

# Exodus: No Longer Slaves – Part 12

## Why was the Law Given?

While reading through the 10 Commandments and the other civil requirements and worship instructions, I was reminded of how much confusion there is today in regards to our understanding and application of the law. For instance:

Romans 6:14 - *For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

Romans 3:32 - *Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*

### **The Misunderstanding of the Mosaic Law**

There are three possible meanings for the word “law” in the New Testament when used in different contexts.

- 1) The word “law” sometimes refers to the entire Old Testament.
- 2) The word “law” sometimes refers to the writings of Moses.

Example: Luke 24:44 - *These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.*

- 3) The third meaning of the word “law” is not a different part of the OT, but the OT understood in a different way.
  - a) We will see in a few moments how many in Israel twisted the 10 Commandments and the other ordinances of God’s covenant of Moses and turned it into a legalistic job description of what it takes to gain salvation.

The foundation of the Law was established on love and faith.

The purpose of the Law is NOT a righteousness (being right with God) that comes by self-willed obedience that leads to religious pride and legalism, but rather a righteousness that comes by faith.

Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him as righteousness.

Would Israel believe God and be right with God?

- b) There is no Greek word for legalism, so when Paul wanted to refer to this distortion of the Mosaic law, he often used the phrase:
  - i) “works of law”

- (1) Romans 3:20 - *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*
- (2) Galatians 2:16 - *... we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ... because by works of the law no one will be justified.*
- ii) Sometimes he simply used the word “law” to refer to this false distortion of the Law. Romans 6:14 - *You are not under law but under grace.*

This does not mean you don't have to keep the Law. It means you are not burdened by it as a job description of how to earn your salvation.

So whenever you read the word “law” in the New Testament, ask yourself...Is this the OT, or the writings of Moses, or the legalistic distortion of Moses' teaching?

This will help us understand whether we are being warned about the legalistic distortion or encouraged to love and honor the Law.

### **The Purpose for the Law**

#### 1) LOVE: Love is the chief aim of the Law.

- a) When God gave the law, He had love in His mind.

Romans 13:8-10 - *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. v.9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” v.10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Galatians 5:14 - *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

- b) The chief aim of the Law is not a righteousness that comes by some hyper legalistic works mentality. The chief end of the Law is Love!

Matthew 22:36-40 – *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” v.37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

- c) Love is the foundation of the 10 Commandments.

#### **The first 4 are God-focused.**

- i) Don't have other god's before me. Give to Me your full heart.
- ii) Don't make an image or idol of any kind.

This has everything to do with love. Exodus 20:4-6 - *You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. v.5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, **for I the Lord your God am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, v.6 but **showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me** and keep my commandments.*

Notice the order of “love me” and “keep my commandments.” Keeping these commandments must come from a foundation of love.

- iii) Don't use My name in vain.
- iv) Make the Sabbath day holy where you don't pursue wealth or riches but rather, you rest and you pursue a relationship with Me.

### **The Next Six Commandments are People-focused.**

- v) Honor your father and mother.
- vi) You shall not murder another person.
- vii) Don't hurt another person by committing adultery with their spouse.
- viii) You shall not steal a person's belongings.
- ix) You shall not bear false witness.
- x) You shall not covet.

So, we should uphold the Law by living a life that finds for itself a foundation based in love.

## 2) FAITH: Covenant love is the fruit of faith.

### a) Key verses:

- i) Galatians 5:6 - *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*
- ii) Galatians 3:5 - *Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith.*

The path on which the Spirit comes to empower us is faith in God's promises. Love is the fruit of the Spirit and the outworking of faith.

To love God the way He desired and still desires will take faith! You cannot love a God you do not believe in and, the greater one's faith, the greater one loves.

- b) What God wanted more than anything else was His people to love Him and trust Him.

The reason why God showed off His power was so they could believe. The reason why He wanted them to believe was so they could love!

- i) Covenant love only works through faith.
- ii) One can act loving or will oneself into acting in a pleasing way and still not do it in love.

Jesus asked, why do you break the commandments for the sake of tradition. (Matthew 15). How were they breaking the commandments? They actually increased the commandments by adding new rules to their job description but they did not know God or love God; they loved their rules and the status it gave them.

Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:13 – *[you] honor me with your lips but your heart is far from me.*

We should not reject the Law of Moses, but rather we should reject the distortion called the “works of the law” because it infers that we can earn righteousness by our good works.

- 3) OBEDIENCE: The Law called for loving obedience, which works through redeemed people who would trust God for their future in faith!
  - a) The Law did not call for an obedience-based righteousness found on the merit of works. It was never God’s intention for someone to earn His favor by their good behavior.

There is none righteous, no not one (Romans 3:10).

The Law called an obedience that flows out of love and faith.

- b) If love is what the Law aimed at, and one can only love God and/or his neighbors by faith, then the Law must teach obedience by faith.

Romans 9:30–32: Paul explains why Israel has not fulfilled the law even though she pursued it for centuries. He says, “What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; v.31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. v.32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works...”

That little phrase “as if” is tremendously important. It shows clearly that Paul did not believe that God ever intended the law to be obeyed by “works.” That is, if you try to use the Law as a job description of how to earn God’s favor you are doing something that the law itself opposes.

- c) The Law itself is against “the works of the law.” The Law never commanded anyone to try to merit salvation.
  - i) The Law is based on faith in God’s promises, not on legalistic strivings. The mistake of Israel was not in pursuing the Law, but in pursuing it by works instead of by faith.

- ii) Jesus taught the same thing in Matthew 23:23 NLT: What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.
- d) What portion of the Law shall we obey?

i) Christ Jesus fulfilled the Law.

- (1) He fulfilled the sacrificial side of the OT (1 Corinthians 5:7 - *He is our Passover Lamb*).
- (2) He declared all foods clean. Mark 7:19 - *...since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?* (Thus, He declared all foods clean.)
- (3) He founded a new people of God, which is not a national or ethnic group but instead we are all the people of God.

Therefore the dietary laws, laws about sacrifices, laws pertaining to political organizations and national action are not requirements for us in this day.

However, the OT inspires love, faith, and obedience; therefore like David says in the Psalms over and over, we should delight in the law and meditate on it day and night.

ii) What portions should we obey? That which inspires love and faith!

Matthew 22:36-40 – *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” v.37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. v.38 This is the great and first commandment. v.39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. v.40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*