



PAUL:

Apostle of Law and Liberty

NOEL DUE

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by

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COMMENDATION

Fresh springs are breaking out in these days as we are led back to the truths of the Scripture. We are regaining insights so long lost, but so essential to true Christian living. Moses tells us, 'The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law' (Deut. 29:29). Notice that the things revealed to us do not quickly pass away. They 'belong to us and to our children for ever.' They are new for every generation so that 'we may do all the words of this law.'

God's law: whether as Abraham knew it (Gen. 26:4-5), Israel knew it, or we know it today—calling it 'the law of Christ'—we and our children have it and do it forever.

That is why this small book outweighs its size in importance. Noel Due has succinctly given us the essence—and quality—of Paul's understanding of law. This thoughtful monograph will save the reader endless hours of research in Paul's writings. It will also give him an overview of the matter of law, concerning which Paul 'is not only eager, but insistent. He wishes us to see all aspects of law so that, being free from its bondage, our lives may be devoted to joyful obedience.

We urge all, into whose hands this book may come, to persist until all its contents are thoroughly digested. As we have indicated, this book is highly significant. It will help us to know our freedom through the Gospel; and at the same time the constraint of love in the matter of joyful obedience.

Geoffrey Bingham, Publisher.

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*When once the firey Law of God,
Has chased me to the Gospel road,
Then back unto the holy law
Most kindly Gospel-grace will draw.*

— *Gospel Sonnets*, 1720

*After Christ has maid agreement betwixt us and the law,
we delight to walk in it for the love of Christ.*

— SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

*The Law is of unspeakable use in deriving strength from our
Head into His living members, whereby He empowers them to do what His
law commands; and...in confirming our hope of
whatsoever it commands and we have not yet attained.*

— JOHN WESLEY in *Christian Theology*

*... but from the Commandment, as a rule of life, we are not
freed, but contrariwise inclined and disposed, by his free spirit, to the
willing obedience thereof. Thus to the regenerate the Law
becometh as it were Gospell, even a law of libertie.*

— SAMUEL CROOKE

*He (a holy man) will have a decided bent of mind toward God, a hearty
desire to do His will—a greater fear of displeasing Him than of displeasing
the World, and a love to all of His ways. He will endeavour to shun every
known sin, and to keep every commandment.*

— J. C. RYLE

*The power and authority of the law fastens together with a disposition to
obedience upon the heart, so that the heart will be no more contrary to it,
but sweetly concurring with it.*

— JOHN SEDGWICK

INTRODUCTION

Throughout her history, the church has stood in the danger of falling into two opposite, though not unrelated, errors. The first is that of anti-nomianism (from the Greek *anti and nomos*, ‘against law’), the second is that of legalism. We should not be surprised at this, for all of us in dividually face the same dangers. Law is fundamental to God’s creation, and as His creatures we must live under it. However, as fallen creatures we have a great antipathy to God’s law. Either we try to flaunt it (wrongly equating freedom with licence and suppressing the truth of the law in doing so), or we try to use our seeming obedience to it in an attempt to bribe God into action on our behalf. Whichever may be the case, we have abused God’s good law because of our own rebellion.

Truly perceived, liberty and law are not two opposite principles, but complementary ones. There can be no true liberty apart from God’s law, which is why the Psalmist can write,

*I will walk at liberty,
for I seek thy precepts (Ps. 119:45).*

To live ‘lawfully’ is to fully live, but to seek liberty apart from the law is to end in bondage. Paul has much to say on the topics of ‘law’ and ‘liberty’ (not that he ever treats them as distinct), and as a young Christian I found this all very confusing. I was constantly faced with questions like, ‘What did Paul mean when he talked about the “law”?’ ‘Are Christians free to do what they like?’ ‘What happens if we disobey the law?’ In fact I used to shy away from reading those parts of Paul’s epistles which dealt with the law because I could not understand them, and thus much of Paul remained a rather closed book to me.

I strongly suspect that my experience is not unique, which is why this little publication has come forth. I have based this booklet on a larger academic paper on the same subject, which means that this is much

more a personal study booklet than an “easy reader.’ For maximum benefit, Biblical references should be followed through with the text, especially where they are discussed at length. I hope that this booklet proves useful in (a) alleviating the confusion to those of us who are young in the faith, and (b) underlining the important truths of the gospel for those of us who are a little older in ‘the Way.’

