



The Covenant at

Sinai

(Part 2)

A
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Teaching Series

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The Mosaic Covenant (Part 2)

Answering Questions about Sinai

I. An Introduction

In the last lesson, we gave several reasons for why we take Sinai as being, in essence, a *gracious* covenant. It's hard to deny the fact that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace. But there are also important objections that we need to deal with. There are certain Scriptures that seem to contradict the things we've been affirming. *Some passages of Scripture seem to speak quite negatively about the Mosaic Covenant, making Sinai appear to be something entirely different than the Covenant of Grace.* We read for instance in John 1:17: "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." And in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul refers to the Law as a letter that kills, a ministry of death, and a ministry of condemnation; where in contrast, the Spirit gives life and is a ministry of righteousness. And in Galatians 3:23, Paul writes that "before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed." If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the **NATURE** of the Mosaic Covenant? *Further, Scripture seems to tell us that what God requires under Moses is something very different than what He requires of us now in the gospel.* Paul says in Romans 10:5: "For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows. . ." And again, in Galatians 3:11-12, Paul says: "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.'" If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the **REQUIREMENT** of the Mosaic Covenant? *There are also certain Scriptures that seem to teach that the Law is now null and void for us as Christians.* For instance, Paul says in Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." And he writes again a chapter later in Romans 7:4 that we "were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ" and that "we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound" (v6). Paul also testifies of himself in Galatians 2:19: "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God." If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the **AUTHORITY** of the Mosaic Covenant as it relates to us now as believers?

These are important questions that require thoughtful explanation. In fact, they're so important that we are going to devote the entirety of this lesson to answering these questions in detail: So: *First*, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the *nature* of the Mosaic Covenant? *Secondly*, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the *requirement* of the Mosaic Covenant? And *lastly*, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the *authority* of the Mosaic Covenant?

II. The First Objection: The *Nature* of the Mosaic Covenant

So then, the first objection has to do with *the nature of the Mosaic Covenant*. If Sinai is part of the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain the ways that certain Scriptures seem to speak negatively about the Mosaic Covenant, contrasting it, and even seeming to oppose it to the grace of the gospel? This is an important question. What we're going to see is that many of these Scriptures can be understood in light of what the older writers referred to as *differences in administration* between the old and new covenants. That is, there are indeed differences between the way the Covenant of Grace was revealed in the Old Testament and the way it's revealed in the New Testament. Further, these differences seem to be most pronounced at Sinai. Still, these are not differences that have to do with *the essence* or *core content* of

the covenant (its substance), but rather differences that relate to *the outward form or application of the covenant* (its administration). *To give an example:* Say that yesterday, you picked a delicious mango off the tree. Today, you peeled off the skin, cut the mango into bite-size pieces (yummy!), and then placed those pieces in a bowl. Is there a difference between the mango from yesterday and the one from today? Yes! Yesterday, the mango still had its skin; today it's been peeled, cut up, and ready to eat. But it's still the same mango. Well, just like that mango, there are differences between the old and new covenants, to be sure. Yet, those differences don't have to do with *the nature of the covenant*, but simply with *the way that covenant is outwardly presented*. Speaking of the Covenant of Grace, the Westminster Confession says: "This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: *Under the Law* it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come. . . *Under the Gospel*, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited. . . it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament."¹ So then, the old covenant no less belongs to the Covenant of Grace, but it was "administered" differently than the new. Just like the mango, it was the same Covenant of Grace—just presented in a different way. But how so, exactly?² There are at least *seven differences in administration* between the old and new covenants:²

1. **EMPHASIS:** One of the contrasts of "administration" between the old and new covenants has to do with what seems to take center-stage. In the old covenant, the *earthly and temporal* are set forth most visibly, while it's the *heavenly and eternal* that are front and center in the new covenant. This can create confusion as we think about the old covenant. But what we have to realize is this: *Gospel truths* were no less present in the old covenant—it's just that those truths were set forth in and through *earthly pictures*. That is, the old covenant set forth *earthly* benefits *in order to* teach us about *eternal* ones. We see this in Hebrews 11:8-10: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." *Verse 8* tells us that Abraham left his home in order to receive another land, which God was promising to give him as an inheritance. And as we read through the rest of Genesis, the focus is clearly on the geographical territory we know as the land of Canaan. But *verses 9-10* clarify that the inheritance God was promising Abraham was never just a physical piece of property. Even as he dwelt in Canaan, Abraham lived as an alien, as in a foreign land; because his heart was set on inheriting the city that would last forever. So then, in the Old Testament, the focus was on the physical land of Canaan. But the New Testament helps to clarify that all along, it only served as a picture or type of the heavenly inheritance that God was promising His people. And so, though it was physical, temporal things (like Canaan) that were often emphasized in the Old Testament; still, those physical, temporal things were always meant to signify spiritual realities.³ Just as a kernel of rice is wrapped in an outer husk, so too, gospel truths were wrapped with an earthly husk in the old covenant.⁴ God was teaching His Old Testament people gospel truth—but He was doing it using things that were tangible and physical; much like we do with our children in Sunday school.⁵ As one writer explained: "the Lord dealt with [Israel] as with children in their infancy and under age, leading them on by the help of earthly things, to heavenly and spiritual, because they were but young and tender. . . their covenant did first and chiefly promise earthly blessings, and in and under these it did signify and promise all spiritual blessings and salvation. . . These, and some other circumstantial

¹ WCF 7:5-6. In the original, "under" and "law" are not capitalized; I did so to make the intended comparison more clear.

² For a summary of the differences in administration, see Calvin's *Institutes*, 2.9.1-2; 2.11.1-13; Ball, pp161ff; Burgess, pp251ff; Turretin, V2, pp233ff; Bridge, pp49ff; Blake, pp205ff; Witsius, V2, pp362ff; Bavinck, V3, pp223ff; and Hodge, V2, pp376ff.

³ Other examples here would include the ceremonial laws; including the temple furnishings, sacrifices, and ritual cleansings.

⁴ "The Old Testament...and the New, are sometimes compared and considered by sacred writers, as the thing including and included, the husk and the grain. The gospel before Christ's time, was in the Law as the corn new set in the ear." (Ball, p117).

⁵ We see this in Galatians 4:1-4: "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world." Paul is speaking about the Old Testament church, comparing them to children; and he's likening the ceremonies, pictures, and types of the old covenant to guardians and managers. Calvin uses this text as the clearest example of this first difference: "Although Paul applies this comparison chiefly to the ceremonies, nothing prevents us from applying it most appropriately here as well. Therefore the same inheritance was appointed for them and for us, but they were not yet old enough to be able to enter upon it and manage it. The same church existed among them, but as yet in its childhood. Therefore, keeping them under this tutelage, the Lord gave, not spiritual promises unadorned and open, but ones foreshadowed, in a measure, by earthly promises." (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:11:2).

differences in regard to administration, there were betwixt their way of salvation, or covenant of grace, and ours. . . but in regard to substance, they were all one and the very same. . . in these covenants Jesus Christ is the subject matter of both, salvation the fruit of both, and faith the condition of both.”⁶

THE FIRST DIFFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATION: *EMPHASIS*

	THE MAIN FOCUS	THE MAIN POINT
THE OLD TESTAMENT	Earthly Pictures (the “husk”)	JESUS and the GOSPEL
THE NEW TESTAMENT	Eternal Realities (the “kernel”)	

2. **CLARITY:** Because gospel truth in the old covenant was wrapped in the outer husk of the earthly and temporal, it was more hidden from view. In the old covenant, God spoke gospel realities to His people, but He did so *indirectly*, through pictures and types; whereas now in the new covenant He speaks to us *directly*, face to face. There is a measure of clarity in the new covenant that old covenant believers didn't get to experience.⁷ Perhaps this is why the author of Hebrews uses the imagery of *shadows* (rather than pictures or types) to describe the ministry of the old covenant (8:5; 10:1); there was an element of murkiness involved.⁸ The new covenant is at times contrasted with the old because, with the coming of Christ, the things that were formerly dark or obscure have now become crystal clear. Calvin likens it to the light of dawn compared to noonday.⁹ And another writer put it this way: “The revelation of faith before and under the Law was so small, imperfect, dim and obscure, in comparison of the clear, full and glorious manifestation of faith afterwards under the New Testament, that till then it seemed as [if] it were not. . . revealed at all.”¹⁰ This is what Paul is speaking of when he says in Ephesians 3:5 that the mystery of Christ “. . . in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. . .”¹¹ The mystery that Paul is referring to is a certain aspect

⁶ Fisher in *The Marrow*, pp69,71. As we noted, Calvin taught that spiritual blessings in the old covenant were represented by the temporal. He explains it thus: “Now this is the first difference: the Lord of old willed that his people direct and elevate their minds to the heavenly heritage; yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits.” (*Institutes*, 2.11.1). Calvin also later retorted: “But away with this insane and dangerous opinion—that the Lord promised the Jews, or that they sought for themselves, nothing but a full belly, delights of the flesh, flourishing wealth, outward power, fruitlessness of offspring, and whatever the natural man prizes! Christ the Lord promises to his followers today no other ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ than that in which they may ‘sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’ (Matt. 8:11).” (*Institutes*, 2.11.23). Ball says: “The good things promised in this Covenant [IE, the old covenant] are temporal or spiritual; but the temporal as types of spiritual.” (p130). Witsius puts it: “The difference of the economies [between the Old and New Testaments] consists in this, that the same inheritance is held forth different ways: in the New Testament clearly and without any veil; in the Old wrapped up in many types and earthly pledges. . .” (*Economy*, V2, p318). In the new covenant, “the fruit was ripe and broke through the husk. . . Nothing of the Old Testament is lost in the New, but everything is fulfilled, matured, has reached its full growth, and now, out of the temporary husk, produces the eternal core.” (Bavinck, V3, p224).

⁷ As Calvin writes: “But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly, laying aside the lower mode of training that he used with the Israelites.” (*Institutes*, 2.11.1). Blake says: “The Jew was in the same covenant in his time, as Christians are in gospel times. There is not a promise in the new covenant, whether it be for privileges conferred upon us, or graces wrought in us, but by the help of that light, we may find in the old covenant, the same held out. . . The better-ness is in the greater ease being freed from that bondage of the ceremonial yoke, and in their more distinct clearness.” (p208). Roberts distinguishes: “The *Sinai-covenant* or Old Testament, and the *Sion-covenant* or New Testament, are for substance one and the same; though they differ never so much in the circumstance or manner of administration. . . In that, Christ was set forth darkly. . . In this, Christ is set forth clearly. . .” (p786).

⁸ As Blake puts it: “In the Old covenant, all was held out to the people under types, figures, shadows; all about the tabernacle and temple, persons, utensils [?], sacrifices, did lead to Christ; all of these, darkly holding him forth. They had a shadow of good things to come, and not the image of the things themselves (Hebrews 10:1); a little of reality in a great bulk of ceremony. In the New Testament, the truth of it is clearly, and manifestly (without figure or type) held forth unto us.” (p207).

⁹ Calvin understands Galatians 3:23 to be speaking of a difference in *Clarity*. Here's the quote used above in its fuller context: “Faith was not yet *revealed*, not because the fathers wanted [IE, lacked] light, but because they had less light than we have. The ceremonies might be said to shadow out an absent Christ, but to us he is represented as actually present, and thus while they had the mirror, we have the substance. Whatever might be the amount of darkness under the law, the fathers were not ignorant of the road in which they ought to walk. Though the dawn is not equal to the splendor of noon, yet, as it is sufficient to direct a journey, travelers do not wait till the sun is fully risen. Their portion of light resembled the dawn, which was enough to preserve them from all error, and guide them to everlasting blessedness.” (*Galatians*).

¹⁰ Francis Roberts, p768.

¹¹ This is also how Calvin explains Galatians 3:23 (above); it's also how Roberts sees Galatians 3:23: “Though the Apostle says, ‘Before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed’ (Galatians 3:23); as intimating that Faith was not revealed *before*, or *under*, but *after* the Law; yet his words are not to be taken *simply* and *absolutely*, as if Faith was not at all revealed till after the Law, for Faith was revealed before the Law, as is evident in the

of gospel truth—that the Gentiles are also fellow inheritors of the promises to Abraham. And Paul is saying that this aspect of gospel truth, though present in the old covenant, had nevertheless been much less clear. But now it has been revealed to the apostles as clear as day.¹² As Bridge puts it: “though the covenant of grace was made with the Jews that were saved, yet it was given more darkly and obscurely; there was a veil upon Moses. . . But now we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” says the apostle, as speaking of the difference between the one and the other (2 Corinthians 3:18).¹³

THE SECOND DIFFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATION: *CLARITY*

	HOW THE LORD TAUGHT	WHAT THE LORD TAUGHT
THE OLD TESTAMENT	Not so Clear	JESUS and the GOSPEL
THE NEW TESTAMENT	Very Clear	

3. **CONSUMMATION:** Your children can tell you there's all the difference in the world between looking at *the sign* of the ice-cream shop and actually going in and devouring two scoops of mint chocolate-chip. So too, when I was first getting to know my wife, it was a long-distance relationship. And though it was great talking over the phone and looking at her picture, there was a massive difference between that and finally seeing her face to face. Well, that's what it was like with the ushering in of the new covenant. When Christ came into the world, all the signs and pictures of the old covenant finally became a reality. Jesus had come. The *signs* gave way to the *substance*. Christ took on flesh and dwelt among us. In the old covenant the Covenant of Grace was *fore-pictured*, but in the new it was actually *fulfilled*. What was *promised* in the old was finally and actually *performed* in the new. Scripture often contrasts the old and new covenants in this way.¹⁴ The author of Hebrews tells us that under the old

covenant with Abraham, and with Noah; and under the Law, as I have formerly manifested, and as Paul himself plainly testifies; but they must be understood only comparatively and respectively, that till after the Law faith was not revealed so fully and clearly.” (p768). Calvin also explains Luke 16:16 as a difference of *Clarity*: “Not that the holy patriarchs were without the preaching that contains the hope of salvation and of eternal life, but that they only glimpsed from afar and in shadowy outline what we see today in full daylight.” (*Institutes*, 2.7.16). And again of Luke 16:16: “What did the Law and the Prophets teach to the men of their own time? They gave a foretaste of that wisdom which was one day to be clearly disclosed, and pointed to it twinkling off. But when Christ could be pointed out with the finger, the Kingdom of God was opened.” (2.11.5; cf. 2.11.10).

¹² As Hodge explains: “That the Gentiles were to partake of the blessings of the Messiah's reign. . . is not only frequently predicted by the ancient prophets, but Paul himself repeatedly and at length quotes their declarations on this point to prove that what he taught was in accordance with the Old Testament; see Romans 9:25-33. The emphasis must, therefore, be laid on the word *as*. This doctrine was not formerly revealed *as*, ie, not so fully or so clearly as under the gospel.” (*Ephesians*).

¹³ Bridge, *Christ and the Covenant*, p49. This is how Hodge understands 2 Corinthians 3:12-13: “*And not as Moses*, that is, we do not do what Moses did. Paul had just said that he used great plainness of speech, that he practiced no concealment or reserve. Of course he means that Moses did the reverse. He did use concealment and practice reserve. This is no impeachment of the character of Moses. Paul is not speaking of his personal character, but of the nature of his office. The truth concerning man's redemption was not 'in other ages made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,' Ephesians 3:5. It was not consistent with the nature of the ministry of Moses to use the *paraesias*, the openness, in communicating the doctrines of redemption, which it is the glory of the Christian ministry to be permitted to employ. He was sent to speak in parables and in types, to set forth truth in the form of significant rites and ceremonies. He put a veil over the glory, not to hide it entirely from view, but to obscure its brightness. The people saw the light, but only occasionally and imperfectly. Paul had already spoken of the brightness of Moses's face as a symbol of his ministry, and therefore he represents him as veiling himself, to express the idea that he communicated the truth obscurely. Paul was sent to let the truth shine forth clearly; he did not put a veil over it as Moses did, and was commanded to do.” Another passage that draws out this difference in administration is 1 Peter 1:10-12: “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. . .” David Murray notes of this passage: “*the prophets studied their predictions*. Because it was not always immediately or entirely clear to the prophets what their predictions meant, they 'inquired and searched carefully' into the salvation they prophesied. . . Peter then said *the prophets knew their predictions would be even better understood by future generations*. . . Though the prophets grew in understanding of the Savior they were looking for, Peter told us they knew their predictions would fully make sense to their readers only when they happened. . . Peter was. . . expressing a lack of full understanding.” (*Jesus on Every Page*, pp21-23).

¹⁴ Ball writes, “The Old [Testament] doth involve the doctrine of the grace of the Messiah under the shadows of types and rites; the New doth contain the fulfilling of the types and figures. Moses is the typical Mediator of the Old Testament; Christ is the true Mediator of the New. The Old is sealed by the blood of sacrifices; the New is ratified by the blood of the Mediator and death of the Testator. The Old by oblations did not pacify the wrath of God, nor purge the conscience; the New contains the true propitiation in the blood of Christ. . .” (p96); and again: “the first covenant. . . must bring forth a second, in which is fulfilled that which in the first is prefigured.” (p119). Roberts notes: “This unusual way of the Sinai-covenant's administration, was notwithstanding. . . accommodate to that time and people. . . the Ceremonial Law, wherein as in their A,B,C of Christianity they might learn to spell out C-h-r-i-s-t, and sinners' salvation by him; till they should come to ripeness of age in the fullness of

covenant, “both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.” (9:9). And again, he says, “the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.” (10:1).¹⁵ The author's point isn't to bash the sacrifices of the Old Testament (after all, it was God himself who commanded them). His point is rather to show us that those sacrifices, in and of themselves, could do nothing—*considered apart from Christ whom they signified*. The sacrifices were only *the shadow*—Christ himself is *the substance* to which all the Old Testament shadows had for so long been pointing. Think of it this way: If you are a man dying of thirst in a scorching desert, *the shadow* of a gushing river—in and of itself—won't do you any good. It's *the actual gushing river* you need. So too, the Old Testament sacrifices—in and of themselves, considered apart from Christ—could do nothing to take away sins. But they were meant to point us to the One who would. As Calvin put it: “in the absence of the reality, [the old covenant] showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance; the New Testament reveals the very substance of truth as present.”¹⁶

THE THIRD DIFFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATION: *CONSUMMATION*

	WHAT WE SEE	WHO WE SEE
THE OLD TESTAMENT	Signs and Pictures	JESUS and the GOSPEL
THE NEW TESTAMENT	The Person Himself	

4. **ABROGATION:** Another way we can understand the contrasts in Scripture between the old and new covenants is through the principle of *abrogation*. Now, it's important to understand that when we speak here of abrogation, we're not saying that the Law as a whole is now abrogated for believers in Christ (we'll deal with this in more depth later). Rather, we're speaking of particular aspects of the Mosaic Law. As we saw in the last lesson, the Mosaic Law may be divided up into three sub-categories: the Moral, the Ceremonial, and the Civil (or Judicial) Law.¹⁷ *The Moral Law* is summarized in the 10 Commandments; it is the eternal expression of God's will for mankind, and thus *perpetually binding* for all men. But the *Ceremonial and Civil Laws* were never meant to be perpetually binding. The *Ceremonial Laws* had to do with Israel's worship; the *Civil Laws* had to do with Israel's civil State. And these were added as appendixes to the Moral Law.¹⁸ They were given to a particular people (the Jews) for a particular time

time, when Christ himself was actually revealed. They could not ascend to Christ's spirituality; God condescends to their carnality.” (p755,757). Bridge says: “*Then* Christ was in the hand of Moses, *now* Moses is in the hand of Christ.” (p50).

¹⁵ Again, the Scripture references are from Calvin; who sees much that's written in the book of Hebrews as understood in this light. He says: “a fuller discussion of it is to be found in the letter to the Hebrews than anywhere else.” (*Institutes*, 2:11:4).

¹⁶ Calvin's full quote is: “The second difference between the Old and New Testaments consists in figures: that, in the absence of the reality, it showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance; the New Testament reveals the very substance of truth as present. . . the Old Testament of the Lord was that covenant wrapped up in the shadowy and ineffectual observance of ceremonies and delivered to the Jews; it was temporary because it remained, as it were, in suspense until it might rest upon a firm and substantial confirmation.” (*Institutes*, 2.11.4). This is largely how Ball understands John 1:17: “the Law prefiguring Christ, and redemption in him, and teaching and commanding what ought to be done, but neither giving grace to do it, nor containing the substance of the thing prefigured, was given by Moses; but grace to do what was commanded came from Christ, in whom also the substance of what was prefigured by the ceremonies, is fulfilled.” (Ball, 119). So also Roberts: “*Moses gave the Law; but Jesus Christ brings grace and truth*. That is. . . Christ brings. . . the true substance and accomplishment of the legal types and shadows now under the New Testament. For truth is here opposed, not to lies and falsehood, but to types and shadows.” (p770). And Colquhoun likewise says of John 1:17: “Considered as a rule of duty in the covenant of grace, and in the hand of Moses the typical mediator, [the Law] was a ministration of *shadows*, as opposed to *truth*. . . It is *truth*, as opposed. . . to *shadows*. . . While Jesus Christ has brought to his Church, the clearest discoveries of redeeming grace, he himself is the substance of all the Jewish types, and the accomplishment of all their predictions and promises.” (p81).

¹⁷ Calvin writes: “*The moral law*. . . is contained under two heads, one of which simply commands us to worship God with pure faith and piety; the other, to embrace men with sincere affection. Accordingly, it is the true and eternal rule of righteousness, prescribed for men of all nations and times, who wish to confirm their lives to God's will. For it is his eternal and unchangeable will that he himself indeed be worshiped by us all, and that we love one another. *The ceremonial law* was the tutelage of the Jews, with which it seemed good to the Lord to train this people, as it were, in their childhood, until the fullness of time should come (Galatians 4:3-4; cf. 3:23-24), in order that he might fully manifest his wisdom to the nations, and show the truth of those things which then were foreshadowed in figures. *The judicial law*, given to them for civil government, imparted certain formulas of equity and justice, by which they might live together blamelessly and peaceably.” (see 4.20.15).

¹⁸ *The Ceremonial Laws* had to do with Israel's worship; they dealt with things such as the tabernacle and its furnishings, the priesthood, the sacrifices, purifications, and the feasts. They were added as an appendix to *the first table of the Law*—which dealt with the relationship between man and his God. *The Judicial Laws* had to do with Israel's civil state; they dealt with the

(before the coming of Christ), and thus served a *temporary* purpose.¹⁹ In the words of the Confession (19:3): “Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, *ceremonial laws*, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth diverse instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament.” And again (19:4): “To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry *judicial laws*, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging under any now, further than the general equity thereof may require.” This is why Jesus declared all foods to be clean in the new covenant. And it's what Paul was speaking of when he wrote in Colossians 2:16-17, “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”²⁰ If you've ever watched the launching of a space shuttle, you might have noticed that after a certain time, part of the shuttle disconnects and falls back to the earth. The piece that disconnects is the external fuel tank; it provides the fuel needed to get to space; but after it serves its purpose, it's no longer needed and disconnects from the shuttle. The Ceremonial and Civil Laws of Israel were like that external fuel tank. They served a temporary purpose, but now that Christ has come, they're no longer needed. Now that we have the kernel, we can do away with the husk.²¹

things that related to judicial sentences and proceedings in the court of law. They were thus added as an appendix to *the second table of the Law*—which dealt with the relationship between man and his neighbor. Roberts notes: “The Ceremonial Laws may all be referred to the first table; the Judicial Laws to the second table of the Moral Law, as explications thereof to that people of Israel.” (p659). And again: “The Ceremonial and Judicial Laws are nothing else but special appendixes to the Moral Law. . .special ordinances peculiarly concerning the Jewish Church and Commonwealth. The Ceremonial Laws are the exercises of the first table, determining the worship of God prescribed in the first table by external circumstances. The Judicial Laws are the exercises of the second table, determining in like sort righteousness towards men prescribed in the second table by outward circumstances. . .For, the Ceremonial Laws vanished at Christ's death, having received their accomplishment in him; and the Judicials expired at the dissolution of the Jewish Commonwealth.” (pp662-663). Colquhoun writes: “He gave the moral law to them, as the primary rule of the obedience, which he required in this covenant (Deut. 4:13). He gave them also, the ceremonial and judicial laws, as appendages to it. . .The ceremonial institutions, which, in the sacred history, are frequently called *Statutes*, were, for the most part, reducible to precepts of the first table; and the judicial laws, which, in the same history, are often styled *Judgments*, were mostly reducible to precepts of the second table.” (p73). Roberts is in agreement, adding that *the Moral Law* was often called “commandments”, “laws” or “testimonies” (pp661-62).

