



UNDER THE LAW?

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I was recently sent a YouTube video of a young man who didn't see the need for honoring *certain* Old Testament laws of God. His argument was that certain laws of God in the Old Testament don't apply to New Testament Christians. His discourse contained a *mixture* of some truth and some error. I might add that a mixture of truth and leaven (error) always results in confusion and misunderstanding—which dulls our discernment. Those who fail to discern the leaven in what they see and read, such as contained in the video I viewed, will be spoiled by confusion and misunderstanding, which in this case is the confusion on the subject of keeping the laws God gave to Israel in the Old Testament. I hope what I am about to share will bring some Scriptural insight and clarity concerning the issue of “law keeping.” First of all, I want to state that I in no way doubt the sincerity of the brother's faith in Christ, who made the video clip I viewed. I only wish to address his lack of understanding concerning “law keeping” which resulted in his belief that he does not have to honor certain laws, which he mentioned in (Lev 19:1-37).

Understanding the INTENT of God's laws

It is a common argument among Christians that the laws in the Old Testament were for God's people then—and this is now. This argument says Jesus came to set us free from “law-keeping” and we are not **under** the law but under grace. Christians who believe that we are not *under* the law, do not understand the word *under* as used in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul said this: **Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God... Therefore by the deeds of the law (i.e. law keeping) no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by (a more literal translation is: the intent of) the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom 3:19-20) NKJV.**

In the above text the word *under* is the Greek preposition (Strong's 1722 *en* (en); which can also be translated *against*. What this text is saying is that those who are against, or live according to what is *against the law*—are guilty before God, because the laws that God has given us are for the *intent of revealing what offends God* (i.e. sin). The expression *under the law* needs to be *literally* understood when it is used in a verse of Scripture, in order to rightly divide or discern what the word is saying about our relationship to the law.

The Apostle Paul also said... **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (Gal 5:18) NKJV.** In this verse the word *under* is a different Greek preposition, (Strong's 5259) *hupo* (hoop-o'); and according to the CWSD (Complete Word Study Dictionary, N.T.), this word refers to: *being in an inferior position of dependence*. This verse is telling us that if we are dependent upon being led by the Holy Spirit of truth (i.e. as taught by Him) we will not have to depend on knowing and keeping the 613 Old Testament laws—to be free from the sinful works of the flesh. The Holy Spirit will lead us away from what God forbids and lead us into true holiness.

To be *free from the law* means we do not depend on keeping the law to make us righteous. The law cannot change our sinful heart, it can only show us the sins our hearts have embraced. All sin starts in the heart of man. Quite honestly, how many of us are always led by the Holy Spirit in everything we believe and do? This may be the desire of our heart, but it is not always the case, even with the most sincere follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. In those areas that we are not living according to what pleases God—either out of ignorance, rebellion or out of deception—it is because we have not been guided into the truth in that area by the Spirit of truth (Jn 16:13). In such cases we need God’s laws to make clear our guilt, so that our faith is in God’s Holy Spirit to give us the grace we need to change our heart. That is why Apostle Paul said... **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace (Rom 6:14) NKJV.**

This means when we find ourselves in an inferior position of being dominated by sin we are not dependent upon the law—but upon God’s grace to break the power of sin in our lives. Therefore the law shows us our sin (which we need to be made aware of) and God’s grace furnishes and accomplishes in us what is needed to find freedom from sin. Jesus Himself told us he did not come to destroy the law (abolish it) because as stated it does reveal what offends God—instead Jesus said He came to **fulfill** the law. The word fulfill is the Greek word (Strong’s 4137) *pleroo* (play-ro'-o); which means to *furnish and to accomplish*. Jesus came so we could be *furnished* with the indwelling presence and power of the His Holy Spirit of truth—so we could *accomplish* living a life that was according the *intent of God’s laws*. It is a serious thing to teach others that we do not have to obey *certain* laws of God or that we can decide which ones are applicable or to our liking. Jesus said...

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law (i.e. these laws are not be changed or done away with) until all is fulfilled (literally implies: *being continually fulfilled i.e. until heaven and earth pass away and the New heavens and New earth come into being*)... Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven... For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:17-20) NKJV.

To Tattoo or not to Tattoo?

The young man in the YouTube video was trying to argue his case for having tattoos and referred to God’s “laws” concerning holiness that are mentioned in (Lev 19:1-37), which forbid tattooing one’s body. It must be understood that the things mentioned in this text as being forbidden (which included being tattooed)—were an affront to God’s standard of holiness (and are still an offense to the Lord Jesus), because these forbidden practices emulate and support paganism and idolatry. Therefore, the *intent* of these laws was to keep God’s people—then and now—from copying heathen cultural practices, because this brings shame to the worthy name by which we

are called and chosen. We, like the Israelites of Old, are told to *come out from among these heathen cultures* and not let them influence our life...

I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries (heathen cultures) where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles (pagan or heathen people) (Ezk 20:41) NKJV.

God also says...**what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God (our body) with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch (literally: be influenced by) what is unclean (literally: heathen or demonic), and I will receive you." 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty' (2 Cor 6:15-18) NKJV.**

Sanctifying Ungodly Practices?

