

The Law the Believer's Rule?

How should believers read, quote and use the law? Are they obliged to obey it as a command, as a rule? If so, are they obliged to obey all the commandments? Or what?

Different schools of thought come up with different answers.

At one extreme, there is the Reconstructionist: *Believers have to obey the law, all of it. This includes stoning for witches, adulterers, sabbath breakers, and so on. Believers must do all they can to bring about a Christian State which will enforce the Mosaic law on all its citizens.*

At the other extreme, there is the Antinomian: *Believers are utterly free of the law. Disobedience brings more grace and more liberty. This is what the 'no condemnation in Christ' means.¹*

In this article, I have only one thing to say about these two: both are completely unscriptural.

Somewhere in the middle, we have the Reformed: *Believers are under the law for sanctification; the law is their perfect rule of life.² But when the Reformed say 'law', what they really mean is 'the ten commandments' (which they call 'the moral law'), but not the law's 600 plus other commandments.³ They justify this severe narrowing⁴ of the law by use of a non-scriptural (not to say, unscriptural) construct. They say that the law is divided into three bits: 'moral', 'ceremonial'*

¹ If any reader thinks this is a caricature, he should see the evidence set out in my *Four 'Antinomians' Tried and Vindicated* pp19-24.

² The third of Calvin's three uses of the law.

³ In fact, because most of them think that the fourth commandment is partly moral and partly ceremonial, they really think believers are under 'the 9.5 commandments'.

⁴ 'Severe narrowing'? Virtual elimination (by about 99%), even taking into account the repetition of the ten commandments!

and 'judicial'.⁵ Christ has not only abolished these last two bits of the law, but his work covers the believer's failure in the first. But, since Scripture never divides the law like this, never sets out which commandment (or part of a commandment) is moral or ceremonial, how is the believer supposed to determine which part of any particular law is moral (and is, therefore, obligatory) and which is ceremonial (and is, therefore, abolished)? This vexed question applies particularly to the fourth commandment.⁶ So what should believers do? In effect, the Reformed answer amounts to this: 'Consult your chosen Reformed pope. Let him tell you what's what. Grit your teeth and get on with it. And learn to live with the endless conundrums you will inevitably have to face as a consequence'.⁷

Needless to say,⁸ all this is unscriptural, and, for those involved, spells bondage and sadness, and raises one dilemma after another.

Now for Scripture.

Apostolic authority for new-covenant use of the law

Christ promised his disciples that he would not leave them without guidance in all matters of the faith:

The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name... will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you... The Spirit of truth... will guide you into all truth... He will glorify me, for he will take of what is mine and declare it to you. All things that the

⁵ These constructs cannot be justified from Scripture. They are medieval, almost certainly stemming from Thomas Aquinas. See my *Christ is All: No Sanctification by the Law* pp100-104,392-400.

⁶ Is the fourth commandment entirely moral, entirely ceremonial, or partly both? If the latter, what constitutes the moral part, and is therefore obligatory on believers, and which part is ceremonial and has therefore been abolished? How do the Reformed decide? On what biblical grounds do they decide? And what about the sabbath commandments (of which there are many examples) outside the ten? The assorted answers given to such questions demonstrates that hardly any two Reformed teachers agree over the practicalities of their system.

⁷ If any reader thinks this is a caricature, he should read Reformed works on the sabbath. For a sample, see my *Sabbath Notes & Extracts* pp137-156.

⁸ At least, I hope it is! If not, for my arguments, see my *Christ (passim)*.

Father has are mine. Therefore I said that he [the Spirit] will take of mine and declare it to you (John 14:26; 16:13-15).

Having been given the law of Christ from their Redeemer, their lawgiver in the new covenant, and having received the promised Holy Spirit who brought to their remembrance *all* things which Christ had said to them, and who guided them into *all* truth (John 14:26; 16:13), the apostles spelled out Christ's law for all Christ's disciples for all time. The apostolic writings are replete with the concept: 'Be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour' (2 Pet. 3:2). The gospel, 'the way of righteousness', is called 'the holy commandment' (2 Pet. 2:21). The apostles taught 'the law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2), 'this rule' which is to be observed by the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16),⁹ commanding believers to 'walk by the same rule' (Phil. 3:16),¹⁰ and to 'consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness' (1 Tim. 6:3; Tit. 1:1).¹¹ The apostles commanded Christ's people to be sanctified, instructing them in the matter (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 4:1-12; 2 Thess. 3:4-15). They gave instructions about family life (Eph. 5:22-33; 6:1-4; Col. 3:18-21), the work place (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; 4:1), church life (1 Cor. 11:17-34; 1 Tim. 3:14-15), the way

⁹ Is 'this rule' of Gal. 6:16 the law of Christ? I think so. It is the believer's norm, the principle of Gal. 6:15. It is not the law of Moses. Gal. 5:25 does not support the claim that it is; that law is not even mentioned. But by 'rule' we must not think in old-covenant mode. See below and my *Christ* pp212,247,503-504.

¹⁰ Is 'the same rule' of Phil. 3:16 the law of Christ? I think so. Although 'rule' probably was not in the original, even so it is clearly implied. We could use 'principle', or (NASB) 'standard', or 'precept', 'doctrine of Christ', 'the rule of faith as opposed to works'. But by 'rule' we must not think in old-covenant mode. See below and my *Christ* pp212,247,503-504.

¹¹ Are these 'wholesome words' the law of Christ? I think so. Leaving aside the first 'even' (supplied by the NKJV), consider the 'and' in 'the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, *and* to the doctrine'. This 'and' is *kai* which – see discussion in my *Christ* pp315,552-553 – may be translated 'even'. If so, 'the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, *even* the doctrine which accords with godliness' form the law of Christ. In other words, Christ's teaching is that which leads to and promotes godliness. And Christ's teaching includes the apostles' teaching, of course. See my *Christ* pp212,247,503-504.

believers should conduct themselves in the State (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17), and so on. They also commanded other teachers to do the same on the authority of the apostles and their instructions (1 Tim. 4:11; 5:7; 6:2,17; 2 Tim. 2:2,14; 4:1-5; Tit. 2:1-15; 3:1-2,8,14). And all was in the name of Christ himself: ‘Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...’ (1 Cor. 1:10).

In particular, the apostles laid down the ground rules for the way believers should read and apply the law.