¹⁹ This is even reflected in one way Roberts categorizes them: “God's Law given to Moses and Israel on Mount Sinai, is. . . most usually divided into three sorts; [namely], *Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial*. Or, if we rather affect a dichotomy, into two sorts; [namely], *1) Perpetual*, of obligatory force and power forever, as the Moral Law, contained in Ten Commandments. *2) Temporary*, of obligatory power and force only for a certain time, and then determinable; and this concerning, a) the worship and service of God, as the Ceremonial Law; b) the Civil State and Polity of the Jews, as the Judicial Law. Both of which were to determine and expire after the death of Christ; Christ being the substance or body of those shadows, the accomplishment of those ceremonies; and the Commonwealth of the Jews not long after Christ's death being utterly dissolved.” (Roberts, p661).

²⁰ Together with the principle noted earlier of *Emphasis*, the principle of *Abrogation* is also part of what Paul was speaking of in Galatians 4:1-11. The Old Testament Church was under the guardians and managers of the ceremonial laws (vv2-3), but now that Christ, the substance, has come (v4), there's no need to continue to observe the Old Testament shadows whose sole purpose was to point to Him (vv9-10). This passage in Galatians 4 is one of the main proof texts for the portion of WCF 20:1 which reads that, “But, under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected. . .” Citing Galatians 4:1-4, Ball likewise writes: “The Jews were children and heirs, but tutored and kept under with many ceremonial ordinances and observations as appendices to the Law, expedient for that time and state.” (p141). Galatians 3:25 also in part refers to the “tutelage” of the ceremonial laws that have now been abrogated. We'll talk more about this in the next section (*Freedom*), but here we could briefly note that 3:25 looks back to both v22 and v23: we are free both from *the Law's condemnation* (v22) as well as *the Law's ceremonies* (v23).

²¹ I love how Burgess puts it: “The Law, in that Mosaic administration, was to endure but till Christ the fullness came; and then, as the scaffolds are pulled down when the house is built, so were all those external ordinances to be abolished, when Christ himself came. A candle is superfluous when the sun appears. A school-master is not necessary to those that have obtained perfect knowledge. Milk is not comely for those who live on solid meat. The chaff preserves the corn, but when the corn is gathered, the chaff is thrown away. And when the fruit comes, the flower falls to the ground. . .” (Burgess, p256). Calvin explains it this way: “For because the Old bore the image of things absent, it had to die and vanish with time. The gospel, because it reveals the very substance, stands fast forever” (*Institutes* 2:11:8). Burgess says: “The second excellency [of the ministry of the gospel above that of the Law] is in regard of continuance and duration. The ministry of Moses was to be made void and abolished; which is to be understood of that Jewish pedagogy, not of every part of it; for the Moral, as given by Moses, does still oblige us Christians, as has been already proven; but the ministry of the gospel is to abide always. . .” (p268). Fisher writes, “the old covenant, in respect of the outward form and manner of sealing, was temporary and changeable; and therefore the types ceased, and only the substance remains firm. . .” (p71). But Calvin also reminds us: “The ceremonies. . . have been abrogated not in effect but only in use. Christ by his coming has terminated them, but has not deprived them of anything of their sanctity; rather, he has approved and honored it. . .Let it be regarded as a fact that, although the rites of the law have ceased to be observed, by their termination one may better recognize how useful they were before the coming of Christ, who in abrogating their use has by his death sealed their force and effect.” (*Institutes*, 2.7.16).

THE FOURTH DIFFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATION: *ABROGATION*

	WHAT GOD DID	WHY GOD DID IT
THE OLD TESTAMENT	Added Civil and Ceremonial Laws	JESUS and the GOSPEL
THE NEW TESTAMENT	Abolished Civil and Ceremonial Laws	

5. **FREEDOM:** Because the Ceremonial Laws have been abrogated and the Judicial Laws have expired, New Testament believers now in turn have a greater measure of freedom. It's this distinction that Paul seems to be referring to in Galatians 3:23, where he says, "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed." Most traditional commentators understand the phrase, *before faith came*, as referring not to the *message of faith* (IE, before the way of salvation was revealed), nor to the *reception of faith* (IE, before we put our trust in Christ), but rather to Christ, the *object of faith* (IE, before Jesus took on flesh and inaugurated the new covenant).²² And Paul is saying, before Christ came into the world, God's Old Testament people "were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed." Well, it sure doesn't sound very good, and it's a definite contrast, but this verse is not here putting the old covenant against the new. In the context of the passage, Paul has been describing how the Moral Law condemns us all for our sin (v22). We are guilty sinners, and the Moral Law is hunting us down to execute judgment against us. It's in this light that Paul begins to talk about the Ceremonial Law. For the Old Testament people of God, being under the Ceremonial Law was like being "in custody"—it was burdensome, to be sure—but it was a *gracious* custody. How so? As Calvin beautifully puts it: "They were besieged on every hand by the curse, *but this siege was counteracted by an imprisonment which protected them from the curse*; so that the imprisonment by the law is here proved to have been highly generous in its character."²³ Think about all those families in Germany during the reign of Hitler who risked their lives to hide Jewish people in their homes. Now, for those Jewish people hiding behind bookcases and in secret rooms, life for them was very much like an imprisonment. They were restricted and confined; it was unpleasant and burdensome—but *it was this very imprisonment that actually served to protect them*. Well, the Ceremonial Laws were just like this for God's people. They were burdensome, and yet also merciful, because it was those very laws that taught them of Christ, so that those pictures and sacrifices were the very means by which they were saved. After all, as one pointed out, "by the Law they were, *not shut up from the faith, but shut up unto the faith, that after should be revealed*."²⁴ The Ceremonies served to

²² Not *the message of faith*, because that message was revealed far before the Law was declared, beginning with the promise of Genesis 3:15; not *the reception of faith*, because the verse isn't speaking of us coming to faith, but rather of faith coming to us. As Calvin says: "Faith was not yet *revealed*, not because the fathers wanted light, but because they had less light than we have. The ceremonies might be said to shadow out an absent Christ, but to us he is represented as actually present, and thus while they had the mirror, we have the substance." (*Galatians*). Perkins says of Galatians 3:23: "Paul in the 19th verse had said, *that the law was for transgressions, till the seed come, to which the promise was made*. And here [in Galatians 3:23] he makes a more large declaration of his own meaning. . . *Faith* [signifies] the gospel, or, the doctrine of remission of sins and life everlasting by Christ, *exhibited in the flesh*." (p198). In other words, the "faith" that "came" in 3:23 refers back to the "seed" yet to "come" in 3:19. John Gill says: "*But before faith came*. . . This is to be understood, not of the grace of faith, which was under the former dispensation, as now; the Old Testament saints had the same Spirit of faith, and the same grace of faith, as for its nature, object, and use, as New Testament saints have; Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham [etc] believed in Christ, and were justified by faith in his righteousness, as we are. . . it is best to interpret it of Christ, the object of faith, who was to come, and is come in the flesh, to fulfill the law; and, by so doing, has put an end to it; and to redeem his people from under it, and to save them with an everlasting salvation. . . ." Luther says of Galatians 3:23, "We know that Paul has reference to the time of Christ's coming. It was then that faith and the object of faith were fully revealed. But we may apply the historical fact to our inner life. When Christ came He abolished the Law and brought liberty and life to light. This He continues to do. . ."

²³ From Calvin, *Galatians*, on his note for 3:23. How does the entire passage of 3:19-25 fit together? I take the "Therefore" of v24 as referring back not only to verse 23, but also to the whole passage of vv19-23. So how did the Law thus become our tutor (IE, the tutor of the OT people of God and with us as secondarily application)? In two ways primarily: 1) It condemned us for our sin (what Paul said in vv19-22); and 2) it bound us to the ceremonies (what we just saw from v23). Put simply, the condemnation of the Moral Law as outlined in v22 (IE, the Law *strictly* taken—Do this and live, do it not and die) served to drive them to the Ceremonial Law as outlined in v23 (IE, the Law *largely* taken—including the promises and pictures of the gospel), which was their gospel as it fore-pictured Christ. As we quoted Edward Fisher saying earlier: "*the moral law* did teach and show them what they should do, and so what they did not; and this made them go to *the ceremonial law*; and by that they were taught that Christ had done it for them; the which they believing, were made righteous by faith in him." Then for v25: it is in these two ways that we are no longer under the Law. We are still under the authority of the Moral Law as believers. But we are no longer under the Law 1) as it condemns us for our sin—cf. v22 (this aspect was also true for OT believers); nor are we under under the Law 2) as it binds us to the ceremonies—cf. v23 (this aspect is true only for us as new covenant believers).

²⁴ Here's the full quote from Francis Roberts: "the Law. . . is not against the promises, or Covenant of faith. It is *diverse*, but

protect God's people until the coming of Christ. But in the new covenant we are set free from the bondage connected with them. Those Jews in hiding must have been grateful beyond words for those secret rooms; but after all, it was just a temporary arrangement. Once the country was liberated, they no longer needed to keep living “in custody.”²⁵ And so it is for us as new covenant believers in Jesus.²⁶

THE FIFTH DIFFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATION: *FREEDOM*

	THE SITUATION	THE REASON
THE OLD TESTAMENT	A Gracious Imprisonment	JESUS and the GOSPEL
THE NEW TESTAMENT	An Unnecessary Imprisonment	

6. EFFECT: You may be familiar with the theologian Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening that became associated, in part, with his ministry. It was at the height of the Great Awakening, in July 1741, that Edwards preached a sermon called, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. God spoke to the listeners of this particular sermon in such a powerful way that Edwards was interrupted several times by people audibly moaning, and crying out, “What shall I do to be saved?” But not everyone knows that this was actually the second time Edwards preached this sermon. He preached *the same sermon* to his own congregation earlier, and as far as we know, there wasn't nearly the same effect. Sometimes God is pleased to work more powerfully than at other times. And this is another way that Scripture seems to contrast the old and new covenants. In Jeremiah 31:33, the Lord tells His people about the new covenant He would make with them, contrasting it with the covenant He had made with them at Sinai, saying: “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” This is truly an amazing promise; but it also leaves us wondering: Didn't God do the same thing in the Old Testament? Did God only begin to write His Law in the hearts of His people in the new covenant? Wasn't it David who wrote, “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11)?²⁷ How then are we to understand the prophecy in Jeremiah? I think in this way: God *did* write His Law on the hearts of His old covenant people. There were indeed many in the Old Testament, such as David, who embraced God's covenant through faith. God took His Word and applied it effectually to their hearts. But, sadly, there were also countless others who remained unchanged. Moses told his whole congregation in the wilderness: “Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.” (Deuteronomy 29:4).²⁸ And Isaiah

not *adverse*; subordinate, not contradictory to the New Testament. . .by the Law they were, *not shut up from* the faith, but *shut up unto the faith, that after should be revealed.*” (pp744-45). It's an important distinction. If Paul had said that the Law shut us up *from* the faith, it would be opposed to the new covenant. But the Law actually shut us up *unto* the faith that was later to be revealed. Galatians 3:23 isn't saying that the Law kept us *from* Christ, but rather that the (Ceremonial) Law kept us *for* Christ. The verse is saying that the Ceremonial Laws were actually God's way of protecting His Old Testament people.

²⁵ Another example here could be Noah's ark. I'm sure it wasn't a pleasant place to live for an entire year—it would have been restrictive, like being shut up in a prison—and yet it was the very means of Noah and his family being saved and entering into the new heavens and the new earth. So too, after the flood was over, there was no need to continue living in the ark.

²⁶ Together with *Emphasis* and *Abrogation*, we also see this truth in Galatians 4:1-11. *Calvin*: “The Old held consciences bound by the yoke of bondage; the New by its spirit of liberality emancipates them into freedom. . .Further, we shall deny that [even the patriarchs] were so endowed with the spirit of freedom and assurance as not in some degree to experience the fear and bondage arising from the law. For, however much they enjoyed the privilege that they had received through the grace of the gospel, they were still subject to the same bonds and burdens of the ceremonial observances as the common people. They were compelled to observe those ceremonies punctiliously, symbols of a tutelage resembling bondage (cf. Gal. 4:2-3); and the written bonds (cf. Col. 2:14). . .” (2:11:9). *Hodge*: “when contrasted with the new or Christian economy, as a different mode of revealing the same covenant, it is spoken of as a state of tutelage and bondage, far different from the freedom and filial spirit of the dispensation under which we now live.” (V2, p376). The Westminster Confession says: “under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish Church was subjected” (20:1). Shaw comments on WCF 20:1 saying: “Christians are now freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law. The Jewish Church was kept 'in bondage under the elements of the world' (Gal. 4:3); but that burdensome yoke is not imposed on the Christian Church (Acts 15:10). The ancient ceremonies were abrogated, in point of obligation, by the death of Christ; and though, for a time, the use of them was indifferent, yet, upon the full promulgation of the gospel, and the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, the observance of them became unlawful; and the Apostle Paul exhorted Christians to 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.' (Gal. 5:1).”

²⁷ See also Psalm 37:31, where David, writing in the old covenant, says of the righteous that the Law of God is in his heart.

²⁸ And Deuteronomy 32:5 declares, “They are not His children, because of their defect; but are a perverse and crooked generation.” Witsius: “In that one nation of Israel, very few were partakers of saving grace. . .and therefore Moses said to the whole people, with a reference to the generality of them, Deut. 29:4, Jehovah hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes

cried out, “For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return. . .” (10:22).²⁹ So then, though many in the old covenant embraced the message of the gospel, many more remained unchanged. Though there were periods of revival and decline in Israel, it seems on the whole that few embraced Christ. But it would be different in the new covenant. This is the point of Jeremiah's contrast. God would write His Law on the hearts of His people on a much greater scale. So that if we think of the multitude of those whom God is now effectually drawing to himself in the new covenant Church, we have to say that those who embraced the covenant in ancient Israel were few by comparison. Just as with Edwards' sermon, the *content* was the same in the Old Testament; the old covenant was no less about the gospel (Hebrews 4:2,6). But the *effect* would be different in the new covenant, because God now applies His Word powerfully to the hearts of His people, by His Spirit, in a much greater proportion.³⁰ As one writer put it: “as one star differs from another in glory, thus did the Church of the Jews, from that of Christians. They had drops, but we have the fountain. . .”³¹

to see, and ears to hear; for they who were favored with that grace, compared with the rest, were inconsiderable” (V2, p372).

²⁹ Isaiah is full of this kind of language; see Isaiah 1:4; 5:2; 65:2, etc. So is Jeremiah: 6:13; 7:25-26; 8:10; 9:26; 22:21; etc.

³⁰ Writing on Jeremiah 31:33, Calvin grapples with the question: “*Was the grace of regeneration wanting to the Fathers under the Law?*” But this is quite preposterous. What, then, is meant when God denies here that the Law was written on the heart before the coming of Christ? . . .this grace of God was rare and little known under the Law; but. . . under the Gospel the gifts of the Spirit have been more abundantly poured forth, and. . .God has dealt more bountifully with his Church.” And again: “But it may be asked, whether there was under the Law a sure and certain promise of salvation, whether the fathers had the gift of the Spirit, whether they enjoyed God's paternal favor through the remission of sins? Yes, it is evident that they worshipped God with a sincere heart and a pure conscience, and that they walked in his commandments, and this could not have been the case except they had been inwardly taught by the Spirit; and it is also evident, that whenever they thought of their sins, they were raised up by the assurance of a gratuitous pardon. And yet the Apostle, by referring the prophecy of Jeremiah to the coming of Christ, seems to rob them of these blessings. To this I reply, that he does not expressly deny that God formerly wrote his Law on their hearts and pardoned their sins, but he makes a comparison between the less and the greater. As then the Father has put forth more fully the power of his Spirit under the kingdom of Christ, and has poured forth more abundantly his mercy on mankind, this exuberance renders insignificant the small portion of grace which he had been pleased to bestow on the fathers.” (Hebrews 8:10). He then clarifies: “If it be objected and said, that the faith and obedience of Abraham so excelled, that hardly any such an example can at this day be found in the whole world; my answer is this, that the question here is not about persons, but that reference is made to the economical condition of the Church.” And the Westminster Annotations on Jeremiah 31:33 says: “that spiritual grace is withall here promised, whereby they should be enabled to become God's people, not in title and profession alone, but in truth (John 1:47; Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15-16).”

³¹ The full quote is: “The second particular difference is in respect of the measure of grace. Hence the Scripture speaks, as if they had under the Old Testament none at all, merely because there was not such a plentiful effusion of his Spirit upon them; not but that if we consider some particular persons, they might have such degrees of grace, that few under the Gospel can be compared unto them, as Abraham and David; but this was not according to the ordinary dispensation of his graces then. So that as one star differs from another in glory, thus did the Church of the Jews, from that of Christians. They had drops, but we have the fountain; they had glimmerings, but we have the sun itself.” (Burgess, p254). Thomas Brooks: “There is more abundance of the Spirit of grace, of light, of knowledge, of holiness, poured out generally upon the people of God now, than there was in those times. Though then some few eminent saints had much of the Spirit, and much of grace and holiness, both in their hearts and lives; but now the generality of the saints have more of the Spirit, and more grace and holiness, than the generality of the saints had in those times.” (V5, p287). Calvin: “We are not to surmise from this difference between letter and spirit that the Lord had fruitlessly bestowed his law upon the Jews, and that none of them turned to him. But it was put forward by way of comparison to commend the grace abounding, wherewith the same Lawgiver. . .honored the preaching of the gospel. For suppose we reckon the multitude of those whom he gathers into the communion of his church from all peoples, men regenerated by his Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. Then we will say that in ancient Israel there were very few—almost none—who embraced the Lord's covenant with their whole hearts and minds. Yet, reckoned by themselves without comparison, there were many.” (*Institutes*, 2.11.8). Roberts: “Under the *Old Covenant* the Spirit of God was given but so sparingly, so restrictively, to an handful of people the Jews, and in such small measure, and producing so few and small effects; that it is said, not to be given; *for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. But under the *New Covenant* the Spirit was shed forth abundantly, in great variety of graces and gifts, both upon Jews and Gentiles, beginning at *Pentecost* to be poured forth upon the Apostles, and afterwards falling upon private believers.” (p1256). Again: “The *Efficacy* of former administrations, was very weak and small, in comparison of this New Covenant administration which is great and powerful. Under those the Holy Spirit was but as it were sparingly sprinkled upon them; their knowledge and love of God was dark, feeble childlike; their hearts were very stony hard and inflexible, as God intimated to them in writing his Laws upon stones, etc. But under this, the Holy Spirit is plentifully poured forth as in streams and rivers upon them; and into them; their knowledge and love of God is clear, strong, ripe, man-like: their hearts very fleshy and flexible to God and his will, etc. Hence, the Old Testament ministration is called *the ministration of the letter, that condemns and kills*, viz, an ineffectual ministration, showing the letter of the duty and death in case of non-performance, but affording no ability for that duty; but the New Testament ministration is called *the ministration of the Spirit that quickneth*, and is a *ministration of righteousness*, viz, an effectual and powerful ministration, that affords sufficiency of ability for the duty which it requires. Hence, the Spirit is said *not to be given, till Christ was glorified*: not as if it had not been given at all; but because it was bestowed so sparingly and slenderly, in comparison to what is now, that it might seem not to be given at all. [Also,] the *Extent* of former Covenant administrations, was but to particular families, as of Adam, Noah, Abraham, David; or to some particular tribes, as to the

THE SIXTH DIFFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATION: *EFFECT*

	EFFECT OF PREACHING	CONTENT OF PREACHING
THE OLD TESTAMENT	Few were Changed	JESUS and the GOSPEL
THE NEW TESTAMENT	Many are Changed	

