

# Understanding the Purpose of the Law

Jack Elder

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Back in the early days when we first started learning about God's truth, for me that was somewhere in 1968 or 1969. We started sending for literature. Marie came along very soon after that. One of the first things we learned was God's commandment to keep the Sabbath. Awkwardly we tried to do that and we kind of stumbled along. At that early stage, the problem was that we just had a poor understanding of the law. There was an article that came along that helped me. I've saved this for many years. Again, we had a very naive understanding of God's law at that point in time. Here is a quote from that article:

In addition to the broad principles of the Ten Commandments, God gave to the patriarchs statutes for the general wellbeing of the people together with judgments for the protection of everyone's legal rights, and statutes or lesser expressions of a lawmaker usually commanding or forbidding that certain things be done. The judgments are binding decisions made by judges based on God's law.

They're used to settle future disputes, render a sentence, verdict and all that. Continuing the quote:

The Ten Commandments apply to individual conduct; the statutes to national (or today we could use those principles within the church) and the judgments to decisions rendered according to the principles of the Ten Commandments and statutes. All of these are based on the principle of love towards God and love towards man.

That was in the Good News in 1993 by Dr. Hoeh.

Again, we see these three broad categories of the law:

The Ten Commandments  
The statutes  
The judgements

We know there is some overlap there, and sometimes it's all collectively called "the law."

A brief summary of that again would be the statutes. That would cover things like the holy days which we still observe.

Judgments: Ruling, governing, the precedence, the decisions for the Israelites. Remember that at one point they were pretty much an agrarian society or culture. Then they became somewhat nomadic, so a lot of those decisions had to do with land marks, inheritance and all that when they finally came into the land. This involved manslaughter, etc.

Again, we collectively term all of these as the law, the law of Moses or the Mosaic law, as it is referred to.

Today we have our civil law. We have the English and European law for our country.

Because of misunderstanding, what I would like to cover today is the purpose of the law. Turn to Psalm 111. We think we have a good understanding of everything, but sometimes we slip in that regard. We have a lot of outside influences. Historically in our church, we have had individuals that have thrown out God's law.

***Psalm 111:10.*** *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. (NKJV)*

***Psalm 111:10.*** *Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true wisdom. All who obey his commandments will grow in wisdom. Praise him forever. (NLT)*

So putting those together, a good understanding of the purpose of God's law is foundational to our faith.

I'd like to look at this subject from the perspective of the New Testament. We know the difference between the old sacrificial and the ceremonial laws and God's law. Like James Smyda has said, "When it comes to any kind of topic (the same is true with the law) we have the two ditches." We have the one ditch that says the law has been done away and then we have another ditch that says, like Judaism, where we not only have the law, we have to add a bunch of things to that. We have those two extremes.

If you listen to most churches long enough you're going to get confused when it comes to the topic of the law. Basically they use all kinds of suspicious arguments to teach that the law is done away. Sooner or later they get cornered. Then they'll have to say something about obeying God's law. They'll talk in circles and say, "Well, we do need to obey and keep God's law," because they don't want to get caught in that. It's too easy to get caught in a lie. They throw up a smoke screen.

What do they mean when they say that the law is done away, yet on the other hand, we need to obey the law? How do we separate what we should and shouldn't do regarding the law? We should know that. They get caught in this quandary about how to answer this question. If you ask that question of them, you'll get different answers. You'll at least get these two answers:

### **First answer:**

God's laws are done away as a means of salvation. They use the argument that you can't keep God's law because if you say that, you would have to do it perfectly. They use all kinds of circular reasoning to come up with that. The truth is that it was never meant for that. God's laws were never a means of salvation. God never said that this is what you must do to be saved and gain eternal life. That was never the purpose of the law.

### **Second answer:**

They will say that the Old Testament stuff was done away. You don't have to listen to that or worry about it. There are no commandments. All you have to do is believe and listen to the spirit and it will tell you what to do. It's kind of an emotional, syrupy protestant way to view things. They get backed into a corner and say we do need to keep the ten commandments except the fourth one. How do they deal with that? They'll do kind of a slight of hand and say that it just means one day in seven. They may say that nine of the ten commandments are mentioned in the New Testament, but not the fourth. They ignore the statement that it was Christ's custom to go into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The church has produced publications about that in the past. It's easy to prove in the New Testament that Christ and the apostles kept the Sabbath. Then they will take Colossians 2:14 out of context where they claim that it says that the law was nullified or it was nailed to the cross. Actually, it's not even talking about the law.

