

## Stop Obeying the Law

~Hebrews 10:1-18

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Good morning! I hope you are all doing well.

This morning I have a bit of a quiz for you. It's going to require you to type an answer in the chat. So grab your phones or keyboard, and get ready to put your answer in on Facebook, YouTube, or in the chat on the website.

So across the world, there are all sorts of weird laws. But how weird can they get? I want you to answer Real or Fake in the chat, depending on if you think it is an actual law or something I made up. Now some of these laws are not in effect today, but were apparently at some point enforced. And participate, don't be afraid to get it wrong, some of them are quite odd.

Okay, let's do a practice one.

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It's illegal to wear a Winnie The Pooh shirt in Poland (REAL)

It is illegal to dance in the dark after midnight in Japan (REAL)

It's illegal to display a peace sign on public buildings in Delaware (FAKE)

In Alabama, it is illegal to wear a fake mustache that causes laughter in Church (REAL)

In Florida, you are not allowed to feed alligators with fried chicken. (FAKE)

In Tylertown, Mississippi, is against the law to shave in the center of Main Street. (REAL)

In Florida, if an elephant is left tied to a parking meter, the parking fee has to be paid just as it would for a vehicle. (REAL)

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How did you do? It makes you wonder why these are real! Like what scenario happened that they went through the process to make an official law to mandate that Elephants need to pay for parking when parked at a meter?

Some laws can feel irrelevant when we are so far removed from them. They aren't relevant to us. We can feel the same way about the Old Testament Law.

For instance in the Old Testament Law, did you know that if you find a mother bird sitting on her nest with her eggs or baby birds, you cannot take the mother with her young, but you can take the young as long as you leave the mother?

One law says that you cannot plant two seeds in one field. OR wear clothing with two types of mixed fabric.

You cannot eat the fruit from a tree that is in its first three years of yielding fruit.

If you had a vineyard, you are not allowed to pick up any grapes on the ground during harvest

It becomes helpful to learn why these laws exist in order for us to appreciate why they are there. For example, the grapes that fell to the ground are meant to be left for the poor. So they could come and have food to eat. At first glance, it seems like an odd thing, but really it's a law around loving and caring for the less fortunate in society. And really most laws have some type of relevance in teaching people to live in a way that is honoring to God – if you were able to follow them all. Which was impossible.

And I would say that as a Christian living in 2021, most people couldn't articulate much of what is in the Old Testament Law, nor could they clearly answer the question about which of the Old Testament Laws still apply today.

Well, today's passage, much like last weeks, is talking about how Christ has fulfilled the requirements of the Law. Once for all. As a result, we have become so unfamiliar with the Old law, and therefore cannot really appreciate the implications of this passage for us today.

So we are going to talk about the relationship the believer has with the Law today, as clearly as I can say it, so that you can appreciate the implications of this passage in Hebrews.

So flip to Hebrews Chapter 10 now to read together. The thought in this chapter, overlaps with what Riley shared about last week in terms of Christ's finished work, and because I'm covering the first half of the Chapter, Pastor Serge gets everything after the word 'therefore' which means, he get's all the application part to preach on, so all his work is already done for him, which is, I'm sure, why he took this weekend off. But we've got some work to do, so, lets dive in to Hebrews chapter 10 verses 1-18.

One side thing before we read, in Hebrews, the author used a literary tool called an **inclusio**. This is where they used words or phrases as brackets to make an argument. So similar to a chiasm, but without the series of parallels. The dominant theme through Hebrews, highlighted by this **inclusio** is the idea of perseverance. The first part of the bracket is in chapter 1:1-3, and ends here in chapter 10 verses 12. Then Chapter 11 becomes highlighted with the heroes of faith, those who have persevered. But as we read, listen for the phrase where Jesus sits down. Just an interesting point that helps us understand the point of the letter. Once we understand what is being highlighted, in this case a call to perseverance, then it helps guide our understanding for the rest of the letter. I just found that cool. Something to look out for.

Hebrews 10:1-18

**For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? <sup>3</sup> But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. <sup>4</sup> For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

<sup>5</sup> **Consequently, when Christ<sup>[a]</sup> came into the world, he said,**

**“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
but a body have you prepared for me;**

<sup>6</sup> **in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you have taken no pleasure.**

<sup>7</sup> Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

<sup>8</sup> When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup> then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

<sup>11</sup> And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when Christ<sup>[b]</sup> had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

<sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

<sup>16</sup> “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”

<sup>17</sup> then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

<sup>18</sup> Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

A question I get asked regularly in youth ministry is why Christians pick and choose what parts of the Old Testament laws to follow and which ones do not follow? How do they decide? Atheists, will use the same question to try to show inconsistency or hypocrisy in the Christian life.

