

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE LAWFUL USE OF THE LAW

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully. I Timothy 1:8

The word "law" appears 300 times in the Old Testament and 223 times in the New Testament in our English bibles. The Hebrew word which is predominately translated as "law" in the Old Testament is "towrah" or "torah". This word literally means "a direction, instruction, custom, or manner". It is most often used in the Old Testament to describe the Law of GOD which was given to Moses for the nation of Israel. While that law is often divided by men into what is referred to as the "ceremonial" law and the "moral" law, we don't find such a division of it in the scriptures. Moses law is not simply what has come to be referred to as the Ten Commandments, but includes all of those commands which were given to him on Mt. Sinai and written in stone by the hand of HIM who changes not and whose Word cannot fail.

When we come to the New Testament, the Greek word which is predominately translated as "law", is "nomos". This word literally means, "a custom, a statute, a principle, or a force or influence which compels to action." The use of the term law, in the New Testament, sometimes refers to the Mosaic Law but not exclusively. The only way we can determine when it does is by the context in which it is used and not strictly by the use of the word itself, since it clearly does not refer to the Mosaic law each time it is found.

The Mosaic Law was given to the nation of Israel and was designed to instruct them primarily about the great distance that there was between them as sinful men and a HOLY GOD who dwells in a light to which no man can approach. This law was presented to them as a covenant which set them apart from the other peoples of the earth and to prepare the stage for the redemption of True Israel by HIM who would be JUST and the JUSTIFIER. The LORD showed them to be a nation, precious in HIS sight, by communicating to them HIS holy character in a way which no other nation upon the earth enjoyed. (see Rom. 3:1-6) That law which was holy and irreproachable, they disregarded and broke. Therefore this law became to them a law of sin, death, and condemnation.

It is most certainly a good thing for men to love the LORD their GOD with all their hearts, and to love their neighbor as themselves. Yet who has kept this law? This law demands and provides nothing that would aid a man in keeping it, and does but promise condemnation to all who fail to abide by it. This is the very reason that CHRIST came to redeem HIS elect from it. *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3)* So "the law" cannot be of service to any who would seek to be found acceptable before a righteous, and holy GOD. When a man is enabled to see the source of his condemnation, he can only flee to CHRIST alone.

Men, who are not personally acquainted with the condemnation breathed out in the Mosaic Law, will often simply view it as a good code of ethics for men to follow. Quite often they are akin to the Pharisees who considered themselves to be "lawkeepers". They look upon the outward

letter of that law and see it as a "good" rule to keep. While we are certain that nothing contained in the Mosaic law is anything less than holy and good, we are also certain of the utter impossibility of a man to keep it according to the demands as it was given, to be in its jot and tittle.

Paul warns Timothy (as he did the Galatians and Philippians) of those who were, *"Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."* (1Tim 1:7) This is a problem which has plagued the church from its very earliest days. (see Acts 15:1-29). The correction of this same error is that which occupies the majority of Paul's letter to the Galatians and this error has beset the people of GOD in just about every age up to the present. Those who have a limited understanding of the purpose and weakness of the Mosaic law will continue to seek to bind it upon the very people whom the LORD has set free from it.

There is a "law" spoken of in the New Testament which we might call the "natural law". The scripture says that this "law" is written in the hearts of every man and leaves him without excuse, before GOD, whether he is a Jew or a Gentile. (see Rom.1:18 - 2:15) This is the power of the conscience, from which none can escape, except those who are reprobate. This very law condemns him because he testifies of the righteousness of that law by condemning conduct in others, which he allows in himself. For example; a man can justify himself for taking something that belongs to someone else but that same man will rise up in anger if someone takes something from him. A man may convince himself that his own adulterous affair is excusable, but be angry when another man commits adultery with his wife. In this men testify that they are knowledgeable about right and wrong. All men shall be condemned who stand before GOD on the basis of conscience, since they have despised HIS righteousness time and again, and denied that which HE plainly gave. While conscience does indeed serve as a restraint against sin in a measure, yet just like the law of Moses it is weak in the flesh and men will even deny their own conscience to pursue their own destruction.

If the natural law and the Mosaic law were the only "laws" given to men, none should ever escape condemnation. Thankfully we read that there is a "law" which is given to the sons of GOD which forever sets them free from the law of sin and death whether that be written in the conscience or chiseled in tablets of stone. Paul writes, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom 8:1-2)

A man could keep the outward letter of the Mosaic law and yet fall in condemnation because this law is not satisfied by an adherence to its letter as is demonstrated in the account of the rich young ruler. (see Luke 18:18-23) Likewise a man could fulfill the law of Moses concerning sacrifice for sin and yet still not have a clear conscience. *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."* (Heb 10:1-4)

So those who find themselves burdened with the grief of their sin can find no consolation in the law of conscience or the law of Moses. In these they are reminded of their sin. Yet I show unto you a better way. *"For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."* (Heb 7:19)

The only "lawful use" of the law, for the sons of GOD is to manifest the Holiness of GOD to wicked men, HIS separation from guilty sinners, and HIS just condemnation of all law breakers. Those who are made righteous in JESUS CHRIST are made free from the Law of sin and death since that law is given for the lawless and disobedient. Those who are in CHRIST are not "lawless" but abide in *"the law of the SPIRIT of life in CHRIST JESUS."* *"being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ."* (1Co 9:21) *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."* (Gal 3:24-25)

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