

The Commands, Ordinances and Precepts of God still apply to Gentile Disciples.

This piece continues in the same vein as the previous article, which provoked not a little controversy as we expected. But, nonetheless, it is a matter greatly overlooked in church doctrine and must be considered as our salvation is connected to it.

Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus said that unless a man is born again of water and the spirit he cannot either see, or enter, the kingdom of heaven. One cannot enter what one cannot see. A blind man cannot enter a room if he cannot see the door. The kingdom of heaven is not of this fleshly world, which will pass away and burn up. It is eternal and spiritual. So unless one is truly born again, one cannot see or understand according the ways of the Spirit. If we are born again of the Spirit, we are no longer slaves to this fleshly world, which we are sojourning through, but on the contrary, we are able to bring our flesh into submission to the Spirit. This ability is given freely through faith and grace.

If we walk according to the flesh then we are slaves to the law of sin and death, because it is impossible to bring our flesh into submission to the law of the Spirit, except through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we walk according to the flesh we gratify the flesh, which is in opposition to the Spirit and therefore the will of God. And herein lies a very important point for those who feel that the commands, ordinances and precepts of God are not for Gentile believers. If we do not walk according to the Spirit, in accordance with God's ways, which are not of this fleshly world, then consequently we put ourselves back 'under' the law because the flesh is weak and it enslaves us in its natural born state of disobedience and lawlessness. A lawless state is one that refuses to submit to its authority.

There are some who say we must obey the law in order to be saved, and by this they mean through their own strength and by their own doing. This is erroneous doctrine and leads to destruction.

There are some who counsel that we must become Jews (go Jewish!) in order to be counted righteous and worthy of salvation and that we must keep every ritual and tradition of the Jews. (Some Christian Zionist go too far in this matter!) This too is wrong, so do not be deceived by this error.

Striving to keep the law according to the flesh enslaves us and in so doing we reject the freedom given to us by Christ. Our righteousness comes through Him alone.

However, does this mean that we disobey the law and that we are free to do according to what is right in our own eyes? Absolutely not! God's ways are just and righteous and pure. God's ways are holy and lawful. How dare we assume that we may set our own standards in place of God's!

The law (the commands, ordinances and precepts of God) was given in order that we might be aware of God's standards and to be aware of our hopeless, sinful nature without Him. It shows us our need for a Saviour and for His grace and mercy. Does this understanding mean that the law has passed away or no longer applies? Of course not!

"My ways are not your way and my thought are not like yours, they are higher" Isaiah 55:4.

Does it mean we are doomed to destruction by ourselves if we do not accept the free gift of salvation through faith? Yes!

Does it mean that by accepting the free gift of grace and mercy, we are permitted to ignore God's standards and live according to the flesh as though we had not received the gift? Heaven forbid!

When we are born again of the Spirit, our spirit ought to walk in line with the Holy Spirit. Our standards should be the same as God's standards. His ways should be in our hearts and obedience should become as natural as breathing, instead of being influenced by our old fleshly sinful nature in disobedience. Only by walking in the Spirit, is it possible to walk according to the ways of God. This does not mean we must follow the letter of the ritual purification instructions, or perform sacrifices as in the days of old. It certainly does not mean we follow Rabbinic teachings of men! Rather, we live according to God's moral standards – His immovable, unchanging, commandments. His ways are concrete and unchangeable. He is holy and righteous. Therefore, the natural outworking of walking in the Spirit is, and should be, obedience to His standards not our own. This includes His moral laws.

"Come out and be ye separate"

Now the works of the flesh are clearly seen and evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. These are contrary to the law and constitute sin – for sin is a violation of the law. Sin is missing the mark, the standard the law sets. Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. How then can one say the law no longer applies otherwise sin would not apply. If the law no longer applies then even the ‘Ten Commandments’, which form part of it, are also void and we enter the realms of a lawless society where murder, theft, violence and idolatry are permissible.

If this were the case then those who commit such acts as listed above could also enter the kingdom, as is now taught by certain denominations who embrace sexual immorality and then tell people God will still accept them. He will **not** break His own standards. The word is clear: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is both a massive doctrinal error and blasphemy.

Know this therefore, those who have crucified their flesh along with its passion and desires, and are bringing it into submission, to the law of the Spirit, which is the standard of God, these are they who belong to Christ Jesus.

A lawless state has no respect for authority. Jesus said on Judgment Day many will come claiming they did many things in His name and He will tell them to go away because He never knew them, calling them workers of lawlessness! This is a most serious warning.

Those who have crucified their flesh along with its passion and desires (which conflict with God) and are bringing it into submission to the law of the Spirit, which is the standard of God, these are they who belong to Christ Jesus. By walking according to the Spirit, we are free from condemnation and we are free from the slavery we were under when we walked according to the flesh. Be warned however, that this freedom is certainly not a license to sin, or freedom to violate God’s holy standards. God has given you the power and freedom to walk in His ways, not to spit in His face by counting your own standards as more important than His, and discounting His holy commands.

Finally, there is neither Jew nor Gentile among God’s people. All are one in Christ. There should then be no distinction that says “this is just for the Jews” for it is the Gentiles who have been grafted into spiritual Israel and

welcomed into God's holy people, not the other way around! We are to be set apart, holy and one with Him. We cannot be one with Him if we oppose His holy standards. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

For sin, seizing its opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the Law is holy and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? Certainly not! But in order that sin might be exposed as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. - Romans 7:12

The commandments of God expose our sinful nature through our refusal to obey, reinforcing our need for a Saviour. But having a Saviour does not exonerate us from the responsibility of trying our best to respect the laws of God by walking in the Spirit.

*What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace?
By no means! - Romans 6:15*

Sin means missing the mark, missing God's standard. Standards laid out for His people, Jew and Gentile, one in Christ.

Through Jesus we are freed from the curse that comes as a result of our sinful disobedience caused by our fleshly nature, because He has made it possible to crucify that nature and instead, walk according to the Spirit. It is a case of being brought out from being under the law, and instead, having the power and authority to bring our flesh into submission to it, so we no longer sin – miss the mark.

So in conclusion, our position remains firm. Disciples of Christ are not to sin by disobeying the law, even though they be under grace. Grace is not a license to sin. Sin means disobeying God's laws. If there were no law, sin would not exist! We are justified by faith in Christ. We are sanctified by our obedience to the commandments through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are saved by faith and grace. But as Paul says, faith without works is dead and Jesus will judge us accordingly (2 Cor 5:10). Righteous living means living in accordance with God's ways not our own, which includes keeping His standards.

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