Once I had a new manager in our department (can't remember which denomination he was) but he was wanting to do some work on the weekend. I told him that I don't work on the Sabbath. He said, "Well, I can worship my god on any day of the week that I want." He took that approach.

So for the most part, they will give a nod to the law and say, "It's nice to obey the Ten Commandments, but ..."

Please turn to 1 Timothy. I'm going to use several translations today to perhaps make the intent of the Greek a little easier to understand. The context is Paul teaching Timothy about teachers teaching the wrong things about God's law.

**1 Timothy 1:8.** *But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, (NKJV)*

That's somewhat vague. Here's the same verse from the Home and Christian Bible. I'll use that quite a bit through here because it does clear some of the language.

**1 Timothy 1:8.** *But we know that the law is good providing one uses it legitimately. (H&CB)*

The New Living Bible says "correctly."

**1 Timothy 1:8.** *Now we recognize and know that the Law is good if anyone uses it lawfully [for the purpose for which it was designed], (Amplified)*

That really makes it clear. The implication is that we can see a purpose already for the law, but it's never for salvation. It was not designed to do that.

We know that the law is good and it has a purpose. If we use it for the right purpose, it's a good thing, but how then do we use it for the right purpose?

What I'd like to do first is establish whether the law has any effect on us today in any form at all. After all, religions out there will tell you that Christ intended to do away completely with the law, and actually that's a central theme of Protestantism. Logically, the lawful use of the law would be history. We wouldn't have to pay any attention to it.

Turn to Matthew 5 and review what Christ said about the law. We've been here a number of times. In fact, I'm not going to use any scriptures today that we've never used before on the same topic. Did Christ, in the New Testament, change the standing of the law? We know that the context here is the so called beatitudes. The law is basic if you look at the context and study it. The law is basic to blessings.

**Matthew 5:17.** *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. (NKJV)*

**Matthew 5:17.** *“Don't assume that I came to destroy the law or the prophets ... (H&CB)*

**Matthew 5:17.** *Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to complete and fulfill them. (AMPC)*

Some will use the argument that, “He fulfilled it so we don't have to do anything.” It's like he jumped through some semantic hoop here, as if he said, “I didn't come to destroy the law, but I destroyed it.” That doesn't make any sense. If you look into the Greek and look at the word “destroy,” it literally means *to loosen or unfasten something that has been bound*. That's why the Amplified uses the words, *not to undo or unfasten*. That's what the Greek means. It also means to *demolish, dissolve, or throw it down*. The point is that Jesus did not say that He had come to destroy the law, throw it away, loosen it, undo it, demolish it, dissolve it or any of those things. Also, we know that the word “fulfill” means to *fill up or complete*. Zodiates, in his [New Testament Word Study](#) says this about that passage:

When Jesus said he came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill, meaning He came only to fulfill the types in prophecies by His actions and sufferings, but also to perform perfect obedience to the law of God in His own

person and to enforce, explain it fully by His doctrine. Thus He fully satisfied the requirements of the law.

He fully satisfied the points of the law. He became the perfect example for us. He enforced the law by His teaching. We know the word "Torah" means *teaching*. In doing that, He showed us what the law looked like. He was a living example of it.

It doesn't sound at all like He intended in any way, shape or form to do away with the law. He actually fulfilled all the prophecies that were spoken about Him and He also demonstrated what perfect obedience looked like.

If we looked at the New Testament, the only time there would be any debate about the law at all is if we look at the writings of Paul.

Turn to Acts 15. There are many positive examples where things are said positively about the commandments of God, the law of God. We'll look at 1 John later. Almost all of the confusion about the law in the New Testament comes from the writings of Paul. There's one exception, in a sense, because it has to do with the old ceremonial law. It's an example of what Paul was dealing with and where people want to twist this around. In Acts 15 is where they were dealing with the law issue within the early church. We know the whole conflict here was over circumcision. Later on, there was an uproar about that and that actually came from the Old Testament law, the Mosaic law as the Jews would call it. We see also in Acts 15 where the gospel was being taken to the Gentiles and they had to send a group of men back to the council in Jerusalem to address this. The narrative in Acts 15 goes like this:

**Acts 15:1.** *And certain men came down from Judea (it doesn't say who) and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (NKJV)*

They associated it immediately with salvation. Those words, "custom of Moses," that word "custom" actually comes from the Greek word "ethos." That's where we get the word "ethical." It means a *moral standard*.