7. **COMPARISON:** The last difference in administration between the old and new covenants is in many ways a summary of all that has gone before. We've seen that in the new covenant, we have the *gospel kernel* removed from its outward, earthly husk. The *gospel clarity* we now enjoy in the new covenant is like high-noon compared with the light of dawn by which the old covenant saints walked. Instead of merely the shadow of gushing water in a desert, we have *Christ, the fountain himself*. We enjoy a greater

captives of Judah and Benjamin, or to a select nation, as to the Jews at Mount Sinai: Alas, how few, what a small handful were all these to the rest of the world! And yet of this small number, how few were there that had any saving inscription of Gods Laws upon their hearts at all? And we say, *minimum in magne nihil*, a small thing in that which is great is as nothing; a drop is as nothing in the sea, a grain of sand is as nothing in the earth: so the writing of God's Laws in the hearts of so few, is as nothing in the world. But the extent of this New Covenant administration is universal, *to all nations in the whole world*; and consequently Gods writing of his Laws in mens hearts is proportionably extended to all Gods people in all those nations: to many thousands and ten thousands more then under all former Covenant expressures." (pp1383-86). *Why was the old covenant less efficacious?* Roberts says: "Under the *Old Testament*, as the foederates knowledge of God was less clear and less perfect, so it was less efficacious. The power and efficacy thereof was proportionable. They rested much in a literal and notional knowledge; few of them had a spiritualized knowledge; consequently the efficacy of their knowledge upon them was either none at all, or very slender. Literals and mere notionals have no efficacy; weak spirituals have but weak efficacy upon the hearts and lives. But under the *New Covenant* the foederates knowledge of God, etc, is much more powerful, strong, and efficacious. The Apostle signifies this excellently, saying, 'But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'" (p1408). *MORE THOROUGH EXPOSITION OF JEREMIAH 31:31-34:* I wanted to add a bit more detail here. Many understand the words "new covenant" in Jeremiah 31:31 as encompassing all of the differences in administration that we've been speaking of between the old and new covenants (IE, emphasis, clarity, consummation, abrogation, freedom), as well as that of efficacy, but while all of these may be mentioned, still it seems Jeremiah is mainly speaking of the difference in efficacy between old and new covenants. He's not contrasting the old and new covenants *in general*, but especially *one aspect of them in particular*: in the old covenant, God's people broke his covenant, because, it is inferred, God's Law was written externally on stone but not in their hearts; whereas in the new covenant, God's Law would be written internally in their hearts, and thus they would be covenant keepers rather than covenant breakers. IE, in the old covenant God's people turned away because they didn't have God's Law in their hearts; but in the new they would never turn away because they truly would have His Law in their hearts. For full understanding, we need to clarify a few things from the passage: 1) *The essence or substance of the two covenants is exactly the same:* Notice that the word "Law" is actually used of the new covenant, not the old. Jeremiah isn't saying that the Law was what was written in the old covenant, but the gospel would be written in the new. Nor does Jeremiah say a *new Law* would be given, but rather that a *new covenant* would be made, in which the same Law would be written in a different place. The difference isn't in *what* was written but rather in *where* it was written. So it's not that the Mosaic Covenant was about the Law, whereas the new covenant will be about the gospel. The Mosaic Covenant was no less about the gospel. So when we read that Israel broke this covenant, we're not to think that Jeremiah means that Sinai was a legal dispensation and the people broke the Law (as all of us do). After all, if that's what Jeremiah is saying, how do we make any sense of the contrast? If we also in the new covenant break God's Law by not keeping it perfectly, what sense can we make of Jeremiah's contrast, where the new will be so different from the old? No, when Jeremiah speaks of Israel breaking the covenant, he's not talking about breaking the Law, he's actually talking about breaking the covenant itself—which was a Covenant of Grace. In other words, he means they failed to embrace the covenant from the heart, by faith. And this is what would be different in the new covenant: God's new covenant people would embrace the covenant from the heart. 2) *The members of the two covenants are spoken of in general:* When God says that "they" broke the old covenant (v32), he's not speaking of every single individual, as we've seen, but rather about Israel in general, on the whole. Again, there were indeed many who embraced God's covenant from the heart under the old covenant, but taken on the whole, the people turned away. Well, the same principle applies to the objects of the new covenant. When God says that in the new covenant He will put His Law within "them", He's not talking about every single individual, but of the people on the whole. If it is objected that verse 34 tells us that God is indeed speaking of every individual, in that it says "they will *all* know Me", we would simply refer back to verses 29-30, which clarify that not every single individual is meant, but again the population on the whole, for even in the new covenant there will be some who yet eat the sour grapes and die for their own iniquity. This is confirmed by that expression in verse 34, "from the least of them to the greatest of them", for Jeremiah uses the same phrase twice before this passage (6:13; 8:10) in speaking of how Israel in his day had turned away from the Lord; but surely no one takes him to be speaking of every single individual; the prophet is rather characterizing the vast majority of the people. Jeremiah is not saying there were *no* individuals who knew God in the old covenant, nor is he saying that *every* individual would know God in the new covenant, but rather that on the whole, God's people turned away from Him in the old, but that they would know and walk with Him in the new. 3) *The reason for this contrast between old and new covenants is that God would cause His Word to take effect upon His people in a much greater proportion in the new covenant,* as we've shown above. This isn't to say that there were periods in the old covenant when the Spirit was so powerfully at work that it seemed as if that time belonged to the new covenant; or in turn, that there will be periods in the new covenant when the workings of the Spirit seem so small and insignificant that it will resemble more the

measure of *gospel freedom*, having been released from the burdens of the Ceremonial Laws. And now in the new covenant, *God writes His Law* on the hearts of His people in a much greater proportion than ever before. In light of these things, though the old covenant was full of gospel glory, it's almost as if it had no glory at all when we compare it to the new covenant. Well, this was exactly what Paul was saying in 2 Corinthians 3:7-11: "But if the ministry of death. . .came with glory. . .how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory." A little later we'll deal with this passage in much more detail. But for now, just notice that Paul is affirming that the ministry of Moses had glory; he's just saying that the glory of the new covenant is so much more by comparison. Francis Roberts puts it beautifully: "This *New Covenant* outshines the *Old*, as far as the sun out-shines the moon. Yea as the moon derives and borrows all her clear light from the sun. . .so the *Old Covenant*. . .derived and borrowed as it were all her clearest light from Christ, and the mysteries of the *New Covenant*. There was a gloriousness in the *Old Covenant*: but a far greater glory in the *New*."³² The painting of a lavish feast is fine and good, but it can never compare with the banquet itself (especially if you're hungry). Looking at a picture of my wife is wonderful, but it can never compare to being with her face to face. This is Paul's whole point in 2 Corinthians 3. It's also what the author of Hebrews was speaking of when he calls the new covenant "a better covenant" (7:22; 8:6). The new covenant is infinitely better than the old because we now have Christ minus the husk, we have Christ without any obscurity, we have Christ himself instead of the shadows, we have Christ without the burdens of the Ceremonial Laws, and we have Christ applying His Word effectually to our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It is truly an amazing privilege to be a Christian in the new covenant church.³³

THE SEVENTH DIFFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATION: *COMPARISON*

	ITS ADMINISTRATION	ITS ESSENCE
THE OLD TESTAMENT	Came with Glory	JESUS and the GOSPEL
THE NEW TESTAMENT	Comes with Far Greater Glory	

SUMMARY: We've been trying to answer the question: If the Mosaic Covenant is really part of the Covenant of Grace, why is it that certain Scriptures seem to speak so negatively about Sinai? And we've seen that many of these Scriptures speak this way because they're comparing and contrasting the ministry of the old covenant with that of the new. The difference isn't in *what the covenant is*—but rather in *how*

times of the old covenant. But the comparison is a general one; Jeremiah is speaking of the two dispensations on the whole when he tells us that *the old covenant* was characterized by the writing of God's Word externally on stone (even though He also wrote that same Word in the hearts of His people), and that *the new covenant* would be characterized by the writing of God's Word internally in the hearts of His people (even though it is no less still written externally on the pages of our Bibles). The old covenant included God's Law written internally on hearts; and the new covenant includes God's Law written externally on paper, but the difference is that the old would be *marked and characterized by* the external writing, whereas the new would be *marked and characterized by* the internal writing. And the reason is that God would take His Word and apply it effectually to the hearts of His people unto salvation in such a greater proportion in the new covenant than in the old.

³² Roberts, *Mystery and Marrow*, p1714; cf. pp1410, 1689. Hodge says, "It was of the same kind, though less in degree, as the glory of the gospel. The one dispensation was indeed glorious, but the other was more so." (*2 Corinthians*; p78).

³³ Roberts likewise understands the new covenant to be "better" in many of the same ways we have been describing: "Now this New Covenant is called a Better Covenant and Testament in opposition to the Old Covenant and Testament. And this, not in essence and substance; but in accidents and circumstances, viz: 1) *Because, it is established upon better promises.* The promises of the Old Covenant were a) more carnal and earthly; b) more obscure, in Christ to come afterwards; c) more restrained, to one nation of the Jews. . .But the promises of this New Covenant are a) more spiritual and heavenly; b) more clear and conspicuous in Christ come already; c) more extensive and universal, to all nations. 2) *Because, it is not an earthly, servile, slavish, terrible dispensation. . .but a heavenly, free, filial and comfortable dispensation. . .* 3) *Because, it was dedicated with better sacrifice and blood, than the Old Covenant.* Not with the typical sacrifices and blood of slain beasts; but with the true sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ. . . 4) *Because, it is administered by a better priesthood, even the perfect, everlasting, unchangeable Melchizedekian priesthood of Jesus Christ himself. . .* 5) *Because, upon all the grounds why it's called, A New Covenant, it may also deservedly be counted a better covenant.*" (pp1264-65). Later, he adds: "The New Covenants promises are better promises, than those of the Old Covenant, and consequently much more than those of the fore-going covenants, in many regards; as: 1) *Better in regard of perspicuity and clearness. . .* 2) *Better in regard of spirituality. . .* 3) *Better in regard of divine efficacy and sufficiency. . .* 4) *Better in regard of extent. . .* 5) *Better in regard of duration. . .*" (pp1674-75). See also Witsius, V2, pp362ff. We could summarize by saying: "The same redemption, sanctification, justification, adoption and glorification, even the same complete salvation by Christ, was revealed in both covenants; though in different manners and degrees. . .The New Testament promises are better than those of the Old; not in *kind*, but in *degree*." (Roberts, p784).

it's administered. The essence is still the same: The Old Testament is about Jesus and the gospel just as much as the New Testament. But the way it's presented; the outward form or administration would be much better in the new covenant. So then, this is what we have to understand: In all these Scriptures, the contrast *isn't* between the old covenant and the Covenant of Grace; the contrast is *rather* between the administration of the Covenant of Grace in the old covenant and the administration of the Covenant of Grace in the new covenant. Scripture isn't telling us that the Mosaic Covenant doesn't belong to the *Covenant of Grace*. It's simply telling us that the Mosaic Covenant doesn't belong to the *new covenant*.³⁴

SUMMARY OF THE DIFFERENCES IN ADMINISTRATION BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS:

	IN THE OLD COVENANT	IN THE NEW COVENANT
EMPHASIS	The gospel was packaged in a temporal husk	The gospel is set forth without the temporal husk
CLARITY	The gospel was revealed but indirectly and darkly	The gospel is set forth with full noon-day clarity
CONSUMMATION	Redemption was promised, pictured, signified	Redemption is performed by Christ the substance
ABROGATION	The Ceremonial Laws applied to OT church	The Ceremonial Laws abrogated for NT church
FREEDOM	God's people were held in custody and burdened	God's people are set free from that bondage
EFFECT	God's Word produced little effect on most hearts	God's Word has a much greater effect on hearts
COMPARISON	Thus, the old covenant was full of gospel glory	But the glory of the new covenant is much greater

III. The Second Objection: The *Requirement* of the Mosaic Covenant

We've been showing that the Mosaic Covenant wasn't a Covenant of Works, a Mixed Covenant, or a Subservient Covenant, but rather that it's simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace. We mentioned that there are three main objections to this view. The first had to do with *the nature of the covenant at Sinai*; this is the objection we just finished dealing with. The second objection has to do with *the requirement of the covenant at Sinai*; what it is that the Law demands. Paul says in Romans 10:5: "For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows. . ." This same principle is echoed in Galatians 3:10-12, where Paul writes: "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.' Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.'"³⁵ Paul is telling us in these passages that the Law operates on a completely different system than that of faith. The Covenant of Grace requires faith, but the Law requires perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. The Covenant of Grace says: "*Believe in Christ* and you shall live", but the Law says: "*Keep the commands* and you shall live." This creates a problem: If the Covenant of Grace operates on the principle of faith, but the Law is *not* of faith, how is it that the Mosaic Covenant can be part of the Covenant of Grace? If the Law and faith are two mutually exclusive systems, how can we say that Sinai is an administration of Grace? If what God requires in the Law is something completely different than what He requires in the gospel, how can we say that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace?

³⁴ Roberts draws out this distinction beautifully in the course of his discussion of Jeremiah 31:33. He says, "The Sinai-Covenant, made with Israel when God brought them out of the land of Egypt, is said to be unlike, or not according to the New Covenant; but it is not said either by the prophet or apostle to be unlike to the Covenant of Faith [IE, Grace]. And the dissimilitude or difference here intimated betwixt the Sinai-Covenant and the New Covenant, is not in substance or kind, for in both the Lord says, 'I will be their God and they shall be My people;' but only in manner of administration and degree. God promising in His New Covenant a greater, fuller, and clearer measure of grace upon His people, then under the Sinai Covenant. . . They are both Covenants of Faith, but the New Covenant every way more excellent, complete and perfect." (Roberts, pp769-70). There are other differences in administration that we didn't explicitly mention here. For example, another difference is that the old covenant was primarily limited to the Jews, whereas the new covenant is meant to spread to every tribe and tongue and nation. Also, the graces of the Spirit are more generally poured out on believers now in the new covenant than in the old. Further, the old covenant was always meant to be temporary, but the new covenant is permanent.

³⁵ In Romans 10:5-6, Galatians 3:10-12, and similar passages, the word "live" is to be taken as living *eternally*; IE, "be justified." The word here is used in the same way our Savior uses it in Luke 10:28, where after the lawyer asks what to do in order to inherit eternal life and correctly summarizes the Law as outlined in Deuteronomy 6:5, Jesus tells him: "You have answered correctly; 'Do this and *you will live*.'" For a more in-depth explanation of how we know "live" is to be taken as "justified" in Galatians 3:10-12 in particular, see the third footnote in Section III.3 below ("Perfect Obedience in the Law").

1. **GENERAL PASSAGES FROM THE LAW:** Paul cites two passages here: In Romans 10:5, he cites Leviticus 18:5; and in Galatians 3:11-12, he cites both Deuteronomy 27:26 and Leviticus 18:5. But the Law is full of these kinds of Scriptures: In Exodus 19:5, the Lord tells His people: “Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples. . .” Deuteronomy 4:1 says, “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live. . .”³⁶ Deuteronomy 5:33 says, “You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you. . .” Deuteronomy 6:25 tells us, “It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.” Deuteronomy 7:12 says, “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers.” Again, Deuteronomy 8:1 tells us, “All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land. . .” Moses says in Deuteronomy 11:26-27: “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.” And Deuteronomy 28 tells us: “The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. . . But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you” (vv9,15). We could list many other passages as well, but we can begin with these. What do these Scriptures mean? How are we to understand such passages?

2. **GOSPEL OBEDIENCE IN THE LAW:** The first thing we can say is that many of these kinds of passages³⁷ have traditionally been understood as being actually *evangelical* in nature (rather than legal). Obedience is required—but in many of these passages, it may indeed be *gospel obedience*—rather than legal obedience, that God is commanding. That is, God is requiring of Israel to prove through their obedience to the Lord that they have actually embraced His covenant from the heart by faith. This is especially clear in passages such as Deuteronomy 7:9, “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation *with those who love Him and keep His commandments.*” The passage tells us, in effect, that God blesses those who keep His commandments; but Calvin clarifies that “this indicates *what kind of servants they are* who have undertaken his covenant in good faith rather than expresses *the reason why the Lord benefits them.*”³⁸ In other words, this passage isn't describing the *cause* of entering into God's blessing, but rather the *characteristics* of those who have entered into it. It's not saying our obedience is the *means* of salvation—it's saying our obedience is the *mark* of salvation. This passage isn't describing *how* to gain God's favor, but rather *who* it is that has gained it. We can understand many similar passages in the Law in the same way.³⁹ And not only passages in the Law, but many other passages of Scripture. This is how

³⁶ John Ball rightly notes that *live* in these passages refers primarily to *eternal* life: “Eternal life is promised in the Covenant [IE, at Sinai]. . . Not only long life and good days, in the land of Canaan, but eternal life is assured by the promise to them that keep Covenant, as eternal death and destruction is comprehended under the curse denounced against them that break the Covenant. . . eternal life is comprehended under the terms of life and blessing, as eternal death under the terms of death and the curse. Eternal life in heaven, eternal death in hell, the Law notes, though it does not expressly name them.” (p132).

³⁷ Many of them—not all (some, such as Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26, are exceptions). We'll get to these soon.

³⁸ *Institutes*, 3.17.6. Calvin goes on to say: “Whenever, therefore, we hear that he does good to those who keep his law, let us remember that the children of God are there designated by the duty that ought in them to be perpetual.” And, “But again, let us keep in mind that the fulfillment of the Lord's mercy does not depend upon believers' works but that he fulfills the promise of salvation for those who respond to his call with upright life, because in those who are directed to the good by his Spirit he recognizes the only genuine insignia of his children.” (3.17.6). That Calvin sees this principle as applying to multiple similar passages is clear not only from his sermons on Deuteronomy, but also because he affirms in the same section (3.17.6) that among the promises of the law sprinkled throughout the books of Moses, “in them many evangelical promises also occur. . .” John Gill also understands Deuteronomy 7:9 in this way. He says, “See (Exodus 20:6) which are not the causes or conditions of his covenant and mercy, nor of his keeping them, but descriptive of the persons that enjoy the benefit thereof.”

³⁹ As Ball notes: “In Scripture they are pronounced blessed, who keep the Commandments, and observe the Statutes and Judgements of the Lord; but withal their blessedness is said to consist in this, that God imputes not sin unto them, that their sins be forgiven, and transgressions covered. The true worshippers of God then are happy, not for their works, but because God is pleased to accept them in Christ, and to pardon their offenses. This is the true sense of those promises made to or spoken of them that walk in the perfect way, and do no iniquity. . . life and salvation [are] promised to them that observe and

we can understand the Beatitudes: When Jesus pronounces blessing on the poor in spirit, the gentle, and the pure in heart, He's not telling us *how* to enter into God's blessing, but *who* it is that has entered into it; He's not describing *the means* of obtaining God's favor, but *the characteristics* of those who have obtained it. This is also how we can understand what Jesus meant when He said in John 5:29 that "those who did the good deeds [will arise] to a resurrection of life"; or when He told the crowds in Luke 11:28, "blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Why are they blessed? Not because they can earn God's blessing by doing what He says—but rather because in doing what God says they show themselves to be the recipients of God's blessing by faith. This is what David was saying when he wrote in Psalm 103:17-18, "But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, *to those who keep His covenant and remember His precepts to do them.*" David isn't saying that our obedience is the *basis* of our good standing with God, he's saying that it's the *proof*; he's not *limiting* the amount of God's grace, but simply *qualifying* who are the ones that have obtained it.⁴⁰ This is also how we can understand passages in the New Testament epistles, such as Romans 8:13, where Paul writes: "for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Here too, Paul isn't describing *how* to enter into life, but *who* are those that will enter into it; he's not speaking of the *means* of obtaining eternal life, but rather the *marks* of all those who will one day inherit it.⁴¹

keep the Statutes, Judgements and Ordinances of the Lord, not for the dignity of the work, but through the mere grace and mercy of God pardoning transgressions and sins. . ." (p110). And again: "True it is the promises run upon this condition: 'If you obey My voice and do My Commandments.' But conditions are of two sorts, antecedent or consequent. *Antecedent*, when the condition is the cause of the thing promised or given. . . *Consequent*, when the condition is annexed to the promise as a qualification in the subject. . . And in this latter sense, obedience to the Commandment was a condition of the promise; *not as a cause why the thing promised was vouchsafed, but a qualification in the subject capable, or a consequence* of such great mercy freely conferred." (Ball, p133). Speaking of Exodus 19:5, Roberts says: "*Generally*, that since entire constant obedience is not required in this Sinai Covenant in a *Legal*, but in an *Evangelical* sense; not as an exact condition of the Covenant of Works, but as an upright condition of the Covenant of Faith. . . And, being a Covenant of Faith, it could not formally require the condition of the Covenant of Works, as such. As the Covenant was Evangelical, so the conditioned obedience was Evangelical also. . . *Particularly*, sincere, entire and constant obedience was required in this Sinai Covenant. 1) Not as an *Antecedent Condition* of the Covenant, moving God to enter into Covenant with Israel, or meriting in any sense any such thing from God; but as a *Consequent Condition* of the Covenant, required by the Covenant from all that accept God's Covenant. 2) Not as performable *Legally* by a mans own mere natural ability, as it was in the Covenant of Works made with all, in the First Adam; but *Evangelically*, by supernatural ability from Christ, who gives both to will and to do; which ability also this Covenant promises. . . 3) Not as *opposite to true faith and grace*; as in the Covenant of Works, doing and works, were opposed to faith and grace, Adam was to have life by working in and from himself, not by believing in a Mediator; but *as consequent from, and subservient to grace and faith*. True obedience is a consequent fruit or effect of faith, and faith is a fruit of divine grace. 4) Not as a *joint cause with faith in justification*. . . but as a *proper fruit and effect of true justifying faith*. . . Faith justifies our persons before God, applying Christ's righteousness to that end; obedience sincere entire and constant justifies our faith before God, ourselves and men, God requiring true obedience from faith ourselves and others discerning and discovering truth of faith by true obedience." (pp874-75). And of passages such as Deuteronomy 4:1; 5:33; 6:24-25 and 30:16, Blake says: "We may so interpret those Scriptures (and the Jews, as it appears for a great part, did so interpret them) that they hold out a Covenant of Works, *when* grace was not at all acknowledged to assist in doing, nor Christ known at all to satisfy for failing, and to expiate for transgression. . . [But] They may yet be so interpreted as taking grace in the work for change of the heart, and putting it into a posture for obedience, according to that even in Moses: 'I will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live,' (Deuteronomy 30:6), and so these duties are only gospel qualifications of truth and sincerity of obedience. In this sense (which they may well bear, *and I take to be their native sense*) here is no more than what we find in the gospel, from Christ and the Apostles: 'They that have done good, shall rise unto the resurrection of life' (John 5:28-29); [and], 'To them that by patient continuing in well-doing, seek for glory and immortality, eternal life' (Romans 2:5)." (p216). He concludes, "A righteousness, which is the condition of the Covenant of Works; out of our own inherent strength and abilities, in an exact perfection, is denied; a righteousness, not of us, but through grace wrought in us, in sincerity, which the Covenant of Grace calls for, is asserted and required." (Blake, p218).

⁴⁰ John Gill on Psalm 103:17-18: "not that the fear of God is the cause of mercy or grace; but, on the contrary, grace and mercy are the cause of the fear of God; which is a blessing of the covenant of grace, and one of the first things which appear in conversion; but this properly describes the persons who openly and manifestly share in the grace or mercy of God. . ."

⁴¹ Perkins says of *Romans 8:13*: "The promises of the gospel are not made to the work, but to the worker; and to the worker not for his work, but for Christ's sake, according to his work. As for example, promise of life is made not to the work of mortification, but to him that mortifies his flesh, and that not for his mortification, but because he is in Christ, and his mortification is the token or evidence thereof." (*Galatians*, p171). And of *Galatians 6:6-7*, Perkins says: "the Papists reason thus: works are seeds; but seeds are the proper cause of the fruit; therefore good works are the proper cause of eternal life, and not faith only. . . [But] the Apostle [here] shows only who they are that shall inherit eternal life; *and the order how life is attained*; but not the cause wherefore it is given. . . We are just by faith, but we are known to be just by our works. . . Now a tree is not known what it is by his sap, but by his fruit; neither are men known to be just by their faith, but by their works. Indeed a tree is therefore good, because his sap is good; but it is known to be good by his fruit. So, a man is just, because of his faith, but he is known to be just by his good works; therefore seeing that the last judgement must proceed according to evidence that

UNDERSTANDING GOSPEL OBEDIENCE IN THE LAW

	DESCRIBING	DECLARING	TEACHING
NOT	The <i>Cause</i> of inheriting God's blessing	Obedience is the <i>Means</i> of our salvation	<i>How</i> to gain God's favor
BUT	The <i>Characteristics</i> of those who have it	Obedience is the <i>Mark</i> of our salvation	<i>Who</i> has gained God's favor

3. PERFECT OBEDIENCE IN THE LAW: But though this principle helps us to interpret many passages in the Law, it still can't explain all of them. Paul makes it very clear in his references to Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26 (in Romans 10:5-6 and Galatians 3:10-12) that, at the very least, *these two passages* are talking about something very different.⁴² In Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12, Paul tells us that Leviticus 18:5 sets forth a righteousness that is based on the Law, wherein the condition for eternal life is nothing short of *perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience* to God's commands:⁴³ "He who practices them shall live [IE, be justified] by them."⁴⁴ This is a righteousness that is obtained by *doing* rather than *believing*. And not only does the Law offer us the *blessing* of God on the condition of perfect obedience, it also *curses* anyone and everyone who would fall short of it, for in Galatians 3:10 Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them." The Covenant of Grace tells us: *Believe in order to live*; but here the Law is telling us: *Obeys in order to live*. And again, *believing* and *doing* are two mutually exclusive systems. So, if the Law is not of faith, how can the Mosaic Covenant be part of the Covenant of Grace?⁴⁵

is upon record. . . all must be judged by their works, which are evident and apparent to the view of all men, and not by their faith, which is not exposed to the sight of any. And hence it is that the Scripture says, we shall be judged *according to our works*, but it is nowhere said, *for our good works*. . . good works are *the way*, but not *the cause* [of life]. . . In the evangelical covenant, the promise is not made to the work, but to the worker; and to the worker, not for the merit of his work, but for the merit of Christ. . ." (*Galatians*, pp499-501). The Scriptures we've been referring to describe 1) *the HEIRS OF LIFE*, but a similar yet distinct way to understand these kinds of passages evangelically is as describing 2) *the PATH OF LIFE*. Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 4:8 that, "godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." Here Paul is saying that *the outcome* of a life of godliness is eternal life. Godliness *results* in eternal life. A life of godliness isn't the basis or means of our salvation, but it is the narrow road by which we must walk in order to obtain it. It's the same truth Christ spoke of when He said: "For the gate is small and *the way is narrow* that leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matthew 7:14). It's the narrow way that leads to eternal life; there's no other way to get there. We aren't saved by our godliness, but in a very real sense, we can't be saved without it. The narrow path is the only path that that results in eternal life: "It is not the foundation by which believers stand firm before God that is described but the means whereby our most merciful Father introduces them into his fellowship, and protects and strengthens them therein." (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.17.6). It may be that passages such as Deuteronomy 5:33 and 8:1 are best interpreted in this way. Still yet, other passages seem to describe 3) *the MEANS OF LIFE* in an evangelical sense; that is, some passages in the Law seem to actually command faith. In Exodus 19:5 the Lord tells His people, "Now then, if you will indeed *obey My voice* and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples. . ." In the literal Hebrew, it says "if you will *listen to My voice*." A similar passage is Deuteronomy 4:1: "Now, O Israel, *listen* to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live. . ." Literally, "listen. . . that you may live." Here, life is contingent on *listening*, and this listening seems to be gospel listening—the listening of faith. Compare Isaiah 55:3 ("Listen, that you may live"); Galatians 3:2,6 ("the hearing of faith"); and Hebrews 3:15 and 4:7 (where Israel fails to listen to God's voice, which is associated with the message of good news preached to them; cf. Psalm 95:7). This listening seems to be synonymous with faith in Deuteronomy; indeed, these passages seem to be commanding *faith*. Colquhoun draws this out from Deuteronomy 5:27, noting: "they do not say, as they did, before the publication of the law at Sinai, 'All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do'; but, 'We will *hear* and do.' For speaking in this strain, the Lord commended them thus: 'They have well said all that they have spoken'. . . They said well, in that they made hearing or believing, the principle of acceptable obedience." (pp65-66). Even when obedience is mentioned together with listening (cf. 7:12), we may regard it as commanding that true faith that produces obedience as its fruit (cf. Matthew 7:24).

