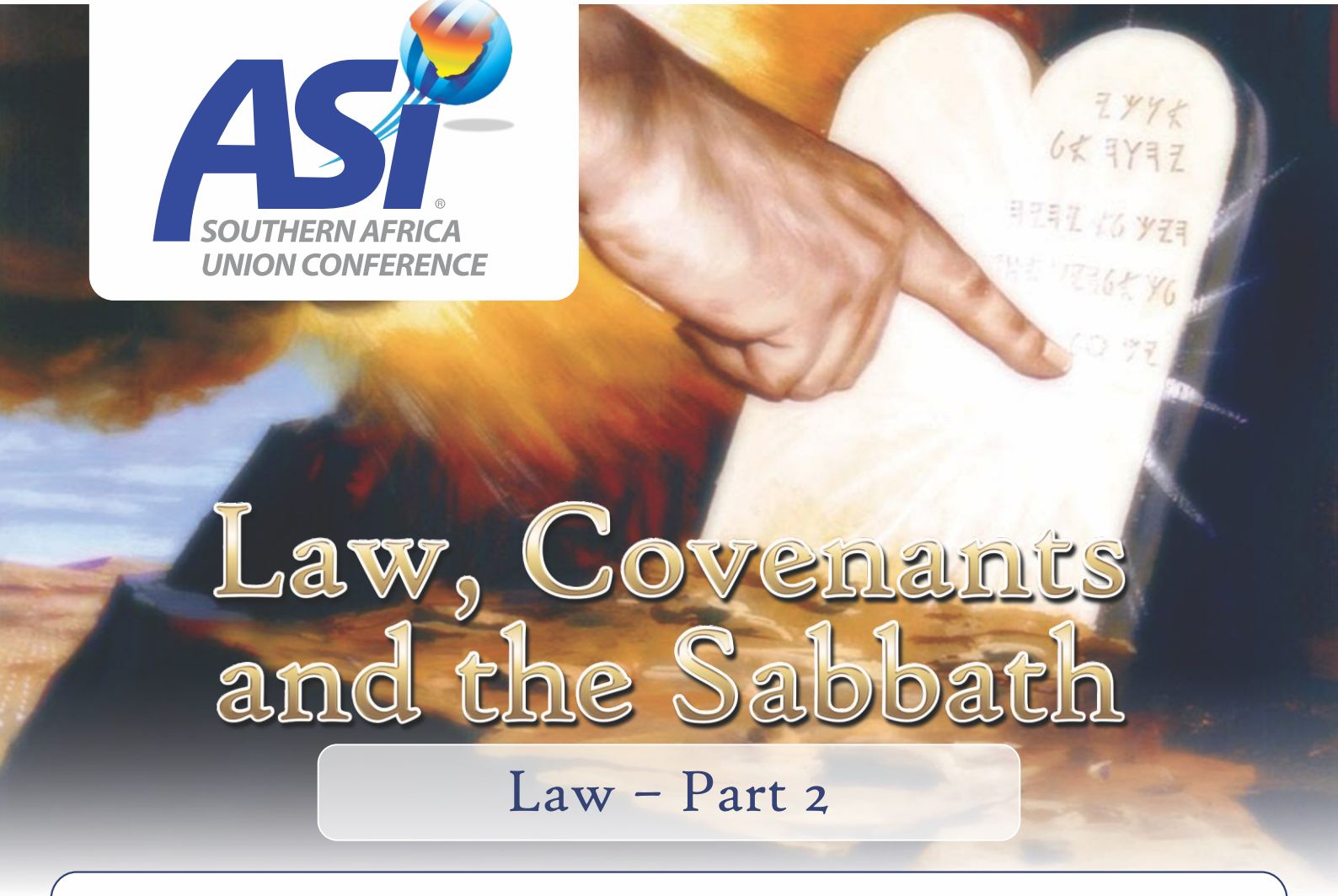
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Law, Covenants and the Sabbath

Law – Part 2

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Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction in Law – Part 1, this section takes a more detailed look at those 'problematic' passages which many people quote in favour of the law's abolishment – such as 'not under law, but under grace,' 'law nailed to the cross,' 'law not based on faith,' 'Christ, the end of the law,' 'redeemed from the curse of the law,' 'law for sinners only,' etc.

This study will explore what the Bible actually says, by looking at the context of each passage and the broader input from the rest of Scripture. It demands careful search, so get out your Bible and have your marking pens ready! A thorough understanding of these passages will prove to be a great blessing to you personally, and equip you to be an effective witness on this vital subject.