In other words, their standard was the law of Moses, the Mosaic law. We know it wasn't really Moses' law, it's what God gave through Moses. That was their standard, the circumcision. You had to do that in order to be saved. Now from the Amplified version:

**Acts 15:1.** *But some men came down from Judea and were instructing the brethren, Unless you are circumcised in accordance with the Mosaic custom to them that's the same as the law), you cannot be saved. (AMP)*

That was their whole approach. That's what they were teaching the brethren. What these teachers were saying and what Paul was warning Timothy about is that if you're not doing this, you're not keeping the law and you cannot be saved. That is what they were teaching.

You have to think about that a bit. To these legalists (that's what they were), it wasn't about circumcision or salvation, it was all about circumcision. That was the law to them. That is what led to this significant issue in the church. Mind you, they were fifteen to twenty years into the church by then. Individuals in the church were still trying to teach that to the brethren. If you look at the context of Acts 15, these individuals came from Jerusalem. It says they came down from Judea. They were probably Pharisees or converts, but they still hung onto these things. The scholars will refer to these individuals as Judaizers. They went around in the early church trying to influence people that they had to keep the letter of the law. A lot of people think that's what we are. They've termed us as Judaizers, legalists, keeping the law of the Jews and all of that because we keep the seventh day Sabbath and the holy days.

This article is from the Apologetics Study Bible. It's also published by Holman. I have the 2007 edition. Here is a quote on Judaism:

Judaism should not be confused with the religion of ancient Israel (Rick gave a sermon recently about whether there's a connection between Christianity and Judaism). They are two different things. Judaism and the religion God gave Israel are completely different. Early Judaism rose in the aftermath of the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC. The term "Judaism" originally appeared in the first century BC to describe the Hellenistic Greek influence there. Judaism has developed considerably over the intervening centuries. Official Judaism has been a non-sacrificial religion since the destruction of the second temple in AD 7.

Of course, the prophecies say these sacrifices are going to begin again. Continuing the quote:

Observance of the commandments replaced a sacrifice atoning for sin.

That is their whole approach. That's their philosophy and that's what they think. The atonement is not Jesus Christ. Continuing:

For Judaism there is no human feeling, whether collective or individual, that requires special divine intervention and that cannot be remedied with the guidance of the Torah. Salvation consists of faithful, though not perfect adherence to the commandments of God and God, in His mercy, forgives those whose intentions are upright.

You don't need the conversion process. You don't need God's holy spirit, just the laws. That is their approach and that is what they taught. I assume that is what they still teach. If you have a copy of Philip Neal's book, The Religion of Moses or Religion of Men, it has an interesting appendix 2 in there where it gives a list of all those little things you have to do from the time you get up until you go to bed. It governs your whole life. Anyhow, it's interesting.

The point is that this is what Paul was fighting, the concept that you had to be perfectly obedient in every possible way in everything to the letter of the law and then some. It later evolved into ... as long as your intent was good, you still had to do all of that. That's all you had to do for salvation. You didn't need anything else. You didn't need God's intervention in your life. All you had to do is obey the letter of the law.

In Acts 15, in the context here, Peter steps in and it gives a record of what Peter said.

**Acts 15:7.** *After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them: "Brothers, you are aware that in the early days God made a choice among you that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the gospel message and believe. (HCSB)*

We know that by this time the church was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles.

**Acts 15:19.** *Therefore, in my judgment, we should not cause difficulties for those among the Gentiles who turn to God, 20) but instead we should write to them (He lists four things) to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from blood. (HCSB)*

As the context shows, they went on to carry out this policy, taking this gospel to the Gentiles and the rest of the world. However, nowhere did they imply that God's law had been done away, but some try to use this in their arguments. They say, "You don't have to worry about the law anymore. All you have to do is not do these four things."