Noel Due, 1985

PAUL’S UNDERSTANDING OF ‘LAW’

There are a number of factors to consider when we look at the way in which Paul uses the word ‘law’ in his epistles. Firstly we need to recognize the varying contexts for which his diverse letters were written. The ‘life setting’ of Galatians differs from that of Romans, for example, which means we cannot impose the argument of one on to the other, *in toto*. This does not mean that Paul’s theological framework varies between all his diverse epistles, but it does mean that we must carefully look at the context in which we find the same word (‘law’) to make sure we do not miss Paul’s true meaning.

Secondly we’ need to note that, because of the language in which Paul wrote, the same word for law (*nomos*) must sometimes be used in opposite ways. The Greek used by Paul had no word, or word group, for ‘legalism,’ ‘legalist,’ and ‘legalistic’ This means that such concepts needed to be expressed using the same word for ‘law,’ which, on other occasions, had quite a positive meaning. Thus, while Paul may, at times, seem to be disparaging the law, what he really has in mind may not be the law itself but the misunderstanding-and misuse of it, for which we have a convenient term.¹

Thirdly we need to be aware of both Paul’s Judaic (notably Pharisaic) background and the social conditions prevalent at the time of the church’s inception. One of the main battles of the early church was to identify itself as something new and distinct from the old Judaism from which it sprang. Paul’s arguments against the Judaisers of Galatia, for example, were concerned to proclaim the truth that the church was not merely a Jewish sect that was still subject to the law-religion of Judaism.

¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, ‘St. Paul and the Law’ in *Scottish Journal of Theology?* Vol. 17, p. 55.

As an ex-Pharisee, Paul came to his exposition of the law with a profound respect for it, but as an apostle who had been ‘laid hold of by Christ,’ he came to proclaim an understanding of the law which was different from his Pharisaic past. For the Pharisees the doctrine of grace meant that God gave grace to keep the law for salvation. Paul reverses this to show that true law-keeping *flows from* a salvation which is freely given by grace. For both the young church and Paul, ‘law’ was therefore a word crammed full of social and religious connotations, giving it an importance which we in the present often fail to grasp.

Furthermore, in Paul’s day the word ‘law’ was used by the Jewish people to refer to the Old Testament Scriptures in whole or in part. Paul shares this common usage. ‘Law’ could refer to the Old Testament laws relating to the civil and ceremonial rituals and procedures followed in Jewish society and in the religious cultus respectively. Likewise the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) as a whole could also be called ‘the law of Moses,’ or ‘the law.’ Finally the whole of the Old Testament could be referred to as ‘law’—hence Romans 3:19 counts as law quotations taken from Psalms and Isaiah.

Occasionally Paul uses ‘law’ to refer to a general norm or principle (eg. Rom. 3:27), or of compulsion or restraint (Rom. 7:2f., 7:22-8: 1), and sometimes it is used interchangeably with commandment (*entolé*, eg. Rom. 7:7ff.). Thus; in terms of background, Paul uses the word *nomos in an* undifferentiated sense. The law of Moses, the law (i.e. the Pentateuch), and the Old Testament as a whole, can all be referred to simply as ‘law.’

To summarize then, we can say that ‘law’ is sometimes used to refer to the Old Testament Scriptures (generally or specifically), but in terms of its content, Paul’s primary concern is with the demands the law makes on a person’s life. As such, the law stands as the expression of God’s-will, and applies not only to Jews, but to all men. In general terms, the law is the norm appointed by God for man’s relationship to God and for true manhood.² Even though the Gentiles do not have the law as the Jews do, they nevertheless stand as creatures under the Creator with His law written on their hearts (Rom. 2: 14f.). The fact is

² H. Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 106.

that all humanity does not stand in ignorance, but rather it actually *suppresses* the truth of God which is self-evident to all (Rom. 1:18). What then is the importance of ‘law’ for Paul, and, what function does it fulfil?