Christians who engage in practices which are forbidden by God's laws—do so because they do not see the harm in the things God has forbidden His Holy Nation to practice. Many sincere Christians are grossly ignorant, both of the *intent of the laws* given to God's people and to the gospel of Jesus Christ (that requires turning away from all that is pagan and idolatrous). It dishonors God for those that have fellowship with Christ's Holy Spirit to emulate the customs and ways of those who have fellowship with the demonic realm. We are to be *counter-culture* to the heathen and pagan cultures and sub-cultures around us. Our Christian culture is one that is based upon honoring the laws of God and not that of honoring and following the social trends or cultural practices of heathen or pagan people that we as Christians live among.

Many think they can "sanctify" what is unholy and forbidden by the laws of God, by using what is forbidden as a means for getting the heathen to accept them and their message. They believe that because *their intent* in doing what is forbidden by God's laws is to honor God among the heathen, God's law can therefore be set aside. Those who think this way, like the young man in the video, are deceived into believing the lie that we need to "be like them (heathen or pagans) in order for "them" to relate to us and accept our Christian message. However good our intentions for going contrary to the laws of God, our good intentions can never be accepted by God as a justification for ignoring His Laws. Just ask Uzzah, who ignored the law of God, because of his good intention He reached out and touched the Ark of the Covenant to steady it when the oxen that were carrying it stumbled. God's law forbid him to touch the ark and Uzzah was struck dead by God ... **And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God (2 Sam 6:7) KJV.**

Like the old saying goes, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Whether Uzzah was ignorant of the law that said he could not touch the ark or just decided to overlook the law in favor of his good intentions, we don't know. What we do know is that God takes seriously our response to His laws—whether through ignorance or good intentions, breaking them has grave consequences. Again, Jesus warned that when we teach others that setting the laws of God aside

is ok, we put our eternal destiny in jeopardy. It is crucial to understand God's intentions concerning His laws, so we can fulfill those laws that we are obligated to fulfill through the power of the Holy Spirit. By rightly dividing the word of truth (by the Spirit of Truth) we will know what laws Jesus Himself fulfilled through His life, death and resurrection—and which laws we are to fulfill because of what He accomplished and now furnishes us with. We must set aside our own self-righteous intentions for ignoring God's laws that pertain to our life and godliness. This especially holds true for us today, because as God's people we are to be demonstrations of God's holiness by how we honor God's word and his ways. Man looks on the outward (how we look and live), therefore we must look like the Holy Nation (a godly culture) to those who do not know our holy God. God looks on our hearts and knows why we do or do not obey His laws. **This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as (emulate) the Gentiles walk... (who) work all (practice) uncleanness (what is defiling and demonic)But you have not so learned Christ... (Eph 4:17-22) NKJV.**

How the heathen cut their hair or wore their beards was a tribute to their demonic culture that heathen and pagan people embraced. Therefore the *intent* for the laws given in the (Lev 19) text by God was that of forbidding His people from emulating the ways of pagan or heathen people—which also included the practice of tattooing their body. God considered copying the practices of heathen or pagan cultures idolatrous worship because they were honoring godless ways and not the ways of God. Our temples (bodies) are to reflect obedience to God's laws, not because we depend upon these laws to give us eternal life, but as a means of fulfilling the *intent of God's laws*—which is to bring honor to God and not to what is godless. Therefore, God's laws are meant to be understood according to their “intent”... observing God's laws without understanding the intent or purpose of those laws is a fruitless exercise in religious futility, as seen by the Pharisees. Again, Jesus said he came to fulfill (the intent) of the law, and not abolish the laws themselves. His laws were given to show us how to stay away from practices that are heathen in nature because when these things are practiced (knowingly or unknowingly) worship (honor) is being given to the devil and dishonor is being given to God.

We are told not to give place to the devil (Eph 4:27), however, the devil is given a place (license or foothold) in our lives when we honor and emulate heathen and pagan practices (knowingly or unknowingly). When this happens we open the door for demonic influence to harass and influence our lives and those associated with us.

Many Christians wonder why they struggle with Satan's seductions (temptations—wrong desires) and can't seem to walk entirely free of fleshly lusts. When we believe the lies (leaven) of Satan, we will doubt the truth and won't practice that which can set and keep us free. Instead when we pick and choose what *laws* we will keep and won't keep, an independent and lawless antichrist spirit will invade our life, through very subtle deceptions. This will give us Satan's vile affections for what is pagan or heathen, so that we end up (knowingly or unknowingly) forsaking God's holy ways, which gives honor (worship) to Satan and empowers his demonic influences in our life. May our God grant us repentance regarding any false teaching that we may have agreed with, which makes us think we don't need to concern ourselves with God's Old Testament laws. We must

become willing to allow the Holy Spirit to replace our thoughts (reasoning) with His thoughts, and may we yield to His thoughts so that God's ways (practices and laws) will become our ways!

" Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near...Let the wicked (literally means wrong doer) forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon... For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:6-9) NKJV.