

## 脱离律法得自由——歌罗西书 2:16-17 及相关经文

### Freedom from the Law —— Colossians 2:16-17 and Selected Verses

#### *Introduction, Outlines*

- **Scripture reading:** Colossians 2:16-17; Romans 7:1-6; Galatians 5:16-24.
- **Theme:** How should Christians view the law in the Bible? What is our relationship with the Old Testament law? How do we obey God's law? .....
- **Introduction:** God is the God of law. The reason why there are laws in the world is because man is made in God's image and so he intuitively knows the reality of law and its importance. This God-given conscience is what we call the moral law, which was written in our hearts by God when He created us (Romans 2:14-15). God will use the Law as the standard to judge all the men he created.

Law is not only the standard for judgment, but also the standard for salvation. The center of salvation is justification, which is a legal term meaning to satisfy all the requirements of the law perfectly. Jesus is the only man who perfectly satisfied God's law, so the only way for us to be justified is to have His righteousness imputed to us through faith. This is the very core of the gospel.

**Question:** What is included in God's law? Since believers are justified by Christ, should they still obey the law? How? Do I need to keep the Mosaic Law? Obviously, no one would say we should obey the sacrificial regulations of the Mosaic Law, but neither would anyone say we do not have to observe the command to not worship idols. How about other details? Can we eat meat with blood? Can we work on the Sabbath?

- **Outline:**
  - Title: Freedom from the Law
  - A. The temptation of legalism (v16)
    1. Two types of legalism
    2. The harm of legalism
  - B. The real purpose of OT Law - Pointing to Christ (v17)
  - C. Believers are not under the OT law (Romans 6:14; Gal 5:18 etc.)
    1. Moral Law (Rom 2:14-15) vs Mosaic Law
    2. The law cannot be divided (Gal 5:3; James 2:10)
    3. Believers are not under the Law (Romans 6:14; 1 Cor 9:20; Gal 5:18)
    4. Christ- the fulfillment and end of the Law (Mat 5:17; Romans 10:4)
  - D. New life-principle of the believer - the Law of Christ (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2)
  - E. Application

#### **The temptation of legalism (v16)**

##### *1. Two types of legalism*

- The most severely refuted legalism in the Bible-Justification/salvation by works of the law. Including any form of trying to meet the requirements of God's law and be justified by God by one's own good deeds.

Essence: Directly deny the gospel, deny substitutionary redemption of Jesus Christ, rob the glory of Christ and seek to glorify oneself!

**Romans 10:2-3** “2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 **For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.**”

**Galatians 2:21** “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly! ”

- Legalism that confuses the Colossian believers — complete sanctification by the Mosaic Law.

Colossian believers have true faith in Christ Jesus (1:4), and truly know salvation is by the grace of God, and not earned (1:6). However, they still face temptation on “food or drink, in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day” (2:16), thought Justified by Christ’s salvation is not sufficient, must add other rules to make our life complete.

The two types of legalism - the first directly *denies the effectiveness of Christ’s salvation*, and the second denies *the sufficiency of Christ’s salvation*; The first *completely rejects the gospel message*, and the second undermines *the gospel message*.

Review the sufficiency of Christ’s salvation: Colossians 1:19, 22, 28; 2:3, 6-7, 9-10, 11-15...

## 2. *The harm of legalism*

- “Therefore no one is to act as your judge”: It is not to silence other people, but to guard one's own heart, and prevent the false guilt produced by allowing these false doctrines into our hearts, and affect our complete life we already possessed in the Lord.

Don’t take man’s opinion of you too seriously. God’s evaluation is infinitely more important. You need to know God’s standard!

“**judge**”: Do not judge is not to avoid all judgement, but learn how to judge rightly (cf Matthew 12:33; 1 John 3:7; 1 Cor 5:3). The correct principle for judgement is: “**Do** not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” (John 7:24) The judgement of the Colossian legalists belongs to the former, that is, according to appearance.

**Danger**: “keep defrauding you of your prize” (v18) — true believers cannot lose salvation, but can be defrauded of the prize in heaven. When man judges you with things not in God’s Word, you are affected and want to please man, but quench the comprehensive guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Bible. If you follow others to live a pretended life for superficial appearance, your rewards will be defrauded. This reward is ultimately used to glorify Christ. You lose the opportunity to glorify Christ when your prize is defrauded.

## The real purpose of OT Law — Points to Christ (v17)

- “**Shadow.....substance**”: this one sentence summarizes the nature and function of the whole OT Law, which is a mere shadow that points to the real thing. The shadow is flat, black and

white, and fuzzy, and the real thing is colorful, three-dimensional, and clear. With Christ's life inside, if we still try to be sanctified by submitting to the Law, it'd be like a husband embracing the shadow of his beloved wife when she is right there by his side.

**Hebrews 8:5**“who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things,”

**Shadow** — “**food or drink**” (v16): the key to all dietary rules in the OT is “clean.” God defines what is clean and what is not, and the purpose is to tell the Israelites how important it is to be clean. An unclean person cannot come to God. **Substance** — The sin-defiled conscience needs to be cleansed. **Hebrews 10:22** says “let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” by the precious blood of Jesus.