1. The law is God’s law

As mentioned above, the law is the revelation of God’s will for man. As such, there can be no thought of ‘law apart from God,’ just as there can be no distinction drawn between a person and his words. It is God’s law (Rom. 7:22, 8:7) and is therefore ‘spiritual’ (Rom. 7:14) and ‘holy, just and good’ (7:12). Importantly, ‘all this the law not only is originally, but also continues to be, even when it is being misused and dishonoured by men.’³ As the revelation of God’s will, the proper purpose of the law is ‘life’ (Rom. 7:10, 10:5, Gal. 3:12), and hence Israel’s possession ‘of the codified (i.e. written) law was to be counted a great privilege (Rom. 9:4, cf. Deut. 4:6-8). Paul never condemns Israel for pursuit of the law (indeed he implies that pursuit of the law is what they should have been concerned with), but he does condemn them for the particular way they pursued it, i.e. by works of righteousness instead of by faith (Rom. 9:31f.). Instead of being seen as the natural way *of* life, the law (i.e. works of the law) was falsely understood as the way of *obtaining* life. Faith was replaced with the bribery of legalism. But this does not offset the intrinsic nature of the law as a gift from, and expressive of, God Himself. When seen in its true meaning, ‘law’ is both a promise and an act of grace. In that it comes from God, the whole content of the law is love—firstly towards God and secondly towards fellow men (Rom. 13:8-10, Gal. 5:14).

But having said all this, we have only stated the first part of an enigma, for while Paul maintains that the law is the gift and instrument of God, he also asserts that it is the servant of sin. It is to the second section of this enigma that we must now turn.

³ Cranfield, p. 45.

2. The law makes sin manifest as sin and enhances it

Paul's argument in Romans 5:13ff. is important, though it takes time to unravel. It is obvious, argues Paul, that sin was in the world before the law was given (at Sinai), because death reigned before Sinai, and death is the result of sin. But the disobedience of man before the law was given at Sinai was not the same as Adam's sin, for this disobedience was not disobedience to a specific commandment, as was Adam's. Hence, while sin was still sin' in the absence of law (as witnessed by the fact that all died as the punishment of sin), it is only after the law. that sin is 'registered.' The law introduced no new principle into the situation; it simply revealed more fully the principle of sin which was already present.⁴

Thus the law brings the 'knowledge of sin' (Rom. 3:20). That is, it shows sin up as specific transgressions of God's will, and shows sin in its true colours. One commentator states,

It is only in the presence of the law, only in Israel and church, that the full seriousness of sin is visible and the responsibility of the sinner stripped of every extenuating circumstance.⁵

In Galatians 3:19, Paul says that the law was given 'because of [i.e. for the sake of defining] transgression.' This is the meaning supported by Romans 7:13, 'that sin might be shown to be sin and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.' Sin is turned from sin generally to transgression specifically. Law, in its published form,

was given to man as a being who had already fallen into sin. By its commands and prohibitions the moral fall of Adam multiplies historically into many breaches of a written law. The law was therefore not merely for the *recognition* of sins as transgression, 'but more deeply to impart the *form* of transgression to sin (cf. Rom. 4:15b).'⁶

Sin is thus made manifest, but also given the character of specific transgressions in that sin exhibits itself in the conscious disobeying of deliberate commandments. The character of sin is made plain—sin is disobedience, and' this is now manifest for all to see.

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, p. 128

⁵ C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 282

⁶ E. F. Keyan, *The Law of God in Christian Experience*, p. 33f.

3. The law increases sin

Not only does the law make plain the nature of sin by exposing it as disobedience, but it actually incites men to sin more. The law opposes men's sinful desires, which only stirs them up to greater fury. Thus the law comes not so much as a power against sin, but rather it is a power used in the hands of sin (I Cor. 15:56), because of the opportunity sin takes in the commandment (Rom. 7:8, 11). The law provides sin with 'an occasion' (Rom. 7:8, 11), i.e. a base of operation (the Greek word is a military term), and incites man to sin.

We know this personally only too well. How do we handle a 'WET PAINT—DO NOT TOUCH' sign? We are incited to transgress the law and leave our fingerprint in the still sticky paint! F. F. Bruce tells the story of an old lady who objected to the recitation of the ten commandments in church 'because they put' so many ideas into people's minds,' which demonstrates the same point. Incredible though it may seem, 'the law came that sin might increase; (Rom. 5:20).

