

Paul's REAL Position on "The Law"

Widely Considered as the Major Advocate of the Anti-Law Position, the Apostle whose Theological Premises were Highly Subject to being "Wrested" actually had Much to Say Regarding Our Obligation Toward GOD's Laws.

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Depending on one's personal persuasion, it IS possible to make a strong case for the Apostle Paul being an advocate of keeping the Laws of God. Also, in contrast to that, some make a case that he advocates that we no longer need to keep them.

It is important at this point to explain that the below narrative was obtained from, and I wish to credit, another author. Unfortunately, that author's name escapes me at this late date. Nevertheless, he captures the essence of the matter quite clearly, as does the esteemed scholar whom he quotes.

VALIDATION OF THE LAW OF GOD

When it comes to discerning the absolute validity as to how the Law of God functions and is applied in the life of a true Christian (converted follower of Jesus Christ); the best succinct explanation that I have ever read, was authored by the late Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, Professor of Theology of Andrews University in Berrian Springs, Michigan. (A Seventh Day Adventist University). Many hold this learned Bible scholar in rightful respect as to his intellectual honesty in so much as to his objective-mindedness in seeking the Truth of God, as well as, in particular, his keen ability to correctly evaluate God's Law in a world held captive under Satan's evil sway of strong delusion.

The following original quotations, with emphasis added in the form of italics, underlining, s p a c e d - o u t words, and bold-faced words; gives ample credence as to the absolute irrefutable proof that God's Laws, Commandments, Statutes, and Judgments are still valid, and therefore must be obeyed by humankind in this sophisticated modern-day end-time world of man-ruled society.

The following quote Dr. Bacchiocchi:

"When carefully reading Holy Scripture, it is clearly revealed w h y the Law of God is still in force today. For those who still vainly cling to the futile and erroneous reasoning that the Apostle Paul taught that Christ came to abrogate or annul His Father's Law ¹ – The Ten Commandments, in particular, and the chief 'target' of all their futile attacks: God's Sabbath ² – then such deluded individuals must answer the following straightforward question:

"How can Paul view the Law both as "abolished" (Eph.2:15 and "established" (Rom. 3:31), plus unnecessary (Rom. 3:28) and necessary (1 Cor. 7:19; Eph. 6:2-3; 1 Tim. 1:8-10)?

"The failure to understand this important distinction that Paul makes between so-called "legalistic" observance of the Law, and "loving" observance of the Law, has led many to conclude erroneously that the Apostle rejects the validity of the Law; when in reality he rejects only its unlawful use. ³

¹ It should be pointed out that the Being who gave the Law from Mt. Sinai was the pre-incarnate Christ, NOT the Father! It was Christ who dealt with the nation in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. (1 Cor. 10:4) Most mistakenly think it was the Father who gave the Law from Mt. Sinai, thus leaving open the idea that Christ set-up a whole new legal structure in opposition to His Father's harsh edicts.

² Those who have dealt with this controversy soon come to realize that the 'issue' isn't so much to reject the Law in its entirety, but to dismiss the fourth Commandment. Theft, murder, adultery and such are not generally advocated so much as the **Sabbath** Command is rejected in favor of another practice which was borrowed from non-Biblical sources.

³ By 'unlawful use' we must realize what that means. Religious people, regarded as 'legalists', often imagine that their faithful keeping of the Law results in their attaining an acceptably righteous condition by their own effort. The fallacy being that the remission of sin is not attainable except

“Thus, those who begin with a false premise will most certainly end with a false conclusion! ⁴

“The resolution to this apparent theological paradox is to be found in the two different contexts in which Paul speaks of the the Law: (1) When he speaks of the Law in the context of salvation (meaning, justification, or a right standing before God) – especially in his confrontations with Judaizers and other self-righteous individuals – he clearly affirms that Law-keeping is of no avail. (Rom. 3:20). (2) On the other hand, when Paul speaks of the Law in the context of Christian conduct (meaning, sanctification, or right living before God) – especially in dealing with antinomians (those who are against Law, and in particular, God’s Law); he upholds the validity of God’s Law (Rom. 7:12; 13:8-10; and 1 Cor. 7:19).

“Thus it is clearly evident that Paul consistently rejects the Law as the method of salvation; but consistently upholds the Law as the primary moral standard of Christian conduct.”

===== END QUOTE =====

While Dr. Bacchiocchi lays out the broader essence of the matter, it still remains elusive as to providing the full and comprehensive answer to this age-long controversy.

What Do You Mean: LAW?

Before we can fully identify the ‘issues’ regarding the applicability of God’s Laws in Christian life, we must first establish exactly what is meant by the term: LAW.

First: there are the Moral Standards enumerated in the Ten Commandments;

Second: there are Statutes which proscribe annual Observances such as Holy Days, which were not as

with the shedding of blood, and that not of animals, which only typically represented that truth.

⁴ The false conclusion being that the Laws of God are no longer relevant. What is missing from that reasoning is the premise that the Law is not the MEANS of salvation, but is the due expression of appreciation of having been given it. The Law in its most fundamental intent defines how to LOVE God and fellow man. (Matthew 22:36-40 / Leviticus 19:18)

comprehensively understood in their day as have been realized today;

Third: there are Ritual Observances which include sacrificing, describing holy artifacts, religious dress, ritual cleansings and ceremonies.

Forth: numerous ‘judgments’ relating to interpersonal relationships, restitution of damages, civil codes, harvesting and resting of the land.

But foremost: there are the added determinations made by men interpreting into the Law many non-Biblical requirements. Such practices are or were not necessarily all wrong, it just satisfied a need for answers to matters the elders of the day thought important. These also are in places referred to as “the law”.


With these considerations in mind, we can see how important it is to clearly define exactly what is meant by “the Law”. When we read “the Law” we must correctly understand which Laws are being referred to AND the reason for its application.

Not Justified BY Law-keeping!

What we need to carefully take note of is that in the places where Paul appears to be negative toward the Law, it is consistently in those cases where the context reflects upon worshippers using the law as an alternate means of absolving ones’ self of sins. (What is referred to as using the Law unlawfully!) This is the essential point. Law keeping does not absolve anyone of past sins, but not keeping the Law thereafter does impact the accumulation of further sins.

But without the application of Christs shed Blood to effect the remission of past sins, a person is still in his sinful state. But such application does not remove the obligation to pursue a righteous path, as defined by God’s righteous standards (the Moral Law), as lived by Christ as an example.

Another shocker with many ‘believers’ is that the Ceremonial / Sacrificial Law is not permanently ‘done away’ as it will be reinstituted in the millennial Kingdom. That is suspended for the present time, but there is a use for it (as there was in the past) in the millennial Kingdom. Other articles

address this important development, as do the final dozen chapters of the Book of Ezekiel. 

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