For instance, Christians, try to not steal, lie, dishonor our parents, or murder. Some people would say that Christians should use the death penalty, not get tattoos, women should wear dresses, and need to practice the Sabbath. However, at the same time, when we eat fruit, we don't consider the particular year it was harvested in. We were not worried about our clothing being a particular length. We are okay wearing clothes with mixed fabrics. We are not worried about specific haircuts, or having to build parapets on our rooves so that no one will fall off. We also eat bacon, which is pretty great.

So, why is it the Christians can pick and choose what in the Old Testament to follow? Great question. It's one that I think that most people can't articulate an answer to. Over the years, answering the question, I came up with a way to answer it based on something I had heard that made sense. It didn't completely answer it for me, but it was enough for me to accept.

So the Law in the Old Testament is made up of 613 commands in various contexts, and seem to be able to be put into three categories: There are **purity/ceremonial laws, civil laws, and moral laws**.

**Purity or ceremonial laws** included things around sacrifices, burning incense, ceremonial washings and so on. For the Israelites it was very important for them to know if they were in a pure or impure state at any given time before entering God's presence. It's not a sin to be unclean,

but they needed to know how to become pure again, and the purity laws describe what they needed to do.

The **civil laws** are laws on how to govern themselves as a people. After they left Egypt, they had no government to tell them how to deal with justice issues. So these laws were all about what to do with people who hurt others and how they should operate as a people group. People who were stealing, or murdering, or cheating others.

The third section are the **moral laws**. These laws are like the 10 commandments; they talk about what is right and wrong. There are many more than just the 10 commandments, many of them overlapping other civil and ceremonial laws. In the New Testament, the 10 commandments are repeated by Jesus, and he commands everyone to do them (except for one – the Sabbath, which he says was made for people, not for God's benefit. But all the rest we are told to keep doing.

So the way I heard it said was that we no longer follow the Civil and Ceremonial parts of the law because Jesus fulfilled those parts, but we still obey the moral laws because they tie into God's character.

So this sufficed for a while, as it seems like a clear answer to the question. But I questioned a few things that weren't made clear until I really studied through the Book of Romans. *I particularly struggled with the thought that only the moral aspect of the law is tied into God's character.* It wouldn't make sense for God to put into practice a bunch of laws that were out of character for him. So it leaves a gaping question – why would God keep those rules and not all of them? Also many moral laws were tied and overlapped to civil and ceremonial laws. And this actually points to another problem, that I can't find scripture that divided the Law into these three categories. It doesn't mean that they aren't there, but scripture just doesn't speak about the Law as being three sections. There are times like in this chapter in Hebrews 10 that talk about a specific aspect of the law, in this case offering sacrifices, but references to the Law refer to the whole law, or a specific law, not these 3 man articulated sections of civil, ceremonial, and moral.

In Matthew 5 Jesus said that he came to fulfil the law. Paul refers to living under the law as living as a captive to it. The Law demanded. It demanded perfect purity, justice and righteousness. No one could ever live up to what is required. A savior was needed. So Jesus fulfilled the demands of the Law for us. Not just parts of the Law, rather the entire thing. His sacrifice was the perfect sacrifice and makes the believer pure and clean. So much so, that now the presence of God can reside inside us! Instead of his presence being in the temple, in the holy of holies, our bodies are now the new temple. God's spirit dwells with his people. And we don't die, because we are always in a pure state, thanks to Jesus.

The civil requirements of the Law were also fulfilled by this too. With the temple no longer required for sacrifices, the curtain torn symbolizing God's Spirit can be with believers. There was a decentralization of worship and God's people. Like Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4 "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." They no longer had to stay together and worship in Jerusalem to be in God's presence. As seen at Pentecost, God's spirit could not rest with purified believers from all over. God's people now were from all over, and under other governments. The civil laws no longer applied because God's people no longer were centralized.

But what about the moral law? The 10 Commandments? Well these were fulfilled too. Think about the 10 commandments. Just like Brother Ted shared a couple of weeks ago, we could never

perfectly keep God's moral law –not even just those 10! Have you ever lied? Have you ever been disrespectful to your parents? Have you ever used the Lord's name frivolously, as a slang, expression, or as a swear word?

You can go down the list and see that nobody measure up to the demands of the moral parts of the law.

So it's not that Jesus just fulfilled 2 parts of the law so we don't obey those anymore –no! He fulfilled ALL of the law. We could never be righteous on our own, so Jesus paying the price for us on the Cross, fulfilled it's demands on us, allowing us to take on His righteousness as our own. Now we are no longer captives to the law, we are free from what it demands.

