

The Modified Dispensationalism of Greg Loren Durand Exposed

Chapter 2: The Abiding Validity of the Old Testament Moral Laws

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The temporary duration of the Mosaic expression of the law raises some important questions for Christians living today. Do passages such as Galatians 5:18, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law,” and Romans 6:14, “...You are not under law but under grace,” teach (as dispensationalists and law of Christ *only* advocates assert) that, with the coming of Christ, New Covenant believers are to have nothing to do with any aspects of the Mosaic code whatsoever? In other words, are believers only under the ethical requirements stated in the New Testament or under natural law? In addition, is it wrong to look at the Old Covenant revealed moral laws as a guide to sanctification or as principles for governing society (what the Reformers called the second and third uses of the law)? And if some laws from the Mosaic law do apply, how can one say that the law was added until the coming of Christ (cf. Gal. 3:19)?

To answer these and similar questions we need to point out a few things. Note that Paul is discussing the Mosaic *administration* as a temporary means between Abraham and Christ of God’s dealing with the chosen people. It is the *tutor aspect* of the law in redemptive history that Paul has in mind. There is something peculiar and unique about the Mosaic system that is the focus of this verse. If we say that nothing regarding the law continues into the New Covenant era, then we would have to argue that the revealed moral law no longer convinces men of sin which is obviously false. (In fact Paul says “I would not have known sin except through the law” [Rom. 7:7]. The law exemplified in the Ten Commandments was needed to show the apostle that he himself was guilty of sin and sinful. This use of the law occurred *after* the death and resurrection of Christ [cf. Ac. 9:1-19]). The law continues to reveal our transgressions even till the second coming of Christ.¹ But, with respect to the Mosaic manner of revealing sin (i.e. the ceremonial ordinances), it was only until the first coming. “For the law before Christ did convince men of sin, not only by precepts and threatenings, but also by rites and ceremonies. For Jewish washings, and sacrifices, were real confessions of sin.... *And this manner of revealing sin, ended in the death of Christ.*”²

Moreover, if the whole law is abrogated (even the Ten Commandments and the moral case laws) when Jesus came, then people living after the death of Christ were dead to the law *before* they believed the gospel. The dispensational view, if applied consistently, would teach many absurd doctrines. Also, if every aspect of the law has been abrogated, then how is sin reckoned in the New Covenant era, for the Bible defines sin as “the transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4)? As Paul says, “Sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom. 5:13); and, “Where there is no law there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). The fact that sin and death existed from Adam to Moses and is still operative from the death of Jesus to the present indicates that moral laws,

¹ If the moral law continues to reveal to us what sin is, then it is obviously still an absolute and universal standard of right and wrong. If the law is an absolute standard of right and wrong, then it is absurd to suggest that it can no longer serve as a standard for Christian conduct or as a guide to social ethics. It still tells us how to love God and our neighbor. It certainly does not show us what sin is so that we can embrace Christ and then continue to habitually sin (Rom. 6:1ff.).

² William Perkins, *A Commentary on Galatians*, 189; emphasis added.

whether enscripturated or not, have a permanency throughout all time. (The only way to circumvent this observation is either to assert that the moral law as revealed to Adam [so-called “natural law”] and the moral law as delivered to Moses are two *different* ethical standards that have nothing in common; or, one can posit two separate moral codes for two different dispensations. Both of these views are wrong because all moral laws derive from God’s nature and character and thus God has one moral law, not two.

The contradictions and absurdities of dispensationalism and natural law antinomianism can all be avoided simply by making a distinction between covenantal form (e.g., New Covenant believers are obviously not required to adopt the whole Mosaic administration of grace as a covenant or system) and the moral content of the Mosaic law, which Gentiles throughout all time have been and continue to be obligated to obey. Further, as we survey the whole Word of God and use the analogy of Scripture, it is easy to demonstrate that all dispensational approaches to the moral law of God are exegetically and logically untenable. There are many solid, irrefutable reasons as to why the dispensational interpretation of the Old Testament moral law is unbiblical.

First, the dispensational approach is based on a fallacious presupposition that the Mosaic law is such a unified whole that a completion or fulfillment of only a portion of it cannot take place. The basic argument behind this idea is that the Jews viewed the law as a unity; that the biblical authors had no concept at all of categories of law such as moral, ceremonial and civil. When they spoke of the law they meant the whole law. Therefore, when Paul says the law was until Christ we have no choice but to regard this as an abrogation of the entire Mosaic legislation, Ten Commandments and all. The idea that the law is an indivisible single entity that cannot be divided in any way contradicts a number of biblical teachings.

There are a number of passages in the prophets where obedience to moral laws is given a clear priority over ceremonial or ritualistic requirements. Isaiah pleaded with Israel saying, “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? Says the LORD. ‘I have had enough of burnt offering of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats.... Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away evil of your doings from before your eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow’” (Isa. 1:11, 16-17). Sacrifices, even if done correctly, are worthless when the people refuse to do good and seek justice. Similarly in Micah we read, “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings...? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,...He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God (Mic. 6:6, 7, 8). Obviously, ethical requirements took precedence over external ceremonial rituals, even though they were still required at that time (see Jer. 7:21-23; Ps. 51:16-17).

Samuel made a category distinction when he said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD” (1 Sam. 15:22)? “*To obey is better than sacrifice*, because obedience to God is a moral duty, constantly and indispensably necessary; but sacrifice is but a ceremonial institution, sometimes unnecessary, as it was in the wilderness; and sometimes sinful, when it is offered with a polluted hand, or in an irregular manner; therefore their gross disobedience to God’s express command is not to be compensated with sacrifice.”³ Hosea makes a distinction between moral and ceremonial requirements when he spoke for God saying, “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (6:6). If the Old Testament Jews had no concept of a difference between moral and ritualistic requirements in the law, then such

³ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:550.

statements would be essentially meaningless. The people of God were not complete idiots. They could see that Jehovah was placing a priority on loving one's neighbor over the external performance of ceremonial rituals. The New Testament also recognizes a distinction between moral and ceremonial laws (e.g., Ac. 8:10-16; 15:10-29; Rom. 14:2-6, 14-17; Gal. 2:3-5; 4:9-11; 5:2; 6:15; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Tim. 3:11; etc.). In fact, the book of Hebrews is incomprehensible without such a distinction (cf. Heb. 7:11-12, 18-19).

Jesus Himself alluded to the positivistic aspect of the ceremonial requirements when He noted that David "did eat the showbread, which [according to the ceremonial law] was not lawful for him to eat" (Mt. 12:4), in order to preserve his life. Here our Lord is arguing that there is nothing wrong with ignoring a ceremonial requirement in an emergency. Yet the Bible clearly does not allow men to violate moral laws in a similar situation. Men are not permitted to steal, lie, cheat or do violence to a neighbor if they are hungry. The reason for this difference is simple. The moral law is based on God's nature and character while (generally speaking) ceremonial laws are positivistic laws that illustrate or teach a truth through symbols or types.

