

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

THE LAW OF CHRIST AND ITS STRICTNESS

By Donald Townsley

This subject needs to be studied because of the loose attitudes that prevail in the religious world, and are found even among brethren, toward the law of Christ. The Calvinist teaches that man is saved by God’s grace apart from law. Some brethren have accepted this theory and have concluded that we are not under law – that the system of salvation is by grace apart from law. Let us examine this in light of New Testament teaching.

The New Testament plainly teaches that we are under the law of Christ today. Listen to what Paul told the Galatians: **“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”** (Gal. 6:2). He also taught that we are under the law of Christ in 1 Corinthians 9:21, **“To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.”** James said in chapter four and verse twelve of his epistle that there is one lawgiver, and Peter said in Acts 3:22-23 (Luke recording) that all who fail to hear Christ, the lawgiver, shall be destroyed from among the people. Peter was quoting from Deuteronomy 18.

The law of Christ is called **“the gospel of the grace of God”** in Acts 20:24. God’s grace is appropriated by the law of Christ today. Without obedience to the **“gospel of the grace of God”** there is NO GRACE extended to man! Paul said to the Romans: **“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”** (Rom. 8:2). James called the law of Christ **“the perfect law of liberty”** because it liberates (frees) man from sin when he is obedient to it: **“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”** (Jas. 1:25). God’s grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21), and God’s righteousness (His plan to make man righteous) is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17), so grace reigns through the gospel. No honest man can deny that God’s grace is appropriated by the law of Christ.

The law of Christ (the gospel) is not a legal system like the law of Moses. The Hebrew writer makes this very clear: **“For finding fault with them, he saith, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people”** (Heb. 8:8-10).

The law of Moses was a legal system of meritorious works. It demanded perfect obedience in order to be justified by it: **“Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord”** (Lev. 18:5). When man violated the law of Moses he came under the curse of it: **“Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen”** (Deut. 27:26). Man could not be justified by this system because of the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 8:3). All men (except Jesus Christ) who lived under the law sinned and came under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10). Paul told the Galatians: **“for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”** (Gal. 2:16).

The law of Christ is a legal system that extends grace (Acts 20:24, 32; Titus 2:11-12; Jas. 1:25). Under the **“perfect law of liberty”** man can have LIFE when God, by His grace through the blood of Jesus Christ, pardons his sins when he obeys the gospel – the law of Christ (Matt. 26:28; Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 13:39). Under the law of Christ God’s grace is extended to man **CONDITIONALLY**. Paul said, **“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of**

God” (Rom. 5:2); and to the Ephesians: ***For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God***” (Eph. 2:8). Salvation on God’s part is GRACE, and on man’s part is an OBEDIENT FAITH.

The grounds of salvation are God’s grace and the blood of Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 2:8). When we obey the gospel, we are simply meeting God’s conditions in order to have the salvation that His grace has provided – we have merited nothing! Jesus said, ***“So, likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do”*** (Lk. 17:10).

Just because we are under ***“the gospel of the grace of God”*** (Acts 20:24) does not mean it is not strict. Let us now look at the strictness of the law of Christ:

1. The Hebrew writer points up the strictness of the law of Christ in comparison with the law of Moses when he writes: ***“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace”*** (Heb. 10:28-29)?

2. The New Testament teaches that every soul who does not obey the gospel, the law of Christ, will be lost (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Acts 2:22-23).

3. The law of Christ is inalterable and indestructible (Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:25).

4. The law of Christ operates with legal definiteness:

(1) In becoming a Christian under the law of liberty, God has a point at which He remembers sin no more (Heb. 8:12), so no man can know he is saved by grace until he meets God’s conditions of salvation (Rom. 8:16; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:36-38).

(2) No Christian can know he is forgiven of the sins he commits until he complies with God’s second law of pardon (Acts 8:22; 1 Jn. 1:9).

5. Everyone who has lived in this dispensation will meet the law of Christ in the Judgment (Jn. 12:48).

6. The law of Christ plainly teaches us that any who would take liberties with this law comes under the condemnation of God (Rev. 22:18-19; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Jn. 9-11).

Let us not think because we are under ***“the gospel of the grace of God”*** (Acts 20:24), that God does not demand strict obedience to His will in order that we might enjoy His grace (Matt. 7:21; Jas. 1:25; 1 Pet. 4:2; 1 Jn. 2:17; Jn. 15:7, 10-11; Gal. 5:13). Those who are inclined to minimize the strictness of the law of Christ had better take another look at what God has demanded and what He requires NOW! ***“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool”*** (Prov. 28:26). ■

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure” (Heb. 10:1-6).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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