

Paul Vehemently Warned Us About This Gospel Perversion

If being good and keeping the 10 Commandments (or at least some of them) were enough to make us good enough for heaven, then Christ died for no reason at all.

Christmas was pointless.

Easter was even more pointless.

Paul's letter to the Galatian church is a reprimand to Messianic Jews (*Jews who had received Christ as their Messiah*) for their prejudice against Greeks who had received Christ and requirements to keep certain cherry-picked, Jewish ceremonial laws as a fulfillment of their salvation.

In Galatians 3:10, Paul said this:

For all who rely on the works of the law are under the curse. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them."

James, in James 2:10 actually echoed this later when he said: "For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of breaking the whole law."

Before we examine the dangers of trying to keep the law, I feel it is important to preface it with this truth:

There are a lot of Christians who declare they are free from the law, and therefore almost completely ignore the Old Testament and find the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) irrelevant to today's believer.

They misunderstand what Paul is teaching.

First, we must understand that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed (Jesus and His redemptive work are hidden all over the Old Testament in the sacrifices and ceremonial laws)

And the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

Jesus, Himself, said in Matthew 5, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish, but to fulfill."

Jesus' life and sacrifice did not make the law irrelevant; they fulfilled it.

However, there are still parts of the law that God expects us to obey, and that is what we will look at today.

There is a huge difference between living under the burden of the keeping the law for our validation and acceptance by God, and being obedient to God's Word because we love and respect Him. "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

The former is a perversion of Christ's sacrifice, because His sacrifice already made us accepted and validated:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love; He predestined us to adoption as sons to Himself through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved (Eph. 1:3-6, emphasis mine).

The former places upon us a burden and obligation from which Christ already set us free 2,000 years ago; the latter is a choice we make to live our lives in a way that glorifies God.

3 Dangers of Trying to Keep the Law

1. It is impossible to keep.

There are not “laws”, there is one Law. Anytime you read Scripture, you never see it refer to Law as a separate law, such as—you keep the fourth commandment and do no work on the Sabbath at all, but slip up sometimes on the fifth law and disrespect your parents.

The Law is one solid document. It is a whole, not a sum of its parts. If you look at the Law as solid piece of granite, and you somehow break a part of it, you have broken it completely.

This becomes a problem for the one who bases their validation and acceptance by Christ on their ability to keep the Law, because even Paul admitted that it is impossible to continually keep the Law and not slip up somewhere.

2. It diminishes Christ.

“Brothers, I am speaking in human terms: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is ratified, no one annuls or adds to it” (Gal. 3:15).

When you sign a contract, neither party is able to annul or add to that signed contract.

How much more a divine covenant with Almighty God?

The New Testament is that new covenant, signed in Jesus’ blood, that set us free from having to live under the burden of keeping the Law for our validation and acceptance by God.

When we continue to live under that burden of law, we diminish Christ and the sacrifice He made.

We offend Him.

3. It makes us critical.

Anytime we base our own validation and acceptance by Christ on our own ability to keep the Law, we become critical and judgmental.

We become very hard on ourselves, because every day is a reminder to us that we are completely incapable of keeping the whole Law without slipping up.

We also grow very critical of others around us who daily make mistakes.

We begin to measure their level of salvation and their dedication to Christ by what they do and do not do. And while in chapter 5, we'll see that our liberty in Christ does not give us an excuse to live in willful sin, neither have we been entrusted with the measuring rod of holiness and Christian dedication.

Anytime we begin to measure others' righteousness and Christian dedication by their actions (or lack of action) we should become frightened, because that is the exact judgement Jesus was talking about in Matthew, and He said: "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

Jesus Came to Set Us Free From Keeping the Law

Jesus' sacrifice fulfilled the ancient laws, sacrifices and ceremonial customs God had prescribed to cover the sins of the Israelites so that He could look upon them without destroying them with His perfect holiness.

Now our sins are not just covered, they are removed as far as the east is from the west.

We are no longer "sinners saved by grace", but we are justified, made holy—we are just as if we've never sinned.

In Romans, Paul talks about being "slaves to righteousness," and by this we get a picture of a slave being set free, but

returning to his master out of deep love and devotion and choosing to serve his master—no longer out of obligation, but out of love, devotion and respect.

And this is why we continue to obey the law.

We don't keep the law—the law is no longer our guardian: "But now that this faith has come, we are no longer under tutor" (Gal. 3:25).

When we still lived in sin, the law apprehended us and kept us under its guardianship until Christ came and set us free.

Christ came, and by faith in Him we have become justified—just as if we never sinned.

Now we don't keep the law, we are not kept by the law ... We obey the law out of deep love, devotion and respect for our Master, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because we want Him to be glorified in all in the earth.

My little children, I am writing these things to you, so that you do not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word truly has the love of God perfected in him. By this we know we are in Him. Whoever says he remains in Him ought to walk as He walked.

The New Commandment

Brothers, I am writing no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning. 8 Yet a new commandment I am writing to you, which holds true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing

away, and the true light is already shining.

Whoever says he is in the light but hates his brother is in darkness even until now. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

And when we live in this kind of liberty, we set our brothers and sisters free to live in the same liberty. We no longer look at them as “Jew, Greek, slave, free, male or female” – in other words: We don’t rate our brothers and sisters according to their ethnicity, social standing and outward displays of Christian dedication because we know there is only one standard of Christ’s validation and acceptance: The blood of Jesus.

And under the blood, we are all one in Him.

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