

The Honest Truth

You ultimately live in God's courtroom. When you place your hands on this book, to read it, to understand it, to teach it, and to apply it, who do you represent? This word is the standard of God's law, and because of sin, we should expect nothing less than a real battle to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.



STAYING ON THE LINE

- There are temptations within and/or without to say either *less than* what the Scriptures say or to say *more than* what the Scriptures say.

Deuteronomy 5:32-33 “You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ³³You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.”¹

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us (1 Jn 3:24)

- The hermeneutical principle has not changed for us in the New Testament under the Covenant of Grace. The challenge is handling the law of God in light of Christ's coming (New Testament age). This requires prudence and humility before God so that we do not stray to the right or the left.
- We learned in week one that the central message of Scripture is that God in Jesus has established his kingdom as a suffering servant by way of his death and resurrection for sinners. Since the gospel is the central *storyline* of Scripture, we must learn what it means to not depart from it as we properly handle the commandments of God.

Above the line we add (+)

Below the line we subtract (–)

ABOVE THE LINE: Danger to Avoid

Legalism: This error teaches that one receives the promise(s) of God based on keeping the law. It is the thought that you *can* do it on your own (Pharisaism). The inevitable result is an anti-gospel that teaches “*this* is the way to get to God.” It theologically rejects justification by faith alone and practically upholds a sanctification that is not grounded in the sufficiency of the cross.

¹ See *also*, Deut 4:2; cf. 27:26

Moralism: This similar error teaches that one is saved through the gospel *but* practically teaches an excessive emphasis on human behavior marked by *arbitrary laws* added on top of the laws of God. Hermeneutically, a person or group of people add rules, stipulations, or obligations to the Christian life that are either not taught in Scripture or adds laws that are fulfilled in Christ and no longer binding.

- Like legalism, moralism strikes at the vitals of justification and sanctification.
- Biblical sanctification is a proper response to the gospel by obedience to those biblical laws that *are still binding* upon Christians.

BELOW THE LINE: Dangers to Avoid

Liberalism: This error teaches an overly free interpretation of the meaning or application of Scripture. Efforts are made to preferentially borrow teachings of Scripture to create a self-made religion. The gospel is not the central message but is replaced by another “gospel” message that subsequently distorts doctrines of Christianity.

Antinomianism: This error loosens the binding nature of God’s commands on the human heart by appealing to the presence of divine grace. It affirms the gospel message but dismisses biblical commands for Christian sanctification. Ultimately, it cheapens the grace of God offered in the gospel and ignores or greatly minimizes the call to biblical sanctification.

- Progressivism is an offspring of antinomianism which offers a dismissive interpretation of Scripture’s commands shaped by either personal convictions, social pressures, or a cultural moment.

EXAMPLES

Genesis 3:1-3. Q: How do Eve and the serpent add or detract from God’s law?

Job 8:1-7. Q: Does Bildad go above or below the line of Scripture?

THE THREE FORMS OF THE LAW

THE MORAL LAW

- When God created Adam, he commanded him to exercise dominion over the earth by imitating God (Gen 1:26, 27) and to not eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17).
- God created Adam and Eve with an intrinsic law written on their hearts that continues *even after the fall* as a perfect rule of righteousness. This “law on our hearts” God wrote down (codified) in the 10 Commandments (Ex 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21).
- The moral law always remains personal, entire, exact, and demands perpetual obedience.



- Christ fulfilled the moral law, yet it remains binding for believers and non-believers. It renders us accountable to God (Rm 2:14-15) even though our sinful consciences distort the law (1 Cor 8:7, 10; 10:29; 1 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:15).
- We can summarize the first four commandments as our responsibility to God, while the later six commandments as our responsibility to our neighbor.
- The Old Testament summarizes the law (Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18). Jesus uses that summary when his antagonists want to give preferential treatment. “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus responds, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:28-31).

THE CIVIL LAW



- God commanded Israel (Mosaic Covenant) to keep judiciary laws as a nation. Israel was a political state (i.e. Ex 21-23), yet these civil laws expired with the state of the people.
- They do not oblige Christians in any way since we now belong to the household of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) awaiting a country that is to come. Now, we are strangers and exiles on the earth (Eph 2:19; Heb 11:13,16; cf. 1 Pt 2:11 and 1 Tim 2:1-2).
- The civil laws were fulfilled by Christ our King (Gen 49:10; 1 Cor 9:8-10).
- What remain in force are the national laws of men whether by king or governor. Christians should submit themselves to their civil ordinances just as Paul and Peter clearly teach (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-14, 17; cf. Mk 12:17).
- Christians must exercise wisdom and prudence in their submission to governments as they remain bound to God’s moral law. Today, the civil laws of Israel remain as general principles of equity and fairness when followed by any nation state.

THE CEREMONIAL LAW



- God ordained for the people of Israel the ceremonial law that regulated a proper worship of the Triune God.
- The New Testament teaches that this law, like the civil law, was because of Israel’s youthfulness (Gal 3:19ff). They needed daily reminders and pictures (types) of God’s attributes to point them of their need of God and lead them to their Messiah (Gal 4:1-3; Heb 9-10).
- While these laws deeply enrich the New Testament church in morality and worship, they are nevertheless fulfilled in Christ and are not obligatory.
- Daniel the prophet predicted one would come “to put an end to sacrifice and offering” (9:27), and Paul reminds us that the written code of the sacrificial system was canceled with its regulations in Christ (Col 2:14, 16-17). False teachers promoted these Jewish ceremonial regulations as necessary for spiritual maturity. In Colossians, based in Acts, we learn that Christians are not obligated to observe these laws: dietary laws (food and drink), festivals, new moon festivals, Sabbath festivals. They foreshadowed Christ. The writer of Hebrews states, “For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain. But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better...In speaking of a new covenant, [Christ] makes the first one obsolete” (Heb 8:5-6,13).