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Guided by His Word,
Serving in His Love

So, What about the Law?

The moment a gospel of grace apart from works of the Law was proclaimed, the question surfaced: "What has the Law of Moses to do with any believer now living under the new covenant secured by Christ?" The question was raised this past week in one of our Bible School Classes. The variety of thoughtful answers that were shared seemed to indicate that it is a question worthy of our wrestling with.

On the one hand, we all understand that the Law of Moses is not the path to our salvation. Jesus fulfilled that Law for us. On the other hand, most believers find it uncomfortable to simply dismiss the usefulness and value of something that God used to forge a nation and to point that nation to the coming of Christ. Whether or not any believer is horrified when statues and plaques bearing the Ten Commandments are removed from courthouses here and there, what believer would deny that those commandments are a solid foundation for any civil government?

The Apostle Paul makes the most compelling biblical arguments that the Law is powerless to save us and that we should not count on it for that purpose. Still, after making such an argument, this same Paul typically calls His readers to live according to an ethic that honors the Christ Who saved them. However, on those occasions when he defines that ethic, he does so in rather general terms. He highlights certain gross sins that have been evident as sin from creation. He speaks to relational sins that undermine the unity of the church. Beyond this handful of specifics, he leaves far more questions unanswered than did Moses.

Assuming that we are only dealing with authentic believers that desire to please Christ with their lives, the individual believer is free to make an awful lot of judgments according to his or her conscience. How arrogant it would be to conclude that we are equipped to make such judgments without any insights and boundaries beyond ourselves. This is where the Law comes in quite handy.

What were the purposes of the Law? Again, according to Paul, the Law tutored us until the time of Christ (*Galatians 3:24, 25*). It also helped us to understand what sin is (*Romans 7:7, 8*). Though we are not bound to the letter of the Mosaic Code, we should not assume that it has lost any power to tutor or enlighten us as to God's ways.

Approaching the tabernacle of God has nothing to do with us, but the regulations surrounding that matter still remind the modern of God's holiness. The laws governing sacrifice do not legally speak to us, but they still have much to say about His worthiness. Technically, we are free from the Sabbath observance and the tithe. Still, the importance of sabbath rest and sacrificial generosity are evident in the laws addressing those issues, and to simply dismiss those Laws as "antiquated" has led many Christians to grow comfortable in their stinginess and to never make adequate time for sabbath fellowship with God.

Not every believer will agree on every conclusion. For that very reason, many of the personal scruples by which we govern our own lives to God's glory we should keep to ourselves. When it is apparent that such scruples differ with someone else's, we should be very cautious about dogmatism lest we venture into the realm of inappropriately judging one another. When any man's own body of scruples becomes a codified law that he feels he must impose on someone else, he is not constructing a righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees. He is constructing one very much like it.

The righteousness that we all must pursue cannot be captured by obeying the Law of Moses, but it is reflected within it. We do not need to keep the ancient code in order to reach heaven, but we all need boundaries and wisdom in order to live to God's glory. I would suggest that the Law remains a valuable source for establishing such boundaries and gleaning such wisdom.



Karl's Korner