers to leave behind as *little* as possible (the exact opposite of Old Testament times), since that ensures less waste (since poor people wouldn’t be able to glean the left-overs anyway) and provides more food for the world (which ultimately helps poor people . . . or should in theory). The part of this law that is universally binding on us today is that we should not forget the poor and the foreigners among us; we each need to take personal responsibility to give and be generous in order to feed and take care of the downtrodden in our society.

---

<sup>23</sup> Jamieson, Robert, A.R. Fausset, David Brown. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Toledo, OH: Jerome B. Names & Co., 1884. WORDsearch CROSS e-book. Commentary contained as a single volume.

<sup>24</sup> One further reason for this law also had to do with the concept of ‘first-fruits.’ With whatever the Israelites harvested from the soil they were always expected to give first to God out of that harvest before eating for themselves (Ex 23:19; 34:26). For this reason, part of the reason for waiting for the 5<sup>th</sup> year may have had to do with the fact that God didn’t want them giving to Him out of the puny first harvests a tree would give; He wanted them to give to Him out of the first major crop they harvested from that tree. Remember, the entire tribe of Levi (the tribe of priests) had to live off of what the rest of the Israelites gave to God from their first-fruits (Num 8:8-13); generous giving was required in order to take care of them, as well as the Temple they looked after.

#### 4. The Old Testament Civil laws, type 4: *The Mixing Laws*.

- ◇ The primary Mixing laws are found in two passages of Scripture:
  - a) *“You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole yield be forfeited, the crop that you have sown and the yield of the vineyard.”<sup>10</sup> You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.<sup>11</sup> You shall not wear cloth of wool and linen mixed together. – Deut 22:9-11 (ESV)*
  - b) *“You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.” – Lev 19:19 (ESV)*
- ◇ These Mixing laws seem, to many people, to be rather strange and random. Why did God give the Israelites these commands? Are there underlying Moral principles at work here? What are we to do with these laws today? Over the course of the past century different people have misinterpreted these laws and, as a result, many wrong applications for today’s society have been taught, using these laws as their basis: everything ranging from people using these laws to teach that God is against interracial marriage, to people using these laws to teach that God is against the genetic manipulation and hybridization of crops and animals (like when scientists mix corn with rice, say, to come up with a new and more resilient form of rice; or when people breed two types of dogs together, in order to get a new kind of dog with certain desirable traits).
- ◇ 3 things need to be said first, in the negative, about what these laws do NOT mean:
  - a) First of all, there is absolutely NOTHING in these passages concerning marriage or human sexuality. If God wanted to prohibit people of different ethnicity from marrying He would have explicitly said so somewhere in Scripture. At the very least, such a law would most certainly have been included in Leviticus 18, which chapter is wholly devoted to a painstaking break-down of every possible sexual relationship that God forbids. If God wanted to forbid the intermarrying of different ethnic groups, He most certainly would not have been so vague as to make the law only about animals (‘don’t let your cattle breed with a different kind’ Lev 19:19), and then expect us to apply the law to human beings only by analogy.
    - ◆ Furthermore, people with different skin colour cannot be considered to be of different ‘kind’ from one another, anymore than people with different hair and eye colour can be considered to be of different ‘kind’ from one another. Human beings all constitute one species – human beings, regardless of skin, hair and eye colour. Would proponents of this ridiculous doctrine think that this passage prevents a brown cow from mating with a white one?
  - b) Second of all, these laws cannot mean that God is against the selective interbreeding of various sub-types of animals (say, for example, a German Pinscher with a Rottweiler, which gives a Doberman Pinscher), in order to realize some new and improved (for whatever trait is desired) sub-species. The fact is that the Bible repeatedly confirms the existence of horses (1 Ki 10:29; Zech 14:15), donkeys (Gen 22:5; 42:27) and mules (1 Ki 1:33,38; Ps 32:9) – and nowhere frowns upon the fact that a mule is produced by breeding a horse and a donkey together.
  - c) Thirdly, there is nothing in these passages which prohibits genetic engineering and the cross-breeding of various plants in order to achieve better crop yields, and/or to create disease and drought-resistant crops. The only practice this law prohibits is the planting of two different crops intermingled with each other; in other words, don’t sow oats and wheat together; and don’t sow turnips and carrots together.
- ◇ What, then, was the purpose of these laws? Are these universal Moral laws which we are still obligated to obey today? No. These laws contained much wisdom for the Israelites (just like the stewardship laws looked at in the previous section), and also served a religious and ceremonial purpose in Old Testament times, but they are not universal moral laws which must be followed exactly today. Here are 5 reasons for these laws:
  - a) **Better crop yields:** One important reason for the prohibition on sowing different types of seed together had to do with God’s concern for the Israelite’s crops. As Robert Jamieson records in his commentary on Leviticus

19:19: *“Those who have studied the diseases of land and vegetables tell us that the practice of mingling seeds is injurious both to flowers and to grains. “If the various genera of the natural order Gramine, which includes the grains and the grasses, should be sown in the same field, and flower at the same time, so that the pollen of the two flowers mix, a spurious seed will be the consequence, called by the farmers chess. It is always inferior and unlike either of the two grains that produced it, in size, flavor, and nutritious principles. Independently of contributing to disease the soil, they never fail to produce the same in animals and men that feed on them.”*<sup>25</sup> Adam Clarke, in his commentary on the Deuteronomy passage, had much the same thing to say: *“As to seeds, in many cases it would be very improper to sow different kinds in the same plot of ground. It would be improvident to sow oats and wheat together: the latter would be injured, the former ruined. The turnip and carrot would not succeed conjointly, where either of them separately would prosper and yield a good crop; so we may say of many other kinds of seeds; and if this be all that is intended, the counsels are prudential agricultural maxims.”*<sup>26</sup>

◆ In other words, this is not a universal Moral law which must be exactly followed today, it was a Stewardship law (see previous section) intended to improve Israelite crop yields. Farmers today obey the underlying principle behind this law when they work hard to maximize their own crop yields.

b) **To prevent the Israelites from engaging in superstitious pagan rites:** A second reason for the prohibition on sowing different types of seed together may have had to do with pagan customs in Old Testament times. In ancient times worshipers of the sun, moon and stars (which included such notable nations as the Chaldees and Persians) were known to practice a particular custom, whereby they would sow different seeds in a field, accompanying the act with magical rites and invocations.<sup>27</sup> Part of the reason for this Old Testament law forbidding the sowing of different kinds of seed in the same field may have had to do with ensuring that the Israelites not imitate this practice.

◆ This may also be the reason for the prohibition in Leviticus 19:19 *‘not [to] let your cattle breed with a different kind.’* It is well documented that in many pagan societies in the ancient world, people engaged in bizarre and disgusting sex acts with animals (see prohibitions to the Israelites Lev 18:22-23).<sup>28</sup> With respect to the mixing of various kinds of animals (not sub-species of the same kind, but totally different kinds, like a horse with a sheep for example) this law may have been meant to prevent the excitement of unnatural lusts, as well as the animal cruelty inherent in trying to mate totally different kinds of animals, whether for pagan rites or sinful curiosity.

◆ This may also be the reason for the prohibition in both Deuteronomy 22:11 and Leviticus 19:19 *‘not [to] wear cloth of wool and linen mixed together.’* Note that this law does not prevent the mixing of any types of materials – only the specific mixture of wool and linen (see footnote below, concerning the ESV translation of Lev 19:19 which does generalize as ‘two materials’).<sup>29</sup> Some commentators have speculated that this may have had something to do with superstitious rites practiced by the pagans.

c) **To ensure the proper treatment of animals:** *“You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together”* (Deut 22:10). Whether God’s intent in giving this particular law, like the mixture of seeds, was to prevent the imitation of some pagan practice cannot be said. At the very least it prevented a great inhumanity often

<sup>25</sup> Jamieson, Robert, A.R. Fausset, David Brown. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Toledo, OH: Jerome B. Names & Co., 1884. WORDsearch CROSS e-book. Commentary contained as a single volume.

<sup>26</sup> Clarke, Adam. *A Commentary and Critical Notes*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1826. WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

<sup>27</sup> Jamieson, Robert, A.R. Fausset, David Brown. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Toledo, OH: Jerome B. Names & Co., 1884. WORDsearch CROSS e-book. Commentary contained as a single volume.

<sup>28</sup> Clarke, Adam. *A Commentary and Critical Notes*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1826. WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

<sup>29</sup> Leviticus 19:19 is translated by the ESV as saying ‘two kinds of materials,’ rather than specifying only wool and linen. But the Hebrew word is *sha’atnez*, which literally means a cloth made from linen and wool. It’s the exact same word as that used in Deuteronomy 22:11, which is translated by the ESV (and all the other major translations) specifically as linen and wool. The KJV (and others) translate both passages the same, specifying linen and wool in both.

practiced in ancient times, which was to yoke animals of very different kinds together for the purpose of pulling a wagon or plow. As Robert Jamieson records in his commentary: *“An ox and ass, being of different species and of very different characters, cannot associate comfortably, nor unite cheerfully in drawing a plough or a wagon. The ass being much smaller and his step shorter, there would be an unequal and irregular draft. Besides, the ass, from feeding on coarse and poisonous weeds, has a fetid breath, which its yoke fellow seeks to avoid, not only as poisonous and offensive, but producing leanness, or, if long continued, death; and hence, it has been observed always to hold away its head from the ass and to pull only with one shoulder.”*<sup>30</sup>

◆ So what is the universal Moral principle behind this law, which still needs to be obeyed today? Take care of animals; don't subject them to unnecessarily cruel treatment and/or conditions.

d) **To act as a picture of Israelite separation from the surrounding nations:** Finally, the fact that the Mixing laws are grouped together, in spite of the fact that they regulate vastly different areas of life (cattle breeding and clothing regulations grouped together?), is significant. One of the reasons for these laws was to symbolize the separation of the Israelite people from the pagan peoples who surrounded them. In these laws God gave Israel another picture of the fact that they were not to mix with the surrounding nations, culturally (Deut 18:9), spiritually (Deut 12:29-31) or sexually (Num 25:6-9). The Israelites were to be a holy and separate nation.

---

<sup>30</sup> Jamieson, Robert, A.R. Fausset, David Brown. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Toledo, OH: Jerome B. Names & Co., 1884. WORDsearch CROSS e-book. Commentary contained as a single volume.

## Chapter 5 - Applying the Law, part 4: All of the Moral laws are still BINDING on Christians today.

1. **Review:** In this section of the paper we have been examining the 4 different kinds of laws in the Law to see which ones apply – and *how* they apply – to believers today. So far we have covered the following:
    - a) Part 1: The Ceremonial Laws have all been CANCELLED;
    - b) Part 2: The Separation Laws have all been CANCELLED;
    - c) Part 3: The Civil Laws – there are 4 types of Civil laws; some can be ignored and some are no longer applicable, but others are based on universal Moral principles and must be followed, though they must be adapted to fit our culture today.
    - d) Part 4: The Moral Law, is what we will now turn our attention to.
  2. **Obeying the Moral Law is essential for the Christian life.** The Moral Law is made up of all the timeless, eternal, universal laws, which apply to all people, in all situations, at all times. It is made up of laws like ‘do not murder,’ ‘do not steal,’ ‘do not commit adultery,’ (Ex 20:13-16) and, ‘love your neighbor as yourself’ (Lev 19:18).
    - ◇ It is absolutely essential that Christians today obey the Moral Law. This point cannot be overstated, especially in an age when modern-day ‘Grace’ preachers are filling people’s ears with the message that holiness no longer matters. Though we affirm that God can and does forgive sin, no matter how bad, He only forgives those who truly repent, humble themselves and are broken by their sins (Matt 4:17; Lk 13:1-5; Acts 3:19; 2 Cor 7:9; 12:21). People who are casual about sin, however, are not forgiven – even though they may have said ‘sorry’ once, and now call themselves Christians (Matt 21:21-23). And what is sin? To disobey the Moral Law (1 John 3:4).
  3. **Problem: How does a person discern which Old Testament laws are Moral laws and which ones are not?** Is getting a tattoo a sin (Lev 19:28)? Does it break a permanent Moral law? How about keeping the Sabbath? Is it a sin for Christians to cook on Saturday, since Saturday is the Sabbath (Ex 35:3)?
  4. **3 tests to determine which laws are part of the Moral Law.**
    - a) Test #1: Laws that define how people are to treat each other (“love your neighbor as yourself”) are Moral laws;
    - b) Test #2: Laws that are a reflection of a specific aspect of God’s character are Moral laws;
    - c) Test #3: Laws that are universal – they always apply, to all people, at all times, in all situations – are Moral laws.
- In detail:
    1. **Test #1: Laws that define how people are to treat each other (“love your neighbor as yourself”) are Moral laws.** The easiest test of whether or not a given Old Testament law is a Moral law (and thus, still binding on Christians today) is, “Does this law fall under the category of me loving my neighbor as myself?” We know this because love is the primary way in which the New Testament writers themselves all defined the Moral Law; “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”<sup>9</sup> For the commandments [the Moral Law], “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:8-10 ESV). Thus, any Old Testament law which prescribes how people are supposed to treat each other (their ‘neighbor’) is a Moral law that is still binding on Christians today.
      - a) Four examples of Old Testament laws which pass this test:
        - 1) *You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. – Lev 19:14 (ESV)*
          - This law stipulates that no one is ever to be unkind towards, or take advantage of, a handicapped person. Clearly this is a Moral law that is still binding on Christians today!
        - 2) *You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbour [ie. bear false witness against a person in court]: I am the LORD. – Lev 19:16 (ESV)*

- This law outlines malicious behavior that hurts people and is abhorrent to God; therefore, it too is a Moral law still binding on Christians today. Do Antinomians really wish to argue that under the New Covenant laws like this no longer apply to believers?
- 3) *You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.* <sup>18</sup> *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. – Lev 19:17-18 (ESV)*
- 4) *When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.* <sup>34</sup> *You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. – Lev 19:33-34 (ESV)*
- Many Christians today think that the Old Testament Law is legalistic and harsh. Far from it! Laws such as the four passages above give dignity to human life and behavior; they prescribe how people are to treat each other. All such laws can be placed under the category called ‘Moral laws;’ laws which are binding on all people, all the time, including modern-day Christians. Christians who break any of these laws will be held accountable by God (though forgiveness is freely offered to all who confess and repent). Breaking any one of these laws is the very definition of sin (1 John 3:4).
- b) By contrast, there are many other laws in the Old Testament which have nothing to do with how people treat each other – the vast majority of these laws are not Moral in nature, and thus, no longer apply to Christians today. Examples:
- 1) All the sacrificial laws;
  - 2) All the dietary laws;
  - 3) Other miscellaneous laws, such as: *You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material. – Lev 19:19 (ESV)*
- ◆ None of these laws has anything to do with loving one’s neighbor as one’s self. Though God had reasons for giving them to the Old Testament Israelites, it is clear that these most certainly are not Moral laws which still apply to Christians today.
- c) **What about the tattoo law?** *You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD. – Leviticus 19:28 (ESV)* The tattoo law is one of those in-between laws that get Christians fighting. What is an in-between law? A law that Christians can’t agree on as to whether it is Moral or Ceremonial in nature. Many laws are obvious: ‘Do not murder’ is obviously a moral law that everyone agrees still applies today; and on the other side of the spectrum, the animal sacrifice laws are also obvious – everyone agrees that those are ceremonial laws which no longer apply today. But laws like the tattoo law, above, and the Sabbath laws are ‘in-between’ laws in that it isn’t obvious to many people which category they fit into, and people can’t agree: some say they still apply to Christians today, while others say they don’t. So let us apply the first of our three tests of a Moral Law to the tattoo law: Is this law a relational law? Does it define how people are supposed to treat each other? Does it have anything to do with loving ones neighbor as oneself? No. Therefore the tattoo law fails the first test of a Moral law. We may yet find that it passes one of the other tests of a Moral law, but it has certainly failed the first one.

## 2. **Test #2: Laws which directly correlate to a specific character trait of God are Moral laws.**

- ◇ The Bible is very clear that God *alone* is 'holy' (Rev 15:4), that God *alone* is 'righteous' (Prov 21:12, 1 Pet 3:18), and that God *alone* is 'good' (Mk 10:18). Yet Paul states clearly that "*the LAW is holy, and the COMMANDMENT is holy and righteous and good*" (Rom 7:12 ESV). This can only be true because the Moral Law is rooted in the very character of God. The laws contained within the Moral Law show us God's Nature – they reflect specific aspects of His character and the way He behaves.
- ◇ **Testing Old Testament laws:** So now we have a second test with which to test the various laws we come across in the Old Testament; when looking at any given law in the Old Testament we can ask the question, *Does this law directly correlate to a specific character trait of God that is explicitly named in the Bible?* In other words, does this law prescribe a behavior that God Himself models, or prohibit a behavior that God in His Holiness would never engage in? If so, then that law is a universal law, which we must follow as well.
  - a) For example, the Scriptures repeatedly tell us that one of God's main character attributes is Truth (Ex 34:6; Deut 32:4; Ps 31:5; Isa 65:16; Jn 14:6; etc., etc.). This is an essential component of God's eternal and unchanging Nature – He always tells the truth (in fact Hebrews 6:18 tells us it is impossible for Him to lie). Therefore, since God Himself only ever tells the truth, then any Old Testament laws which prohibit lying (like Lev 19:11, for example) and command truth-telling are universal Moral laws which still apply today in the New Covenant.
  - b) Another example would be the character trait of Justice – the Scriptures repeatedly tells us that God is Just (Ps 37:28; 33:5; Isa 30:18; 61:8; Heb 1:8-9; etc., etc.). This means that in everything God does, He always behaves justly; He always treats people fairly and with integrity. Therefore, any Old Testament laws which spell out for human beings what it means to be fair and just, are eternal and unchanging Moral laws that are still applicable to our lives today. For example, "*You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small.* <sup>14</sup> *You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, a large and a small.* <sup>15</sup> *A full and fair weight [justice and truth!] you shall have, a full and fair measure you shall have, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.* <sup>16</sup> *For all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are an abomination to the LORD your God.*" – **Deut 25:13-16 (ESV)**
    - ◆ Of course, the specific application of this law – honest weights – perhaps doesn't apply to most business people in today's computer age. But from this passage we see that God *really* hates it when people are dishonest in their business dealings and take advantage of others. God finds dishonesty to be an 'abomination' because He is the God of Truth and Justice who Himself always behaves justly; thus, this law is rooted in His eternal character. That means it applies to Christians today just as much as it did to the Israelites in the Old Testament. Christians who break this law by taking advantage of others or by cheating and stealing will be judged and punished by God (Matt 16:27; 1 Cor 5:10-11; James 2:12; 5:4; Rev 2:23).
  - c) Contrast the above laws however, with laws like 'do not cut the hair around your temples' (Lev 19:27), and 'do not eat fruit from a tree the first 3 years after you have planted it' (Lev 19:23-25). Neither of these laws correlate to a character trait of God, as evidenced by the fact that Scripture nowhere describes God as being the God-who-does-not-cut-the-hair-around-His-temples, or the God-of-not-eating-fruit-from-freshly-planted-trees. Ridiculous. As discussed earlier, these laws served some specific purpose for the Israelite people in Old Testament times, but they are no longer binding on Christians today. Moral laws, however, being directly rooted in the eternal nature of God, will stand forever.
  - d) **What about the tattoo law?** We already found that the tattoo law fails test #1 of a Moral law, but does it pass test #2? Does the tattoo law directly correlate to a character trait of God that is named in the Bible? No. We know that God is love (1 John 4:8), but the tattoo law has nothing inherently to do with loving ones neighbor as oneself. We also know from Scripture that other important character traits of God are that He is truthful, merciful and just – but again, getting a tattoo does not directly correlate to any of these things. And

furthermore, it goes without saying that nowhere in Scripture is God described as the God-who-doesn't-mark-His-body. Therefore, the tattoo law fails test #2 of a Moral law: it does not directly correlate with any of God's character traits as described in Scripture.

### 3. **Test #3: Moral laws are universal: they always apply, to all people, at all times, in all situations.**

- ◇ This is the very definition of what a Moral law is – it is a law, like a law of nature, that always applies, to all peoples, in all situations, throughout all time periods in history and forever. If a law is a Moral law then following that law is always good, and disobeying that law is always sin, no matter what the circumstances are. This is a key distinction between the Moral laws and all the other laws, and is usually fairly easy to spot. For example, is it ever okay to commit adultery (Ex 20:14)? No! Adultery is always wrong. Therefore ‘do not commit adultery’ is a Moral law. Or, is it ever okay to commit premeditated murder? No! Premeditated murder is always wrong.<sup>31</sup> Therefore the command ‘do not murder’ (Ex 20:13) is a moral law rooted in the very nature of God. Are there ever instances where it is okay to lie, cheat or steal (Lev 19:11)? No! [Note: There are people who come up with elaborate scenarios and extreme theoretical circumstances where they argue it is morally acceptable to lie and steal – for a further discussion of these possible ‘exceptions’ see the Appendix at the end of this paper.]
- ◇ By contrast, there are many other laws in Scripture where God *does* allow exceptions – these cannot be moral laws. For example, in Matthew 12:1-8, the story is recorded of the disciples picking wheat to eat on the Sabbath. This was a clear violation of the Sabbath laws not to gather food or do any work on the Sabbath (Ex 16:26; 20:8; Num 15:32-36), and the Pharisees were incensed. But Jesus defended the disciples actions by bringing up *another* Scriptural example of law-breaking, the time when King David ate bread from the Tabernacle, which by law he was not supposed to eat, simply because he was so very hungry (1 Sam 21:1-6). Laws that can be broken simply because a person is hungry, cannot be universal Moral laws.
- ◇ Or, take for another example, laws such as Deuteronomy 22:8 “*When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it.*” Does God still expect all people everywhere to build fences around their roofs in modern times today? No! The reason for this law was cultural: in Old Testament Israel, people built houses with flat roofs, and then used those roofs as a second floor to their house; they would often eat up there and do work up there and entertain guests there. The purpose of this fence law was safety, to protect people so they wouldn’t be falling off their roofs all the time and dying or being injured needlessly. But nowadays most people don’t build their houses with flat roofs (at least not in Canada), and no one spends time on their roof except, maybe, to fix it. Therefore there is no need for people to build fences around their roofs. Clearly, laws like this one were only meant for the Israelites in a specific place and at a specific point in time; they are not universal laws that apply to all people, in all time periods, in all situations. Therefore laws like this are not Moral laws that are still binding on people today.
- ◇ To identify whether or not a given law is a universal, Moral law 2 questions can be asked:
  - a) Did God apply this law to *all* nations in the Old Testament, or just to the Israelites? If it only applied to the Israelites, then it is not a Moral law because it is not a universal law for all people everywhere. But if God held the Gentile nations accountable for a specific behavior, then it is a moral law for all people that still applies to us today.
  - b) Can I find exceptions to this law in Scripture? If yes, then said law cannot be a Moral law, since Moral laws are universal and apply to all people, at all times, in all situations.
- ◇ Examples:
  - a) ***Laws that applied to all nations in the Old Testament are universal Moral laws which still apply to believers today.***
    - ◆ For example, the law against child sacrifice is clearly a moral law because it is universal – God held the Gentile nations accountable for practicing it, not just the Israelites: “*When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations.*”<sup>10</sup> *There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who*

---

<sup>31</sup> The Hebrew word for murder in this passage only covers premeditated murder, and does not apply to killing in war, or to the situation where governments execute criminals. The Old Testament uses separate words for those kinds of killing.

*practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer<sup>11</sup> or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead,<sup>12</sup> for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them [other nations] out before you.” – Deut 18:9-12 (ESV)*

- ◆ Another example would be the law against witchcraft and occult involvement; God judged the Gentile nations for engaging in these practices, not just the Israelites – therefore this law is a universal Moral law that still applies today. *When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there [this law did not just apply to Israel].<sup>10</sup> Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft,<sup>11</sup> or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.<sup>12</sup> Anyone [not just Jews] who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations [God judged Gentile nations for breaking this law] before you. – Deut 18:9-12 (NIV)*
- ◆ By contrast, there are many other laws in the Old Testament which applied only to the Israelites, but not to Gentile nations. Such laws, obviously, are not Moral laws and are not binding on Christians today – they were just for the Israelites in Old Testament times. For example, the dietary laws were only meant to apply to the Israelites, and God did not hold Gentiles accountable for following them: “*You [the Israelites] shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. “You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk” (Deuteronomy 14:21 ESV).*
- ◆ It is also true that nowhere in Scripture does God get angry at Gentile nations for not keeping the Sabbath – therefore the Sabbath cannot be a universal law that applies to all people, at all times, in all situations. Thus, it is not a Moral law that is still binding on Christians today.

b) ***Can I find God-approved exceptions to a given law in Scripture? If so, it is not a Moral law.***

- ◆ Another way to test if a given law in the Old Testament is one of the Moral laws, or not, is to ask the question; “Can I find God-approved exceptions to this law in Scripture?” Since Moral laws are universal (they apply to all people at all times) God would never approve of exceptions to obeying them. Therefore, if you can find exceptions to obeying a given law in Scripture that law is not one of the Moral laws.
- ◆ **Eg. The Tattoo law.** Leviticus 19:28 states, *You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD (ESV)*. The question many modern-day Christians have debated over the years, is, “Is it okay for Believers today to get a tattoo?” In other words, is this a universal Moral law that still holds today, or did this law only apply to the Old Testament Israelites? Let’s break this down into points:
  - 1) What is a tattoo? A tattoo is nothing more than a permanent mark directly applied to a person’s body.
  - 2) Are there any places in Scripture where God approves of people getting a permanent mark directly applied to their body? Yes. (1) In Genesis 4:15 God Himself applied a permanent mark to Cain so that no one would kill him in the places where he would travel. (2) Isaiah prophesies in Isaiah 44:5 that after Jesus’ Second Coming godly Jews will write on their hands “The LORD’S.” Many commentators agree that this refers to a permanent marking with punctures and ink (a tattoo!), like what soldiers in ancient times would do in order to identify which commander they served under, and like what early Christians did when they tattooed their wrists or hands with the sign of the cross.<sup>32</sup> (3) In Revelation 3:12 Jesus

---

<sup>32</sup> See Jamieson, Robert, A.R. Fausset, David Brown. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Toledo, OH: Jerome B. Names & Co., 1884. WORDsearch CROSS e-book. Commentary contained as a single volume; and, Clarke, Adam. *A Commentary and Critical Notes*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1826. WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

promises to write His Name, and the name of the New Jerusalem (marks of some kind), on the bodies of overcoming believers, when He returns.

3) Therefore, the Tattoo law cannot be a moral law. More likely the reason for Leviticus 19:28's prohibition against tattoos had to do with the fact that in Old Testament times most of the nations surrounding Israel used tattoos as a component of their idolatrous practices;<sup>33</sup> the intent, then, behind the law was to keep the Israelites from mixing the pagan practices of their neighbors into their worship of YAHWEH.

◆ **Exception to this rule about exceptions? Are there exceptions in Scripture to telling the truth?** Some people argue that there are exceptions to this rule about exceptions, because the Bible chronicles three (supposed) examples where God approved of lying. The three instances cited are found in (1) Ex 1:15-22 (the Hebrew midwives lying to Pharaoh); (2) Joshua 2 (Rahab lying in order to hide the Israelite spies); and (3) 1 Sam 16:2-5 (Samuel misleading Saul about his intentions). Since telling the truth is generally accepted to be a Moral law, these examples would seem to teach that there are extreme instances where God approves of disobeying His Moral commands. Such a conclusion, however, is unwarranted and potentially dangerous; a closer reading of the biblical texts in question reveals that though God approved of the *people* who lied in each of the above texts, the Scriptures nowhere give approval to their acts of lying. This is an important distinction to make: for example, when God said that David was a 'man after His own heart' (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22), He was not in any way giving approval to David's adultery with Bathsheba or murder of Uriah! Each of these three supposed exceptions is discussed in detail in the Appendices at the end of this paper.

● **A summary of 3 tests to discern if an Old Testament law is a Moral Law:**

1. Does this law define how people should treat each other ("love your neighbor as yourself")? If so, it is a Moral law.
2. Does this law correlate directly to a character trait of God that is revealed in Scripture? If so, it is a Moral law.
3. Is this law universal? Does it apply to all peoples, through all time periods, in all situations? If so, it is a Moral law.