LAW – Part 2

Difference Between God's Eternal Moral Law and the Ceremonial Laws[A]

Moral Law	Ceremonial Laws
• Called the 'royal law,' 'the law of liberty' (James 2:8, 12)	• Called the 'law of commandments contained in ordinances,' 'fleshly ordinances' (Eph. 2:15; Heb. 9:10). Sometimes referred to as the 'Law of Moses' (Luke 2:22; 1 Cor. 9:9)
• Spoken by God Himself (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:22)	• Given to Moses to speak to the people (Lev. 1:1-3; Ex. 24:3)
• Written by God's own finger on stone (Ex. 31:18; 32:16)	• Written by Moses in the 'Book of the Law' (Deut. 31:9, 24; 2 Chron. 35:12)
• Placed inside the Ark (Ex. 40:20; Deut. 10:1-5; 1 Kings 8:9)	• Placed beside the Ark (Deut. 31:24-26)
• Existed before sin (Ps 119:160; 1 John 3:8 [if the devil sinned from the beginning, and there cannot be no sin where there is no law (Rom. 5:13), then it means God's law had to be from the beginning]	• Given after man had sinned (Heb. 5:1; 8:4). Priests, who offered sacrifices on behalf of the people, were only required ***after*** man had sinned.
• *Purpose:* to reveal sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7)	• *Purpose:* To reveal the remedy for sin (Lev. 6:6, 7 cf. John 1:29)
• Complete, holy, just, good, perfect (Deut. 5:22; Rom. 7:12; James 1:25)	• Subject to change, 'made nothing perfect' (Heb. 7:12, 18, 19)
• Is eternal (Deut. 5:29 – God wishes people to "ALWAYS keep ALL" His commandments)	• Was temporary (Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:13; Dan. 9:27). It came to an end at the Cross.

Law Nailed to the Cross?

Col. 2:13, 14 – "[13] When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, [14] having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross."

- In Col. 2 Paul describes the wonder of the salvation that Christ has made possible for the Colossians [and obviously the whole human race]. Buried in baptism with Him, they were also circumcised in Christ (vss. 11, 12). They had been "dead in trespasses" and "uncircumcision," but God had made them alive; He had forgiven their sins. Also He had cancelled the "written code, with its regulations." He had done this figuratively by "nailing it to the cross" (verses 13, 14). Because of Christ's triumphs over the evil powers, the Colossians were now free to enjoy the blessings of salvation (verse 15).[B]
- In Col. 2:14 it speaks about a "written code with its regulations." What does this phrase mean?
  - "written code" is simply a reference to a [handwritten] manuscript.[C]
  - "with its regulations." The word for 'regulations' (Greek, *dogma*; sometimes translated as 'ordinances') is also used in Eph. 2:15. Various researchers believe that the use of 'dogma' in Eph. 2:15 throws light on its use in Col. 2:14.[D]
  - In Eph 2:14, 15 (*see fuller commentary below*) the *regulations* have to do with ritual that separated Jews from Gentiles, especially circumcision. The context of Col. 2:14 indicates regulations having to do with ceremonial celebrations and food offerings (v. 16). In both cases *'dogma'* refers to the Jewish ceremonial law.

- Thus the ceremonial system, which pointed forward to Christ, was nailed to the Cross (vs. 14). No longer was it necessary to keep these ceremonies, with their "complex requirements regarding food and drink offerings, celebrations of various festivals (Passover, Pentecost, etc.), new moons or ceremonial sabbaths (Col. 2:16 cf. Heb. 9:10) which were only a 'shadow of things to come' (Col. 2:17)."[E]
- Col. 2:14 mentions that the ceremonial system was 'against' and 'opposed to' both Jew and Gentile ['us']. How could this be?
  - Before we can answer this question, we have to note that the ceremonial system as God originally gave it, did not create this enmity and opposition. "It was the interpretation the Jews placed upon it, the additions they made to it, and the exclusive and hostile attitudes they adopted as a result"[F] that caused this opposition.
  - Thus the ceremonial system was *against* and *opposed* to both Jew and Gentile in the following ways:
    - **Jew:** it created pride and exclusivism (because they felt they alone were God's chosen ones); it prevented them from evangelising the 'unclean' Gentiles; it was also used legalistically as a means of salvation (like they did with God's other laws)
    - **Gentile:** it prevented the Gentiles from accepting salvation and the worship of the true God (because of the Jewish attitudes)
- Thus Paul in Col. 2:13-14 is saying: "You were dead in your sins while following the carnal nature, but when you accepted Christ you become alive, for He had forgiven your sins. When He died, he wiped out the handwritten document of regulations (a reference to the ceremonial law) which stood contrary to us and was opposed to us (because of the Jewish exclusive and hostile attitudes that accompanied it), doing away with it at His death."
- It is critical to note that Christ could not have nailed the Ten Commandments to the Cross. If He did it would mean that since the Cross mankind had been freed from the Law and thus given license to steal, lie, disobey their parents, blaspheme, commit adultery, kill, etc. This runs contrary to all of Scripture.