Jesus Himself taught His disciples that it was important to recognize distinctions in the law. In their presence He chided the Pharisees for focusing on minor issues and neglecting "the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith" (Mt. 23:23). When confronted with the false piety and legalism of the Pharisees, our Lord often instructed His followers to contemplate the moral emphasis of the law as taught by the prophets. He said, "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'" (Mt. 9:13; cf. 12:7; 23:23; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:8). While modern scholars may not see any distinctions within God's law; the prophets, Christ and the apostles obviously did. Solomon did also and, under divine inspiration, wrote a whole book of practical wisdom by applying the moral law of God to everyday situations. If those who reject every aspect of the Mosaic law were consistent they would argue that the book of Proverbs only applies to Christians when its teachings are explicitly restated in the New Testament canon.

In addition, the Old Testament law recognized a distinction between moral laws and ceremonial ordinances in that *unbelieving, uncircumcised* sojourners, who were among God's people or in the land, were subject to the moral laws within the civil code (e.g., Lev. 18:26), yet were not required to participate in any of the ceremonial rites. In fact they were forbidden to do so (Ex. 12:44-48; Lev. 22:10). The Temple worship and the sacrificial cultus were only available to the people of God. The Old Covenant Jews certainly understood the difference between moral statutes (e.g., laws dealing with rape, murder, fraud, adultery and theft) and ceremonial ordinances (e.g., burnt offerings, feast days, etc). Are we to believe that Gentiles guilty of homosexual acts or violence against a neighbor were not punished because such laws only applied to the Israelites? Such a view is absurd.

Moreover, the fact that the different laws are not organized into neat separate categories but appear all mixed together in a single *Tora* is irrelevant. Virtually all important biblical topics are not organized into a modern systematic theology. The Bible is simply not written that way. That, however, does not mean that differences do not exist or that classifications cannot be made. As long as this categorization can be inferred and proved by Scripture then it is legitimate. In fact, as we will see, the biblical teaching on the law is incomprehensible and contradictory without these categories.

Second, the Old Testament law itself explicitly recognized that the moral laws were universal (i.e. applicable to both Jews and Gentiles) in that after a lengthy list of laws dealing with sexual ethics in Leviticus 18 (i.e. statutes forbidding incest, adultery, homosexuality as well as sacrificing children to Molech), God says the pagan nations are defiled and will be cast out of

the land *for violating these same laws* (vs. 24-30). The judicial code of Israel was even supposed to be an example of supreme justice among the surrounding heathen nations. God told Israel that if they were careful to observe His statutes and judgments then the Gentile nations will “hear all these statutes, and say...what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law” (Deut. 4:6, 8). This acknowledgment would not be based on the ceremonial ordinances which were incomprehensible to the heathen, but rather the moral statutes. This direct revelation from God would have been dishonest and inappropriate if the *whole* law could only be applied to Israel and could not be used in any way outside the covenant nation as a guide for social justice. In fact, it would not make any sense whatsoever.

Furthermore, the prophets who applied the *Torah* in their covenant lawsuit preaching recognized that all the heathen nations were required to obey God’s moral commandments and would be judged if they violated them. Thus, God spoke through Isaiah saying, “The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed [or violated] the ordinance [or statute] broken the everlasting covenant” (24:5). E. J. Young’s comments on how and why the Gentile nations were guilty of violating God’s revealed law are excellent:

Just as Palestine itself, the Holy Land, had become profane through the sin of its inhabitants (Num. 35:33; Deut. 21:19; Jer. 3:9; and Ps. 106:38), so also the entire earth became profane when the ordinances given to it were violated.... Transgression is against the law of God, and this is expressed by the terms *law, statute, everlasting covenant*. The [moral] laws which God has revealed to His people bind all mankind; and hence, the work of the Law of God written on the human heart, for example, may be described under such terms.

The Law was not specifically revealed to the Gentiles as it was to the Jews at Sinai. Nevertheless, according to Paul, the Gentiles do by natural instinct those things which are prescribed by the Law...and this fact shows that the work of the Law is written on their own hearts. In transgressing those things prescribed in the Law, however, it may be said that the Gentiles were actually transgressing the Law itself. Here, the plural is used to show that the Gentiles had transgressed divine commands and ordinances, and also that their sins were many and varied. We may say that the Gentiles transgressed specific items of the Law, a thought which the plural form of the noun would also support. It is a transgression of the divine will generally, or as Calvin puts it, “all the instruction contained in the Law.”

The mention of “statute” is perhaps intended for the sake of specificity, for inasmuch as both commandment and promise are included in the Law, this word stresses the commandment....

Lastly, we are told that men frustrated or made void the everlasting covenant.... It must be noticed, however, that those who have frustrated the eternal covenant are not merely the Jews but the world generally. The frustrating of the covenant is something universal. For this reason we may adopt the position that the eternal covenant here spoken of designates the fact that God has given His Law and ordinances to Adam, and in Adam to all mankind.... Isaiah uses the language which is characteristic of the Mosaic legislation, and thus describes the universal transgressions of mankind.⁴

It is important to note that God defines “the work of the law written on the heart” (Rom. 2:15), or the universal law given to Adam, using the Mosaic law and not vice versa. Because written moral statutes are perspicuous and easily accessible, they are used to tell us what the Gentile nations did wrong. (This explicitly contradicts the idea that *every aspect* of the Mosaic legislation had nothing to do with the Gentiles.) It is for this reason that when the book of Proverbs applies the law of God to whole nations it says that, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but

⁴ E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:156-158.

sin is a reproach to any people” (14:34). David also defines “all the wicked of the earth” as “all those who stray from Your statutes” (Ps. 119:118-119).

The prophets repeatedly condemned heathen nations and peoples for violating specific statutes found in God’s law. They condemned idolatry (Jer. 47:25; 48:13, 35; 50:2; 51:38; cf. Ex. 20:2-3; Deut. 5:7-8); kidnapping (Am. 1:6; cf. Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7); sorcery (Isa. 47:9, 12, 13; Nah. 3:4; cf. Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:21); unlawful loans (Hab. 2:6; cf. Ex. 22:25-27; Deut. 24:6, 10-13); theft (Isa. 16:4; cf. Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19); and murder (Isa. 14:20; cf. Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). John the Baptizer applied the moral law to a heathen magistrate (Herod) when he told him it was not lawful for him to be married to his brother’s wife (Mk. 6:18; cf. Lev. 18:16, 20, 21). It is totally unrealistic to think that John was basing his exhortation on natural law theory. He was a prophet who applied God’s revealed law.