● **Question: Must a law pass all three of the above tests in order to be classified as a Moral law?**

**Answer: No – a law only has to pass any one of the tests to be classified as a Moral Law.** The vast majority of Moral laws will pass all three, but there are several exceptions which people may argue only pass one or two of the tests. These are still Moral laws; a law only has to pass *one* of the three tests in order to be considered a Moral law that applies to all people, in all time periods, in all situations, including Christians today.<sup>34</sup> Let us now look at an example of a set of laws which only pass one or two of the three tests, and yet most certainly are universal, moral laws that must still be obeyed today . . .

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Incidentally, all Moral laws will pass, at the very least, test 3, which is the test of universality (Does this law apply to all peoples, throughout all time periods, in all situations?). If a law does not pass that test it cannot be a Moral Law. It is also true, however, that any law which passes one of the first two tests will automatically pass test 3: a 'love your neighbor as yourself law' will always be universal, as will any law (like telling the truth), which directly reflects a specific character trait of God. We can sum this up by saying the following things:

1. Every Moral law will pass test 3 (if it doesn't it isn't a Moral law, by definition);
2. Every law which passes tests 1 or 2 will also automatically pass test 3;
3. But there may be some laws (very few) which pass test 3 (are universal), but not either of tests 1 or 2. These are still Moral laws. For example, a law like the law prohibiting bestiality (Lev 19:23), does not technically have anything to do with loving one's neighbor as oneself (test 1) since it doesn't involve more than one person; nor can it be argued with 100% certainty which specific character trait of God it reflects (test 2); and yet it can still be clearly shown in Scripture that this is a universally binding Law on all peoples in all times, the breaking of which God will certainly punish in all peoples (see argumentation above for the sexual laws). Therefore it is a Moral law, though it only clearly passes one of the three tests of a Moral law, the third test, which is the test of universality.

- **The sexual laws of Leviticus 18.** These are some of the most hotly contested laws in all the Bible and they include, among other things, laws prohibiting bestiality (v.23), homosexuality (v.22) and incest (v.6-12). At first glance, some of these laws may not appear to fit (to some people) under the heading of ‘love your neighbor as yourself;’ thus they would fail the first test of a Moral law. For example, the law prohibiting bestiality (Lev 19:23) technically falls outside the bounds of ‘love your neighbor as yourself,’ since the act of bestiality involves only one person and, it could be argued, doesn’t technically affect any other people. A second example would be homosexuality; many people today would argue that the law prohibiting homosexuality is not a Moral law since homosexual acts between two consenting men or two consenting women do not break any commands that define how to ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’ And it is not immediately obvious, using only test 1, that such people could be refuted. And yet they *are* wrong; both of the Leviticus laws prohibiting bestiality and homosexuality (and indeed all the laws in Leviticus 18) *are* Moral laws that still apply to people today, even if they don’t pass test 1 of a Moral law (laws defining ‘love your neighbor as yourself’).
- How do we know this? By definition, a Moral law is like a law of nature in that it is universal; it applies to all people groups, throughout all time periods, forever. Moral laws do not distinguish between Jews or Gentiles, or apply only to certain cultures or time periods. They are for everyone, all the time. So the question that *really* matters is not simply, ‘Am I hurting someone else when I do this?’ but rather, ‘Does this still make God angry today?’ Will God hold me responsible for this on Judgment Day? These are the most basic questions underlying all Moral laws. So, then, what about the sexual laws of Leviticus 18? Are these universal laws which God still holds all people accountable for today, and the breaking of which bring His wrath and judgment? The answer is – yes. The Bible is very clear that these laws were not just meant to apply to one group of people (the Israelites) or to one period of time (Old Testament times). In fact, it can be shown from Scripture quite easily, that these are laws God has applied to all people (including Gentiles), throughout all time periods, both before and after the Old Covenant. Thus, these are clearly Moral laws that still apply today. Consider the following 3 points:
  1. **God applied the laws in Leviticus 18 to all the nations of the world, not just Israel.**
    - ◇ Consider the beginning and ending of Leviticus chapter 18:
      - a) **Beginning of Leviticus 18:** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. <sup>3</sup> You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. – Lev 18:1-3 (ESV)*
      - b) **The end of Leviticus 18:** *Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things [the breaking of the sexual laws listed in chapter 18], for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, <sup>25</sup> and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity [the iniquity of Gentile nations], and the land vomited out its inhabitants [Gentile nations]. <sup>26</sup> But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you [notice that these laws apply to foreigners, not just to Jews] <sup>27</sup> (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), <sup>28</sup> lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. <sup>29</sup> For everyone [not just Jews] who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. <sup>30</sup> So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God. – Lev 18:24-30 (ESV)*
    - ◇ The fact that God held the Gentile nations responsible for breaking the laws in Leviticus 18, and punished them for doing so, proves that these are universal Moral laws that apply to everyone, not just Ceremonial, or Civil, or Separation laws that applied only to the Jewish people.

2. **The sexual laws of Leviticus 18 actually *preceded* the Mosaic law – thus, they transcend the Mosaic law and are universal Moral laws that were written into the natural order of things at the time of creation itself.**
- ◇ Many of the laws in the Old Testament applied only to the Jewish people, and applied only during the time of the Old Covenant. These laws would include all the Ceremonial laws, the Separation laws and the Civil laws (with the one exception of circumcision, which is binding on the Jewish people forever – see Gen 17:13). Thus, any laws which *precede* the giving of the Mosaic law at Mount Sinai cannot be one of these three types of laws, and must instead be universal Moral laws that were written by God into the natural order of things at the time of creation itself, and thus, will stand forever.
  - ◇ The sexual laws of Leviticus 18, then, are certainly part of the natural order of things since they precede the giving of the Mosaic law. Thus, they are universal Moral laws which still hold true today. Consider the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities existed hundreds of years before the Law was given at Mount Sinai, indeed, hundreds of years before the Jewish people themselves came into existence. And yet God judged these cities with fire and brimstone for their sexual immorality (Gen 18:22 – 19:29). Consider what Jude says about them in his book; *“Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a PUNISHMENT of eternal fire”* (Jude 1:7 ESV). If sexual immorality, including homosexuality (‘unnatural desire,’ see also Gen 19:5), was a sin in God’s eyes before the giving of the Mosaic Law to Israel at Mount Sinai, then it is certainly a universal Moral law which transcends the Mosaic Law and is universally applicable to all peoples in all time periods.
3. **The sexual laws of Leviticus 18 are affirmed in the New Testament, proving that they are universal Moral laws applying to all peoples in all time periods.**
- ◇ As has been discussed in many places in this paper, the New Testament explicitly cancels all of the Ceremonial and Civil and Separation laws from the Old Testament since those were inferior laws that only served a temporary purpose during the time of the Old Covenant – they were never intended by God to be universal or eternal in application. By contrast, however, the New Testament repeatedly affirms the ongoing importance of obeying the Moral laws, since those laws reflect God’s eternal and unchanging nature. Thus, any laws which appear in the Old Testament and get confirmed in the New Testament must be universal Moral laws that apply to all peoples in all time periods. With this in mind, consider some of the many New Testament passages which clearly affirm the Old Testament laws governing sexuality – clearly these are universal Moral laws that still apply to Christians (indeed, *all* people) today:
    - a) *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.* <sup>4</sup> *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.* <sup>5</sup> *For you may be sure of this, that EVERYONE who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has NO INHERITANCE in the kingdom of Christ and God.* <sup>6</sup> *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* – **Eph 5:3-6 (ESV)**
    - b) *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;<sup>27</sup> and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.* – **Rom 1:26-27 (ESV)**
    - c) *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will NOT inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* <sup>11</sup> *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* – **1 Cor 6:9-11 (ESV)**

- **Conclusion to this chapter on the Moral laws: an easy-to-remember list of the four types of laws from the Old Testament that are Moral in nature.** If we apply the three tests of Moral laws to all the laws in the Old Testament we find four types of laws that pass the test and must be recognized as universal Moral laws that still apply today. When you are reading in the Old Testament, pay close attention to the following four groups of laws because God still requires that you obey them:
  1. All the relational laws (“love your neighbor as yourself”) are moral laws that still apply today;
  2. All the integrity laws (truth, honesty, keep-your-promises, etc.) are moral laws that still apply today;
  3. All the sexual laws outlined in Leviticus 18 are moral laws that still apply today;
  4. The law forbidding witchcraft and occult activity is a moral law that still applies today.

## Chapter 6 - What about the Sabbath? And other controversial laws (Tattoos, head-coverings and sex).

- Here is an outline of the different laws covered in this section, and the order in which appear:
  1. The Sabbath: Is the Sabbath a Moral or Ceremonial Law?
  2. The sexual laws of Leviticus 18: Are these Moral laws that still apply today?
  3. The tattoo law: Is it a Moral law that still applies today?
  4. Head coverings: Does God expect all women everywhere to wear head coverings to church?

### Controversial laws, part 1:

#### **The Sabbath: *Is the Sabbath a Moral or Ceremonial Law?***

The vast majority of Christians living today (and throughout history) do not believe the Sabbath is a Moral law, as evidenced by the fact that most Christians go to church on Sunday – and have for 2000 years. There are, however, small groups of believers (like the Seventh Day Adventists) who argue vigorously that the Sabbath *is* a Moral law, which must be observed by Christians on Saturday and no other day. This is an important question to answer because if the Sabbath is a Moral law, rooted in the eternal and unchanging nature of God, modern-day Christians who do not observe a solemn day of rest on *Saturday* are actually committing a serious sin against God, on par with the breaking of any of God's other Moral laws such as murder, adultery, lying, etc..

Most Christians, however, inherently comprehend the fact that the Sabbath law(s) is different from these laws; our consciences bear us witness that breaking the Sabbath is not a crime on par with lying, adultery or murder. But are we deceived? Do Sabbatarians have a convincing body of arguments on which to base their premise that the Sabbath is, indeed, a Moral law? They do not. The force of the entire Sabbatarian argument primarily stems from one thing – the fact that the Sabbath law is included in the Ten Commandments. Though this fact provides an emotional boost to the Sabbatarian cause, it is far from convincing in light of the following facts: (1) outside of the Ten Commandments, both the Old and New Testaments regularly (and repeatedly) categorize the Sabbath together with the Ceremonial laws instead of the Moral ones; and (2) the New Testament explicitly states that the Sabbath is not an important command to follow (Rom 14:5-6; Col 2:16-17).

So is the Sabbath law a Moral law that is still binding on Christians today? No. If the Sabbath law is tested against the four characteristics of Moral laws, as explained in the previous chapter, it is found to fail *each* and *every* test. For convenience sake, the four characteristics are listed here:

1. Moral laws are hard-wired into humanity's conscience;
2. Moral laws are rooted in God's eternal nature;
3. Moral laws are universal: they always apply, to all people, at all times, in all situations;
4. Moral laws can be summed up by "love your neighbor as yourself."

The Sabbath law does not meet a single one of these criteria, therefore it cannot be considered to be a Moral law in the same category as 'don't murder,' 'don't commit adultery,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' Is it wrong to observe the Sabbath on Saturday? No! But neither is it a moral obligation for modern-day Christians.

Before going further, it should be noted here that I am NOT arguing against people observing a day of rest each week (often called a Sabbath). I *do* believe that people should observe a day of rest each week, and that they should gather with other believers, read Scripture and worship the Lord on that day. God Himself rested on the seventh day of Creation, and if He took a day of rest I believe it must be very good for human beings to observe a weekly day of rest as well. My only argument in this paper is that Christians are not *morally* obligated to observe that day of rest on *Saturday* – they may

observe it on Sunday, or any other day which best suits them. And if they miss a day of rest from time to time, for whatever reason, I do not believe that they have sinned in the same way as if they had lied, or stolen something, or committed adultery, or murdered someone. Observing a day of rest each week is a *wisdom* principle, not a *moral* command. Hence, people, businesses and societies who ignore a weekly day of rest will suffer in proportion to their lack of adherence to this creation principle as a result of being *unwise* – but not because they are being explicitly immoral. Sabbatarians who argue this point need to realize that they are casting a wide swath of condemnation with their arguments (which is fine to do if one is truly convinced that the issue at hand really is that important to God) – because according to their theology doctors and emergency workers who work on Saturday, truckers who drive on Saturday, and shift workers like police officers, fire-fighters and even traveling construction workers who work 10-day shifts, before getting 4 off (or whatever), are all committing a grave sin in God’s eyes when they fail to observe the Sabbath on Saturday, each and every week.

### **A summary of 5 proofs that the Sabbath is not a Moral Law:**

1. God grew weary of Israel’s Sabbath keeping;
2. The Sabbath is not hard-wired into the human conscience;
3. Every time Jesus speaks of the Sabbath He compares it to Ceremonial laws, even ranking the Sabbath as less important than some of those laws;
4. The New Testament explicitly states that observing the Sabbath on Saturday is not important;
5. God allowed exceptions to Sabbath-observing.

### **The 5 proofs in detail:**

#### **1. Proof #1 that the Sabbath is not a Moral law: God grew weary of Israel’s Sabbath-keeping.**

- a) *Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.* <sup>14</sup> *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. – Isa 1:13-14 (ESV)*
  - ◆ In this passage God clearly states that He was ‘weary’ and ‘burdened’ by Israel’s Sabbath keeping! This is proof that the Sabbath is not a Moral law. Can you imagine God saying of any of the Moral laws that they had become a ‘burden’ to Him, or that He was ‘weary’ of them? Can you imagine God saying to Israel “I am weary of your truth-telling”? Or could you imagine Him saying “You are loving each other too much, it’s become a burden to me”? Or, “I am weary of all the faithfulness and justice and integrity in the land”?! Never! We all know that God would never say things like that, because those are the Moral laws which He loves – He NEVER gets tired of people obeying His Moral laws, because those laws are rooted in who He is.
- b) So why, in this passage, is God weary of the Israelite’s Sabbath keeping? Because He ‘cannot endure’ the mixture of ‘iniquity [breaking Moral laws] and solemn assembly [the observance of Ceremonial laws]’ (v.13). It’s the same theme throughout the Old Testament; God hated it when the Israelites made a *show* of loving Him by following the Ceremonial laws, while not *actually* loving him in their hearts – as evidenced by a life of obedience to His Moral commands (see also 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; Prov 21:3; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8). It’s not that the Ceremonial laws were bad, it’s just that the Moral laws are vastly more important. And in this passage Isaiah makes clear the fact that the Sabbath is one of the Ceremonial laws.

#### **2. Proof #2 that the Sabbath is not a Moral law: It’s not hard-wired into the human conscience.**

- a) As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the characteristics of Moral laws is that they are written into the human conscience. In other words, by God’s design, human beings are all born with an innate sense of right and wrong. The rights and wrongs which make up this innate sense are the fundamental, universal laws, which in this paper we have termed the ‘Moral laws.’ God, in His Wisdom, has ensured that these laws are clear enough to the entire human race that no special revelation is required in order to learn them; in other words, God will hold all people, everywhere, accountable for disobeying these laws, whether they’ve ever read the

Bible, heard about Jesus, or had someone teach them about Christianity, or not. This is exactly Paul's point in Romans chapter 2: *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by NATURE do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.*<sup>15</sup> *They show that the work of the law is WRITTEN ON THEIR HEARTS, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them*<sup>16</sup> *on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.* – **Rom 2:14-16 (ESV)**

◆ According to this passage every person will stand before God on Judgment Day and be held accountable for actions like murder, and adultery, and back-stabbing, and lying, and slander – even if they never heard the Gospel, or had an opportunity to read the Bible. Why? Because people don't need the Bible's teaching (though it helps, obviously!) in order to know that those things are wrong – each person is born with a conscience that tells them what the Moral laws are.

b) **What does this discussion have to do with the Sabbath?** Everything, because the Sabbath clearly fails this test. Are people born with an innate sense that they should rest on Saturday as opposed to any other day? No. Special revelation is required in order to properly obey and observe the Sabbath law(s). A person who has no access to a Bible would never know that there was something special about Saturday, or that they must rest on that day as opposed to another day. Try to imagine God holding people, who have never come in contact with a Bible, accountable on Judgment Day for not observing the Sabbath – hard to imagine, right? He would never do such a thing because it wouldn't be just. Thus, the Sabbath cannot be a Moral law.

3. **Proof #3 that the Sabbath is not a Moral law: Every time Jesus speaks of the Sabbath He compares it to the Ceremonial laws, even ranking the Sabbath as less important than some of those laws.**

a) When Jesus talked about the Sabbath, He clearly grouped it with the Ceremonial laws, not the Moral ones. Consider the following:

- 1) In matters of morality Jesus had a very strict standard, stricter than the Pharisees (Matt 5:20; also 5:21-22; 27-28; 31-32; 33-35; 38-39; 43-44). In matters of morality and holiness Jesus always raised the bar with respect to God's expectations of people (Matt 5:48; 18:7-9) – never once did He lower the bar in terms of obedience to God's Moral commands;
- 2) When it came to the Ceremonial laws, however, He was more lenient than the Pharisees (Matt 12:7; 23:23-24).

◆ How about the Sabbath? Was Jesus more strict, concerning the Sabbath, than the Pharisees, or more lenient? Decidedly more lenient. On several occasions, He noted that the Pharisees were too strict about the Sabbath, and never once is He recorded as giving any restrictions about the Sabbath. In contrast, compare this to Jesus' treatment of the Moral laws in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapter 5), when He made God's Moral commands far more exacting and restrictive than the Pharisees had! This point in itself suggests that Jesus saw the Sabbath as a Ceremonial law.

b) More importantly, Jesus repeatedly compared the Sabbath to Ceremonial laws, even going so far as to give precedence to some of those laws *over* the Sabbath. Here are 3 examples:

- 1) In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus compared the Sabbath to the sacrificial laws and noted that priests were allowed to 'profane the Sabbath,' while remaining 'guiltless' (Matt 12:5). How could the priests remain guiltless while profaning the Sabbath? Obviously the requirement to sacrifice animals was *more important*, in God's eyes, than the requirement to rest on the Sabbath. In other words, the sacrificial laws took precedence over the Sabbath. But if the sacrificial laws took precedence over the Sabbath, then the Sabbath cannot be a Moral law, because the Scriptures are clear that the relationship between Moral laws and sacrificial laws is the other way around – Moral laws always take precedence over sacrificial laws (1

Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; Prov 21:3; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8; Matt 12:7). This is proof that the Sabbath is not a Moral law.

- 2) In the same way, Jesus also noted that circumcisions could be performed on the Sabbath without sinning (John 7:22-23). Again, the only explanation for this is that the ritual law of circumcision was more important to God than the requirement to rest on the seventh day. Can a situation be imagined where the law of circumcision would supersede any of the Moral laws? Never (1 Cor 7:19). Therefore the Sabbath cannot be a Moral law.
- 3) When His disciples were criticized for picking grain on the Sabbath, Jesus used the example of David eating the Tabernacle showbread (Matt 12:1-4). In essence His response was, 'If David could eat the showbread, my disciples can pick enough grain to eat.' Notice that Jesus' line of argument does not work if the Sabbath is a more important law than the showbread law – in that case, the Pharisees could have said, 'It's permissible to take liberties with the showbread, but the Sabbath is more important, so we have to be more careful about it.' No, in order for the logic of Jesus' argument to work, the showbread has to be just as important as the Sabbath. Only then could the comparison carry any weight.
- ◆ Conclusion: Since Jesus put the showbread law, the sacrificial laws and circumcision – all Ceremonial laws – on the same level of importance as the Sabbath, or higher, it is clear that the Sabbath cannot be a Moral law. Moral laws are far more important than Ceremonial laws.

#### 4. **Proof #4 that the Sabbath is not a Moral law: The New Testament explicitly states that observing the Sabbath on Saturday is not important.**

◇ Consider the following two passages:

a) *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. – Rom 14:5-6 (ESV)*

- ◆ The entire Sabbatarian argument for Christians being morally obligated to observe the Sabbath on Saturday rests on the premise that there is something inherently moral about the day of Saturday itself. But this passage clearly refutes that thinking. Paul states unequivocally here that 'all days' are 'alike' (v.5). Whether a person observes a festival or a Sabbath on a particular day doesn't matter – what matters are a person's motives and intentions towards God.

b) *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. – Col 2:16-17 (ESV)*

- ◆ This passage explicitly groups the Sabbath with the *Ceremonial* laws (food and drink, and festivals and new moons), and clearly states that all of these things – including the Sabbath – are merely 'shadows' of real things which are to come. In other words, the Sabbath is not a Moral law and is no longer binding on Christians today.
- ◆ Sabbatarians will attempt to complicate things, however, by arguing that this passage does not refer to the Sabbath itself (rest on Saturday) but only to laws *about* the Sabbath, which specifically defined what that rest should look like – laws like, No cooking on the Sabbath (Ex 35:3); and No gathering food on the Sabbath (Ex 16:23-25), etc., etc.. But on what basis do they make this assertion? The passage does not stipulate 'only-laws-about-the-Sabbath-but-not-the-Sabbath-itself,' it only says 'let no one pass judgment on you . . . in questions of . . . a Sabbath.' That implies *any* question regarding the Sabbath – including what day it is observed on. When Sabbatarians restrict what aspects of the Sabbath this verse is referring to they are reading things into the text which aren't there.

- ◆ Moreover, are Sabbatarians prepared to be consistent in their interpretation of this passage? In addition to the Sabbath, this passage also mentions ‘festivals’ and ‘new moons.’ Are Sabbatarians willing to apply their reasoning about the Sabbath in this passage to the Jewish festivals and new moons as well? Do they desire to argue that this passage only applies to laws *about* the Jewish festivals and not to the festivals themselves? In that case, Christians today would be morally obligated to follow the Jewish calendar, and to observe all of the festivals prescribed in the Old Testament on the correct days of the year. Preposterous! The plain teaching of this passage is clear – it is no longer a moral necessity for believers to bother observing any of the Old Testament festivals, nor to remember the dates on which they fall. Unfortunately for Sabbatarians, Paul’s discussion of the moral non-importance of the Jewish festivals and dietary laws also includes the Sabbath in that same group.
- ◆ Furthermore, when this passage is compared to the Romans 14:5-6 passage discussed earlier, it becomes clear that Paul most certainly does have *everything* about the Sabbath in mind – including what day of the week people observe it on.

5. ***Proof #5 that the Sabbath is not a Moral law: Scripture records many incidences of God-approved Sabbath-breaking.***

- ◇ In the previous chapter we saw that one of the primary characteristics of Moral laws is that there are not exceptions to obeying them. Is it ever okay to commit adultery? Is it ever okay to hate your neighbor? Is it ever okay to commit pre-meditated murder? No! That’s because these are Moral laws, which means that they are rooted in the eternal and unchanging nature of God. God does not *ever* approve of breaking any of His Moral laws because they are rooted in His eternal and unchanging nature.
- ◇ But what about the Sabbath? Does Scripture ever record God-approved instances of breaking the Sabbath? If so, the Sabbath cannot be a Moral law. And the Scripture *does* record many incidences where God approves of – and sometimes even commands! – Sabbath breaking. Here are just four examples:
  - a) ***The priests were allowed to break the Sabbath.***
    - ◆ This particular example has already been discussed, and no more needs to be said, other than Jesus’ own words on the topic: *Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?* – **Matt 12:5 (ESV)**
    - ◆ If observing the Sabbath was a Moral law, under no circumstances could the priests have profaned it and still remained guiltless.
  - b) ***God personally commanded Joshua and the Israelites to break the Sabbath when He told them to march around the walls of Jericho seven times on the seventh day.***
    - ◆ And the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor. <sup>3</sup>You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. <sup>4</sup>Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the SEVENTH DAY you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. – **Josh 6:2-4 (ESV)**
    - ◆ In this story God specifically commanded Joshua and the Israelites to march around Jericho seven times – and conquer it (6:20-21) – on the *seventh day*, expressly breaking the law to rest on the Sabbath (Ex 16:29). Obviously the Sabbath cannot be a Moral law. As proof, can you imagine any scenario in which God’s battle plan for the Israelites would have included the breaking of Moral laws like murder, adultery or lying, as part of the overall strategy for taking Jericho? Of course not! God *could* never do such a thing, and *would* never do such thing. The fact that His battle plan in this instance did include Sabbath-breaking, proves that the Sabbath is not a Moral law.

## The sexual laws of Leviticus 18: are these Moral laws that still apply today?

These are some of the most hotly contested laws in all the Bible and they include, among other things, laws prohibiting bestiality (v.23), homosexuality (v.22) and incest (v.6-12). They are all universal Moral laws that still apply today.

How do we know this? The Bible is very clear that these laws were not just meant to apply to one group of people (the Israelites) or to one period of time (Old Testament times). In fact, it can be shown from Scripture quite easily, that these are laws God has applied to all people (including the Gentiles), throughout all time periods, both before and after the Old Covenant. Thus, these are clearly Moral laws that still apply today. Consider the following 3 points:

### 1. God applied the laws in Leviticus 18 to all the nations of the world, not just Israel.

◇ Consider the beginning and ending of Leviticus chapter 18:

a) **Beginning of Leviticus 18:** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. <sup>3</sup> You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. – Lev 18:1-3 (ESV)*

b) **The end of Leviticus 18:** *Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things [the breaking of the sexual laws listed in chapter 18], for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, <sup>25</sup> and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity [the iniquity of Gentile nations], and the land vomited out its inhabitants [Gentile nations]. <sup>26</sup> But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you [notice that these laws apply to foreigners, not just to Jews] <sup>27</sup> (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), <sup>28</sup> lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. <sup>29</sup> For everyone [not just Jews] who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. <sup>30</sup> So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God. – Lev 18:24-30 (ESV)*

◇ The fact that God held the Gentile nations responsible for breaking the laws in Leviticus 18, and punished them for doing so, proves that these are universal Moral laws that apply to everyone, not just Ceremonial, or Civil, or Separation laws that applied only to the Jewish people.

### 2. The sexual laws of Leviticus 18 actually *preceded* the Mosaic law – thus, they transcend the Mosaic law and are universal Moral laws that were written into the natural order of things at the time of creation itself.

◇ Many of the laws in the Old Testament applied only to the Jewish people, and applied only during the time of the Old Covenant. These laws would include all the Ceremonial laws, the Separation laws and the Civil laws.<sup>35</sup> Thus, any laws which *precede* the giving of the Mosaic law at Mount Sinai cannot be one of these three types of laws, and must instead be universal Moral laws that were written by God into the natural order of things at the time of creation itself, and thus, will stand forever.

◇ The sexual laws of Leviticus 18, then, are certainly part of the natural order of things since they precede the giving of the Mosaic law. Thus, they are universal Moral laws which still hold true today. Consider the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities existed hundreds of years before the Law was given at Mount Sinai, indeed, hundreds of years before the Jewish people themselves came into existence. And yet God judged these cities with fire and brimstone for their sexual immorality (Gen 18:22 – 19:29). Consider what Jude says about them in

---

<sup>35</sup> One exception would be circumcision, which is binding on the Jewish people (though not Gentiles) forever – see Gen 17:13.

his book; “Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a PUNISHMENT of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7 ESV). If sexual immorality, including homosexuality (‘unnatural desire,’ see also Gen 19:5), was a sin in God’s eyes before the giving of the Mosaic Law to Israel at Mount Sinai, then it is certainly a universal Moral law which transcends the Mosaic Law and is universally applicable to all peoples in all time periods.