Now to answer my original question. How should believers read, quote and use the law? All they have to do is ask the apostles how they used the law, and walk in their boots. So how did they use the law? In one way. Always. With every law. With all the law. And that way was... what? They never used the law in an old-covenant way, as a rule by which believers are to be governed, but *they always used the law as a paradigm for them*.¹²

An objection

‘Whoa! If, as you claim, believers are not under the law, why does the New Testament appeal to the ten commandments? And why do the apostles press the ten commandments on believers?’ The Reformed have no problem with this, of course. It is just what would be expected.

But wait a minute! Is it? The New Testament does use the ten commandments when addressing believers, yes. But how does it do it? And how often does it do it? Surely, if the Reformed view is right, the New Testament should always – always! – be drawing the attention of believers to the ten commandments; ‘as the ten commandments say’ should be a constant refrain. After all, the Reformed say that the ten commandments are the believer’s perfect rule. If so, shouldn’t the New Testament be always pointing believers

¹² As for Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, he not only took some principles from the Mosaic law and made them more intense, he upheld others – in particular the love commandment (Lev. 19:18) – and made others redundant. In this sermon, Christ was not renewing the Mosaic covenant, but, right at the start of the new age, he was instituting his own law for the new covenant. He was setting out a new law, under a new covenant, in a new age, for new men. See my *Christ* pp236-241,493-500; *passim*.

to the ten commandments – to that which is their ‘perfect’ rule? But we do not find it so. Nor do we find the apostles pressing the law on believers, do we? Where? When?

Let us clear away some loose thinking. And there is need! We meet plenty of sloppy – not to say, shoddy – exegesis when the Reformed turn to these passages, and try to make their case. For instance: Paul did not *impose* the fifth commandment on the believers at Ephesus (Eph. 6:1-3). Christ and the apostles did not *always* refer believers to the law when they wanted to speak of godliness. Nor does the New Testament show that *frequently* meditating upon the law is the *best* way to live a sanctified life, or to be stirred to it. Nor does it repeat and enforce *all* the ten commandments. These things are claimed. Do we get the impression that believers in the New Testament were turning to the law and *frequently* meditating upon it as the *best* way to discover God’s will for their lives, and stirring them to godliness? I think not! What evidence do we have that Gentile believers in that time had, or had even seen, a copy of the ten commandments?¹³ To think Gentile believers had (let alone pored over) a copy of the law (in Greek or Hebrew) is wildly fanciful.

The truth is, reader, where does Paul *ever* tell believers they are under Moses’ law? Where does he *ever* tell believers they must regard the law of Moses as their norm, their rule? Which commandment of the ten does Paul *ever* tell believers they must obey? The silence is deafening. These significant facts cannot be ignored. Yes, Paul *used* the law when *exhorting* believers – though even this is rare – but he never commanded believers to obey the Mosaic law.

Having cleared the ground in general, let me now go on to consider those particular places where Paul does appeal to the ten commandments when writing to believers. There are three. Only three. But let us look at all three of them.

Consider Romans 13:8-10

Owe no man anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not

¹³ See my *Christ* p481 regarding most Diaspora Jews and their lack of the Hebrew Scriptures.

bear false witness, you shall not covet’ – and if there is any other commandment – are all summed up in this saying; namely: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’. Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

The love Paul spoke of is love for men – particularly, if not expressly, believers – not love for God. As to the ‘law’ in question, there can be no doubt. Both the wider context – Paul’s overwhelming use of the word throughout Romans – and especially the immediate context – in which some of the ten commandments are quoted (Rom. 13:9) – make it clear that Paul, writing to believers, was here speaking about the Mosaic law,¹⁴ the ten commandments in particular. The upshot is, Paul undoubtedly quoted some of the ten commandments when writing to the believers at Rome. This is agreed.

But notice what Paul did not do. He did not make the law the be-all and end-all of his teaching. He did not make the law its climax. *Notice further what Paul did not say.* He did not tell the believers – nor remind them of what, according to Reformed teaching, they are supposed to have been fully aware of – that they are, of course, under the law of Moses. Strange silence! Not exactly a proof that Calvin’s third use of the law is wrong, I grant you, but from the Reformed point of view, certainly odd! Rather, the apostle said that love fulfils the law (Rom. 13:8,10; Gal. 5:14). ‘Fulfil’! How many times we meet this word in this context (Matt. 5:17-18; Rom. 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14-16; 6:2; Jas. 2:8, for instance)! Love, said Paul, *fulfils* the law. And we know that, in this regard, old-covenant regulations do not count: ‘For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love’ (Gal. 5:6). I realise that Paul was speaking of justification in this last verse, but the point is justifying faith will show itself by love – not by trying to keep the law of Moses! It is by faith a believer is justified, and it is as his faith works by love that he shows his sanctification.

While love does not dispense with the law – rather it fulfils it – Paul certainly did not say the law of Moses is the regulative norm for believers; he did not impose it upon them. He did not say it is their rule. He did not say believers must strive to keep it. *Nor did he imply it.* He simply cited examples from the ten commandments, making

¹⁴ He quoted Lev. 19:18. See below for more on this point.

the point that love is the real end, the ‘fulfilment’, of the law. And in order to drive the point home, Paul says it twice in this brief paragraph (Rom. 13:8,10). *This*, I say, is the point. Furthermore, if the apostle’s citing of the ten commandments really does prove that the law is the believer’s perfect rule, does the same apply to nature and pagan poets? After all, see Acts 17:28-29; 1 Corinthians 11:14; Titus 1:12-13. No! Paul briefly quotes the ten commandments to say that love fulfils them.

‘Fulfil’ is a strong word. What does it mean? It does not here mean ‘sum up’. Rather, we are, once again, in the realm of the eschatological. It also reminds us of something Paul said earlier in Romans: God has done a work through his Son in order ‘that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:3-4). I refer you, reader, to chapter 10 and my remarks on those verses. Linking that passage and this, both in the same book, remember, with no chapter/verse divisions, Paul, it is evident, is speaking of believers, those who are redeemed by Christ, who are indwelt by the Spirit, who belong to the new age of the Spirit, who are no longer under ‘law’, ‘but now’ are in Christ – the one who is the ‘end of the law’ (Rom. 10:4). And what does Paul say of these believers? Believers, who love one another, have satisfied, fulfilled the demands of the law as far as their conduct towards their fellow-men is concerned.