Third, if the whole Old Testament law including all the moral precepts was abrogated with the coming of Christ, then why does God promise to put His law into the hearts of believers in the New Covenant era? Jehovah said, “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer. 31:33). Calvin writes, “By these words he confirms what he said, that the newness, which he before mentioned, was not so as to substance, but as to the form only: for God does not say here, ‘I will give you another Law,’ but I *will write My Law*, that is, the same Law which had formerly been delivered to the Fathers.”⁵ Since the New Testament makes it perfectly clear that the ceremonial ordinances have been abrogated, we must interpret this verse in terms of the Holy Spirit’s work in the New Covenant era of causing hearts to love and obey the revealed moral law. There is a much greater effusion of the Spirit after Pentecost than under the Older Covenant. This passage obliterates the idea that New Testament passages which speak of the abrogation of the ceremonial laws; or, which assert that believers are dead to the law as a means of justification, teach the abrogation of the whole law even for the sanctification of believers. Did God abrogate His law in order to write it on our hearts? Such a view is illogical and unbiblical.

Fourth, the Old Testament prophets viewed the teaching of God’s law as an integral aspect of discipling the nations in the New Covenant era. In Isaiah 2:2-3 we read, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *that* the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many

⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Prophet Jeremiah and Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 4:131-132. Calvin’s view is the same as all the classic Protestant commentators. Matthew Poole writes, “After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: in the times of the gospel, God’s law is not abrogated and made void. Christ himself came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; but it is written in the hearts of God’s true Israel by the finger of the Spirit, not in tables of stone only; and they become obedient to it, not from compulsion and force, but from their secret appropriation of it, and acknowledgment of it, as holy, just, and good, the delight they take in it after the inward man, Rom. vii. 22” (*A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 2:592). Matthew Henry concurs, “That he will incline them to their duty: I will put my law in their inward part and write it in their heart; not I will give them a new law (as Mr. Gataker well observes), for Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is written in the heart, Prov. iii. 3. He makes them in care to observe it, for that which we are solicitous about is said to lie near our hearts. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original” (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 4:606). John Gill notes, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; not the ceremonial law, which was abolished when this covenant was made; but rather the moral law still in force, which is a transcript of the nature and will of God...” (*An Exposition of the Books of the Prophets of the Old Testament*, 1:578).

people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (cf. Mic. 4:1-5). In Isaiah 42 we are told that the Messiah will establish justice in the earth; "and the coastlands shall wait for His law" (v. 4). The law that proceeds from Jehovah will be "as a light of the peoples" (Isa. 51:4). His law will reside in His people's hearts (Isa. 51:7; cf. Jer. 31:33). The expressions "the law" or "His law" in these contexts must refer to the same moral law given to Moses. If we argue that these references refer to a wholly new law (e.g., the law of Christ) that has nothing to do with the Old Testament law, then we not only ignore the original audience, but also import a meaning to these words that is alien to the context. The *Torah* of "the last days" refers to the use among New Covenant believers of the Old Testament moral laws. All the Protestant symbols recognize the moral law and the teaching of this law has been a great spiritual and social benefit to individuals, families and nations.

Fifth, the New Testament authors repeatedly appeal to the Old Testament moral laws for ethics. This use of the law is completely inconsistent with the idea that every aspect of the Mosaic law has been abrogated. When contrasting the ethics of His kingdom with the perverted doctrine of the Pharisees, Jesus says that loving our neighbors (Lev. 19:18) even extends to our enemies (Mt. 5:44). He also rebukes the scribes and Pharisees for circumventing the fifth commandment through their traditions (Mt. 15:14; Mk. 7:9-10). In Matthew 18 our Lord applies a civil law regarding witnesses to discipline cases in the church (v. 16; Deut. 19:15). In Mark 10:19 and Matthew 22:37-40, He quotes approvingly from the Ten Commandments and their summary. In Matthew 5:17-19 Christ explicitly endorses the ethical teachings of the Old Testament law for His disciples and makes it crystal clear that His disciples need to do and teach them if they want to be called great in the kingdom of heaven. According to the teaching of our Lord in this passage, we should assume continuity unless laws are abrogated or altered by further revelation. The only clear passages of abrogation in the New Testament involve the ceremonial ordinances or the weak and beggarly elements (see the section on this below). (The attempt to circumvent Matthew 5:17ff. by arguing that "fulfill" [*plerosai*] refers only to the fulfilling of prophecy or the Savior's own obedience to the law violates the immediate and broader context. Not only is "fulfill" set in a contrast to "destroy" or "abrogate" [*katalysai*], but the whole rest of the chapter is taken up with personal ethics. Jesus gives the correct interpretation of the moral law over against the perverse traditions of the scribes and Pharisees.)

The apostle Paul, writing *after* Galatians, assumes that the moral law of God revealed in the Old Testament is authoritative, good, useful and binding on New Covenant believers. He affirms that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12; cf. 1 Tim. 1:8). "As holy, just, and good it reflects the character of God and is the transcript of his perfection. It bears the imprint of its author.... As 'holy' the commandment reflects the transcendence and purity of God and demands of us the correspondent consecration and purity; as 'righteous' it reflects the equity of God and exacts of us in its demand and sanction nothing but what is equitable; as 'good' it promotes man's highest well-being and thus expresses the goodness of God."⁶ In verse 14 of the same chapter he adds the statement, "We know that the law is spiritual." That is, it is derived from the Holy Spirit and thus has its origins in God and displays His character. For this reason David could say, "The law of the LORD is perfect" (Ps. 19:7). How, we ask, is something that is spiritual, perfect, good, holy, righteous and just abrogated by God? Could God set aside laws that are not positivistic or arbitrary in any way, but

⁶ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:253.

rather are reflections of His own nature and character? God could no more abrogate His moral precepts than deny His own nature.

Further, if Jehovah could simply abrogate His own moral laws revealed in the Old Testament, then why send Jesus to the cross to endure the suffering that violations of these laws merited? God could have eliminated all sin simply by abrogating all moral laws. Further, why would Christians who are serious about sanctification and personal godliness want to ignore or deliberately set aside righteous, holy, just and good laws? Such a view does not make any sense exegetically or logically. To argue that with the coming of Christ these moral, just and righteous laws are no longer allowed to instruct us in holiness is incredible and astounding. Only someone blinded by unbiblical presuppositions in this area could come to such strange and irrational conclusions.

When Paul describes himself after his conversion, he says that as a Christian he has a “delight in the law of God according to the inward man” (Rom. 7:22). The apostle’s regenerate mind consented to, approved of, and delighted in the moral perfections of God’s revealed law. His fight against sin as a saved individual involved a heartfelt commitment to the moral law. In our battle against the flesh, our renewed soul recognizes the moral law as our ally in personal sanctification. If Paul, the Christian, says that the law is the object of his love or delight, then obviously his renewed mind approves and endorses the revealed Old Testament moral law.