**3. The sexual laws of Leviticus 18 are affirmed in the New Testament, proving that they are universal Moral laws applying to all peoples in all time periods.**

- ◇ As has been discussed in many places in this paper, the New Testament explicitly cancels all of the Ceremonial and Civil and Separation laws from the Old Testament since those were inferior laws that only served a temporary purpose during the time of the Old Covenant – they were never intended by God to be universal or eternal in application. By contrast, however, the New Testament repeatedly affirms the ongoing importance of obeying the Moral laws, since those laws reflect God’s eternal and unchanging nature. Thus, any laws which appear in the Old Testament and get confirmed in the New Testament must be universal Moral laws that apply to all peoples in all time periods. With this in mind, consider some of the many New Testament passages which clearly affirm the Old Testament laws governing sexuality – clearly these are universal Moral laws that still apply to Christians (indeed, *all people*) today:
- a) *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. <sup>4</sup> Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For you may be sure of this, that EVERYONE who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has NO INHERITANCE in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. – **Eph 5:3-6 (ESV)***
  - b) *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. – **Rom 1:26-27 (ESV)***
  - c) *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will NOT inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. – **1 Cor 6:9-11 (ESV)***

## The tattoo law: *Does it still apply today?*

Leviticus 19:28 states, *You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD* (ESV). The question many modern-day Christians have debated over the years, is, “Is it okay for Believers today to get a tattoo?” In other words, is this a universal Moral law that still holds today, or did this law only apply to the Old Testament Israelites? Recall the three tests of a Moral law: (1) Does this law define how to treat other people (“love your neighbor as yourself”)? Then it’s a Moral law. (2) Does this law directly correlate to a specific character trait of God? Then it’s a Moral law. And lastly, (3) Can we find any God-approved exceptions to this law? If so, it is not a Moral law since Moral laws are universal in application. Let’s break this down into points:

1. **Love your neighbor as yourself?** Let us apply the first of our three tests of a Moral Law to the tattoo law: Is this law a relational law? Does it define how people are supposed to treat each other? Does it have anything to do with loving ones neighbor as oneself? No. Therefore the tattoo law fails the first test of a Moral law.
2. **Direct correlation to a character trait of God?** Time for test number two – does the tattoo law directly correlate to known attribute of God, as revealed in Scripture? We know that God is love (1 John 4:8), but the tattoo law has nothing inherently to do with loving ones neighbor as oneself. We also know from Scripture that other important character traits of God are that He is truthful, merciful and just – but again, getting a tattoo does not directly correlate to being truthful or being merciful or being just. We also know that God is pure and holy – but getting a tattoo has nothing inherently to do with being sexually immoral, obscene or impure (assuming the tattoo itself is not obscene or lewd). And furthermore, it goes without saying that nowhere in Scripture is God described as the God-who-doesn’t-mark-His-body. Therefore, the tattoo law fails test number two of a Moral law: it does not directly correlate with any of God’s character traits as described in Scripture.
3. **Universal law?** Lastly, and most importantly, does the tattoo law pass the third test of a Moral law, the test of universality? Does it always apply to all peoples in all situations, or can we find examples in Scripture of God-approved exceptions to the law?

Before applying this test let us first define what we mean by the word ‘tattoo.’ A tattoo is nothing more than a permanent mark directly applied directly to a person’s body. With that in mind let us ask the question, Are there any places in Scripture where God approves of people getting a permanent mark directly applied to their body? Yes.

- ◇ In Genesis 4:15 God *Himself* applied a permanent mark to Cain so that no one would kill him in the places where he would travel.
- ◇ Isaiah prophesies in Isaiah 44:5 that after Jesus’ Second Coming godly Jews will write on their hands “The LORD’S.” Many commentators agree that this refers to a permanent marking with punctures and ink (a tattoo!), like what soldiers in ancient times would do in order to identify which commander they served under, and like what early Christians did when they tattooed their wrists or hands with the sign of the cross.<sup>36</sup>
- ◇ In Revelation 3:12 Jesus promises to write His Name, and the name of the New Jerusalem (marks of some kind), on the bodies of overcoming believers, when He returns.

**Conclusion:** Would God ever do something immoral or sinful? No! So if God Himself tattoos people with permanent marks, and if godly people will tattoo themselves with His Name at Jesus’ Return, then certainly the law prohibiting tattoos cannot be a universal Moral law. Thus, the tattoo law must belong to the set of Separation laws and/or the set of Ceremonial laws in the Old Testament – laws which were cancelled when Jesus died on the cross. The most likely reason for Leviticus 19:28’s

---

<sup>36</sup> See Jamieson, Robert, A.R. Fausset, David Brown. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Toledo, OH: Jerome B. Names & Co., 1884. WORDsearch CROSS e-book. Commentary contained as a single volume; and, Clarke, Adam. *A Commentary and Critical Notes*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1826. WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

prohibition against tattoos had to do with the fact that in Old Testament times most of the nations surrounding Israel used tattoos as a component of their idolatrous practices;<sup>37</sup> the intent, then, behind the law was to keep the Israelites from mixing the pagan practices of their neighbors into their worship of YAHWEH.

**Caution:** Just because it is *technically* okay to get a tattoo does not mean it is necessarily the right thing to do; in other words, the fact that tattoos are not automatically all evil does not mean that they are necessarily all good. Getting a tattoo could still be a sin for you in many circumstances. Consider the following questions:

1. Is your getting a tattoo going to cause a weaker brother to stumble? Is it going to harm your Christian testimony in your community or in your family? If so then Paul teaches very clearly, both in Romans 14:13-22 and 1 Corinthians 8:9-13, that you should not get that tattoo. In all such cases believers should give up their rights and freedoms in order to love their brothers (1 Cor 8:9). In fact, to uncaringly get a tattoo is a sin if there are people in your life whose relationship with Christ could be negatively affected because of the tattoo (1 Cor 8:12; Matt 18:6-7).
2. Second question: Why do you want to get a tattoo? Are you doing it to rebel against your parents, or some other authority? Or, are you doing it because of personal vanity? If your answer is 'yes' to either of the previous questions, then there is a good chance that getting a tattoo is a sin for you. Seek God's will on the matter.
3. Third question: What kind of a tattoo are you getting? Does it have any kind of occult or New Age significance? Is it sexual, obscene or inappropriate? If so, then do not mark your body with it! Do your research and be very sure that what you are marking your body with is not abhorrent to God. Many of the symbols and artwork that are popular in our culture today have significant occult influence (Native spiritism, New Age, etc.); stay far away from all such things.

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

## Are women supposed to wear head coverings in church? (1 Corinthians 11:2-17)

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-17 Paul seems to teach that women are always supposed to wear head coverings in church. Many Christians today wonder, *Is this command still for today?* What are we to do with this? Here is the passage:  
*Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.<sup>3</sup> But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.<sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head,<sup>5</sup> but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.*

<sup>6</sup>*For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head.*<sup>7</sup> *For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.*

<sup>8</sup>*For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.<sup>9</sup> Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.<sup>10</sup> That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman;<sup>12</sup> for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.*

<sup>13</sup>*Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered?<sup>14</sup> Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him,<sup>15</sup> but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering.<sup>16</sup> If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God. – 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (ESV)*

On the surface, this passage seems pretty clear: women must wear head coverings to church. The difficulty, of course, is that almost no Christian women in our modern day evangelical culture feel that this command still applies to them. And we here at Southland agree with them. How is it that we can, with a good conscience, ignore such a 'clear' command of Scripture?

There are many different kinds of commands in Scripture: some, like the sacrifices, have long been cancelled, while others like 'Do not murder' (Ex 20:13) and 'Love your neighbor as yourself' (Lev 19:18) are universal moral laws that will stand forever (Ps 111:7-8; Mt. 5:18).

Still others, however, occupy somewhat of a middle ground – it no longer makes sense to apply them exactly as-is in our day and age, though the underlying principle(s) on which they are founded still holds true. For example, Deuteronomy 22:8 commands everyone to 'build a fence around your roof' in order that the 'guilt of blood' not be brought on your house. The reason for this command is obvious: in ancient Middle Eastern cultures people built their homes with flat rooftops so that the roof doubled as usable space – a second storey for their homes. People used their roofs to sleep, eat, gather and, in some cases, work. Thus, in Deuteronomy, God's command to always put a fence on your roof was a safety law intended to keep people from unnecessarily being injured or killed in falls from rooftops.

In our context today in North America however, very rarely would anyone build a house that has a flat rooftop. There are probably many of reasons for this, not the least being that such rooftops are impractical in our climate, where it is necessary that a roof be able to bear heavy snow loads in the winter time. Thus we build our homes with peaked rooftops

instead of flat, and as a result, our rooftops are unusable; no one ever goes onto their roof unless they have to fix something.

So does Deuteronomy 22:8 still apply to us today? Does God expect all of His people to still put fences up around their rooftops?

A strict literalist would say, 'We have to do exactly as the Bible commands – what right have we to change God's laws?' And they would be right when it comes to the universal moral laws that are contained in Scripture such as 'Do not murder,' 'Do not lie,' 'Do not steal,' 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' etc..

But any careful student of the Scriptures will recognize that some of the commands in Scripture are the result of universal moral laws being applied to *particular situations*. In the case of Deuteronomy 22:8 this is surely the case: it is extremely doubtful that anyone could argue cogently that every house that will ever be built for all of eternity – regardless of style, culture, climate or usage – must have a fence around its roof *as a universal moral principle*; or that houses having fences around their rooftops is intrinsic to the very nature of God and how He has created the universe!

No. The universal moral law underlying the command is this: all human life is valuable and must be treated as such. Therefore, appropriate precautions must always be taken to ensure that human life is not unnecessarily lost or injured. In a culture where people's houses have flat rooftops and where people spend lots of time on their roof, this universal moral law – that human life is precious and should be protected – takes the form of a culture-specific command to 'put a fence around your rooftop.'

In a context, however, where people don't ever go onto their rooftops, the culture-specific part of the command can be ignored. The underlying principle, however, will always stand: human life is precious, and in our workplaces and homes we should always ensure that all reasonable precautions have been taken so that human life is not unnecessarily lost or injured.

### **What does all of this have to do with 1 Corinthians 11:2-17 and women wearing head coverings at church?**

Everything. Because the question now is, what kind of command is Paul's instruction that women should wear a head covering at church? Is it an intrinsic universal moral law – like 'Do not murder,' and 'Love your neighbor as yourself' – that will stand unchanged for all eternity? Or is it a culture-specific application of one of those universal moral laws, like Deuteronomy 22:8 and the command to 'put a fence around your roof?'

Let's see. If Paul's command to women to wear head coverings to church is a universal moral law, intrinsic to the very character of God and to the nature of how He has created the universe, then it will stand forever – it will always be true in all situations and places, in all cultures, and throughout all time periods (it will even continue to be obeyed in heaven!). That's what a universal moral law is.

Are head coverings on women an eternal law like this? No. How can I be so sure? Because you won't find the command anywhere in the Old Testament.

Does this make sense? If a law is a universal moral law, intrinsic to the very nature of God and the way He has created the universe, then that means it has *always* been true since the very beginning – it didn't just suddenly begin to be true in New Testament times.

Consider, for example, the other universal moral laws: it has always been wrong to murder. There has never been a time in history when it was okay to murder someone. Likewise, it has always been *right* to love your neighbor as yourself – there has never been a time when loving your neighbor as yourself was wrong. It has also always been wrong to steal – there has never been a time in history when stealing and cheating and taking advantage of people was ‘okay’ with God.

None of these universal moral laws suddenly ‘started’ in the New Testament. No – they are universal moral laws that are rooted in God’s character and the created order of things, which means they have always been, since the very beginning.

And since the universal moral laws are from the beginning we can find them all recorded in the Old Testament, which records for us the beginnings of everything. For example, in Genesis 4 God punished Cain for murdering his brother Abel; therefore we see that murder was wrong from the very beginning. And then, in the Ten Commandments, we have explicitly recorded the eternal moral commands concerning adultery, stealing, lying and covetousness (Ex 20:12-17). These are universal moral laws that have been in effect since the beginning of time, and hence we find them enshrined from the very beginning, in the Old Testament.

This is very important: the New Testament did not add any new universal moral laws. How could it? Such laws could hardly be universal if for thousands of years they did not apply to anyone! If anything, the only thing the New Testament did was *cancel* a bunch of laws, the temporary ones that are no longer needed thanks to Jesus’ work on the cross.

So what about head coverings for women? Where is that command in the Old Testament?

Nowhere.<sup>38</sup>

Which means that God didn’t expect all women everywhere to wear head coverings in Old Testament times . . . which means that Paul’s command to the women of Corinth to wear head coverings is not an eternal law that has been in effect since Adam and Eve, but rather a situation-specific command that applied to a particular people (the Corinthians) at a particular point in time (first century AD).

Does this not make sense? Imagine an isolated tribe living in the jungles of the Amazon: now imagine that according to this tribe’s customs it is considered highly disrespectful and offensive for a woman to wear any kind of covering on her head. Only a very rebellious and angry woman would ever do such a thing. Now imagine that a missionary comes to this tribe; would we expect this missionary to force these women to wear head coverings, thus offending the rest of the tribe, and promoting rebellion against the leadership within the ranks? Of course not! And we thereby show our implicit realization that Paul’s command to the Corinthian women to cover their heads must be tied to the culture of that day.

### **What was happening at Corinth that would cause Paul to command the women to wear head coverings?**

One of the big problems in the Corinthian church (and many scholars agree on this point)<sup>39</sup> was that many of the women had what Gordon Fee calls an ‘over-realized eschatology.’ Some cultural background will first be needed in order to explain this . . .

---

<sup>38</sup> There are a number of examples in the Old Testament where women wore head coverings, but no explicit commands that they must do so. These are two very different things. I could cite a number of examples of things people did in the Old Testament that aren’t universal commands which we all must follow today. For example, the men in the Old Testament all wore robes, not pants. Does this mean that all men today are required to wear robes instead of pants? Ridiculous. The farmers in Israel all plowed their fields using oxen or horses – not tractors. Does this mean that farmers today are required – as a matter of principle – to plow their fields with animals instead of tractors? Ridiculous. There is a huge difference between things people did in the Old Testament just because that’s how society functioned at the time, and things people did because God commanded that they must.

Christianity had an enormously liberating effect on women. In Judaism (from which Christianity was born) women were not allowed to worship with men; they were not allowed past the outer courts of the Temple in Jerusalem, and in the synagogues they were kept separate from the men and not allowed to participate in most of the proceedings. In Roman society and religion too, women were in a lot of respects held to be inferior to men and did not enjoy many of the privileges and respect that men did.

Then Jesus came along: He talked to women, had women in His regular entourage, treated women with a respect and dignity they were not always accustomed to, and just generally raised the status of women by His interactions with them. As a result of His example, His disciples and the leaders of the early church immediately accepted women as full participants in church life after Jesus' ascension back to heaven. The apostle Paul could even make what, for his day, would have been an astonishing statement about the status of women, saying , "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28 ESV).

We see examples of this female liberation throughout the New Testament: women and men praying together, women prophesying, women serving, and women being honored in the Church. Many modern readers fail to realize just how revolutionary this shift was for women living in the first century AD.

But of course, as with everything good that God does, there is always an abuse waiting somewhere in the wings. Some women, in some of the churches, took their new found freedom too far and began spreading heresies, as well as behaving in inappropriate ways that brought shame on the Church.

This was certainly a problem in the Corinthian church. As respected scholars like Gordon Fee and John Piper have documented, one of the problems in the Corinthian church was that some of the women had come to have what I mentioned above, an 'over-realized eschatology.' In other words, they had come to believe that since the age of the Holy Spirit had begun, the kingdom of heaven had been *fully* realized in them already – no need to wait for the future day when Jesus will return and our bodies will be resurrected. They believed that they had become like angels already, and had taken Paul's teaching that men and women are equal in Christ to the extreme that there are no differences between men and women. [Incidentally, this also helps to explain why there was teaching at Corinth that marriage was unspiritual, and sex – even within marriage – was also unspiritual (see 1 Corinthians 7).]

The Christian message most certainly affirms that men and women are equal. But equal does not mean the same! (When is the last time you heard of a man getting pregnant?) Equality in Christ does not mean that men should act or dress like women, nor that women should act or dress like men. The consistent teaching of Scripture, confirmed by our experience, is that men and women are equal but different.

In their uninhibited zeal and newfound freedom, however, these women had begun crossing the line into impropriety and were doing away with some of the customs of *their day* that distinguished men from women – like taking off their head coverings in church. In their boldness these women were actually puffing themselves up and causing themselves to stand out in inappropriate ways; they were the feminist activists of their day, using their clothing, behavior and lack of a head covering to make bold social statements whenever they went to church. The spirit behind their behavior was not right, and it was disrupting the worship of the church and putting Christianity itself in a bad light in the surrounding society.

---

<sup>39</sup> See Gordon Fee's *The first epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1987), pp. 10-13, 269-270, 516. Fee names a number of other scholars who have also made this point. See also John Piper's *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (a book whose conclusions in some cases we do not agree with), p. 129.

Thus, in 1 Corinthians 11:2-17, Paul hammers home the point that, though equal in the Lord, men and women really are different, and should act and dress accordingly when at church.

**Objection: But Paul grounds his case that women should wear head coverings at church in the created order of things. How can something based in the created order of things not be binding on us today?**

It is true that Paul grounds his argument that women should wear head coverings in the created order of things (see verses 7 – 10 and 14). The key question here, however, is whether creation dictates that women wear head coverings or whether creation dictates that we use culturally appropriate expressions of masculinity and femininity.

I would say the latter. When God made Adam and Eve did He tell Eve to put on a head covering immediately? No! The Bible says that Adam and Eve were both 'naked' (Gen 2:25). The first time we see Adam and Eve putting any type of clothing on was after they had sinned (Gen 3:7), and even then we don't see God telling Eve to wear a head covering.

Thus we see that from the beginning God did not expect women to wear head coverings specifically. The only thing God has required of men and women in this regard, since the beginning, is that women behave and dress like women, and men behave and dress like men (Deut 22:5) – however that may play out in the various cultures and contexts throughout time.

### **The cultural milieu of the Corinthian church in Paul's day.**

In any time period, the conventions which govern fashion are a thing in constant flux, forever shifting and changing. As such, not much is known about the specific practices involving head coverings in Corinth at the exact time when Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. What is known is that in the ancient world the wearing of head coverings was a common thing that came into vogue at various times and in various places throughout the Graeco-Roman Empire. Some groups expected the men to wear head coverings; others expected women to wear them. Still others felt that such were optional for both men and women. It is not important to determine which group did what. The important thing to note is that the early church adopted a convention (1 Cor 11:16) *already in use in society* and gave it a distinctively Christian hue.

Thus, when churches asked Christian women to wear head coverings at meetings, it would not have been viewed as an unusual request by any in the surrounding society. In the cosmopolitan cities of Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece no woman would have felt uncomfortable or out of place while wearing a head covering. Head coverings were everywhere.

Today, however, the situation is quite different, at least in the West. Making a woman wear a head covering in many church contexts today wouldn't cause her to blend in, but rather to stand out – the exact *opposite* of Paul's intent. So here we have an example where following the letter of a command could actually constitute disobedience to the spirit behind the command. Paul wanted the women of Corinth to be known for their godliness and respect, not for their belligerence and bravado. In today's Western culture, however, head coverings do not communicate godliness and respect, as Paul intended them to do.

**Conclusion:** In this paper I have shown that the head covering command found in 1 Corinthians 11:2-17 is not an eternal moral law which needs to be obeyed by all women, in all places, for all time, but rather a culturally specific application of the deeper moral law that women should behave and dress like women, and men should behave and dress like men – however that works itself out in a given culture and context. Paul's concern in passages like these is that the worship in the church be orderly and respectful, and that the testimony of the church not be harmed in the surrounding society. Thus, women in our churches today need not concern themselves about wearing head coverings.

# Part 3: Bible Study – A close look at some Antinomian (anti-Law) proof-text passages

- In this section I will attempt to systematically deal with the primary passages of Scripture which Antinomians use to build their case that the *entire* Old Testament Law has been cancelled, not just the Ceremonial bits.

## Chapter 1 - Romans 6:14 – Not under law but under grace?

- I will tackle this passage in three parts: (1) in part one I will examine the passage in its context and show what Paul CANNOT be saying; (2) in part two I will show what Paul is ACTUALLY saying; (3) and in part three I will examine the practical implications of Antinomianism's (anti-Law) interpretation of Romans 6:14, showing that it is inherently self-contradictory.

### 1. Part One: What Paul CANNOT be saying in Romans 6:14.

- ◇ Romans 6:14 is probably Antinomianism's favorite passage of Scripture. It says, "*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*" – **Romans 6:14 (ESV)** Antinomians (anti-Law) frequently quote the second half of the sentence in order to 'prove' their point that Christians are no longer bound by the Law since they are now under Grace. The first thing to notice, however, is that when Antinomians quote the phrase '*you are not under law but under grace*' they are not even quoting an entire sentence! This is a very shaky foundation on which to build an entire doctrine – especially when you consider the context of the rest of the chapter, sentence and verse from which the phrase is lifted.

- a) **The Context of Romans 6 – “Don't Sin!”** What is the primary point Paul is making in Romans chapter 6? Don't sin! The chapter starts off by saying, "*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in SIN that grace may abound?*"<sup>2</sup> *By no means! How can we who died to SIN still live in it?"* (Rom 6:1-2 ESV) If we look at Paul's train of thought later in the chapter, leading up to verse 14, we find that his train of thought remains unchanged. Consider the phrase '*you are not under law but under grace*' in the full context of the preceding verses: *Let not SIN therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.*<sup>13</sup> *Do not present your members to SIN as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.*<sup>14</sup> *For SIN will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace"* (Romans 6:12-14 ESV).

- ◆ Again, what is the major point that Paul is making in this passage? That Christians are not to continue sinning – but this creates a problem for the Antinomian interpretation of the last part of verse 14, as the next point will make clear . . .

- b) **A major problem for the Antinomian interpretation of Romans 6:14 – How to define 'sin' if there is no Law for Christians to break:** Antinomians interpret the second half of Romans 6:14 to mean that Christians are no longer bound by the Law – but the primary point Paul is making in this passage, and indeed the entire chapter, is that Christians aren't supposed to keep sinning. How, then, do Antinomians define 'sin' in this passage, since they do away with the Law? They say that verse 14 releases Christians from the Law, but if that is indeed true, and it doesn't matter whether or not Christians obey or disobey the Law, then Antinomians must explain what constitutes 'sin' for a believer, since Paul is very preoccupied throughout Romans 6 with warning Christians to stop sinning. If there is no Law to break, then it is not possible to sin (Rom 4:15; 5:13)!

- ◆ Is it 'sin' for a Christian to commit murder or to commit adultery or to commit bestiality? Christians everywhere would agree, 'Yes!' But why are these things sin? Because they are against the Law! This is exactly what the apostle John states so clearly in his Epistle: *Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin IS lawlessness.* – **1 John 3:4 (NIV)** And this is exactly the same point Paul makes later in Romans 6, as well: *I am*

speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. – **Romans 6:19 (ESV)** Thus, according to Paul himself in Romans 6, sin (ie. ‘impurity’) is lawlessness (ie. law-breaking).

- ◆ **Conclusion:** Therefore, the statement in Romans 6:14 that Christians are no longer ‘under law but under grace’ cannot be interpreted to mean that Christians no longer have to continue obeying the Law because in that case it would not be possible for Christians to sin, and the rest of Romans 6 (which is primarily focused on warning Christians not to sin) becomes nonsensical.
- c) **Objection: Of course, Antinomians may here object and propose a new Law – the ‘Law of Christ’ – and a new definition of ‘sin,’ which is, anything that breaks the ‘Law of Christ’ instead of the Old Testament Law.**<sup>40</sup> But this leads to an absurdity: Antinomians started out by saying that Christians are not ‘under law,’ in the sense that they no longer have to obey rules and regulations such as ‘do not murder,’ ‘do not commit adultery’ and ‘do not commit bestiality;’ but now they change tack and argue the exact opposite point, saying that Christians *DO* have to obey such rules and regulations, just with a different name – the ‘Law of Christ.’ All these Antinomians have done is change the label from the Law of *Moses* to the Law of *Christ*, but the rules are the same under both! In which case Christians *are* ‘under law’ – the Law of Christ – which is still made up of the moral commands found in the Old Testament.
- ◆ It is right here that the Antinomian will be tempted to object, “The Gospel is not about rules, it’s about LOVE.” This fuzzy statement sounds wonderful, but what does it actually mean? The New Testament consistently teaches that the moral commands contained in the Old Testament actually define what it means to love others (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8). That being the case, what does it mean to say that a Christian is obligated to obey the *general* New Testament injunction to ‘love his neighbor as himself,’ but not obligated to obey the *specific* Old Testament injunctions about love like ‘don’t murder’ (Deut 5:17) and ‘don’t put a stumbling block in front of a blind man’ (Lev 19:14)? The general command to ‘love one another’ (New Testament) does not cancel out the specific commands which define what it means to love another person (Old Testament)! This point has already been proven repeatedly throughout this paper. In other words, if Antinomians concede that Christians are obligated to obey what they call the ‘Law of Christ,’ or the ‘Law of Love’ they are in fact conceding that Christians are obligated to continue obeying the moral laws contained in the Old Testament code, since the New Testament itself repeatedly teaches that those Old Testament laws define what love is.
- d) **Conclusion – Antinomians are trapped:**
- 1) If they say that 6:14b releases Christians from the Law they lose all coherent definitions for the word ‘sin,’ which makes all of Romans 6 nonsensical;  
BUT,
  - 2) If they say that 6:14b does *not* release Christians from having to obey the Law, they have lost one of the most important proof-texts for their position that Christians are no longer bound by the Law.

---

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, the Antinomian position as stated by Wayne House and Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1988), 113-115.

2. **Part 2: What Paul is ACTUALLY saying in Romans 6:14 – free TO obey the Law, rather than free FROM obedience to the Law.**

◇ *“For sin will have **NO DOMINION** over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” – Romans 6:14 (ESV)*

- a) Paul’s point in this verse is not that Christians no longer need to obey the Law, but that because of grace Christians now have *power* to overcome sin (ie. power to obey the Law) – unlike before-hand when all they had was the Law, but no power. His teaching here, as elsewhere, is that those whose personal resources consist only of the Law, but who do not have a relationship with Jesus, nor the filling of the Holy Spirit (the provisions of Grace), are incapable of actually obeying the Law and for that reason are held captive under the dominion of sin. More specifically, in this passage as in many others throughout the book of Romans, Paul is contrasting the victory and power available to Spirit-filled believers with the defeat and bondage of the Pharisees and the Jewish religious establishment of the time – people who were under the Law (and proud of it), but who were still completely bound by sin because they had refused God’s grace and subsequently did not have the Holy Spirit’s life and power operating inside of them (see also Rom 2:17-29).
- ◆ Spirit-filled believers, on the other hand, are ‘not under law but under grace.’ This does not mean that Spirit-filled believers are free FROM having to obey the Law (as Antinomians teach), but rather, that Spirit-filled believers are free TO obey the Law.
- b) That this is the correct interpretation of Romans 6:14 is confirmed in the rest of chapter, where Paul expounds on this idea that Spirit-filled believers (‘under grace’) are free TO obey the Law rather than slaves of disobedience. For example, consider the following statement he makes, just 3 verses after 6:14 (if this isn’t conclusive, I don’t know what could be): *“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart [grace-power!] to the standard of teaching to which you were committed [the Law!],<sup>18</sup> and, having been set FREE from sin [ie. disobedience to the Law], have become slaves of righteousness”* (Romans 6:17-18 ESV).
- ◆ In this passage Paul clearly states that grace does not nullify the need for obedience to the Law but rather that it empowers people to be obedient to it *from the heart*! What an amazing promise: under grace, Spirit-filled believers no longer obey the Law because they *have* to, but because they *want* to. That’s freedom! And this is exactly what God, through the Old Testament prophets, had promised would happen under the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-33; Ez 36:26-29).
  - ◆ **Objection:** No doubt Antinomians may here wish to object that Paul’s phrase ‘the standard of teaching to which you were committed’ is not referring to the Law. But this goes against the clear context of the passage, and indeed all of Romans 2-8, which is an ongoing discussion of the relationship between Law and Grace – what else could Paul’s readers have possibly interpreted the phrase to mean? Furthermore, if the phrase does not refer to the Law, what then does it refer to? This is an important question because, whatever it is, Paul has just stated that grace has empowered us to become obedient to it from the heart. Certainly, then, this phrase cannot refer to the Roman laws of that time, nor the laws of some other religion, nor the ethical guidelines of some Greek philosopher, since we can be sure that God’s grace has not empowered us to obey some man-made system of belief. What then is left? Two options are available to Antinomians: (1) that Paul is talking about the Moral Law as revealed in the Old Testament (they don’t want that); or, (2) that Paul is talking about that old Antinomian stalwart, the ‘Law of Christ’ (also sometimes referred to as the ‘Law of Love’). Though Antinomians won’t like it, logic demands that the only option which actually works is #1, the Moral Law as revealed in the Old Testament. Consider the following 2 points:
    - 1) *‘The standard of teaching to which you WERE [past tense] committed . . .’* Whatever the ‘standard of teaching’ refers to, these believers (including a number of Jews) had been committed to it in the past, before they became believers, when they ‘were once slaves of sin’ (v.17). This automatically rules out the

'Law of Christ,' since it is illogical and impossible to believe that these people were committed to Christ's teachings and to Christ's love before they became believers and came under grace.

2) Furthermore, even IF it is possible (which it is not) that this passage is somehow referring to some vague 'Law of Christ,' or 'Law of Love,' whatever that means, then, as has been proven repeatedly throughout this paper, this passage STILL teaches obedience to the Old Testament Law because the New Testament itself teaches that that Law sums up what it means to love people (see part 1 of this section above, as well as Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8).

