

CHRISTIANS NOT UNDER THE LAW

TEXT: JAMES 2:10-13

INTRODUCTION:

1. James 2:10 and 11 refers to the law of Moses.
2. This brings us to that very important New Testament doctrine: Christians are not under the law.
3. Some, like the SDA and other groups would say that we are under the law. Others would say no, we are not under the law, but they mix together law and grace.
4. Let me emphasize at the onset that Christians are not under the law but under grace, and grace only (cf. Rom. 6:14; 7:4-6; 11:6).
5. Paul's epistle to the Galatians was written to refute the false teaching that Christians are under the law of Moses (cf. Gal. 2:19, 21; 3:13, 24, 25).
6. This "saved by works" teaching is often called legalism. Those who teach salvation through keeping the law are usually called "legalists" or "Judaizers."
7. The word "legalism" is often misused by Christians who do not believe in Biblical holiness and separation from worldliness.
8. Legalism simply means teaching believers are saved by works, or sanctified by works.
9. We are saved by grace through faith and sanctified by grace through faith.
10. The New Testament teaches that the law is now "done away" (II Cor. 3:7-11).
11. However, certain principles of the law are of abiding value and apply to people of all ages: for example, it will always be wrong to commit murder or adultery (cf. James 2:10, 11).
12. These commandments, the sixth and seventh, are not just for believers. They apply to all mankind. It is just as wrong for an unbeliever to murder as it is for a Christian.
13. Nine out of the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament – only the fourth is missing.
14. The fourth commandment is found in Exodus 20:8-11. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

15. Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians commanded to keep the Jewish sabbath (cf. Ex. 31:12-17).
16. Exodus 31:15 says, "Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death."
17. Seventh-day Adventists do not advocate the death penalty for working on Saturdays. And the New Testament does not teach Christians should worship on the seventh day.
18. In fact, I Corinthians 16:1, 2 says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."
19. Therefore, the sabbath principle applies to the Lord's Day, the first day of the week.
20. The law of Moses was a temporary way for God to administer His moral absolutes to the nation of Israel from Mount Sinai to Mount Calvary (cf. Gal. 3:19-25).

I. THE LAW IS AN INDISSOLUBLE UNIT (JAMES 2:10, 11)

1. The law is like a chain. To break one part of the law is to be guilty of all.
2. To commit one crime makes one a criminal. To commit one sin makes one a sinner. By the way, technically committing a sin does not make us sinners – rather, we sin because we already are sinners – we were born with a lost, sinful nature.
3. The law is one indissoluble unit. It has three elements – moral, ceremonial, and civil – but is a mistake to suggest that we are under the moral law but not the ceremonial (ritualistic) or civil. This cannot be done because there is only one law (James 2:10).
4. It is interesting to note that in the Bible the law is always referred to in the singular, whereas it is always used in the plural everywhere else. For example, ancient writers refer to "the laws of Athens" or "the laws of Rome," but the Bible always speaks of "the law."
5. This points to the unity of God's law as opposed to merely human laws.
6. The Sermon on the Mount is an interpretation, in part, of the law and has many similarities to the epistle of James (cf. Matt. 5:21-28; cf. James 2:13 with Matt. 5:7; James 5:12 with Matt. 5:37).
7. One Bible teacher found 15 connections between the Sermon on the Mount and the epistle of James (Mayor, cited by Guy King, *A Belief that Behaves, An Expository Study of James*, p. 29).

8. In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord is not abolishing the Mosaic law nor is He replacing it, but is actually reaffirming its unity and inviolability.

II. CHRISTIANS ARE UNDER A HIGHER LAW – THE LAW OF LIBERTY (JAMES 2:12)

1. We already touched upon this back in James 1:25.
2. Liberty means freedom from restraint, and the purpose of the law is to restrain. (And to punish lawbreakers – Daniel Webster said that a law without a penalty is simply good advice).
3. So if liberty means freedom from restraint and the law restrains, "the law of liberty" seems like a paradox. But the Christian life is a paradox – abase yourself and God will exalt you; give away your money and God will make you rich; etc.
4. The law of liberty is an inward constraint rather than an outward restraint. If you are born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you are perfectly free to do that which is right, not by restraint but by constraint.
5. The apostle Paul says in II Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us."
6. We do not obey in order to be saved – we obey because we are saved. We do not obey out of fear of punishment but out of love for Christ who died for us on the cross.
7. This law of liberty is higher than the Mosaic law. According to Galatians 5:4, those who choose to go back to the law of Moses have "fallen from grace."
8. The law says, "Do this in order to be blessed," but grace says, "Do this because you have been blessed!"
9. Scofield says: "Moses' law demands love; Christ's law is love."
10. This law of liberty is also called the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."
11. In John 13:34, our Lord says, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."
12. In John 15:12 our Lord says, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."
13. First John 3:23 says, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."
14. Second John 5 says, "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."

15. James calls it the "perfect law of liberty" and "the royal law" (James 1:25; 2:8, 12).

III. GOD'S PRINCIPLES NEVER CHANGE (JAMES 2:13)

1. Under God's divine government men will always reap what they sow – these principles never change.
2. The merciful shall always obtain mercy (James 2:13). Our Lord said in Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."
3. Those who will not forgive will not be forgiven. Our Lord said in Matthew 6:15, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."
4. Mercy shown on earth by the justified sinner, who has himself been the object of God's mercy, is a sure ground for confidence that for him there will be no judgment from God (James 2:13).
5. "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (2:13) – God would rather show mercy to us than judge us.
6. Micah 7:18 says God "delighteth in mercy."
7. In Isaiah 28:21, we are told that judgment is God's "strange work."
8. God would much rather bless us – it is not His desire to deal harshly with any man. God is ready to forgive and bless, not anxious to judge and condemn.

CONCLUSION:

1. H.A. Ironside told a story about a man hanging over a steep cliff by a chain with ten links.
2. Ironside would ask, "What should happen if just one link breaks?"
3. The man falls to his death just the same, whether it is one broken link or if all ten break (cf. James 2:10).
4. To summarize: the law is an indissoluble unit. We are not saved by keeping the law. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ.
5. The Lord Jesus Christ was the only person who could ever keep the law, because He is the sinless Son of God.
6. Though we are not under the law, we are not lawless (cf. James 2:9-11).