Ceremonial Laws Abolished, But Not Moral Law

The following verse emphasizes the previous point made:

- 1 Cor. 7:19 (NRSV) – "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything."
- Here Paul makes it emphatically clear that the moral law was not abrogated. When speaking of the end of circumcision [which was part of the ceremonial system] he was careful to add, "but the keeping of the commandments of God is everything"

Which commandments did Christ abolish in His flesh?[G]

Eph. 2:13-15 (NKJV) – "[13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. [14] For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, [15] having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, [16] and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."

Eph. 2:13-15 (NIV) – "[13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. [14] For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, [15] by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace."

- Ephesians 2, the context of the above verses, deals with God's grace - the basis of the unity between Jews and Gentiles.
- Vss. 11-12 describe the separated and hopeless state of the Gentiles
- The 'but now' of vs. 13 signals a shift from the alienation and hopelessness of the Gentiles to their inclusion in the one great family of God (vs. 13-22)
- How was this unity and reconciliation achieved? Eph. 2:13-18 shows that it was effected through the Cross. At the Cross 2 things happened:
  1. Christ broke down the 'dividing wall of hostility' (vs. 14)
     - This is a reference to the wall that separated the court of the Gentiles from the Jewish courts in the Tabernacle. No Gentile could enter the Jewish court without placing his life at risk.
     - Christ's blood figuratively broke down the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles, the wall that made it difficult for Gentiles to become part of God's people. No longer must the Gentiles remain "alienated" and without promises or hope (vs. 12). By His death Christ made Jews and Gentiles into one Christian church.
  2. He abolished the "law with its commandments and regulations" (vs. 15)
     - In order to make the Jews and Gentiles one, Christ abolished "the law of commandments and ordinances" (Greek, "the law of commandments consisting of decrees" [vs. 15]).
     - What laws visibly separated the Jews from the Gentiles?

- For one, the Jews had the temple service with the daily sacrifices, regulated by ceremonial laws, as well as numerous regulations that were added later - all these very clearly distinguished Jew from Gentile (see for instance Acts 21:28, 29 cf. Acts 10:28)
- God called Israel out to be separate from the nations (Ex. 19:5, 6; 1 Kings 8:53). Various regulations maintained this separation. The Jews sadly interpreted these laws in a legalistic and exclusive way, creating a ***hostile*** wall of separation between them and the rest of the world. Take circumcision, one of the ceremonial laws, for instance. This law the Jews used to separate the world into 2 camps – the Circumcised and Uncircumcised (see Eph. 2:11). The former were alone entitled to salvation and the blessings of the gospel, while the latter were condemned and lost.
- The book of Acts gives us some insight into the great separation between Gentiles and Jews. Only under mandate of a vision from God was Peter willing to take the gospel to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:9–20). At the Jerusalem Council the main issue was whether Gentiles should become Jews before being accepted into Christian fellowship (Acts 15:1–29). Some believers went so far as to say: "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses" (vs. 5). After much discussion, the leaders of the church and the Holy Spirit agreed that circumcision was not necessary; Gentile Christians were however still to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, and unchastity (vs. 29). By not requiring Gentiles to follow Jewish ceremonies, the leaders were indeed opening the door to the Gentiles. They could not have extended their fellowship to those who did not practise the cultic ritual had not Christ made a new and better way possible, doing away with the need for rituals and ceremonies such as circumcision, ritual baths, and sacrifices.
- Thus the *law with its commandments and regulations* is a reference to the ceremonial laws and legal regulations that made it difficult for Gentiles to become part of God's people. It was this that Christ abolished in His flesh on the Cross. At Calvary Christ did away with burnt offerings, sacrifices, festivals, etc. – the things that were peculiar and special only to the Jew. This tore down the wall of separation.