◆ Conclusion: Antinomians are trapped – the only possible interpretation of Romans 6:17-18 is that grace empowers people to obey from the heart the Old Testament Law. Which proves that in Romans 6:14 Paul is not teaching that Christians are released FROM having to obey the Law, but rather that under grace Christians are freed and empowered TO obey the Law.

c) **Confirmation:** This interpretation is confirmed by many other statements Paul makes in the book of Romans (here are just 5):

- 1) For example, in Romans 3:31 he asks *"Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we UPHOLD the law"* (ESV). If being free from having to obey the Law is so important to the Christian faith, as Antinomians teach, why does Paul insist that Christians are still supposed to uphold the Law?
- 2) Elsewhere, in Romans 2:13 Paul says *"For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the DOERS of the law who will be justified"* (ESV). This is exactly opposite of what Antinomians are teaching – but obviously Paul considers obedience to the Law to still be an essential component of the moral framework of the Christian life.
- 3) In Romans 8:7, Paul has this to say *"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, FOR it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot"* (ESV). In this passage Paul says that the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God BECAUSE it does not submit to His Law. In other words, Spirit-filled believers still have to be submitted to God's Law (can Paul make this point any more obvious?). This fact is confirmed three verses earlier where Paul states that those who walk according to the Spirit will fulfill the 'righteous requirements of the Law' (Rom 8:4).
- 4) In Romans 7 Paul says this about the Law: *For I DELIGHT in the law of God, in my inner being,<sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.<sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?<sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself SERVE the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. – Rom 7:22-25 (ESV)* In this passage Paul states both that he 'delights' in the Law and that he 'serves' the Law, two statements which make absolutely no sense if Christians are 'freed' (as Antinomians call it) from having to obey the Law.
- 5) One final example (and so many others could be cited); in Romans 7:12 Paul says *"So the law is holy, and commandment is holy and righteous and good"* (ESV). In other words, the Law is wonderful; it's not something Christians need to be freed from, it's something Christians need to be freed to live out!

3. **Part 3: The practical implications and the inherent self-contradictions which arise from the Antinomian interpretation of Romans 6:14.** Antinomians are happy to preach from this verse that Christians are 'not under law' but they are less happy to define what that actually means. In actual, practical, daily life what does it mean for a Christian to not be 'under' law?

◇ Let us explore two options Antinomians have for what it means to not be 'under law:'

a) **Option #1: Does 'not being under law' mean that Christians are not obligated to obey the moral commands contained in the Old Testament?**

- ◆ If so, then what Antinomians are teaching is that Christians are not obligated to follow such Old Testament commands as ‘do not murder’ (Deut 5:17), ‘do not commit adultery’ (Deut 5:18) and ‘do not commit bestiality’ (Lev 18:23). How awful!
- ◆ **[NOTE: the next two paragraphs are an exact repeat of an argument used above – many readers may wish to skip ahead to option #2.]** Of course, most Antinomians who are faced with this fact will acknowledge the absurdity of such a teaching and so have come up with a diversionary answer that only postpones the inevitable self-contradiction of their argument. Here is how it goes: ‘Believers are no longer under the Law of Moses but are now under the ‘Law of Christ’ (or, alternatively, the ‘Law of Love’).<sup>41</sup> But this leads to an absurdity: Antinomians started out by saying that Christians are not ‘under law,’ in the sense that they no longer have to obey rules and regulations such as ‘do not murder,’ ‘do not commit adultery’ and ‘do not commit bestiality;’ but now they change tack and argue the exact opposite point, saying that Christians *DO* have to obey such rules and regulations, just with a different name – the ‘Law of Christ.’ All these Antinomians have done is change the label from the Law of *Moses* to the Law of *Christ*, but the rules are the same under both! In which case Christians *are* ‘under law’ – the Law of Christ – which is still made up of the moral commands found in the Old Testament.
- ◆ It is right here that the Antinomian will be tempted to object, “The Gospel is not about rules, it’s about LOVE.” This fuzzy statement sounds wonderful, but what does it actually mean? What does it mean to say that a Christian is obligated to obey the New Testament injunction to ‘love his neighbor as himself,’ but not obligated to obey the Old Testament injunctions to not murder (Deut 5:17) and to not put a stumbling block in front of a blind man (Lev 19:14)? The general command to ‘love one another’ does not cancel out the specific commands which define what it means to love another person! And as has been proven repeatedly in this paper, the New Testament consistently teaches that the moral commands contained in the Old Testament define what it means to love others (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8). In other words, if Antinomians concede that Christians are obligated to obey what they call the ‘Law of Christ,’ or the ‘Law of Love’ they are in fact conceding that Christians are obligated to continue obeying the moral laws contained in the Old Testament code, since the New Testament repeatedly teaches that those Old Testament laws define what love is.

**b) Option #2: Does ‘not being under law’ mean that God will not discipline or punish Christians when they disobey the moral laws contained in the Old Testament?**

- ◆ Perhaps after looking at option #1, Antinomians will concede that Christians do still need to abide by the moral commandments found in the Old Testament. How, then, are they to define what Paul means by his statement that Christians are ‘not under law?’ A second option available to them is to argue that though Christians *should* abide by the moral commandments found in the Old Testament, they need not fear judgment from God for breaking any of those commands. Antinomians often do teach this point, though they phrase it in several different ways. Here are some of the different ways they word this teaching:
  - 1) ‘Since Jesus’ death on the cross, God no longer holds Christians accountable to the standard of the Old Testament Law.’ (ie. It doesn’t matter if Christians fall short of holiness in their day-to-day lives, God doesn’t expect them to.)
  - 2) ‘God sees you as holy in Jesus.’ (ie. Even when you sin God doesn’t see you as sinful, because He has covered you with Jesus’ holiness.)
  - 3) ‘All of God’s wrath was spent on Jesus on the cross, therefore there is no wrath left when people sin today.’ (ie. When Jesus died on the cross God punished Him for all of your sins, past, present and future;

---

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, the Antinomian position as stated by Wayne House and Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1988), 113-115.

therefore, whenever you sin that sin has already been punished in Jesus. Therefore, God cannot punish you for that sin.)

- ◆ Though there is a seed of truth in statements 2) and 3) above, these three statements taken as a whole are unbiblical and false. For example, God did pour out His wrath on Jesus at the cross, but not *all* of it in the sense that He no longer has any wrath towards sinful people, including worldly and rebellious Christians. Even a cursory reading of Scripture provides ample testimony that Christians since Christ's death have run afoul of God's wrath, and there is a mountain of evidence in Scripture about the abundance of God's wrath that is yet to come on mankind (Acts 5:1-11; Heb 10:26-31; Rev 6:16-17; 14:10; 15-16). The everlasting existence of Hell, where people will experience eternal conscious torment because of God's wrath, is all the testimony that is needed to prove that God's wrath was not fully spent on Jesus at the cross (Mt 25:41,46; Mk 9:47-48; Lk 12:4-5; Heb 6:1-2; Rev 14:9-11; Rev 20:10). Though at the cross Jesus satisfied God's wrath for all those who *truly repent* of their wicked deeds, there is yet much wrath and judgment in store for all those who reject Him, as well as for all those who call themselves Christians, yet live in worldliness (1 John 2:15-16; James 2:4-5) and refuse to obey Him or to strive after a life of holiness (Matt 7:21-23; Lk 13:23-28; Heb 10:26-31; Heb 12:14).

- ◆ Let us now answer the following two Antinomian questions concerning judgment for Christians: (1) Did the cross eliminate all future judgment and wrath for God's people? And, (2) Does God have lower standards of behavior for His people since the cross?

1) **No more judgment for God's people?** Antinomians teach that there is no more wrath for God's people because of the cross. This is in direct contradiction to Scripture (here are just 5 passages):

- i) *For it is time for JUDGMENT to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us [believers], what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" – **1 Pet 4:17-18 (ESV)***
- ii) *For if we [believers] go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth [after becoming Christians], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of JUDGMENT, and a FURY of fire that will consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." [believers] <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. – **Heb 10:26-31 (ESV)***
- iii) *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself [look for sin], then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks JUDGMENT on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died [God's judgment today can even include killing believers!]. <sup>31</sup> But IF we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But WHEN we [believers] are JUDGED by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world [God judges us and disciplines us, sometimes severely, in order to keep us from Hell]. – **1 Cor 11:27-32 (ESV)***
- iv) **Ananias and Sapphira.** Consider also the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); they lied to Peter, separately, about the percentage of their offering for the church – and God killed them both, in turn, for this lie! The end result was that 'great fear' came upon the church (v. 6, 11). What are Antinomians to make of this passage? If there is no more judgment for believers because of the cross, how is it that Ananias and Sapphira (believers!) could be killed by God for telling a lie, a short time *after* Jesus' death and resurrection?

v) **Jesus' Parable of the unforgiving servant.** Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."<sup>23</sup> "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants."<sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.<sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.<sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'<sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.<sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'<sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'<sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.<sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.<sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.'<sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'<sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.<sup>35</sup> **So ALSO my heavenly Father will do to every one of you [speaking to believers], IF you do not forgive your brother from your heart."** – **Matt 18:21-35 (ESV)**

This parable clearly teaches that believers who refuse to do right will face judgment and wrath from God. The first part of the parable pictures salvation: a servant owes a king far more than he can pay back (v.24-25), so he begs for mercy from the king, who promptly forgives all of his debts (v. 26-27). This is a beautiful picture of redemption in Christ: we come to God with a sin-debt that is impossible for us to pay, so we beg Him for mercy and He forgives us our debt – and at that point we are 'saved.'

But the parable doesn't end there. The first servant has had all his debts forgiven, which according to the Antinomian understanding of salvation means all of his future debts (ie. sins) are forgiven too, regardless of whether he confesses or repents. Wrong! The parable goes on to tell of how the newly forgiven servant (ie. Christian) then refuses to forgive another servant of a much smaller debt (v. 29-30). When the king (who represents God in this parable) hears about what has happened he is furious (v.31-32) and calls the once-forgiven servant to account, *erasing* his original forgiveness and punishing him in jail (v. 33), which represents Hell.

- Here the Antinomian may protest, "But did not Jesus satisfy God's wrath at the cross?" Yes He did (Rom 3:23-26; 5:9; Eph 2:13); the problem arises when Antinomians twist that phrase to mean something the Bible doesn't teach. That Jesus satisfied God's wrath on the cross DOES NOT mean that all of a Christian's future sins are automatically forgiven regardless of whether or not they confess and repent of them; it also does not mean that God won't hold His people accountable for their actions on Judgment Day, nor that He won't punish and judge His people for sinful living – the Bible is very clear that He will indeed do all of those things.
- Here is what Jesus satisfying God's wrath on the cross DOES mean: Jesus paid for all of your sin-debts, and took all of the punishment for your sins, **IF** you truly repent of those deeds (with remorse) and turn from them. But repentance is not a one-time event that is good for all time into the future: if a truly repentant person at some point goes back to their wicked ways, they cease to walk in Jesus' forgiveness, and God's wrath comes on them again in all its fury (Heb 10:26-31; Eze 18:21-32; 33:12-20; Matt 18:21-35). This is why the Antinomian teachings of our day are so dangerous: by focusing (unbiblically) only on God's Forgiveness, and not on His Wrath and Holiness, they are encouraging

Christians to live with a false sense of security with regards to the consequences of sin in their lives. This is in direct contrast to the teaching of the New Testament, which regularly admonishes believers everywhere to work out their salvation with ‘fear’ and ‘trembling’ and to avoid sin because of fear of judgment (Lk 12:4-5; Rom 11:20-22; 2 Cor 7:1; Phil 2:12; 1 Tim 5:20; 1 Pet 1:17; Jude 1:23).

- The words of the apostle Paul are very appropriate here, concerning the biblical relationship between a believer’s confidence in God’s promises and fear of God’s wrath against sin: *“Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves [get rid of sin] from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the FEAR of God”* (2 Cor 7:1 ESV). Believers today should be confident in God’s promises AND fearful of the consequences of turning away from those promises. Both the confidence and the *fear* are needed; according to Scripture fear is an important motivator that helps us move towards holiness. Antinomians are often horrified when someone suggests that a believer should have fear about anything. Let me clarify: I am not here proposing that believers live in fear, only that they fear God’s wrath and the consequences of sinning. A good analogy would be a hot oven element: I don’t live my life in fear of the oven in my kitchen, but I am most definitely afraid of touching an oven element when it’s hot – and that fear keeps me from doing such a stupid thing, which, in turn, saves me from serious injury. Same with the fear of God: the Bible does not teach believers to live their lives being scared of God – but we should most definitely fear the awful consequences of sinning and running afoul of God’s wrath. Such a fear will keep a person safe!

- ◆ **Lower standards for God’s people?** Many Christians today have been deceived into thinking that God’s Grace through Jesus Christ has lowered the standard of holiness for Christians, so that God expects less of Christians today than He did of the Israelites in the Old Testament. Far from it – God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8), and His standards do not fluctuate up and down. Thus God’s Grace does not make a person’s sin more acceptable to God, it is supposed to empower a person to not sin (Phil 2:13)! Consider the following sample of New Testament passages which clearly teach that God’s standard of holiness is not lower for New Testament believers than it was for the Old Testament Israelites:
  - 1) *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* – **Jesus (Matt 5:48 ESV)**
  - 2) *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.* <sup>14</sup> *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.* <sup>15</sup> *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in ALL you do;* <sup>16</sup> *for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”* <sup>17</sup> *Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.* – **1 Pet 1:13-17 (NIV)**
  - 3) *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from EVERY defilement of body and spirit, bringing HOLINESS to completion in the fear of God.* – **2 Cor 7:1 (ESV)**
  - 4) *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* – **Heb 12:14 (ESV)**
  - 5) *For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.* <sup>3</sup> *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;* <sup>4</sup> *that each one of you know how to control his own body in HOLINESS and honor,* <sup>5</sup> *not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;* <sup>6</sup> *that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.* <sup>7</sup> *For God has not called us for impurity, but in HOLINESS.* – **1 Thess 4:2-7 (ESV)**
- ◆ Some Christians may despair upon reading these passages, realizing that they are nowhere near perfect – do not give up! The Bible clearly teaches that no one achieves perfection in this lifetime (James 3:2; 1 John 1:8). The point is that Christians shouldn’t apathetically think to themselves ‘nobody’s perfect’ when they sin –

instead, our sins should distress us and drive us deeper into God, fearing the consequences of a life apathetically turned over to sin and worldliness. As the apostle Paul said, “**NOT** that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, **BUT I press on** to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.”<sup>13</sup> *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,*<sup>14</sup> *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil 3:12-14 ESV). In other words, we should constantly be *striving* for absolute holiness (Lk 13:24; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; Heb 12:14) and we should be broken by our sinfulness when we fall short (2 Cor 7:9-10; James 4:8-10). Every time a person sins they should confess their sin, come to a place of remorse, and repent and turn away from those sins (James 5:16; 1 John 1:8-9). This is true Christian living, and far from being the condemning bore Antinomians paint it as.

- **Conclusion to the discussion on Romans 6:14:** In this chapter we have shown that Paul’s statement in Romans 6:14 that Christians are ‘not under law but grace’ CANNOT mean that Christians are not obligated to obey the Moral Commandments found in the Old Testament, but rather that, because of grace, Christians are now *empowered* to live out that Law from their hearts. Because of grace Christians are free TO obey the Law (and enjoy it), not free FROM having to obey it. The statement ‘not under law but grace’ needs to be understood within the context of the passage from which it is pulled, and the distinction Paul is trying to make, between the Jewish legalists of his day, who were proud of their knowledge of the Law but were terrible at keeping it (Rom 2:17-29), and Spirit-filled believers, who because of the grace of God, which includes the power of the Holy Spirit, are now able to fulfill all the requirements of the Law from their heart, by love (Rom 6:17-18; 13:8-10).

## Chapter 2 - 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 – ‘To those outside the law I become as one outside the law.’

- 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 is another passage which Antinomians (anti-Law proponents) sometimes turn to in their attempts to prove that the Law is no longer binding for Christians. Here is what it says: *For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.* <sup>20</sup> *To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.* <sup>21</sup> *To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.* <sup>22</sup> *To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.* <sup>23</sup> *I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.* – **1 Cor 9:19-23 (ESV)**
1. Antinomians (anti-Law proponents) often use the underlined passages above to teach that Christians are no longer bound by the Law. But what do they mean by this? Are they teaching that Paul was no longer obligated to obey God’s Moral Laws, as revealed in the Old Testament (‘I became as one outside the law’), when he evangelized Gentiles (those ‘outside the law’)? How absurd! In that case Paul would have been advocating that Christians murder, steal, rape and blaspheme in order to reach murderers, thieves, rapists and blasphemers for Christ. Certainly not!
  2. It is obvious to all that Paul is not teaching in this passage that Christians can disobey God’s Moral Laws in order to evangelize people; what then is his point? The ‘law’ he is referring to here must refer only to the Ceremonial laws which separated Jews and Gentiles (ie. laws about how to cook food, ritual laws about how to wash your hands, etc.), and which were cancelled when Jesus died on the cross. Only in this light does 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 make sense. In that case, Paul’s primary point is that when he evangelizes Jews, he acts like a Jew (v. 20) with regard to all the Jewish *customs and rituals*; but when he evangelizes Gentiles he ignores all such Ceremonial laws since as a Christian he is not morally bound to obey such rules anyway, and they would only serve to hinder his evangelistic efforts in that context.

## Chapter 3 - 2 Corinthians 3:4-11 – ‘The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.’

- 2 Corinthians 3:4-11 is another Antinomian favourite. I’ll deal with the entire passage in two parts:
  1. **Part 1: verses 4-6.** *Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup>Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, <sup>6</sup> who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (ESV)*
    - a) Truth from this passage: ‘the letter (speaking of the Law) kills, but the Spirit gives life.’ I do not wish to dispute this fact, since the apostle Paul so clearly states that it is so. Therefore it must be so. My question is, however, *In what way does the letter kill?* Antinomians interpret this passage to mean that the Law brings death to any Christian who tries to keep it. They believe that preachers who teach the Law are actually bringing spiritual death to their hearers, and that Christians who study the Law and attempt to obey it cannot experience the abundant Spirit-life spoken of in the Gospels. But is that really what Paul is saying here? If so, we have a problem because then this passage directly contradicts a number of other passages in Scripture (here is just a tiny sampling of examples):
      - ◆ For example, Matthew 5:19-20, where Jesus states explicitly that anyone who teaches and does the Law will be called ‘great’ in the kingdom of heaven, but that anyone who is ‘relaxed’ in their obedience to the Law, and/or teaches others to do the same, will be called ‘least’ in the kingdom of heaven;
      - ◆ Then there’s Romans 8:4-7 where Paul states clearly that the mind of the flesh does not submit to the Law (v. 7), but that the mind of the Spirit obeys it (v. 4);
      - ◆ And Romans 3:31 where Paul teaches explicitly that Christians are supposed to ‘uphold the Law;’
      - ◆ And Romans 7:21-25, where Paul states both that he ‘delights in the Law’ (v.21) and that he ‘serves the Law’ (v. 25);
      - ◆ And James 1:25, where James calls the Law ‘liberty’ and promises blessing for all those who ‘persevere’ in studying and obeying it;
      - ◆ And 1 John 5:1-4, where John states clearly that one of the primary ways in which believers show their love for God is by obeying His commandments (found in the Law), and that those laws are ‘not burdensome;’
      - ◆ And there’s the many passages, as well, in the Psalms, where the Psalmists expounded on the blessings of studying and obeying the Law, as well as the life it brought to their relationship with God (eg. Ps 1:1-2; 40:8; 112:1; 119:1; 48; etc., etc.);
      - ◆ And of course there are God’s promises to both Moses and Joshua of blessing and success to all those who study and obey the Law (Josh 1:7-8; Deut 17:18-20; 30:9-10).
    - b) **Conclusion:** 2 Corinthians 3:6 CANNOT be teaching that obeying the Law will kill a Christian’s spiritual life, nor that teaching others to obey the Law will kill their spiritual life because then it contradicts many other passages of Scripture.
  - ◇ **The question then is, in what sense DOES the ‘letter kill but the Spirit give life’ with respect to the Law?**  
**Answer: In the same way that the letter of anything, without the spirit and heart of that thing, is dead.**
    - a) The important thing to realize is that the Law is much *more* than just a bunch of words (‘letters’) on a piece of paper (or tablets of stone); the heart behind it is love (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8), and its purpose is to point people to *faith* in Jesus Christ (Lk 24:27; John 1:45; 5:46; Rom 9:31-32). If you remove the heart, which is love, and the purpose, which is faith in Christ, then of course the letters that are left will not be able to bring life. And this is what the Jewish religious establishment of Paul’s day had done; they turned the Law into a dry and lifeless set of rules, void of love and faith; they followed the rules legalistically without actually bothering to be loving towards other people and without feeling the need to actually trust in God. That kind of loveless rule-following is indeed death! But it doesn’t mean that the rules

themselves *cause* death; just that following the rules *without* love and faith is death. Nor does it mean that the rules are unimportant – the rules provide a framework around which love and faith can grow.

- ◆ **Eg.** For example, consider the human body: a skeleton without heart, organs and flesh is dead. But that doesn't mean that the skeleton itself *causes* death, does it? No! Nor does it mean that the skeleton is unimportant, since a heart, organs and flesh that do not have a skeleton are mush! Conversely, if you strip a body of its heart, organs and flesh, leaving only the skeleton, it will die. So also with the Law; the Jewish leaders had stripped the Law of its heart and spirit, and that kind of lifeless religiosity kills – but the fault lay with their hearts NOT with the Law.
- ◆ **A big problem with the Antinomian movement of today is their mis-diagnosis of the fatal disease which had infected the Jewish religious establishment of Paul's day: the Law is not what was killing them, lack of faith was.** The Law was always meant to operate hand-in-hand with faith (Rom 9:30-32).

b) **'The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.'** This same principle holds for many things, not just the Old Testament Law. Consider, for example, the case of a parent who makes rules to keep their children safe. Imagine this family lives on a busy street, complete with sidewalks and boulevards; now imagine that the parents of this family lay down a firm rule for all the children "No one is allowed to set so much as one foot on the boulevard." The point of the rule, obviously, is to keep the children from wandering out onto the street where they could be badly hurt, or even killed. Everyone would agree that this rule is a good one – it has the children's best interests in mind. Imagine for a moment, however, that the children decide to obey the letter of this rule, but not its spirit. What good is that? Imagine that one rebellious but enterprising youngster hops on his bike and smugly *drives* onto the boulevard the moment his parents are not watching; he has not technically broken the letter of the law in this case, since he has not physically set his *feet* onto the actual boulevard, but he has most certainly broken the *spirit* of the Law, and could bring death upon himself should he happen to fall into the street – which is what his parents were attempting to prevent by making the rule in the first place. Or imagine that another child, also rebellious and enterprising, decides to pole-vault across the boulevard and directly onto the street using an improvised pole of some kind. Again, this child has kept the *letter* of the law, by not setting his actual feet onto the boulevard, but has blatantly disobeyed the *spirit* of the law, and could be killed because of it due to a passing car.

- ◆ Notice that in both of these examples the rule itself is not the problem – the children's disobedient and rebellious hearts are the problem. In fact, the rule is necessary and any children that obey it will experience life as a result. BUT, in order to enjoy the benefits of the rule, the children must obey it both in letter *and* in spirit – the letter itself will kill. Same with the Old Testament Law!

c) **Conclusion:** God never meant the Law to be an end in itself; from the very beginning He always intended the Law to be obeyed in *partnership* with His Spirit, by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 9:30-32). This is why He promised in the *Old* Testament, that under the coming New Covenant He would write His laws on people's hearts (Jer 31:31-34; Ez 36:26-29). Thus, the New Covenant does not cancel out the Law, rather it consummates the partnership between God's Spirit and God's laws by putting God's laws into people's hearts. What this means is that because of God's indwelling Spirit, believers under the New Covenant have the power and desire to actually obey the Law properly (ie. *want* to, as opposed to *have* to – see Phil 2:13). This is life! The Spirit and the Law are not opposed to each other, so that somehow the Spirit gives life to people, but the Law kills people – no! Paul said the Law is 'good' (Rom 7:12). It's just that the Law was always meant to be obeyed *IN* the Spirit, and so apart from the Spirit it brings death.

- ◆ **The Law and the Spirit work hand-in-hand together.**

1) **Q:** What is the fruit of the Spirit? **A:** Love (Gal 5:22).

2) **Q:** And what do all the Moral laws contained in the Old Testament Law define? **A:** What it means to love! (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8)

- ◆ Therefore, the Spirit and the Law cannot be opposed to each other since One loves and the other defines the boundaries of what love looks like; the Spirit loves to obey the Law, and so will all those who have the Spirit.

2. **Part 2: verses 7-11.** *Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end,<sup>8</sup> will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?<sup>9</sup> For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it.<sup>11</sup> For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.* – **2 Cor 3:4-11 (ESV)**

a) **'The ministry of death, carved in letters of stone.'** Antinomians often point to this phrase as proof that the Law has been cancelled for believers, since it is a 'ministry of death.' But again, as has been proven repeatedly throughout this paper, Paul's point is not that the Law itself brings death to people (Remember that Paul called the Law 'good' (Rom 7:12) and stated that Christians must continue to 'uphold' it (Rom 3:31)), but rather that trying to obey the Law by human effort alone, *without God's indwelling Spirit*, brings death to people. The point is that we need God's Spirit, not that we don't need the Law!

- ◆ **A car without an engine.** Perhaps an illustration will help: imagine that you have a car sitting in your driveway that doesn't have an engine. This car may be a good-quality car in excellent condition, but without an engine it's not going to take you anywhere – it is, for all intents and purposes, 'dead.' What that car needs is an engine (a power supply) and some fuel – then it could really take you places. But what would you say if a friend brought a powerful engine over to your house and said, "Now you don't need the car, let's take this engine for a ride!" You'd think that was ridiculous. Why? Just because a car without an engine is 'dead' doesn't mean that if you have an engine you don't need the car! Both the engine and the car are needed. Yet this is the same mistake Antinomians make concerning the Law and the Spirit: they think that because believers under the New Covenant now have God's indwelling Spirit that they no longer need to pay attention to the Law. Absurd! God's Law and God's Spirit work hand-in-hand together – and how could they not? God's Law is simply an expression of His Character; and His Character and His Spirit are not at odds with each other!

b) **What then does Paul mean by calling the Law – apart from the indwelling Spirit of God – a 'ministry of death'?**

- ◆ It is the province of the Law to do two things:
  - 1) Define the responsibilities of human beings according to the character of God ('Be holy as I am holy' – 1 Pet 1:15-17; Lev 19:2);
  - 2) Define penalties for falling short of those responsibilities.
- ◆ The problem is, of course, that we human beings are all born sinful and prone to sin – therefore, apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, we regularly fall short of what God's goodness demands (the Law) and it is the Law's job, then, to condemn us (ie. prescribe the penalties for falling short). It is in this sense that the Law is a 'ministry of death.' This does not mean, however, that the Law is bad; the Law has always been good (Rom 7:12) because God is good and the Law defines what goodness looks like. The problem lies not with the Law, but with people (Rom 7:13) – the Law is good, but people are bad, and the Law condemns badness. What is needed is *not* for people to get rid of the Law (the Antinomian solution), which is good, but for people to overcome their badness by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus live (Rom 8:1-11). A life of obedience to the Law in the power of the Holy Spirit is the abundant life indeed (see Psalm 19:7-11).

## Chapter 4 - Ephesians 2:15 – Did Jesus abolish the law and the commandments?

- Since Christ's death all of the Ceremonial laws which served symbolically to separate Jews and Gentiles have been torn down, since Gentiles have now been brought into the family of God. This is Paul's whole point in Ephesians 2: *Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision [the Jewish people], which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility<sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,<sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. – Eph 2:11-16 (ESV)*
- Many Antinomian teachers today, however, are using Ephesians 2:15 to say that the entire Law has been cancelled. Wrong! Such an interpretation directly contradicts many of Paul's other statements that believers still need to obey the Law (see Rom 3:31; 1 Cor 7:19). The context of Ephesians 2:15 is that Paul is making a point about how Christ's death brought the Gentiles into the family of God. Because the Gentiles have now been brought in to the family of God, there is no longer any need for the laws which separated Jews and Gentiles – thus, all of *those* laws and 'ordinances' have now been abolished.
- That this is the correct interpretation of Ephesians 2:15 can be confirmed by comparing it with Romans 14:17 – *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness [obeying the Moral laws – see Ps 119:172] and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (ESV). The laws concerning 'eating and drinking' formed the core component of laws which separated the Jews from the Gentiles. In this Romans passage Paul clearly states that those laws no longer matter, but that obeying the Moral laws – 'righteousness' – still does matter. This makes a perfect fit with our interpretation of Ephesians 2:15.

