

Law and the Believer – Just Scripture

The purpose of this paper is to show that the believer's walk is not regulated by a focus upon Mosaic Law but by a focus upon Christ by His Spirit. I have discussed this matter at length in my paper, *The Believer's Relationship to the Law*, but here I make this point just by itemising the Biblical texts with only limited comments. The point is to show that scripture overwhelmingly supports this case by many clear texts. I offer minor comments here and there to help clarify the writer's argument, but mostly this is just the text of the Bible as it stands. I challenge anyone to make a case from these texts that believers are called to follow the Mosaic Law for sanctification after their conversion.

All men are under some form of law

Take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. Jos 22:5

Only if they are careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them. 2 Kg 22:8

Law is the principles of God's will for man's behaviour.

The work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness. Rm 2:14-15

Gentiles know what is right and wrong in their conscience. This is due to the work of the Moral Law being written on the heart.

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law. Gal 4:4-5

Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law. Deut 31:12

Jews are under the Mosaic Law. This includes Jewish proselytes.

To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law [literally 'in-law'] toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law. 1 Cor 9:20-21

Jews are under the law; Gentiles are without the Mosaic Law but are still under the Moral Law of God; Christians (like Paul here) are in-lawed to Christ (i.e. they fulfil the law in Christ).

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Rm 3:31

Being in Christ and fulfilling the law by faith does not mean that Christians are not under law. They are under the Law of Christ, which is higher than Mosaic Law (see later).

Men do not keep your law. Ps 119:136

Both Jews and Greeks ... are all under sin. Rm 3:9

Men outside of Christ do not keep God's law even when they understand it.

The essentials of the Moral Law are revealed to the world in nature and conscience, but not the fulness of the Mosaic Law.

For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law. Rm 2:12

Gentiles, who do not have the law. Rm 2:14

Gentiles are not under the Mosaic Covenant or Mosaic form of law. Gentiles are 'without law' that is without an external code of law like the Mosaic Law.

Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness. Rm 2:14-15

The essential principles of the Moral Law are known in men's conscience. But this is either enhanced by learning or debased and weakened by sin.

The Moral Law was in action from the time of Adam onward and involves the testimony in the heart / conscience of all men, and the oral tradition that God originally imparted to Adam passed down through parental instruction. The Moral Law contains all the moral principles found in the Ten Commandments, within the Mosaic Law.

The Mosaic Law was not given to the patriarchs

The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who *are* here today, all of us who *are* alive. Deut 5:2-3

And neither was it given to all men. The Moral Law is incumbent upon every man but not the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law involved the building of the Tabernacle and detailed ritual instruction on offerings; this was not the case for the patriarchs (or Gentiles).

Jews are under Mosaic Law since the Mosaic Covenant began

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law. Rm 3:19

Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law'. Jn 10:34

Their law. Jn 15:25

Jews; to those *who are* under the law. 1 Cor 9:20

The Law only applies to those under it (Jews). It cannot apply to Gentiles who have no knowledge of it, neither does it apply to believers who are not under law but are in-lawed to Christ.

The Mosaic Covenant is centred on the Ten Commandments

So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. Num 4:13

The tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you. ... the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. ... and the two tablets of the covenant *were* in my two hands.

Deut 9:9,11, 15

It is impossible to separate the Mosaic Covenant from the Ten Commandments. The crux of the Mosaic Covenant was the Ten Commandments and this involves the law of the Sabbath. If you keep the Mosaic Covenant, then you must keep the Mosaic form of the Sabbath, and the 613 other commands. There is no instruction in the Mosaic Law to change the Sabbath day to Sunday. Those who do this contravene Moses' instruction not to add to the words of the Law (Deut 4:2, 12:32). You can only change the instruction regarding the Sabbath by following a different law to the Mosaic Law.

Those who demand that Christians fully obey the Mosaic moral laws are also saying that they must fulfil all the rest of the Mosaic Law, including the ceremonial and civil laws which are not separated from the Moral Law in the Mosaic Covenant.

The purpose of the Mosaic Law was to magnify sin in sinners

The law was fleshly and made for sinners

And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest [Jesus] who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. Heb 7:15-16

The law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers ... 1 Tim 1:9

If the law was fleshly and made for sinners, how could it be the rule for spiritual believers?

The law reveals and exacerbates sin

The law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression. ... the law entered that the offence might abound. Rm 4:15, 5:20

As well as exposing and magnifying sin, the Law brings punishment and condemnation.

The Mosaic Law was the administration of death

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious. 2 Cor 3:2-11

The Mosaic Law was the administration of death and condemnation (including the 10 Commandments, v3, 7: i.e. that which was carved on stone tablets); it has now passed away (Gk 'rendered inoperative'). The Law of Christ replaces it by an internal, spiritual law (Gal 6:2, Rm 8:2). How can an administration of death be the rule for Christian living? The ministry of and glory is the ministry of the Spirit, not the Mosaic Law.

The law separates

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 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, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. Eph 2:11-16

The Law was a wall keeping the Gentiles from Jewish blessings, which has now been broken down. Unity amongst God's people is in the Spirit, not by Law. The promises of the Gospel to Abraham cannot be entered into by keeping the Mosaic Law; it hinders receiving these promises.