In Romans chapter 3, Paul says that “we know that whatsoever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (v. 19). This verse is significant because Paul includes Gentiles throughout the whole world as under the condemnation of the law even though they never possessed the specially revealed law (see Rom. 2:14).⁷ There is a sense in which those without law (i.e. the Old Testament revealed law) are yet within the law and condemned by it. The reason for this reality is simple. The work of law written on the heart (Rom. 2:15) and the enscriptured moral laws of the Old Testament are both based on God’s nature and character and thus contain the same moral standard. Paul focuses on the enscriptured moral law because it is perspicuous and is the standard of judgment on the final day (Jas. 2:12). This verse explicitly contradicts theologians and expositors who maintain that the Old Testament law was for the Jews only and did not apply to Gentiles in any way.

Those who teach that every aspect of the law has been abrogated with the coming of our Lord are teaching the exact opposite of Romans 3:31: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.” This verse is connected to the preceding statements of Paul by the word “then.” Paul had just argued that men could not be justified by obedience to the law (vs. 21-30). Men are not justified by doing but by believing. In context it is obvious that Paul is discussing the Mosaic law (e.g., “by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified” [v. 20]; “the righteousness of God apart from the law” [v. 21]; “a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” [v. 28]). Since the apostle is making universal statements about all mankind (e.g., “every mouth...all the world” [v. 19]; “no flesh” [v. 20]; “to

⁷ Regarding this verse Hendriksen writes, “I believe... —everybody, the whole world—most adequately expresses what Paul had in mind. It is true that the phrase ‘those (who are) within the pale of the law’ might cause us to think exclusively of the Jews. However, does not the law, God’s Word, have a message for all? And does it not have authority over all, and a claim on all, whether they be believers or unbelievers? And does it not condemn all, without exception, whether they be Jews or Gentiles by race” (*Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980, 81], 124). John Murray writes, “There can be no question but here is the note of all-inclusive universality, especially in the words ‘the whole world.’ Paul includes the Gentiles who did not have the law in the sense of the Old Testament or specially revealed law (cf. 2:14)” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:124).

all and on all” [v. 22]) and is comparing two kinds of righteousness: the righteousness obtained by faith and attempts to achieve righteousness by observing the law, Paul’s focus here is on the revealed Old Testament moral law. Interestingly, in the Greek, “law” in this question is in an emphatic position: “the law do we nullify?” The apostle raises this hypothetical question at the end of this chapter precisely because he at some length has been speaking strongly against the law as a means of justification. If the keeping of the law serves no role in our justification, then is the law irrelevant for New Covenant believers? Does not Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from works render the law of God superfluous?

The apostle answers this question with his strongest, most emphatic formula of denial: “God forbid!” or literally, “Let it never be!” He views the idea that the gospel results in an abrogation of the law for daily living with shock and abhorrence. “On the contrary,” he affirms, “we establish the law.” “The forceful character of the answer must probably be explained in the light of the fact that there were those who were saying, ‘Let us do away with the law. All we need is faith. Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound.’”⁸ Here Paul anticipates the main objection to his argument and deals with it in brief. He will take up this subject in much more detail later on when he discusses the work of Christ as it relates to sanctification in opposition to the accusation of antinomianism.

The verb *histomen*, translated “we establish,” means “to cause to stand” or “confirm.” Although the Christian never obeys the law as a means of justification, he is still obligated to obey the moral law in order to live a sanctified or godly lifestyle. An imputed righteousness, apart from a personal obedience to the law, does not mean that believers can ignore the moral demands of the law as the proper, ethical, Christian way to live. Paul says that the moral requirements of the law are still in effect as the authoritative will of God for New Covenant believers. John Owen notes that “faith does not render void, or nullify the authority, the use and sanctions of the moral law, but on the contrary, sustains and confirms them. Though it does what the law does not, and cannot do, inasmuch as it saves the sinner whom the law condemns; yet it effects this without relaxing or dishonoring the law, but in a way that renders it, if possible, more binding, and more honourable, and more illustrious.”⁹ The doctrine of justification by faith

⁸ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 137.

⁹ John Owen, as quoted by the editor of John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 151-152, footnote 1. The interpretation that Romans 3:31 teaches the continuing validity of the Old Testament moral law for the sanctification of believers is common among the best Protestant interpreters. Calvin writes, “For the *moral* law is in reality confirmed and established through faith in Christ, inasmuch as it was given for this end—to lead man to Christ, by showing him his iniquity; and without this it cannot be fulfilled, and in vain will it require what ought to be done; nor can it do anything but irritate lust more and more, and thus finally increase man’s condemnation; but where there is a coming to Christ, there is first found in him the perfect righteousness of the law, which becomes ours by imputation, and then there is sanctification, by which our hearts are prepared to keep the law; it is indeed imperfectly done, but there is an aiming at the work.... Let us then also bear in mind, so to dispense the gospel that by our mode of teaching the law may be confirmed; but let it be sustained by no other strength than that of faith in Christ” (*Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 152). Matthew Poole says, “It is indeed abolished as a covenant of works, and in this sense is made void to believers; and it is done away as to the form of administration of it by Moses; and it is destroyed as a yoke of bondage; and the people of God are free from the malediction of it, and condemnation by it, and so from its terror; yet it remains unalterable and unchangeable in the hands of Christ; the matter of it is always the same, and ever obligatory on believers, who, though they are freed from the curse of it, are not exempted from obedience to it: wherefore the law is not made void, so as to be destroyed and abolished in every sense, or to be rendered idle, inactive, useless, and insignificant; but, on the contrary, is made to stand, is placed on a sure basis and firm foundation, as the words used signify” (*Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 3:498). Matthew Henry concurs, “*Do we then make void the law through faith?* A very material objection is here to be anticipated and answered, viz. that by establishing justification by faith alone

establishes the law because justified believers who live according to the Spirit fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (Rom. 8:4; cf. 13:8, 10).

A passage that is devastating and inexplicable to those who teach the abrogation of the whole law is Romans 8:3-4: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Paul notes that because of our sinful natures the law did not have the power to deal with sin judicially. The law cannot exercise a judicial judgment over the power of sin in our lives. The law does not deprive sin of its power; instead, because of our depravity, it stimulates sin (Rom. 7:8-10). But what the law could not do, Jesus did by taking a human nature and dying for our sins and rising victorious out of the grave. He eliminated the guilt of sin and also conquered the grave. He eliminated the penalty of sin and also conquered the enslaving dominion of sin over our lives (Rom. 6:2-14).

