

### **The Christian and the Law of Moses (3)**

**If Christ is the end of the law (Rom 10:4) does this mean we can now ignore the law?**

No! 2 Tim 3:16

But 1 Tim 1:6-11

Historically, Christians have spoken about three uses of the law:

1. It is given to convict unbelievers of sin and in this way lead the sinner to Christ
2. It is given to restrain evil within society
3. It is given to educate and teach believers saved by grace, to help shape their lives in a way that is pleasing to God

So, naturally people ask, what which parts of the law are binding on Christians?

A 3-part division?

- The Ceremonial Law – worship, sacrifice and cleanliness
  - fulfilled by Christ – no longer binding
- The Moral Law (10 C's) – unchanging
  - continues to be binding on all people incl. Christians
- The Civil Law – for Israel as a nation-state; regulated land ownership, government, admin of justice etc.
  - not directly binding - but the principles of justice and fair-dealing should be observed -they are a model for contemporary society

In practice, not a bad rule of thumb

But – two problems

1. the law itself does not present itself in terms of moral commands, ceremonial requirements and civil regulations
2. the NT doesn't deal with the issue in this way

We are probably asking the wrong question!

**The question to ask is not 'Which part of the Mosaic Law is abolished/rejected/upheld/useful?'**

**But, 'In what capacity or function is the Law abolished/rejected/upheld/useful?'**

Brian Rosner argues that Paul does three things with the Law<sup>1</sup>:

**1. He *repudiates* the law as ‘law-covenant’ or ‘legal code’**

- The Christian is not ‘under the law’ (Gal 5:18)
- As Israel’s legal code (commanding and penalising) it has been fulfilled and terminated by Christ (Rom 10:4)
- Jewish Christians are released from being under the law
- Gentile Christians should not have the law imposed upon them

**2. He *replaces* the law with a new way of living**

Instead of ‘walking according to the law’, he says that Christians are to walk:

Rom 6:4

Rom 8:4

Gal 2:14

Eph 4:1

Eph 5:2

Eph 5:8

**3. He *re-appropriates* the law as ‘prophecy’ and as ‘wisdom’**

- (a) As prophecy, the law ‘testifies’ or ‘bears witness’ to the gospel

*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. (Romans 3:21)*

- (b) As wisdom, the law is a God-given source of instruction, admonition and teaching

***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)***

*“Rather than reading the law as law, Paul reads it as wisdom for living, in the sense that he has internalized the law, makes reflective and expansive applications, and takes careful notice of its basis in the order of creation and the character of God.”<sup>2</sup>*

Growing in wisdom by meditating upon and internalizing the Law is a practice commended to us in the Psalms:

Psalms 19:7

Psalms 37:30-31

Psalms 119:97-98

We should expect the law to be a source of wisdom for us as we seek to be careful how we live – not as unwise but as wise, not being foolish but understanding what the Lord’s will is (Eph 5:15-17); with love abounding in knowledge and depth of insight so that we may and discern what is best and be pure and blameless filled with the fruit of righteousness (Php 9:11)

<sup>1</sup> *Paul and the Law – keeping the commandments of God*; Brian Rosner; IVP 2013

<sup>2</sup> Rosner p.204

**Examples of Paul's use of the law as 'wisdom':**

<p><b>1 Cor 9:7-14, especially vv9 and 13</b>  <i>Paul is arguing the case for gospel workers to 'receive their living from the gospel'</i></p> <p>Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk?<sup>8</sup> Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing?<sup>9</sup> <b>For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain."</b></p> <p>Is it about oxen that God is concerned?<sup>10</sup> Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the ploughman ploughs and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.<sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?<sup>12</sup> If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.</p> <p><b><sup>13</sup> Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?</b></p> <p><sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.</p>	<p><i>How does Paul argue his case?</i></p>
--	---

**1 Cor 5:1-13**

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup> And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

<sup>3</sup> Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. <sup>4</sup> When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, <sup>5</sup> hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

<sup>6</sup> Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? <sup>7</sup> Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

<sup>9</sup> I have written to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— <sup>10</sup> not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. <sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler.

With such a man do not even eat.