But, I hasten to add, as the context also makes clear, this does not mean that love has replaced the commandments; love *fulfils* the law, it does not replace it. Believers still need the written word, including the law of Moses – but they need all the word, including all the law, not merely the ten commandments. The entire word teaches them, reproves them, corrects them, instructs and trains them (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And this word, I repeat, includes the Mosaic law in all its entirety – properly nuanced in line with the New Testament, of course. But it also includes apostolic commands. And love is the fulfilling of it. Love is the purpose of the commandment – whether we understand it to refer to the precise command Paul gave Timothy (1 Tim. 1:5), or to the whole of Scripture, including the law. The law is ‘all summed up’ in love (Rom. 13:9). The believer, one of God’s people, a member of the new covenant, is no longer under the law of Moses, the law for Israel, the old-covenant people of God. On the contrary, he is under a

new law, ‘the law of Christ’ (1 Cor. 9:19-21; Gal. 6:2). And at the heart of Christ’s new law lies that commandment of Moses – namely, the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves (Lev. 19:18; Gal. 6:2 with 5:13-14).

There is not a hint of a suggestion that Romans 13:8-10 is a list of rules for believers. Indeed, such a thing would have destroyed what the apostle is, in fact, saying. Consider the context. Paul has been dealing with practical godliness right from Romans 12:1. We can go back even further. From Romans 6:1, he has been dealing with sanctification.¹⁵ On reaching Romans 13:9, Paul cites several of the ten commandments to illustrate the point that love is the great fulfiller of the law. Love is the great motive and spur for godliness. Love is both its test and standard: ‘He who loves another has fulfilled the law... Love is the fulfilment of the law’ (Rom. 13:8,10). And how does the apostle go on? By sundry commands and exhortations. Ah, but why? Why ‘do this’ and ‘do that’? Because the law says so, because we are under regulation, because otherwise we might get lashed with Calvin’s whip?¹⁶ Not at all! Why should we be godly? Because Christ is coming, because our salvation is getting daily nearer (Rom. 13:12). Avoid carnality, Paul demands. But how? By this:

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh... the Lord... the Lord... the Lord... the Lord... the Lord... the Lord... Whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s... Christ... Lord... We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... the Lord Jesus... Christ... joy in the Holy Spirit... Christ... Christ... Christ Jesus... glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... just as Christ... Jesus Christ... by the power of the Holy Spirit... Jesus Christ... sanctified by the Holy Spirit... Christ Jesus... Christ... the Spirit of God... Christ... Christ... Christ... I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit... in the Lord... in Christ Jesus... in Christ... in Christ... in the Lord... in Christ... in Christ... in the Lord... in the Lord... in the Lord... in the Lord... Christ... Lord Jesus Christ... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen... the Lord... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Rom. 13:11 onwards).

¹⁵ See my *Christ* pp158-177,448-468.

¹⁶ The very word Calvin used in his third use of the law.

Otherwise you ‘do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Rom. 16:18). In conclusion:

Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now¹⁷ made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith – to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen (Rom. 16:25-27).

If this does not set Romans 13:8-10 in its proper context, nothing will. The suggestion that Paul is imposing the law of Moses upon believers is incredible. The sense of anticlimax – to return to Moses after nearly thirteen chapters of teaching on the glory of Christ in the gospel – would be intolerable. Paul does not go back to Moses. Of course not! In contrast, he rises to the Lord Jesus Christ. ‘Christ’ is what he leaves ringing in their ears. Christ!

Let me summarise the passage. As I have already said, the argument runs from Romans 12:1. Paul, having reached Romans 13, lays the foundation and measure of sanctification, ‘love’ (Rom. 13:10), and then moves on to the eternal hope believers have in Christ (Rom. 13:11-12), and the consequent holiness of life this must produce, both in a negative sense – things to ‘cast off’ (Rom. 13:12) – and in a positive sense – ‘let us put on... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh’ (Rom. 13:12-14). Paul then takes up the issue of ‘things indifferent’ (Rom. 14:1-23; 15:1-7). Notice the absence of a list of rules and regulations – the law approach. And not only an absence of regulations! Observe how the apostle gives believers an *overall principle* by which to order their lives. And what is this principle? It can be summed up as the law of Christ. Note the references to Christ. In addition to references to ‘the Lord’, it is Christ and his work which are specifically and repeatedly used as the believer’s motive and touchstone (Rom. 14:6-10, 14-15, 18; 15:1-3, 5-7). And Moses is not mentioned once! Above all, notice Paul’s final word on the subject: ‘Therefore receive one another, *just as Christ also received us*, to the glory of God’ (Rom. 15:7). As in the previous chapter, I draw attention yet again to this

¹⁷ Note the ‘now’.

paramount comparison, this staggering comparison: ‘Just as...’! Is this what Reformed critics mean by ‘wishy-washy’?¹⁸

Thus the believer has to take a far more spiritual stance than merely looking up a code of practice and seeking to obey it. How mistaken it is, therefore, to say that Paul, at the start of Romans 12, takes up the law and wields it to teach believers their duties. By his use of ‘the will of God’, the apostle does not mean ‘the law of God’. Certainly, ‘the will of God’ cannot be confined to the ten commandments, a mere sixteen verses (thirty-two, with the repeat) of Scripture. It is the entire revealed will of God – ‘all Scripture’ (2 Tim. 3:16-17). As Christ prayed for his people: ‘Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth’ (John 17:17). ‘Your word’ – your entire word! The apostle does not tell the believer to keep the law. He does not say the law is the rule, the norm, the standard of the Christian life. That could not be right.

Paul, in Romans 13:8-10, shows that he is not against the law. He does not attack Moses. He is not an antinomian. The work of Christ in the gospel fulfils the law in the believer. But this does not mean that Paul here re-issues the law. How could he? He has already taught that believers, living by the Spirit, are enabled by him to love one another – and that this is what the law wanted to produce but could not. Paul is not making the law the rule for believers in Romans 13:8-10, and thus going back on what he set out a few pages before (Rom. 6:14; 7:1-6). Believers have died to the law!

Consider Galatians 5:13-14

Here is another place where Paul, when writing to believers, quotes the Mosaic law, or a kind of summary of it – but not, in fact, one of the ten commandments:

You, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’.

Paul does not here destroy what he has so carefully established in the rest of his letter to the Galatians. Of that we may be sure. After all that he has said, he is not at this late stage putting forward ‘the moral

¹⁸ See my *Christ* pp156,219,222,248,280-281,285,287,488-489,528-529,535.

law', the ten commandments, as the believer's rule. And if he is, he chooses a singularly inept way of doing it, since he quotes from Leviticus.¹⁹ The law here is, without question, the Mosaic law. Consequently, if Reformed teachers want to use this passage to say the moral law is binding on believers as their perfect rule, it proves too much for them. They must extend their view of the law far beyond the ten commandments. 'The law', in Galatians 5:14, is the law of Moses.²⁰ It is, literally in the Greek, 'the whole law'.