⁴² It may even be the majority of these passages quoted above are commanding perfect obedience. It's not an easy thing to discern. One example of just how difficult it can be to classify certain passages is Calvin, who in his *Institutes* classifies Deuteronomy 7:12-13 (along with "a thousand other passages of the same type") as commanding *perfect obedience* as the cause of life (see 3.17.1), and yet in his sermons on Deuteronomy, speaks of the same passage as rather describing *evangelical obedience* as the proof of eternal life. Though there were exceptions (see Ball and Blake above), most of the Puritans were hesitant to classify particular passages, preferring to rather cite Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26 as very sure examples.

⁴³ This is the language of the Westminster Larger Catechism, #93.

⁴⁴ We know that in this passage, "live" is speaking of justification (as opposed to "walk according to," which would indeed be redundant) because of the context. Paul says this in Galatians 3:12; and in the verse just prior, he quotes Habakkuk 2:4 telling us that "The righteous man shall live [IE, again: be justified] by faith." And we know that "live" in verse 11 is speaking of justification because Paul makes that very clear: "Now that no one is *justified* by the Law before God is evident, for, 'The righteous man shall *live* by faith.'" IE: We know no one is justified by the Law because Scripture says we are justified by faith.

⁴⁵ Bolton lists no less than 6 separate possible interpretations of Leviticus 18:5 (*True Bounds*, pp104-06). Ball tried to exposit Leviticus 18:5 in the same way as the other places in the Law that require an evangelical obedience. He says: "These words, 'Do this and live,' must not be interpreted, as if they did promise life upon a condition of perfect obedience, and for works

4. **A TWO-FOLD UNDERSTANDING OF THE LAW:** One of the most valuable things I've learned personally as I've studied through the Mosaic Covenant is how the older writers resolved this question. There is a single overwhelming answer that both the Reformers and Puritans give that resolves what must surely be the biggest difficulty in understanding the covenant at Sinai. What they tell us is that the Law must be considered from *two different perspectives*: As both largely and strictly considered. *Largely considered*, or taken on the whole, the Law refers to the entire doctrine delivered at Sinai, including not only the commands and precepts—but also the promises of Christ and gospel mercy, which are sprinkled throughout the books of the Law. And so, in its larger, wholistic sense, the Law in so many different ways sets forth Christ over and over again, and calls upon us to believe in Him as the way to God's blessing. But there are also times when the Law sets forth perfect obedience as the way to God's blessing. This is the Law *Strictly considered*; the Law as an abstracted rule of righteousness, that sets forth life upon no terms but perfect obedience, and threatens death to all who would come short of it. This is the way we can make sense of all the conflicting passages we read in the New Testament about the Law. How can it be that, on the one hand, Scripture tells us that Israel had the same *good news* preached to them under Moses that we do today (Hebrews 4:2,6; IE, the gospel); but that on the other hand, Scripture also tells us that Moses' ministry was a “ministry of death” and “condemnation” that actually “kills” (2 Corinthians 3:6-9)? How can we reconcile the fact that one Scripture tells us the ministry of Moses was a *gospel ministry*, and yet another Scripture tells us that Moses' ministry *brought death and condemnation*? By understanding that the New Testament writers themselves sometimes spoke of the Law as viewing it in its *larger* sense; but sometimes they spoke of it as viewing it in its *stricter*, abstracted sense. In other words, the reason we read two very different things about the Law in the New Testament is that the Law itself commands two very different things: On the one hand, the Law commands *faith in Christ as the way to God's blessing* (the Law as largely considered). But on the other hand, the Law also commands *perfect obedience as the way to God's blessing* (the Law as strictly considered). So then, the Law itself sets forth two very different ways to enter into God's blessing. And this is the reason we read such conflicting things

done in such exactness as is required; but they must be expounded evangelically, describing *the subject* capable of life eternal, not *the cause* why life and salvation is conferred. . . [these] passages are to be understood of sincere and upright walking, and show *who* are justified, and *to whom* the promises of life pertain, but not *why* they are justified” (pp136-37). But Roberts is right to humbly correct him. Quoting Ball here, Roberts says: “But this interpretation (though in itself very pious) comes not home to satisfy and remove the force of the objection; and therefore I cannot acquiesce in it. For, it may be easily replied: That, *Do this and live*, has something more in it, than those other passages of Scripture alleged by him. They may be interpreted Evangelically, but this phrase in the passages objected can hardly be so interpreted. *Partly*, because *Doing*, in those Scriptures is directly opposed to *Believing*, as to the point of justification and life (Lev. 18:5 with Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12). Here the Apostle purposely compares the righteousness of works and the righteousness of faith together (says Calvin) that he may the better show the repugnancy of them one to another. *Partly*, because the curse is denounced upon the least failing (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10). But failings in Evangelical obedience are *covered*, not *cursed*. . .” (p773). We should also note that though Ball seems to deny that the Law sets forth eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience, at least in Leviticus 18:5; still, in other places, he equally affirms that it does just that: “*The Law in itself considered exacted perfection of works as the cause of life*; but when that was impossible to man by reason of the infirmity of his flesh, it pleased the Lord to make known to his people by the ministry of Moses, that the Law was given, not to detain men in confidence of their own works, but to lead them unto Christ.” (pp113-114). Again: “For though the Law of righteousness promise a reward to the keepers thereof; yet after it has shut up all men under sin, it does substitute another righteousness in Christ, which is received by faith” (p114). And again: “the Law. . . exacts perfect obedience of man in his own person” (p114). Later, Ball clarifies, saying: “Perfect obedience is *commanded*, that if a man will trust in his works to be justified thereby, he must either bring that which is every way complete, or be cast in judgment. Sincere obedience, though imperfect is *approved*, that the imperfection of their best works being covered, and their transgressions graciously pardoned, they might be accepted by faith in Christ, who is the end of the Law, as righteous unto eternal life. . . *The Law requires perfect and exact obedience*. . . and he that trusts in his works, if he continues not in everything that is written in the book of the Law to do them, he is accursed. But to them that be in Covenant, the Law was given with such moderation, that *sincere obedience was accepted* of them. . .” (p135). Some today seem to want to deny that the Law truly demands perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience as the condition for life and curses all who come short of it. But this denial not only opposes the Westminster Confession (Chapter 19); it also opposes the clear teaching of Scripture itself. The OPC Report on Republication helps to bring needed clarity as they address one view they see as erroneous: “the view that we have referred to as the ‘misinterpretation’ theory has sometimes been articulated in such a way as to deny the requirement of perfect obedience in the moral law. In other words, Paul’s references to the law’s requirement for perfect obedience exist only in the minds of the Judaizers, and are not in some way expressed in the content of the Decalogue itself. This presentation of the misinterpretation theory sees the law’s requirement of perfect obedience existing only subjectively in the minds of the Jews, rather than objectively in the law itself. . . *Surely these are errors to be avoided*. A better way to articulate the misinterpretation position is to recognize that while the law itself always requires perfect obedience, it can also have several functions and uses in this regard. . . this [more correct] articulation of the misinterpretation position distinguishes between the law in itself and the use or function of the law. While it affirms that the Judaizers abused the law in its use, *it recognizes that the law itself always requires perfect obedience.*” (OPC Report, Ch.6, IV).

about the Law in the New Testament. When the New Testament writers refer to the Law, *sometimes* they're speaking of it on the whole, as including gospel mercies, promises of grace, and atonement for sin through Christ. When they refer to it this way, they are speaking of *the Law in its larger sense*—as it sets forth faith in Christ as the way to God's blessing. But *other times*, when the New Testament writers refer to the Law, they're speaking of it as it is also often presented, as an abstracted rule of righteousness, demanding perfect obedience and cursing all who fall short. When they refer to it this way, they are speaking of *the Law in its stricter sense*—as it sets forth perfect obedience as the way to God's blessing.⁴⁶

THE LAW LARGELY TAKEN VERSUS STRICTLY TAKEN

	UNDERSTOOD	WHAT IT DOES	WHAT IT REQUIRES	WHAT IT SAYS	HOW IT'S DESCRIBED
THE LAW	<i>Largely taken</i>	Provides Gospel Mercies	Faith in Christ	Believe and Live	A Gospel Ministry
	<i>Strictly taken</i>	Commands and Condemns	Perfect Obedience	Obey and Live	A Ministry of Death

A) A Few Examples: This is exactly the tool we need to help us understand passages like Romans 10:5-6 and Galatians 3:10-12. In Romans 10:5-6, Paul tells us: “For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.” Then in verse 6, he contrasts the righteousness that comes through the Law with the righteousness that comes by faith. But as we noted earlier, when Paul begins speaking of the righteousness that comes by faith, in verse 6, in order to describe it, he actually quotes a passage *from the Law*: “But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down), or “Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).’ But what does it say? ‘The word is near You, in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. . .” The passage Paul is quoting from here is Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Again: Paul is quoting here a passage from *the Law* in order to describe the righteousness that is *by faith*. And all this after he had just told us in verse 5 that the righteousness of the Law is something completely different than the righteousness of faith! How can we make any sense out of what Paul is saying here? By understanding that Paul is considering the Law from two different angles: If we take the Law *strictly*—as abstracted from all the promises of Christ and His redemption—then the Law indeed

⁴⁶ Roberts notes: “Now here it is diligently to be observed, that the word ‘Law’, as used for God’s Law given to Moses for Israel on Mount Sinai, is taken, 1) More largely; 2) More strictly; and 3) Most strictly: 1) *More largely and generally*, for the whole dispensation of all sorts of commandments: Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial; given and promulgated on Mount Sinai. . . 2) *More strictly*, and specially for the Moral Law, or Ten Commandments, taken complexively with the preface prefixed, and the promises interwoven therein, as God spoke them on Mount Sinai out of the midst of the fire to Israel, and afterwards wrote them, and gave them to Moses. . . 3) *Most strictly*, and restrainedly; the word [Law] is taken for The Law abstracted from Moses’ administration of it, and precisely considered as an abstracted rule of righteousness, holding forth life merely upon terms of perfect and perpetual personal obedience and denouncing death and the curse upon every one, and that without mercy, in case of the least contrary failing.” (pp659-60). And again: “the Law may be considered, more *largely*, as comprehending the whole doctrine and administration of the Sinai-covenant, as delivered by Moses on Mount Sinai; [but also] more *restrictively*, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness consisting in precepts, threats and promises; holding forth life upon a condition absolutely impossible to lapsed men; viz, perfect and perpetual personal obedience to the Law; but denouncing the curse and death upon the least contrary failing.” (Roberts, p773). Burgess writes: “The Law. . . may be considered *more largely*, as that whole doctrine delivered on Mount Sinai, with the preface and promises adjoined, and all things that may be reduced to it; or *more strictly*, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness, holding forth life upon no terms, but perfect obedience. Now take it in the former sense, it was a Covenant of Grace; take it in the latter sense, as abstracted from Moses’ administration of it, and so it was not of grace, but works. This distinction will overthrow all the objections against the negative.” (p233). Blake says: “Though *the whole Law* that Moses delivered from God on Mount Sinai to the people. . . do contain a Covenant of Grace, yet the Law is taken sometime[s] *in that strict sense*, as containing a Covenant of Works, and holding forth life upon condition of perfect obedience. So the Apostle, [in] Romans 10:5-6 puts an opposition between the righteousness of the Law, and the righteousness of faith; so also Galatians 3:18. If righteousness be by the Law, it is no more of promise, so that there is a necessity of distinguishing between the Law *abstracted from* the promise. . . and the Law *including* this promise. . . so that the works of the Law, considered in *the bare mandatory part* of it, can save none. . . yet *the righteousness witnessed by the Law and the Prophets*, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-22). . . brings salvation (Romans 3:21-22). . . So that the Law *abstracted from Christ*. . . was a ministry of condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:9). . . *but including Christ*, it was perfect, and saves the soul (Psalm 19:7).” (pp218-219). And Kevan affirms all this when he says: “The Puritans. . . [distinguished] between the Law, in the narrow sense of the Divine requirements of man, and the Law in the wider sense of the whole Mosaic order of things. *More strictly* and properly the Law signifies the Covenant of works, which is also called the Law of works, Rom. 3:27. . . *more largely* Torah the Law signifies the whole doctrine of the Old Testament’ . . . Put briefly, the Law can be considered as it is an ‘abstracted rule of righteousness’, or as comprehending ‘the whole Doctrine and Administration of the Sinai-Covenant.’” (p110; quoting Roberts pp773-74).

commands perfect obedience as the condition of life and condemns and curses all who fall short. This is Paul's meaning in verse 5. But if we take the Law as a whole, including the promises of Christ and His redemption that are scattered throughout the Law, we see that God, in the Law, is requiring faith in the Messiah who is often revealed in the Law in its *larger sense*. And this is Paul's meaning in verse 6.⁴⁷

A similar passage is Romans 3:21-22, where Paul writes: “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. . .” Speaking of Christ, Paul tells us here that the righteousness of God for salvation is *apart from the Law* (v21a) and yet *witnessed by the Law* (v21b). How to make sense of this? It seems Paul is contradicting himself. Is faith in Christ something *separate from* the Law (21a), or is it something actually *taught in* the Law (21b)? Here again, Paul is considering the Law in both its larger sense (including Christ) as well as its stricter sense (as abstracted from Him). The passage makes perfect sense if we read it this way: “But now apart from the Law [*strictly taken*] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law [*largely taken*]. . .even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ. . .” In other words, the righteousness of faith is apart from the Law strictly taken, but it is also revealed in the Law largely taken. I love how Francis Roberts puts it: “The Law itself testifies, that the righteousness of God is without [IE, apart from] the Law. . .”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ As Calvin says of Romans 10:5: “But we ought to understand the reason why Paul harmonizes the law with faith, and yet sets the righteousness of one in opposition to that of the other: The law has a twofold meaning; *it sometimes includes the whole of what has been taught by Moses*, and sometimes that part only which was peculiar to his ministration, which consisted of precepts, rewards, and punishments. . .But as evangelic [IE, evangelistic] promises are only found scattered in the writings of Moses, and these also somewhat obscure, and as the precepts and rewards, allotted to the observers of the law, frequently occur, it rightly appertained to Moses as his own and peculiar office, to teach what is the real righteousness of works, and then to show what remuneration awaits the observance of it, and what punishment awaits those who come short of it. For this reason Moses is by John compared with Christ, when it is said, ‘That the law was given by Moses, but that grace and truth came by Christ.’ (John 1:17). And whenever the word law is thus *strictly taken*, Moses is by implication opposed to Christ; and then we must consider what the law contains, as separate from the gospel. Hence what is said here of the righteousness of the law, must be applied, not to the whole office of Moses, but to that part which was in a manner peculiarly committed to him. . . [But in verse 6] He then means not the law only, but generally the whole of God's truth, which includes in it the gospel.”

⁴⁸ Roberts' full quote is: “The Law itself testifies, that the righteousness of God (viz, which God has ordained, revealed, and will accept), is without the Law; that is, by faith without the deeds of the Law.” (p787). In the quote, he refers to the Law as *largely taken* in the first usage of the word, and *strictly taken* in the second usage. Again, Roberts says: “In both the former [larger] and latter [strict] sense, the word ‘Law’ seems to be used in that passage, [Romans 3:21-22]: ‘But now apart from the Law [IE, strictly taken] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law [IE, largely taken] and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe’. . .[Thus] the Law *largely taken*, holds forth life on condition of believing in Christ, and in this notion it was given in the Sinai-covenant, which therefore is a Covenant of Faith [IE, Grace]; [but] the Law *strictly taken* requires perfect doing, and in that sense Moses gave it not, nor is it a Covenant of Faith but of works.” (Roberts, pp773-75). Roberts isn't saying that we're wrongly imputing the strict sense into our understanding of the Law, but only that in this sense the Law is not of faith but of works. Most commentators understand the second usage of ‘Law’ in Romans 3:21 as referring to the entirety of the first 5 books of Moses, as the phrase “Law and Prophets” often takes on this meaning (cf. Matthew 22:40). But this in no way nullifies the point we're making here, since even that broader definition of the Law *always also includes* the dispensation at Sinai (indeed, Sinai makes up the majority of the Pentateuch). Thus Calvin comments on Romans 3:21: “This righteousness then, which God communicates to man, and accepts alone, and owns as righteousness, has been revealed, he says, *without the law*, that is without the aid of the law; and the law is to be understood as meaning works; for it is not proper to refer this to its teaching, which he immediately adduces as bearing witness to the gratuitous righteousness of faith. . .*Being proved (or approved) by the testimony*, etc. He adds this, lest in the conferring of free righteousness the gospel should seem to militate against the law. As then [IE, v21a] he has denied that the righteousness of faith needs the aid of the law, so now [IE, v21b] he asserts that it is confirmed by its testimony. . .you will find in the commandments a demonstration of your iniquity, and from the sacrifices and oblations you may learn that satisfaction and cleansing are to be obtained in Christ alone.” In his Institutes, Calvin also notes: “Paul. . .justly makes contraries of the righteousness of the law and of that of the gospel (Rom. 3:21ff; Gal.3:10ff; etc). But the gospel did not so supplant the entire law as to bring forward a different way of salvation. Rather, it confirmed and satisfied whatever the law had promised, and gave substance to the shadows. . .Hence Paul, calling the gospel ‘the power of God unto salvation for every believer’ (Rom.1:16p), presently adds: ‘The Law and the Prophets bear witness to it’ (Rom.3:21). . .From this we infer that, where the whole law is concerned, the gospel differs from it only in clarity of manifestation.” (*Institutes*, 2.9.4). Haldane likewise says of Romans 3:21: “*Being witnessed by the law*. . .[the righteousness of faith] was intimated in the writings of Moses, in every declaration of the forgiveness of sin, and every call to repentance. All the declarations of mercy that are to be found in the law of Moses belong to the Gospel. They are all founded on the Messiah and His righteousness, and are made in consequence of God's purpose to send His Son in the fulness of time into the world, and of the first promise respecting the seed of the woman.” (*Romans*). Murray notes of this passage: “We have here an instructive example of the ease with which the apostle can turn from one denotation of the word ‘law’ to another. The righteousness that is unreservedly without law in one sense of the word ‘law’ is, nevertheless, witnessed to and therefore proclaimed by the law in another sense of that term. Law in one sense pronounces the opposite of justification, the law in another sense preaches justification.” (*Romans*, p110).

In Romans 3:21-22 and 10:5-6, Paul is considering the Law from *both* perspectives: in its *strict sense*—as abstracted from Christ and the promises, as well as in its *larger sense*—including Christ and the promises. In other passages, though, Paul refers *only* to the Law as considered in its strict sense. This is what he is describing in Galatians 3:10-12, where he tells us that “the Law is not of faith” (v12). We know that Paul can't mean this in an absolute or unqualified sense, because of what he had told us elsewhere in passages like Romans 3:21-22 and 10:5-6, where, once again, he had proven the righteousness of faith from the Law. Rather, Paul is speaking here of the Law in a particular sense—in its strict sense—as abstracted from the promises of Christ and the gospel, which were also revealed in the Law. And it's in this strict sense, where the Law commands perfect obedience and curses all who would fall short, that Paul is telling us the Law is not of faith. We might put it this way: The way of the gospel is *in the Law* but it's not *of the Law*. It's in the Law (*largely taken*), but not of the Law (*strictly taken*).⁴⁹ This is also what Paul is referring to in 2 Corinthians 3:6-9, where he describes the Law as a ministry of death and condemnation that kills its hearers. Here also, Paul isn't speaking of the Law in a way that is absolute or unqualified, but rather in a particular sense: he's talking about the Law as it's considered strictly taken, removed and abstracted from Christ and the promises of grace that are revealed in the Law in its larger sense. And indeed, in and of itself and removed from Christ, the Law is very rightly described as a ministry of death, since all it can do is justly condemn us for our many sins.⁵⁰ So then, though Paul at times considers the Law from both perspectives, at other times he only speaks of the Law in its strict sense. Consider the following chart:

⁴⁹ Speaking of Galatians, Calvin asserts: “[Paul] was disputing with perverse teachers who pretended that we merit righteousness by the works of the law. Consequently, to refute their error he was sometimes compelled to take the bare law in a narrow sense, even though it was otherwise graced with the covenant of free adoption.” (*Institutes*, 2:7:2). Turretin unpacks Calvin, saying: “The law is said 'to be not of faith' (Galatians 3:12), not as taken broadly and denoting the Mosaic economy, but strictly as taken for the moral law abstractly and apart from the promises of grace. . .” (p267). And Francis Roberts likewise notes: “Most strictly, and restrainedly; the word [Law] is taken for the Law abstracted from Moses' administration of it, and precisely considered as an abstracted rule of righteousness. And in this sense the Apostle takes the word [Law] in his dispute about justification by faith, and not by the works of the Law; opposing Law, to Gospel and to Grace; works, to faith; and justification by works, to justification by faith. . . *But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the Law is not of faith: but, the man that doth them, shall live in them.* . . In these, and like passages, the word Law is considered in this most restrictive sense, as abstracted and separated from all other additions in Moses' administration of it. And in this strictest sense, the Law is materially and for substance the same with the Covenant of Works written in Adam's heart in innocency. . .” (p660). Again Roberts says: “That, whereas Paul elsewhere says, 'The Law is not of faith', that is, sets not forth the righteousness of faith, Galatians 3:12, to this I answer. . . that this cannot be meant of the Law, absolutely taken (for then, you see, Paul should contradict himself, who proves the righteousness of faith from the Law, as revealed [in Romans 10:6ff]); but it must needs be intended of the Law in some limited and restrictive sense. . . this cannot be meant of the Law, more generally and complexively taken. . . but it may be intended of the Law, more strictly and abstractively taken, for the mere preceptive part of the Law, as declarative of, and in substance one with the Law of nature in Adam's heart, and as abstracted from Moses' administration. . .” (pp767-68). And again: “the Law may be considered, more *largely*, as comprehending the whole doctrine and administration of the Sinai-covenant, as delivered by Moses on Mount Sinai; [but also] more *restrictively*, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness. . . In the latter sense Paul understands the Law in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12 and in this sense, the righteousness of the Law stands in perfect doing: 'the man that does them shall live in them'. . . But this acceptance of the Law abstracts the Law from Moses' dispensation of it, from faith, and from Christ the soul of the Law; and so leaves the Law as a mere ministry of death and condemnation. . . To this effect says one, 'The Law in itself considered, exacted perfection of works as the cause of life; but when that was impossible to man by reason of the infirmity of his flesh, it pleased the Lord to make known to his people by the ministry of Moses, that the Law was given, not to detain men in confidence of their own works but to lead them unto Christ'. . . (Roberts, pp773-74).