Why did our Lord vanquish the power of sin over us? Paul says that He did it in order that we might fulfill or live in habitual obedience to the righteous requirement of the law.¹⁰ The

the law is rendered useless, and the obligation thereto destroyed. *God forbid: yea, we establish the law*: having rejected this objection, by his usual note of abhorrency, he proceeds to show, that nothing more establisheth the law, inasmuch as by faith we attain a perfect righteousness, we are interested in the most complete obedience of Christ to the moral law; and that hereby every type, promise, and prophecy is fulfilled; see Matt. v. 17; Luke xvi. 17: and we ourselves also being enabled thereunto by a gospel spirit, have a more exact conformity to the law, though we cannot reach to a fulfilling of it" (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:388). John Gill's commentary reads, "He obviates an objection (v. 31), as if this doctrine did nullify the law, which they knew came from God: 'No,' says he, 'though we do say that the law will not justify us, yet we do not therefore say that it was given in vain, or is of no use to us; no *we establish the right use of the law*, and secure its standing, by fixing it on the right basis. The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future; though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own it, and submit to it, as a rule in the hand of the Mediator, subordinate to the law of grace; and so are so far from overthrowing that we establish the law.' Let those consider this who deny the obligation of the moral law on believers" (*An Exposition of the New Testament*, 2:440). Charles Hodge writes, "If it means the moral law, which no doubt was prominently intended, still it is not invalidated, but established. No moral obligation is weakened, no penal sanction disregarded. The precepts are enforced by new and stronger motives, and the penalty is answered in Him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree" (*Romans*, 102). See also John Murray, John Stott, R. J. Rushdoony, William Hendriksen, Thomas R. Schreiner, etc.

¹⁰ The common view of older commentators, that verse 4 is only forensic, has rightly been rejected by the vast majority of modern commentators. Some reasons for this are as follows. First, the fact that verse 3 is discussing the sacrificial death of Christ (contrary to Hodge) does not necessitate a strictly forensic view. Paul in Romans 6 and 7 had just explained how the efficacy of Jesus' death *extends* to deliverance from the power of sin. Murray writes, "It will have become apparent why it was maintained at the outset that 'condemnation' should be interpreted more inclusively than freedom from the guilt of sin. As it has been shown, it is the judicial aspect that is in view in God's condemnation of sin in the flesh. And it is this same judicial aspect of our enslavement to the power of sin that comes into view in verse 1. Our enslavement to sin is properly viewed as the judgment to which we are consigned and there can be no release from this bondage, contemplated in its judicial character until sin as power receives its judicial condemnation in the cross of Christ and until the effectual application to us takes effect. Hence freedom from condemnation must embrace freedom from the judgment of sin's power as well as the judgment of sin's guilt" (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:282).

Second, the strictly forensic view must interpret verse 4 as teaching that in a certain sense our justification is subjective, for Paul says plainly, "the law might be fulfilled in us." The problem with this view is that it contradicts the Scriptural teaching that justification is *objective* to the sinner. It takes place in the heavenly court, not in our souls or our flesh. In addition, our Lord's perfect obedience to the law takes place outside the sinner. Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed or reckoned to the sinner's account, even though personally he is still a sinner.

Third, in verse 4 Paul describes the fulfillment of the law in us as walking in the Spirit and not according to the flesh. This statement clearly refers to personal behavior. Because of Christ's redemptive work, the Christian's lifestyle is directed by the Holy Spirit and not the sinful flesh. The Spirit indwells believers, breaks the power of sin

efficacy of Jesus' death and resurrection which is applied in us by the power of the Holy Spirit results in holy living which Paul defines as fulfilling the moral ordinances of the Mosaic law. Before we were converted we could not obey the law because we were held captive by sin both as to guilt and pollution. But the redemptive work of Christ is the basis for victory over sin. It is the foundation for the work of sanctification in us and according to Paul the ethical standard for sanctification is still God's revealed moral law. "The failure to see a reference to the keeping of the law by believers is explicable in some cases by an unduly negative view of God's law.... What Paul argues is that those who have the Spirit actually keep the law."¹¹ This law-keeping, however, we know from other portions of Scripture is far from perfect (e.g., 1 Jn. 1:8). This passage "is conclusive proof that the law of God has the fullest normative relevance in that state which is the produce of grace."¹² John Stott notes, "Holiness consists in fulfilling the just requirement of the law. This is the final answer to antinomians and adherents of the so called 'new morality.' The moral law has not been abolished for us; it is to be fulfilled in us. Although law-obedience is not the *ground* of our justification (it is in this sense that we are 'not under law but under grace'), it is the fruit of it and the very meaning of sanctification."¹³ This is part of the reason that Paul could say, "Do we make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

Having noted the apostle's teaching in Romans 3:31; 7:12, 14 and 8:4, we should not be surprised that he repeatedly quotes from the Mosaic law as a source of authority for his injunctions on personal godliness. In Romans 12:17-18 Paul commands believers to avoid personal revenge against those who have done evil against them. Why should Christians act this way? Because the law teaches, "'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:15). To back up this quote from the law Paul quotes Solomon's application of it (Prov. 25:21-22) in the next verse (20).

The apostle also explicitly endorses the revealed moral law in Romans chapter 13: "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For

and more and more enables them to obey God's holy law (cf. Gal. 5:18, 25 where walking in the Spirit refers to sanctification).

Fourth, the objection that the phrase "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" implies sinless perfection and thus cannot refer to sanctification (e.g., Calvin and Hodge) is refuted by the analogy of Scripture. When the Bible speaks of certain believers as being righteous, upright, faithful or blameless, it is understood that this does not mean a perfect obedience to the law. When Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) in his discussion of sanctification, no one believes this refers to a perfect and perpetual love of our brethren this side of heaven.

¹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 406, 407. Frederic Louis Godet adds regarding verse 4, "The matter in question here is not *guilt* to be removed; and to say that the law itself can henceforth declare as just, the term *plerthesai*, *to be fulfilled*, would not be very suitable. The matter in question, according to the context and the terms employed, is *what the law demands* of man. All the postulates contained in the righteousness demanded by the law (comp. the Sermon on the Mount, for example) are *fulfilled in us*, as soon as we *walk*, no more *after the flesh*, but *after the Spirit*. For, as we have seen, the law being *spiritual*, must coincide at all points in its statutes with the impulses of the Spirit" (*Commentary on Romans* [Grand Rapids: Kregel (1883) 1977], 301). F. F. Bruce writes, "The law's 'just requirement' is summed up in 13:9 in the commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'...Here is the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant (quoted in part in 11:27), under which, God said, 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts' (Jer. 31:33), and of the parallel promise of Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27, where God undertakes to give his people 'a new heart' and a 'new spirit'—in fact, his own Spirit, sent to dwell within them so that henceforth do his will spontaneously" (*Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, (1963) 1985], 153).

¹² John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:283.