All this means that. sin uses the law to deceive and to kill (Rom. 7:11). The Dutch theologian, Hetman Ridderbos, puts it this. way:

By holding up the commandment to man as the end of his liberty and by promising him life in the transgression of the commandment, sin draws man under its enchantment. It promises him just that which the law appears to take away, and leads him thus into death.⁷

Hence Luther's statement is apt: 'The law did not come to make us good, but to make us bad.'

4. The law exacerbates sin because it establishes the possibility of legalism

Paul's concept of legalism is of paramount importance to our discussion. Legalism, for Paul, is 'the intention to claim God's favour by

⁷ Ridderbos, Paul, p. 144.

establishing one's own rightness.'⁸ As such, it shows sin in all its heinousness because legalism clearly demonstrates our uncreaturally refusal to accept our need of God and dependence on 'Him. Ultimately, legalism is nothing short of bribery of the proudest son, and herein lies its evil (cf. Deut. 10:17). By the 'works of the law' man imagines that he can place God under obligation to him. Works righteousness represents man's proud, thankless, sinful attempt to earn God's favour on the basis of human merit. It lies at the very heart of sin in that it attempts to rob God of glory by seeking to obligate Him to falsely conceived fallen human merit (cf. Rom. 3:20). In short, legalism exposes the 'wretchedness of self-conceit.'⁹

For this reason, Paul condemns any 'boasting' in the law (Rom. 2: 17, 23, 3:27), i.e. boasting in the works of the law (Eph. 2:9). The flesh puffs itself up and boasts in its own 'strength, not in God (cf. I Cor. 1:29ff.). Legalism is wrong not simply because it is futile, but because it is sin *par excellence*. It is refusal to remain a creature dependent upon the Creator. It is an effort to secure oneself by one's own strength, and to establish oneself as the ultimate arbiter of God's favour. It is 'an idle boast taking offence at the sovereignty of God's grace.'¹⁰

'By works of the law shall no flesh be justified,' says Paul (Rom. 3:20), because legalism stands in rebellious pride against the grace of God, and the principle of legalism is irreconcilable with the principle of grace.

5. The law pronounces condemnation and curse

In II Corinthians 3:9, the giving of the law is referred to as the 'ministration of condemnation' (cf. Rom. 8:1). In Galatians 3:10, we read, 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse' (cf. Gal. 3:13), while in II Corinthians 3:7, the giving of the law is called the 'ministration of death.' This does not mean that the law itself is evil

⁸ C. F. D. Moule, 'Obligation in the Ethic of St. Paul' in *Christian History and Interpretation*,

p. 393.

⁹ Ridderbos, p. 139.

¹⁰ Ridderbos, p. 143.

(cf. Rom. 7: 12, 14), but in being used by sin, it leads to condemnation and death.

In so doing, the law deepens conviction of sin and invokes the fear of God's wrath. E. F. Kevan quotes an old saying which correctly states 'the scarlet thread of the gospel is attached to the sharp needle of the law.'¹¹ In pronouncing its curse and its condemnation, the law firmly 'shuts up all men in disobedience' (Rom. 11:32) in order that the mercy of God may be made manifest to all.

6. The ultimate goal and innermost meaning of the law is Jesus Christ

Romans 10:4 says, 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.' The word for 'end' is *telos*, which unfortunately has a large range of meaning. How are we best to understand it here? Is Christ the 'end' in the sense of termination of the law, or is He the 'end' in the sense that He is the goal of the law (and therefore not necessarily the termination of it)?

In view of passages such as Romans .7: 12, 14a, 8:4,. 13:8-10 and 3:31, it would seem that it is best to interpret *telos* in 10:4 as meaning 'goal.' Thus Christ is the goal to which all along the law was directed, and this means that in Him, a righteous status before God is available to everyone who will accept it by faith.¹²

The law (as Scripture) points towards Christ (Rom. 3:21), and it bears witness to Him by virtue of the promises which it contains (cf. Gal. 3:8). Moreover, the law draws the outline of perfect obedience which was fulfilled only in Christ (cf. Phil. 2:8, Rom. 5: 19), and this obedience—to the point of 'death on a cross' (Phil. 2:8)—fulfils and consummates the sacrificial law of the Old Testament (cf. I Cor. 5:7f., Rom. 3:25, I Cor. 11:25, etc.). In that the law points out and makes explicit man's sinfulness, Christ is the goal of the law because He stands as the only remedy to man's predicament (cf. Gal. 3:22).