⁵⁰ John Ball says: “The words of Paul [that the Law is a killing letter and ministration of death and condemnation]. . . are not to be understood absolutely of the Law, but as it was separated from Christ and the gospel. . . the Law animated by Christ is pleasant and delightful, but as it is barely considered in opposition to Christ and to the gospel, as it exacts perfect obedience, but gives no ability or power to perform what is required, it wounds, terrifies, kills and works wrath. Of the Law there is a twofold use and consideration. One as it is a rigid exactor of entire obedience, and hand-writing against us for sin, and thus of itself barely considered, it wounds, but heals not, it revives sin, but mortifies it not. The other, as it points to Christ in whom salvation is to be found, and directs how to walk in all well-pleasing before the Lord; and thus it is an easy yoke. The Law considered without Christ wounds, kills, and revives sin by reason of our corruptions; but the Law considered in Christ, and as it points unto him, kills corruption, and converts the soul.” (pp120-121). Vos notes: “The covenant with Israel served in an emphatic manner to recall the strict demands of the covenant of works. . . It is for this reason that in [2 Corinthians 3:7 and 9], Paul calls the ministry of Moses a ministry of condemnation. This simply shows how the demand of the law comes more to the fore in this dispensation of the covenant of grace.” (*Reformed Dogmatics*, V2, p130). Bavinck adds: “The law of Moses, accordingly, is not antithetical to grace but subservient to it and was also thus understood and praised in every age by Israel's pious men and women. *But detached from the covenant of grace, it indeed became a letter that kills, a ministry of condemnation.* . . that it might arouse the consciousness of sin, increase the felt need for salvation, and reinforce the expectation of an even richer revelation of God's grace. . . The impossibility of keeping the Sinaitic covenant and of meeting the demands of the law made another and better dispensation of the covenant of grace necessary.” (*Volume 3*, p222).

THE LAW LARGELY AND STRICTLY TAKEN: A SUMMARY

	UNDERSTOOD	CONSIDERED AS	RIGHTEOUSNESS IS	REQUIRES	EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE
THE LAW	<i>Largely taken</i>	Including Christ	Witnessed in the Law	Faith	Rom.3:21; 10:6-9; (Jn.5:46; Heb.4:2,6)
	<i>Strictly taken</i>	Abstracted from Christ	Demanded by the Law	Works	Rom.3:21; 10:5; Gal.3:10ff; 2Cor.3:6ff

B) A Few Clarifications: Towards the beginning of our lesson, we outlined the four major views of the Mosaic Covenant. There we refuted two views that claimed the Covenant of Works was republished at Sinai (the Republication View and the Mixed View). We concluded that the Mosaic Covenant was not a republication of the Covenant of Works in any way, but was rather simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace, and we gave several reasons for why we take it to be so. Well, we're now at the point where we're able to come full circle and clarify one final point about the Mosaic Covenant. And here's what it is: *Though it's true that the Law largely taken belongs to the Covenant of Grace, it's also true that the Law strictly taken is actually the content of the Covenant of Works.*⁵¹ Let me explain: The Law *largely taken* belongs to the Covenant of Grace, because it reveals Christ and the gospel and calls us to put our faith in Him. This is why the Mosaic Covenant is a manifestation of the Covenant of Grace, because the essence of the Mosaic Covenant is the Law as it is given largely, the Law taken on the whole—including the promises of Christ and redemption in Him. But though the Law *largely taken* belongs to the Covenant of Grace, the Law *strictly taken* actually contains the content of the Covenant of Works: Perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life is the arrangement that God originally entered into with Adam in the garden. Now, at first, this may sound like another form of the Mixed View; it sounds like we're saying that ultimately the Mosaic Covenant was a mix of the Covenant of Grace *and* the Covenant of Works. But this is quite distinct, because though the Mixed View tells us that Sinai contained both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, they think of it in a way that is much different. The proponents of the Mixed View assert that at Sinai the Covenant of Works itself was again *republished*; we're saying that at Sinai the content of the Covenant of Works was simply *repeated*. They say that at Sinai the Covenant of Works itself was again *reinstated*; we're merely saying that at Sinai the terms of the Covenant of Works were again *reiterated*. The Mixed View holds that God was actually *renewing* the Covenant of Works with Israel at Sinai; we're just saying He was *reminding* them of its demands.⁵²

⁵¹ This is the position of the great majority of the Puritans who subscribed to the Westminster view. Of Galatians 3:10-12, Roberts says: "In these, and like passages, the word Law is considered in this most restrictive sense, as abstracted and separated from all other additions in Moses' administration of it. And in this strictest sense, the Law is materially and for substance the same with the Covenant of Works written in Adam's heart in innocence. . ." (p660). And Turretin writes that broadly taken, the old covenant contained "the doctrine of grace delivered to the ancients, promising salvation and life. . . under the condition of repentance and faith in the Messiah about to come. . . Strictly, however, it denotes the Covenant of Works or the moral law given by Moses—the unbearable burden of legal ceremonies being added, absolutely and apart from the promise of grace." (pp233-234). And again: "The Mosaic Covenant may be viewed in two aspects: either according to the intention and design of God and in order to Christ; or separately and abstracted from him. In the latter way, it is really distinct from the Covenant of Grace because it coincides with the Covenant of Works and in this sense is called the letter that killeth and the ministration of condemnation when its nature is spoken of (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). But it is unwarrantably abstracted here because it must always be considered with the intention of God, which was, not that man might have life from the law or as a sinner might be simply condemned, but that from a sense of his own misery and weakness he might fly for refuge to Christ." (Turretin, p267). And Vos likewise: "Even after the covenant of works is broken, perfect keeping of the law is presented as a hypothetical means for obtaining life. . ." (V2, p41). And again: "The covenant with Israel served in an emphatic manner to recall the strict demands of the covenant of works. To that end, the law of the Ten Commandments was presented so emphatically and engraved deeply in stone. This law. . . truly contained the content of the covenant of works. But—and one should certainly note this—it contains this content as made serviceable for a particular period of the covenant of grace. It therefore says, for example, 'I am the Lord your God'. . . But also, beyond the Decalogue, there is reference to the law as a demand of the covenant of works (e.g., Lev 18:5; Deut 27:26; 2 Cor 3:7,9). It is for this reason that in the last cited passage, Paul calls the ministry of Moses a ministry of condemnation. This simply shows how the demand of the law comes more to the fore in this dispensation of the covenant of grace." (Vos, V2, p130). And Hodge: "[The Mosaic Covenant] contained, as does also the New Testament, a renewed proclamation of the original covenant of works." (*Systematics*, V2).

⁵² The Puritans were always very careful in how they used their language here. The overwhelming majority of them (who held to the Westminster view) never affirmed that the Covenant of Works itself was actually *republished* or *renewed* at Sinai along with the Covenant of Grace, but clarified that the content of the Covenant of Works was rather there *repeated* or *reiterated*. They are clear in the way they articulate their view that it wasn't that the Covenant of Works was *made* again at Sinai—but rather that there it's terms were again *declared* afresh (see my *Abstracts* for more). John Colquhoun summarizes them when he writes: "the covenant made with the Israelites at Sinai could not be the Covenant of Works. God could not consistently. . . renew or make again that covenant with persons who, by breaking it in the first Adam, had already subjected

Still, the question remains: If all this is true, how can it be that the Mosaic Covenant actually belongs to the Covenant of Grace? Jesus tells us that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and it's hard to imagine anything more at opposition than the way of works and the way of faith. If it's true that the Law strictly taken is really the content of the Covenant of Works, how can we say that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace? How can anything that includes the content of the Covenant of Works actually be thought of as belonging to the Covenant of Grace? How can the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Works co-exist together at Sinai? The Puritans answered this question by making a distinction between what they called *ingrediency* and *subserviency*; or again, between *coordination* and *subordination*. What they meant was that, at Sinai, the Covenant of Works was not mixed or blended together with the Covenant of Grace (ingrediency), whereby these two very different covenants took on the form of one and the same covenant (coordination). It wasn't as if the Covenant of Grace, which requires *faith alone*, was mixed together with the content of the Covenant of Works, which requires *perfect obedience*, in such a way that they lost all distinction; so that as a result, Sinai now required *both* conditions: faith *and* obedience as the requirements for eternal life. Though the content of the Covenant of Works was declared at Sinai, it was never blended together with the Covenant of Grace, but remained distinct. It was added, not by way of *ingrediency* but rather *subserviency*; not by way of *coordination* but *subordination*. In other words, when God added the content of the Covenant of Works to Sinai, it wasn't like adding chocolate syrup to a glass of milk and stirring it up; it was like adding oil to water: though the content of the Covenant of Works was added to the Covenant of Grace, it remained distinct.⁵³

Think of a bag of beef jerky. What's inside? Well, if you've eaten a lot of beef jerky in your life, you know that there are actually *two things* inside that bag. There are dozens of slices of original, teriyaki, or peppered flavored beef, smoked to perfection. But there is also something else in that bag. Among the slabs of delicious dried meat there is also a strange looking white packet of something called silica gel. You want to keep an eye out for these small white packets in your jerky bag; they always have written on them: "Do not eat" or "Do not consume" because they're not edible, and eating them can be hazardous. So why in the world do they put them in? Well, they put these packets in along with the meat in order to better preserve the taste of the jerky. In and of itself it is inedible and can even be dangerous—but it was never meant to be consumed. Its purpose is to better draw out the taste of the jerky you *are* meant to eat. Or *think of the bay leaves* you add to the delicious curry you're cooking on your stove. Now, the bay leaf is not the same thing as the curry of which it is a part. It's part of the curry but it's included in order to serve the curry as a whole. And when you add the bay leaf to the curry it doesn't dissolve into the curry—it retains its distinctive form as you cook it. So that even though the bay leaf is part of the curry, you can still distinguish it from the rest of the curry. Further, just as with the white packets in the beef jerky, you shouldn't try to eat the bay leaves: though part of the curry, they're not edible and can hurt you. So why do you put them in? Because they contribute to the overall taste and enjoyment of the curry as a whole.

themselves to the penalty of it. He could, indeed, display it in its terror before condemned sinners, but could not again make it with them. . . The violated Covenant of Works. . . was not, and could not be, made or renewed with the Israelites at Sinai; for it was a broken covenant. . . But though it was not renewed with them, yet it was, on that solemn occasion, repeated and displayed to them. It was not proposed to them in order that they might consent, by their own works, to fulfill the condition of it; but it was displayed before them in subservience to the Covenant of Grace that they might see how impossible it was for them as condemned sinners to perform that perfect obedience which is the immutable condition of life in it. Although the Lord knew well that they were far from being able to yield perfect obedience, yet He saw proper to set forth eternal life to them upon these terms (Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 27:26). . . in order that the people might, by contemplating it, see what kind and degree of righteousness it required as the condition of eternal life; and that by means of it, finding themselves utterly destitute of perfect righteousness, they might be impelled to take hold of the Covenant of Grace in which the perfect righteousness of the second Adam is provided and exhibited for the justification of all who believe." (Colquhoun, pp.58,63-64).

⁵³ William Strong uses the language we mentioned above. He says, "God's intention was not to join the Law and the promise together in the matter of justification and life; because they be quite cross and contrary one to another. . . [and] do directly destroy each other; [for] if the inheritance be by the Law, it is no more of promise; and therefore no man can be justified by both. Yet God having revealed the Law after the promise, and seeing he will have them both to be perpetual and lasting, they must stand together, and a way must be found out how they may, and not cross one another, nor destroy or disannul each other; for the Law is not against the promise of God, God forbid we should think so; then if they cannot stand together in a way of *ingrediency*, they may very well in a way of *subserviency*; if not *coordination*, they may in *subordination*; both tending to honor the mercy and grace of God in his Son; the one primarily, and the other secondarily, as an appendix or an addition thereunto. . . Seeing therefore these two must stand together, and the former cannot be disannulled by the latter; hence then it must needs be inferred, that God's intention was in publishing the Law, to do it in subordination unto the gospel, and the second covenant, and that so it is to stand and to be made use of by the Saints." (Strong, *Two Covenants*, p.87).

This is exactly how the Law strictly taken functioned in the context of the Mosaic Covenant as it was given as a whole. It's how the content of the Covenant of Works was declared at Sinai on the one hand, and yet how the Mosaic Covenant as a whole belonged to the Covenant of Grace. The Mosaic Covenant as a whole was like that bag of beef jerky or the curry on the stove. The content of the Covenant of Works was indeed included in the Mosaic Covenant—but just like the little white packets in the bag of beef jerky or the bay leaves in the curry—it was never meant to be consumed but rather was added to Sinai by way of *subserviency* and *subordination*—to serve the larger purposes of the Mosaic Covenant as a whole. In other words, at Sinai, the content of the Covenant of Works was *added* to the Covenant of Grace in a way that *submitted* to the Covenant of Grace in order to *serve the purposes* of the Covenant of Grace.⁵⁴

What did this look like in particular? How was it that the content of the Covenant of Works served to advance the purposes of the Covenant of Grace at Sinai? Simply put: *the Law strictly considered was added in order to drive God's people to Christ as He was revealed in the Law largely considered.* At Sinai, the demand of the *Covenant of Works* was repeated afresh in order to cause God's people to seek refuge alone in the *Covenant of Grace*. The command, “*Do this and live*” was given to Israel so that, considering the absolute perfection demanded in the Law, they would rather flee to Christ, the only hope for sinners, and in Him might, “*Believe and live.*”⁵⁵ Now, this is where so many of the Jews went wrong.

⁵⁴ As Turretin says: “The specific difference of a covenant cannot make a diversity of condition, expressed by the law and gospel—of the former imperfect obedience; of the latter in faith. It was not required in the same way, nor for the same end. For faith in Christ is demanded primarily and intended chiefly, but perfect obedience (under punishment of death and the curse) only subordinately and relatively to faith and the righteousness of faith. By convincing man of his sin and weakness, it forced him to seek a remedy in Christ by faith (as we have already said.)” (p268). And again: “It is one thing to speak of the law in itself (which had the form of a Covenant of Works and was enacted not with the end of making alive, but to convict of transgression, extort the confession of debt and lead to Christ); another concerning the Sinaitic covenant itself, in which the law was enacted. In the former sense, the law is called a handwriting against us and the minister of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9; Col. 2:14); but in the latter sense, that covenant had the lively oracles (Acts 7:38) and contained the saving promises of the grace of Christ.” (Turretin, p269). And Bavinck says, “Concerning the law as law, apart from the promises, to which in the Old Testament the law was made subservient, Paul asserts that it cannot justify, that it increases sin, that it is a ministry of condemnation [2 Cor. 3:9], and precisely in that way prepares the fulfillment of the promise and necessitates another righteousness, that is, the righteousness of God in Christ by faith.” (IV:452-53). Bridge puts it beautifully: “It is plain and clear that the Jews that were saved in the time of the Old Testament, were saved by the same covenant that we now are saved by. . . But though those Jews that were saved were saved by the same covenant that we now are saved by, yet notwithstanding the covenant of works was declared and promulgated among the Jews; ‘Wherefore then was the law added?’ says the apostle. Added then it was. As Sarah and Hagar, made types of the two testaments by the apostle, were at once in Abraham’s house; so the old covenant of works, and the new covenant of grace were at once in the Jewish church. But though both these covenants were at once in the Jewish church, the one [was] declared and the other [was] made with them; though Hagar was in the same house, yet it was in subserviency unto Sarah; and though the covenant of works was declared and was there at the same time, yet it was in subserviency unto the covenant of grace; ‘It was added, wherefore?’ says the apostle, because of transgression, to be a schoolmaster to bring to Christ. It was there in subserviency, and upon a gospel design. . .” (pp48-49).

⁵⁵ Roberts says: “this Sinai Covenant was in such sort administered, as to press upon them the perfect fulfilling of the Law, as most necessary to life and salvation, denouncing the curse upon the least failing; but withal revealing to them, that this perfect fulfilling of the Law in their own persons being utterly impossible, he was pleased to accept it in Christ their Surety, perfectly fulfilling it on their behalf, and bearing the curse for their offenses, according to the intimation of the many types and ceremonies in the Law. By exacting of them perfect obedience, impossible to them, it takes them off their own seek[ing] for righteousness by their own doing; by representing Christ’s perfect obedience and sufferings as a remedy, it teaches them to seek for righteousness by Christ’s perfect obedience, through faith in him.” (p768). Burgess says: “Now when we speak of the Moral Law. . . that may be considered two ways. 1) Either *rigidly*, and in an abstracted consideration from the administration of it, as it does require perfect obedience, and condemning those that have it not. . . 2) Or else the Law may be taken in a more *large* way for the administration of it by Moses, in all the particulars of it; and thus Christ was intended directly, and not by accident; that is, God when He gave the Law to the people of Israel, did intend that the sense of their impossibility to keep it, and infinite danger accruing thereby to them, should make them desire and seek out for Christ; which the Jews generally not understanding, or neglecting, did thereby, like Adam, go to make fig leaves for their covering of their nakedness, their empty, external obedience.” (p266). And speaking of the Galatians, Strong says: “They seeing a covenant made with Abraham, and a promise of free grace and of righteousness, and life without works, an inheritance by promise; and 430 years after a Law given requiring works, and promising life upon perfect obedience thereof, they did not know how to conceive, but that either God did repent of and revoke his former covenant, or else they must be both joined together in the matter of justification and life. Now to answer this the Apostle acquaints them *with the end why God did give the Law*: it was not to set it up as a Covenant alone, that any man should attain righteousness and life thereby. . . neither was it published to make void the Covenant of Grace, but it was added, not by way of opposition but subordination, *that it might be as Hagar to Sarah; a handmaid to further the ends of the gospel, and to advance the grace of it, that it might be as the avenger of blood to the city of refuge*, and make men look for the Law in the Ark, Christ, who is the end of the Law for justification. . . [But] This men being ignorant of, they look upon the Law as a Covenant of Works, and all that they do in obedience thereunto is to gain righteousness and life.”

All they saw at Sinai was the command to obey, and obey perfectly; and taking only this command, they sought to establish their own righteousness through the works of the Law. Sadly, they never truly listened to Moses at all; for Moses in the Law wrote of Christ, and had they listened to Moses, they would have been led to seek refuge in Him (John 5:46).⁵⁶ Indeed, they not only *added* many things to the Law, but they also *took away* from the Law Christ, the hope of salvation, revealed in the Law. For though the Law demands perfect obedience, the reason for such a requirement was never for us to actually try to earn life by obeying its precepts perfectly, but rather in being confronted with how far we come short of it, to flee to Christ. The purpose for which God set forth *the Law* at Sinai was always to lead men to *the gospel*.⁵⁷

So then, it's true that the Law as it is strictly taken is very different than the Gospel. And it's truly vital that we never mix them together or confuse them: The Law tells us what is *required* for salvation; the gospel tells us how God has *provided* it for us. The Law issues *commands*; the gospel makes *promises*. The Law *breaks* guilty sinners; the gospel *heals* them. The Law declares *what we must do*; the gospel declares what God in Christ *has done*. The Law *condemns* sinners; the gospel justifies them. The Law brings *conviction*; the gospel brings *comfort*. The Law *demand*s righteousness; the gospel *provides* it. The Law *shows* us our sin-disease; the gospel *cures* it. The Law gives *the knowledge of sin*; the gospel gives *the knowledge of the Savior*. So that, apart from Christ and the gospel, the Law is merely a letter that kills.⁵⁸

(p29). Turretin says: "A twofold relation ought always to obtain [be considered]: *the one legal*, more severe, through which by a new promulgation of the law and of the Covenant of Works, with an intolerable yoke of ceremonies, he wished to set forth what men owed and what was to be expected by them on account of duty unperformed. In this respect, the law is called the letter that kills (2 Cor.3:6) and the handwriting which was contrary to us (Col.2:14), because by it men professed themselves guilty and children of death, the declaration being written by their own blood in circumcision and by the blood of victims. *The other relation was evangelical*, sweeter, inasmuch as 'the law was a schoolmaster unto Christ' (Gal.3:24) and contained 'the shadow of things to come' (Heb.10:1), whose body and express image is in Christ. . .According to that twofold relation, the administration can be viewed either as to the external economy of *legal teaching* or as to the internal truth of the *gospel promise* lying under it. . .eternal life [was set forth] according to the clause, 'Do this and live.' On the part of the people, it was a stipulation of obedience to the whole law or righteousness both perfect (Deut.27:26; Gal.3:10) and personal and justification by it (Rom.2:13). But this stipulation in the Israelite covenant was only accidental, since it was added only in order that man by its weakness might be led to reject his own righteousness and to embrace another's, latent [hidden] under the law." (p227).

⁵⁶ See footnote above. Ball says: "the condition of obedience, which God requires and man promises, is the chief thing urged in the Law; but free and gracious pardon, wherein consists the happiness of the Saints is therein promised and proclaimed. They under the Old Testament lightly following the letter, mistook the meaning, not looking to the end of that which was to be abolished, whereunto Moses had an eye under the veil. For they perceived not so well the grace intended by the legal Testament, which the perfection of the Moral Law, whereof they could not but fail, should have forced them to seek, and the imperfection of the typical Law, which made nothing perfect, should have led them to find, but they generally rested in the work done, as was commanded by either Law, when as themselves were unable to do the one, and the other was in itself as insufficient to help them." (Ball, p106). And Dabney says: "[The Apostles] were arguing, for the gospel plan, against self-righteous Jews, who had perversely cast away the gospel significance out of the Mosaic institutions to which they clung, and who retained only the condemning features of those institutions; vainly hoping to make a righteousness out of compliance with a law, whose very intent was to remind men that they could make no righteousness for themselves." (Dabney, p458).