## Chapter 5 - Galatians chapters 2 & 3 – No longer under the guardianship of the Law?

- This chapter is broken up into two sections: (1) The different uses of the word 'law' in Paul's epistles; (2) An examination of specific passages in Galatians 2 & 3 which may seem to cancel out the Law.

### 1. **Section one: The different uses of the word 'law' in Paul's epistles.**

- ◇ The book of Galatians contains many of Paul's strongest statements about the Law. Antinomians have seized on several of these to make their case that the entire Law has been cancelled under the New Covenant. The truth is however, that once again, the Antinomian failure to acknowledge the existence of different types of laws within the Old Testament Law has confused their ability to properly interpret Scripture. See, Antinomians view all of the laws within the Old Testament as being one indistinguishable whole; they do not acknowledge the existence of separate categories of laws within that Law, such as Ceremonial laws and Moral laws and Civil laws. To them all the laws in the Old Testament make up only one category – 'the Law' – and all are equal in God's eyes. This point is an important cornerstone of their doctrine since, in that case, if *any* Old Testament law can be shown to have been cancelled under the New Covenant, then *all* of them are automatically cancelled because they are all part of one indistinguishable whole. Antinomians base much of their entire argument for the indivisibility of the Law on the fact that Scripture nowhere mentions terms such as 'Ceremonial,' 'Moral,' or 'Civil' to describe the various types of laws. This, however, is an argument made of straw; for example, nowhere in Scripture do we find the term 'Trinity,' or anything like it, to describe the three-person nature of the Godhead – yet only heretics deny the existence of the Trinity, since the Scriptures clearly teach its existence, though without actually labeling it.
- ◇ This is an important discussion with regards to the book of Galatians, because many of Paul's statements about the 'law' in that epistle are referring only to the Ceremonial laws, not the entire Law (which would include the Moral laws as well). Before looking at the Galatian passages in question, then, it is important to first establish the fact that there are different types of laws in Scripture, and that Paul himself understood this fact. Once this point is established it will be easy to see that in the book of Galatians Paul is only cancelling out the Ceremonial laws, not the Moral laws.

#### a) **There *are*, indeed, different types of laws within the Law, and Paul assumes this fact throughout his**

**writings.** In order to understand the Scriptures properly it is essential to recognize that the Old Testament contains two contrasting sets of commandments. One set of laws defines the righteousness of God that is to be emulated by human beings (thus being moral in nature), while the other set of laws defined the way of forgiveness and salvation for the unrighteous through sacrifices and rituals (these were ceremonial in nature). For example, the law forbidding us to steal (Ex 20:15) shows us what righteousness looks like, whereas the law stipulating animal sacrifice shows what must be done by a thief, who has already stolen something, in order to obtain forgiveness (Lev 6:1-7).

- ◆ This distinction between Ceremonial and Moral laws was well understood by the Jews and proverbially expressed by the statement, *"To do righteousness and justice [Moral laws] is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice [Ceremonial laws]"* (Proverbs 21:3 ESV). In other words, the Moral laws were/are much more important than the Ceremonial laws. God Himself repeatedly affirmed this fact throughout the Old Testament: *"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings"* (Hosea 6:6 NIV; see also 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; Isa 1:11-17; Mic 6:6-8).
- ◆ Jesus clearly recognized a distinction within the Law between the more important Moral laws and the less important Ceremonial laws: *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin [Religious laws having to do with the Temple], and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness [Moral laws]. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others"* (Matthew 23:23 ESV).
- ◆ Paul, too, made it abundantly clear that he recognized a difference between two types of commandments in the Law: *For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of*

God" (1 Corinthians 7:19 ESV). This is an important verse for understanding the Law. Paul says that it no longer matters whether or not people keep the commandment to be circumcised, as previously prescribed in the Law (Gen 17:11; Lev 12:3) – but then he turns around and says that keeping the commandments of God is still important. The only way this verse is not a contradiction is if Paul had a distinction in his mind between two types of commandments: (1) Ceremonial laws, like circumcision, which have been cancelled because of Christ's work on the cross; and (2) Moral laws, which continue to be binding on believers and which must still be obeyed.

- ◆ Furthermore, if Paul did not understand there to be different kinds of laws within the Law, then he contradicted himself in Romans 3:31 when he said, "*Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law*" (ESV). Was Paul teaching in this passage that Christians should still uphold *all* of the laws in the Old Testament Law, including circumcision and animal sacrifice? Of course not! He clearly taught in many places that those laws were cancelled (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:2; 5:6; Col 2:16; etc.). So when he says here, 'we uphold the law' he cannot be using the word 'law' to mean all the laws in the Old Testament Law; he must have in mind some category of laws within the Law that continued on even after Christ's death on the cross – what I am calling in this paper the 'Moral Law.'

b) **Paul uses the same word 'law' to mean many different things throughout his epistles.** This is a very important point to understand when reading Paul's writings. People generally tend to understand 'every-single-law-in-the-Old-Testament,' whenever they read a passage in which Paul uses the word 'law.' But that should not be the case since Paul uses the word 'law' to mean at least four or five different things throughout his writings. The only way to determine, in any given passage, what he means by the word 'law,' is to look at the context of the passage – the context will always make it clear. Here is a brief sampling, from two passages, of some of the different ways in which Paul uses the word 'law' in his writings:

1) **Sometimes Paul uses the word 'law' to refer just to the Moral laws, while excluding the Ceremonial laws.** Example: *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.*<sup>15</sup> *They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them*<sup>16</sup> *on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. – Romans 2:14-16 (ESV)*

- In verse 14 when Paul states that Gentiles sometimes do by 'nature' what 'the law requires,' he cannot mean by that word 'law,' every-single-law-in-the-Old-Testament, since many of those laws – the ceremonial ones – like circumcision, the sacrifices, keeping the Sabbath and the festivals, Gentiles most certainly do not do naturally. But there is another set of laws within the Old Testament Law that Gentiles *do* sometimes follow naturally – the Moral Laws. What this means is that even Gentiles who have never encountered the Scriptures before often know how to do right; they sometimes show mercy, and they sometimes love their neighbors as themselves, and they sometimes are honest, and they sometimes tell the truth. These are the Moral laws. Why do they do these things? Because they 'by nature' have an understanding – even if it is extremely weak in the absence of Bible knowledge – of what is right and what is wrong. But no one knows 'by nature' any of the Ceremonial laws in Scripture (Are your kids born with an innate sense about not mixing two kinds of cloth (Lev 19:19)?).
- Paul goes on to say in verse 15 that the 'work of the law is written on their [the Gentile's] hearts.' What this means is that all men are born with an innate sense of God's laws. But which laws? All of them? No – just the ones which define right and wrong. Even people who have never heard about God, nor encountered the Bible, have an innate sense that certain things, like murder and stealing for example, are wrong. This sense may be very faint, and will certainly be somewhat fuzzy in the absence of clear teaching about God's laws – but still, there is some form of a conscience in all men. So when

Paul uses the word 'law' in this verse he can only be referring to laws like 'do not murder,' and 'do not steal' – which laws constitute the Moral Law – since it would be ridiculous to think that Paul is here teaching that Ceremonial laws like observing the Sabbath on Saturday instead of any other day (Ex 16:26,29), circumcising one's sons on the eighth day (Lev 12:3), or not mixing different kinds of crops together (Lev 19:19), are naturally written onto all men's hearts.

- **Conclusion:** It would be ridiculous to think that Paul is teaching in Romans 2:14-16 that all human beings everywhere are naturally born with an innate knowledge of the Bible's ceremonial commands. Therefore, Paul's usage of the word 'law' in this passage cannot mean 'every single law in the Old Testament,' but rather, in this case, it refers only to *one part* of the Old Testament Law, specifically the Moral laws, which are indeed generally known by all peoples of the earth.

2) **Sometimes Paul also uses the word 'law' to refer to facts of reality and people's sinful natures.** Example:

*So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.* <sup>22</sup> *For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,* <sup>23</sup> *but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.* <sup>24</sup> *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* <sup>25</sup> *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* – **Romans 7:21-25 (ESV)**

- In this one passage, Paul uses the same word 'law' to refer to three different things:
  - i) Verse 21 – Paul uses the word 'law' to mean something akin to 'a fact of nature,' as in, 'I find it to be a fact of nature [law] that whenever I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.'
  - ii) Verses 22 & 25 – 'the law of God.' The 'law of God' referred to in these verses cannot mean the entire Mosaic Law, including both the Ceremonial laws and the Moral laws, since Paul clearly states both that he 'delights' in this 'law of God' (v. 22) and that he 'serves' this 'law of God' (v. 25). We know that Paul did not delight in, nor did he serve, the Ceremonial laws such as circumcision and animal sacrifice. Therefore that phrase can only be referring to the Moral laws – laws such as 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Lev 19:18), 'honor your father and mother' (Deut 5:16), etc..
  - iii) Verses 23 & 25 – 'the law of sin.' The 'law' referred to in these verses refers to the sinful nature that is within every human being. It cannot refer to God's laws in the Old Testament, since in the same chapter Paul clearly states that God's law is not sinful (Rom 7:7), but rather 'holy' and 'good' (7:12, 16). Why does Paul use the word 'law' to describe people's sinful natures? Because the sin nature is quite comparable to laws of physics like gravity, in that is very *consistent* and *dependable*: it is present in every human being on earth, and it does not fail to corrupt people's desires and good intentions. Because of this consistency and prevalence, Paul calls the sinful nature a 'law' – you can count on its presence and on its workings in people and society everywhere.
- **Conclusion:** In this passage we find again that Paul uses the same word 'law' to refer to various different things, not just 'all-the-laws-in-the-Old-Testament.' It is imperative that people understand this because if they apply only one definition to every one of Paul's uses of the word 'law,' they will end up with faulty conclusions and contradictions. Context must always provide us with the keys to interpreting Paul's use of the word 'law' in any given passage.

2. **Section two: An examination of three specific passages in Galatians which may seem to cancel out the Law.**

a) **Galatians 2:19** – *"For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God"* (ESV).

- ◆ The Law was never meant to save people. Its primary jobs were only ever to show people the difference between right and wrong (a job it still does), and to prophetically point the Old Testament Israelites ahead to the coming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees, however, had missed this point thinking that the Law

itself *could* save them; that through self-righteous obedience to the Law, by their own human efforts, they could be right with God *apart* from faith (ie. having to trust God to save them, apart from their own efforts). This is Paul's whole argument in Romans 9:31-32, for why the Jewish religious establishment missed out on salvation.

- ◆ Paul's point here in Galatians 2:19 is that the Law *itself* taught that it could not save people and that people could only be saved through faith. Thus, in the passage above, Paul says 'through the law I died to the law.' In other words, it was in the Law itself that Paul learned that he could not be saved by works of the Law. Thus, Paul repented ('died') of his legalistic mindset towards the Law and his legalistic misuse of the Law and put his faith in God.
- ◆ The fact that Paul stopped using ('died to') the Law as a means of salvation (something it was never meant to do in the first place) does not mean, however, that he at the same time also stopped using the Law for its proper God-intended purpose, which is to show people the difference between right and wrong. Antinomians want 'I died to the law' to mean that after Paul came to faith he no longer felt an obligation to obey any of the Law, including the Moral laws. But their interpretation is proved wrong by the fact that in Romans 3:31 Paul clearly stated that he continued to obey ('uphold') the Law, and so should all believers, as well as 1 Corinthians 7:19, where he states that obeying the commandments is still an essential part of the Christian life.

b) **Galatians 3:10-14** – *“For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”<sup>11</sup> Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”<sup>12</sup> But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”<sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—<sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith” (ESV).*

- 1) Verse 10–11: Paul states that every self-righteous legalist who thinks he can be saved by his own good works, instead of by faith in Jesus Christ, is under a curse. He then quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 as his authority, which states that anyone who does not abide by *all* the laws is cursed. The point is that nobody is capable of living an absolutely perfect life (obeying *all* the laws perfectly), thus forgiveness is needed – but that forgiveness only comes by faith (forgiveness is a gift from God, not something anyone can earn). Therefore, those who try to save themselves by their own obedience to the Law have rejected the faith which brings forgiveness, so they therefore are still under the curses pronounced in the Law for all of their failures to obey that Law (since everyone *will* have failures).
- 2) Verse 12: Paul is not here stating that obedience to the Law is incompatible with faith – that would contradict his teaching in Romans 9:31-32 that God always intended the Law to be obeyed ('pursued') by faith. Remember the context of this passage; Paul is arguing against the Pharisaical misuse of the law as a means of salvation *apart* from faith. His point in this verse is that the Law in itself is not faith: it can be pursued by faith, or it can be pursued by works (again, see Romans 9:31-32) but it is not itself faith. And he contrasts that point with a quote from the Old Testament itself, Habakkuk 2:4, “The righteous shall live by faith.”
- 3) Verse 13: ‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law . . .’ Amen! The Law shows us what is good and what is evil, and it also describes for us what the consequences of each are: the blessings that go with goodness and the punishments ('curses') that go with evil. These consequences are like laws of physics – blessings ultimately follow good and curses ultimately follow evil just as naturally as gravity draws two bodies together. The big problem for humanity is that each of us human beings has done evil – none of us

has even come close to *only* doing good, 100% of the time. But that means the consequences ('curses') described in the Law for evil must certainly fall on each one of us, just as assuredly as stepping off of a cliff will bring about a fall, due to gravity. It is in this sense that every human being is under the 'curse of the Law;' we are all in line for the consequences we justly deserve as a result of our evil actions. The Law, however, does not mete out these consequences ('curses'), it merely describes them and warns us of them.

- And this is where Antinomians go wrong: they consider the Law *itself* to be the curse that Jesus rescued us from, as if rules like 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Lev 19:18), and 'do not murder' (Deut 5:17) are a curse to have to obey. No! The Law was not the curse, the Law only warns us of the curses which follow wickedness. In this the Law is like the doctor who must break bad news to a patient – is he bad when he brings the bad news? No! On the contrary, as patients we are thankful to our doctors when they correctly diagnose our problems so that we can go about treating them effectively. In the same way, the Law. Jesus did not redeem us from our doctor (the Law), he redeemed us from the cancer (sin and its consequences) our doctor diagnosed.
- This is an important point to realize because Antinomians are continually attempting to pit the Law against Christ, as if the Law was the 'bad guy' and then Christ, the 'good guy,' came and rescued us from that 'bad guy.' Nothing could be further from the truth! God Himself wrote the Law, so how can it be bad (Rom 7:12)? If the Law is bad and Jesus is good, then God is schizophrenic since He wrote the Law. Far from the Law being the 'bad guy' and God being the 'good guy' it is important for Antinomians to realize that the curses prescribed in the Law are not carried out by the Law but by *God Himself*. It is God Himself who personally brings the curses (ie. punishments, judgments and consequences) described in the Law down upon the heads of the wicked – the Law is not a person that it can do *anything*; it only tells us what *God* will do if we don't obey Him. Thus we cannot blame the Law for its curses, because those curses are *from* God, *because of* God and *carried out by* God – the Law is only our doctor warning us of what *God* will do to those who walk in wickedness.
- **'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.'** Back to the problem of humanity. All of humankind – every single person – has done many acts of wickedness. Therefore, every human being must face punishment from God, as described in the Law ('the curse of the Law'). But thanks be to God, that Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty ('curse') required for those sins! This means that anyone who simply asks Him may now be *forgiven*, which means they no longer have to face the consequences from God ('curses') that the Law said must surely be done to those who sin. In this way, Christ has 'redeemed us from the curse of the law.'

c) **Galatians 3:23-26** – *"Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, <sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith"* (ESV).

- ◆ Many Antinomians have seized on this passage as 'proof' that the entire Old Testament Law has been cancelled, and that Christians are no longer obligated to obey it. But, once again, they should be reminded of other statements of Paul's, such as Romans 3:31, where Paul clearly states *"Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law"* (ESV), and 1 Corinthians 7:19 where he states, *"For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God"* (ESV). Clearly Paul believed that obedience to the Law was important for Christians. And what of other passages in the New Testament, passages such as; *"But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing"*

(James 1:25 ESV); and, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3 ESV)? By interpreting Galatians 3:23-25 in isolation from the whole of Scripture Antinomians have created contradictions within the Bible. Therefore, the Antinomian interpretation of Galatians 3:23-26 (that the entire Old Testament Law has been cancelled) must be rejected.

- ◆ What then are we to make of Galatians 3:23-26? Answer: When Paul speaks of the ‘law’ being ‘our guardian’ (v.24) and then states that ‘we are no longer under [that] guardian’ (v.25) he was only referring to the *Ceremonial* laws, not to the entire Old Testament Law. Thus, in this passage, he is doing away only with the Ceremonial laws, not all of the laws in the Old Testament.
- ◆ Proof that Paul is speaking only of the Ceremonial Law in Galatians 3:23-26 (2 points):
  - 1) **It is the only interpretation which avoids creating a contradiction in Scripture.** As stated above, if Galatians 3:23-26 is interpreted to mean that the whole Old Testament Law has been cancelled, then there is a contradiction in Scripture with the many other passages in the New Testament which state that believers must still obey the Law.
  - 2) **It is the only interpretation which makes sense in the context of the book of Galatians.** What is the primary purpose of the book of Galatians? Paul’s one main purpose in Galatians is to refute a group of Judaizers who were teaching the Galatian church that in order to be saved they needed to follow Jewish customs such as circumcision (5:2-12; 6:12-15), the festivals (4:10) and the eating laws (2:11-14). Paul was justifiably upset at this, as those laws were always inferior, temporary laws meant to point people to Jesus, but otherwise inherently useless – they did nothing for a person’s character (Col 2:20-24), nor for one’s standing with God (Heb 10:1-4). All those laws were, were pictures and illustrations (Heb 8-10), the substance of which is Christ (Col 2:17). The moment Jesus died on the cross the need for that inferior set of laws disappeared and they were all cancelled; in other words, the pictures (Ceremonial laws) gave way to the real thing (Jesus).
    - But Antinomians would have us believe that in Galatians Paul is doing away not just with the Ceremonial rituals, but with the whole Law, including Moral laws such as, ‘do not murder’ (Deut 5:17), ‘do not commit adultery’ (Deut 5:18), and ‘do not hold a grudge or take revenge’ (Lev 19:18). But where is their proof? Where in Galatians does Paul name a single Moral law as an example of something he was mad at the Judaizers for preaching? Where does he call them out for preaching ‘do not commit adultery’? Where does he call them out for preaching ‘do not steal?’ Or ‘do not lie?’ Or any of the other Moral laws? Nowhere! Can you even imagine him doing such a thing? Paul does, however, in the book of Galatians specifically name a number of Ceremonial rituals that he was mad at the Judaizers for preaching; laws such as circumcision (repeatedly – 2:3-9; 5:2-12; 6:12-15), as well as the festivals (4:10) and the eating laws (2:11-14). Is it just a coincidence that these all happen to be Ceremonial rituals? Is it just a coincidence that Paul fails to mention any Moral laws? Hardly. And this is a serious problem for the Antinomian position since nowhere in any of Paul’s writings does he ever mention a Moral law as cancelled, though he repeatedly and specifically calls out many Ceremonial laws as being finished (see also Rom 14:1-6; 14:17; Col 2:16-17; Heb 8-10; etc.). It strains the limits of credulity to imagine that this is merely a coincidence and that Paul did not have in his mind a clear distinction between the Ceremonial and Moral laws.
    - That Paul was only referring to the Ceremonial laws in Galatians 3:23-25, and not the whole Law, is further bolstered by his statement, in Galatians 5:23, about the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc.), that “*against such things there is no law*” (ESV). In other words, none of the fruits of the Spirit break any laws. But this statement doesn’t make any sense if you hold to the Antinomian interpretation of Galatians; if Paul’s whole point in Galatians is that the entire Law has

been cancelled, why would he bother to say that none of the fruits of the Spirit break the Law? If the whole Law has been cancelled, then all the laws are null and void anyway, and it doesn't matter whether or not the fruits of the Spirit break any of them. This statement only makes sense when one realizes that the Moral Law is eternal and still in force today. Then Paul's statement that the fruits of the Spirit don't break any laws makes perfect sense, since it *is* actually still important that people obey the Law (the Moral parts, not the Ceremonial). Furthermore, it is clear that in Paul's mind the Moral Law and the Spirit are not opposed to each other – consider the following comparison of various statements Paul makes in his epistles about the relationship between love and the Law: (1) the fruit of the Spirit is love, which doesn't break any laws (Gal 5:23 above); and (2) all the laws in the Law describe what it means to love (Rom 13:8-10 and Gal 5:14). Notice how closely Paul links love, the Law and the Spirit. The three go hand-in-hand-in-hand. Clearly Paul does not think that the age of the Holy Spirit has cancelled the authority of the Law, since one (the Spirit) empowers people to love, and the other (the Law) defines what it means to love. The Spirit and the Law work hand-in-hand.

- Another passage in Galatians which confirms that Paul was only intending in that book to cancel out the Ceremonial laws, rather than *all* the laws, including the Moral laws, is Galatians 6:2 where Paul states, *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (ESV). In other words, there *is* a law that Paul expects Christians to follow and obey – the 'law of Christ.' But this law is nothing more than Paul's label for what I in this paper have termed the 'Moral Law!' There is no way around this fact, even for Antinomians, since everyone will unanimously agree that the 'law of Christ' must refer to Christ's command to 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Matt 19:19; 22:39). And if the 'law of Christ' means 'love your neighbor as yourself' then, as I have argued repeatedly throughout this paper, all the Moral laws in the Old Testament are still in effect, since those laws define what it means to 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Matt 7:12; 22:36-40; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14). The Moral Law in the Old Testament IS the 'law of Christ.' Therefore, Paul explicitly affirms in Galatians 6:2 that the Moral laws in the Old Testament have not been cancelled.

## Chapter 6 - James 2:10 & Galatians 5:3 – Are the Moral and Ceremonial laws an indivisible whole?

- One of the pillars of the Antinomian (anti-Law) position is the argument that the Old Testament Law is one indivisible whole which cannot be broken up into different pieces such as Moral laws and Ceremonial laws. This helps their position because obviously the Ceremonial laws have all been cancelled (for example, no Christians feel the need to sacrifice animals anymore); thus, if the Ceremonial laws and Moral laws are part of one indivisible whole, and if the Ceremonial laws have been clearly cancelled, then the Moral laws must be cancelled too. Antinomians have two verses they (mis)use in order to ‘prove’ this point that the Law is an indivisible whole: the first verse is James 2:10 and the second is Galatians 5:3. We will now examine those two passages individually:
  1. **James 2:10.** James 2:10 states, *“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it”* (ESV). Antinomian teachers understand from this verse that the Ceremonial and Moral Laws cannot be separated into two different categories of laws, since no one ‘point’ of the Law can be separated out from the whole of the Law. They say that this passage teaches that if you want to follow any one point of the Law you have to actually follow all of it, including the sacrifices, because you will then become accountable for all of it. Thus, they actually use this passage in James to argue that believers are no longer under any part of the Law.
    - a) Such a conclusion would have been astonishing to James, however, who repeatedly argued throughout his short letter that believers were supposed to study, obey and do the Law! (James 1:22-25; 2:12; 4:11-12)
      - ◆ In light of James’ many statements about the importance of doing and studying the Law, it is clear that James 2:10 cannot be used by anyone to build a doctrine where the Law is cancelled in the life of the believer. So what does the context of James chapter 2 really say? Read the chapter for yourself. The whole point of James chapter 2 up to verse 13 is to stop Christians from showing partiality to wealthy people over poor people. In verses 8 – 13, James argues that the *reason* it is bad to show partiality is because the Law tells us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (v.8). Certainly James is not cancelling out the Moral Law in this passage, since the Law is his standard for why partiality is bad! Breaking the Law in James’ mind is a sin (v.9; 11) – which means he still thinks that believers are bound by the Law. He even states clearly that Christians will be judged by the Law (v. 12), which he calls ‘liberty’ (v. 12), thus proving even more conclusively that he does not want Christians to think that the Law has been cancelled in their lives.
    - b) **So what is James really saying in verse 10?** Let’s break this up into 4 logical steps:
      - 1) All of James chapter 2, from verses 1-13, constitutes one point James is making – essentially, ‘Do not show partiality (favoritism) to rich people over poor people.’
      - 2) In making this point James states that the ‘royal law’ can be summed up in one word “love your neighbor as yourself” (v.8).
        - What is this ‘royal law’ James is talking about? James is just re-iterating what Jesus said in Matthew 22:36-40, and Paul said in Romans 13:8-10 & Galatians 5:14, that all of the laws in the Law can be summed up by one over-arching law (the ‘royal law’) – “love your neighbor as yourself.”
      - 3) In James’ mind whenever anyone breaks any one of the commandments like ‘don’t murder,’ ‘don’t commit adultery’ (v.11), don’t show partiality (v.9), or any other law, they are actually all breaking the same law, the law to “love your neighbor as yourself.” This is an important point because it is easy for Christians to fall into the trap of thinking of some sins as ‘small’ (like showing partiality) and others as ‘big’ (like murder and adultery).<sup>42</sup> The truth is that when you break *any* law, you break the most important one, which is “love your neighbor as yourself.”

---

<sup>42</sup> Note: this is not to say that God doesn’t see a difference between the various crimes. All law-breaking is serious, but some law-breaking is more serious. Just because all law-breaking essentially boils down to one thing – not loving one’s neighbor as oneself – doesn’t mean that some crimes aren’t more serious than others. All one has to do is look at the differences in punishment God meted out for various crimes in the Law, to see that not every sin is equally bad. Compare, for example, the crimes of murder and theft: for the crime of murder the Law prescribes death (Num 35:30), but for the crime of theft the Law prescribes paying back double the value of

4) **Conclusion:** Thus, when James says, *“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it”* (v.10) his whole point is that showing partiality is a serious sin because it breaks the law of love. Since each of the laws in the Law reveals an aspect of *“love your neighbor as yourself,”* and since the whole Law can be summed up by *“love your neighbor as yourself,”* then breaking any one of the laws makes a person accountable to God for not loving their neighbor, which is the whole law. Thus, anyone who fails in any one point of the law becomes accountable for all of it, which is to say, accountable for not loving their neighbor as themselves.

2. **Galatians 5:3.** A second passage that Antinomian advocates try to use in order to make their point that the Law is an indivisible whole, which has been cancelled in its entirety and which cannot be broken up into categories like Moral and Ceremonial, is Galatians 5:3; in it Paul states, *“I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law”* (ESV). Antinomians have taken this verse to what they think is its logical conclusion – that thus, if a Christian does not accept circumcision he is free from having to obey any of the laws.
- ◇ Notice the subtle step, however, that Antinomians have jumped in coming to this conclusion, something most people never stop to think about. They have ASSUMED that the following two statements are logically connected; that if (1) *Anyone who accepts circumcision is obligated to keep the whole law* (what Paul actually says) is true, then its CONVERSE must also be true, that (2) *Anyone who does not accept circumcision is not obligated to keep any of the laws* (what Antinomians want it to say). But this is a very big assumption to make, because in that case what Paul is teaching here is that a person who doesn't accept circumcision would then be free from the 'obligation' of obeying such commands as 'Don't murder' (Ex 20:13), 'Don't have sex with animals' (Lev 20:15-16) and 'Don't put a stumbling block before the blind' (Lev 19:14). How awful – then uncircumcised people could do whatever they pleased! And not at all the point Paul is trying to make in this passage.
  - ◇ What this is, then, is a failure of logic. Follow closely: it does not automatically follow that the statement *Anyone who accepts circumcision is obligated to keep the whole law*, is the same as its converse statement that *Anyone who does not accept circumcision is not obligated to keep any of the law*. Let me illustrate with a simple example: If a parent with a 3-year old child says at supper time, *“If you take one bite of your dessert, you are obligated to eat all of your vegetables as well,”* it does NOT automatically follow that the parent also intends to enforce the converse statement, *“If you don't take one bite of your dessert you don't have to eat any of your vegetables either.”* Right? Even if the child eats none of their dessert, the parent may still force the child to eat all or some of their vegetables. The point this illustration makes is obvious; the converse statements about vegetables and dessert are not equal because the two types of food – vegetables and dessert – are not equal. Most parents want their children to eat their vegetables, but don't care whether or not their children eat their dessert.
  - ◇ Same with Paul's statement about the Law in Galatians 5:3. In order for the statement *Anyone who accepts circumcision is obligated to keep the whole law* (what Paul actually says) to be equal to the converse statement *Anyone who does not accept circumcision is not obligated to keep any of the law* (which is what Antinomians want it to say) then one has to first assume that there are not different types of laws within the Law, and that all the laws in the Old Testament are equal in God's eyes, from the animal sacrifices (what we call the 'Ceremonial Law') to the Ten Commandments (what we call the 'Moral Law'). But that assumption is exactly what Antinomian proponents are trying to use this verse to prove! And it is circular reasoning to assume your point in order to prove your point. Furthermore, it is patently false, as we have already proven, since the Bible repeatedly makes distinctions between the Ceremonial Laws (animal sacrifices) and the Moral laws ('love your neighbor as yourself'), consistently teaching that God views obedience to the Moral laws as much more important than

---

what was stolen (Ex 22:4). Clearly God views murder as a more serious crime than theft, since loss of life is a much more severe and costly penalty than the restitution of goods.

obedience to the Ceremonial laws (Prov 21:3; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8; Matt 23:23; 1 Cor 7:19), which have now been cancelled anyway.

