

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Faith Without Works?**

**Faith Without Works? - posted by hijode1dios (), on: 2004/3/27 2:09**

There is thought within many religious circles today that this new dispensation of grace brought about by Jesus' cross-work has done away with the law. This leads to the discarding of the Old Testament as irrelevant to Christianity today; culminating in an "easy-believism" that deteriorates the foundation of Christian holiness. In fact, grace has not discarded the law, but has provided the Christian with the means to fulfill the law.

There are two aspects of the law recorded in Scripture: that which is God-made and that which is man-made. The two are distinct. The Law of God is the original rules of order for mankind and existed far before the time of Moses. The law of man came about in an attempt to fulfill the law of God. But, man's ways are not God's ways (Isaiah 55:8-9.) The law of God came to us immediately at creation. This is evidenced by the first accounts of God's response to human behavior. Eve and then Adam ate the fruit from the wrong tree (Gen. 3:6.) Cain offered the wrong sacrifice, and later shed blood, bringing a curse on himself (Gen. 4:38.) Enoch walked with God, thereby avoiding the death commanded by sin (Gen. 5:24.) Within eight generations, violations of God's law had reached such colossal proportions that God was disgusted (Gen. 6:5,6.) So, God destroyed all life on earth, saving alive a prototypical selection on the ark. This was the direct result of violation of God's law.

Immediately after the Flood, God set forth more concrete laws concerning the eating of animals and blood (Gen. 9:4-6.) This was a sign of the sanctity God placed on life and the blood. This was because men did not even have the knowledge of how to follow God's law (Jer. 4:22.)

More than 800 years later, the Law of Moses was given to the Hebrews (Exo. 20-30.) This man-made law quickly swelled to delineate every imaginable rule, even to the forbiddance of picking up sticks on the Sabbath. This was man's attempt to follow God's law. A millennium and a half later, Jesus began to teach and preach grace. Many today see this as a turning from the law. Though it is a turn from man's attempt to follow God's law, it did not discard the law of God. Instead, it provided the means to fulfilling the law.

The law of God has been very well described in Scripture. Psalms 19:7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." According to Psalm 119:1-8, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly." Romans 13:10 goes further to tell us that love is the fulfilling of the law. James 1:25 says, "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." According to I John 3:4 sin is the transgression of the law. Why all these references to fulfilling the law in the epistles with Jesus' cross-work already fulfilled? Because obviously, Jesus' cross-work did not cast out the law. We read in Jesus' own words in Matt 5:17-20 that Jesus came to fulfill the law instead of destroying it.

So the work of the cross was to help us fulfill the law by removing our sinful nature. It can be seen in Matthew 5:21-45 that the new requirements of Jesus are much more difficult to meet than the requirements of the Law of Moses, as the Israelites followed it. For example, it is not impossible to avoid adultery or fornication and to keep our bodies pure, as Moses commanded. But, to keep our hearts and mind pure, completely abstaining from lust is another matter. Yet, this is what Christ commanded as the fulfilling of the law. Actually, it was what God originally intended by the Law of Moses. The new covenant predicted in Jeremiah 31:31-34, and fulfilled in the cross, did not destroy the law, but as Jeremiah said, only put the law inside our hearts.

This is my humble opinion of Scripture. I did not see this topic addressed elsewhere. If it was, accept my apology. I have not been around very long.

Vicky

Re: Faith Without Works? - posted by hijode1dios (), on: 2004/3/28 13:50

Allow me to use an analogy, to further clarify my post. In every classroom, teachers find it necessary to post a set of rules for classroom behavior. Otherwise, it would be utter chaos. Some teachers go for the long detailed list method; describing the exact infractions that will result in punishment. Most students will find a way around those rules because you can't list everything. Children look for loopholes. The more specific your rules, the more loopholes are available. If you say no hitting or kicking, you leave open biting or throwing objects at an enemy. And what about name-calling and bickering? Are those allowed? Furthermore, what is the point in saying, "No fighting is allowed?" A posted rule against fighting will not stop a fight. Will a student say, "Oh, I guess I can't fight here because there is a rule against it?" Of course not! What is needed is a code of ethics. To get to the root of the problem, the teacher must set up an environment where fighting is not necessary. My classroom rules are: (1) Be kind (2) Be polite (3) Be clean and (4) Work Hard. Does this mean I allow fighting, gum chewing, and cursing? Absolutely not! Any infraction can be pinned to a violation of one of those four rules. If a student makes fun of someone, that's not kind. If you knock someone's books out of their hands accidentally, it's polite to say, "I am so sorry. I will help you pick those up." Following these ethics will prevent fights. If everyone is working hard, few problems will arise.

By the same token, when Jesus said in Matthew 5 that lust was wrong, He wasn't saying, "It's ok to commit adultery now, just don't lust." He was getting to the root of the sin/transgression problem and making it possible to fulfill the law.

If God's law stands, and the cross is but the catalyst that launches us into a state of grace, where we find ourselves capable of obeying the law, then the Old Testament must be taken into account in today's soteriology. Many Christians do not fully comprehend grace, because of a failure to study the Old Testament. It is really impossible to grasp the meaning of what Jesus did on the cross that day without first reading the Old Testament. Much of Revelations would be meaningless without a background in the Old Testament prophets. It is through the nation of Israel that God chose to bring salvation to the world. And it is there in the pages of the Old Testament that we find the footsteps to the cross. Many can not take up their cross and follow Christ (Matt. 16:24) because they have not made that trip through the Old Testament to get to Calvary.