¹¹ E. F. Kevan, *The Law of God in Christian Experience*. p. 41

¹² Cranfield, p. 49.

Hence in Galatians 3:23f. and 4:9ff., Paul is able to speak of the law as a pedagogue (*paidagogos*). It is significant that Paul uses this description rather than teacher (*didaskalos*). The law performs more than simply a teaching function. The role of the pedagogue was larger than that of the teacher. A pedagogue was a slave whose full-time job was to serve as a child's guardian until puberty. This involved not only instruction but a continuing concern for the child's welfare. Even though the pedagogue was himself a slave, he was given total charge over the child, so that the child experienced life under the authority of his own pedagogue as if he too were a slave. Though a son, he did not reside in his father's house as a freeman.¹³ Hence, to be under the pedagogue is not to be understood as being 'still at school,' receiving instruction, but as being unfree, finding oneself in the position of a slave.¹⁴

Paul asserts that the law fulfilled this pedagogical function until the 'fulness of time'—i.e. until the sending forth of Christ 'to redeem those who were under the law' (Gal. 4:4): 'The end result of this redemption is our adoption as sons (Gal. 4:5) and the sending of the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, by which we cry, 'Abba, Father' (Gal. 4:6). As the redeemer, Christ stands as the end (*telos*) of the law's function as a pedagogue. He is the law's ultimate goal.

7. The law is not abolished by Christ

Does the Coming of Christ therefore abolish the law? That is, is Paul in essence an antinomian? There can be no doubt that this charge was leveled at him by his opponents, but it cannot be substantiated. For Paul, the law is *God's* law (cf. Section 1), and as such it is 'holy, just and good.' Christ comes as the goal and fulfilment of the law, not its termination. Believers are still bound by the moral law (i.e. the Ten Commandments), and hence Paul can speak strongly against transgressions of this law found within the church (eg. I Cor. 5:1-3).

¹³ C. H. Cosgrove, 'The Mosaic Law Preaches Faith: A Study in Galatians 3', in *The Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. lxi, p. 157f.

¹⁴ Ridderbos, p. 148.

Freedom, according to Paul, is not equivalent to licence.

However, to confirm these conclusions it is necessary to 'consider briefly some statements in Paul's writing which have been used historically to justify an antinomianist stance.

Romans 6:14b ('for you are not under law, but under grace') is often taken to imply that for the Christian, law has no importance. This conclusion stands in sharp contrast, however, to Paul's 'may it never be,' of Romans 6:2. Christians are not under the law as they once were, i.e. under the pedagogue, and operating on the principle of legalism—for they are now freed from the condemnation and curse of the law (Rom. 8:1)—but they still 'establish the law' (Rom. 3:31) through holiness of living.

Likewise, Romans 7:6 ('But now we have been released from the law') is often taken to mean that Christians have no responsibility to keep the law. 'This goes against the context of the verse, however. To be sure, we have been freed from the law as legalism, but 7:25, 12 and 14 make it quite clear that we are still to obey the law because it is expressive of God's will. We have been released from the misuse of law, but not from law, *per se*.

II Corinthians 3 has also often been understood as Paul disparaging the law, but really the key to the true understanding of this whole passage is to recognize that it is essentially two ministries which are being contrasted, rather than the two covenants themselves.¹⁵ Hence in II Corinthians 3:12ff., when men turn to Christ they are able to see the true glory of the law—a glory which was hidden beforehand—because of the wrong use of God's good law. Calvin's comment is apt:

For the law is in itself bright, but it is only when Christ appears to us in it that we enjoy its splendour.¹⁶

When all this is added to passages such as Romans 3:31, 7:12, 7:14, 8:4 and 13:8-10, it is quite clear that Paul does not understand 'the Christian to be cut loose from the moral guidance and standards of the moral law. One theologian has put it this way:

¹⁵ Cranfield, p. 58.

¹⁶ From his *Commentary on Corinthians*

It is not that grace abolishes the law, but that dependence on grace, instead of the attitude of legalism, is the only way to fulfil God's law. There is obligation, but it is to grace, not law.¹⁷

Thus Christ abolishes, not law *per se*, but the wrong use of the law which has always been occasioned by sinful flesh.