But why did Paul quote from Leviticus? Why this emphasis upon 'love your neighbour'? We have met this reference to Leviticus 19:18 before, and will meet it again. This is noteworthy. Whereas before Christ's use of it, and Paul wrote his letters to the churches, there are no explicit references to the verse in Jewish writings, in clear contrast, in the New Testament this verse is the most frequently quoted passage from the Pentateuch (Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8). This can only mean that the emphasis on Leviticus 19:18 is particularly and specially a gospel emphasis, and must have come from Christ himself, who first used it in this way (Matt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27).

Notice Paul's emphasis upon 'fulfilled' once again. Paul is certainly not establishing the Mosaic law as the believer's rule, the commandments of which are to be obeyed in every particular. Love is the fulfilment of the law, and this love is possible only to those who have the Spirit. To try to establish Calvin's third use of the law from this passage is to miss the point of what Paul is saying, and to miss it badly. He is not exhorting believers to keep the law. He is stating a fact. By their life of love, he declares, all the law is fulfilled. And he puts it in the passive, 'the law is fulfilled'. I am not word-spinning. Paul is not commanding them to 'fulfil the law'; he is telling them 'the law is fulfilled' – two very different things. Paul speaks of believers and the fulfilment of the law in three places (Rom. 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14), and in none of them does he command believers to fulfil the law. Rather, as believers walk according to, by or in the Spirit, the law is fulfilled, he says. We have already met this important passive. Paul says the righteous requirement of the law is

¹⁹ See above for Paul's use of Lev. 19:18 in Rom. 13:8-10. See also below.

²⁰ Not the law of Christ. See my *Christ* pp116-157,412-447.

fulfilled in believers (Rom. 8:4), but never says believers have to *do* or *keep* the law.

So what is the issue? It is no accident that ‘fulfilled’ (Gal. 5:14) and ‘fullness’ (Gal. 4:4) come from the same root word (which is, significantly, the same word as in Matt. 5:17), *plēroō*. The truth is, Paul is expounding the theme he has stressed so much in this letter; namely, the eschatological. The age of the law is over. The ‘fullness’ of the time has come (Gal. 4:4). Christ has come. The faith, the gospel, has come. And this has huge consequences for the individual. ‘All the law is fulfilled’ in believers by their obedience to Christ and his law in this new age. They are a new creation. And this is what Christ said he came to accomplish (Matt. 5:17).²¹ And this is the issue in Galatians 5:13-14.

Paul, it must not be forgotten, is directing his remarks to those ‘who desire to be under the law’ (Gal. 4:21).²² To Paul, such a desire is unthinkable, the stock-in-trade of false teachers, the Judaisers. He stresses the believer’s freedom from the law (Gal. 4:21-31; 5:1,13), and this context of Galatians 5:13-14, both narrow and wide, must not be forgotten or ignored. It is the eschatological point all over again, worked out in individual experience. Paul is speaking of the believer’s freedom (Gal. 5:1), the freedom he has by the work of the Holy Spirit. The believer has been rescued from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4).

As for ‘all the law’, Paul meant ‘the whole law’, the entire law of Moses; that is, not so much individual commands, but the law in its entirety and purpose. Compare Romans 8:4. The literal Greek, ‘the all law’, is ‘odd’ in that Paul put the ‘all’ in a peculiar place, and this is significant. Moreover, Paul put the definite article – ‘the’ – in a strange position too. None of this would have been lost on the original readers; ‘the all law’ is ‘the entire law’, ‘the heart of the law’, the fulfilment of the law’s purpose.²³

²¹ See my *Christ* pp96,170,236-244,498-500.

²² The Reformed get caught in this net.

²³ What of the seeming contradiction between Gal. 3:10-12; 5:3 and Gal. 5:14? See my *Christ* pp536-537 for my views. In brief, in Gal. 5:3, Paul was speaking of the attempt to earn justification by ‘doing the law’, which can be only by ‘doing the whole law’, ‘the observance of all that the law requires’ (Gal. 3:12; 5:3). This is impossible for fallen man. Hence the *negative*

As I have pointed out, ‘loving one’s neighbour’ is not a soft option, not a lowering of the standard of the law. To dismiss the thesis of my book by such a device is too tempting for some; they wave it away as something vague and hazy – ‘imprecise ethics’.²⁴ Not at all! The very imprecision in defining ‘love’ and ‘neighbour’, and how this can vary according to time and circumstance (Gal. 6:10),²⁵ makes Christ’s law *all the more demanding* than Moses’ law. While Christ does not call for conformity to rules, a ticking-of-the-boxes approach to sanctification – which, in truth, is no sanctification at all – neither does he call for a warm, vague feeling towards other believers. He wants, he demands, a real, practical and concentrated love, the sharing of goods and money, even – wait for it – even to the laying down of one’s life for the brethren, all because Christ laid down his life for us (Rom. 15:1-3; 1 John 3:11-18)! And we are to have the mind of Christ in this (Phil. 2:5)! Think of that! I hesitate, I shrink back, even as I write the words and cite the passages! How do they strike you, reader, as you read them? ‘Soft option’, indeed!

Galatians 6:2 is apposite here. The law of Christ is that law of love which Christ taught in John 13:34-35; 15:12, and so on. In bearing one another’s burdens, believers are obeying the law of their Lord. When they fail to do this, they break his law. Believers keep the law of Christ, the essence of which is love, and they do so out of gratitude to him for his love to them. To break his law, therefore, is to show gross ingratitude to him for his love. Clearly, the law of Moses and the law of Christ are in contrast. Paul was saying the bearing of one

*overtone*s. In Gal. 5:14, however, Paul was speaking of the new-covenant provisions Christ brought in, by which he gives people grace to ‘fulfil the whole law’, giving them his Spirit to enable them to live a sanctified life which expresses love (see Rom. 8:3-4). ‘The love of God’ – the sense of God’s love to his people – ‘the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us’ (Rom. 5:5). Thus the Spirit enables believers to love in return (Luke 7:36-50; 1 John 4:7-11,19) and so ‘fulfil the whole law’. Hence the *positive overtones*.

²⁴ See my *Christ* pp156,219,222,248,280-281,285,287,488-489,528-529,535.