<sup>12</sup> What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? <sup>13</sup> God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

In v13, Paul quotes the 'expulsion formula' used on ten occasions in Deut. to command the death of an offender to 'purge' the evil from among you/from Israel (13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:13, 19; 21:21; **22:21, 22, 24**; 24:7). In eight out of these ten instances, the LXX uses the verb *exairō* (to exclude/drive out). The only use of this verb in the NT is here in 1 Cor 5 in verses 2 and 13.

v1 – Sexual intercourse between a man and his father's wife is forbidden by Deut **22:30** and the offender cursed in Deut 27:20

v2 – 'putting out from among you' is the means of 'purging' the evil from the church

v3-5 recall the judgement of Deut 19:16-20 where judgement takes place in the presence of the Lord, the priests and judges and texts (such as Lev 24:14, 16; Num 15:35; and 35:24) were the judgement and punishment of capital crimes involve the assembly of Israel. Here the judgment is to be enacted in the presence of the Lord Jesus and Paul (who is present in spirit), the judge, when the whole church is assembled.

v6-7a – the imagery of getting rid of yeast before the feast of unleavened bread is used as a metaphor for protecting the community from the spread of wickedness

v7b-8 – the death of Christ is the fulfilment of the death of the Passover lamb and the life of the church is likened to a continuous Passover celebration; eating unleavened bread becomes acting with sincerity and in accord with the truth.

v11 – the list of sinners the church is to judge largely parallels the list of sinners to whom the expulsion formula is applied in Deut.

**1 Cor 5:11**

*sexually immoral  
greedy*

*idolater  
slanderer  
drunkard  
swindler*

**Deuteronomy**

*promiscuity, adultery (22:21-22, 30)  
(no parallel but paired with swindler in v10)*

*idolatry (13:1-5; 17:2-7)  
malicious false testimony (19:16-19)  
rebellious drunken son (21:18-21)  
kidnapping, slave-trading (24:7 –  
LXX uses *kleptēs* ['thief'])*

c.f. Psalm 101:5

<sup>4</sup> Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil. <sup>5</sup> Whoever slanders his neighbour in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure [LXX: 'eat with']

v12 – the corporate responsibility given to Israel for the purity of the community evident in Deuteronomy is applied to the church. The Deuteronomy expulsion formula is quoted.

Paul's directions are clearly informed by the wisdom contained in the OT Law when it comes to identifying sin and dealing with the sinner within the covenant community, but note how:

1. He exercises apostolic authority rather than directly appealing to Mosaic authority (v3)
2. He contextualises the teaching of Deuteronomy to the context of the New Covenant church with:
  - a. his reference to the presence of the Lord Jesus
  - b. his reference to his own apostolic authority to pass judgment
  - c. his use of the unleavened bread and Passover imagery
  - d. his modification of the death penalty to exclusion from table fellowship with the church

If we follow Paul's example:

1. Our methodology should be to turn the precepts (rules) given to Israel into principles and then determine what the principle means in terms of precept (instruction/application) for the New Covenant community
2. We must recognise that the final authority lies with Jesus, the Lord of the church. So, the final test of legitimacy for any application of the law of Moses is conformity to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles.

A final example:

<b>Ephesians 6:1</b>	
<i>Children</i>	addressed as responsible members of the congregation
<i>obey your parents</i>	Apostolic instruction
<i>in the Lord</i>	the relationship which should motivate and shape their obedience – similar to 'as to the Lord or 'as to Christ' (5:22; 6:5)
<i>for this is right</i>	Further motivation
<i>'Honour your father and mother'</i>	5 <sup>th</sup> commandment cited in support of the 'rightness' of obeying their parents
<i>which is the first commandment with a promise</i>	Further motivation from the Law highlighted
<i>'so it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth'</i>	The promise quoted with 'land' [of Israel] changed to 'earth' to universalize the promise for the New Covenant context

The primary motivation given is not the fifth commandment itself but being 'in the Lord', indicating that the obedience of children to parents should be part of their Christian discipleship.

The appeal to the fifth commandment serves to support the teaching that such obedience 'is right'.

Note the motivations Paul gives in the wider context:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 4:17-21 – new way of life having learnt Christ | 5:15 – live as wise                        |
| 4:24 – created to be like God                  | 5:17 – understand the Lord's will          |
| 5:1-2 – imitate God/Christ                     | 5:18-21 – submitting to one another as an  |
| 5:8-10 – lives as children of light            | outworking of being filled with the Spirit |

Nowhere does Paul appeal to the authority of the law as law-code; his application of the OT law is always 'through Christ'

**In Summary**

Questions to ask of any section of the law of Moses:

1. How does it reveal the character of God and expose human sin?
  - The law as *revelation of/from* God
2. How does it point to and find fulfilment in Christ?
  - The law as *prophetic witness*
3. How do the principles underlying the commandments have application to the church and Christian believer in the New Covenant context in light of Christ's fulfilment of the law.
  - The law as *instructive wisdom*

Or, in terms of 2 Tim 3:15-16, as we read any section of the law 'through Christ', how does it function as part of God's breathed-out word to:

- (a) make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus
- (b) teach, rebuke, correct and train in righteousness