¹³ John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1994), 222.

the commandments, ‘*You shall not commit adultery,*’ ‘*You shall not murder,*’ ‘*You shall not steal,*’ ‘*You shall not bear false witness,*’ ‘*You shall not covet,*’ and if *there is* any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law” (vs. 8-10). When discussing the duties of Christians towards each other Paul alludes to Leviticus 19:18 twice and then quotes it verbatim in verse 9. When Christians follow this law to love their neighbor, then all the other commandments are obeyed. The apostle also quotes four of the Ten Commandments as they are set forth in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Love is not left undefined by the apostle, but is fleshed out in concrete acts based on the objective, enscriptured, moral standard of the Decalogue. This would be an exceptionally odd and contradictory thing to say if Paul had abrogated the whole Mosaic law (i.e. every aspect) back in the book of Galatians. Paul does not say that love is the end of the law or that believers are now only obligated to follow the “laws of Christ,” but that “love is the fulfillment of the law” (i.e. the moral precepts in the Old Testament). He goes on to say that “love does no harm to a neighbor” (v. 10). If we want to express Christian love to another person, then we must seek their good by obeying the Old Testament moral laws that were given for their protection. “This appeal to the Decalogue demonstrates the following presuppositions. (1) The Decalogue is of permanent and abiding relevance. (2) It exemplifies the law that love fulfills and is therefore correlative with love. (3) The commandments and their binding obligation do not interfere with the exercise of love; there is no incompatibility. (4) The commandments are the norms in accordance with which love operates.”¹⁴ This is one of the clearest and strongest affirmations of the abiding validity and relevance of God’s Old Testament moral laws in the New Testament. The law of God is the standard by which Christians love each other. The standard for expressing our love to God is also found in God’s commandments. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandment. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 5:2-3).

Scholars who are dispensational or hold to a replacement theory of God’s Old Testament law (i.e. the whole Old Testament law [even the Ten Commandments and moral statutes] are replaced with a new law—the law of Christ), have great difficulty with such clear applications of God’s Old Testament moral laws by New Testament authors. Some simply assume that since these laws are in the New Testament that they are part of Christ’s new law. The problem with this argument is that the expression “law of Christ” (cf. Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21) is never demonstrated exegetically to be a new and different law for Christians. “The law of God” and “the law of Christ” are essentially synonymous like God’s Word and “the word of Christ” (Col. 3:16). Those who advocate a dispensational paradigm need to demonstrate how the New Testament has a new ethical approach as regards *content*. What features of the New Testament ethic are brand new and are not simply a repetition, renewal or exposition of the Old Testament ethic? The result of such a study would prove continuity, which is what we would expect given Matthew 5:17-19. In addition, after Paul tells us that “all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14; It is interesting that Paul begins a section on Christian sanctification by appealing to the Old Testament moral law and by quoting Leviticus 19:18), he goes to identify this same ethic as the “law of Christ” in Galatians 6:2. Obviously, Paul did not regard the “law of Christ” as a completely new or different ethical system.

¹⁴ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:161-162.

Another tactic of those who hold to a dispensational approach is to argue that laws from the Mosaic code are only used in an indirect manner in the New Testament. In other words, since it has been abrogated, it is not used in a direct or immediate way. The New Testament authors only appeal to underlying moral principles that are found in the law. This view, which is very common today, not only contradicts many passages in the epistles, but is untenable logically. Throughout the New Testament moral laws are quoted *verbatim* from the Old Testament. How is a direct quotation of a passage only an appeal to an underlying principle? This argument is only an attempt to circumvent the obvious fact that the apostles repeatedly and directly appeal to Old Testament moral laws as an authority for Christian ethics. Moreover, what is the moral principle in “you shall not murder, or steal, or lie, or commit adultery, or covet,” that is different than these simple, plain, explicit commands? The word “principle” means a rule of conduct, a fundamental truth, or a law. Apparently, dispensationalists believe there are moral laws within or underlying the moral laws. Such thinking is double talk and nonsense. A moral law is a moral principle. The only difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament when it comes to the moral laws is *application*. We may not have flat roofs where we entertain, so the command to put a fence around our roof does not always apply to roofs today (Dt. 22:8). But it certainly does apply if we have a balcony or if we do happen to have a deck on our roof. The law has not been abrogated, but circumstances have changed.

In 1 Corinthians 5:1 Paul upholds the law’s prohibition against incest. He uses a passage from the moral case laws about kind and fair treatment of oxen as a proof text to take care of pastors (1 Cor. 9:9). And in 1 Timothy 1:8 Paul says “the law is good if one uses it lawfully.” The context indicates that Paul was correcting people in the church who were *not* using the law for “godly edification” (v. 4), or as a way to love others from a pure heart (v. 5). Hendriksen notes that Paul “wishes to impress upon Timothy—and through him upon the Ephesians, particular upon those who were promoting erroneous doctrines—that the proposition, ‘Constant law study is an excellent thing,’ is not new. ‘This proposition,’ says the apostle as it were, ‘is a widely recognized principle, something we all know very well.’ Read Ps. 19, Ps. 119, Matt. 5:17-18.”¹⁵

Paul goes on to explain that the law was made for men who are lawless, insubordinate, ungodly, etc. and not for the righteous (v. 9). Given the fact that Paul was rebuking men who were not Judaizers, but rather were dealing with the law from the perspective of Jewish myths, traditions, genealogies and speculative nonsense (vs. 3-4), his point here is not that the law has been abrogated for the righteous (i.e. those declared righteous), but that they do not need it applied to them because they have already sought to conform their lives to it and thus already are ethical or righteous *personally* (see Barret, Bernard, Calvin, Earle, Ellicott, Knight, Hendriksen, Henry, Poole, Ridderbos, Simpson and Weiss). They have been regenerated by God’s Spirit, sanctified and enabled by the efficacy of Jesus’ death and resurrection to live in conformity (albeit not in a perfect or absolute manner; cf. 1 Jn. 1:8) to the requirements of the moral law. As Paul says in Romans 8, “He condemned sin the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (vs. 3-4).

When Paul elaborates on a proper use of the law it becomes clear that he is referring to the moral aspects of the Mosaic code. George W. Knight III writes,

The conjunction *de* relates this statement about “law” directly to a list of various sins that certainly seems to be based on the Mosaic law, all of them governed by the same verb (*keitai*)

¹⁵ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 2:66.

as that which governs the statement of principle.... The statement of principle and the list of sins are so tightly tied together that it is difficult not to think that they are both dealing with the Mosaic law.... The terms that follow in the list specify sins to be avoided and show that the law was given for a specific ethical use, not to be used in any other way with the righteous (v. 9a). The references to smiters of parents (with two words), murderers, sexual sinners (with two words), kidnappers (literally “stealers of people), and liars and perjurers are a deliberate echo of the order of the second part of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:12-16). Furthermore, that some, indeed most, of the sins are stated in aggravated forms lead one to Ex. 21:15ff. (and elsewhere) the commandments of Exodus 20 are specifically applied and worked out, where we have reference to striking of parents (v. 15), where there is a clear indication that “you shall not kill” is meant to prohibit murder (vv. 12-14), and where one of the forms of stealing is kidnapping (v. 16). By using these aggravated forms from Exodus 21, Paul may be showing the false teachers and the church that when the OT applied and worked out the principles of the law, it did so in this very specific way of dealing with people’s sins. The list would therefore carry with it, then, a double-edged thrust: Its ethical application of the Decalogue echoes the OT itself and thus gives both an example of how the law is to function and a refutation of the would-be teachers.¹⁶

Given all of these considerations, one can say with confidence that the apostle Paul, quite late in his career (c. A.D. 64), was still teaching the applicability of the moral laws in the Mosaic code for the New Covenant era.¹⁷

In the midst of a section where Jesus is rebuking believers for showing partiality toward the rich while ignoring the poor in their midst, the brother of our Lord backs up his charge with an argument taken directly from the Old Testament moral law. He writes,

If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*” you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. For He who said, “*Do not commit adultery,*” also said, “*Do not murder.*” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty (2:8-12).