²⁵ Because the ‘neighbour’ in Lev. 19 referred to a fellow-Israelite, it is probable that the focus here is love to fellow-believers. Leaving aside Gal. 6:10, is there any reference in Galatians as to how believers should relate to unbelievers?

another's burdens, under Christ's law, is infinitely better than keeping the external Moses' law.

Of course, an emphasis upon the believer's freedom, unless accompanied by the equally biblical emphasis on the all-embracing law of Christ, can be turned into an excuse for all sorts of carnal behaviour. This, it goes without saying, is utterly wrong. In declaring that 'all the law is fulfilled in one word' (Gal. 5:14), in declaring that 'all are summed up in this saying, namely: "You shall love..."' (Rom. 13:9), Paul was not jettisoning the Mosaic law, saying it no longer had any place or value. Nor was he replacing the Mosaic law by a warm feeling. Certainly he was not abandoning all restraint. But nor was he imposing the law of Moses upon believers.

To sum up: the comments made above on Romans 13:8-10 apply with equal validity here. In Galatians 5:14, Paul was not imposing the Mosaic law on believers. Rather, he was continuing his theme of the epoch of the Spirit having superseded the epoch of the law, and the relevance of this triumphant 'but now' to the believer. It is tragic, it is a travesty, to reduce such a momentous argument by trying to claim Paul was making the ten commandments the believer's rule.

Consider Ephesians 6:1-3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honour your father and mother', which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth'.

Paul, clearly addressing godly children, here commanded them to obey their parents in the Lord; he said this is right. And he backed up his command by referring to, alluding to the law. *But he did not quote the law as the rule under which believers live.* Rather, he used the law as a paradigm, a model of good behaviour for believers, not as a rule which he imposed upon them. He simply reminded his readers that the Jews had this fifth commandment with its associated promise of possession of the land of Canaan – which promise he stressed. He was challenging his readers: If the Jews had this commandment, and this promise, how much more should believers live a sanctified family-life! What greater benefits are promised to them than to Israel of old! If the Mosaic law spoke of Canaan, how much more does Christ promise to his people today! This is what he was saying.

But if it is still maintained that the commandment must come over unchanged as part of the believer's perfect rule, *then so must the*

promise. We cannot pick-and-mix! In other words, we shall have to admit that we have made a serious mistake in dismissing the ‘prosperity gospel’. In the new covenant, obedience, after all, does bring huge material benefit, here and now. Mind you, depending on how strictly we interpret the promise, we might all have to move to the Middle East and settle in ‘the land’. Hmm! A bit far-fetched? Surely, the apostle was using the commandment as an illustration or paradigm to encourage sanctified family-life among believers. This is what he was doing. He was certainly not imposing the commandment on them, nor was he promising them material prosperity for obedience!

And this is made all the more evident if we bear in mind that the issue of family life – here, the attitude of godly children to their parents – is but one example of the apostolic call for sanctification among many. This stands out all the more if the entire passage concerning practical godliness, the three chapters, Ephesians 4 – 6, is read in one sitting. Paul’s total argument, its overall force, must be kept in mind. Which is? The believer must obey – he will obey – the gospel, and do so in practice, not by thinking he is under the rule of the law of Moses, but by thinking of his calling as a believer, imitating God his Father, living as a child of light, and being filled with the Spirit, and so on; above all, by thinking of Christ – I estimate that ‘Christ’ or ‘Jesus’ appears some nineteen times in these three chapters. And what is at the heart of these chapters? ‘Christ... loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish’ (Eph. 5:25-27). The cross! The cross leading to the believer’s holiness! This is what Paul says to the believer. As the believer walks by the Spirit, living out the life of Christ, keeping his eye and heart on Christ and his cross, so he fulfils the law, fulfils it as it were indirectly. True, in addressing this particular topic, Paul quotes the fifth command to illustrate and enforce his call for godly children to be sanctified at home, but the apostle does not impose the command on believers; he simply uses the law as a paradigm for this godly behaviour.

What am I talking about? What is this ‘paradigm’ business? I have noted it on several occasions. Now is the time to establish and develop what I mean by it.

But before I do, I need to make a vital point. Believers, being in the new covenant, are not under the law of Moses (Rom. 6:14-15; 7:4-6; 8:1-4; 10:4; 2 Cor. 3:6-11; Gal. 2:19-20; 5:18; Eph. 2:14-15; Heb. 7:18-19; 8:13). They are under the law of Christ. But – and this is the vital point – although the word ‘law’ is used in both covenants (Mosaic and new), the law of Christ is a very different entity to the law of Moses.

The use of ‘law’ in the old covenant and in the new

It all hinges on the word ‘law’. ‘The law of Moses’ and ‘the law of Christ’ are (in the common parlance) very different beasts; that is, they are very different ‘entities’, ‘systems’, ‘regimes’. And they are poles apart, not only in content, but in their whole basis, approach, ethos, outlook, attitude and mindset. It is all to do with ‘Moses’ and ‘Christ’ (John 1:17). The two laws belong to two distinct, contrasting ages, and are very different ‘laws’. The law of Moses is a list of specific rules – the decalogue is *ten* commandments, after all. The law of Christ, however, is far wider, far bigger. And I am not thinking of a hundred commandments instead of ten! (Or, rather, a thousand commandments instead of the more-than six hundred in the Mosaic law!) The law of Christ is not a list at all. This is the point I am striving for. The law of Christ is a principle, an all-embracing principle. Anything more different to a list of rules, especially a list of ‘do not’s’, would be hard to imagine. Christ’s law is inflexible, but there is a certain flexibility within it. Within limits, differences of judgment are allowed under Christ (see Rom. 14:1 – 15:7; Phil. 3:15-16, for instance). This is a remarkable aspect of the law of Christ. In general, law allows no room for conscience. In particular, the Mosaic law allows none. Summarising the essential difference between the two ‘laws’, the law of Moses and the law of Christ, we may put it this way: we are talking about the difference between precept and principle.

We are now ready to get to the question I posed. How should believers read, quote and use the law?

The law is a paradigm for believers

The apostles never used the law in the old-covenant way. This needs stating, and stating with force, because, as I have said, law mongers have a hybrid – pick and mix – way of using the law. Sometimes they speak of it as a command binding on believers. At other times they speak of it as paradigm. And sometimes they use it as a mixture of the two, turning to medieval constructs such as the threefold use of the law or ‘the moral law’ as opposed to ‘the ceremonial law’, and play one off against the other. Such goings on are shoddy. Worse, they are unscriptural. And, alas, they thoroughly confuse believers. The solution is the apostolic way of using the law; namely as paradigm, and always as a paradigm.