- ◇ **Conclusion: So what is Paul saying in Galatians 5:3?** This passage only makes sense when you realize that there *are*, in fact, different types of laws within the Law – Ceremonial and Moral (as we proved earlier in this paper). Then what this passage is teaching is not the indivisibility of the Law, but the indivisibility of the *Ceremonial Law*. Thus, if a person decides that circumcision is essential for salvation, that person needs to be prepared to obey all the other ceremonial laws, too, including animal sacrifice and everything else, because circumcision is part of the Ceremonial laws and you can't enforce one without enforcing them all. But since Jesus' death the Ceremonial laws have all been cancelled, which includes circumcision. In contrast to circumcision, however, the Moral laws continue to be binding on Christians today, as Paul so clearly taught elsewhere: "*For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision*[Ceremonial laws], *but keeping the commandments of God* [the Moral laws]" (1 Corinthians 7:19 ESV). This verse only makes sense if there are two types of laws: Moral and Ceremonial, one which is permanent, and one which was temporary and has now been cancelled.

## Chapter 7 - Luke 16:16 – ‘The Law and the Prophets were until John . . .’

- In Luke 16 Jesus said, *“The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. <sup>17</sup> But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.”* – **Luke 16:16-17 (ESV)**
- Some people have taken Jesus’ statement in verse 16 to mean that the Law and the Prophets ended at John the Baptist; in other words, that the Law and the Prophets ceased to have authority over people at that time, and now the ‘good news’ has taken over instead of the Law. But that would directly contradict Jesus’ statement in Matthew 5:18 that not a ‘dot’ from the Law would pass away until heaven and earth pass away (something that obviously hasn’t happened yet), as well as His teaching, in the same passage, that those who teach and obey the Law will be called ‘great’ in the kingdom of heaven, while those who ‘relax’ in their obedience to the Law will be called ‘least’ in the kingdom of heaven.
- Jesus is not contradicting Himself in Luke 16:16-17: He is not pitting the Law and the Prophets against the good news, since the good news was already in the Law and the Prophets (see Heb 4:2). All He is saying is that the season had shifted; up until that time in history the Law and the Prophets had pointed *ahead*, into the future, to the salvation that would one day come from the Messiah, but starting with John the Baptist (when Jesus began His ministry) the good news changed to the present tense, ‘Salvation is HERE – it is available right now.’ Hence Jesus’ next statement ‘and everyone forces his way into it.’ The picture in this line (‘and everyone forces his way into it’) is one of elation, but also of urgency:
  1. Elation – Humanity had waited thousands of years (since the initial Messianic prophecy found in Gen 3:15) for the coming of the Messiah, and now He’s finally here! Imagine a hundred starving people standing in front of a closed door, on the other side of which is a large banquet table filled with the most delicious foods. The moment that door opens, there will be a rush on the door and those starving people will excitedly (and desperately) force themselves through the opening, jostling and pushing each other as they go. Jesus said the kingdom of God was like that in His time – hungry people desperately pushing in. This is still true about the kingdom of God in many places around the world; in places like China, India and the Middle East millions of new people are desperately thronging into the kingdom of God each year – though we don’t see much hunger in the apathetic West.
  2. Urgency – entering into the kingdom of God is not something that people should take casually – “I’ll get around to it at a later date.” No! Nobody knows how much time they have, and so the only proper response to the Gospel message is to press in immediately.
- The Law was never able to save people, and that was never its job. People have this idea like the Law was supposed to save people, but it failed, so along came Jesus to cancel that failed project and in its place do something that would actually save people. Wrong! It was never the Law’s job to save people, therefore the Law was never in competition with the Gospel, and was not cancelled by Christ’s death on the cross. The Law’s job was/is two-fold:
  1. To show people what a ‘saved’ life looks like. The Law shows us what righteousness looks like – if we didn’t have the Law, we wouldn’t know what is right and wrong. The Law still fulfills this purpose today, and will forever (Matt 5:18).
  2. To point people to the saving work of Jesus Christ. This was one of the primary purposes of the Law in the Old Testament, though it still fulfills that role today.
- Thus, in Luke 16:16, Jesus is not doing away with the Law. What He is doing is announcing the exciting fact that salvation is now here and available, present tense; not at the expense of the Law but at the request of the Law! John the Baptist’s ministry heralded the dawn of this new age in human history (because he announced the start of Jesus’ ministry) – a better age than the one which came before it. In Old Testament times people couldn’t experience the forgiveness of sins or the filling of the Holy Spirit like we can now in New Testament times, because the Law can neither forgive nor empower – and neither was it supposed to. But now under the ‘better covenant’ (Heb 8:6), which is the New Covenant, we live in better times than those who lived under the Old Covenant because we get the best of

both worlds: we get BOTH the Law (which is good and shows us what is right and wrong) AND we get the ability to obey the Law (by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) AND we get forgiveness for our law-breaking (by the blood of Jesus). Jesus' death on the cross works hand-in-hand with the Law, not against the Law: Jesus' death saves us TO live lives of righteousness, which means, lives lived in conformity to God's Law (1 John 5:3; 1 Cor 7:19).

- That Jesus is not cancelling out the Law with the Gospel message in Luke 16:16 is made clear in verse 17 when He says "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void." This is a clear reference to Jesus' earlier teaching in Matthew 5:18, where He said "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." Have heaven and earth passed away? No – then neither has the Law.

## Chapter 8 - John 1:17 – The Law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

- *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. – John 1:17 (ESV)*
- Over the years people have interpreted this passage to mean that Grace has replaced the Law. But the passage most certainly does not say that – it simply states that the Law was given through Moses, while Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ. Both are needed! The Law is needed to show us the difference between right and wrong and Grace is needed so that we may be forgiven when we do wrong, as well as be empowered to do right. Of course, Jesus is superior to Moses, and the covenant Jesus enacted (the New Covenant) is superior to the one that Moses enacted (the Old Covenant). But the reason for this is that the Old Covenant was incomplete, not that it was bad; it was a good start, but it couldn't finish. The New Covenant is better than the Old is because under the New Covenant we get the completed work: we get BOTH the Law (which is good and shows us what is right and wrong) AND we get the ability to obey that Law (by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) AND we get forgiveness for our law-breaking (by the blood of Jesus). Jesus' death does not replace the Law, it saves people TO live out the Law (1 John 5:3; 1 Cor 7:19). Without the cross human beings are powerless to do the good things prescribed in the Law, but with the cross and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, believers are now *free to* live out the Law. Living out the Law, incidentally, is not a burden (1 John 5:3b) – it is wonderful; living out the Law is the good life! Isn't it a better life to not murder (Deut 5:17)? To not commit adultery (Deut 5:18)? To love your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:18)? To not hold grudges (Lev 19:18)? To respect the elderly (Lev 19:32)? To take care of the handicapped (Lev 19:14)? To tell the truth (Lev 19:11)?
- A big part of the reason for the historical misunderstanding of this passage has to do with the fact that the King James Version inserts the word 'but' after the word 'Moses,' though the word is not present in any of the Greek manuscripts (none of the other major translations insert it either). In the King James Version, the passage reads thus: "*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" (KJV). The added word 'but' makes grace and truth look like they are opposed to the Law – but it isn't in the original Greek text, and shouldn't be there in the English either.

## Chapter 9 - Hebrews 8:6-7 – The New Covenant is a better covenant.

- *But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.* <sup>7</sup> *For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.* – **Hebrews 8:6-7 (ESV)**
- Antinomians have seized on two things in this passage in their attempts to prove that the Old Testament Law has been cancelled: (1) that the New Covenant is better than the Old; and (2) that the Old Covenant was faulty (v. 7a). What they misunderstand, however, is that the Old Covenant was not faulty because it was bad, but because it was incomplete.<sup>43</sup> There is a big difference between those two things. If the Old Covenant was faulty because it was bad, then the New Covenant would indeed need to dismantle it and replace it completely. But if the Old Covenant was faulty because it was incomplete, then the New Covenant would not need to replace the Old Covenant, but rather complete it. This is in fact what the New Covenant has done – and this is why life under the New Covenant is better. Let us examine this in more detail . . .
- The Old Covenant was a big improvement for the human race at the time when it was given because with the giving of the Law, human beings had, for the first time, a clear communication from God detailing right from wrong. Think about how dark the world would have been before this time. To capture the state of the human race before God gave Israel the Law, consider the following prayer, found in the library of the ancient Syrian king Asher-banapal (the prayer was written down around the 7<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., but probably originates from an even earlier time): *“May the fury of my lord’s heart be quieted toward me; May the god who is not known be quieted toward me; May the goddess who is not known be quieted toward me; Oh goddess whom I know or do not know, my transgressions are many, great are my sins; The transgressions that I have committed, indeed I do not know; The sin that I have done, I do not know; The forbidden thing that I have eaten, I do not know; The prohibited place on which I’ve set foot, I do not know. Man is dumb; he knows nothing; Mankind, everyone that exists, what does he know; Whether he is committing sin or doing good he doesn’t even know.”* – Excerpts from “A Prayer to Every God.”<sup>44</sup> Isn’t that sad? Before the giving of the Law to Moses at Mt. Sinai: (1) Human beings didn’t know who the true God was; (2) They didn’t know what things pleased Him nor what things angered Him; and (3) They didn’t know where to go for forgiveness when they sinned. But then God rescued the Israelites from Egypt, appeared to them at Mount Sinai and gave them the Law. After this human beings could: (1) Know who the true God was; (2) Know the difference between right and wrong; and (3) Know where to go to receive forgiveness. How wonderful!
- So the Old Testament Law was a wonderful gift from God to mankind. BUT . . . it wasn’t the finished product. Though the Old Testament Law revealed to the world the difference between right and wrong, as well as the identity of the one true God, YAHWEH – two amazing gifts in and of themselves – it could not provide pardon for sin, nor the power to live out holiness, nor eternal life. These short-comings (‘faults’), however, do not prove the Old Testament Law bad, just our need for something (or rather some-ONE) more – Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only one in whom we find salvation, and the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. So of course the Law by itself is inadequate; but this is no insult to the Law since *everything in the universe*, apart from Jesus, is inadequate. This is why the New Covenant is a better covenant than the Old; in the New Covenant we can go directly to Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, to be empowered by His Holy Spirit to live a godly life (in accordance with the Law), and to receive eternal life. Under the Old Covenant the people had to sacrifice animals and abide by many ceremonial regulations in order to have their sins temporarily covered – but under the New Covenant all of that ceremonial stuff has been done away with by the precious sacrifice of Christ, and now we can experience full and permanent forgiveness. How amazing! Certainly the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant. But this does not mean that the Old Testament Moral Law has been cancelled – far from it. It still shows us the difference between right and wrong, and we are still required by God to

---

<sup>43</sup> See Paul’s arguments for the goodness of the Law (Rom 7:7, 12, 16) and for our need to uphold the Law (Rom 3:31; 1 Cor 7:19).

<sup>44</sup> This prayer can be read in its entirety online at – <http://www.thenagain.info/Classes/Sources/SumerPrayer.html> (accessed July 28, 2011)

walk according to those Moral laws. Jesus has not saved us so that we can live however we like; He has saved us *from* wickedness and *for* righteousness. The New Covenant has not done away with the Old Testament Moral laws which define righteousness, rather it has put those laws into our hearts (Jer 31:31-33; Ez 36:26-29) so that we can be empowered to DO them and to LOVE doing them.

# Part 4: Debunking Antinomian Theology

## Chapter 1 - What Antinomianism is and why it is dangerous.

- This chapter consists of three parts: (1) Antinomianism defined; (2) A brief history of Antinomianism; and (3) Why Antinomianism is dangerous. Though I believe part 2 to be an important section which will help you in your understanding of Antinomianism and its relationship to the Church over the past two thousand years, it is not essential to the arguments put forth in this paper. Parts 1 and 3 are the essential components to this chapter and readers who cannot bear to learn about church history will not lose the drift of my arguments if they skip over part 2.

### 1. Antinomianism defined.

- ◇ The word Antinomian comes from the Latin word *anti*, meaning ‘against,’ and the Greek word *nomos*, meaning ‘law.’ Literally defined it means ‘against the law.’ In Christian theology it is used to describe that heretical branch of doctrine which teaches that Christians are exempt from the obligations of the Moral Law as described in the Old Testament (ie. Christians are exempt from the Old Testament laws to not murder, not commit adultery, not steal, etc.). Though the reader might recoil from such an awful idea, the doctrine has become very widely popular in evangelical churches today.
- ◇ The definition of Antinomianism expanded. I include below a short list of statements which help to further clarify and define the Antinomian position:
  - a) **A person’s sins are all automatically forgiven – past, present and future – the moment he believes in Christ.** Thus, believers are never bound to mourn for sin, to confess, or even to repent – at any point in their lives, no matter how vile the sin that they commit – since all of their future sins were automatically pre-forgiven the moment they first believed in Christ.
  - b) **Christians cannot be punished by God for any sin they commit. Ever.** According to the Antinomian position, Jesus was already punished on the cross for all of our sins, and since He was punished for our sins already, it would be unjust of God to punish any sin a second time by punishing it again in a believer. Therefore, God cannot punish any believer, for any sin, at any time, because all of a believer’s sins (past, present and future) have already been punished in Christ.
  - c) **God does not see Christians as they actually are, according to what they do, but rather, He only sees Jesus’ righteousness every time He looks at a Christian.** This is an especially pernicious bit of doctrine which divorces a believer’s behavior from reality; now sinful actions that are done are not really done at all, since God doesn’t see them! The Antinomian believes that Christ’s righteous character gets literally imputed onto himself, so that, *no matter what he does* Christ’s character has become his character – even if the fruit of his life is not Christ’s fruit. This is a staggering absurdity, not to mention a logical impossibility (see footnote below).<sup>45</sup> But the Antinomian blindly persists, ignoring the vast body of Scripture which clearly teaches that believers will be judged by God someday according to what *they* have actually done while in the body (2 Cor 5:10; Mt 12:36; 1 Pet 1:17, etc.), believing instead that on the Day of Judgment he will be judged by God *as if he himself were Jesus* (since Jesus’ personal character of holiness has been literally imputed to himself as if it were his).

---

<sup>45</sup> **The absurdity of imputed character:** (1) How can one person be given another person’s character? To claim such a thing destroys the meaning of the word ‘character,’ turning the word into nonsense. A person’s character is simply the accumulation of that person’s actions and choices up to a given point in their life. Thus, the only character I can have is my own, since the only life I have lived is my own. How can another person give me their character? In what meaningful sense can they give me their actions? I am me, and my character is part of who I am. (2) Secondly, in what meaningful sense can I be said to have another person’s character, but *not* have their actions, as Antinomians posit when they teach that believers have Christ’s character even when they don’t have His fruit? That would be absurd and logically impossible, since character is made up of our actions. This problem with the Antinomian position stems from the fact that they confuse forgiveness with holiness: a person does not need to be literally given Christ’s holy character in order to be forgiven of his sins.

- d) **Good works (good fruit) are not a necessary proof of a person's salvation.** On this point Antinomians are especially adamant, people are saved by faith alone! We agree. What they mean, however, is that a person can be completely carnal, steeped in sin, worldly and apathetic – and unrepentant about it all – but if he once prayed a prayer to receive Christ, he is saved for eternity. In this they ignore the clear teaching of Scripture that *true* faith always leads to good works and loving behavior (James 2:17-26; 2 Pet 1:10; 1 John 2:3; 2:9-10; 2:29; 3:6; 3:9; 3:14-19; etc., etc.), that saved people always produce good fruit (Matt 12:33-37; 7:16-20; Lk 6:43-44; Gal 5:22-24) and that our salvation is actually based on our obedience (Matt 7:21-23).
- ◇ The above four tenets of the Antinomian creed are logically intertwined, so that disproving even one point causes the whole doctrine to fall apart.

## 2. **A short history of Antinomianism.**

- a) **The early church.** Antinomianism is not new – theological errors move in cycles, sometimes over very long periods, and Antinomianism has come and gone throughout church history. It finds its seeds in the apostle Paul's writings and nowhere else in the New Testament (a sure sign of heresy) – though Paul himself did not teach it (see Part 1 and Part 3 of this paper). One of Paul's primary missions in life was to combat the legalism of the Jewish religious establishment of his day and to proclaim the awesome Gospel truth that people cannot earn their salvation through works. Already during his lifetime, however, ungodly people began twisting this truth (2 Pet 3:15-17, also Rom 3:8) to also mean that once saved a believer's works do not matter. Thus, the devilish doctrine was first created whereby people can believe themselves to be saved merely by giving intellectual assent to Christian dogmas, but not having to actually be born-again (ie. radically changed) in their character, fruit and behavior. That this Antinomian doctrine sprang up immediately in the early church is evidenced by the repeated warnings against licentiousness (unrestrained immoral living) given by all the writers of the New Testament (Rom 3:8,31; 6:1; Eph 5:6; 2 Pet 2:18-19; James 2:17-26; etc., etc.).
- b) **Martin Luther (1483-1546) is mistakenly taken for an Antinomian.** Antinomianism waned for many centuries under the Catholic church, as Catholic doctrines tended to err far more on the legalism side of things than on the grace side of things. Thus, it is not surprising that Antinomianism was greatly revived during the Reformation, starting with the writings of Martin Luther, though Luther himself was not an Antinomian. Luther was simply reacting to the superstitious and legalistic abuses of the Catholic church, and as a pendulum swings from one side to the other, his attacks on the legalistic abuses of the Catholic church were taken to be arguments in favor of Antinomianism (much as people had twisted the teachings of the apostle Paul). He later proved his true intentions, however, when he endorsed the Augsburg Confession,<sup>46</sup> in which are these remarkable words: *“Now repentance consisteth properly of these two parts: One is contrition, or terrors stricken into the conscience through the acknowledgment of sin; the other is faith, which is conceived by the Gospel, or absolution, and doth believe that for Christ's sake sins be forgiven, and comforteth the conscience, and freeth it from terrors. Then should follow good works, which are fruits of repentance”* and, *“We condemn the Anabaptists, who say that those who have been once justified can no more lose the Spirit of God.”*<sup>47</sup> In other words, Luther believed that people could lose their salvation if they did not produce fruit in keeping with repentance (Acts 26:20; Lk 3:8). Clearly Luther was no Antinomian.

---

<sup>46</sup> **The Augsburg Confession** is the primary confession of faith of the Lutheran Church and one of the most important documents of the Lutheran reformation. The Augsburg Confession was written in both German and Latin, and was presented by a number of German rulers and free-cities at the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V had called on the Princes and Free Territories in Germany to explain their religious convictions in an attempt to restore religious and political unity in the Holy Roman Empire, and rally support against the Turkish invasion.

<sup>47</sup> Christian Classics Ethereal Library: *Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches* – <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.iii.ii.html> (accessed June 11, 2011).

◆ **John Agricola (1492-1566) develops Antinomianism under the guise of Lutheranism.** Though Luther later corrected some of the hastily uttered comments he had made in the heat of his great controversy with the Catholic church (comments which were Antinomian nature), one of his contemporaries, John Agricola, seized on those statements and developed them into an extreme system of Antinomianism. A quote from one of his publications reads thusly: *“Art thou steeped in sin – an adulterer or a thief? If thou believest, thou art in salvation. [In other words, ‘It doesn’t matter how you live, so long as you believe.’] All who follow Moses must go to the devil; to the gallows with Moses.”*<sup>48</sup> Luther wrote a series of disputations against Agricola, and called him a number of harsh names,<sup>49</sup> but the damage was done and many people mistakenly took Luther for an Antinomian.

c) **The great Evangelists John Wesley and Charles Finney both vigorously oppose Antinomianism (1700’s & 1800’s).** Antinomianism raised its ugly head again in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the Antinomians of our day should be sobered by the fact that the greatest revivalists of that time all passionately opposed their doctrine.

◆ **John Wesley (1703-1791).** The following is an excerpt detailing John Wesley’s intense opposition to Antinomianism, taken from the Independent Methodist Arminian Resource Center (IMARC): *“Wesley carefully guarded his own doctrine of Christian perfection from this peril [Antinomianism]. He considered antinomianism the worst of all heresies. Most strenuously and persistently did he teach that the profession of justification by faith should ever be tested by right conduct. “I would not advise to preach the law without the Gospel any more than the Gospel without the law,” wrote John Wesley, referring to the so-called Gospel preaching which he disowned. “Undoubtedly both should be preached in their turns; yea, both at once, or both in one.” And he sums up the Christian ethics taught by himself and John Nelson in these words: “God loves you; therefore love and obey him. Christ died for you; therefore die to sin. Christ is risen; therefore rise in the image of God. Christ liveth evermore; therefore live to God till you live with him in glory.” “So we preached; and so you believed! This is the scriptural way, the Methodist way, the true way. God grant we may never turn therefrom, to the right hand or to the left.” Wesley’s intense conviction of the importance of practical morality led him to take drastic measures to rid his society of antinomian teachers, and their perversions of evangelical truth. . . .”*<sup>50</sup>

◆ **Charles Finney (1792-1875).** Charles Finney, one of the greatest evangelists in American history, spoke of Antinomianism as the opposite extreme to legalism: *“Legalists are all work, Antinomians no work. Professing to have yielded up their whole agency to Christ, they [Antinomians] throw all responsibility upon Him and do nothing. Under pretense of being led by the Spirit and of waiting for God to reveal His will to them, they give themselves up very much to spiritual indolence (idleness).”*<sup>51</sup> Throughout his lifetime of preaching and writing Finney vigorously opposed Antinomianism, while preaching repentance from sin, and the necessity of holy living as part of salvation.

◆ **Even George Whitefield (1714-1770) was no Antinomian.** Though he has sometimes been accused of Antinomianism because of his strong Calvinism,<sup>52</sup> the great revival preacher George Whitefield nonetheless

<sup>48</sup> The American Cyclopaedia Vol1 | by George Ripley And Charles A. Dana: *Antinomians* – <http://chestofbooks.com/reference/American-Cyclopaedia-V1/Antinomians.html> (accessed June 11, 2011)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Independent Methodist Arminian Resource Center: *The minutes of the conference of 1744* – <http://www.imarc.cc/reghist/reghist3.html> (accessed June 14, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> The online site for the complete works of Charles Finney: *The Oberlin Evangelist, March 12, 1845 Letters on Revival No. 4, by Prof. Finney* – [http://www.gospeltruth.net/1845OE/45%20let\\_art/450312\\_let\\_on\\_revival\\_4.htm](http://www.gospeltruth.net/1845OE/45%20let_art/450312_let_on_revival_4.htm) (accessed June 14, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Calvinists are sometimes mistaken for Antinomians because of their doctrines of election and the perseverance of the saints: if, as Calvinists teach, God chooses people to be saved irrespective of their will, and if those people are bound to be saved no matter what they do, the accusation then can be made that their theology encourages Christians not to pursue holiness. Most Calvinists, however,

vigorously advocated for the necessity of holy living among believers who wished to be saved (directly opposite to Antinomian teaching). He even went so far as to teach people to strive for holiness in their lives, since they couldn't know if they were saved (ie. 'elect') and their striving might be the means by which God was saving them (an abhorrent thought to Antinomians): *"And how does the doctrine of election destroy holiness? Who ever preached any other election than what the Apostle preached, when he said, "Chosen . . . through sanctification of the Spirit?" (2 Thess. 2:13). Nay, is not holiness made a mark of our election [ie. holiness is a sign that we are saved] by all that preach it? And how then can the doctrine of election destroy holiness? . . . Just thus it is as to the doctrine of election. I know that it is unalterably fixed (one may say) that I must be damned or saved; but since I know not which for a certainty [ie. a person cannot know if they are saved], why should I not strive, though at present in a state of nature, since I know not but this striving may be the means God has intended to bless, in order to bring me into a state of grace?"*<sup>53</sup> The three ideas here expressed by Whitefield, (1) that a person cannot know if they are saved (which we disagree with); (2) that holiness is a mark of salvation; and (3) that believers should actually strive for holiness, since that striving may be the means by which God brings a person into salvation ('state of grace') are all directly opposed to Antinomian doctrine.

d) **Antinomianism gets revived by the Plymouth Brethren (1830's – 1900's).** Though the Plymouth Brethren movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries had much to commend in it, such as the Brethren's zeal for Bible-study and passion for evangelism, our commendation is tempered by the fact that their Christian zeal was founded heavily upon Antinomian doctrine. Indeed, so extreme was their Antinomianism that in places it bordered on Gnosticism (see footnote below for definition).<sup>54</sup> A harsh claim you may think? Consider carefully the Brethren's dogmatic devotion to the existence of two distinct natures in every believer, one that is unchangeably evil and one that is unchangeably pure (Gnostic duality), as explained by the eminent Plymouth theologian and hymn-writer, J. Denham Smith: *"The two natures remain in him [the believer] unchanged. His old nature is not modified or ameliorated by the impartation of the new; nor, on the other hand, does the new nature become soiled or corrupted by reason of its co-existence in the same being with the old. They remain the same. There is no blending or amalgamation. They are essentially and eternally distinct. The old nature is unalterably and incurably corrupt, while the new nature is divinely pure in its essence."*<sup>55</sup> If that isn't Gnostic theology, I don't know what is!

- ◆ **The danger to Christians of this ancient Gnostic heresy being re-packaged and revived.** And what this system of theology does is to lead Christians into a dangerous place of theological schizophrenia whereby each believer thinks of himself as consisting of two distinct persons: a sinful person and a holy person (ie. an old nature and a new nature). This is dangerous because it removes the need for believers to feel any responsibility for their sins (ie. Godly sorrow, repentance, guilt, etc.), since all of a believer's bad behavior

---

vigorously oppose Antinomianism, arguing as Whitefield does in this quote, that if a person is part of the elect there will be fruit – some sign of holiness in them. Furthermore, Whitefield also argues that since no one can know if they are part of the elect, or not, they have even more motivation to strive for holiness, since that striving may be part of God's means of bringing an elect person into a 'state of grace' (ie. salvation).

<sup>53</sup> The Hall of Church History: *A letter from George Whitefield to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley* – <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/wesley.htm> (accessed June 15, 2011)

<sup>54</sup> Gnosticism is the doctrine of salvation by knowledge alone, apart from any kind of works or 'fruit' in a person's actions. It was condemned by the early church as heresy, and has always been considered heresy by the Body of Christ throughout history. Because there are so many different types of Gnosticism it is hard to clearly define exactly what it is, but essentially Gnosticism is the belief that people are saved through having special knowledge of the Universe, or God. Gnosticism is very mystical, and Gnostics have no use for practical life – obedience to God, submission, godly character, those sorts of things – because they view the material world as evil. To them life is about being saved from the material world, by attaining spiritual knowledge.

<sup>55</sup> Steele, Dr. Daniel, *Antinomianism revived: the theology of the so-called Plymouth Brethren refuted*, chapter 3 (<http://www.gospeltruth.net/Antinomianism/antinom-chap3.htm>, accessed June 15, 2011).

can be blamed on his sinful nature. Furthermore, since his sinful nature is separate and distinct from his new (ie. holy) nature, the believer can remain steeped in unrepentant sin and still consider himself to be saved and in good standing with God, due to the fact that he considers his sinful nature to be guilty for his sins (not himself personally), while his new nature (who he 'really' is) remains in good standing with God and under God's favor. How preposterous and unbiblical! In this case the Christian's 'new' nature is nothing more than a figment of his imagination, existing only in his thoughts, since it doesn't exhibit itself in the real world through his actions. And if God is only saving his new nature on the Day of Judgment, then only his imagination will be saved since that is the only place where his new nature resides. How contrary to Jesus' teaching that you can know a person's true nature by his 'fruit' (ie. his actions and behavior – see Matt 7:16-20; 12:33; Lk 6:43-45).