8. The giving of the Spirit establishes the law

Both in Romans 8:15f. and Galatians 4:6, Paul tells us that our sonship is confirmed by the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is by the Spirit's presence in our hearts that we cry 'Abba, Father,' and in this cry we see the establishment of the law as the norm for Christian conduct. Christ has come, the Son of the Father, to make us sons of the Father by our sharing in His Sonship. True Sonship cannot be divorced from obedience. Obedience is obedience to the Father, whose will is expressed in His commandments. Hence Sonship and love for the 'Father's law go hand in hand. The Spirit thus establishes the law for the believer because He enables us to recognize in God's law the gracious revelation of His fatherly will' for His children.

Moreover, the Spirit quickens our hearts to love the Father, and, in so doing, our hearts are changed towards His law. E. F. Kevan insightfully states, 'The only way to secure the righteousness which the law represents is to create within the mind, the love of those things which are right,'¹⁸ and this the Holy Spirit does within us. Thus the Spirit provides us with both the desire to obey the law and the power for Christian (ie. lawful) conduct. The love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5) is outworked in love for our neighbour, which fulfils the law (Rom. 13:8-10).

¹⁷ Moule, p. 394.

¹⁸ E. F. Kevan, p. 39.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAW AND FREEDOM IN PAUL

Introduction

Via the above discussion, we have come to the point where we are best able to pick up the question of the relationship between law and freedom in Paul's theology. From what has been said above, it is clear that Paul is not an antinomian, yet there can be no doubt that he is the 'apostle of liberty' *par excellence*. How are we best to understand Paul's concept of freedom, and how does it relate to his view of the law? It is self-evident that Paul does not equate antinomianism and freedom (as is often our tendency), but neither does he advocate legalism as a way of life. Is there a third way?

The answer this question we need to consider three related areas: (a) *from* what are we freed? (b) *by* what are we freed? and (c) *to* what are we freed?

1. *From* what are we freed?

There can be no doubt that the people of God are a people who are free and who have been freed (eg. Gal. 5:1, Rom. 8:15, II Cor. 3:17, Gal. 2:4, 5:13, I Cor. 8:9, etc.). In the light of the above arguments, it is clear that, in relation to the law, we are set free from its curse and condemnation (Rom. 8:1, Gal. 3:13), i.e. pre-eminently we are set free from law

used (and thus abused) legalistically. Above all, we have been freed from the guilt and condemnation heaped upon us by the law's pointing out of our sin (cf. Col. 2:13, 14), and the concomitant self-righteous bind of 'works righteousness.' Our sin (disobedience to the law) has been borne by Christ and we stand now in His righteousness (II Cor. 5:21). The obedience of the One has been imputed to the many (Rom. 5:19).

In conjunction with all this, we have been freed from the power of death. Death's sting is gone because the sting of death lay in sin whose power was in the law (I Cor. 15:56). Thus we have been set free from the law (i.e. the governing principle) of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). Moreover we have also been freed from the wrath of God (I Thess. 5:9f., 1:10) because His wrath has been propitiated through the work of Christ (Rom. 3:25). Having been set free from this wrath, we can now embrace HIS will for us gladly, when once it would have only terrified us.

In short, we have been freed from the tyranny of legalism, which was established by the 'sinful use of the law, 'and all of its concomitant terrors. In no way does Paul assert, however, that we are morally unrestrained in our freedom.

2. By what are we freed?

The short answer to this is that we are freed by God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:19). The grace of God brings salvation (Titus 2:11) in that Jesus bears our sin on the cross (I Cor. 15:3), even while we were yet enemies of God and dead to Him (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10, cf. Eph. 2:1ff.). Paul makes it clear that by the death of Christ, believers are transferred from being 'under law' to 'under grace' (Rom. 6:14-15). Christ redeems us from the curse of the law 'by becoming a curse for us' (Gal. 3:13).

The law; as we have seen, leads us to condemnation and death, but it is here that God meets us in Christ. He is the *telos* (end) of the law because He is Our only hope under the law. In forgiving us through the

cross, God *submits Himself* to the force of the law, suffers in weakness under its judgement, thus joining or meeting us in our own sin, condemnation, despair and death.¹⁹ In the cross, God stoops to where we are in order to bring us to where He is (cf. Col. 3:4).