While Paul did not make the law the rule under which believers live, he did not go to the other extreme and ignore the law or say it is of no use whatsoever. From the rich treasury of the entire Old Testament, Paul drew various lessons, types, illustrations, analogies and examples. In particular, he cited the Mosaic law, quoted it, illustrated and supported his doctrine with it, and gave examples from it. Of course he did – the New Testament quite rightly treats the Old Testament as the Scriptures, pointing to Christ, foreshadowing him (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; 10:1). In Hebrews 8:5, two words are used, ‘copy’ and ‘shadow’. A copy is not the real or original, but it shows what the real thing is like; inadequately, yes, but nevertheless usefully. A shadow bespeaks the existence of the real, solid thing. True, a shadow is colourless, blurred and flat, but this does not detract from the glory of the original. In fact, it adds to it. Shadows are vital to an artist in conveying a sense of reality and solidity. In ‘pure’ water-colours, the lights are formed by painting in the darks, and deepening the darks enhances the lights. The Old Testament may be shadow, but how greatly it highlights the New! Paul, therefore, used the entire old covenant, including the law, to enforce his doctrine: ‘Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us’ (1 Cor. 5:7), for instance. But this is not to say he preached Moses, or that he imposed Moses on believers. He preached Christ, making use of Moses to preach Christ.

This is what I mean by using the law as a paradigm – which is what Paul did, and what we should do. But the law must be used

lawfully, properly nuanced²⁶ under the new covenant. The law, a component of ‘all Scripture’, has its role to play in the life of the believer, and part of that role is as a paradigm. But this is not the same as saying that every part of the Old Testament, down to its minutest detail, has authority over the believer, nor that the law is his perfect rule. The New Testament *uses* the Old, but its system of sanctification is not based upon it. The basis of new-covenant ethics is Christ, not the ten commandments. The law of Christ *uses* all the law of Moses to illustrate its claims. It *borrow*s from it – but that only *occasionally*. Above all, it is not *based* upon it.

Take 1 Corinthians. In that book, Paul several times alludes to the Mosaic law. I emphasise this. He alludes to the law, the whole, all the law – not just the so-called ‘moral law’. Paul draws on the entire law, including the Passover (1 Cor. 5:6-8), the removal of offenders from Israel (1 Cor. 5:9-13), the non-muzzling of the ox while treading the grain (1 Cor. 9:8-12), people and priests eating the sacrifices (1 Cor. 9:13-14; 10:18), Israel’s sins in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:1-11), the use of foreign languages (1 Cor. 14:21), and woman’s submission (1 Cor. 14:34). But not once does Paul tell believers they are under the law. Never once does he tell them that they must keep Moses’ precepts. Not once does he speak of the law as a list of rules which govern the life of the believer. Instead, he uses the law to give the believer a paradigm, an example, an illustration of the Christian life. ‘These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come’ (1 Cor. 10:11, NIV). That is to say, the apostle uses the Old Testament in general, and the law in particular, as a pattern, a model, an illustration of his teaching, to help his readers understand his instructions for godliness, and to encourage them in obedience – including the need for purity, for proper financial support of gospel teachers, warning against sin, against the misuse of foreign languages in meetings, showing the right way for a woman to show her submission, and so on. Certainly this is the main way in which Paul

²⁶ What I am setting out is very different to those who say the law is binding in every detail, but at the same time ‘modify’ it by cutting out its punishment, or in splitting it into three, and so on. I am simply doing what the New Testament does with the law. It never plays Reformed ‘ducks and drakes’ with it. See my *Christ* pp99-110,154,392-408.

uses the law in, say, 1 Corinthians. He appeals to the law as a paradigm for godliness. The same goes for 2 Corinthians. Paul uses the law as a paradigm in the matter of holiness (2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1), the giving of money (2 Cor. 8:15), and the need for two or three witnesses to confirm a case (2 Cor. 13:1). But, as before, never does he turn the law into the believer's rule. In short, he takes his own medicine and uses the law lawfully (1 Tim. 1:8). He is *not* dividing the law into three bits, disposing of two, and setting up 'the moral law' as a rule; rather, he uses the entire law to illustrate new-covenant principles for believers. While the law of Moses very usefully serves as an illustration of the believer's behaviour, or an allusion to it, it cannot be the believer's perfect rule.

So, for instance, on not muzzling the ox, Paul takes the law but makes it say something different to what it originally said, applying it to the present circumstances of the believer, showing how the new covenant uses the old as a paradigm for the proper financial support for those who labour in the gospel (1 Cor. 9:1-18). Paul backs his argument by reference to the law: 'Do I say these things as a mere man?' he asks. 'Or does not the law say the same also?' Reader, where did 'the law say the same also'? Where did it say that a gospel preacher needs and must receive financial support to do his work? It said it in the new-covenant reading of Deuteronomy 25:4. Listen to Paul: 'For it is written in the law of Moses: "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain"'. Pause, reader! A literalist, an old-covenant reader, has to argue that Deuteronomy says nothing about financial support for a preacher of the gospel. And he is quite right – on *old-covenant* principles; the verse is concerned with allowing an ox to eat some corn as it works the treadmill, and that is all. But listen to Paul, reading the law through new-covenant eyes:

Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does he say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who ploughs should plough in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?... Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has

²⁷ In writing to Timothy, he used the same paradigm, saying 'the Scripture says' (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:9-14).

The Jews, no doubt, should have realised that the principle applied to more than oxen. All who labour ought to partake of the benefit of their labour. Surely oxen should not be treated better than men! Even in the old covenant, the humane treatment of oxen served as a paradigm for labour-relations. But it is only in the full light of the gospel that the spiritual point is made clear. This is the way the old covenant serves as a paradigm for the new. This is the way believers should use the Mosaic law, not as a binding rule down to its last Jewish detail.²⁸

There are many such examples. In that same section, Paul cited temple-practice (1 Cor. 9:13-14; 10:18). Before that, he had raised the Passover. I know, like the sabbath, the Passover slightly anticipated Sinai (Ex. 12 and 16), but, again, like the sabbath, the Passover was in fact an integral part of the Sinai covenant. In any case, both came very heavily into the law, and both played an enormous part in the life of Israel under the law. Now then, what did Paul command the Corinthians? ‘Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth’ (1 Cor. 5:7-8). Let us think about that for a moment. Believers must get rid of yeast, and keep the feast of Passover. Hang on a minute! Do believers keep the feast as Moses stipulated? Do they keep the feast at all? They do not! If they did, it would be anathema to the Lord, would it not – since it would be an offence against the person and finished work of Christ? It would be tantamount to saying he had not died, and had not, by the shedding of his blood, redeemed his people. The truth is, of course, Paul was not talking about keeping any literal feast! Nobody in their right mind would think it! ²⁹ He was telling believers to get rid of all

²⁸ I am not supporting the Puritan way of making the law teach every new-covenant matter in advance. There is all the difference between *that*, and looking back, through the gospel to the law and seeing an illustration.