If we used this type of logic, we'd be thinking that all we really have to do is abstain from things polluted by idols. We don't have much of that anymore. We have to abstain from sexual immorality, (and that's a big issue), eating meat from even a clean animal that had been strangled, and from blood. Those really have to do with one another. So we would have to do those four things and not anything else. If we bought into that kind of logic, then there are an awful lot of things that we could do that we haven't been doing. What about the rest of the Ten Commandments? What about the sixth commandment that says, "Do not murder?" We can all think of people that we know the world would be a lot better off without. Sometimes you have these visions rolling through your head that you have control of a drone and you can put a hellfire missile up someone's tailpipe, but we can't think like that.

The point is that these four things that Peter stated were part of pagan worship. The early church was being taught that you cannot bring those things into your Christian belief. That's what that whole scripture is about.

Actually, they did everything they needed to know about God's law already, right? If you go to verse 21 of Acts 15, it says:

**Acts 15:21.** *For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” (NKJV)*

So there was a lot of teaching about the law, The Torah, the first five books. It was available in every city, everywhere. I don't remember what the rule was, that if there were so many Jews in an area and they would have a synagogue. If a city was big enough, there would be several synagogues. So they understood the basic concepts. They had everything they needed. Obviously these individuals that were telling them that they must be circumcised and keep every dot and tittle of the law, they wanted them to become their converts. So this entire issue here, even though some people would try to use this to say the law has been done away, it has nothing to do with the dissolution of any part of God's law. But Paul is still thought of as the individual who totally and completely obliterated any use of God's law for a Christian.

However, look at the things that Paul did say about the law. In Romans, Paul is speaking to a significant Jewish population and there were individuals there that obviously grew up on the letter of the law, but for some reason they weren't getting the concept of law and faith to live by. So Paul is telling them:

**Romans 3:31.** *Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. (NKJV)*

From the New Living, that verse says:

**Romans 3:31.** *Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law. (NLT)*

That comment, "We establish the law," establish means to *make stand*. That is literally what the word means. So how do you make something stand if you're doing away with it as some say Paul did? It doesn't make any sense. I especially like the Amplified for this verse.

**Romans 3:31.** *Do we then by [this] faith (of Jesus Christ) make the Law of no effect, overthrow it or make it a dead letter? Certainly not! On the contrary, we confirm and establish and uphold the Law. (AMPC)*

Let's look at Romans 7.

**Romans 7:14.** *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. (NKJV)*

Again I like the Amplified.



**Romans 7:14.** *We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am a creature of the flesh [carnal, unspiritual], having been sold into slavery under [the control of] sin. (AMPC)*

That makes it clearer because it's showing that Paul recognized his pre-conversion natural human state apart from God. He goes on to say some very positive things about the law. Unless people cherry pick scriptures to try to prove their arguments about the law being done away, they have to ignore these scriptures.

*22) For in my inner self I joyfully agree with God's law. (HCSB)*

It doesn't sound like he is doing away with anything. From the New King James, it says:

*22) For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. (NKJV)*

As we go on and see the context here, it's the outward man that Paul had trouble with. It's kind of the same for us.

So Paul said a number of positive things about the law. But we know there are some other scriptures that make it sound like the law has been done away. Some use the concept that we are dead to the law.

**Romans 7:4.** *Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. (NKJV)*

Some take this completely out of context. Here is a similar scripture.

**2 Corinthians 3:6.** *who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

*7) But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones (sounds like the commandments), was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,*

*11) For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. (NKJV)*

People read into that that the law passed away. Galatians 2 refers to being dead to the law. Its talking about the works of the law.

**Galatians 2:19.** *For through the law I have died to the law, so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ. (HCSB)*

So Paul is banning the law. What's he getting at? Nowhere in Paul's writing does he say that observing the law is bad. It doesn't say that anywhere. Turn back to Romans chapter 8.

**Romans 8: 6.** *For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace.*

7) *For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God ...*

Then it goes on to say why.

7b) *... because it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so.*  
(HCSB)

You have to do a little thinking there because if carnal-mindedness is death, not subject to the law, then spiritual-mindedness would be life and peace. If you were spiritually minded, you would be subject, in submission to God's law. When people tried to do away with that, he said, "Well, certainly you have to keep and submit to God's law."

So what is Paul's point here? If you look at all of Paul's writings, you see a theme that runs through there. Remember that he is countering the teachings of the Judaizers that you had to convert to Judaism and its interpretation of the Mosaic Law plus all the things they added to it, and if you do that perfectly enough, then you can save yourself by keeping the law. This is what Paul was fighting in everything he wrote about the law. That's why some of the things we see are twisted by people and they say the law has been done away and that it is not in effect. Turn to Romans 2.