Christians, James says, do the right thing if they obey the royal law. The expression “the royal law” (*nomon basilikon*) refers to the fact that God and Christ are the sovereign givers of the law. The law rests on God’s power and on the absolute authority of the theanthropic Mediator. “God’s laws are royal laws because of the dignity of the author of them.... Men’s laws are but properly ministerial and explicatory; God’s is royal and absolute.”¹⁸

¹⁶ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 82, 83-84.

¹⁷ One heterodox writer and publisher attempted to circumvent the obvious endorsements and New Covenant applications of the Old Testament moral laws by making a distinction between the apostle’s use of the word law (*nomos*) with or without the article. He argued that when Paul did not use the article (the) that he was not speaking of the Old Testament law, but rather “natural law.” Since Paul does not use the article in 1 Timothy 1:9, this would be a good time to dispense with this argument. There are many passages that do not use the article that are recognized by virtually all expositors to refer to the Mosaic law (e.g., Lk. 2:23-24; Ac. 13:39; Rom. 2:25; 3:20; 4:13; 6:14; 10:4; Gal. 2:19; 6:13; 1 Cor. 9:20; etc). As the Greek scholar A. T. Robertson has noted, “*Nomos* is a word that is used with a great deal of freedom by Paul. In general when *nomos* is anarthrous [i.e. without the article] in Paul it refers to the Mosaic law as in *epanapaue nomo* (Rom. 2:17)” (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934], 796). Further, in 1 Timothy 1:8, Paul uses the article and then in the very next verse (9), when speaking of the same law, does not use the article. Clever arguments based on the anarthrous use of *nomos* must be rejected.

¹⁸ Thomas Manton, *A Commentary on James* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1693] 1962), 206.

How does James define this kingdom law? He cites Leviticus 19:18 out of the Old Testament Scriptures: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (This same verse is quoted six times in the synoptic gospels and is appealed to as an authoritative guide for Christian sanctification by Paul in Romans 13:9 and Galatians 5:14). This commandment perfectly suits James’ argument because it specifically applies to a case where Christian poor people were not being treated biblically as neighbors. “The truly wise man goes to God’s own authorized statute-book; and those who ‘fulfill’ the law, as found there, ‘do well,’ act worthily of the Christian profession, ‘adorn the doctrine of God their Savior.’”¹⁹ Those who show favoritism break the royal law (the whole moral law as summarized in Lev. 19:18). Such a person is guilty of sin.

To strengthen his point and express the unity of the moral law, James sets forth examples from the Decalogue which are the central ethical commandments from the Mosaic law. God formulated the law and thus it is royal. It is absolute and binding on mankind. This moral law is a unity and thus we are not free to pick and choose which of the moral laws we would like to obey. To blatantly disregard one law is, in principle, to disregard the whole moral law (v. 10). Therefore, all Christians whether Jewish or Gentile are obligated to keep the whole moral law, even the Old Testament moral laws found in the Mosaic legislation. “In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches that nothing from the law will disappear ‘until everything is accomplished’ (Mt. 5:17-19). And Paul refers to the obligation of obeying the whole law (Gal. 5:3).”²⁰ “The law is a transcript of the divine character. It contains many details for our guidance; but of this *body* of law, *love* is the *soul*, all-pervading: for God, whose character the law expresses, ‘is love.’”²¹

Given both Paul’s and James’ dependence on Leviticus 19:18 and the Ten Commandments as basis of Christian ethics, we can only conclude that the “law of Christ” and the “royal law” found in the Mosaic legislation (Jas. 2:8) are indeed the same law. Given these kinds of unambiguous ethical instructions in the New Testament, it is *impossible* to demonstrate exegetically, logically or substantively that the moral law given to Moses was considered abrogated or off limits to New Covenant believers for sanctification. Moreover, one cannot argue that in the New Covenant era the principle of love has replaced the old law because the law of love that Jesus, Paul and James appeal to came from the Mosaic law and was a summary of the second table of the Decalogue and the moral case laws that flow from it.

James backs up his teaching by telling believers to speak and act with the final judgment of God in mind where they will be judged by the law that gives freedom (v. 12). God’s eye is always watching us and one day all of us must stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). What is interesting for our topic is the fact that everything a man says or does is going to be judged by the moral law of God. In context, this at a minimum must include the moral laws recorded in the Old Testament referred to by James. Manton writes, “He hinteth the reinforcement of the duties of the law of Moses in the gospel, which doth as exactly require a care in our speeches and actions as the law, for though believers be freed from the terrors of the law, yet not from the obedience of it.”²² To believers the law is a law of liberty because it sets the boundaries in which we enjoy complete freedom and because the Holy Spirit enables our service to God. License and antinomianism leads to slavery and bondage to sin. Although believers

¹⁹ Robert Johnstone, *Commentary on James*, 159.

²⁰ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 78.

²¹ Robert Johnstone, 167.

²² Thomas Manton, *A Commentary on James*, 218.

cannot go to hell, their works whether good or bad will still be evaluated by Christ. For James, our Lord and Paul this is a legitimate motivation for holiness.

Sixth, those who argue that the Christian has nothing to do with the Mosaic law are never fully consistent with their own teaching. One of the moral commandments within the Mosaic code is the prohibition of bestiality (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:16). This commandment is never repeated in the New Testament. Yet, there are few, if any, dispensationalists who argue that bestiality is now permitted. Instead, they attempt to circumvent this argument by saying that bestiality is forbidden by the general New Testament prohibition of fornication or sexual immorality. The problem with this argument is that the New Testament authors define fornication in terms of the Mosaic law. It is a fundamental principle of biblical interpretation that general terms and phrases used in Scripture are to be defined by the Bible itself.

The New Testament also does not repeat the Old Testament prohibitions against cursing a deaf person (Lev. 19:14) or deliberately causing a blind man to wander off the road (Deut. 27:18). These kind of obvious moral commands are said to be covered by the New Testament injunctions to love our neighbor (Rom. 13:9, 10; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8). Yet, once again, the Bible defines the general command to love in terms of obedience to the detailed, specific commandments of the revealed moral law. This statement is not conjecture or even merely an inference, but is the explicit teaching of Paul (Rom. 13:8-10), John (1 Jn. 5:2-3) and James (Jas. 2:8-11). The New Testament authors, writing under divine inspiration, repeatedly presuppose the continuing validity of the Old Testament moral laws.