- It is important to note that the 'law with its commandments and regulations' cannot refer to the Ten Commandments for the following reasons:
  - It would contradict what Paul says in his other letters
  - In the book of Ephesians itself, Paul says that we were created for good works (Eph. 2:10), i.e. God designed us to be obedient, not lawless.
  - Furthermore, in Ephesisans chapters 4-5 the apostle warns against immoral practices that transgress God's Law: sensuality/lust – Eph. 4:19 (violation of 7th comm.); falsehood – 4:25 (9th comm.); anger – 4:26 (6th comm. – cf. Matt. 5:21-22); stealing – 4:28 (8th comm.); sexual immorality – 5:3 (7th comm.); fornication – 5:5 (7th comm.); covetousness – 5:5 (10th comm.); idolatry – 5:5 (2nd comm.). Then in Eph. 6:2, 3 the fifth commandment (concerning honour to parents) is spoken of as a principle of continuity validity with a promise of inheriting eternal life attached.
    - Thus Paul could not, in the book of Ephesians, teach that the Ten Commandments were abolished in Christ's flesh on the Cross in 2:14, and then in later references expect his audience still to keep it.

Christ, the End of the Law

Rom. 10:4 – "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (KJV). There are 2 legitimate interpretations of this verse:

- First, the Greek word for 'end' does not only mean 'to do away with' or 'abolish,' but also 'goal, outcome, purpose, design and achievement.' For instance, when we say the end justifies the means, the word 'end' refers to aim, purpose or goal. A good example is that in 1 Tim. 1:5. Notice how the King James Version uses this word, and compare it with the way some newer Bible versions (indented) use that word:
  - "Now the **end** of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart." 1 Tim. 1:5. (KJV)
    - "The ***goal*** of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." (NIV)
    - "The ***purpose*** of this command is for people to have love, a love that comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a true faith." (NCV)
    - "But the ***aim*** of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith." (NRSV)
    - "Christ is the ***goal*** of the Law which leads to righteousness" (CEB)
  - Thus Christ is the goal of the law. God's laws were designed to ultimately lead people to Christ.
- Second, from the context of Rom. 9:30 – 10:5, we see that Paul is speaking about the misuse of the law. In that case Paul is saying: For those who believe, "Christ is the end of the law as a means of righteousness."

Meaning of 'Under Law' in Paul's Writings[I]

There are a number of meanings of 'under law' in the writings of Paul, one positive one and three negative ones. They are:

- The positive connotation of "under law," is being under the authority or jurisdiction of law in the Mosaic era that spanned the period from Sinai to the Cross. Being 'under law' meant obedience to the entire system of law God had given Israel at that time. These laws were designed to give Israel a knowledge of the true nature of sin and to prepare her historically for a trusting dependence upon the promised Messiah for salvation.
- On the negative side, 'under law' has 3 facets:
  - The corporate lostness of the entire human race from the Fall to the Cross (Gal. 3:19, 23-25). Before Christ died for our sin, we as a human race, were legally lost. We corporately lived in an era of being 'under the law's condemnation,' in a state of spiritual 'lostness.' Man could still be justified by faith individually before the Cross (Rom. 4:3), but it was in a *promise* that future salvation would be accomplished by Christ. In this sense, at the Cross the law ceased its function of corporately, historically and legally condemning mankind to the results of sin, namely, eternal death. After the Cross, man was now legally justified and entered an 'era of grace.'
  - The individual lostness of any person regardless of the age in which he lives (either before or after the Cross), who has not accepted Christ (either because of ignorance of the gospel or open rebellion to it) – see Rom. 6:14. That person *individually* is 'under the condemnation of the law,' which will lead to his/her eternal death. The person however falls 'under grace' at the time of conversion, symbolised by his/her baptism.
  - The false teaching of New Testament Judaism that man can save himself by his own outward conformity to the law. Being "under the law" in this sense, is being 'under the law as a means to salvation.' (Gal. 3:12; 5:18 cf. Rom. 7:1-6 – *see commentaries on these passages below*)

Not Under Law, but Under Grace[J]

Rom. 6:11-14 – "[11] In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. [12] Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. [13] Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. [14] For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace."

- This passage can be viewed from 2 perspectives, viz., historical and experiential.
- Historically it means that man, before Calvary, was corporately 'under the condemnation of the law,' and legally lost (see *"Meaning of 'Under Law' in Paul's Writings"* above). However after the Cross, with the penalty of sin paid, man was 'under grace.' In this sense Paul was saying: "Don't let sin be your master since Jesus has died for your sin. You are now no longer under the law's condemnation."
- Experientially this passage can be viewed as follows:

Under Law	Under Grace
• "Sin shall… be your master" (v. 14)	• "Sin shall no longer be your master" (v. 14)
• You are "alive" to "sin" (v. 11)	• "Count yourself dead to sin… alive to God" (v. 11)
• Sin "reigns in your body… [you] obey its evil desires" (v. 12)	• "Do not let sin reign in your body [or] obey its desires" (v. 12)
• "Offer… yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness" (v. 13)	• "Offer yourself to God… as an instrument of righteousness" (v. 13)
Unconverted person	**Converted person**