**Romans 2:17.** *Now if you call yourself a Jew (he's talking to a Jewish population), and rest in the law, boast in God,*

...  
23) *You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? (HCSB)*

We have to think about that, because a lot of us come from a background where we boasted in the law, we rested in the law in a sense.

Years ago, I remember Mr. Armstrong saying once that he was labeled as a legalist. Unfortunately, sometimes I think that was our approach. I'm not saying that derisively about the church or Mr. Armstrong, but we spent a lot of time talking about the law. We needed to do that because we needed to be educated by that. Like anything else, if it is over emphasized, it can get out of bounds. But many of us got the idea that if we kept the law, we would be saved, or if not saved directly by that, we would at least be in the first resurrection and no one else would be, because we kept the law. People probably would even use that and say that we're obedient so we would be in a place of safety. Back then, in a sense, it was the same as being saved. The thinking was that God will make the judgment. He knows who is obeying Him. He knows who is keeping the law and who isn't.

When you think about that, some of us had that approach. I know I did. I won't speak for my lovely wife. We were no better than these individuals that were teaching that. It was the same mentality. If we keep the law, it's going to save us. But keeping the law never would, never could save anyone, only Jesus Christ could do that.

Now we're getting to the real purpose of the law. Romans 3 tells us very plainly that the purpose of the law was never meant to save anyone. Of course, we need to keep God's law.

**Romans 3:20.** *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (NKJV)*

It becomes clear just from that statement that the knowledge of sin is part of the purpose and function of the law. We will see a little more of that from the Amplified.

**Romans 3:20.** *For no person will be justified (made righteous, acquitted, and judged acceptable) ...*

We thought we were.

*20b) ... in His sight by observing the works prescribed by the Law. For [the real function of] the Law is to make men recognize and be conscious of sin [not mere perception, but an acquaintance with sin which works toward repentance, faith, and holy character]. (AMPC)*

The Greek means *acknowledge, recognition of what sin is*. Remember what Paul said in Romans 7? It should be a familiar scripture.

**Romans 7:7.** *Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "You must not covet." (NLT)*

That's the tenth commandment. Then we have that famous scripture:

**1 John 3:4.** *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. (NKJV)*

It doesn't get any plainer than that. Sin is operating outside of God's law. So one of the primary functions of the law is to educate us and identify for us what sin is and show us what to repent of. Doing the law perfectly, even if you could do that, still would not save you. You cannot be justified by keeping the law, because the law just tells us what sin is.

What does "justified" mean? It means *to be declared right, just and sinless in the eyes of God*. It's like a judge declaring you "not guilty." You've appeared before a judge and he has declared you "not guilty" and you are free to go. Have you ever looked to see

what kind of laws have no statutes of limitation? I Googled this the other day. There are six of them. They are murder, kidnapping, fraud, embezzlement (if you embezzle a huge amount of money from a company), war crimes like treason, and do you know what the big one is? It's non-payment of student loans. That is an unforgivable crime. Do you know what the real tragedy of that is? \$36 billion dollars are owed on student loans. Do you know who that student loan belongs to? It belongs to the seniors over sixty that have co-signed for student loans.

Anyhow, back to what I was trying to say there. You've committed a crime with no statute of limitation, 20, 30, 50 years ago if you're old enough. Since that time, you've been a perfect law abiding citizen. You haven't broken one single law. You haven't got so much as a speeding ticket. However, you're still guilty of that crime like murder, unless you get exonerated of those charges and a judge declares you not guilty. That's an example of why you can't save yourself by keeping the law. You may be keeping it perfectly now, but you are still guilty of what you did before. Every one of us has done something that would be a sin, every one of us. No amount of right living can make up for the fact that you have sinned. You're guilty until a judge declares you not guilty. I think we read this scripture once, but we'll read it again.

***Galatians 2:16.*** *know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified. (HCSB)*

You cannot justify yourself by keeping the law, no matter how good a person you are.