**Shadow** — “**festival, new moon**” (v16): All the spiritual meaning of the OT festivals are/will be fulfilled in Christ. **Substance** — “*Passover foreshadows the death of Christ; Unleavened Bread foreshadows sinlessness of Christ; First fruits foreshadow resurrection of Christ; Pentecost foreshadows outpouring of Spirit of Christ; Trumpets foreshadows gathering of His chosen people by Christ; Atonement foreshadows substitutionary sacrifice by Christ; Booths foreshadows rest and reunion with Christ.*” — 《MacArthur Study Bible》

**Shadow** — “**Sabbath**” (v16): *foreshadows salvation by faith alone*, is provision of God's grace alone, and not by works of man (Exo 16:22-30). **Substance** — **Hebrews 4:3**“we who have believed enter that rest”. Sunday corporate worship is very important, is an inevitable expression of faith; if someone decides not to work on Sundays besides corporate worship, that's OK. However, if you see not working on Sundays as a law to abide by, that becomes legalism.

## **Believers are not under the OT law (Romans 6:14; Gal 5:18 etc.)**

### *1. Moral Law (Rom 2:14-15) vs Mosaic Law*

- **Moral Law**: “**in** that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them” (Romans 2:15). This is general revelation. Everyone has been accused by their conscience! Example: Cain lied to cover up after killing Abel.

**Limitation**: Conscience is not a perfect rule, for it is tinted by sin. Mankind needs clearer guidance. Therefore, God gave Israel, His chosen people, the Mosaic Law.....

- **Mosaic Law**: is the detailed guidance for God's people at that time. If they obey by faith, they will be blessed and testify God's glory to all the nations.

**Deu 4:6-8** “**6** So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ **7** For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? **8** Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”

### *2. The Law cannot be divided (Gal 5:3; James 2:10)*

- Those who advocate that believers have to observe Mosaic Law in some way often separate the Law into three kinds: moral law (Ten Commandments), ceremonial law, civil Law. The

latter two have been abolished, but the moral Law represented by ten commandments are effective indefinitely. However, the Sabbath belongs to Ten Commandments, Colossians 2:16-17 listed the Sabbath as a shadow! The bible clearly shows that the Law is a whole —

**Gal 5:3**“every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.”

**James 2:10**“ For whoever keeps the whole [k]law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.”

### 3. Believers are not under the OT Law (Romans 6:14, Gal 5:18 etc.)

- **Romans 6:14** “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” It indicates that if we are still bound by the Law, then sin is our master. “**The** sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (1 Cor 15:56), those under the power of the Mosaic Law can only be tempted to sin. But Paul says, we are not under the Law but under grace.
- **Gal 5:18** “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.” This verse contrasts the Spirit with the Law, and following verses (vv. 19-23) contrast the fruits of the Spirit with the deeds of the flesh. Obviously, following the Spirit will produce the fruits of the Spirit; following the Law will produce the deeds of the flesh. The Spirit-filled believers are not bound by the Mosaic Law.
- **1 Cor. 9:20** “to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law” Paul clearly states that he is not under the Law. Though he followed some of their customs for the purpose of spreading the gospel, the essence is for proclaiming Christ, not keeping the Law. Christ is the principle for Paul to obey, not the Mosaic Law.

### 4. Christ- the fulfillment and end of the Law (Mat 5:17; Romans 10:4)

- **Matthew 5:17**“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.” Christ is the fulfillment of the Law, His sufficient salvation fulfilled God’s Law for believers.
- **Romans 10:4**“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. “Christ is the end of the law. He brought an end to the contents of the Law by His own life and teaching.

### **New life — principle of the believers — the Law of Christ (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2)**

- **1 Cor 9:21**“though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ” Paul was not under the Mosaic Law, but under the law of Christ.
- **Gal 6:2**“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ” In a letter that severely condemns legalism, Paul said that the believers should fulfill the law of Christ. Obviously, the law of Christ is not legalism, but the new life-principle of the believer. Loving one another and bearing one another’s burden fulfills the law of Christ.
- **What exactly is the law of Christ?** — It is “*a life-principle within the believer empowered by the Spirit of Christ, [including] the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles, the central demand of love, and the guiding influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. ... Christ Himself is the law of Christ!*” — one scholar

## **Application**

1. Christians, don't let people judge you by Mosaic Law (Colossians 2:16; Gal 5:1).
2. Don't misuse freedom, use your freedom to serve God and serve brothers/sisters (1 Peter 2:16; Gal 5:13).
3. How to study the OT Law? The most important thing is to understand how it points to Christ's salvation — How it reflects God's holiness, justice, love, and mercy; how it reflects man's sinfulness; how it reveals the way God provides for men to approach Him, which foreshadows the full salvation of Christ. Learn who God is, and turn that into trusting and worshipping God, so we may better live out the law of Christ.
4. How to live out the law of Christ?
  - 1) Receive the Holy Spirit (confess, repent and trust Christ!);
  - 2) Read the Bible;
  - 3) Pray;
  - 4) Obey biblical teaching;
  - 5) Practice regular church body life. There is no shortcut for the sanctification process.