Forgiveness for our transgression is based solely upon the cross (Rom. 4:25, cf. I Cor 15:3-4, 13-15), so that we are now accepted 'in the Beloved' (Eph. 1:5-7). God does the justifying (Rom. 3:21ff., 8:33ff.), and in Christ's flesh judges our sin (Rom. 8:1-3). Our righteousness thus is not 'based on law' but it is 'the righteousness from God which depends on faith' - (Phil. 3:9, cf. Gal. 2:11-21).

From all this it is clear that Christ's work, while it is substitutionary, is not merely so. To coin a word, the work of Christ is 'identificationary.' Christ has not only died for us (i.e. as a substitute), but we have died 'in Him' (Rom. 6:8 context; II Cor. 5:14f., II Tim. 2:11, Col. 3: 1-4, Rom. 5: 15, etc.), and 'in Him' we have been transferred from the role of law to the rule of grace. The new life of believers consists of participation in Christ's life (Eph. 2:6, Phil. 3:20, cf. 1:21), therefore believers are not to place themselves at sin's disposal, but God's (Rom. 6: 12ff.). The natural concomitant of this is that the believer should live in obedience to God—that is, in keeping with the law.

3. To what are we freed?

As the last sentence indicates, we are set free to obey God and to live for Him (II Cor. 5:14f.). Our immediate reaction could be to see this as no freedom at all, but rightly perceived, it is only in dependence upon God and obedience to Him that we have true freedom.

'Man was created by God,' is a basic axiom of Biblical truth. For man to try and live apart from his Creator is to lose true manhood, because it is to reject his status as creature. Jesus shows us manhood in all its glory—i.e. fully obedient to the Creator and fulfilling His vocation of

¹⁹ R. J. Hunter, 'Law and Gospel in Pastoral Care', in *Journal of Pastoral Care*, vol. xxx, p. 156.

Son, servant and creature. By the very nature of things, therefore, man to be man must live in obedience, and it is only in so doing that he is free.

By our incorporation into Christ, we have at once been freed from the bondage of legalism and to the freedom of obedience. For this reason, Paul is able to speak of the grace which not only saves us, but trains us in obedience (Titus 2:11-14). Thus the law, when it is understood in the light of Christ and when it is established in its true character by the Holy Spirit—so far from being the ‘bondage’ into which legalism has perverted it—is true freedom.²⁰

Paul thus urges (and commands!) his readers towards morality and holiness of life (eg. Titus 3:8-11, Col. 3:12-17, Phil. 2:15, Gal. 6:6ff., etc.). This new thrust to keep the law is in no way of the legalistic type, however. Legalism (proudly) sees the way of law as salvific (i.e. working to salvation), but true morality sees it as the way of life prompted to action by the love of God. The Christian keeps the law not to be saved, but because of the salvation which has already been given him.

So, far from being an antinomian, Paul is very much a ‘nomian.’ Justification sets the believer free, but this freedom is not licence (Gal. 5:13f.). The Christian is to walk in ‘newness of life’ (Rom. 6:4), i.e. allegiance to Christ, not allegiance to sin. The believer is called upon to ‘fulfil the law of Christ’ (Gal. 6:2, cf. Rom. 13:8-10) and depart from iniquity (so Rom. 6:19f., Eph. 4:25, 28-31, 5:3; 6:1, 4f., 9). Both the new attitude of heart to the law and the new motivation to obey it flow from our justification. Hence Barrett can state, ‘ultimately... justification by faith, which means living under grace... becomes the one hope of a truly moral life.’²¹

In living under grace, the believer at once recognizes the ongoing nature of sanctification and totality of his justification. To be sure, he will fail, but this failure drives him, not back to legalism, but to the cross. The intense dynamic of forgiveness thus acts as a spur for growth in sanctification. He can thus approach law without condemnation and the bondage of self-justification (works righteousness). Law seen in this way still shuts us up to faith and grace, and constantly leads us to Christ—even though we have arrived there! Truly, the law is still ‘holy, just and good.’

²⁰ Cranfield, p. 60.

²¹ Quoted by Moule, p. 395

CONCLUSION

Freedom and law are not opposites. The law has many diverse roles to fulfil, but ultimately leads us to the freedom of God’s grace and forgiveness. When we arrive there, we find that the law, because it is the way of God, is the way of love, which is the way in which we must live to be truly free.

In the end, it is all of grace—a fact which both law and freedom confirm.

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