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Christians Must Obey Law

by Bill Lockwood

Paul wrote to the Romans that men are “dead to the law” (Romans 7:1-7). Some have mistakenly supposed that this means that Christians are in no sense under any kind of law whatsoever. They reason that we are “free from law” and that Christianity is not a system of law, but of grace. This they think is supported by Romans 6:14 in which Paul wrote “ye are not under law, but under grace.”

Is it the case that Christians are under no obligation to obey any spiritual law? Does God have no law at all for Christians? Is it true that being under grace frees Christians from all law in Christ? What of these matters?

First, if law in no sense applies to the Christian, it means that it is impossible to sin. Why is this? 1 John 3:4 teaches that sin is a “transgression of law.” Paul himself says the same at Romans 4:15, “Where there is no law, there is no transgression ...” The very concept is sin is defined as violation of law. Is there no regulation in Christ against adultery, killing, stealing, and such like? Is there no law which prohibits idol worship?

Second, Paul teaches that there are commandments to be obeyed. “If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Further, the same apostle tells us that God’s law must be written in the heart and mind (Hebrews 8:10). The very fact that there are commandments to be obeyed shows that there is law in Christ.

*Third, the book of Hebrews explains that there has only been a “change” of law. “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a ‘change’ also of the law” (7:12). Paul did not say there is an erasure of law, period. Rather, the law *changed*. This new law, which is to be written on the heart, has obligations such as love of neighbor (Romans 13:8-10).*

*Fourth, Paul declares plainly that he is under “law to Christ.” In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul discusses how he adapted himself to his audiences and “became all things to all men.” In v. 21 he notes that “to them that are without law, as without law, *not being without law to God, but under law to Christ*, that I might gain them that are without law...” In the previous verse he explained that this “law” was NOT the law of Moses or the Old Testament law. “To them that are under the law, *as under the law, not being myself under the law*, that I might gain them that are under the law.” Thus, the apostle to the Gentiles was NOT under the law of Moses, but he was under the law of Christ. Pretty plain language here.*

*Fifth, Paul’s statements about “not being under law” refer to the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses was a legal code that in and of itself offered no grace. The Romans discussion takes us to chapter 7:1-4 in which the law is clearly described as the Old Testament law. It was a legal system that offered, within itself, no grace whatsoever. This is why it is called the “law of sin and of death” (Romans 8:1). We are free from that law, but *under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*.*