

Law 4: The Law and Christ

The law is holy, since it came from God, but its purpose was temporary and led Israel to see the need for Christ, Law does not save since there is no human merit in justification. Law tells man what to do but cannot give him power to do it. Man is only justified by faith in Christ and his work. The Gospel not only commands us to believe in Christ but it also comes with power to the elect so that they obey. This is all of grace; God gives the elect the ability to believe and repent and then live a righteous life to the end. Christ secures his people.

Christ came as the fulfilment of the covenant promise to Abraham, given 430 years before the appearance of the Mosaic Law (Gal 3:17-18). The Gospel is the outworking of the Abrahamic not the Mosaic Covenant. However, Christ's work is not opposed to law; indeed Christ came to fulfil all the law (Matt 5:17) and to complete it (Rm 10:4). As the standard for righteousness, the law was perfectly fulfilled by Jesus on Earth. Jesus is the embodiment of God's perfect will for man; the only man who ever fully obeyed the law. Thus God's will for man is now the person Jesus Christ, not the written law. The law does not regulate Christian behaviour, but the Spirit guides us into Christ (Jn 16:13-15).

We are growing up into Christ, to become a mature man in him (Gal 2:19-20; Eph 4:13). We do not follow an external, objective set of regulations, but follow Christ. The external code of laws has been cancelled (Eph 2:15; Col 2:14; Heb 8:13) since it represented the shadow of Christ and not Christ himself (Heb 10:1). It contained helpful features to teach us but could not lead us into the fulness of Christ. The Old Covenant allowed hate of enemies (Ps 101:3, 119:113, 139:21-22) but Christ commands us to love them (Matt 5:43-44). This alone shows the nature of the change between law and grace. We do not void the law by faith in Christ (Rm 3:31), but take it further through Christ's Spirit.

This means that the believer walks in the Spirit, the bringer of grace and does not merely follow external regulations but obeys the conviction of the Spirit. The Spirit guides the believer into obeying the commandments of Christ, which fulfil and exceed the Ten Commandments. The Spirit does this by revelation through scripture, education, discipline, fellowship, and suffering.

The Mosaic Law only speaks to the old Adamic nature, which Christians are to consider dead (Rm 6:6, 11; Col 3:9); it condemns sin in it. Christians are to put that nature off and put on the new man in Christ, where law does not reign (Eph 4:22-24). The motivation and ability to perform righteousness is God's Spirit working in us (Phil 2:13). Sanctification is the whole Trinity working for us, not law (Isa 26:12; Heb 13:20-21; 2 Cor 3:5; 2 Thess 1:11, 2:13).

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Understanding Ministries

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