The law cannot justify; only faith in Christ can justify (gain pardon for sins)

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. Rm 3:20

Law exposes sin. It does not impart grace, righteousness or give life.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ... Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. Rm 3:28-31

Men are justified by faith in Christ not by Law; but those justified establish the Moral Law by living holy lives as they obey moral law from the heart - obeying the Law of Christ by his Spirit.

Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Rm 8:7-8

The flesh (carnal mind) is meant to be subject to the Moral Law, which regulates human behaviour; but men hate God and love sin and thus refuse to be subject to God's law. Man has no power to obey the Law because he is sinful flesh.

Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because *they did* not *seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. Rm 9:31-32

Jews, as any men, cannot attain righteousness by works of the Law, even though they pursued it and sought to be religious. Justification can only ever be by faith.

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Gal 3:2

Effort under the Law is antagonistic to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is only received by faith. Work for God that is not inspired by the Spirit is a dead, legalist work.

No one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.' Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.' Gal 3:11-12

A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Gal 2:16

The Law cannot justify, legalism produces dead works. The Law is not of faith. Faith and Law are two systems: Law is based on works faith is based on grace.

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. ... therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh. Heb 10:14, 19-20

The cross of Christ justifies, perfects and opens up the way for fellowship with God by uniting us to Christ.

If righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain. Gal 2:21

If the Mosaic Law could justify and lead to righteousness, then Christ would not have needed to die and man could have worked up his own salvation. But it doesn't lead to justification and cannot save; thus Christ's cross was necessary.

Relying on the law results in being cursed

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' Gal 3:10

Relying on the Law puts you under a curse – note this is written as a warning to Gentile believers.

The law was a temporary institution, pointing towards the Messiah

What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Gal 3:19

The Mosaic Law was never meant to be permanent, it was added to the Abrahamic Covenant and lasted until Jesus came to fulfil that covenant and inherit God's promise to Abraham as his seed.

And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God *gave it* to Abraham by promise. ... *is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. Gal 3:17-18, 21

Righteousness cannot come by Law. Law is the strength of the old nature which works under it. It results in works not fruit. The Law wasn't opposed to the promise, it was added to reveal sin 430 years after the promise to Abraham.

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Gal 3:23-25

Faith was only revealed with the coming of the Messiah. Justification was only fully obtained and enjoyed by faith in Christ's atonement. The Law kept Israel under guard, confined in God's order, until Christ came. The Law led God's people towards Christ, showing man's essential weakness and need of grace. Its purpose as an external, objective focus of God's will ceased when Christ came as the fulness and reality that the Law foreshadowed.

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things.
Heb 10:1

The Law was not the reality; Christ is the reality of spiritual life and righteousness. When the reality came, the shadow was no longer required.

The Mosaic Law was faulty, makes no one perfect and is now annulled

For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. Heb 7:18-19

The Mosaic law was weak and unprofitable; i.e. it had no power to make people righteous but only to condemn unrighteousness. How can this be effective in being the rule of sanctification for the believer? We are called to be perfect, but the law makes nothing perfect.

Then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second. Heb 10:9

The law was a shadow of the good things to come in the New Covenant. When this covenant came with Christ, the Old Covenant was taken away and annulled.

In that He says, 'A new *covenant*,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. Heb 8:13

God annulled the Old Covenant at the cross but its form continued in Judaism until it was wiped out in 70 AD when the temple was destroyed and the priesthood dispersed.

Since the priesthood has changed, the law has changed

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of

Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. Heb 7:11-12

The simple fact that Christ came as a new order of priesthood based upon an eternal incorruptible life, means that the Mosaic law has ended since under Mosaic Law the priesthood was Levitical.

The Mosaic Law is now replaced by the Law of Christ which is internal and empowered by the Spirit

By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Heb 7:22

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Heb 8:6-7

The Mosaic Law and the covenant it is part of are inextricable mixed. Indeed the law is called the 'covenant' in many places and was the main content in the Ark of the Covenant. This was faulty and a better covenant, the New Covenant, has replaced it. It was not faulty in terms of God's plan; indeed it did what God wanted it to do – to magnify sin; but it was faulty in terms of bringing spiritual life. Only Christ can do that. The New Covenant does not only have a more excellent ministry by the Spirit, does not only have better promises, but also imparts eternal life.

'This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days', says the LORD: 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.' Heb 10:16

This is the key difference between the Old and New Covenants; the Mosaic Law was external and objective; the New Covenant is internal, spiritual and subjective. The New Covenant changes man from within and this leads to righteousness; the Mosaic Law made demands of man's actions but had no power to change his thoughts and inclinations. The Mosaic Law showed man that he was flesh and condemned it; the New Covenant changes the flesh into resurrection life and leads it on.

Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.
Matt 5:17

Jesus fulfilled all that the Old Covenant promised. It was made obsolete in the form it then held (as objective, external, written law), but was continued and fulfilled in the spiritual covenant inaugurated by Christ. The moral laws were extended and completed as Christ's Law written in the hearts of believers (2 Cor 3:3); while all the civil, judicial and ceremonial aspects were fulfilled as antitypes in Christ's work.

Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Rm 10:4

Christ is the realisation and fulfilment of Mosaic Law; he is both the goal and termination of it. He has internalised the demands of the Moral Law and subsumed them into his life. Saints now continue in law by continuing in Christ's life by his Spirit.

Believers died to the law in Christ

For you are not under law but under grace. ... you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another. Rm 6:14, 7:3

Christians are not under Law as Jews, but are in-lawed to Christ. They fulfil the Law as they put on Christ and walk in the Spirit.

But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter. ... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Rm 7:6, 8:2

We are not under law because we have died with Christ. The Law only applies to Adamic men, our Adamic life died at the cross and we are now new creatures in Christ, subject to spiritual laws not the written Law of Moses. The Law can only apply to flesh and not spirit.

Believers fulfil the law's demands in the Spirit

The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rm 8:4

As we walk in the Spirit we obey the Law of Christ. This ensures we obey all the moral principles of the Mosaic Law and much more.

The law cannot be used for sanctification

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ... For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness. Heb 7:11-12,18

Christ's priesthood is based on Melchizedek not Aaron. The Law was the basis of the Aaronic priesthood. Melchizedek's priesthood requires a new law - Christ's law (Heb 5:1-10).

The law made nothing perfect. Heb 7:19

The Law cannot make anything perfect. It cannot sanctify.

The Christian is called to look to Christ, not the law; we follow Christ's law not Mosaic Law

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 1 Jn 2:3-8

Note that believers are called to walk like Christ; they are directed to look to Jesus and not to the Law. John does not say that believers live by obeying moral regulations but by walking as Christ did.

Believers do not ignore law; in fact the law they live under is the commandment they had from the beginning (love) but is also a new law. This refers to the fact that Jesus called it a new commandment (Jn 13:34-35) and gave it a new and higher motivation, 'Love one another as I have loved you' (Jn 15:12). The Mosaic Law called people to love their neighbours; Christ called his brethren to love their enemies – only grace can achieve this. Christian love is loving as Christ loved us. Christian law is focused on Christ's commandments not the Law of Moses; it is centred on keeping His word as we are in Christ. Obedience to the new commandment is possible only 'in Him'. The result of walking like Christ is to live in the perfection of God's love. As we walk in Christ by His Spirit, we obey God's Moral Law.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ... So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Col 2:13-14, 16-17

The handwriting of requirements is the Law of Moses centred in the Ten Commandments. This external form of law has been taken out of the way and destroyed in the cross. It was a form of Moral Law enshrined in ritual, codes and statutes for Jews but now the Moral law is enshrined in a person, Christ, for all men and mediated to believers by the Spirit of Christ. This means that the ceremonial forms of the law are wiped out because they were mere shadows pointing to Christ. Now Christ has come we have no need of shadows; thus all feasts and rituals in the Mosaic Law are dead.

The believer is dead to the law

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ. Rm 7:1-4

This is not referring to being dead to the law as a means of justification. Indeed there never was any justification by the Mosaic Law. Reformed commentators who say that this is referring to a Christian not being justified by law but needing to follow it as a believer are completely wrong.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Rm 6:14-15

There are two worlds. The first is the whole world under the law and shut up to sin; this world comprises of Jews under Mosaic Law and Gentiles under the essential principles of Moral Law as found in the Mosaic Law. The second is the world of the elect who are under grace. The elect obey God's law, but not the external code of Moses but the internal law of the New Covenant applied by the Holy Spirit. Those under grace are those who walk in the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rm 8:2-4

For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Gal 2:19-20

The Christian is under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and not the Law of Moses. Mosaic Law was weak, did not empower people to be righteous, magnified sin and condemned to death. The fulfilment of the Mosaic Law was completed by Christ for all believers; we have fulfilled it in Christ and now walk according to the Spirit. Thus the Mosaic Law is finished for the believer; he fulfils righteousness by walking in the Spirit.

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

When we walk in the Spirit we are automatically not under Mosaic Law at all but are spiritual people obeying God from the heart.

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. Eph 2:15

Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.
And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Col 2:14

There are two men in Scripture. The first is Adam and all sinners in him, the wicked, the reprobate. The second is Christ and all the elect in him, the righteous. The Mosaic Law is abolished for all those who are in Christ. [In Eph 2:15 Paul is talking about the unity between elect Jews and elect Gentiles, made one in Christ. The law created enmity between them; Christ unifies them.]

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.’ Col 2:20-21

The Christian is no legalist; he does not live by following strict rules and written regulations of men. He listens to the Spirit and is led by the Spirit to walk in holiness by spiritual intuition. When you follow regulations, you cease from following the Spirit.

Conclusion

The Scriptures are clear enough; they show that the believer is to follow Christ and not Moses, to walk in the Spirit and not try to objectively obey Mosaic Law codes. It is only by subscribing to a certain type of Covenant Theology that this is obscured. When men follow unbiblical systems they depart from honouring Scripture.

To have a snapshot of the scope of the Mosaic Law and to see how it fits into God’s plan, see my diagram, ‘*The Universal Scope of the Law*’.

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