However, the old Law is not gone or useless. Quite the opposite. The old law serves a purpose, but we must know that that is. Paul says in Romans 3, that the reason the Law was given was to show people they are sinful and fall short of God's glory. Romans 3:19-20 says **"Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."** Two things to note there: it says through the law comes the knowledge of sin. Second, it says the law speaks to those under the law, which Christians are not anymore. The book of Romans is actually building a whole case for this.

Chapter 1: The world is corrupted

Chapter 2: Don't point fingers because you are also corrupted when held to the standards of the Law.

Chapter 3: We all need a savior because all have fallen short of the glory of God. The law was made to show us our sin.

Chapter 4: The promise of Abraham is fulfilled through faith, not by following the Law.

Chapter 5: Faith in Jesus is the fulfilment of that promise, and he gives grace to cover sin

Chapter 6: We have died with Christ through baptism, and raised to new life. Therefore we are dead to sin. And not under the Law, but now under grace.

Then chapter 7 Paul uses the illustration go marriage to say that just like a wife who's husband has dies, she is now free to marry another, so are we free from the old law to marry ourselves to another – the "new way of the spirit".

Romans 7:6 says: **"But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code."**

So what is the new way of the Spirit? Well the remainder of Romans tells us that it is all about having Faith expressed through loving God and loving others. That's it. That is our new "law". What Paul calls in Galatians 6 – the Law of Christ.

Paul continues to express this played in Romans. Chapter 12 he shares what a true Christian looks like:

**<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine.**

**Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.**

**<sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.**

**<sup>11</sup> Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, ....**

**<sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.**

**<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.**

**<sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.**

**<sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another.**

**Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly...**

**Repay no one evil for evil, ...**

**live peaceably with all....** ...

**“if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink....” <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Then in 13, he says, if the government is oppressing you, respect and honor their position and love them.

Then listen to what's next:

**<sup>8</sup> Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.**

So with loving God and Loving others as the metric, consider the 10 commandments. Would the Christian still do those things? Paul says Yes! Love is fulfilling the Law. So we do obey all the 10 commandments - All except for one- the Sabbath. Jesus said the Sabbath is not for God's benefit, but rather our personal benefit. So not following the Sabbath practices does not go in contrast to loving God or others, rather it is just a gift for us to enjoy.

In Romans 14, Paul talks about why certain things are sinful and why some things are not sinful and it's not to do with it being written down in an Old Testament law. The same action being done can be sin for one person and not sin for another if it goes against their conscience! He cracks the definition of sin wide open.

Going back to Hebrews 10, we see in verse 9, it says “Behold I have come to do your will’. He does away with the first in order to establish the second.” The Old Law was good – it lead God's people toward LOVE. It taught them to love God and to love others. It's not that Jesus did anything NEW, but Jesus offered a better version of everything they already held dear in the Law. Now it continues to point people toward their need of a savior. However, it was a shadow of the good that was to come. Because through the finished work of Christ, the single sacrifice of Christ has allowed us to be free from the captivity of the Law.

There is also this bit about the Holy Spirit writing God's Laws on people's hearts and minds.

**<sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,**

**<sup>16</sup> “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord:**

**I will put my laws on their hearts,  
and write them on their minds,”**

Of course, they Jewish people knew that the 613 laws were not in people’s minds then, nor are they now, however the Law of Christ IS written on our hearts. To love God and Love neighbor we know in our innermost being, this is what we are called to do as believers. We know this.

Later in the chapter, and I don’t want to steal Serge’s thunder here, but verse 24 says “**And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works**”. This is what it all moves towards – Love. We cannot, as believers in the finished work of Christ, go back to the way’s that were just a shadow. The priest stood by the altar because he was never finished, but Jesus sat down. His work was finished. All of it. We cannot ignore it. If we ignore the finished work of Christ, then we can expect judgement – the same judgement that God’s Law requires. Rather, understand the fullness of what Christ finished on the cross, and trust in that finished word. Don’t live under the condemnation of the Law, rather live in the new way of the Spirit – the Law of Christ.

If you have never trusted in Jesus, then let the message of this book ring true for you today. **Jesus is the better way.** If you are not persevering in faith. **Jesus is the better way.** If you are wondering if the world can meet your needs. **Jesus is the better way.**

The world is broken. People are trying to be successful, trust in the world’s definition of success. People are lonely. Hurting. Many are fighting each other, even to the point of taking lives. **Jesus is the better way.** Throughout history, people have tried to pervert the way of Christ. Crusading around coercing others to follow them instead of Christ, but **Jesus is the better way.**

You know it to your core. The way of Christ is loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. You know this. It’s like someone wrote this law on your heart.

If you are trying to walk your own path, and in your own wisdom, today is the day to repent. Repent from ignoring the way of Christ, and seek God’s complete forgiveness. Spend some time speaking with the Lord after the service today. Then let somebody know what the Spirit of God has been putting on your heart.