God said, "Be ye Holy even as I am Holy (Lev. 20:26)." God's holiness is unchanging. Similarly, His desire for us to be holy has not changed (Heb. 12:14.) Isaiah said, "All our righteousness is as filthy rags (64:6.) A filthy rag is still filthy until it has been washed. And after it is washed, if it returns to the filth, it will be filthy still. The Christian call to holy living was repeated in the new Testament. Through grace we are enabled to follow God's law. The Old Testament is valid as Scripture because II Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness." In response to the doctrine of easy-believism, James said, "...shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works (James 2:18.)" Furthermore, faith without works is dead (James 2:20.)

Re: Faith Without Works? - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/3/31 14:04

Hi Vicky,

Quote:  
-----There are two aspects of the law recorded in Scripture: that which is God-made and that which is man-made. The two are distinct. The Law of God is the original rules of order for mankind and existed far before the time of Moses. The law of man came about in an attempt to fulfill the law of God. But, man's ways are not God's ways (Isaiah 55:8-9.) The law of God came to us immediately at creation.  
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It is common to make a distinction between the Law of God and the law of man, however, I usually associate the latter with the **oral traditions**, which are *outside* of scripture.

However I note the following:

Quote:  
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You seem to be identifying "man-made laws" with Mosaic law, which seems rather peculiar to me. After all, in Exodus 20-30, it is clearly stated that God instructed Moses to pass down these laws to the Israelites. Given the divine origin of these laws, it is difficult for me to call them "**man-made** laws", especially when the Ten Commandments are included in Exodus 20.

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I would prefer identifying "man-made laws" with the "oral traditions", not Exodus 20-30.

Agent001

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/3/31 14:42**

Agent001 wrote You seem to be identifying "man-made laws" with Mosaic law, which seems rather peculiar to me. After all, in Exodus 20-30, it is clearly stated that God instructed Moses to pass down these laws to the Israelites. Given the divine origin of these laws, it is difficult for me to call them "man-made laws", especially when the Ten Commandments are included in Exodus 20.

Hi Vicky

I was about to make the same comment. The Sinai Covenant was a unique agreement between God and the people who became 'God's people'. The law given to them was not a new invention; we know that other cultures had codes with similarities. There is a 'work of the law' written in the hearts of men and women to which our conscience bears witness, but the Sinai Covenant was a unique application of that 'universal law' to God's people. If you read Ex 20 you will see it was addressed to people that had Jehovah as their God, and who had been brought by Jehovah 'out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'.

As such this was never addressed to me, although I am accountable for the 'work of the law written in the heart'. The Sinai Law code was a special application of that 'universal law' combined with a tenancy agreement for the land of promise. God held Israel uniquely responsible for their behaviour; Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Amos 3:1,2. See again the way in which God is speaking to people with a unique history when He says "You only have I known... I will punish you for all your iniquities". When upon earth Christ held them responsible for what they ought to have known; "did you not read..."

The non-Sinai-covenant individual is seen in Paul's word to the Athenians. Here there is no mention of 'the Law' but there is an appeal to the conscience. Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. Act 17:29-31 NASB)

The mood here is very different from Amos 3.

Having said all this genuine faith will always produce faithful living. I love this verse We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; (2Co 4:13 KJV). True faith always has a 'therefore', a consequence. It is true that salvation is by faith alone without good works, but true faith is never 'alone'; it is always accompanied by good works.

Have you noticed that the New Testament never refers to Christians 'keeping the law' but only to 'fulfilling the law'.

**Re: Law of Moses - posted by hijode1dios (), on: 2004/4/7 3:03**

Quote:

Agent001 wrote:

You seem to be identifying "man-made laws" with Mosaic law, which seems rather peculiar to me. After all, in Exodus 20-30, it is clearly stated that God instructed Moses to pass down these laws to the Israelites. Given the divine origin of these laws, it is difficult for me to call them "**man-made** laws", especially when the Ten Commandments are included in Exodus 20.

I would prefer identifying "man-made laws" with the "oral traditions", not Exodus 20-30.

Agent001

Hello,  
You are correct. The Law of Moses is directly from God. I can see how that could be taken. I did not mean to imply that the Law of Moses was not from God directly. I was referring to the modern day observance of the "Law of Moses." As you can see, it has swelled to unimaginable proportions, far beyond what Moses ever instructed.

For example, consulting The Mitzvot: The Commandments and their Rationale(p.40.)

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" A Jew must not travel more than 2,000 cubits from any point of the city limits, unless he deposits an eruv at that point. (An eruv is a symbol consisting of food..." The point here was God wanted man to have a break on the Sabbath. The Jew "observes" this rule by leaving something of his at intervals of 2,000 cubits to get around this injunction. Of course this was not part of God's law given to Moses. But, it is part of the Mitzvot or current Law of Moses (what you refer to as Oral Tradition.)

Going even further, modern Orthodox Jewish women are required to cover their hair after they get married, whenever they are in the presence of anyone other than their husband. The rationale behind this rule is that her hair is seen as a sexual symbol and attractive. So no one but her husband should see it. So they require her to wear a wig. I could not find this injunction even in the Mitzvot. It seems to be an even more modern construct of their oral tradition. Of course, if that is the case with hair, how does wearing "false hair" make her more modest? This is definitely a tangled mess, forgive me.

So, as you can see, there is a difference between the Law handed down from God to Moses and what we now call "the Law of Moses." Most modern day Christians observe the Ten Commandments (as supported by the Jerusalem Council and Paul,) yet we don't consider ourselves to be fulfilling the Law of Moses when we keep the Ten Commandments.

On the question of fulfilling versus keeping...Do we fulfill the Big Ten, or keep them? I would say both, and, or either. Same difference I should think. Maybe you could delineate. I don't fulfill OR keep the Law of Moses. But I try to fulfill AND keep the Ten Commandments.

Either way you feel comfortable is fine.