

The Enigma of the Law

Romans 9:31-33 “What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.”

Is the law to be kept or has it been dismissed by the works of the cross? Believers have been wrestling with this for 2,000 years. Let's examine both sides.

Has the Law been dismissed as some claim, in the writings of Paul?

Paul defended the law but was consistently accused of preaching it had been “done away with.” We know these facts about Paul:

1. He was a very learned student of the Scriptures, having been a student of Gamliel he would have been required to have all Torah (the books of Moses) committed to memory BEFORE being accepted as Gamliel's student. Paul was also from Tarsus, a center of learning in that day. (See Acts 5:34 and 22:3)

2. A Pharisee, Paul was a leader among his peer group of Pharisees. He knew the Talmud inside and out. (Talmud was the oral Torah; traditions of men full of rules about how to fulfill one's obligation to the Torah. By Paul's time, Talmud had superseded importance to the Pharisees over and above the Word of the Scriptures. It was to this law Y'shua referred to when He said, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” and “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”) As such, Paul had been extremely zealous towards the believers in Y'shua in persecuting them and was, in fact, in charge of the stoning of Stephen.

3. Peter said, regarding the teachings of Paul, “in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:15-16)

Much of what Paul preached with regards to “the law” has been badly taken out of context. Deeper studies as well as knowledge of the Torah (just as Paul had long been trained in; for him it was easily understood, but in light of all the misrepresentations we have today, evidently not so easily communicated) will begin to reveal what Paul's meaning and intent were in the letters he wrote.

Paul makes reference to several types of law, not all of which pertained to THE Law (the Commandments). Many times he referenced the Talmud (laws and traditions man had added to the Torah). Other times he refers to natural laws such as cause and effect. The “Law of sin and death” is a perfect example of this type of natural law of cause and effect. The law of sin and death says if you sin, you die. (cause: sin, effect: death)

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Ez. 18:20.

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Other times, he uses other phraseology that is misrepresented as the Law. For example:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;” Colossians 2:14

Many use this as proof positive that “The Law was nailed to the cross!”

The Word says in Isaiah 65 our offenses are written before YHWH. When we break the law, there is a handwritten record of our offenses. Much like the ticket you get issued when you have a traffic violation. That ticket is against you. The law is not against you. It is simply the boundaries within which you have the freedom to act. When you violate it's boundaries, you have broken the boundaries which results in a handwritten record of the ordinance you broke and a penalty is attached: you run the stop sign - your violation gets recorded and penalized in the form of a ticket and a fine. No matter who or how that penalty gets paid, once it's paid the law has not been nullified, the ticket has. The ticket is the handwriting of the ordinance against you. The law is not! If you are a believer, your ticket of offense has been nailed to the cross, nullifying the penalty of the law of sin and death!

Do you see how the Scripture has been twisted to say that the Commandments were nullified, and not the natural law of cause and effect?

“[There is] therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1-2

The law of the Spirit of life in our Redeemer, who paid our penalty, FREED you from the law of sin and death. You repented and accepted His finished work, allowing that payment to do it's work supernaturally releasing you from the penalty of the law of cause and effect.

What does the Savior have to say?

Matthew 5:17-20 “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, **Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.** Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach [them], the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed [the righteousness] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In other words, as long as you see heaven and earth, the WHOLE Law is still in effect! Not even those parts that may have been fulfilled. We cannot even ignore PARTS of the Law that we feel are completed. (I.e. supposedly Sabbath was “changed” to Sunday, according to some because that's when the disciples gathered after the resurrection. YHWH said He does NOTHING except first makes it known to His servants the prophets. Find the Scripture that shows He intended to change the 4th commandment. -Hint: there ISN'T any. That's a man made idea, one enforced by Constantine by threat of death that became tradition and accepted over time as fact. For a great work on Babylonian ways within the church read “Time is the Ally of Deceit” by Richard Rives.)

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So, if you want to say your belief that the law was done away with, using Paul's writings as evidence, EVEN IF your interpretation of Paul was right, does Paul's word supersede that of Y'shua? Both in the Gospels AND in Revelation Y'shua clearly makes His views known on the topic of the Commandments.