- Thus experientially, a person before conversion, is living in the left column - under "the law of sin," under the control of the sinful nature (Rom 7:25) – bent toward immorality (Gal. 5:19-21) or legalism (Phil. 3:4-6)
- After conversion however, the person moves to the right column, having accepted by faith the provisions made available by Jesus on Calvary for his salvation, and lives a life controlled and directed by the Spirit
- Life 'under grace' is not free from intense struggle with sin, as both Scripture and any Spirit-led believer can testify. Indeed, the Christian experience is characterised as spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10f). The difference is that before conversion the unbeliever is hostile to God (Rom. 8:7), but after conversion the believer switches sides and begins to fight as a citizen of heaven against the "spiritual forces of evil" (Eph. 6:12).

Law Given Through Moses but Grace and Truth Came Through Jesus[K]

John 1:17 – "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

- The word 'but' is not in the original text but has been supplied by some translations like the New King James Version above. It was never John's intention to pit law and grace against each other.
- The NIV renders it more accurately: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."
- **Grace** and **truth** did not only come at the time of Christ, but were inherent in the system of revealed religion in Old Testament times (see Ex. 34:6, 7)
- From the context John is saying that even though the law, given through Moses, was a clear revelation of God in the Old Testament (the clearest revelation of God's character given to the human race up to that point), the clearest and fullest revelation came through Christ.
- Moses and other prophets were *bearers* of grace and truth, but Jesus was its *source*. Notice that the text says the law '***given*** through Moses,' i.e. he was an intermediary, but grace and through '***came*** through Jesus Christ,' i.e. He was its Source and Originator.
- It is also interesting to note that Ps. 119:142 says: "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and **Your law is truth**." If the *law* is *truth*, we could rewrite John 1:17 as, "For truth was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." In other words, even though Moses was a bearer of truth in the Old Testament, Christ brought a clearer and fuller revelation of truth when He came to this earth.

Redeemed From the Curse of the Law[L]

Gal. 3:13 – "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

- Paul says that those who belong to the works of the law are "under a curse" (3:10). Thus the Jews were under the "curse" of the law. This curse could not be the law or disobedience to it, because Christ Himself became "a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13); that is, He took upon Himself the divine judgment for sin, so the believer could receive the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit (vs. 14).
- Paul quotes four Old Testament passages to show what the curse of the law is (Deut. 27:26; Hab. 2:4; Lev. 18:5; Deut. 21:23). He does not speak of a radical separation between faith and law but of a radical separation between curse and justification. Curse is the consequence that comes to one who "does not confirm the words of this law by doing them" (Deut. 27:26). For a criminal the curse was death by being hanged on a tree (Deut. 21:22, 23). The curse was not the law, nor disobedience itself, but the consequence of disobedience. It was death. The law was intended to protect life; the one who observed it would live (Lev. 18:1–5). But humanity disobeyed the law, and disobedience brought death. Under such conditions there was only one-way to attain life: faith (Hab. 2:4). Humanity, however, could not live a life of faith, because it was under the curse of the law. It must be liberated first by Christ's becoming a curse for us... Christ liberated those who were under the curse by taking upon Himself the curse of the law. He died in place of the accursed ones.
- A person who has been liberated from the curse of the law is no longer a slave but a son of God (Gal. 4:5), who lives a life by the Spirit (Gal. 4:6).

Died to the Law – Married to Christ[M]

Rom. 7:1-6 – "Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? [2]For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. [3]So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man. [4]So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. [5]For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. [6]But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code [NKJV: 'and not in the oldness of the letter.' The term 'letter' is the same Greek word used in Rom. 2:29 that refers to the legalistic misuse of the law, separated from the Spirit]."

This section can be summarised as follows:

Who died?	"You"
What did you die to?	"Died to the law"
Why is it necessary to die?	"That we might belong [be married to] to another" [to Christ], and to "bear fruit for God"
What is our condition before we die?	We lived "in the realm of the flesh," "sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us," and "we bore fruit for death"
What is our condition after we die?	We are "dying to what once bound us," "released from the law," and "serve in the new way of the Spirit"

