

Ahuoma Chukwueke

Dr. David Emanuel

BIB 102

11 October 2022

The Law: To Obey or Not to Obey - A Christian's Approach

“There is no need for Christians to obey the Law (Ten Commandments) anymore because we cannot gain our righteousness through it, but only through faith in Christ.” This statement is one that I have often wrestled with. The Law known as the Ten Commandments were ten laws given to Moses on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 20. I believe that the Bible teaches that we are not under the Law and teaches that we are led by the Spirit of God. I believe that Christians are not obligated to keep the Ten Commandments as we are not under the Mosaic Covenant also known as the Old Covenant. Believers are under the New Covenant, given by Christ. However, as the Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” I believe that all scripture is useful for wisdom and knowledge of how to love God and love others.

Throughout history God has dealt with his people through distinct covenants. Covenants are agreements that two parties enter into after coming to a joint agreement over a specified set of terms and conditions. Our covenant is known as the New Covenant and it has its own set of laws and regulations. As followers of Christ, we are not under the Old Covenant, therefore we do not obey the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. However, as followers of Christ we do follow the Law of Christ and of the Spirit which expands on nine of the original Ten Commandments. Jesus expanded on them in the New Testament and they are applicable specifically for believers under this new dispensation. There is large speculation over the fourth

commandment, the Sabbath day, as it is the only commandment not commanded by Jesus Christ nor the apostle throughout the New Testament. I believe that this is because Jesus is our Sabbath rest. In Hebrews 4:9-10 he says, “9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His” In Mark 2:27, Jesus called Himself “ Lord of the Sabbath”. In this statement, Jesus was stating that the Sabbath day was instituted to give man rest from his labors, in the same way Jesus came once and for all to provide us rest from striving to gain salvation by works. Lastly, Christ calls Himself our rest. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus says, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The theme of rest is echoed throughout the Bible. Jesus is our rest- rest from striving for our works, striving for righteousness apart from Christ. Galatians let us know that we are no longer under the Law nor the other Laws of Moses. However, as stated there is wisdom to be found in the Ten Commandments and throughout the New Testament we are pointed to the wisdom in the Law though we are no longer under its guardianship.

In my early days as a believer, I was taught that the Law was divided into two sections. The first five commandments were to instruct the Israelites in how to properly love the God of Israel while the last five commandments were to instruct the Israelites on how to love one another. The Law was given to the nation of Israel after they were released from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites were instructed that if they obey the Law then they would be prosperous, and if they disobeyed the Law then they would be destroyed. In this moment, the Israelites entered into a covenant with God in which they had their part to play and then God had his part to uphold. The Law was an established part of the Israelites distinction as God’s holy people. God desired to have a special nation that was set apart with whom He would lavish His love and use to fulfill the promise of redemption for all mankind after the fall of Adam and Eve. In the

New Testament, we find the Messiah that was promised in the Old Testament whom Isaiah said would be the suffering servant that would be “wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity.”(Isaiah 53:5) Jesus steps on the scene and states in Matthew 5:17, “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose.” I believe that Jesus accomplished the function of the Law which was to teach us how to love God and others. Additionally, in Jesus' death he also canceled the debt that we owe God for being unable to keep His Law and righteous requirement. The New Testament has a lot to say about the Law and our relationship with it as believers in Christ.

The New Testament Paul states, “20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.” (1 Corinthians 9:20) .In Hebrews 8:11-13 when reiterating what will happen when Christ comes and sends His Spirit into every believer the writer says “No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”13 By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.” Obsolete is the word that stands out to me. Obsolete can be defined as outdated or no longer in use. The Bible is clear that the Old Covenant in which Christians are made right with God by obedience to the Law is obsolete. So how can these two ideas exist? How can God’s Word be eternal but also be called outdated. I believe that the answer is simple. Christ truly fulfilled the Law. He accomplished its given purpose and now it is left for believers to put their faith in what Christ did and they will be saved. In Galatians 5:3 Paul says, “I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be

circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.” If someone was to try to keep a law to be in right standing with law they would be obligated to keep the entire law. Again he states in Galatians 3:16 “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The seed referred here is to Christ ”. All of the requirements of the Law were fulfilled by Christ. I do not think that this means there is no wisdom in the Old Covenant, there certainly is. This is why Jesus amplifies almost all of the commandments in the Old Covenant in the New Testament. This includes lust, idolatry, coveting, greed, and resting in His finished work. Along with this idea, I believe that the Old Testament idea of salvation was the same throughout the Scriptures.

The Old Testament idea of salvation was found in faith in God. I previously believed that salvation in the Old Testament was through obedience to the Law. There were some that believed that they could earn their salvation through obeying the Law. This is why Jesus and Paul reiterated this truth throughout the New Testament. In Romans 3:20 Paul says, “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” In the Old Testament Habakkuk cries out to God because he is waiting for God’s judgment and vindication. The Lord answers Him and indicates that He indeed sees him and will carry out his judgment and send the promised Savior at the appointed time. God makes the statement “but the just shall live by his faith.” This is a familiar statement to all believers, as we use it to explain how we are saved, however, not many know it was an Old Testament idea. God's plan of salvation for His people was consistent through the Old and New Testament.

The truth is that the people of God in the Old Testament were saved by faith in the promise of God and not by obedience to the Law. Hebrews 11 lists out the heroes of our faith. For example, “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and

became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (Hebrews 11:7). Noah was counted as righteous when he believed God and moved according to faith in His word. Another example is Abraham, the Bible says, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.” (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham was commanded to leave his family and all that he knew to go to a land that God promised him and his descendants. Lastly, about Rahab the scripture says, **31** By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.” (Hebrews 11:31) Rahab the prostitute was saved by being obedient to the word of Lord and hiding the spies that came to scope out the Promised Land. She was not a Canaanite and was saved through faith. The chapter helps us understand that though the people of the Old Testament did not see the fulfillment of the promise that God made with Abraham, they believed by faith in God’s promise and were counted as righteous because of it. The people in the Old Testament and in the New Testament believed that God's Law was righteous and holy and through it they were able to be closer to God. However, there is an indication that the Law’s righteous requirements will be fulfilled in Christ.

All in all , believers are not under the Old Covenant and not obligated to follow the Ten Commandments. However, there are commandments that Jesus expounded upon and gave believers in Him their intended purpose and interpretation. I believe that the Ten Commandments provide wisdom and can teach every single one believer something about how to love God and love one another. The patriarch and heroes of our faith looked forward to this time in which God would fill us with His Spirit and teach us how to love Him wholeheartedly. The time is here and now and we as believers who have been giving the indwelling Holy Spirit should not look

Chukwueke 1

towards the Law to save us but look at the cross as the place where the finished work of Christ has set us free.