⁵⁷ We've noted earlier that some actually seem to deny that the Law contains the requirement of perfect obedience as the cause of eternal life and curses all who fall short (see end of last footnote under #3: *Perfect Obedience in the Law*). I would guess that many who would hold this view do so because they believe the Mosaic Covenant was indeed part of the Covenant of Grace, and they think that to concede that perfect obedience is demanded in the Law is to weaken the argument that Sinai belongs to the Covenant of Grace. I hope we've demonstrated above that this is emphatically *not* the case. The Puritans often speak of the Jews misunderstanding God's Law in the context of speaking of the Law in its strict sense. But when they do so, they are not saying that the Jews were mistaken to take the Law in its *strict sense*—but rather that they were mistaken in failing to also take the Law in its *larger sense*. The Jews' mistake was not *adding* to the Law (the strict sense), but rather in *taking away* from it (cutting Christ out of the Law's larger sense). Their mistake didn't have to do with the Law's *demands*—but rather with the Law's *design*; not with *what* the Law required, but *why* it required what it did. Their mistake was never wrongly imposing upon the Law the demand of perfect obedience—but rather misunderstanding why the Law demanded what it did.

⁵⁸ See Romans 3:19-20; 5:20; 7:7; 2 Corinthians 3:5-7; Galatians 3:19, 21-22; and John 1:17. On 2 Corinthians 3:5-7, Calvin says: "The law was *engraved on stones*, and hence it was a literal doctrine. This defect of the law required to be corrected by the gospel. . .From this, too, it follows, that the law was the *ministry of condemnation* and of *death*; for when men are instructed as to their duty, and hear it declared, that all who do not render satisfaction to the justice of God are cursed, (Deuteronomy 27:26), they are convicted, as under sentence of sin and death. From the law, therefore, they derive nothing but a condemnation of this nature, because God there demands what is due to him, and at the same time confers no power to perform it. The gospel, on the other hand, by which men are regenerated, and are reconciled to God, through the free remission of their sins, is the ministry of righteousness, and, consequently, of life also. . .the office of the law is to show us the disease, in such a way as to show us, at the same time, no hope of cure: the office of the gospel is, to bring a remedy to those that were past hope. For as the law leaves man to himself, it condemns him, of necessity, to death; while the gospel, bringing him to Christ, opens the gate of life." (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). And again, Calvin says: "The law is like a mirror. In it we contemplate our weakness, then the iniquity arising from this, and finally the curse coming from both—just as a mirror shows

But though the Law has a different function than the Gospel, they still always have the same goal: to bring sinners to Christ. And so, though they are very different, “the Law. . .is not opposite, but subordinate to the gospel.”⁵⁹ *Think of farming:* You plow and you sow. But plowing itself never bears fruit. It's the sowing that bears fruit. So why plow? Because plowing prepares the way for the sowing. In and of itself, plowing actually destroys. But is plowing against sowing? No way. Why? Because though they have different functions, plowing and sowing both work together for the same goal; namely, to bring fruit from the earth. And it's the same with the Law and the gospel. Though the Law is very *different* than the Gospel, still, they are not *contrary* to one another (Galatians 3:21). In and of itself, the Law is indeed a ministry of death. But God's design in it is to lead us to the life that He has freely provided in Christ.

C) One Final Thought: There's one more reason that God gave us the Law in its strict sense at Sinai. Perfect obedience was commanded under Moses, not only to expose our own wretchedness under the Covenant of Works, but also to demonstrate the requirements Christ himself must fulfill for us under the Covenant of Grace. The older writers recognized that these two conditions—these two wholly opposing conditions—*faith* and *obedience*, were both given in the Law *because they were equally necessary for our salvation*, but in this way: *faith* is commanded in the Law (in its large sense) because it is *required of us* in

us the spots on our face. For when the capacity to follow righteousness fails him, man must be mired in sins. After the sin forthwith comes the curse. Accordingly, the greater the transgression of which the law holds us guilty, the graver the judgment to which it makes us answerable. The apostle's statement is relevant here: 'Through the law comes knowledge of sin' (Rom. 3:20). . .Related to this are these statements: 'Law slipped in, to increase the trespass' (Rom. 5:20), and thus it is 'the dispensation of death' (2 Cor. 3:7) that 'brings wrath' (Rom. 4:15), and slays. . .It remains, then, to the law to arm God's wrath for the sinner's downfall, for of itself the law can only accuse, condemn, and destroy. . .But when we say that, we neither dishonor the law, nor detract at all from its excellence. . .[As Augustine] writes. . .'The usefulness of the law lies in convicting man of his infirmity and moving him to call upon the remedy of grace which is in Christ.' . . .Again: 'The law was given for this purpose: to make you, being great, little; to show that you do not have in yourself the strength to attain righteousness, and for you, thus helpless, unworthy, and destitute, to flee to grace.'” (*Institutes*, 2.7.7-9). Hodge says: “the law as written was something external and objective. It was addressed to the eye, to the ear, to the understanding. It was not an inward principle or power. It held up the rule of duty to which men were to be conformed, but it could not impart the disposition or ability to obey. It was, as it were, a mere writing or book. On the other hand, the gospel is spiritual, as distinguished from what was external and ritual. It is the power of God, Romans 1:6; the organ through which the Spirit works in giving life to the soul. These words therefore express concisely the characteristic difference between the law and the gospel. The one was external, the other spiritual; the one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case the law was written on stone, in the other on the heart. The one therefore was *letter*, the other *spirit*. . .It was the design and effect of the law to kill. . .In all these forms it was designed to bring men to the knowledge of sin and helplessness; to produce a sense of guilt and misery, and a longing for redemption, and thus be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ (Galatians 3:24).” (*2 Corinthians* 3:6-7). Bavinck says, “While, on the one hand, the Reformers held on to the unity of the covenant of grace in its two dispensations against the Anabaptists, on the other hand, they also perceived the sharp contrast between law and gospel. . .the terms 'law' and 'gospel'. . .in their actual significance they definitely describe two essentially different revelations of divine will. . .[In Scripture] law and gospel are contrasted as demand and gift, as command and promise, as sin and grace, as sickness and healing, as death and life. Although they agree in that both have God as author, both speak of one and the same perfect righteousness, and both are addressed to human beings to bring them to eternal life, they nevertheless differ in that the law proceeds from God's holiness, the gospel from God's grace; the law is known from nature, the gospel only from special revelation; the law demands perfect righteousness, but the gospel grants it; the law leads people to eternal life by works, and the gospel produces good works from the riches of the eternal life granted in faith; the law presently condemns people, and the gospel acquits them; the law addresses itself to all people, and the gospel only to those who live within its hearing. . .” (IV:453). And Colquhoun writes: “The law regards us as creatures, originally formed with sufficient ability to yield perfect obedience to it; and accordingly it requires us to retain, and to exert that ability, in performing perfectly all the duties, which we owe to God, ourselves, and our neighbors; whereas, the gospel considers us as sinners, condemned to death. . .totally destitute of strength. . .and it declares to us, what God, as a God of infinite grace and mercy, has done, and what he offers and promises still to be, and to do, for us. . .The law shows us 'what manner of persons we ought to be'. . .but it does not inform us, by what means we may become such; whereas the gospel teaches us, how we may be made such; namely, by union, and communion with Christ in his righteousness. . . The law condemns [sinners]. . .the gospel justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus. In the former, he curses, as on mount Ebal; in the latter, he blesses, as on mount Gerizim. . .While the law, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, serves to convince the sinner of his sin, and of his want of righteousness; the gospel presents him with a perfect righteousness, for his justification before God. The law, wounds and terrifies the guilty sinner; the gospel heals and comforts the guilty sinner who believes in Jesus. The one shows him, that his debt is infinitely great, and that he has nothing to clear it; the other informs him, that, by the obedience and death of Jesus, his Divine Surety, it is paid to the utmost farthing. . .by the law, is the knowledge of sin; by the gospel, is the knowledge of a Savior. . .The law shows the sinner his disease; the gospel presents him with healing balm. . .The former presents grounds of fear; the latter, a foundation of hope. . .” (pp162-70).

⁵⁹ Ball, p113. This is what Calvin was pointing out when he said of Galatians 3:21-22, “The law would be opposed to the promises, if it had the power of justifying; for there would be two opposite methods of justifying a man, two separate roads towards the attainment of righteousness. But Paul refuses to the law such a power; so that the contradiction is removed. . .”

the Covenant of Grace; *perfect obedience* is commanded in the Law (in its strict sense) because it is *required of Christ* in the Covenant of Grace. *Evangelical faith* and *perfect obedience* are both required at Sinai because both are equally necessary for our justification—but again, in this way: it's *Christ's perfect obedience* (not ours) that will justify us; but this perfect obedience can only be imputed to us *by faith*.

Turretin gives a beautiful summary of these things in his Institutes. He says: “Again, these two conditions are proposed because they are necessary to the salvation of the sinner: *perfect obedience in Christ* to fulfill the righteousness of the law. . .without which the justice of God did not permit life to be given to us; *faith however in us* that the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ might be applied to us and become ours by imputation. *Thus what was demanded of us in the Covenant of Works is fulfilled by Christ in the Covenant of Grace.* Nor is it absurd that in this way justification takes place by works and by faith—by *the works of Christ* and by *our faith*. And thus in sweet harmony the law and the gospel meet together in this covenant. The law is not administered without the gospel, nor the gospel without the law. So that it is as it were a legal-gospel and an evangelical-law; a gospel full of obedience and a law full of faith. So the gospel does not destroy the law, but establishes it (Romans 3:31) by giving us Christ, who perfectly fulfilled it. And the law is not against the gospel, since it refers and leads us to it as its end.”⁶⁰

Francis Roberts also has condensed down many of the things we've been discussing into a beautifully rich section in his writings. It's a bit lengthy, but it's so valuable that I'd like to end by quoting him at length. He says: “I add therefore, for the unfolding of this mystery more clearly. . .these few considerations touching the Law or Sinai Covenant, and the condition of life and happiness therein revealed, [namely]:

- 1) “That the Sinai Covenant was purposely so dispensed as to tender life and happiness upon two opposite and contrary conditions; *viz*, works and faith; perfect doing, and believing; *a) Upon perfect doing* all in the Law: Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12 with Leviticus 18:5; the curse being denounced against the least failing, Galatians 3:10 with Deuteronomy 27:26. *b) Upon believing in Jesus Christ* the Messiah promised, Romans 3:21,22 and 10:6-12; compared with Deuteronomy 30:11-14. . .To deny this, which is so clear, will but tend to weaken Paul's authority, [and] to darken many Scriptures. . .
- 2) “That, in this Sinai Covenant these opposite conditions, of perfect doing under pain of curse and death, and of believing in Christ, are very differently required and revealed: *a) Believing in Christ* is revealed very sparingly and obscurely; *b) perfect doing* very frequently and plainly. . .Whence (as Calvin notes) though the whole ministration of the Sinai Covenant belongs to Moses' office; yet that function most properly. . .seems to be ascribed to him, which consisted in teaching what the true righteousness of works was, and what rewards or punishments attend upon the observers or breakers of the Law. . .
- 3) “That, though these two conditions of perfect doing, and believing, be thus differently revealed and required in the Sinai Covenant; yet *believing in Christ* unto life and righteousness was therein chiefly and ultimately intended, and *perfect doing* only urged upon Israel's subordination. . .and tendency to believing and the righteousness of faith, [for]. . .*The Scripture*, peculiarly the Law, *hath hereby concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ may be given to them that believe.* . .
- 4) “That, the condition of *perfect doing* under pain of curse and death, convincing the sinner of his sin and misery, leaves him hopeless *in himself*, not to trust in his own works. . .but the condition of *believing* gives him hope, *without himself*, in Jesus Christ, to trust to him alone for justification. . .
- 5) “That the Sinai Covenant tendered life and happiness upon these two opposite conditions of perfect doing under penalty of curse and death; and of believing in Christ; because both these conditions were necessarily required to the sinners' [eternal] happiness: [whether] in the sinner, or the sinners' Surety: *a) Perfect doing of all God's Law upon pain of death was required to the sinners' happiness:* because God's Covenant of Works, at first made with Adam and with all his posterity in him, but broken by them, cannot be eluded or evaded. They must do it, or die; otherwise God himself should not be just and true. Do it, in their own persons, they could not, because the flesh was weak; therefore they lie under the curse and death. This covenant hereupon. . .reveals the sinners' Surety Jesus Christ, who alone could satisfactorily bear this curse upon himself, and perform the duty of the Law to the uttermost, for the

⁶⁰ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, p268.

sinners' redemption and righteousness. *b) Believing in Christ is also necessary to the sinners' happiness:* because without faith his Surety's perfect doing and enduring cannot become his by imputation. . .

6) “That, *perfect doing* on pain of death, and *believing* in Jesus Christ are so required and conditioned in this Sinai Covenant, as to let all men see, that the penalty and duty of the Covenant of Works, have their plenary accomplishment in the Covenant of Faith [Grace] through Jesus Christ alone. . . Herein they are directed unto Jesus Christ by faith, for life and righteousness. Thus according to the tenor of the Sinai Covenant, the Covenant of Works has its perfect accomplishment in Christ—by *doing and enduring*, all which becomes ours—by *believing*. Thus the Covenant of Works is digested into, incorporated with, and wholly swallowed up by the Covenant of Faith. Thus *perfect doing is attained by believing*. . .

7) “That, the condition of perfect doing being thus attained by believing, with greatest ease unties the knots of many difficulties, and unveils the secret of many mysteries [and especially]. . . *How sinners are at once justified by perfect doing, and by believing*. By *perfect doing*, in Christ's person, to whom the Law drives them, by exacting impossibilities of them. By *believing*, in their own persons; whereunto the law allures them, by representing Christ as the scope and end of the Law to them. Thus it's no paradox for sinners to be justified, in the sight of God, both by works, and faith; by *Christ's works, by their own faith* . . . In themselves, through the weakness of the flesh, they can do nothing, as the Law requires. . . and yet in Christ, the perfect Performer of the Law, embraced by faith, they can do all things perfectly; Christ's perfect obedience being imputed to them by faith. This Sinai Covenant therefore, requires *perfect doing* from the sinner under pain of curse, that it may drive him from himself who can do nothing; and requires *believing in Christ*, that it may draw the sinner unto Christ, who has done all things that so the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in him. . . Hereby God will have us know, that neither God nor man shall lose by substituting the Covenant of Faith instead of the Covenant of Works, but rather both shall gain; God shall gain a better observance of His Law in the second Adam, than He had in the first; and man shall gain a better righteousness in Christ by faith, than ever they had in themselves before the fall. Thus the gospel does not overthrow, but establish the Law, by setting forth Christ the most perfect Performer of the Law.”⁶¹ We've charted out Roberts' main thoughts in the chart given below:

FRANCIS ROBERTS' VIEW OF THE DUAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW

WHAT THE LAW DEMANDS	MANNER IN WHICH EACH IS REVEALED	INTENDED FOCUS	GOD'S PURPOSE FOR US IN EACH COMMAND	ULTIMATE REASON BOTH ARE GIVEN	WHAT WE ARE MEANT TO LEARN IN THIS
<i>Do and live</i>	Often & clearly	Secondary	To drive sinners to Jesus	We need both Jesus' doing & our believing	We obtain perfect doing in Christ by faith in Him
<i>Believe and live</i>	Seldom & obscurely	Primary	To save sinners in Jesus		

5. A CLOSING SUMMARY: We've been dealing with objections to the view that the Mosaic Covenant rightly belongs to the Covenant of Grace. The second objection had to do with the requirement of the Law at Sinai: How is it that the Mosaic Covenant, which demands perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life, is part of the Covenant of Grace, which requires faith apart from works? What we've shown is that the Law demands both *perfect obedience* and *faith*, but for very different reasons. We take the Mosaic Covenant to be part of the Covenant of Grace because, as a whole (largely taken), Moses not only points us to Christ, but also requires faith in this Messiah to whom he is pointing us (Romans 10:6). The requirement of perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life is indeed also given in the Law, yet it was never given as an alternate way of salvation—but rather in order to serve the purposes of the Covenant of Grace. The *strict requirement* of the Law confronts us with just how far short we fall of God's perfect standard, and was always meant to drive us to Christ for life, who is revealed in the Law *more largely*. Just like with silica gel in the packet of beef jerky, or the bay leaf in the pot of curry, the strict requirement of the Law was never meant to mix and blend together with the way of faith also revealed at Sinai, neither was it meant to oppose or contradict it, but rather its purpose was to compliment and serve the ends of the gospel. How so? The command “Do and live” was always meant to point us and drive us to Christ, that in Him we would “Believe and live.” The purpose for which God set forth *the Law* at Sinai was always to lead us to *the gospel*. Indeed, though it's even true to say that both *evangelical faith* and *perfect obedience* are demanded by the Law because they're both necessary for our salvation, still, the perfect obedience that alone saves us is *Christ's obedience*, which is then imputed to us through *faith in Him*.

⁶¹ Roberts, *Mystery and Marrow*, pp775-78. Note: Reference to Calvin (point #2) refers to his commentary, *Romans*, 10:5.

IV. The Third Objection: The *Authority* of the Mosaic Covenant

The Marrow of Modern Divinity is considered to be one of the most important books ever written on the law and the gospel. Penned by Edward Fisher, a Scottish layman in the mid-1600's, it's written as a conversation between four main characters who each represent different kinds of people: *Nomista* is a legalist, *Antinomista* is an antinomian, *Neophytus* is a new Christian, and *Evangelist* is a minister of the gospel. The book begins with the new Christian, the legalist, and the antinomian, all coming to the minister for help relating to a particular question. And the question is this: Are believers under the Law, or not? Are believers bound to keep the Law, or are they no longer under its authority? As you might guess, the legalist claimed that believers were bound to keep the Law, the antinomian claimed that believers were free from having to keep the Law, and the young Christian was troubled and confused.

Now, we talked earlier about the three categories of the Mosaic Law: the Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil; and we showed there that the *Ceremonial* and *Civil* Laws were given to a particular people (the Jews) for a particular time (until the coming of Christ), and thus served only a temporary purpose. We concluded that new covenant Christians are no longer under the Ceremonial and Civil Laws in the same way that God's people were in the old covenant. But the question that was being asked in *The Marrow* didn't have to do with the Ceremonial or Civil Laws—it had to do with *the Moral Law*. Has the Moral Law been abrogated for Christians along with the Ceremonial and Civil laws? Are new covenant believers under any of the Law, or have we been released from all of it? Are Christians under the Ten Commandments?

Most of us would shutter to hear someone say that the Ten Commandments were just for Old Testament believers and we don't need to keep them anymore. Not only did Jesus himself tell us *plainly*: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law” (Matthew 5:17), but His entire ministry is characterized by opening up the true meaning of the Law and then calling His disciples to radical obedience in doing what it says. For instance, in Matthew 5-7, Christ didn't do away with the *6th and 7th Commandments* (to not murder or commit adultery) by telling His followers that if they believed in Him they no longer needed to keep these commands. He rather expounded what these commands truly meant and then called His disciples to live and walk accordingly. In another place, Jesus criticizes the scribes and Pharisees for creating man-made rules that in effect nullified the *5th Commandment*, “Honor your father and your mother.” He tells them: “Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” (Mark 7:8). Jesus' problem with the scribes and Pharisees, in other words, wasn't that they were too zealous for the Law, but that they didn't actually follow what the Law said at all. And in Matthew 23:23, Jesus says: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.” Again, Jesus isn't condemning them because they made the Law *too central*—but because they had *neglected the most central teachings* of the Law. And when Jesus is asked what commandment is the foremost of all, He not only quotes two passages *from* the Law, but in doing so gives a wonderful summary *of* the Law, when He answers that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength (a summary of Commandments 1-4), and our neighbor as ourself (a summary of Commandments 5-10). And so, when Jesus tells His disciples in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law”, it must be that He tells them this because He knew that some of them would begin to think that He came to do exactly that—but they would be wrong.⁶²

⁶² Calvin makes this observation in his *Institutes*: “[The Lord] would not have refuted the notion that he would abolish the law (Matthew 5:17) if this opinion had not been prevalent among the Jews. But since without some pretext the idea could not have arisen by chance, it may be supposed to have arisen from a false interpretation of his teaching, just as almost all errors have commonly taken their occasion from truth.” (2.7.14). This error of saying that the Law on the whole has been abrogated for Christians (not just the Ceremonial or Civil aspects) is called Antinomianism. Calvin describes it in this way: “Certain ignorant persons, not understanding this distinction, rashly cast out the whole of Moses, and bid farewell to the two Tables of the Law. . . Banish this wicked thought from our minds!” (*Institutes*, 2.7.13). And again: “many persons, wishing to express such liberation from that curse [of the Law], say that for believers the law—I am still speaking of the moral law—has been abrogated.” (2.7.14). As an example of this teaching, Kevan cites John Eaton, who makes the statement: “The Law. . . terrifies the conscience. . . therefore let us not suffer the Law in any case to bear rule in our conscience. . . let the godly learn therefore, that the Law and Christ are two contrary things. . . when Christ is present, the Law may in no case rule, but must depart out of the conscience.” (quoted in Kevan, p147). Tobias Crisp was likewise said to hold that “a believer has no more to do with the Law of Moses than an Englishman has with the 'Laws of Turkey.’” (Kevan, p147). And Robert Towne contended that “if

But if all this is true, what do we make of other passages that seem to tell us we're no longer under the Law? Paul says in Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." He writes a little later in Romans 7:4 that we "were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ" and that "we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound" (v6). And Paul testifies of himself in Galatians 2:19 when he writes: "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God." Again, it would resolve a lot of difficulty to just say that Paul is speaking here of the *Ceremonial* and *Civil Laws* of the Mosaic Covenant, and that believers in the new covenant are no longer under those laws in the same way that Old Testament believers were. But it's clear from the context of these passages that Paul is here speaking of something more; he's talking about the Law in a much more general sense. In these Scriptures, Paul isn't speaking about the Ceremonial or Civil Laws but *the Moral Law*. What do we make of this? What does Paul mean when he tells us that believers are no longer under the Law? Are Christians no longer bound to keep the Law after all?

1. **CLARIFYING THE MEANING:** In *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, the way in which the minister begins to answer the question is by asking a question of his own. When Nomista, Antinomista, and Neophytus come to ask him whether or not believers were bound to keep the Law, the minister responds by asking: "What law do you mean?"⁶³ Being baffled by his question, the minister began to explain how the same Moral Law—the Ten Commandments—is actually used in Scripture *in three different ways*. The minister then went on to distinguish between what he called *the Law of Works* and *the Law of Christ*, and later returned to refer to a third category called *the Law of Nature*.⁶⁴ Another writer summarized these three categories when he wrote: "The law of God. . . is to be considered in a threefold point of view: first, *as written on the heart of man in his creation*; secondly, *as given under the form of a covenant of works to him*; and lastly, *as a rule of life, in the hand of Christ the Mediator, to all true believers*."⁶⁵

2. **SURVEYING THE SCRIPTURE:** It might be helpful to give an illustration here, even if it seems simplistic. We might think of the Moral Law—the will of God for man as revealed especially in the Ten Commandments—as the chemical compound H₂O. This compound, H₂O, is the chemical formula for *water*. But it's also the chemical formula for *ice* and *vapor*. That's because the exact same chemical formula, H₂O, can actually take on three different forms: in its *solid* form, H₂O is ice; but in its *liquid* form, H₂O is water; and in its *gas* form, H₂O is vapor. It's the same chemical formula, but it can take on three different forms. Someone might ask: Can you walk on H₂O? But to answer the question, you have to ask: What *form* of H₂O are you speaking of? Because you can't walk on it in its water or vapor forms—but you can when it's ice. Well, we can think of the Moral Law in a similar way. Just like with H₂O, the Moral Law—though always itself unchanging—is actually revealed in Scripture in three different forms: As *1) the Law of Nature, 2) the Law of Works, and 3) the Law of Christ*. And so, in order to answer the question: "Are believers under the Law?", the first thing we have to do is ask, "What law do you mean?"