- Rom. 7:1-6 Paul uses an illustration from marriage [realising that no analogy is perfect]
- A woman is bound to her husband by the law of marriage. To go to another man would be adultery. But if her husband dies, she is not longer bound but released from the law of marriage and free to marry another.
- This passage speaks about a two types of relationships between the law and the sinner: a fatal and a faithful relationship
- The fatal relationship is a 'fleshly' one in which the sinner relates to the law as a means of salvation, as well as a source of pride and self-exaltation (Luke 18:9-14). This 'marriage' to the first husband is a metaphor for legalism, which is a life that is controlled by the flesh, unconverted and separated from God.
- But when the sinner accepts Christ, he/she dies (believer dies at baptism – Rom. 6:4) to this enslaving marriage of the flesh, released from the old relationship to the law as a legalistic, written code. This frees him/her to be married to Christ and live the new covenant experience. In this new relationship the believer now has a ***faithful*** relationship to the law (not a ***fatal*** one) – and lives according to the 'law of the Spirit of life' (Rom. 8:2 – see commentary there), a life of obedience, lived by the Spirit, and prompted by love.
- Being 'released from the law' in this passage (7:6), does not mean license to sin, as has already been proven (see Rom. 3:31; 6:15). It is not the law that dies, but its fateful relationship to the sinner, in which it 'lorded itself over' the sinner (Rom. 7:1).

Through the Law I Died to the Law[N]

Gal. 2:19 – "**For through the law** [by personal experience in seeking salvation through compliance with the requirements of the legal system Paul had proved to his own satisfaction the inefficacy of that system] **I died to the law** [he died to law keeping as a means to salvation. He abandoned that system altogether. He was through with the law as a justifying factor] **that I might live for God** [His life was now oriented toward God, as it had formerly been toward the law. He had experienced a 'resurrection' to a new way of life (cf. Rom. 6:1-8), in which Christ was now living out His life and principles through him (Gal. 2:20)]."

Law as Guardian/Tutor/Schoolmaster[O]

Gal 3:15-25 – "[15] **Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established** [once an agreement has been formally accepted by those who enter into it, its provisions are legally binding and cannot be changed except by mutual consent], **so it is in this case** [God won't suddenly change His promise of saving men by faith, to saving them through works of the law]. [16] **The promises** [of the covenant] **were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ** [Christ ultimately was the Descendant of Abraham through which 'all the nations of the earth would be blessed' – Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4]. [17] **What I mean is this: The law** [Israel's entire legal system, including both the moral and ceremonial laws], **introduced 430 years later** [after God's covenant with Abraham. In other words, the promise to save men by faith preceded the formal giving of the Ten Commandments by over four centuries], **does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.** [18] **For if the inheritance depends on the law** [i.e. if the promises of the covenant were based on law keeping], **then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.** [19] **What, then, was the purpose of the law?** [In other words, why was the law 'added' if the Abrahamic covenant was adequate to salvation?] **It was added because of transgressions** [i.e. it was 'added' to make the Israelites, who had recently come out of Egypt, conscious of the true character of sin and to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah, who would bring salvation from sin] **until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels** [according to Deut. 33:2 there were "ten thousands of saints (literally, "holy ones") present at the giving of the law. See also Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2; Ps. 68:17] **and entrusted to a mediator** [Moses]. [20] **A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.** [21] **Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God?** [Is the law incompatible with the covenant? Has God replaced the promise of salvation by faith with a program of salvation by works?] **Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law** [the law was never intended to impart righteousness and provide eternal life. This could only be done through Christ]. [22] **But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin** [Ps. 14:1-3 cf. Rom. 3:23], **so that what was promised** [the covenant promise of salvation by faith], **being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe** [not to those who want to earn salvation through law-keeping]. [23] **Before this faith came** [i.e. before Christ came into history, the object of our faith], **we were held prisoners by the law** [the

law is pictured as a jailor], **locked up until faith should be revealed** [when Christ came, He released us from the condemnation of the law. This is also true on a personal, experiential level. The law condemns us as soon as we step out of a relationship with Christ]. [24] **So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ** [the proper function of the law was to show people their need of salvation and lead them to the One who would provide that salvation] **that we might be justified by faith.** [25] **Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law** [Greek: 'we are no longer under a guardian.' The Jewish legal system – which included the moral, ceremonial and civil laws – was suppose to create a need in the heart of the believers for the future historical promised Messiah and the salvation He was to bring, but now that He had come, that 'guardian' function of the law was no longer required.]

Law Not Based on Faith

Gal 3:12 – "Yet the law is not of faith…"

- When kept legalistically the law does not require faith on the part of those who practise it (Rom. 9:30-31)
- Legalism requires *performance*, not faith

What does it mean to be "under the law" in Gal. 5:18?[P]

Gal. 5:18 – "But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law."

- Paul warns the Galatians that the Holy Spirit never leads men to seek salvation by compliance with the requirements of the Jewish ritual system, or for that matter through any system of legal righteousness. Conversely, those who submit to a legalistic religion are at war with the Holy Spirit.

Law for Sinners Only?

1 Tim. 1:10-12 – "[8] We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. [9] We also know that ***law is made not for the righteous*** but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, [10] for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine [11] that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me."

