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Ephesians Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Christ Abolished the Law

In what sense did Christ abolish the law?

First, we are not declared righteous (justified) by the law. Romans 3:20 says, “no human being will be justified in his sight ‘by deeds prescribed by the law.’”

Secondly, we are not sanctified (made holy) by the law; “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (Ro. 6:14). Notice carefully that this verse says that reason sin will not have dominion over us is because we are not under the law. If we were under the law sin would have dominion over us! And if sin has dominion over us we are not being sanctified. Being free from the law gives us freedom from the bondage of sin which results in sanctification. Galatians 3:2b-3 also denies that sanctification comes through the law; “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” The believers of Galatia had begun their Christian life by faith not by keeping the law. Why now would they be deceived into thinking that what had begun in the Spirit apart from the law could be perfected by the flesh under the law? This is the force of the whole argument in Galatians. The believers in the church were not trying to be saved by the law, but trying to please God and grow in holiness by seeking to live under the law. Paul calls this accursed (Gal. 1:8-9; 5:12).

Lastly, the law cannot preserve us in salvation. Romans 8:3-4 states, “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.” Christ came as a sacrifice for sin and it was His work on the cross that fulfilled the law and condemned sin.

According to Romans 7 we have been become dead to the law (Ro. 7:4) and delivered from it (Ro. 7:6). Romans 10:4 sums up the argument; “Christ is the end of the law (i.e. the termination or cessation of the law) for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (For an excellent summary of Romans 7:1-6 see Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: the Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, 643)

The conclusion must be that the entire law for the Christian is no longer binding. This includes even the moral law. This is clear in II Corinthians 3 where the “tables of stone” (i.e. the 10 commandments, the moral law) which guided the Israelites are called the ministry of death (II Cor. 3:7, 9) and have been done away with (II Cor. 3:7, 11). The great Accuser, Satan, found his source to condemn us in the law, but the charges against us have been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14) so that we are free from judgment which the law demands.

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At this point one may wonder in what sense were the Jews under the law? As we have seen, the people who lived in Old Testament times were under the law from the time it was given till Christ died on the cross (Gal. 3:17-23). To be “under the law” could only mean one of two things to a Jew; either it was (1) the way of salvation or (2) a rule (or guide) of life. We know for sure that it was not the way of salvation (see notes on “Salvation in the OT”). Therefore, we must conclude that the Jews were under the law as a rule of life. Our conclusion is that the change from the Age of Law to the Age of Grace does not mean that before Christ people were saved by obeying the law. As we have already seen the law saves no one in any age. What it means is that in the Old Testament period people were under the law as a rule of life, today we are not.

APPENDIX 2

Ephesians 6:5 – the slave / master relationship

“. Δοῦλος and κύριος are here relative terms, although in Greek the antithetical term to δοῦλος is commonly δεσπότης, as in 1 Tim. 6, 1; Titus 2, 9; compare also 1 Pet. 2, 18. Δοῦλος, from δέω, to bind, means a bondman, or slave, as distinguished from a hired servant, who was called μίσθιος or μισθωτός. That such is its meaning here is plain not only from the common usage of the word, but also from the antithesis between δοῦλος and ἐλεύθερος, bond and free, in v. 8. Κύριος, means possessor, owner, master. It implies the relation which a man may bear both to persons and things. The nature of that relation, or the kind and degree of authority involved in it, however, is not determined by the word, but in each case by the context. It is evident both from the meaning of the terms here used, and from the known historical fact that slavery prevailed throughout the Roman empire during the apostolic age, that this and other passages of the New Testament refer to that institution. It is dealt with precisely as despotism in the State is dealt with. It is neither enjoined nor forbidden. It is simply assumed to be lawful, so that a Christian may consistently be an autocrat in the State, or a master of slaves. In this view the scriptural doctrine on this subject, differs on the one hand, from the doctrine that slave-holding is in itself sinful, on the ground that one man cannot lawfully possess or exercise the rights and authority over his fellow-men, which are involved in the relation of a master to his slaves. This of necessity leads to setting up a rule of faith and practice higher than the Scriptures, and thus tends to destroy their authority. It leads to uncharitable feelings and to unrighteous judgments, as well as to unwarrantable measures for abating the evil. On the other hand, the scriptural doctrine is opposed to the opinion that slavery is in itself a desirable institution, and as such to be cherished and perpetuated. This leads to results no less deplorable than the other error. As slavery is founded on the inferiority of one class of society to another, the opinion that it ought to be cherished naturally leads to the adoption of means to increase or to perpetuate that inferiority, by preventing the improvement of the subject class. It presents also a strong temptation to deny the common brotherhood of men, and to regard the enslaved as belonging to an inferior race. The great mistake of those who adopt the former error, is—1. That they assume the right of property in the master to extend to more than the services of the slave. The only right of property possible in the case is a right to use the slave as a man possessing the same nature with his master, and may, by the law of God and the constitution of things, be properly used. And 2. The

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confounding slave-laws with slavery, which is as unreasonable as to confound despotism as a form of civil government, with the laws of any particular despotic state. Those laws may be good or bad. Their being bad, as they too often are, does not prove either in the case of despotism or slavery that the institution itself is contrary to the divine law. The mistake of those who hold the other extreme opinion on this subject, so far as the Bible is concerned, is that what the Scriptures tolerate as lawful under given circumstances, may be cherished and rendered perpetual. This is as unreasonable, as to maintain that children should, if possible, always remain minors.

The Bible method of dealing with this and similar institutions is to enforce, on all concerned, the great principles of moral obligation—assured that those principles, if allowed free scope, will put an end to all evils both in the political and social relations of men. The apostle, therefore, without either denouncing or commending slavery, simply inculcates on master and slave their appropriate duty. On the slave he enjoins the duty of obedience. In the expression, masters, according to the flesh, there is evidently an implied reference to a higher authority. It limits the authority of the master to what is external; the soul being left free. The slave has two masters; the one κατὰ σάρκα, the other κατὰ πνεῦμα. The one, man; the other, Christ. The directions here given relate to their duty to the former. As to the nature of the obedience required, the apostle teaches—1. That it should be rendered μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου, with fear and trembling, i. e. with conscientious solicitude. That nothing servile is intended by these terms is plain from the context, and from a comparison with other passages in which the same expression is used. It is not the fear of man, but the reverential fear of God of which the apostle speaks, as what follows clearly proves. In 1 Cor. 2, 3, Paul tells the Corinthians that he came among them "with fear and trembling;" and in 2 Cor. 7, 15, he speaks of their having received Titus, "with fear and trembling;" and in Phil. 2, 12, he exhorts believers to work out their salvation "with fear and trembling." In all of these cases solicitude to do what is right is all the terms imply." (Hodge, Commentary, 362-364)