- e) **A.W. Tozer (1897 – 1963) vigorously opposes Antinomianism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.** A.W. Tozer was one of the most respected writers and theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a man whose books and character left an indelible impact on the Christian Church in the West.<sup>56</sup> In his book, *Paths to Power*, he defined and condemned Antinomianism this way: *"Fundamental Christianity in our times is deeply influenced by that ancient enemy of righteousness, Antinomianism. The creed of the Antinomian is easily stated: We are saved by faith alone; works have no place in salvation; conduct is works, and is therefore of no importance. What we do cannot matter as long as we believe rightly. The divorce between creed and conduct is absolute and final. The question of sin is settled by the Cross; conduct is outside the circle of faith and cannot come between the believer and God. Such in brief, is the teaching of the Antinomian. And so fully has it permeated the Fundamental element in modern Christianity that it is accepted by the religious masses as the very truth of God. Antinomianism is the doctrine of grace carried by uncorrected logic to the point of absurdity. It takes the teaching of justification by faith and twists it into deformity."*<sup>57</sup>
- f) **Present day – A vast tide of Antinomianism sweeping the Western Church.** It was already happening half a century ago in Tozer's day, and a quick survey of the church landscape today reveals it to be unabated – a vast tide Antinomianism now covering the Evangelical Church in the West. It has spread itself over a wide spectrum of different denominations and churches; from small to big and from conservative to liberal. It is passionately preached by a very diverse group of prominent leaders, preachers and writers of our day – men like Joseph Prince, Charles Stanley, David Jeremiah, Joel Osteen, etc. I do not mention these names as a personal attack on these men's character, as most of these men are to my knowledge sincere men. The Antinomian element of their doctrine, however, is doing tremendous damage to the Body of Christ and it is this doctrine I wish to fight.

---

<sup>56</sup> Some of his more well-known books, like *Knowledge of the Holy*, *The purpose of man*, *The Pursuit of God* and *The Attributes of God* have achieved the status of 'classics' within the Western Church.

<sup>57</sup> Tozer, A.W.; *Paths to Power*, chapter 5, page 40 – can also be accessed online at <http://www.injesus.com/messages/content/172530> (accessed June 15, 2011).

### 3. Why Antinomianism is dangerous.

- ◇ False beliefs are always dangerous because people's beliefs ultimately determine their actions and behavior. Antinomianism is a particularly dangerous false doctrine because it touches on areas which directly affect a person's salvation and eternal destiny. Below are five points outlining some of the specific dangers of Antinomianism:
  - a) It gives Christians who are steeped in sin false comfort about their standing with God and destination for eternity;
  - b) It teaches Christians to despise God's Law and thus gives fuel to immoral behavior;
  - c) It fosters spiritual slothfulness instead of the strenuous pursuit of godliness;
  - d) It creates an artificial separation between a Christian's beliefs and a Christian's behavior, thus discouraging repentance and confession;
  - e) It evangelizes cheaply, ignoring repentance, thus leading to false conversions.
- ◇ We will now look at each of these five points in detail:
  - a) **The dangers of Antinomianism #1: It gives Christians who are steeped in sin false comfort about their standing with God and destination for eternity.**
    - ◆ *"From prophets to priests, they are all frauds. They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when there is no peace"* (Jer 6:13-14 NLT).
    - ◆ Antinomianism teaches Christians that nothing they do can negatively affect their standing with God because God continues to see them as holy, even when they live in sin; it tells them that God will never get mad at them for sinning, nor will He ever punish them – no matter how much they sin unrepentantly – since Jesus already automatically paid for all of their future sins, the moment they first believed in Christ. This makes a mockery of the Bible and the many passages of Scripture which teach the exact opposite and soberly warn straying Christians of God's wrath and judgment (Heb 10:26-31; James 5:19-20; 2 Pet 2:20-21; Rom 11:17-23; etc., etc.). Thus, this doctrine has the effect of telling people who desperately need to change course and repent of their sins, people who are in grave danger of serious discipline or even of losing their salvation, that everything is fine, don't worry about anything, keep-going-the-way-you-have-been. This is somewhat analogous to putting a blindfold on a child and letting him play along the edge of a cliff, all the while encouraging him that nothing's wrong and everything will be okay. Dangerous! The job of ministers everywhere is to pull the blindfolds off of luke-warm Christians (Rev 3:14-22), helping them to see the awful dangers of worldly, sinful living, and to plead with them to repent so that, by the power of the Spirit, they can come away from the cliff that drops straight into the abyss of God's wrath.
    - ◆ Jesus clearly warned that on the Day of Judgment 'many' people would stand before Him thinking that they were saved from Hell and covered by grace, and yet He would condemn them to Hell because of their disobedience (Matt 7:21-23). Antinomianism is helping to ensure that this prophecy will come true by convincing millions of people that they are saved and in good standing with God, even though they live worldly, disobedient and un-submitted lives.
    - ◆ Though it is true that the penitent believer seeking forgiveness for his sins is pardoned by faith alone, as Antinomians stress, it is *also* true that on the Day of Judgment this same person will be judged by works alone, works which attest to the genuineness of his faith (Matt 25:31-46; 12:36-37; Rom 2:6-8; 1 Cor 3:8, 13-15; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 1:17; Rev 2:23b; 3:2b; etc., etc.). These two truths are both sides of the same coin, the fact that true faith always produces good works (James 2:17-26). People ignore the second half of this truth (the part about works) at their own peril.

b) **The dangers of Antinomianism #2: It teaches Christians to despise God’s Law and thus gives fuel to immoral behavior.**

- ◆ Jesus stated clearly that He did not come to abolish the Law; He also explicitly warned that anyone who taught people not to obey the Law would be called ‘least in the kingdom of heaven’ (Matt 5:17-19). And yet Antinomians teach people exactly that! They are ensuring that a vast number of Christians will be ‘least’ in Christ’s eyes.
- ◆ Furthermore, the Law is the foundation of morality. By using the Law as a foil for the Gospel, and teaching Christians that they are not obligated to obey God’s Law, Antinomians are attacking the very foundations of Morality itself. The consequences for this can only be an increase of immorality and confusion in the Church (which is already happening, see footnote below),<sup>58</sup> leading to bondage, judgment and loss of power in the Body of Christ. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5 the apostle Paul foresaw exactly this type of church in the last days, a church languishing in sickness and immorality (see also 2 Tim 4:3-4; Mt 24:10; Rev 3:14-22); his prophecy describes the Western Church of today with stunning accuracy.
- ◆ **Objection: “I know someone who is an Antinomian and he/she has a very high quality of moral character.”** No doubt many Antinomians will here wish to object to the statement that their doctrine fuels immoral behavior in the Church and in the lives of its adherents. In making this objection they will most likely point to the high moral quality of their own life, or to the high moral quality of some Antinomian teacher they are following. This defense, however, does not absolve their doctrine. Here’s why: they have failed to distinguish between a *direct correlation* to immorality and a *fuel* for immorality. Let me explain: I am not arguing in this paper that Antinomianism directly correlates to immorality – in other words, that a person who believes in Antinomianism immediately becomes immoral, nor that anyone who is immoral must be an Antinomian. Both of those statements are obviously false since there certainly are Antinomians who live morally upstanding lives, just as there are certainly people who believe *against* Antinomianism (who believe that God’s Law is good) but who live *immoral* lives. The truth of the matter is that no one doctrine can be held fully responsible for the overall quality of any person’s moral (or immoral) character, since there are many different factors and beliefs (probably hundreds) which influence how a person lives, and the choices they make from day to day.
  - For example, most Christians (including Antinomians) would agree that atheism is not good for morality; by denying the existence of God, most Christians understand that atheists destroy the foundation for an objective standard of morality, thus turning morality into relativity, whereby ‘right’ is whatever a person *feels* is right, and wrong is whatever a person *feels* is wrong. This fuels immoral and wicked living, most Christians would agree. And yet it is also true that atheists can be found who live quite impressively moral lives, in some cases at a higher level of quality than some Christians (as atheists are happy to point out). Does this absolve atheism? No! Atheism clearly provides an environment which nurtures immorality by casting off the restraints of objective morality, conscience and the fear of accountability before God. Nonetheless humans are complicated beings and isolated cases can certainly be found of atheists who, for a variety of reasons (a good upbringing, an unusually

---

<sup>58</sup> In the 1990’s and early 2000’s George Barna conducted in-depth research to see if Christian behaviour in the United States was any different from non-Christian behaviour. What he found was stunning – in many areas of morality and behaviour there was almost no difference between the average person who calls themselves a Christian, and people who identify themselves as non-Christians. For example, Christian divorce rates are almost identical to non-Christian divorce rates; rates of depression are just about identical between Christians and non-Christians; giving to charity is very similar between Christians and non-Christians; the amount of people with debilitating debt problems is just about identical between Christians and non-Christians; Christians were only moderately less likely to watch X-rated movies; etc., etc.. Barna published these findings in a book called, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Disclaimer: I do not agree with all of his conclusions as to how to fix the church).

good disposition, etc., etc.), live their lives with a high degree of good moral character *in spite* of their atheism, not because of it.

- The same is true of Antinomianism: any doctrine which baldly teaches that Christians are not obligated to obey God's Moral Law; that Christians will not (in fact *cannot*) be punished by God no matter how much they sin unrepentantly; and that all of a Christian's future sins are automatically pre-forgiven, will most certainly give fuel to people's immoral impulses and create an environment in which immorality can grow. Nonetheless, there will be those within the Antinomian camp who by the strength of their conversion, who have been truly born-again, and who have a genuine walk with the Lord who, though they later fall into the doctrinal errors of Antinomianism, still manage to live a godly and holy life *in spite* of their doctrine. In many of these cases these people have been well-fortified against the pernicious effects of their doctrine by the well-established Christian habits of prayer, Scripture meditation, regular fellowship with other people of godly character and corporate worship. These people are exceptions to the rule, however, and their conduct is not the product of their Antinomianism, but in spite of it. The fact is that most people live below their doctrinal beliefs, not above them, and Antinomianism provides both fuel and comfort for immoral impulses.

c) **The dangers of Antinomianism #3: It fosters spiritual slothfulness instead of the strenuous pursuit of godliness.**

- ◆ One of the key tenets of Antinomian theology, which Antinomians preach passionately, is that the victorious Christian life is supposed to be 'effortless.' In their system the believer plays no role in the salvation or sanctification process since Jesus 'does it all.' The actual effect of this teaching, however, is that it ends up *hindering* Christians from living victoriously by making them lazy and slothful as they wait around for Jesus to do everything for them. This is not a biblical paradigm of the Christian life. The Bible does not teach that godliness and holiness come to a Christian automatically by Jesus doing everything and the believer doing nothing; instead the Bible teaches a robust partnership whereby Jesus' power is *necessary* for sanctification and salvation, but that this power flows into the believer's life *only* as the believer makes appropriate responses, choices and efforts to pursue and obey Him (Phil 2:12-13; 2 Pet 1:3-10, especially verses 3 & 5). This is what Jesus was talking about when He said 'abide in me' (John 15:4).
- ◆ Let me illustrate this with a personal story. I once knew of a young man who had been addicted to pornography for many years and couldn't stop. Finally, at one point, he came to the church for help – which he got. The pastor put this young man on a strict diet; he had to start up a devotional life, come in for regular prayer counseling, get connected with some men in the church for accountability, get involved in a church group for regular fellowship and take some measures to rid himself of the unnecessary lustful temptations in his home. For many years this young man had proven over and over again that his human efforts were insufficient to deliver him from his sinful desires (as all human efforts are), but through these humble steps of obedience (which required effort), the power of the Holy Spirit flowed into his life and for several months this young man experienced victory over his lusts, and did not fall into lustful temptation or look at pornography even once. Oh the freedom of conscience and joy in the Lord that he experienced! But after several months of freedom he left off following his 'diet,' which quickly brought him to a place where he went right back into his sin and addiction. So my pastor friend sat down with him and asked him why he had stopped his 'diet,' to which the young man responded that he had heard some teaching (Antinomian in nature, though he would not have known that label for it) which stated that any efforts he expended in trying to overcome his sin was of the flesh, and meant he wasn't trusting and relying on Jesus Christ to save him. So he stopped all of his efforts. Furthermore, he boldly stated that he was now free of his lust 'in Christ,' though at that very time he was again in the grips of bondage and looking at pornography as

frequently as he ever had in all his life. Diabolical doctrine! In the end, the young man refused to let go of his Antinomian teachings, and eventually wandered away from the church to who knows what end – leaving us to marvel at the powerful deception Antinomianism works so that people under its sway actually end up calling freedom ‘bondage,’ and bondage ‘freedom.’

- ◆ In their emphasis on the effortlessness of the Christian life Antinomians make heavy use of several passages such as Matthew 11:28-30 (‘My yoke is easy’), Galatians 2:20 (‘It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’) and Galatians 5:22-23 (The fruit of the Spirit – trees don’t have to work to produce their fruit, so neither should you have to work to have the fruit of the Spirit, goes their reasoning), but completely ignore the many passages in Scripture which plainly state that the Christian life requires strenuous energy, perseverance and warfare. For example, consider the following passages which clearly teach that the Christian life requires constant warfare and strenuous output energy:
  - 1) *Enter [the kingdom of heaven] by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.<sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is HARD that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” – **Matt 7:13-14 (ESV)** Jesus here says it clearly: the Christian life is hard. It is a life of daily self-denial (Matt 10:38; 16:24; Lk 9:23) and crucifying the flesh with all of its fleshly desires (Rom 8:13; Gal 5:24; 1 Pet 2:11).*
  - 2) *Rather train yourself for godliness [godliness does not come about effortlessly – it requires training!];<sup>8</sup> for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.<sup>9</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.<sup>10</sup> For to this end we toil and strive [far from effortless], because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. – **1 Tim 4:7-10 (ESV)***
  - 3) *STRIVE for peace with everyone, and for the holiness [holiness comes with striving, not effortlessly] without which no one will see the Lord.<sup>15</sup> See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God [people who think holiness is automatic and effortless may ‘fail to obtain grace’]; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;<sup>16</sup> that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. – **Heb 12:14-16 (ESV)***
  - 4) *But as for you, O man of God, flee [action word] these things. PURSUE righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness [godliness, righteousness, faith and love are not effortless, they require pursuit!].<sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith [another action word – obviously the life of faith is not effortless]. Take hold of the eternal life [another action word – eternal life won’t just happen to you] to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. – **1 Tim 6:11-12 (ESV)***
  - 5) *So flee youthful passions and PURSUE righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. – **2 Tim 2:22 (ESV)** Once again we see that righteousness, faith, love and peace don’t come automatically or effortlessly, hence Paul says we should *pursue* them.*
  - 6) *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.<sup>25</sup> Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.<sup>26</sup> So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.<sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. – **1 Cor 9:24-27 (ESV)** In this passage Paul compares his spiritual life to the life of an athlete in training; it requires strict discipline, self-control and supreme energy – the exact opposite of the ‘effortless’ life promoted by Antinomians.*
- ◆ And there are many other passages we could look at in the New Testament which also testify to the fact that the Christian life requires sacrifice, self-discipline and hard work.

- ◆ **Conclusion:** It is not as though Christians can overcome their sins *merely* by human effort and hard work – no! But it is *through* our obedience and pursuit of godliness (effort), *while* in relationship with Jesus, that God’s Spirit works in our lives producing His fruit. By teaching Christians that all human effort is meaningless (even sinful in some cases), however, Antinomians cut off the very pipeline (obedience) through which God’s Spirit-power flows and foster lethargy and apathy in Christians, which leads to bondage.

d) **The dangers of Antinomianism #4: It creates an artificial separation between a Christian’s beliefs and a Christian’s behavior, thus discouraging genuine repentance and godly grief for sin.**

- ◆ A fourth danger of Antinomianism is that it drives a wedge, in people’s minds, between their beliefs and their behavior, which creates a dangerous form of Christian schizophrenia where people become detached from their behavior and no longer need to feel remorse or guilt for their sinful actions. Antinomianism does this in one of two ways: either (1) by teaching Christians that their ‘identity in Christ’ has nothing to do with their behavior (alert: I am about to kill some sacred cows!); and/or, (2) by teaching a form of Christian dualism whereby every believer is said to consist of two separate persons – a sinful nature and a holy nature. Let me explain both of these in turn . . .

1) **Identity in Christ – a misused and abused teaching!**

- Antinomians and false-grace teachers have a problem; they teach passionately that Christ’s holiness has literally been imputed onto every believer, so that every Christian literally gets Jesus Christ’s righteous character at the moment of conversion – and yet, it is obvious to everyone that Christians still sin (quite regularly in many cases). What is to be done? How can a person be said to be holy, and yet sin? Obviously this is a logical absurdity – a person cannot sin and be holy at the same time, and to teach such only serves to turn the word ‘holy’ into so much meaningless nonsense.
- But the Antinomian, undaunted, presses on: he now makes an arbitrary and un-biblical distinction between *who* a Christian *is*, and *what* he *does*, in order to make his theology work. So now a Christian can BE holy while living in sin and DOING un-holy things. This is still absurd – can a person BE honest, while TELLING a lie? Can a frying pan BE hot and cold at the same time? Can a geometric shape BE a triangle, and yet ROLL like a circle? Can a person BE loving, while in the act of DOING hateful things (James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:18; etc., etc.)?
- Not only is this absurd, it is completely against the Bible’s teaching (more on this in the chapter on Identity). The Bible consistently teaches a very holistic theology of humankind whereby actions flow out of a person’s heart (Matt 12:33-37), and a person’s fruit (behavior) gives evidence of the type of tree (person) that they are (Matt 7:16-20; Lk 6:43-44). According to the Bible you cannot separate a person’s actions from their beliefs and character and person (James 2:17-26). Think of the damage that is done when believers are taught that they can sin and still be considered holy – much motivation for confession and repentance is lost and the capacity for feeling guilt and remorse for sin is stolen away. Dangerous!
- **The difference between a person’s *Worth* and a person’s *Identity*.** Antinomians reading this paper may at this point be upset, thinking that I am arguing that God loves people less when they sin. Not at all! Every human being has a tremendous amount of worth and value to God *regardless of how they behave*. This is because every person is made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27; 9:26). Thus, nothing a person does, whether good or bad, can increase or decrease their value in God’s eyes, so that even the worst sinner, trapped in the most awful bondage, and the most back-slidden Christian steeped in apathy, is deeply loved and valued by God at all times, simply because he (or she) is human. What Antinomians have done, however, is to confuse two types of identity: a person’s identity as a human

being (which cannot be changed and is independent of a person's behavior), and a person's character-identity (which is based on what a person does). God *loves* us based on our identity as human beings, but He *judges and relates* to us according to our character, what we *DO* (2 Cor 5:10; Heb 10:26-31; 1 Pet 1:14-19; etc., etc.).

- Consider the differences between the two: If a person (identity as a human being) commits horrible acts of murder, butchery, violence and immorality he becomes a criminal (character-identity). Because he is a human being he still has the same amount of value and worth in God's eyes as he did before he committed his crimes, but his relationships, with both God and people, will be broken (at least temporarily) because of his behavior, and he will also have to face consequences from both men and God because of this behavior. He is a human being (one kind of identity) but he is also untrustworthy, violent and dangerous (his character identity). That's what character is, by definition – the compilation of a person's actions. Thus, a person cannot be said to be holy if they do not live out holiness in their *actions*. Look at how the apostle Peter puts it in his first epistle: *As obedient children [obedience is something you DO], do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,<sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your CONDUCT [what you DO!],<sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."<sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's DEEDS [God judges us by our deeds, not our beliefs], conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,<sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. – **1 Pet 1:14-19 (ESV)***
- This is the testimony of the entire Bible, and as I stated before, though God loves us according to our identity as human beings, He judges us according to our character identity – what we DO (2 Cor 5:10). Jesus said it this way: *"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit."<sup>34</sup> You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.<sup>35</sup> The good person [good character] out of his good treasure brings forth good [good actions and words], and the evil person [bad character] out of his evil treasure brings forth evil [bad actions and words].<sup>36</sup> I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak [God holds us accountable for what we DO, even down to the words we speak],<sup>37</sup> for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." – **Matthew 12:33-37 (ESV)***

## 2) **Gnostic Dualism re-packaged into Christian form.**

- As I stated at the beginning of the previous point, Antinomian and false-grace teachers have a problem: they teach passionately that God sees every Christian as completely holy in Christ from the moment that person first believes; but of course we all know that Christians still sin (quite regularly in many cases). In the first point we saw one way in which Antinomians attempt to deal with this problem. Here is another one, used by some (though not all) Antinomians: when a Christian sins it's not actually they who sinned, but their sin nature. And since it was the believer's sin nature that sinned, his new nature remains perfectly holy and un-touched. Imagine that! How convenient. Consider the following quote from prominent author and teacher Andrew Wommack, a thorough Antinomian: *"Just like a lost person's good actions cannot change their sin nature, neither can a born-again believer's sinful actions change their righteous nature. Many Christians have accepted one side of this truth, but not the other... Your nature doesn't become corrupted every time you sin any more than your nature became righteous every time you did something holy before you were born again."<sup>59</sup>*

---

<sup>59</sup> Wommack, Andrew; *Grace: The power of the Gospel*, (2007, pg. 108-109).

- What a bizarre and heretical doctrine! Think about the license to sin that this gives to unsuspecting and immature believers, to teach that it is not them who sins, but their sin-nature, and to also teach that their sins cannot affect their standing with God, since He continues to see them as holy no matter how un-holy their behavior!
- Once again the effect of this doctrine is to introduce into the Christian's mind an artificial separation between his beliefs and his actions, so that he now views his actions and behavior (his 'old nature') in one compartment, while his beliefs (his new nature – who he 'really' is 'in Christ') are in another separate compartment of his life. This gives him great comfort, for, contrary to Scripture, he believes that God only cares about his beliefs compartment and on the Day of Judgment will only judge him according to that compartment of his life, while ignoring the compartment which contains the things he actually DID while in the body. Against this heresy the apostle Paul thunders, *For we must ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has DONE in the body, whether good or evil.* – **2 Cor 5:10 ESV**

e) **The dangers of Antinomianism #5: It evangelizes cheaply, ignoring repentance, thus leading to false conversions.**

- ◆ Because Antinomians don't believe that good works are a necessary sign of a person's salvation, they don't need to preach repentance *from* sins to people in order to be saved. In their system people are saved by one thing – believing in Jesus (in their minds), usually as evidenced by a prayer of some kind to 'receive Christ.' Though we affirm that praying a prayer to receive Christ is a wonderful thing to do, and when it is accompanied by true repentance it is certain that a conversion has occurred – but it is not in any way biblical to say that conversion occurs *merely* through the act of praying a prayer by itself. The Bible is clear that 'believing' in Christ is not just an exercise of the *mind* but also of the *heart*; one leading to remorse for sin, love for God, and changed behavior. But in the Antinomian system there is no need for a person to actually feel remorse for their sins, or to leave their wicked ways, or be radically born-again to the point that everyone else can see that this new believer has been radically changed by God, that the Holy Spirit is indwelling him powerfully, and that he has become a totally new creation in his behavior and character and speech. In the Antinomian system it's just 'Pray a prayer, and hopefully you'll change, but if not don't worry – you're now permanently saved for all eternity, no matter what!'
- ◆ How different this is from the evangelism of Jesus in the Gospels, and the apostles in the book of Acts, where repentance from sin was a central pillar of the salvation message. Here are just a few examples:
  - 1) *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "REPENT [ie. 'turn from your wicked ways'], *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" – **Matt 4:17 (ESV)***
  - 2) *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,<sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; REPENT and believe in the gospel."* – **Mk 1:14-15 (ESV)**
    - Notice that in this passage Jesus clearly states that belief (intellectual assent) in the gospel is not enough for salvation – belief *and* repentance are needed.
  - 3) *And he [Jesus] called the twelve [disciples] and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. . . . So they went out and proclaimed that people should REPENT.* – **Mk 6:7-12 (ESV)**
  - 4) *Now when they [the Jews on the day of Pentecost] heard this they were cut to the heart [ie. felt deep remorse], and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "REPENT and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* – **Acts 2:38 (ESV)**

- 5) *And now, brothers, I [Peter] know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.* <sup>18</sup> *But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.* <sup>19</sup> REPENT therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out. – **Acts 3:17-19 (ESV)**
- 6) *The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to REPENT,* <sup>31</sup> *because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed [Jesus]; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.* – **Acts 17:30-31 (ESV)**
- 7) *Therefore, O King Agrippa, I [Paul] was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,* <sup>20</sup> *but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should REPENT and turn to God, PERFORMING DEEDS in keeping with their repentance.* – **Acts 26:19-20 (ESV)**
- ◆ Getting ‘saved’ is so much more than just praying a little prayer – it centers on repentance, which means dying to self (Lk 9:23; Rom 8:13), giving up one’s love for the world (James 4:4-5; 1 Jn 2:15), giving up wicked pleasures (1 Pet 1:14-16) and following Christ into His sufferings (Rom 8:17). People who do not repent in this way are not saved, because that *is* what salvation is. People need to be told all of this BEFORE they convert, otherwise their ‘conversion’ may end up being *just* a prayer, rather than a changed life; a temporary fad to be picked up and left when the going gets tough. Of course, telling people what salvation actually is, before asking them to get ‘saved,’ will probably mean that less people will get ‘saved’ at the rallies – but that seems like a small price to pay for also ensuring that less people are surprised to find they actually *aren’t* saved on the Day of Judgment (Matt 7:21-23).

## Chapter 2 - The impossibility of actually doing away with the Old Testament Law (and the absurdity of trying to).

- Antinomians are adamant about the fact that Christians are no longer obligated to obey the Law, as revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. They make statements like: ‘Christians are no longer under the Law;’ ‘The New Covenant has cancelled the Old;’ etc., etc.. Of course, as has been made clear in this paper, we agree with them that there are *parts* of the Law which Christians are no longer obligated to follow, mainly the Ceremonial laws (see Part 2 of this paper), but it is doubtful that Antinomians actually know what they are saying when they say that Christians are not obligated to obey *any* of the Old Testament Law, including the Moral Law. Are they thus teaching that Christians are not obligated to follow such Old Testament commands as ‘do not murder’ (Deut 5:17), ‘do not commit adultery’ (Deut 5:18) and ‘do not commit bestiality’ (Lev 18:23)? How awful!
- Of course, most Antinomians who are faced with this fact will acknowledge the absurdity of such a teaching, and I do not know of any Antinomians who believe that it is okay for Christians to commit murder, adultery, bestiality, etc.. How then can they say that Christians are not obligated to obey the Old Testament Law, if on the other hand they also say that Christians *are* obligated to not murder, not commit adultery, not commit bestiality, etc.? Do you see the self-contradiction of the Antinomian position? They are talking out of both sides of their mouth. Antinomians are blind to this self-contradiction because of three clever diversions routinely spouted by their teachers. The three diversions are as follows:
  1. Christians are no longer under the Old Testament Law, but under the ‘Law of Love’ (also known as the ‘Law of Christ’);
  2. Christians are only bound by laws that are explicitly stated in the New Testament;
  3. Though Christians *should* obey the Moral laws, they won’t/can’t ever be judged by God for disobeying those laws.
- In detail:
  1. ***Antinomian Diversion #1: Christians are no longer under the Old Testament Law, but under the ‘Law of Love’ (also known as the ‘Law of Christ’).***
    - ◇ One of the primary defenses used by Antinomians to defend their position goes as follows: ‘Believers are no longer under the Law of Moses but are now under the ‘Law of Love.’<sup>60</sup> But this leads to an absurdity: Antinomians start out by saying that Christians are not ‘under law,’ in the sense that they no longer have to obey rules and regulations such as ‘do not murder,’ ‘do not commit adultery’ and ‘do not commit bestiality;’ but now they change tack and argue the exact opposite point, saying that Christians *DO* have to obey such rules and regulations, just with a different name – the ‘Law of Christ.’ All these Antinomians have done is change the label from the Law of *Moses* to the Law of *Christ*, but the rules are the same under both! In which case Christians *are* ‘under law’ – the Law of Christ – which is still made up of the same moral commands found in the Old Testament.
    - ◇ It is right here that the Antinomian will be tempted to object, “The Gospel is not about rules, it’s about LOVE.” This fuzzy statement sounds wonderful, but what does it actually mean? What does it mean to say that a Christian is obligated to obey the New Testament injunction to ‘love his neighbor as himself,’ but not obligated to obey the Old Testament injunctions to not murder (Deut 5:17) and to not put a stumbling block in front of a blind man (Lev 19:14)? The general command to ‘love one another’ does not cancel out the specific commands which define what it means to love another person! And as has been proven repeatedly in this paper, the New Testament consistently teaches that the moral commands contained in the Old Testament define what it means to love others (Matt 22:36-40; Matt 7:12; Mk 12:29-31; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8). In other words, if Antinomians concede that Christians *are* obligated to obey what they call the ‘Law of Christ,’ or the ‘Law of Love’ they are in fact conceding that Christians *are* obligated to continue obeying the moral laws contained in the Old

---

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, the Antinomian position as stated by Wayne House and Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1988), 113-115.

