

God's Law and the Christian

God's Law and
the Christian -
Message

**Obeying the law
of Christ out of
love for Christ is a
necessary pursuit
for the believer
who is under the
New Covenant.**

Guiding Principles

The believer is already and always acceptable to God because he is in Christ.

Obeying God's law is an essential part of the Christian life.

Obedience is not optional for the Christian.

God takes disobedience seriously.

Use New Covenant words to keep its teaching on God's law clear

- **New Covenant** (Jer 31:31; Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8, 9:15, 12:24)
- **Law of Christ** (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2)

The Law of Moses was temporary by nature

- The Law of Moses was given “until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made” (Gal 3:19).
- When the priesthood changed from the Levitical system to Jesus under the NC, “of necessity there takes place a change of law also” (Heb 7:12).

Christians are under the Law of Christ

- Christians “have been released from the Law” (Rom 7:1-6; Gal 2:19; 3:24-25; 1 Cor 9:19-21)
- “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4)
- The Old Covenant is obsolete (Heb 8:13)
- Paul explained, “what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did [unilateral covenant]: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom 8:3-4)
- Christ’s sacrifice fulfilled the requirements of the Law

The NC further develops the prioritization of commands within God's law

- Love for God is primary. Other laws depend on love for God and neighbor (lit., suspended by) - Mt 22:34-40
- Some commands are “weightier” than others. They are more central to obeying God (D. A. Carson, Expositors, 8:480) - Mt 23:23

For each command, there are always 2 or 3 commands to obey

All Commands

- 1) Must obey out of a “whole-person” love for God
- 2) In that love for God, must obey the specified command (such as to worship God only)

Commands related to other people

- 1) Must obey out of a “whole-person” love for God
- 2) Must obey out of a love for that person (concern for their good)
- 3) In that love for God and neighbor, must obey the specified command (such as to not steal)

Love “is the motive and active principle of fulfilment... love fills to the brim the cup which the law puts into our hands. Love is the first drop; it is the last drop; and it is all the drops in between. From start to finish it is love that fulfils the law...both emotive and motive”.

John Murray, Principles of
Conduct, pp. 22-23

Moral law is incorporated into the NC

- God's law flows from His character
- When we obey God, we reflect His character
- Peter said “like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet 1:15-16; Lev 11:44)

Calvin explained, “God has so depicted his character in the law that if any man carries out in deeds whatever is enjoined there, he will express the image of God, as it were, in his own life”.

John Calvin,
Institutes,
I:415

Old Testament Law Categories

Moral law reflects God's character

Ceremonial law prescribed the Jews' worship and pointed to Messiah

Civil law prescribed their government

God's Law Arises From His Character

Foundation

God's Character: Holy, Just, Righteous, Faithful, Merciful, Love, Gracious, Forgiving

God Requires His People To Be Like Him

Requirement

“You shall be holy as I am holy”

Foundation

God’s Character: Holy, Just, Righteous, Faithful, Merciful, Love, Gracious, Forgiving

Love for God is primary

Heart of Law

“You shall love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself”

Requirement

“You shall be holy as I am holy”

Foundation

God’s Character: Holy, Just, Righteous, Faithful, Merciful, Love, Gracious, Forgiving

Weightier Aspects of God's Law

Weightier Aspects	Love God and neighbor, justice, mercy, faithfulness, kindness, walk humbly with God
Heart of Law	“You shall love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself”
Requirement	“You shall be holy as I am holy”
Foundation	God's Character: Holy, Just, Righteous, Faithful, Merciful, Love, Gracious, Forgiving

Moral Law

Timeless Moral Requirements	Love God and neighbor, “weightier” laws, worship Yahweh only, no idols, shall not take His name in vain, honor father and mother, shall not murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, covet, love enemies
Weightier Aspects	Love God and neighbor, justice, mercy, faithfulness, kindness, walk humbly with God
Heart of Law	“You shall love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself”
Requirement	“You shall be holy as I am holy”
Foundation	God’s Character: Holy, Just, Righteous, Faithful, Merciful, Love, Gracious, Forgiving

“Moral Law”



- Timeless moral requirements
- They are laws that have “universal applicability and authority” (J. I. Packer, *Law, Morality and the Bible*, p. 162).
- They transcend time.
- The law of Christ incorporates OT moral law.

God's will for the Christians "is revealed particularly in the teaching of Jesus, who demanded of his disciples a radical obedience to God" and that "James is concerned to show that 'the law of the kingdom' does not replace, but takes up within it the demand of God in the Old Testament"

Douglas Moo, *James*, Tyndale NT Comt, p.94

Royal Law - James 2:8

The motive for obeying the law of Christ comes from within the Christian

- “For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man” and “with my mind am serving the law of God” (Rom 7:22, 25)
- Eph 6:6
- Jer 9:24
- Ezek 36:27

Delighting in God's law produces a "wholehearted pursuit of God and godliness". That "to commit oneself to follow one's heart by running in the path of God's calling and commands as hard and as fast as one can, is the directional basis of holiness. Since that is the most truly natural course for any Christian to follow, it holds out a hope of deep happiness, heart-happiness, here and now, that can never be attained otherwise."

J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, pp. 81-82