- Paul is not here teaching that the Christian is no longer obligated to obey the Ten Commandments, as we have seen above.
- Although the law is a transcript of God's character and is holy, righteous and good, it also has a negative side. Anything out of kilter with His law comes under judgment. In its negative expression, the law is a terror to evildoers. So the law was made 'for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers" – to put, as people sometimes say – the fear of God in them, to turn them around, to arrest their attention,[Q] which appears to be the meaning in this passage.

Law Added that Sin Might Increase

Rom. 5:20 – "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more…"

- The law in this context refers to the Ten Commandments which 'came in' at the time of Moses.
- It was the clearest revelation of God and sin up to that time.
- The law revealed the nature and scope of sin. Even though sin was in the world doing its damage, it wasn't as plainly seen or understood until the law defined it.
- Because God's law speaks against sin, it naturally excites opposition in rebellious hearts and thus becomes the occasion of stirring up sin, and in this sense multiplying transgression. If men's hearts were holy, and there were a disposition to do right, law would have no such tendency.
- Remember that the law in and of itself cannot cause us to sin more. Only our sinful natures lead us to sin more (Rom. 7:21-23; 8:2)

Do the commandments produce evil desires?[R]

Rom 7:7-13 – "[7] **What shall we say then? Is the law sin?** [Because Paul stated in Rom. 7:5 that the law arouses sinful passions, this may lead some to the conclusion that the law in sin] **Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law** [the law is like a mirror that reveals sin in its true nature]. **For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet.**" [An illustration from the tenth commandment, which contains the principle that underlies all sin – selfish and sinful desire. Paul would not have known this 'but by the law.'] [8] **But sin** [personified as an aggressor, antagonistic to God's law], **taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire** [Paul is saying that the command not to covet made him covet all the more. Such is the natural reaction of the unregenerate heart to the express will of God. The fact that something has been forbidden often seems to make it appear all the more desirable, and provokes the evil passions of a rebellious heart (see Prov. 9:17)]. **For apart from the law sin was dead** [where there is no law, sin is inactive, but as soon as the law enters with its restrictions, the power of sin

is aroused in the rebellious heart] [9] **I was alive once without the law** [Paul in his unconverted state, before he became aware of the real nature and spirituality and extent of the divine law. Although he earlier saw himself as 'blameless' (Phil. 3:6) he had a different opinion of himself when he discerned the spiritual nature of the law. He suddenly realised that he was infected with self-centredness and sinful desire, and not as blameless as he thought he was] **but when the commandment came** [i.e. when the spiritual significance of the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" (v. 7), was brought home to his mind and conscience], **sin revived** [sin sprang to life in Paul. It had, of course always been there, but in the full light of the commandment, he could recognise it for the first time for what it was] **and I died** [i.e. died to spiritual pride, self-confidence and self-reliance]. [10] **And the commandment** [the tenth commandment as representative of the whole law], **which was to bring life** [Lev. 18:5; Deut. 5:33; Eze. 18:9, 21; 20:11, 13, 21; cf. Matt. 19:17], **I found to bring death** [the very commandments on which Paul was relying for salvation was condemning him to death]. [11] **For sin** [once again personified], **taking occasion by the commandment** [i.e. using the commandment], **deceived me** [sin blinded Paul to the true nature of the law. It also deceived him by saying 'you can become good and earn salvation by keeping the law'], **and by it killed me** [the commandment, though in itself holy and designed to bring life, became the occasion not only of sin but also of death as its consequence]. [12] **Therefore the law is holy** [far from the law being sin (v. 7), it is holy and pure], **and the commandment holy and just and good.** [13] **Has then what is good become death to me?** ['Does the blame for my death lie with the good law?'] Certainly not! [For example, if a person is convicted and sentenced for murder, there is no fault in the law or those responsible in upholding it. The fault is in the one who broke the law]. **But sin** [and not the law, which exposes sin], **that it might appear sin** [i.e. that it might be seen in its true light], **was producing death in me through what is good** [The real nature of sin becomes apparent when sin uses that which is good to work evil and death. It takes the law, God's standard of holiness, to increase the sin and condemnation of men (vs. 8–11)], **so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful** [so we can see how terrible sin really is]." [A clearer way to express vs. 13 is: "But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands for its own evil purposes" – NLT.]