²⁹ But the unthinkable does happen. I know of a professing believer, once Judaisers had got a toehold, religiously get rid of yeast products, eat unleavened bread for the requisite number of days, and then, on the ‘right’

worldly contamination, and live godly lives for Christ, live sincerely and scripturally for the glory of their Redeemer. The apostle simply used the Passover as a paradigm to drive home his point. What he was not doing was to make the law the believer's rule.

And so it goes on, everywhere, throughout the apostolic writings. Look, for instance, at the thrilling use Paul made of the clash between Sarah and Hagar (Gal. 4:21-31), and the lessons he drew from it. Listen to his punch line. Let it sink in: 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage' (Gal. 5:1). How relevant this is to the question in hand!

Then again, take the sabbath. Compare the Reformed approach with the apostolic. The Reformed pound out their old-covenant talk of sabbath observance in terms of a day on which *this cannot* be done, and *that ought* to be done, all being couched in terms of a law which is attended by the direst of punishments for disobedience³⁰, and all the rest of it. Contrast that with the writer to the Hebrews and his treatment of the subject (Heb. 3:7 – 4:11). Christ is the believer's sabbath. Christ gives the believer rest. Christ *is* the believer's rest.³¹

Similarly, old-covenant worship had an altar. So does the new: 'We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no

day, eat roast lamb while standing up, deliberately-timed at sunset. I know of another who seriously contemplated smearing blood on the front door – with hyssop, I wonder? How long will it be before such people, staff in hand, sandals on feet, cloak tucked in, eat the whole lamb, innards and all, burning the remains the next morning, and doing it all in a rush? And what about the Feast of Tabernacles, the New Moon, and all? Bizarre! And sad. And worse. For Christ has fulfilled all the Jewish shadows, and abolished them! Heb. 7 – 10 is categorical; in particular, Heb. 9:10; 10:9,18.

³⁰ Though the Reformed always offer their followers the panacea that the curse has, in truth, been removed for them For more on this clever-but-groundless device of 'pulling the law's teeth', see my *Christ* pp107-108,404-408. I am not denying, of course, that Christ bore the curse of the law, sin and death for the elect (Rom. 8:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:10-14; 1 Pet. 3:18), but Reformed shenanigans have nothing in common with apostolic doctrine on this vital point.

³¹ See my *Sabbath Questions: An open letter to Iain Murray* pp71-83. Also, put 'sabbath' in the Keyword box on the sermons page of David H J Gay (sermonaudio.com). See also the eDocs link.

right to eat' (Heb. 13:10; compare 1 Cor. 10:14-22). This verse – and its context – encapsulates precisely the right way for Christians to apply old-covenant terms. The altar of the new covenant is spiritual. Only the regenerate can partake of its sacrifices. The kingdom of God is spiritual; it does not consist of foods (Heb. 13:9); 'the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17). When we are told 'to go forth to [Christ], outside the camp' (Heb. 13:13), who thinks we are to make a move to a physical place? Likewise, who (apart from the revivalist with his 'altar-call') thinks that in order to obey Christ's command to 'come to me' (Matt. 11:28), a person has to leave his seat and make a physical movement? Again, the city we seek in the new covenant is not the physical Jerusalem (Heb. 13:14). It is the heavenly, spiritual Jerusalem (Gal. 4:25-26); believers 'have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem' (Heb. 12:22). The saints of the Old Testament ³² were conscious of the very same thing (Heb. 11:10,13-16).

Yes, I know the Reformed have their answer ready. 'Believers are under the moral law. All that stuff is ceremonial'. Oh? I have already shown how that technique only works as long as you are willing to do what Scripture never does, and break the law into convenient bits. The Bible will never warrant it; it always treats the law as indivisible. In any case, it misses my point. I am simply showing that Paul (along with the other apostles) would use anything and everything from the law to enforce his doctrine on believers – the ten commandments (including, therefore, the sabbath), feasts, whatever. But never once did he impose any of those things upon believers as their perfect rule. He simply used anything and everything from the law as a paradigm. *That* is my point. So, whether or not any particular example comes from the ten commandments or any other part of the law (allowing, for argument's sake, such a division to exist), the Reformed gloss is utterly irrelevant.

Furthermore, Paul would use any source to enforce his teaching, not only the law. Moses, of course, was in a different league to the following, but the apostle was prepared to cite nature (Acts 14:15,17; 17:24-29; Rom. 1:20; 1 Cor. 11:14), history (Acts 14:16; 17:30; 1

³² Who were, of course, in the new covenant.

Cor. 10:1-13), superstitious pagan and idolatrous practices (Acts 17:22-23; Rom. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 10:18-22), and the writings of pagan poets, prophets and philosophers (Acts 17:28; Tit. 1:12-13), common sense and every-day practice (1 Cor. 9:7,10-12), the facts of life (1 Cor. 11:11-12; 12:12-31), and so on. But he made none of these the basis for his teaching, nor was he saying these constituted a norm for believers. Rather, he was making use of all these resources to draw analogies, and thus illustrate his doctrine.

In short, when addressing believers, the New Testament sometimes quotes and draws lessons from the whole law, yes, but this is a far cry from saying that the ten commandments are binding on believers as their rule of life. Paul never adopts the Reformed threefold division to limit 'the law' to 'the moral law', and so make the ten commandments the believer's perfect rule. On the contrary, the apostle makes the commands of the entire law to serve as a paradigm or example, illustration, specimen, instance or model of the behaviour which is required of believers. And that is all! I say again: new-covenant men use all the law – we do not select a mere 1% or less of it! No! The Reformed may call us antinomians. Let them! They need to use the mirror. For, unlike them, we use all the law – *but we only use it the way the New Testament does when it applies it to believers*. And never does it make the law the believer's rule.