A) The Law of Nature: In the context of speaking about the Law, Paul makes this statement in his letter to the Romans: "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, *in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts. . .*" (2:14-15). Scripture here teaches that the same Law that God wrote on tablets at Sinai has also been written, in a certain measure, on the hearts of every man. And we can trace it all the way back to creation.⁶⁶ As the Westminster Confession states: "After God had made all other creatures, He created

believers are not under the Law in its *damnatory* aspect, they cannot be under it in the *mandatory*." (Kevan, p148).

⁶³ *The Marrow*, p22.

⁶⁴ Boston in his footnotes afterwards alludes much to *the Law of Nature* (cf. p26, etc); Fisher alludes to it a little later, calling it by its other name, the "law of creation" (pp30-31). Fisher in *The Marrow* has the minister initially describe three laws which he calls "the law of works, the law of faith, and the law of Christ" (p22). Going on to describe them, Boston notes: "*The law of works* is the law to be done that one may be saved; *the law of faith* is the law to be believed, that one may be saved; *the law of Christ* is the law of the Savior, binding his saved people to all the duties of obedience, Gal. 3:12; Acts 16:31." (p23). This is also a wonderful way of thinking about it. For our purposes though, only the "law of works" and the "law of Christ" relate to our discussion regarding the authority of the Moral Law. And since both Fisher and Boston speak later in *The Marrow* (see pp26,31,108-109) of the Law of Nature, recognizing it to be rightly included as a third aspect of the Moral Law as well as the Law of Works and the Law of Christ, we've tried our best to shorten and summarize what's most important for our discussion.

⁶⁵ Colquhoun, p7.

⁶⁶ Haldane notes on Romans 2:15: "This is an allusion to the law written by the finger of God upon tables of stone, and afterwards recorded in the Scriptures. The great principles of this law were communicated to man in his creation, and much

man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image, *having the law of God written in their hearts. . .*⁶⁷ In other words, Adam was created with the Moral Law—essentially, the Ten Commandments—written on his heart. And this form of the Moral Law, which God wrote on the heart of man at creation, is normally called *the Law of Nature*.⁶⁸ In turn, man was called upon to keep this Law—to love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength—from *the very beginning*. But the point of most significance here, is that when the Moral Law was first given to Adam at creation, there were no threats of death for disobedience, nor promises of life for obedience. The *content* of the Moral Law was the same. But it was originally given entirely free of eternal reward or punishment. It was not: “Do and live”; nor: “Do or die”; but simply, “Do.” Simply: “Obey Me; serve Me; love Me, Adam, with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.”⁶⁹

THE LAW OF NATURE: A SUMMARY

THE LAW OF NATURE	ITS ESSENCE	WHEN IT WAS GIVEN	HOW IT WAS GIVEN	WHAT IT SAID
	The Moral Law	At Creation	Written on Adam's Heart	“Do; Obey”

of it remains with him in his fallen state.” (p91). And Murray also says of Romans 2:15: “The Law referred to is definite and can be none other than the law of God specified in the preceding verses as the law which the Gentiles in view did not have, the law the Jews did have and under which they were, the law by which men will be condemned in the day of judgment. It is not therefore a different law that confronts the Gentiles who are without the law but the same law brought to bear upon them by a different method of revelation.” (p74). Roberts says that the Moral Law proclaimed at Sinai is “conform and answerable to the Law of Nature written in Adam's heart at his creation.” (p663). And again: “for Sum and Substance the Moral Law and the Law of Nature are the same” (Roberts, p686). Fisher likewise affirms: “the Ten Commandments [were] the substance of the law of nature engraved in the heart of man in innocency. . .” (p176). And Boston says: “the Ten Commandments were. . .in their perfection engraved on the heart of man, in his creation” (in his notes in *The Marrow*, p177). Kevan likewise notes: “It was commonly held among the Puritans that the Law enshrined in the Mosaic Covenant was identical with the Law of Nature. . . John Flavel takes it as generally understood that ‘the very matter of the Law of Nature’ is found in the Ten Commandments, and Richard Baxter likewise teaches that the Mosaic Law contains the ‘preceptive and directive part of the Law of Nature.’” (pp117-18). *If this is so, why was there any need to declare this same Law again at Sinai?* “The answer to this is found in the Puritan belief that the Law of Nature was so ‘expunged’ that the special revelation of the Moral Law became necessary in order to renew fallen man in the knowledge of it. Men of all points of view concurred in this opinion.” (Kevan, p118). As Roberts also explains: “The fall of Adam and of all mankind in him did miserably deface and obliterate the Law of Nature. . .Sin disrobed man of God's image, dimmed the light, and defaced the Law of Nature so extremely in him, that very few and small sparks thereof remained. . .God therefore published his Moral Law, which for Sum and Substance is the same with the Law of Nature, that the expunged Law of Nature might be perfectly restored. . .” (p714). See also Calvin, 2.8.1-2. We might also give the same answer to the question: *If this is so, why then does the Moral Law of the Ten Commandments seem to require more than we inherently know by nature?* Do we know by nature we ought to keep the Sabbath? And does not Paul tell us he would not have known coveting (the 10th Commandment) was a sin if he had not read in the Law, “You shall not covet” (Romans 7:7)? It seems that the answer here is the same: What the Fall had defaced, Sinai again has renewed.⁶⁷ WCF 4.2. Burgess distinguishes this from regeneration in this way: “There is. . .a two-fold writing in the hearts of men; *the first*, of knowledge and judgement, whereby they apprehend what is good and bad; *the second* is in the will and affections, by giving a propensity and delight, with some measure of strength, to do this upon good grounds. This later is spoken of by the Prophet in the Covenant of Grace, and the former is to be understood here [IE, of the Law of Nature].” (Burgess, p60).

⁶⁸ It's referred to by other names as well, which Colquhoun explains beautifully: “The law, as written on the heart of the first man, is often styled *the law of creation*; because it was the will of the sovereign Creator, revealed to the reasonable creature; by impressing or engraving it, on his mind and heart. To this law, so inlaid in the mind and heart in creation, as to the natural instinct, and moral rectitude, of the rational creature, every person, as a reasonable creature, is indispensably bound. It obliges to perfect and perpetual obedience. . .The same law, is also denominated *the law of nature*; because it was founded in the holy and righteous nature of God, and was interwoven with the nature of the first man. . .It is sometimes called *the moral law*; and it is so called, because it was a revelation of the will of God as his moral Governor, to the first man, and was the standard and rule of all the man's moral qualities and actions. . .and because, it is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments, which are usually styled the moral law. The ten commandments, are the sum and substance of it.” (Colquhoun, pp9-11).

⁶⁹ As Colquhoun notes: “The law of God is to be taken, either *materially*, as merely directing and obliging the rational creature to perfect obedience; or *formally*, as having received the form of a covenant of works. Now it is the law, not *formally*, but *materially* considered, that was inscribed on the heart of man in his creation. Man, therefore, as the creature of God, would have been obliged to perform perfect obedience to the law, in this view of it, though a covenant of works had never been made with him. This law, and sufficient power to obey it, were included in the image of God, according to which he created man.” (pp7-8). Explaining the reason for this, Colquhoun later writes: “The obligation of the natural law upon mankind. . .as resulting from the nature of God, and from the relations between God and man, is such, that even God himself cannot dispense with it. It cannot cease to bind, so long as God continues to be God, and man to be man. . .Since the authority of that law is Divine, the obligation flowing from it, is eternal and immutable. It must continue forever, without the smallest diminution; and that, upon all men, whether saints or sinners; at all times from the moment of man's creation: before the covenant of works, under the covenant of works, under the covenant of grace, and even through all eternity.” (p11).

B) The Law of Works: That all changed in Genesis 2:16-17. It's in these verses that the Lord forbids Adam from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and telling him, "for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." Now, there are several things that are absolutely vital for us to understand about these words to Adam. The *first thing* we need to see is that the command which the Lord gives Adam here in Genesis 2:16-17 is something both subsequent to and distinct from creation. Again, as the Westminster Confession states: "After God had made all other creatures, He created man. . .having the law of God written in their hearts. . .Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."⁷⁰ At creation, God had endowed Adam with the Law of Nature. Later, as something separate and distinct, the Lord also gave him this specific command.

The *next thing* that's important for us to understand about Genesis 2:16-17 is that this was so much more than simply a *command*. It was a *covenant*. Prior to this, God had *created* Adam—but here, with these words, the Lord enters into a *covenant* with him. This is what the Westminster Confession is speaking of when, referring to Genesis 2:16-17, it states: "God gave to Adam a law, *as a covenant of works*, by which He bound him and all his posterity, to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it."⁷¹ To summarize then: God had, in the very beginning, at creation, engraved the Moral Law on Adam's heart. Later, here in Genesis 2:16-17, the Lord entered into the Covenant of Works with Adam.

Now, the *last thing* that we need to see helps us to connect it all together: The content of the Covenant of Works, which God gave to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, *was* the Moral Law. Or to put it another way, in Genesis 2:16-17, the Moral Law *took on the form of* the Covenant of Works.⁷² Consider the words of the Westminster Confession once more: "*God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works*, by which He bound him and all his posterity, to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it. *This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables. . .*" The Confession is telling us that the very Law that God gave to Adam as a Covenant of Works is the same Law that was written on two tablets at Mount Sinai. In other words, it was actually the Ten Commandments, the Moral Law, that was being given to Adam as the Covenant of Works in Genesis 2:16-17. How could this be? Because all the commandments were rolled together into one in that single command.⁷³ Earlier, the Confession had

⁷⁰ WCF 4.2.

⁷¹ WCF 19.1.

⁷² As Boston explains in his notes in *The Marrow*, "The law of the ten commandments, being the natural law, was written on Adam's heart on his creation; while as yet it was neither the *law of works*, nor the *law of Christ*, in the sense wherein these terms are used in Scripture, and by our author. But after man was created, and put into the garden, this natural law, having made man liable to fall away from God, a threatening of eternal death in case of disobedience, had also a promise of eternal life annexed to it in case of obedience; in virtue of which he, having done his work, might thereupon plead and demand the reward of eternal life. Thus it became the law of works, whereof the ten commandments were, and are still the matter." (p26). And again, "the promise of life, and threatening of death, superadded to the law of the Creator, made it a covenant of works to our first parents. . .*the law of nature was turned into a covenant* by the addition of a promise of life and threatening of death. Of the same mind is Burgess and the London ministers. . ." (p350). Shaw says of WCF 19:1 in his commentary on the Westminster Confession, "The law, as thus inscribed on the heart of the first man, is often styled the law of creation, because it was the will of the sovereign Creator, revealed to the reasonable creature, by impressing it upon his mind and heart at his creation. It is also called the moral law, because it was a revelation of the will of God, as his moral governor, and was the standard and rule of man's moral actions. Adam was originally placed under this law in its *natural form*, as merely directing and obliging him to perfect obedience. He was brought under it in a *covenant form*, when an express threatening of death, and a gracious promise of life, was annexed to it. . .The law, as invested with a covenant form, is called, by the Apostle Paul, 'The law of works' (Rom.3:27); that is, the law as a covenant of works. In this form, the law is to be viewed as not only prescribing duty, but as promising life as the reward of obedience, and denouncing death as the punishment of transgression."

⁷³ In *The Marrow*, Fisher explains this in a way that's both clear and helpful: "*Nomista:* But sir. . .it seems to me, you hold that the Law of the Ten Commandments was the matter of the Covenant of Works, which God made with all mankind in Adam before his fall. *Evangelist:* That is a truth agreed upon by all authors and interpreters that I know. . .*Nomista:* But sir, how could the law of the Ten Commandments be the matter of this Covenant of Works, when they were not written, as you know, till the time of Moses? *Evangelist:* Though they were not written in tables of stone until the time of Moses, yet were they written in the tables of man's heart in the time of Adam. . .And indeed, in that one commandment [IE, Genesis 2:16-17] the whole worship of God did consist. . .so that, as a learned writer says, Adam heard as much (of the law) in the garden, as Israel did at Sinai; but only in fewer words, and without thunder. . .*Nomista:* Did he break all the Ten Commandments, say you? Sir, I beseech you show me wherein. *Evangelist:* 1) He chose himself another God when he followed the devil. 2) He

told us that the Moral Law was originally written on man's heart at creation. Here it's telling us that this same Moral Law—which was originally given at creation—took on the form of the Covenant of Works in Genesis 2:16-17. At the beginning, the Moral Law was given to Adam as the *Law of Nature*. But that same Moral Law, originally given to Adam at creation, here in Genesis 2:16-17 took on the form of the *Covenant of Works*. At Genesis 2:16-17, the command to “Do” took on the form of, “Do and live.”⁷⁴

So then, in Genesis 2:16-17, *the Moral Law took on covenant form*. And the *Law of Nature* became the *Law of Works*. Adam was still called to love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength; that didn't change (for this love would be proven in and through his obedience to that single command). The difference was that beginning with Genesis 2:16-17, there was now a promise of eternal life added to the command should Adam obey, as well as a threatening of eternal death should he disobey. With this annexing of life and death to the command, the *Law of Nature* was turned into the *Law of Works*.

Now, we should note here that the Moral Law is often presented in Scripture in this form.⁷⁵ Whenever the Moral Law is set forth as promising life in case of obedience, or on the contrary, threatening death for disobedience, it is being presented in its covenant form—as the Law of Works. And the Law in this form, as the Law of Works, is also identical to what we referred to earlier as the Law “strictly taken.”⁷⁶ It's this form of the Law that is spoken of in Scriptures such as Galatians 3:10-12 and Romans 10:5-6, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them” (Galatians 3:10), and, “He who practices them shall live [IE, be justified] by them.” (Galatians 3:12; Romans 10:5).

idolized and deified his own belly; as the apostle's phrase is, 'He made his belly his God.' 3) He took the name of God in vain, when he believed him not. 4) He kept not the rest and estate wherein God had set him. 5) He dishonored his Father who was in heaven; and therefore his days were not prolonged in that land which the Lord his God had given him. 6) He massacred himself and all his posterity. 7) From Eve he was a virgin, but in eyes and mind he committed spiritual fornication. 8) He stole, like Achan, that which God had set aside not to be meddled with; and this his stealth is that which troubles all Israel—the whole world. 9) He bare witness against God, when he believed the witness of the devil before Him. 10) He coveted an evil covetousness, like Amnon, which cost him his life, and all his progeny.” (*The Marrow*, pp28, 30-31, 35-36).

⁷⁴ Colquhoun helps to summarize: “The law of creation, or of the Ten Commandments, was, in the form of a covenant of works, given to the first Adam, after he had been put into the garden of Eden; and it was given him, as the first parent, and the federal representative, of all his posterity by ordinary generation. An express threatening of death, and a gracious promise of life, annexed to the law of creation, made it to Adam, a covenant of works. . .As formed into a covenant of works, it is called by the apostle Paul, 'the law of works' (Romans 3:27), that is, the law as a covenant of works. It requires works or perfect obedience, on pain of death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal; and it promises to the man who performs perfect and personal obedience, life, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. The law of creation, requires man to perform perfect obedience, and says 'Do', but the law as a covenant of works, requires him to 'Do and live'; to do, as the condition of life; to do, in order to acquire by his obedience, a title to life eternal. The command, to perform perfect obedience merely, is not the covenant of works; for man was, and is, immutably and eternally bound to yield perfect obedience to the law of creation, though a covenant of works had never been made with him; but the form of the command, in the covenant of works, is, perfect obedience as *the condition of life*. The law in this form, comprised, not only all the commandments peculiar to it as the law of nature; but also a positive precept, which depended entirely on the will of God [Genesis 2:16-17]. This positive precept [Genesis 2:16-17] was, in effect, a summary of all the commands of the natural or moral law; obedience to it, included obedience to them all, and disobedience to it, was a transgression of them all at once. The covenant of works, accordingly, could not have been broken otherwise, than by transgressing that positive precept. . .The natural law, given in the form of a covenant of works, to Adam and all his natural descendants, required them to believe whatever the Lord should reveal or promise, and to do whatever he should command. All Divine precepts, therefore, are virtually and really comprehended in it.” (pp15-17). And again: “Seeing the natural law was promulgated to Adam, who though a holy, was yet a mutable creature, liable to fall away from God; not only was a promise of eternal life, in case of obedience, but a threatening of eternal death, in case of disobedience, superadded to it. Thus, it was turned into a covenant or law of works, of which, the law of the Ten Commandments was, and is still, the matter. Accordingly, in its covenant form, it not only says to every man who is under it, 'Do and live,' but, 'Do or die'. . .This law of works has a twofold power; a power to justify persons, if they yield perfect obedience, and a power to condemn them, if in the smallest instance they disobey. . .It is evident, then, that the promise of life in case of obedience, and the denunciation of death in the event of disobedience, annexed to the law of creation, made it to Adam, a covenant of works. . .” (pp26-28). Roberts also connects the Law of Nature with the Law of Works in a profound way when he writes: “According to the general Sum and Substance of the Moral Law, it seems to be the same with the Law of Nature written in Adam's heart in innocency. For. . .The same Law for Substance which the first Adam broke, to the ruin of all his natural posterity; did Christ the last Adam perfectly keep and fulfill, enduring the curse and penalty thereof, to the recovery of his elected supernatural posterity. Otherwise the remedy had not been full, proper, and pertinent to the malady. But the first Adam broke the Law of Nature, in violating that positive Law about the forbidden fruit; and Christ the last Adam kept the charge, and endured the curse of the Moral Law, death. Therefore the Moral Law, and the Law of Nature were the same, for Sum and Substance.” (pp686-87).

⁷⁵ As Colquhoun says, “the moral law, in the revelation which is given of it in Scripture, is almost constantly set forth to us, in its covenant form, as proposed to the first Adam.” (p31). We see it in this form both in the Old and New Testaments.

⁷⁶ See the second Objection: How do you explain what Scripture says about the *Requirement* of the Mosaic Covenant?

THE LAW OF NATURE AND THE LAW OF WORKS: *A COMPARISON*

	WHEN GIVEN	WHAT GOD DID	WHAT IT SAID	WHAT IT WAS
THE LAW OF NATURE	Genesis 1	Wrote His Law on Adam's Heart	"Do; Obey"	THE MORAL LAW
THE LAW OF WORKS	Genesis 2:16-17	Gave Adam a Law as a Covenant	"Do/Obey <i>for life</i> "	

C) The Law of Christ: The last way in which the Moral Law is given in Scripture is in the form of what has been called the Law of Christ. Now, we need to begin here by remembering what we saw earlier in our study: far from abolishing the Moral Law, Christ rather opened up to His disciples its true meaning, and called them to radical obedience in living out what it said. So again, Jesus never abolished the Moral Law for New Testament believers. In fact, the Moral Law is put forth as God's will for His new covenant people—not only in *the gospels*—but throughout Scripture. The Lord had prophesied through *Jeremiah* about the days of the new covenant church, saying: "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it. . ." (31:33). Here, the Lord is neither saying that He would give His people a new Law, nor that He would abolish the old one, but rather that He would take that same Law He had written on stone tablets—the Moral Law—and write it on the hearts of His people.⁷⁷ And if we turn to the *New Testament epistles*, we can find exhortations addressed to God's new covenant people that bring us back to each of the Ten Commandments.⁷⁸ All this is summarized, once again, by the Westminster Confession when it states: "The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation."⁷⁹ So then, the Moral Law continues to be the rule of life for God's new covenant people.

But though the same Moral Law is expressed in the Law of Christ that is expressed in the Law of Works, still, there is a vital difference between the two: the content of the Law of Christ is still the Moral Law, *but now in Christ, it's no longer given to God's people in its covenant form*. In the fullness of time, God sent His Son into the world, as the *second Adam*. In becoming a curse for us, *Christ redeemed us from the curse* pronounced in the Law of Works; and in obeying the Law perfectly for us, *He merited the blessing* promised in the Law of Works. And as a result, all who believe in Jesus, "are, through his obedience and satisfaction imputed to them, freed from eternal death, and become heirs of everlasting life; *so that the law of works being fully satisfied, expires as to them, as it would have done. . . in the case of Adam's having stood the time of his trial. . .*"⁸⁰ In other words, because of the work of Christ the *second Adam*, believers now "are in the very same state. . . in which they [would] have been, had the *first Adam* fulfilled for himself and his posterity, the condition of life in the covenant of works."⁸¹ Precious truths indeed.

⁷⁷ "The Law which God promises here to write in their hearts [Jeremiah 31:33], is God's Moral Law formerly written upon tables of stone. . . So that Jesus Christ, and the Moral Law are not (as some weakly imagine), inconsistent, incompatible and irreconcilable; but most consistent, suitable and sweetly agreeable one to another. . . Had God intended by His New Covenant to have abolished His Moral Law, He would not have new written it, but utterly have expunged it. But in that God undertakes to write His Laws again, and to write them more durably and indelibly than they were written before, not in the long-lasting tables of stone, but in the everlasting tables of mind and heart; hereby He eminently confirms and establishes the Moral Law, as that which shall never be reversed or repealed till the end of this world. . ." (Roberts, pp1392-93).

⁷⁸ For example: 1 John 2:15 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world", which hearkens back to the *1st Commandment*, "You shall have no other gods before Me." And 1 John 5:21 says, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols", recalling the *2nd Commandment*, "You shall not make for yourself an idol. . ." When James tells us: "prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (1:22), he's calling us back to the *3rd Commandment*, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. . ." When the author of Hebrews exhorts us to not forsake assembling together (10:25), he's hearkening back to the *4th Commandment*, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." In Ephesians 6:1-2, Paul writes: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord", bringing us back to the *5th Commandment*, "Honor your father and your mother. . ." 1 John 3:15 says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him"; hearkening back to the *6th Commandment*. The author of Hebrews tells us that, "the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge", bringing us back to the *7th Commandment*. Paul says in Ephesians 4:28, "He who steals must steal no longer", binding us to the *8th Commandment*. Paul says in Colossians 3:9, "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices", recalling the *9th Commandment*. And in 1 Peter 2:1-2, we're exhorted to put away envy, hearkening back to the *10th Commandment*. (See *The Marrow*, pp179-80). These are just a few examples, but they show well how the New Testament epistles uphold the Moral Law for new covenant believers.

⁷⁹ WCF 19.5.

⁸⁰ Boston's notes in Fisher's, *The Marrow*, p26.