Testament code, since the New Testament repeatedly teaches that those Old Testament laws define what love is.

## 2. **Antinomian Diversion #2: Christians are only bound by laws that are restated in the New Testament.**

- ◇ Another diversion used by Antinomians to hide the fact that it is actually impossible to do away with the Law, without simultaneously promoting a system of immorality and anarchy, is to state that believers do not have to obey any commandment in the Old Testament Law except ones that are explicitly upheld or restated in the *New Testament*. But here they are committing the same absurdity that we caught them at in the previous point, namely this: Antinomians start out by saying that Christians are not ‘under law,’ in the sense that they no longer have to obey any of the rules and regulations from the Old Testament, including such commands as ‘do not murder,’ ‘do not commit adultery’ and ‘do not commit bestiality;’ but now they change tack and argue the exact opposite point, saying that Christians *DO* have to obey such rules and regulations, so long as they appear in the *New Testament*. All these Antinomians have done is change the Law that Christians are under, from the *Old Testament* Law to the *New Testament* Law, but the rules are the same under both! In which case Christians *are* ‘under law’ – the *New Testament* Law – which is still made up of basically the same moral commands found in the Old Testament. It is important to realize here as well that the *New Testament* explicitly repeats most of the Moral commands found in the Old Testament (see footnote below),<sup>61</sup> so it is not as though the *New Testament* is more lenient than the Old with regards to moral issues.
- ◇ Furthermore this view still has serious problems: for example, is bestiality still a sin? Almost every Christian would answer ‘yes.’ The Old Testament Law clearly states that it is in Leviticus 20:15-16, but this command is nowhere repeated or explicitly upheld in the *New Testament*. So then, if one operates on the assumption that only commandments which have been explicitly upheld or restated in the *New Testament* are binding on Christians today, then bestiality should not be considered a sinful act by modern-day believers. Such a conclusion is obnoxious and obviously wrong!

Or consider another example: Is it wrong to curse a deaf person or to trip up a blind person? The Law in the Old Testament clearly says that it is: “*You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord*”(Lev 19:14 ESV). Another Old Testament Law passage says “*Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road*”(Deut 27:18 ESV). But neither of these commandments is explicitly upheld or repeated in the *New Testament*. Of course, Antinomian (anti-Law) proponents will vociferously argue that this is a misrepresentation of their position and that obviously such actions as cursing the deaf, and tripping and misleading the blind are sinful.

On what basis, though, do they make this claim, since they consider all of the Old Testament laws to be cancelled unless expressly repeated in the *New Testament*? On the basis, they may answer, of the ‘law of love,’ which is the guiding law of the *New Covenant*. But how, exactly, do they define this thing called ‘love?’ Do they define love by the principle “Do unto others what you would have them do unto you”? If so, then according to Jesus the most loving thing anyone can do is to obey *all* of the commands in the Old Testament Law, since that’s what those commandments are all about (Matt 7:12). As discussed earlier, Paul clearly instructs believers to obey all the commands of the Law in order to love people better (Rom 13:8-10; see also Rom 3:31). If the Antinomian propagates of our day truly are sincere in their desire to see Christians following the ‘law of love,’ they should stop teaching them that the commands of the Old Testament Law have been cancelled since all of those laws can be summed up by saying, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:36-40; Gal 5:14).

---

<sup>61</sup> The *New Testament* is not more lenient than the Old Testament with regards to moral issues: For example consider Jesus’ teaching on adultery – the Old Testament merely said ‘do not commit adultery,’ but Jesus stated that even *looking* at a woman lustfully was adultery (Matt 5:27-30). Or how about murder? The Old Testament merely said ‘do not murder,’ but Jesus stated that anyone who harbours anger in his heart is a murderer (Matt 5:21-22). And whereas the Old Testament prescribed the death penalty for murder, Jesus prescribed Hell (Matt 5:22)! The *New Testament* is not more lenient on moral issues than the Old Testament, if anything it is more severe (see also Gal 5:19-21; 1 John 3:15; etc., etc.).

Once a person accepts the New Testament teaching that the Old Testament laws are simply specific stipulations showing us *how* to love God and people better, it quickly becomes obvious that the statement, ‘The law of love has cancelled out the Old Testament Law’ is a contradiction. How can the general ‘law of love’ cancel out the specific laws which define love? It makes no sense to say that we must follow the general New Testament command to ‘love our neighbors as ourselves’ (Matt 22:39), but that it is unimportant whether I obey the specific Old Testament stipulation not to place a stumbling block before a blind man (Lev 19:14). To trip the blind man is precisely to show a lack of love.

3. ***Antinomian Diversion #3: Christians should obey the Moral laws, but they don’t need to worry about being judged by God when they disobey.***

- ◇ I believe that after examining options #1 and #2 above, most Antinomians will concede that Christians *do* still need to abide by the moral commandments found in the Old Testament; any other argument ends in absurdity. Which brings us to option #3, and what I believe is the actual heart of the Antinomian position. I think that when Antinomians state that Christians are ‘free’ from any obligation to the Law, what they really mean is the following: though Christians *should*, ideally, follow the moral commandments contained within the Old Testament Law, they need not worry about God judging them (or getting angry with them) when they disobey and break those commandments. This is extremely unbiblical because even a cursory reading of Scripture provides ample testimony that Christians since Christ’s death have run afoul of God’s wrath, and that God still judges disobedience in Christians.
- ◇ ***No more judgment for God’s people?*** Consider how Antinomian teaching on this point contradicts the plain teaching of Scripture (here are just 5 passages):
  - a) *For it is time for JUDGMENT to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us [believers], what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> And “if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” – **1 Pet 4:17-18 (ESV)***
  - b) *For if we [believers] go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth [after becoming Christians], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of JUDGMENT, and a FURY of fire that will consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.”[believers] <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. – **Heb 10:26-31 (ESV)***
  - c) *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself [look for sin], then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks JUDGMENT on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died [God’s judgment today can even include killing believers!]. <sup>31</sup> But IF we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But WHEN we [believers] are JUDGED by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world [God judges us and disciplines us, sometimes severely, in order to keep us from Hell]. – **1 Cor 11:27-32 (ESV)***
  - d) ***Ananias and Sapphira.*** Consider also the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); they lied to Peter, separately, about the percentage of their offering for the church – and God killed them both, in turn, for this lie! The end result was that ‘great fear’ came upon the church (v. 6, 11). What are Antinomians to make of this passage? If there is no more judgment for believers because of the cross, how is it that Ananias and Sapphira (believers!) could be killed by God for telling a lie, a short time *after* Jesus’ death and resurrection?

e) **Jesus' Parable of the unforgiving servant.** Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."<sup>23</sup> "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants."<sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.<sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.<sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'<sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.<sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'<sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'<sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.<sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.<sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.<sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'<sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.<sup>35</sup> So ALSO my heavenly Father will do to every one of you [speaking to believers], IF you do not forgive your brother from your heart." – **Matt 18:21-35 (ESV)**

- ◆ This parable clearly teaches that believers who refuse to do right will face judgment and wrath from God. The first part of the parable pictures salvation: a servant owes a king far more than he can pay back (v.24-25), so he begs for mercy from the king, who promptly forgives all of his debts (v. 26-27). This is a beautiful picture of redemption in Christ: we come to God with a sin-debt that is impossible for us to pay, so we beg Him for mercy and He forgives us our debt – and at that point we are 'saved.'
- ◆ But the parable doesn't end there. The first servant has had all his debts forgiven, which according to the Antinomian understanding of salvation means all of his future debts (ie. sins) are forgiven too, regardless of whether he confesses or repents. Wrong! The parable goes on to tell of how the newly forgiven servant (ie. Christian) then refuses to forgive another servant of a much smaller debt (v. 29-30). When the king (who represents God in this parable) hears about what has happened he is furious (v.31-32) and calls the once-forgiven servant to account, *erasing* his original forgiveness and punishing him in jail (v. 33), which represents Hell.
- ◇ Here the Antinomian may protest, "But did not Jesus satisfy God's wrath at the cross?" Yes He did (Rom 3:23-26; 5:9; Eph 2:13); the problem arises when Antinomians twist that phrase to mean something the Bible doesn't teach. That Jesus satisfied God's wrath on the cross DOES NOT mean that all of a Christian's future sins are automatically forgiven regardless of whether or not they confess and repent of them; it also does not mean that God won't hold His people accountable for their actions on Judgment Day, nor that He won't punish and judge His people for sinful living – the Bible is very clear that He will indeed do all of those things.
- ◇ Here is what Jesus satisfying God's wrath on the cross DOES mean: Jesus paid for all of your sin-debts, and took all of the punishment for your sins, IF you truly repent of those deeds (with remorse) and turn from them. But repentance is not a one-time event that is good for all time into the future: if a truly repentant person at some point goes back to their wicked ways, they cease to walk in Jesus' forgiveness, and God's wrath comes on them again in all its fury (Heb 10:26-31; Eze 18:21-32; 33:12-20; Matt 18:21-35). This is why the Antinomian teachings of our day are so dangerous: by focusing (unbiblically) only on God's Forgiveness, and not on His Wrath and Holiness, they are encouraging Christians to live with a false sense of security with regards to the consequences of sin in their lives. This is in direct contrast to the teaching of the New Testament, which regularly admonishes believers everywhere to work out their salvation with 'fear' and 'trembling' (Phil 2:12) and to avoid sin because of fear of judgment (Lk 12:4-5; Rom 11:20-22; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Tim 5:20; 1 Pet 1:17; Jude 1:23).

◇ The words of the apostle Paul are very appropriate here, concerning the biblical relationship between a believer's confidence in God's promises and fear of God's wrath against sin: "*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves [get rid of sin] from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the FEAR of God*" (2 Cor 7:1 ESV). Believers today should be confident in God's promises AND fearful of the consequences of turning away from those promises. Both the confidence and the *fear* are needed (see also Prov 16:6); according to Scripture fear is an important motivator that helps us move towards holiness. Antinomians are often horrified when someone suggests that a believer should have fear about anything. Let me clarify: I am not here proposing that believers live in fear, only that they fear God's wrath and the consequences of sinning. A good analogy would be a hot oven element: I don't live my life in fear of the oven in my kitchen, but I am most definitely afraid of touching an oven element when it's hot – and that fear keeps me from doing such a stupid thing, which, in turn, saves me from serious injury. Same with the fear of God: the Bible does not teach believers to live their lives being scared of God – but we should most definitely fear the awful consequences of sinning and running afoul of God's wrath. Such a fear will keep a person safe!

- **Conclusion to this chapter:** We have found in this chapter that it is impossible for Antinomians to do away with the Christian's obligation to obey the moral commandments found in the Old Testament:
  1. If they say that those commands have been replaced by some vague and fuzzy 'Law of Love' (or 'Law of Christ') they end up with an absurdity, right back where they started;
  2. If they say that the Old Testament Moral Law has been replaced with the New Testament Law they end up with another absurdity, right back where they started;
  3. If they say that the Old Testament Moral Law is a guideline which Christians *should* follow, but for disobedience of which God will not enforce penalties, they run afoul of the clear teaching of Scripture which emphatically and repeatedly teaches that God *does* judge Christians for disobedience.
- Therefore, Christians are under obligation to obey the Moral Law, as revealed in the Old Testament, contrary to Antinomian doctrine.

### Chapter 3 - There is no such thing as a believer being 'holy in Christ' apart from being holy in his own actions.

- If there is a foundational tenet that Antinomians are attached to, it is this: Jesus' death on the cross means that believers are now 'holy in Christ.' What they mean by this is that, the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ he (or she) is somehow literally given Christ's own actual holiness – *permanently* – so that from that time on, no matter what he does, even if he should later choose to walk in worldliness, apathy and blatant sin, God continues to see him as perfectly holy the entire time. Antinomians call this being 'holy in Christ,' and what it means is that holiness is no longer tied to a believer's behavior but rather to some mystical (and theoretical) union with Christ. Though it is true that there are godly people who adhere to this doctrine, such people maintain their godliness *in spite* of this doctrine, not because of it. This kind of doctrine can only act as a fuel for immoral behavior, since in it immoral behavior does nothing to a person's standing with God – whether a believer indulges the flesh or the Spirit, either way they are 'holy' in God's eyes. So why be holy? What moral safeguards are left for the believer who struggles to resist the temptations of his flesh? Unfortunately this doctrine is no longer just limited to Antinomians and has, in fact, crept into much of the rest of the Evangelical Church as well. So pervasive is it that a large portion of modern-day church-goers think it heretical to even challenge the statement that they are 'holy in Christ.'
- But challenge it I will. I will challenge this doctrine in the rest of this chapter, through the following four points: (1) The Bible nowhere states that believers are 'holy in Christ;' (2) The phrase 'in Christ' is just the apostle Paul's way of saying 'Christian;' (3) The Bible clearly documents many instances where God views Christians as un-holy; and (4) The idea of Christ's holy character being literally imputed onto a believer is logical nonsense.

#### 1. The Bible nowhere states that believers are permanently and presently 'holy in Christ.'

- ◇ The phrase 'in Christ' occurs 95 times in the New Testament, not one of which states either that believers are 'righteous in Christ,' or that they are 'holy in Christ.' This may come as a rude shock to all those who so dogmatically hold to the doctrine. The closest the New Testament ever gets to stating that believers are 'holy in Christ' comes in four passages: Ephesians 1:4, Colossians 1:21-24, 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. And what you will soon see in these passages is that the Bible's promise of holiness for believers is a *future promise*, one which will not be consummated until the Resurrection. Let us look at each of the four passages in turn:
  - a) **Ephesians 1:3-4 (ESV)** – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us IN CHRIST with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us IN HIM before the foundation of the world, that we SHOULD be holy and blameless before him.*
    - ◆ The first thing to notice in this passage is that it nowhere states that believers are 'holy in Christ.' The only two things that actually are stated for believers 'in Christ,' are simply these: (1) that God has BLESSED Christians 'in Christ' (how true!), and (2) that God CHOSE us 'in' Christ 'before the foundation of the world.'
    - ◆ When this passage finally does talk about holiness and blamelessness, it only states that Christians 'SHOULD be holy and blameless before [Christ]' not that they actually are. With regards to holiness, Paul is not here stating something that *is*, but rather promising something that *will be*, in the future, when Jesus returns and we are transformed to 'be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is' (1 John 3:2). Any other interpretation reads things into this passage that aren't there, and ignores the clear teaching of 1 John 3:2 that Christians will not become like Jesus until He appears again at His Second Coming.
  - b) **Colossians 1:21-23 (ESV)** – *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> IF indeed you CONTINUE in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.*
    - ◆ Here is another favorite passage with Antinomians for teaching that believers are already holy and blameless 'in Christ,' *present tense*. But once again, notice that the passage does not actually teach such a

thing – in fact, it clearly teaches that our holiness is a *future* event. Think about the statement ‘in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.’ Have you been presented to God yet? No – that is a future event which won’t happen until Jesus returns and believers are resurrected to each stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10). That this event (being presented holy and blameless to God) is still in the future is proven by the statement which immediately follows it; ‘*if* indeed you *continue*.’ So there is an ‘if’ to being presented ‘holy and blameless’ to God; and the ‘if’ is – Will you ‘*continue* in the faith’ until the end of your life? If believers were already holy and blameless in Christ – present tense – there would be no ‘if,’ since it would already be an established fact. But there *is* and ‘if,’ which proves once again that being holy and blameless before God is a future event based on how we finish our life of faith.

- ◆ One further note: notice again the complete absence of the phrase ‘holy *in* Christ’ in this passage. It simply doesn’t exist in Scripture. Nobody is holy *in* Christ, though according to this passage, someday in the future believers who *finish* their lives well will be presented holy ‘*before*’ God, by Christ, as the reward for their faithfulness.

c) **1 Corinthians 1:2 (ESV)** – *To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified IN CHRIST JESUS, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours . . .*

- ◆ It is strange that Antinomians use this passage to defend their doctrine since they are the ones who usually draw such a hard line between justification and sanctification. In the Antinomian system *justification* is considered finished for the believer, once and for all, at the moment of conversion; it is the thing that makes a believer ‘holy’ in God’s sight forevermore, regardless of the person’s actions. *Sanctification* however, in the Antinomian system, is the ongoing, unfinished and less important process of a believer’s character and behavior actually being improved (hopefully!) over the course of his lifetime. Thus, I am puzzled with Antinomian use of this passage as a defense of their position, since this passage neither says that believers are ‘holy in Christ’ nor that believers have been ‘justified in Christ,’ but rather, states only that the Corinthian believers had been ‘*sanctified* in Christ.’
- ◆ Secondly, in order to prove their doctrine Antinomians must do more than simply show verses which speak of justification, sanctification or holiness in the past tense; what they must do is prove that such statements are ongoing and permanent *regardless of a Christian’s future choices and behavior*. Everyone in Christendom, including the leadership here at Southland Community Church, agrees that anyone who is a true believer was at one point justified and forgiven in God’s sight, *past tense*. This is beyond dispute, since at the point of conversion all of the new believer’s *past* sins are forgiven and washed away. What we disagree about is whether that standing with God is permanent, regardless of the person’s *future* choices.
- ◆ Thus, we can all agree about this passage that at one point in time Jesus had sanctified the Corinthian Christians – at the point when they gave their lives to Him. But this does not in any way imply that all believers everywhere are *permanently* holy in God’s eyes even if, after conversion, they later consciously disobey Him and choose to live in worldliness and sin. Such an interpretation not only is not taught in the above passage, it leads to many contradictions with other clear statements by Paul that believers *can* lose their standing with God if they do not *continue* walking in obedience to Christ (abiding). I will show many examples of this in the second part of this chapter, but here are just two:
  - 1) *So do not become proud, but fear.* <sup>21</sup> *For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare YOU [believers].* <sup>22</sup> *Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided [if!] you CONTINUE in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.* <sup>23</sup> *And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.* <sup>24</sup> *For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to*

*nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. – Romans 11:20-24 (ESV)*

- This one passage completely refutes the idea that believers have a permanent and unchangeable standing of holiness in God’s eyes, regardless of obedience and behavior.

2) *For if we [believers – the author of Hebrews includes himself, here] go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup> *Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.* <sup>29</sup> *How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?* <sup>30</sup> *For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.”* <sup>31</sup> *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. – Hebrews 10:26-31 (ESV)**

- This passage clearly teaches that believers can lose their standing with God, and even come to be punished with God’s ‘adversaries’ (v. 27), if they deliberately ‘go on sinning’ after conversion.

d) **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)** – *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we MIGHT BECOME the righteousness of God.*

- ◆ Here is a third passage commonly used by Antinomians to teach that believers are permanently holy in Christ *right now*. Read the passage for yourself, however; does it teach that in Christ Christians already *are* (present tense) the righteousness of God? No – it teaches that in Christ we ‘might BECOME’ the righteousness of God, which again is a *future* promise. Notice the word ‘might’ as well; becoming the righteousness of God is no sure thing – it is based on each Christian’s ongoing choices and responses to God throughout the course of their lifetime.

## 2. The phrase ‘in Christ’ is basically just the apostle Paul’s way of saying ‘Christian.’

- ◇ Whenever Antinomians encounter the phrase ‘in Christ’ in their reading of the New Testament, they understand it to mean some kind of mystical union with Christ, whereby God no longer sees them as they really are, but rather looks at them *through* Jesus, so that somehow, they *look* to God as though they have all of Jesus’ characteristics – even when they don’t. The theory is that Jesus Christ is standing today in the presence of the Father as a specimen and representative of glorified humanity, and that faith in Him so intimately unites us with Him, that all His personal excellencies become ours in such a sense as to excuse us even if we lack them. It is said that the first act of faith eternally incorporates us into the glorified person of Christ, so that whatever sin we may commit afterwards we incur no condemnation. The favorite proof-text of this bit of rank Antinomianism is Romans 8:1 *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (ESV). In such a doctrine people can be ‘in Christ,’ without being ‘new creatures, and ‘new creatures’ without casting ‘old things’ away. They may also be God’s children without bearing God’s image; and be considered as ‘born of the Spirit’ without actually having to bear ‘the fruit of the Spirit.’ It is certain that such a doctrine is not taught in Scripture.
- ◇ Let us now further examine this phrase ‘in Christ.’ As I stated before, there are 95 occurrences of the phrase in the New Testament, as well as a handful of its variant ‘in the Lord.’ In addition to these there are 100 occurrences of the phrase ‘in Him’ (referring to Christ), though only a handful of them carry the sense of a believer being incorporated into the person of Christ, most of the rest occurring randomly in every-day sentences such as: *“A third time [Pilate] said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him”* (Lk 23:22 ESV); and *“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him”* (John 2:11 ESV). Clearly passages like these have no bearing on this discussion, as they have nothing to do with the incorporation of believers into Christ’s person. We can also weed out a number of the ‘in Christ’ and ‘in the Lord’ phrases, for the same reason; certainly verses like

Acts 24:24, “After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus” (ESV), do not have anything to do with this discussion about being incorporated into Christ.

- ◇ After all the ‘weeding out’ is done, we are left with 48 passages of Scripture which make use of the phrase ‘in Christ’ (in one of its 3 forms – ‘in Him,’ ‘in the Lord,’ or ‘in Christ’) in a way that could suggest to Antinomians incorporation into Christ’s person. Let us now examine this phrase in more depth. Here are 5 points to consider:
- a) **Point #1: The phrase ‘in Christ’ is found exclusively in Paul’s letters, with only one exception.** This should be our first warning that something is not right with the doctrine of holiness-in-Christ, as any important doctrine should find much to commend it *across* the entire spectrum of the New Testament.
- ◆ If we look at the one exception which falls outside of Paul’s writings, 1 Peter 3:16, we find a passage that teaches nothing like what Antinomians are teaching. Let Peter speak for himself: “Have no fear of them [evil people], nor be troubled,<sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,<sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior IN CHRIST may be put to shame.<sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for DOING good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.” – **1 Pet 3:14-17 (ESV)** Note that when Peter here talks about good behaviour ‘in Christ’ (v. 16) he is not talking about *Christ’s* good behaviour being credited to a believer who has done nothing (which is what Antinomians take ‘in Christ’ to mean). Rather, he is explicitly exhorting Christians to physically *do good things themselves* (‘YOUR good behaviour’), as evidenced by the next verse ‘for it is better to suffer for *DOING* good’ (v. 17). It is obvious to all who read this passage that the phrase ‘in Christ’ does not here mean that Christ does something which you get credit for, even though you did nothing, but rather, that Christians should do good works *in Christ’s name* (ie. for Christ’s glory) and *with His help* (ie. by His power).
- b) **Point #2: Paul never says that Christians are incorporated into the actual person of Jesus, as He is careful to only use one of Jesus’ titles – ‘Christ’ or ‘Lord’ – when speaking of a believer’s being ‘in Christ.’** This is significant because if, as Antinomians teach, believers are literally brought into a union with the actual person of Jesus so literal and powerful that God actually sees believers as having Jesus’ very character traits, then we would expect Paul to say somewhere that believers are actually incorporated into the literal person of Jesus (ie. ‘in Jesus’). But he doesn’t; he only ever speaks of believers being ‘in Christ’ or ‘in the Lord.’ The fact that he only speaks of Christians being incorporated into one of Jesus’ *titles* (‘Christ’ or ‘Lord’) implies that the phrase has something to do with a Christian’s intimate relationship with Jesus’ *work*, rather than some mystical union whereby Christians become incorporated into the actual, literal person of Jesus. This strongly suggests that the phrase ‘in Christ’ carries such meanings as: ‘with Jesus’ help,’ ‘by Jesus’ power,’ ‘in fellowship with Jesus,’ ‘in Jesus’ Name,’ ‘on Jesus’ side,’ ‘carrying out Jesus’ agenda,’ ‘reflecting Jesus’ character,’ etc., etc., NOT that we are literally inside of Jesus so that God can’t even see our actual character and behavior, being only able to see Jesus.
- c) **Point #3: ‘In Christ’ means ‘in relationship with Christ,’ NOT ‘inside-of-Jesus-so-that-God-sees-us-as-having-Jesus’-character-instead-of-our-own.’**
- ◆ Let me now prove, from Scripture, that ‘in Christ’ cannot mean that believers are so literally incorporated into the person of Jesus that God only sees them, all the time, as having Jesus’ character instead of their own. Instead, as will be shown, ‘in Christ’ often means something more along the lines of ‘in relationship with Christ.’
    - 1) *But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as INFANTS in Christ.* – **1 Cor 3:1 (ESV)**

- According to Antinomians being ‘in Christ’ means that God sees us as having Jesus’ traits instead of our own. In that case, how do they make sense of this passage?!? Because in this passage Paul rebukes the Corinthians for being ‘INFANTS in Christ.’ According to the rules of Antinomian interpretation (if Antinomians are consistent), Paul is here saying that Jesus is a baby (‘infant’), because the Corinthians are ‘infants in Christ,’ and God only sees Christians as having Jesus’ qualities.
  - Think about this: this is just the logical conclusion of where Antinomian interpretation of the phrase ‘in Christ’ ends up. If ‘holy in Christ’<sup>62</sup> means to an Antinomian that, *Jesus-is-holy-therefore-we-are-holy-inside-of-Him*, then this passage means that Jesus is a baby, because the Corinthians were babies ‘in Christ.’ Ridiculous!!
  - What this passage teaches is obvious – Paul was upset with the Corinthians because they were immature (‘infants’) in their *relationship* with Christ. That’s what being ‘in Christ’ means in this passage (and many others) – having a relationship with Jesus.
- 2) *Epaphras, my FELLOW PRISONER in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. – Philemon 1:23-24 (ESV)*
- By the same logic as above. If ‘holy in Christ’ means to Antinomians that, *Jesus-is-holy-therefore-we-are-holy-inside-of-Him*, then this passage means that Jesus is a prisoner, because Epaphras (a co-worker and friend of Paul) was a ‘prisoner IN Christ.’ Ridiculous! Again, the meaning of ‘in Christ’ in this passage is clear – Epaphras was a prisoner ‘in Christ’ in the sense that he was a prisoner because of his *relationship* with Christ; he was in prison for preaching the Good News about Jesus. That’s the sense of ‘in Christ,’ NOT some mystical union with Jesus whereby God can only see Jesus’ characteristics when He looks at us.
- 3) *Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. – Romans 16:10 (ESV)*
- According to the Antinomian interpretation of ‘in Christ,’ this statement of Paul’s is meaningless since EVERY person who believes in Jesus is approved ‘in Christ.’ Remember that in the Antinomian system any person who has *once* believed in Jesus will be *eternally* approved by God – no matter if he later chooses to live in blatant sin – since from the moment he first believes God only sees him as having Jesus’ traits (instead of his own), from that time on.
  - In the Antinomian system, then, Paul’s observation here about Apelles being ‘approved in Christ’ is pointless, since *everyone* who is a Christian is ‘approved in Christ.’ It would be somewhat equivalent to writing a letter to a church and telling them to greet so-and-so because he is a human being. Well of course he’s a human being!
  - This line is obviously meant by Paul to be an endorsement to the church in Rome for a man named ‘Apelles.’ Paul endorses Apelles as being a person who has proven himself in his maturity and walk with the Lord. Once again we see that the phrase ‘in Christ’ denotes a relationship with Jesus, not some mystical union whereby Jesus’ characteristics get transposed over top of the believer’s; it is *Apelles* Paul is complimenting here, not Jesus.

---

<sup>62</sup> Recall that the phrase ‘holy in Christ’ does not actually occur in the Bible! But we here humour Antinomians in order to show the logical bankruptcy of their position.