***Galatians 3:24.*** *The law, then, was our guardian (school master) until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. (HCSB)*

If you're under a school master in school, eventually you are going to graduate. Those things you learned in school are still true. What you learned doesn't change. If you went to one of the military academies, Navy, Air Force, Army, and you graduated as an officer, you would be expected to live up to very high standards that are set in that school. Why would that be any less for us? We are called to the highest standard of all, which is Jesus Christ. He is the Captain of our salvation, if you want to use a military term there. The same is true for God's law. God's law is our guardian and teacher and Christ came so we can be justified by faith in the end.

***Galatians 3:24.*** *So that the Law served [to us Jews] (we are spiritual Jews) as our trainer [our guardian, our guide to Christ, to lead us] ... (HCSB)*

In other words, the principles of God were in effect before Sinai, right? The ten commandments became codified. They became a code of conduct.

***24b) ... until Christ [came], that we might be justified (declared righteous, put in right standing with God) by and through faith. (HCSB)***

**Galatians 5:4.** *You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law (Paul fighting this everywhere he went); you have fallen from grace. (NKJV)*

If we try to be justified or right in God's sight by keeping the law, we will always fail, because that's not the purpose of the law. It's by the law that we know what sin is, but that, of and by itself doesn't save us.

So how are we justified?

**Galatians 2:16.** *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. (NKJV)*

Again I'm repeating that, but I don't know how much clearer Paul could make that point.

**Galatians 3:24.** *So that the Law serve [to us Jews] as our trainer [our guardian, our guide to Christ, to lead us] until Christ [came], that we might be justified (declared righteous, put in right standing with God) by and through faith. (HCSB)*

It is by our faith in Christ that we are justified. Remember what it says in Romans 3:23.

**Romans 3:23.** *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (NKJV)*

**Acts 13:38.** *Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man (Christ) is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; (NKJV)*

That's where the forgiveness comes from. That's the atonement, the redemption; that's where the justification comes from.

*39) and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. (NKJV)*

It just didn't work that way. This wasn't His purpose. So it's the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ and our belief in Him that justifies us. It's not our obedience to the law. Again, the law tells us what sin is, but the law has no power to save us. It doesn't mean we don't have to keep it.

So what is our relationship to the law?

**Romans 10:4.** *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (NKJV)*

People will use that too. It doesn't mean the end of the story; it means that Jesus Christ is the goal. He is the end. Christ's likeness is the goal. He did everything according to the law and then some. That's how He could enforce and explain the law, by His example. The greater purpose of God's law is to help us develop the mind of God, the mind of Christ.

**1 Timothy 1:8.** *But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, (NKJV)*

We saw other translations that said "*legitimately*," and "*correctly*."

*9) knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person (it has nothing to say to those), but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,*

*10) for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, (NKJV)*

Do you see any commandments in there? Sure there are. So the righteous are living Christ-like lives. They're doing the things that the law says, not to save themselves, because that's what Christ did. That's what we do, to follow His example. If we are doing that, the law really has nothing to say to us. What does that mean? For example, say you are obeying the laws of the land, the civil and the criminal laws. Then the authorities have nothing to say to you. A policeman might pull you over and say, "Hi," how are you doing today?" However, he has no reason to intervene lawfully for anything you have done, because you haven't broken any laws. Laws are written for those that break them. They are also to pronounce punishment for those who break the law. Part of the purpose of the law is to outline behavior and prescribe a punishment to those who don't follow those standards. It's the same way with God's law. If we don't break it, the law doesn't have anything to say to us. It's only when we break the law, and then it says, "Ah, ha!" Our conscience bothers us, as it should. That's the way it should work.

I knew a gentleman who lives in the Spokane area and he was downtown one day. This is an example of how the conscience works. He went into a store and came back out. They were doing some remodeling in the store and they threw a bunch of trash on the curb. He saw a piece of metal or something and he thought, "I can use that." He picked it up and took it. When he got part of the way home, his conscience bothered him so bad that he went back, looked up the manager and asked him if he could have that piece of scrap that had been thrown away. The manager said, "Of course." That's just an example of how that should work. There are many things that happen in our lives like that.

So the law teaches us what sin is, how to avoid transgressing the law.

We will read Romans 3:20 from the Amplified. I know I read it earlier.

**Romans 3:20.** *For no person will be justified (made righteous, acquitted, and judged acceptable) in His sight by observing the works prescribed by the Law. For [the real function of] the Law is to make men recognize and be conscious of sin ... (AMPC)*

What that is really telling us is the more converted we are, the more aware we should be of how we are living, the way we conduct our lives.