Further, if we throw out the whole Old Testament law, then, if consistent, we would have to conclude that in many areas the New Covenant ethic is *less specific* concerning regulations dealing with rape, seduction, homosexuality, incest, prostitution, kidnapping, theft, fraud, murder, manslaughter and so on. Are we supposed to completely disregard all these laws which were written by God Himself (Ex. 20:1; 24:3-4) and are called just, righteous and holy laws (Deut. 4:8; Rom. 7:12) in order to start from scratch from general prohibitions or so-called natural law? Such a view is not biblical, logical or wise. Suppose for a moment that a group of Christian legislators are attempting to craft legislation based on “natural law,” but they are in disagreement as to what “nature” teaches. How can such situations be resolved if men are not permitted to go to the perspicuous, detailed *revealed* law? And if these legislators using so-called “natural law” came up with laws that *contradicted* the laws dealing with the same topic in the Old Testament, then, we ask, how could a law that contradicts statutes *that God Himself says are just* (Deut. 4:8; Rom. 7:12) also be just or righteous? Can a law be righteous and non-righteous at the same time? Of course not!

In addition, those who argue that the whole Old Testament law has been abrogated and replaced with a completely new law, the “law of Christ”; and that the many restatements found in the New Testament of moral laws out of the Mosaic code are not the Mosaic law anymore, but now are the law of Christ, are asserting something absurd. If we accept this position, then we must believe two things that make no sense. (1) We must hold that Old Testament moral laws were abrogated at the cross, then *immediately reinstated* at the resurrection. The only difference is that God’s law has been renamed Christ’s law. (2) The Old Testament moral laws were abrogated and then replaced with new laws that *were identical*. This view is patently absurd because if something is abrogated, it is annulled, set out of gear and non-binding. But we have been told that these laws really are binding after all. Attempts to avoid this obvious contradiction by speaking of principles or indirect applications and so forth are a smoke screen to take our eyes

away from the obvious fact that the Old Testament moral laws were accepted as binding by the apostles and continue to be binding today.

Seventh, not only is there abundant evidence throughout the New Testament that the Old Testament moral laws are still binding, the apostles and evangelists make it perfectly clear that some laws have been abrogated—the ceremonial ordinances. If the whole law was set out of gear, this specific teaching about the “shadows” or “weak and beggarly elements” of the law would have been unnecessary.

The ceremonial laws basically came in two categories. (1) The first group included all the laws which typify Jesus Christ and His work of redemption. As such, they were only shadows which pointed to the person and work of the Messiah. The ceremonial laws refer to the sacrificial rituals (the temple cultus): the priesthood, the sacrifices, the Levitical holy days (i.e., the feasts), the temple, the music, the utensils, circumcision, ritual washings, and so on. The ceremonial laws strengthened the faith of the Jews in the coming Messiah, by typifying both Him and the redemption from sin that He would bring. The ceremonial laws were directed to those in Israel. They were *restorative*, for they reflected God’s mercy and salvation. They were *anticipatory*, for they looked ahead to the perfect, final salvation wrought by the Messiah. And they were *temporary*, for as types and shadows they could not really remove the guilt of sin and bring perfection. God always intended to supersede the whole ceremonial system by Jesus Christ. A. A. Hodge writes,

That the ceremonial law introduced by Moses was typical of Christ and His work is taught throughout the New Testament and especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is declared to be a “shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.” The tabernacle and its services were “patterns of things in the heavens,” and figures, anti-types, of the true tabernacle, into which Christ has now entered for us. Col. ii. 17; Heb. ix. 23, 24. Christ is said to have effected our salvation by offering Himself as a sacrifice and by acting as our high priest. Eph. v. 2; Heb. ix. 11, 12, 26, 28; xiii. 11, 12. That the coming of Christ has superseded and forever done away with the ceremonial law is also evident from the very fact just stated that ceremonies were types of Him, that they were the shadows of which He was the substance. Their whole purpose and design were evidently discharged as soon as His real work of satisfaction was accomplished; and therefore it is not only a truth taught in Scripture (Heb. x. 1-14; Col. ii. 14-17; Eph. ii. 15, 16), but an undeniable historical fact, that the priestly work of Christ immediately and definitely superseded the work of the Levitical priest. The instant of Christ’s death, the veil separating the throne of God from the approach of men ‘was rent in twain from the top to the bottom’ (Matt. xxvii. 50, 51), thus throwing the way open to all, and dispensing with priests and their ceremonies forever.²³

(2) The ceremonial law also included laws designed to teach Israel about their religious, ethical and covenantal separation from the surrounding pagan nations. There were ceremonial laws which forbade the covenant people to: mix “different kinds of seeds” when planting crops (Deut. 22:9); plow with two different types of animals such as an ox and a donkey (Deut. 22:10);

²³ A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine Expounding the Westminster Confession* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 255-256. John Owen writes, “What were the tabernacle and temple? What was the holy place with the utensils of it? What was the oracle, the ark, the cherubim, the mercy-seat, placed therein? What was the high priest in all his vestments and administration? What were the sacrifices and annual sprinkling of blood in the most holy place? What was the whole system of their religious [temple] worship? Were they anything but representations of Christ in the glory of His person and His office? They were a shadow, and the body represented by that shadow was Christ” (“Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ, in His Person, Office and Grace” in *The Works of John Owen* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth (1850-1853) 1965], 1:348).

wear garments made of two different types of cloth such as linen and wool (Deut. 22:11). God also prohibited the Israelites from eating unclean animals (Lev. 11:1-47; 20:22-26; Deut. 14:1-21). These laws illustrated that the Gentile nations were unclean before the coming of Christ (cf. Acts 10:9-43; Gal. 2:12). In the Old covenant era, Gentiles who came to believe in the God of Israel had to become Jews (e.g., Ruth). These laws acted as a wall of division between Jews and Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:11-22). But now that Christ has accomplished a perfect redemption, people of all nations who believe in Christ are made holy and are part of God's covenant people with full rights as adopted sons. Although these ceremonial laws do not apply to New Covenant believers, the general principles they teach do apply. Christians are to be holy and separate from the pagan mindset and lifestyle of sin and unbelief and are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

Since the New Testament teaches the continuity and applicability of the Old Testament revealed moral laws for Christians and also explicitly sets forth the discontinuity of the whole ceremonial system, we should not interpret passages about the end of the law as teaching the end of every aspect of the Mosaic law. Those who have done so find themselves in direct conflict with the doctrine of the prophets, Jesus and the apostles as well as simple principles of logic.

I would challenge Durand to attempt to refute this section of this monograph with specific arguments, instead of complaining and equivocating regarding my quickly prepared lectures on the judicial law of Moses.²⁴

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²⁴ I offered to debate Durand on the abiding validity of the Old Testament revealed moral laws back in 2007. He declined. The invitation remains open.