Revelation 22:12-14 Y'shua said, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. **Blessed are they that do his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Now we know that we are not justified by our obedience to the Law (our "doing" of the Commandments). But what does this mean then, that we should "do" His commandments? To what end, since we know we are justified by faith and not of works? Why does it seem so important to "do" His commandments? How do we solve this enigma of the law?

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When writing to the believers in Rome, Paul pointed out that uncircumcised Gentiles having come to the faith, were spiritually circumcised and justified by their **faith**. This confounded the Jews because they had felt their cultural "ownership" of the law was their claim to justification. Paul points out that this was a stumbling stone to them (the Jews) because they were relying on their outward obedience to the law to make them righteous, but they had neglected the more important point of circumcision of the heart. The "doing" of the law because of their love of the Father and His covenant with them, His people. They didn't understand that to attain to righteousness it is by faith in the goodness of the Author to bridge the gap (on our behalf but completely by His doing) between the requirement of the law and our ability to live perfectly within the law. The gap is between the doing and the attaining.

What I mean by this is that the gap that exists, exists between the perfection the Law of righteousness demands and our imperfect ability to achieve that by what we do. It's impossible. We're imperfect. But in order to live in covenant with the covenant Maker, we are commanded to obey. So how can we possibly live up to our end of the bargain, the perfect obedience part?

Let's suppose you have a young child you are trying to teach to swim. You're in the deep end of the pool, and 5 yr old Johnny stands on the side of the pool wanting to jump in but knowing he can't swim and so is frightened of going under. He stands on the side fretting about leaping towards you.

You've given Johnny the instructions. You've explained to him how important it is that he learns to swim for his own safety as well as for his enjoyment, but he knows he cannot yet swim without your help. So, when Johnny jumps in are you going to let him sink and say, "I knew you couldn't swim. Why did you even try?" Or are you going to reach out and take Johnny's hands and help him the rest of the way knowing that for now, he can only swim with you there to bridge

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the gap between his current abilities and what he needs to do in order to swim? Of course it's the latter.

In the same way, in this lifetime we will NEVER be a good enough swimmer to live up to the perfect letter of the law and will ALWAYS need the grace provided for us by the redemption paid for by Y'shua. But we are still commanded to swim! We are still instructed to obey His commands.

After all they (the Commands) are the law of His kingdom. If we expect to be citizens in that kingdom, we cannot be lawless else we have no part in that kingdom. We are then rebels and under the curse of the law. Because it is the disobedience to the law that brings the curse, not our inability to obey it perfectly. THAT is the purpose of grace! That is the work of Y'shua. His work is the gift of the bridge that brings the law of righteousness within our ability to follow in our imperfect and fallen state. Where we stumble we have Him as our Advocate. Do we stop walking because we stumble? No. We get up and continue to walk. Do we look for occasion to stumble? No, that is crucifying Him afresh and are in danger of no longer having justification, putting Y'shua to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Many of you are parents. You certainly have house rules. When you tell your child to clean their room and they do so, perhaps not to the perfection you desire, but you know they did their best. Do you condemn them for not attaining the perfection they are not capable of? Of course not. Do you do away with rules because they cannot keep them perfectly? The answer is obvious: no.

When they DON'T clean their room are there not penalties? ("For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth." Proverbs 3:12) When you forgive their disobedience does that then dismiss the house rule? It might with you, but with YHWH it does not. Heaven and earth are still here as witness to the law. Remember what Y'shua said in Matthew 5, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." We should strive to obey out of our love for the Father and in joy for what the Son has done on our behalf. Not toss His rules in the garbage bin as outdated, "for the Jews" or "impossible." He looks at our hearts. Are we trying to please the Lover of our soul, or the love of our soul?

The enigma is this, we are His children. He knows we are not capable of perfection, yet He still requires us to obey. He has graciously provided our Savior who makes up the gap for us in our imperfect state. Are we children of honor, or children of wrath, claiming lawless grace as an excuse not to try?

Shalom.