

Grace or the Law?

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Question: “According to your contention Christians are still under the law, whereas it is evident to readers of the New Testament that they are under grace, Christ having fulfilled the law for them.”

This is quoted from a letter that was written to us by one who expressed the utmost astonishment that we should keep, and teach others to keep, the Sabbath of the fourth commandment—the seventh day of the week. This expresses a very common idea. Perhaps nine out of every ten who object to keeping the Sabbath of the law of God, will give as their reason for not keeping it the fact that Christ kept the law.

“Not Under The Law”

Before taking up this point, however, we must state again that we do not teach nor believe that Christians are under the law. Most emphatically they are not. And the reason why they are not is that they keep the law, even as Christ did. The psalmist wrote,

Psalms 119

⁴⁵ I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.

1 John 3

⁴ Sin is the transgression of the law.

Now the Apostle Paul writes,

Romans 6

¹⁴ Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not un-

der the law, but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid.

There is no necessity for any misapprehension as to what it is to be under the law, for the apostle says that those who are not under the law do not sin; that sin has no dominion over them. That is to say, they do not transgress the law. The man, therefore, who is not under the law is the man who keeps the law. Christians are under grace, and the grace of God saves from the transgression of the law.

Fulfilling the Law

Come now to the thought that we do not need to keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, because Christ kept or fulfilled the law. This is an acknowledgment of two things, namely:

1. That the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and
2. That Christ kept it.

But let us see how it will work to say that we are absolved from the duty of keeping the Sabbath because Christ fulfilled the law.

“What is written in the law? how do you read?” Remember that there is more in the law than the simple keeping of the Sabbath, and that it all stands together as a unit. The answer which the Lord Himself approved, and which He Himself gave on one occasion, is this:

Luke 10

²⁶ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind;

²⁷ And your neighbor as yourself.

This is the whole law. Now let us for a moment accept as true the statement that we need not keep the Seventh day, ac-

cording to the law, because Christ fulfilled the law, and see to what it leads us.

It is true that Christ fulfilled the law. It is also true that the principal part of the law is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,” etc. Now it is certain that Christ fulfilled this commandment. What then must we conclude, according to the theory before us? Why, simply this, that we do not need to love the Lord our God, since Christ did it for us!

The second great commandment of the law is:

Mark 12

³¹ You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

But Christ fulfilled the law for us; therefore we do not need to love our neighbors at all!

Or, to go into particulars, the commandment says,

Exodus 20

⁷ You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

But Christ fulfilled the law for us, reverencing the name of the Father; therefore we may curse and swear!

The commandment says,

¹³ You shall not kill.

And...

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Christ fulfilled this part of the law also for us, and so Christians may murder and lie!

“No, no,” says our friend, “that is no part of Christianity.”

And so say we. Our friend will say that Christians must reverence the name of God, must honor their parents, must not kill, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness, nor covet; and so say we, because the Bible says so.

The fact that Jesus Christ loved the Father, was obedient to

His earthly parents, did no violence to any person, and always witnessed to the truth, is no reason why Christians should not do the same, but is the strongest reason why they should obey those commandments.

So the fact that Jesus kept the Sabbath,—the very day enjoined by the fourth commandment, the seventh day,—is the strongest reason why Christians should keep it also. There is no argument against the Sabbath that does not strike equally against every commandment of the law. The law is one, and he that offends in one point “is guilty of all.” *James 2:10*.

Christ's Life in Us

Christ fulfilled “all righteousness.” What for? Was it in order that we might be free from righteousness? Far from it. We were already free from righteousness. He fulfilled all righteousness in order that we might be free from all sin. God sent His own Son,

Romans 8

⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Romans 5

¹⁰ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

But bear in mind that the life of Christ does us no good unless it is in us.

2 Corinthians 13

⁵ Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?

So that if the life of Jesus is not “made manifest in our body” (*2 Corinthians 4:10*), we are not Christians at all. It is not the mere fact that Jesus kept the law eighteen hundred years ago that saves us, but it is the fact that He still lives, that His life now is the same as it was then, and that He lives in us, and fulfills the law in us, not outside of us.

Romans 5

¹⁹ By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.

Notice that it is not simply that by the obedience of One we are *accounted* righteous, but that it is by Christ's obedience that we are actually *made* righteous. His obedience is not a substitute for our disobedience, but it is actually our righteousness.

Oneness with Christ is the Christian standard. We are "crucified with Christ," "buried with Him by baptism into death," "risen with Christ," in order that we might also "live with Him." He set the example when He was on earth, and now He comes to walk over the same road in us.

There is altogether too much failure to recognize what true Christianity is. Too many seem to think it is sufficient to acknowledge that Jesus Christ, once came in the flesh, was crucified, buried, and raised, forgetting that true Christianity is the present life of Christ in human flesh.

1 John 4

² Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God;

³ And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.

It is not enough to confess that Jesus Christ *once came* in the flesh; we must confess that He *even now is come* in the flesh, even ours, and that He is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (*Hebrews* 13:8), and that therefore His life in us must be the same that it was in Him eighteen hundred years ago in Judea and Galilee.

Let us not therefore think that since Jesus fulfilled the law we may ignore any part of it, but rather remember:

1 John 2

⁶ He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.