- In this passage the law of God is clearly vindicated of any charges that it is responsible for the sin and death that reign so universally among mankind (cf. ch. 5:14, 17). The blame is rightly fixed on sin/sinful nature. And to the extent that men persist in identifying themselves with sin, they share in its guilt and condemnation.
- These verses also emphasize Paul's doctrine that salvation cannot come by the law. The important function of the law is to unmask sin and convict the sinner of the error of his ways, but it cannot weed out a rebellious spirit or pardon a transgression.
- These verses further clarify the relationship between the law and the gospel. It is ever the continuing function of the commandments to reveal the standard of righteousness, to convict of sin, and to show the need of a Saviour. If there were no law to convict of sin, the gospel would be powerless, for unless the sinner is convicted of his sin, he feels no need of repentance and of faith in Christ. Thus, to claim that the gospel has abolished the law is not only to misrepresent the place and importance of the law but also to undermine the very purpose and necessity of the gospel and the plan of salvation.

Strength of Sin is the Law

1 Cor. 15:56-57 – "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- A casual reading might lead someone to conclude that just as death results from sin, so sin results from the law, and if God had never given humankind any laws, there would have been no sin. Yet Paul wrote, "Before the law was given [at Sinai], sin was in the world" (Rom. 5:13)
- The law is the strength of sin in 2 ways:
  - The sinful nature will war against God's law, urging us to break it or observe it legalistically (see Rom. 7:7-8-2)
  - It makes us conscious of sin (and therefore shows us the power of sin in our lives)

An Unbearable Yoke

Acts 15:10 – "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

- Some have argued that this yoke is the Ten Commandments or the Sinaitic Covenant. This cannot be true for the following reasons:
  - The context clearly shows that this refers to the ceremonial law, of which circumcision was a part (see *'Difference Between God's Eternal Moral Law and the Ceremonial Laws'* above)
    - Vs. 1 – "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'"
    - Vs. 5 – "But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."
  - Not only is Acts 15:10 a reference to the ceremonial law, but apparently also to the legalistic attitude of using the law as a means of salvation. This can be gathered from the very next verse (vs. 11) which says: "**<u>But</u>** we believe that ***through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved*** in the same manner as they." In other words Peter said: 'Although some

Jewish Christians are expecting new believers to practise circumcision *as a means to salvation* (vs. 1), we cannot put this legalistic yoke on them for we are *saved through the grace* of our Lord Jesus…' (vs. 11)

- It is also interesting to note that Jesus called the legalistic attitude to the law "heavy loads" that the Pharisees had placed "on men's shoulders" (Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46) – bringing to mind the words of this verse (a yoke that was put on the neck of the new believers)

Endnotes

[A] Breaden, Frank. New Pictorial Aid for Bible Study. Warburton: Signs Publishing Company, 1987, p. 29, adapted

[B] Largely summarised from Dederen, pp. 476-477

[C] Lenski, R.C.H., The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy and to Philemon, p. 114 (quoted in du Preez, Feast-Keeping and the Faithful. Michigan: LithoTech, 2011, p. 156)

[D] du Preez, Ronald, Feast-Keeping and the Faithful. Michigan: LithoTech, 2011, p. 157.

[E] Seventh-day Adventists Believe, p. 274

[F] Nichol, F.D., Ed. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 6. Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980, p. 1009

[G] Drawn from Dederen, p. 476; Pfandl, Gerard (Ed). Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers. Article by Ivan Blazen on Eph. 2:5: Did Christ Abolish the Law at the Cross? Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 2010; Knight, George. Exploring Galatians & Ephesians: A Devotional Commentary. Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 2005.

[H] Arndt, William and Gingrich, Wilbur. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Chicago, 1979, p. 811.

[I] Japp, Johan. "Under Law" in Paul: A Concise Overview – Unpublished paper

[J] The historical perspective is taken from Japp's unpublished paper, the experiential perspective from MacCarty, p. 107 as well as MacCarty's PowerPoint presentation

[K] MacCarty, pp. 50-53

[L] Summarised from Dederen, p. 474

[M] Taken from MacCarty's PowerPoint presentation; Japp, Johan. "Under Law" in Paul: A Concise Overview – Unpublished paper

[N] Nichol, F.D., vol. 6, p. 950 and Knight, George. p. 70

[O] From Knight, p. 70; F.D. Nichol, vol. 6, p. 956-962; discussions with P.s Johan Japp, ex professor or theology at Helderberg College, Somerset West

[P] Nichol, F.D., vol. 6, p. 981

[Q] Bradford, C. The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Timothy & Titus. Boise: Pacific Press, 1994, p. 37

[R] Nichol, F.D., vol. 6, pp. 548-553

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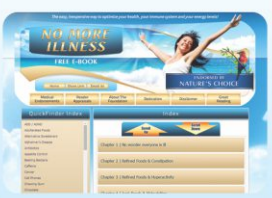
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