Let me confirm that this *is* the right way to read those places in the New Testament where the law is so used. Take 1 Peter 1:15-16: 'As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct'. Why? 'Because it is written'. Where is it written? In the law (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7). What is written in the law? 'Be holy, for I am holy'. If the Reformed view is right, then it follows that since believers must be holy because God in the law told the Jews they had to be holy, then it follows that *that very law therefore is binding on believers as their rule*. Will the advocates of Calvin's third use of the law call upon this passage in 1 Peter for support? I doubt it. Although Peter quoted from the law, he did not quote from that part of the law which Reformed writers like to say is binding upon the saints. The fact is, turning to Leviticus, the apostle quoted from a passage (Lev. 11:1-47, especially verses 44-45) which commanded the Jews as to what kind of animals, fish, reptiles and insects they could or could not eat. He also quoted from another passage (Lev. 19:1-37, especially

verse 2) which commanded the Jews to keep the fifth commandment; to keep the sabbaths (note the plural, reader; it was *all* the sabbaths they had to keep); to keep the second commandment; and to keep listed regulations for eating the sacrifices, reaping at harvest time, and so on. And he quoted from yet another passage (Lev. 20:1-27, especially verse 7) which commanded the Jews to stone idolaters, to execute all who cursed a parent or committed adultery, and so on. Is *this* law binding upon believers? Is it authoritative over them in every minute detail?

Of course not! It is the principle which counts. *As* the Jews had to be holy because God is holy, *so* believers must be holy. But this is not to say that the law, which God imposed upon the Jews, now forms the rule for believers! Rather, it serves as an illustration, exemplar or paradigm: *as* God never changes, and is always holy, and always requires holiness in his people, *so* believers must be holy. As I have shown more than once, this is the vital principle and demand. *As* God has forgiven his people, *so* they must forgive (Eph. 4:32). ‘As... so’ is the key here. Compare also Matthew 18:23-35.

For another instance of the use of the law in this way, see Romans 12:19-21, where believers are instructed: ‘Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath’. Why? ‘For it is written’. What is written? ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay’. So says the Lord (Rom. 12:19; see also 1 Thess. 4:6; Heb. 10:30). But, reader, *where* did the Lord say this? In the law. Ah! but, I ask every Reformed reader, in which of your three categories of the law did God put it? You will not find it in what you like to call ‘the moral law’! The original you will find in Deuteronomy 32:35, among the last words of Moses to the Jews before his death. Does *this* constitute the believer’s rule?

The fact is, the New Testament is its own interpreter in all these matters: ‘Whatever things were written before were written for our learning’ (Rom. 15:4), and ‘these things became our examples... All these things happened to [the Jews] as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come’ (1 Cor. 10:6,11). ‘Whatever things’! In short: ‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [better, God-breathed, God breathed them out], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction [training] in righteousness’ (2 Tim. 3:16). ‘All Scripture’!

But this is a far cry from asserting – as the Reformed want to assert – that what they call ‘the moral law’ is binding on believers as their rule of life. I say again, it is ‘whatever things, all these things, all Scripture’, not just the ten commandments. The Old Testament does not give us all we need. If it does, why the New Testament?

In saying this, I do not say believers may be less holy than the Jews. Far from it: ‘Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven’. And Jesus spelled out what he meant: ‘You have heard that it was said to those of old... But I say to you...’ (Matt. 5:20-22). If you have any suspicion that I am teaching believers to be lawless, reader, I ask you to read my *Christ is All* pp279-298,528-542; *passim*. I assure you I am not.

Nor am I saying a word against the law. Paul never argues that ‘the Mosaic law is a bad thing’. Quite the opposite! But the fact is the time of the law of Moses is over. It has had its day. No doubt the child-custodian was good for the child (Gal. 3:24; 4:1-2), but hardly appropriate for a grown man! The law is not the norm of the Christian life. The law must be viewed through the new covenant.³³ While the law still has relevance for the believer, it is not Moses but Christ who is his people’s lawgiver (Deut. 18:15-19; John 5:46-47; Acts 3:22-23;

³³ For the Anabaptist position on this, and their citation of various laws no longer applicable to believers, see my *Christ* pp77-78,374-378. I quote just one paragraph (sources may be found in my *Christ* p378): ‘Menno Simons: “To swear truly was allowed to the Jews under the law; but the gospel forbids this to Christians”. Sebastian Franck complained of “wolves, the doctors of unwisdom, apes of the apostles, and antichrists [who] mix the New Testament with the Old... and from it prove [the legitimacy of]... [the] power of magistracy... [the] priesthood; and praise everything and ascribe this all forcibly to Christ... And just as the popes have derived all this from it, so also many of those who would have themselves called evangelicals hold that they have nobly escaped the snare of the pope and the devil, and have nevertheless achieved... nothing more than that they have exchanged and confounded the priesthood of the pope with the Mosaic kingdom... If [that is, since] the priesthood cannot be re-established out of the old law, neither can [Christian] government... be established according to the law of Moses”. In all this, Franck listed the sabbath along with circumcision, kingship, temple and sacrifices, as old-covenant externals’. For my own modest contribution, listen to my short discourse: ‘No Mixture! Separation’ (sermonaudio.com).

Heb. 3:5-6). The believer reads Moses, and gains from him, but it is Christ, the one of whom Moses prophesied, the one who fulfilled the law of Moses, whom believers are under. Christ is Lord, even of Moses. This is how and why Paul speaks as he does in 1 Corinthians 9:20-21. And he speaks for all believers everywhere and at all times. It is Christ, not Moses, who is his people's lawgiver. John 1:17 really must be given its full weight: 'The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ'.

In short, while the New Testament uses the old covenant in general, and makes very occasional use of some of the ten commandments (never all of them), in order to illustrate the law of Christ, it never once tells believers that they are under the law of Moses as the rule of life. Certainly not! Believers are not under that killing, condemning ministry, now made obsolete by Christ who fulfilled it in every particular (Rom. 6:14-15; 7:4-6; 8:2-4; 10:4; 2 Cor. 3:6-9; Gal. 2:19-20; Heb. 7:18-19; 8:7,13). The old covenant, as a shadow, illustrated and pointed to Christ and his work, but its days are now well and truly over. The shadows have fled away. The Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2), has arisen. The law remains, as part of the old covenant – indeed, as a part of the word of God – and it serves as an illustration or paradigm of the glorious new covenant. This is how believers should use the law. They should read the law as a collection of insights into the work of Christ, as illustrations of how they should walk in the law of Christ, but not as a list of rules which they cannot sort out and which, in any case, they are unable to keep. They are, after all, the children of Romans 8:2-4:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: he condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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