**Romans 7:7.** *What then do we conclude? Is the Law identical with sin? Certainly not! Nevertheless, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have recognized sin or have known its meaning. [For instance] I would not have known about covetousness [would have had no consciousness of sin or sense of guilt] if the Law had not [repeatedly] said, you shall not covet and have an evil desire [for one thing and another]. (AMPC)*

He talks about covetousness. He wouldn't have known that. When he understood the purpose of the law and it identified sin to him, then he became conscious of that sin. We have to think about that. Prior to conversion, Paul certainly knew the law. He knew it all as a Pharisee. Yet being converted, he finally saw the intent; he finally got it. He saw that the intent of the law was to affect the heart and mind, and coveting has to do with that, right? The thought process starts in the mind. "I want that." I like the red neck version of the ten commandments where the last one about coveting says, "Don't be hankering after your buddy's stuff."

**Romans 7:8.** *But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment [to express itself], got a hold on me and aroused and stimulated all kinds of forbidden desires (lust, covetousness) ... (AMPC)*

It took place in the mind first.

*8b) ... For without the Law sin is dead [the sense of it is inactive and a lifeless thing]. (AMPC)*

Again, the law exposes what sin is. We weren't aware of that before conversion. Paul goes on to say:

*9) Once I was alive (carnally speaking), but quite apart from and unconscious of the Law. But when the commandment came (when converted), sin lived again and I died (was sentenced by the Law to death). (AMPC)*

He was under the death penalty until he was forgiven.

*10) And the very legal ordinance which was designed and intended to bring life ... (AMPC)*

And God's laws do bring life.

*10b) ... actually proved [to mean to me] death. (AMPC)*

The sin, the transgression actually convicted him.

*11) For sin, seizing the opportunity and getting a hold on me [by taking its incentive] from the commandment, beguiled and entrapped and cheated me, and using it [as a weapon], killed me. (AMPC)*

Sin leads to death, not the commandments.

*12) The Law therefore is holy, and [each] commandment is holy and just and good. (AMPC)*

Again what Paul is saying there is that it wasn't the law that killed him. It was sin.

*13) Did that which is good (the law) then prove fatal [bringing death] to me? Certainly not! It was sin, working death in me by using this good thing (the law) [as a weapon], in order that through the commandment sin might be shown up clearly to be sin, that the extreme malignity and immeasurable sinfulness of sin might plainly appear (to be what it is). (AMPC)*

Sin is sin until we are converted. Then it takes on extra understanding. We begin to view it spiritually.

So the primary purpose of the law is to educate, give us understanding that we need to live like Christ. I think Galatians 5:24 says it well. It kind of summarizes everything I just said in a few verses.

**Galatians 5:24.** *Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (HCSB)*

Living Christ-like lives means we have submitted our will and desires to Him, and we actually desire to live like He did. So, in essence again, the law has nothing to say to us if we are doing that. It only affects us if we break that law.

I like Galatians 5:23 from the Amplified. It says:

**Galatians 5:23.** *Gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraint, continence). Against such things there is no law [that can bring a charge].*

It means that there is no law that can bring a charge. There's nothing to say because we are already doing what we should; being led by God's spirit and trying to follow Christ's example.



On the other hand, there is no exemption from the law. We are not exempt from doing those things, but our focus should be not on the law, but on Jesus Christ. We must live as He lived. If we do, the law should be no problem for us. We'll be abiding by the law and then some, like Christ did.

Putting the law in proper perspective is what we will be doing, but not to save ourselves. You can't save yourself by keeping the law. That is not the purpose of the law. It's because our hearts have been changed from the inside and we want to follow that example of Jesus Christ, the one that did keep the law perfectly. Final scripture:

*1 John 2:1. My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. (NLT)*

That's where we should put our faith, not in a law.

*2) He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. (NLT)*

I kind of like that when the Feast is still fresh in our minds. Eventually the rest of the world is going to understand God's law.

*3) And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. (NLT)*

If we live by them and that's our code of conduct. It governs our behaviors.

*4) If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth.*

*5) But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him.*

*6) Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. (NLT)*

Brethren, if we do that, we'll be living within the law as was intended. We will understand it and will actually be living the real purpose of the law.