⁸¹ Colquhoun's entire passage is well worth quoting at length: "since Christ the second Adam performed perfectly all that,

THE LAW OF WORKS AND THE LAW OF CHRIST: A COMPARISON

	PARTICULAR FORM	WHAT IT SAYS TO US		
The Moral Law	The Law of Works	Do and Live	Do for life	Obeys in order to obtain blessing
	The Law of Christ	Live and Do	Do from life	Obeys because you've obtained it

The Law of Works, then, being fulfilled by Christ, expires to us. This doesn't mean that believers are no longer bound to the Moral Law; but it *does* mean that believers are no longer bound to the Moral Law *in its covenant form*—as the Law of Works. God's Law is, “from the moment the law of works expires as to believers, issued forth to them. . . in the channel of the covenant of grace. . .”⁸² What this means is that the Moral Law no longer comes to us from an *exacting* God as to those *outside Christ*—but rather from an *appeased* God who has been reconciled to us *in Christ*.⁸³ Under the Law of Christ, believers are still bound to keep the Moral Law—only now, not as a *law of works*, but rather as a *rule of life*.⁸⁴ We are still commanded to “Do”, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. But the command is no longer, “*Do and live*”, but rather, “*Live and do*.” There's no more threatening of eternal death for disobedience or promise of life for obedience, for in Christ, we've already passed out of death and into life. We're still called to keep God's Law, only not in order to obtain life and salvation, but as

according to the covenant of works, was to have been done by man himself, to entitle him to life, and that, seeing all that he did and suffered, is imputed to sinners who believe, believers therefore are justified in the sight of God. *They are in the very same state, with respect to righteousness entitling them to life, in which they should have been, had the first Adam fulfilled for himself and his posterity, the condition of life in the covenant of works.* Accordingly we read that, 'the just by faith,' are entitled to the same life, to which, man, by his fulfillment of that condition, would have been entitled (Hab.2:4; Rom.10:5). If Adam had continued to yield perfect obedience, until the time appointed for his trial had elapsed, he as the representative of his descendants, would have entered upon a state of confirmation in holiness and happiness, or in the begun possession of eternal life; and the covenant of works, as a contract fulfilled on his part, would henceforth have continued to be an everlasting security to him, for his own, and his posterity's enjoyment of the eternal life promised him for himself and them. But, in his state of confirmation, the law as a *covenant*, could not have continued to be the rule of his obedience; because to subject him still to the law in its federal form, as the rule of his duty, would have been, to reduce him again to a state of trial, and to require him to work over again, for that life to which he was already entitled, by his having performed the condition of the covenant. At the same time, as man could, in no state whatever, be released from his obligation to obey his Creator, he must have had a rule of obedience. And, as the law as a covenant could not, for the reason now mentioned, have been a rule to him; it follows that, in his state of confirmation, the law of *nature*, divested of its covenant form, or of its promise of life and threatening of death, would have been the immutable rule of his obedience, both in time and in eternity. As the first Adam, then, upon his having fulfilled the condition of the covenant of works, for himself and his posterity, would have been released from the obligation of the law in that form; so they, to whom, the righteousness of the second Adam, is imputed for the justification of life, are delivered from the law in its federal form, and, at the same time, they continue under it as the law of Christ, and as divested of that form.” (Colquhoun, pp218-219; cf. Boston's notes in *The Marrow*, pp108-09, which are nearly identical).

⁸² Boston's notes in *The Marrow*, p26. Fisher notes: “The law of Christ, in regard of substance and matter, is all one with the law of works, or covenant of works. Which matter is scattered through the whole Bible, and summed up in the decalogue, or Ten Commandments, commonly called the Moral Law. . . And therefore was it given of God to be a true and eternal rule of righteousness, for all men, of all nations, and at all times. So that evangelical grace directs a man to no other obedience than that whereof the law of the Ten Commandments is to be the rule.” (p172). Thus Fisher shows that the substance of the two is the same. But as Boston helps to clarify: “By the *law of works* is meant the law of the ten commandments, as the covenant of works. . . By the *law of Christ*, is meant the same law of the ten commandments, as a rule of life, in the hand of a Mediator, to believers already justified. . . The *law of works*, and the *law of Christ*, are in substance but one law, even the law of the ten commandments—the moral law. . . but vested with different forms. . . The distinction between the *law of works* and the *law of Christ*. . . is the same in effect with that of the law, as a covenant of works, and as a rule of life to believers. . . What this distinction amounts to is, that thereby a difference is constituted betwixt the ten commandments as coming from an absolute God out of Christ unto sinners, and the same ten commandments as coming from God in Christ unto them.” (pp22-25).

⁸³ As Colquhoun explains it: “Considered as the law of Christ's justified, sanctified, and peculiar people, it is not the law of an absolute God, or of God *out of* Christ, but the law of God *in* Christ.” (p36). More on this also in the footnote below.

⁸⁴ Burgess says: “The Law may be considered as it is a Covenant, or as it is an absolute Rule, requiring conformity unto it. Now it may be truly granted, that the Law is abolished in the former notion, though not in the later. . .” (p213). Colquhoun also: “No sooner does the law as a *covenant*, urge men to Christ, for deliverance from the dominion of it in that form; than Christ leads them back to the law as a *rule*, for the regulation of their heart and conduct; in order that they may express their gratitude to him, for his *perfect* obedience to it as a *covenant*, in their stead, by their *sincere* obedience to it as a *rule*.” (pp146-47). And again: “The command of the law as a rule, is materially the same, as that of the law as a covenant. . . And as the command is materially the same, so the authority which enjoins obedience, is originally the same, and yet vastly distinct; for the commandment of the law as a covenant, is, the command of God *out of* Christ; but the command of the law as a rule, is, the precept of God *in* Christ. . .” (p268). Kevan also notes this distinction: “The inquiry into the subject of the abrogation of the Law calls, first, for the separation of the two ideas of commandment and covenant. . . There can be commandment without covenant, and there can be covenant without commandment. . . they are not only distinguishable, but separable.” (p148).

those who have already obtained it in Christ. So, we still obey; but we obey *from* life rather than *for* life. In a sense, it's as if believers in Jesus return to that state of Adam in the garden under the Law of Nature, *before* it had taken on the form of the Law of Works. The difference is that under the Law of Christ, we have even greater reason to keep God's commands: whereas Adam's motive for obedience was to serve the God who had *created* him; the believer makes it his aim to serve the God who has *redeemed* him.⁸⁵

A SUMMARY OF THE MORAL LAW IN ITS DIFFERENT FORMS IN SCRIPTURE

PARTICULAR FORM	WHEN IT WAS GIVEN	HOW IT WAS GIVEN	WHAT IT SAYS	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED
<i>The Law of Nature</i>	At Creation	As the Moral Law only	Obey	Adam at creation
<i>The Law of Works</i>	At Genesis 2:16-17	As a Covenant of Works	Obey <i>for</i> life	All those outside of Christ
<i>The Law of Christ</i>	Throughout Scripture	As a Rule of Life	Obey <i>from</i> life	All those who are in Christ

3. RESOLVING THE QUESTION: We began this section by asking whether or not believers are still under the Law. After surveying the *three distinct ways* that Scripture speaks of the Moral Law, we're finally ready to give an answer. And we can do so by returning again to our beloved book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, for our response is the same as the one that the minister gave to his friends Nomista Antinomista. When they came to him asking whether or not believers were under the Law, he had asked them in return: "What law do you mean?" In effect he was asking them: "under the Law *in what sense?*" Well, *Nomista* claimed that believers *were* under the Law, but that the Law they were under was *the Law of Works*. *Antinomista*, on the other hand, claimed that believers were *by no means under the Law*, but the Law from which they had been set free was *the Law of Christ*. As it turned out, the minister indeed had to correct *both of them*.⁸⁶ He explained and showed them from Scripture three truths: 1) Believers are most certainly *not under the Law of Works as a covenant*. *Nomista* had said that they were, and he was wrong. But also: 2) Believers most certainly *are under the Law of Christ as a rule*. *Antinomista* had claimed that they were not, and he was also wrong. The truth is: 3) *Though believers have been set free from the Law of Works as a covenant, still they continue to be bound to the Law of Christ as a rule*.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ This breadth of motive for obedience does seem to be one of the greatest differences between the Law of Nature and the Law of Christ. Adam was to obey the Lord in the context of creation; we are to obey the Lord in the context of redemption. There may be a hint of this in the diversity of expression used in the motive provided for the 4th Commandment. In Exodus 20, the command to keep the Sabbath is grounded in *creation*; but in Deuteronomy 5, it is grounded in *redemption*. And though these things are spoken only of the command to keep the Sabbath in particular, still perhaps this serves to represent this very truth. In the garden, Adam was to keep the Moral Law because God had *created* him; but now, under the Law of Christ, we have all the more reason to obey: we keep the Moral Law because God has *redeemed* us. Colquhoun compares the two when he says: "as the same law is called, the *law of nature*, because in his creation, it was inlaid in the nature of the first man; so it may be styled, the *law of renewed nature*, because, in the hand of Christ, and as standing under the covenant of grace, it is interwoven with the new nature of all, who are 'created again in him to good works.'" (p36). *To Summarize and quote others regarding the truths in this section*: Boston says: "under this covenant [the covenant of grace] there is much to do; a law to be performed and obeyed, though not *for* life and salvation, but *from* life and salvation received. . ." (*Marrow*, p117). And Fisher: "But yet. . .though. . .the law of Christ, in regard of substance and matter, be all one with the law of works, yet their forms do differ. . .both these laws agree in saying, 'Do this.' But here is the difference; the one saith, 'Do this and live;' and the other saith, 'Live, and do this;' the one saith, 'Do this *for* life;' the other saith, 'Do this *from* life'. . .The one is to be delivered by God as he is Creator out of Christ, only to such as are out of Christ; the other is to be delivered by God, as he is a Redeemer in Christ, only to such as are in Christ." (pp172-74). And Colquhoun: "The law as a rule of life to believers. . .is very different from the law as a covenant of works. The precept of the law as a covenant, is, 'Do and live;' but the command of the law as a rule, is, 'Live and do;' the law of works says, 'Do, or thou shalt be condemned to die;' but the law, in the hand of Christ, says, 'Thou art delivered from condemnation, therefore do;' the command of the former, is, 'Do perfectly, that thou mayest have a right to eternal life;' but that of the latter is, 'Thou already hast the begun possession of eternal life, as well as the promise of the complete possession of it, therefore do in such a manner, as to advance daily toward perfection;' by that, a man is commanded to do, in his own strength; but by this, he is required to do, in the strength that is in Christ Jesus." (pp38-39).

⁸⁶ The minister tells them: "the law of the Ten Commandments, or Moral Law may be either said to be the matter of *the law of works*, or the matter of *the law of Christ*; and therefore I pray you to tell me, in whether of these senses you conceive it ought to be a rule of life to a believer?" (p24). After they give their replies, the minister says to *Nomista*: "The truth is, *Nomista*, the law of the Ten Commandments, as it is the matter of the law of works, ought not to be a rule of life to a believer. But in thus saying, you have affirmed that it ought; and therefore therein you have erred from the truth." (p25). And to *Antinomista*, he says: "But the truth is, the law of the Ten Commandments, as it is the matter of the law of Christ, ought to be a rule of life to a believer; and therefore you having affirmed the contrary, have therein also erred from the truth." (p26).

⁸⁷ As Fisher later says in *The Marrow*: "Now, as it is the *law of works*, it may be truly said, that a believer is not under the law, but is delivered from it, according to that of the apostle, Romans 6:14, '*Ye are not under the law, but under grace*;' and Romans 7:6, '*But now we are delivered from the law*.' And if believers be not under the law, but are delivered from the law, as it is a law of works, then, though they sin, yet do they not transgress the law of works; for *where no law is, there is no*

And this is exactly what Scripture is telling us in those passages we quoted at the beginning of this section. When Paul writes to believers in *Romans 6:14*, telling them, “you are not under law but under grace”, this is exactly what he's speaking of. Paul isn't saying that the believers in Rome don't need to keep God's commandments any more. He's not talking about the Moral Law in general, but the Moral Law as it is expressed in the form of the Law of Works.⁸⁸ And it's the same thing in *Romans 7:4-6*, where Paul tells us that we “were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ” (v4), and again, that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound” (v6). Paul isn't saying that believers have died to the authority of the Law and are now released from any obligation to keep it. He's speaking of the Law in a specific sense—as the Law of Works. He draws a parallel with marriage, telling us that the Law of Works was our first husband, to whom we were bound by covenant. This Law promised life if we obeyed its precepts perfectly, and pronounced damnation on us for the least failing. But now, because of what Christ has done for us as the second Adam, we have been released from this Law. Just as when one spouse dies, the other is released from the marriage covenant—so too, through Christ—we have also been released from the Law in its covenant form, as the Law of Works. It can no longer make any claim on us.⁸⁹ It's the same truth in *Galatians 2:19*, where Paul writes: “For through the Law I died to the Law, so

transgression.’ Romans 4:15. . .But if you consider the law, as it is the *law of Christ*, then. . .it may be truly said, that a believer is under the law, and not delivered from it; according to that of the apostle, 1 Corinthians 9:21, ‘Being now without law to God, but under the law to Christ,’ and according to that of the same apostle, Romans 3:31, ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, (by faith) we establish the law.’ (pp218-20). And Colquhoun explains: “There are two errors, respecting the deliverance of believers from the law, which are equally contrary to the Oracles of truth. The one, is that of the *Legalist*, who maintains that, believers are still under the moral law as a covenant of works; the other, is that of the *Antinomian*, who affirms that, believers are not under it even as a rule of life. These errors are as contrary to the Scriptures of truth, as they are to each other; and they are equally subversive of that evangelical holiness, which is a principal part of eternal life, and which is so requisite, that without it, no man shall see the Lord. The plain doctrine of Scripture, is this; that, while true believers are dead to, or delivered from, the law, as a law or covenant of works, they are under it, and account it their high privilege, to be under the infinite obligation of it, as a rule of life. Indeed, to be freed from the law in its federal form, is nothing more than, to be delivered from the covenant of works, and from an inclination to cleave to that covenant; and our affirming, according to the Scriptures, that believers are delivered from the law as a covenant of works, necessarily implies that, they are under the law, in some other respect. Accordingly, the apostle Paul informs us that, they ‘are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ’ (1 Corinthians 9:21); that is, they are under the law of the ten commandments, as the law of Christ, or as the law in the hand of Christ the Mediator. No man can live to God, in point of sanctification, till after he become dead to the law as a covenant, in justification; neither can he otherwise live to God, than by holy conformity of heart and of life, to the law as a rule of duty. The death of legal hope in him, is necessary to a life of evangelical obedience.” (pp224-225). And again he says: “The obligation to ‘Do’, or to obey the law, is eternally binding on all believers; but, from the obligation to ‘Do and live’, to do, in order to procure a title to eternal life, they are delivered. They are under immutable and eternal obligations, to yield perfect obedience to the law of the ten commandments, as a rule of life; but they are delivered from the obligation, and in a great measure from the desire, to yield, in their own persons, perfect obedience to it as a covenant of life. Eternal life is, by the perfect obedience of their adorable Surety, already merited for them; and therefore, though they are under every obligation to obey *from* life, they are under no obligation to obey *for* life.” (Colquhoun, pp229-230).

⁸⁸ Haldane says of Romans 6:14: “A great variety of interpretations are given of this declaration. But the meaning cannot be a matter of doubt to those who are well instructed in the nature of salvation by grace. It is quite obvious that the law which believers are here said not to be under, is the moral law, as a covenant of works, and not the legal dispensation—to distinguish it from which may be the reason why the article is here omitted [in the Greek]. To affirm that the law here is the legal dispensation, is to say that all who lived under the law of Moses were under the dominion of sin. In the sense in which law is here understood, the Old Testament saints were not under it. They had the Gospel in figure. They trusted int he promised Savior, and sought not to justify themselves by their obedience to the law. . .Believers are not under the law as a covenant, because they have endured its curse and obeyed its precept in the person of their great Head, by whom the righteousness of the law has been fulfilled in them (Rom.8:4). But every man, till he is united to Christ, is under the law, which condemns him. When united to Him, the believer is no longer under the law either to be condemned or to be justified. . .Believers are not under the covenant of works, but under the covenant of grace, by which they enjoy all the blessings of that gracious covenant in which all that is required of them is promised to them. The great principle of evangelical obedience is taught in this passage. Holiness is not the result of the law, but of the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free.” Colquhoun says: “It is the peculiar privilege of them, who are in a state of union with Christ, and of justification in him, to be wholly delivered from the covenant of works. They ‘are not under the law, but under grace’ [Rom. 6:14].” (p222). Again: “believers ‘are not under the law but under grace’ [Rom. 6:14] and therefore, the law in its federal form, can say nothing to them.” (p281).

⁸⁹ Haldane says of Romans 7:4: “Dead to the law means freedom from the power of the law, as having endured its curse and satisfied its demands. It has ceased to have a claim on the obedience of believers in order to life, although it still remains their rule of duty. All men are by nature placed under the law, as the covenant of works made with the first man, who, as the Apostle had been teaching in the fifth chapter, was the federal or covenant head of all his posterity; and it is only when they are united to Christ that they are freed from this covenant. . .The language, accordingly, of the law, as the covenant of works, is, ‘Do and live;’ or, ‘if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;’ and ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.’ It thus requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, and pronounces a curse on the smallest failure. This law is here represented as being man's original or first husband. But it is now

that I might live to God.” Again, Paul isn't saying that he's not obligated to keep God's Law anymore as a Christian. It's not the Moral Law itself that he's died to—but the Moral Law in the form of a covenant; the Law of Works.⁹⁰ And notice the connection: It was his dying to the Law of Works that enabled him to begin living to God. It was dying to the Law *as a covenant* that set him free to truly live to it *as a rule*.⁹¹

It's clear from these Scriptures that, as believers in Christ, we have died to the Law in its covenant form, as it is the Law of Works. But as we've seen from other Scriptures, the Moral Law is still to be our rule for life as Christian pilgrims passing through this world. These two truths are expressed beautifully in comparing together two Scriptures in particular. We've already looked at Romans 6:14, where Paul tells us that we “*are not under law. . .*” Now, if we turn to 1 Corinthians 9:21, we find Paul describing his evangelistic ministry to the Gentiles in this way: “to those who are without law, [I became] as without law,

a broken law, and therefore all men are by nature under its curse. Its curse must be executed on every one of the human race, either personally on all who remain under it, or in Christ, who was made under the law, and who, according also to the fifth chapter of this Epistle, is the covenant head or representative of all believers who are united to Him and born of God. For them He has born its curse, under which He died, and fulfilled all its demands, and they are consequently dead to it, that is, no longer under it as a covenant.” And Colquhoun: “By the law, in these passages, our Apostle evidently means, not so much the ceremonial, as the moral law, under the form of a covenant of works. . . This, then, is the law which he had in view, when he affirmed to those believers, that they were become dead to, or were delivered from, the law, and that the law in which they had been held, was dead to them. But lest they should imagine, that it was the law of creation, and the law as a rule of life, to which they were dead; he compared the law of which he was speaking, to the law of a husband (Romans 7:2-3), which is a covenant or contract between him and his spouse, and which establishes her relation to him, as long as they both live. By this comparison, he plainly hinted to them, that it was the moral law, not as a rule of life, but as a covenant of works *only*, to which they were dead. The believers at Rome, then, were dead to the law in its covenant form, or were delivered from it, and it was dead to them; so that, it could no longer hold them, in subjection to its precept of perfect obedience as the condition of life, nor to its sentence of condemnation for sin. . . so it is the privilege of all true Christians, in every place, and in every age, that they are dead to the law as a covenant of works, and that the law in *that form*, is dead to them. . . The righteousness of the second Adam, by which he fully answered, in their stead, all the requirements of it as a covenant, is graciously imputed to them; and therefore, in that form, it has nothing more to demand from them. Its demands of perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life, and of complete satisfaction for sin, have, by their Divine Surety, been fully answered for them. His surety-righteousness, received by faith, and imputed by God to them, is their righteousness for 'the justification of life;' their complete answer to all the demands of the law, as a covenant of works. The consequence is, that though the law in that form, is not, with regard to them, abrogated; yet it is fulfilled and satisfied; and, being fully satisfied by them in their Surety and Representative, it will not, in cannot, oblige them in their own persons, to answer the same demands a second time.” (p214-17). And again: “Here [in Romans 7:6,] the Apostle affirms that, believers are delivered from the law, not indeed as a rule of duty, but only as a covenant of works” (Colquhoun, p252). As Walter Cradock put it: “I am dead to the law, as it is a Covenant of Works, the law has no more to do with me then the Laws of men have to do with a man that is in debt when he is dead, when he is dead he is free from it. . . The meaning is not as though the substance and matter of law were not eternal. . . but the law as it is. . . a Covenant of Works. . . is perfectly fulfilled by Christ, and we are dead to it.” (quoted in Kevan, p159).

⁹⁰ As Kevan notes: “The understanding of the relation of the believer to the Law is closely bound up with the interpretation of such phrases as 'dead to the law' (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:19), and 'not under the law' (Rom. 6:14-15). The general view among the Puritans was that these expressions were almost synonymous, and that they meant that the believer was free from the Law as a Covenant of Works.” (Kevan, p159). *What does Paul mean by saying that it was through the Law that he died to the Law?* Perkins says of this clause: “I take the true meaning of the words to be this: 'By the law of Moses, I am dead to the law of Moses' . . . Though the law be not a *cause* of this death to the law, and so to sin, yet it is an *occasion* thereof. For it accuses, and terrifies, and condemns us, and therefore it occasions or urges us to flee unto Christ, who is the cause that we die unto the law. As the needle goes before, and draws in the thread, which sows the cloth; so the law goes before, and makes a way that grace may follow after, and take place in the heart.” (p120). And Colquhoun explains it in the same way: “The means, then, of becoming dead to the law as a covenant, is the law itself. This, at first view, may seem a very strange, and unlikely, means of attaining such a purpose; but, upon due attention to the subject, it will be found that, no means are, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, so well adapted to divorce a sinner from the law in its federal form, as the law itself. The law indeed is not the *cause*, but it is the *occasion*, of a man's becoming dead to it as a covenant; for it accuses, condemns, and terrifies, the awakened sinner; and so, it urges him to flee speedily for refuge to Jesus Christ who is the real cause of one's becoming dead to the law. . . To be dead then to the law, through the law, is, by means of the strictness and rigor of the law, or, of a work of legal conviction and humiliation, to be driven to Christ for justification by faith, 'without the works of the law.' ” (pp240-41).

⁹¹ As Colquhoun notes: “According to these words of the inspired Apostle, a believer's living unto God, is the native consequence and fruit, of his being dead to the law as a covenant of works. As long as a man continues alive to the law, he is dead to God; but when he becomes dead to the law in point of justification, he begins to live unto God in respect of sanctification. The death of his legal hope, is, in order to his life of evangelical obedience. . . His living unto God, then, is the necessary fruit, the sure consequence, of his having become dead to the law in its covenant form.” (p254). We see the same truth in Romans 7:4-6. On that Scripture, Colquhoun likewise notes: “Now the main design, of their deliverance from their first husband, and of their conjugal relation to Christ, is, as our Apostle expresses it, 'that they may bring forth fruit unto God.' It is not, that they may be left at liberty, to live as they please 'without law to God;' but that, by union and communion with Christ, their Head of spiritual influences, they may bring forth 'fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.' As children begotten and born in marriage, are legitimate, and all before marriage, are illegitimate; so

though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ. . .” Between these two verses, Paul expresses three truths about the relationship of the believer to the Law. They are the same three truths we noted above: 1) *Believers are not “under [the] Law”* (Romans 6:14); that is, they are not under the Law as it is the Law of Works. This corrects the error of legalism. At the same time: 2) *Believers are also not “without the Law of God”* (1 Corinthians 9:21a); that is, they are still under the binding authority of God's Law in a very real and important sense. This corrects the error of Antinomianism. In what sense are they still under the Law? 3) *Believers are “under the Law of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 9:21b). Not under the Law of Works, nor free to live however they please, but under the Law of Christ.⁹²

COMPARING ROMANS 6:14 WITH 1 CORINTHIANS 9:21

THE SCRIPTURES	THE TRUTHS		THE LATIN	THE GREEK
ROMANS 6:14	Believers are <i>not</i>	<i>Under</i> the Law (legalism)	<i>Sub lege</i>	<i>'upo nomon</i>
1 CORINTHIANS 9:21a	<i>Nor</i> are they	<i>Without</i> Law (antinomianism)	<i>Sine lege</i>	<i>anomos</i>
1 CORINTHIANS 9:21b	But they are <i>rather</i>	<i>Within</i> or in Law (orthodoxy)	<i>In lege</i>	<i>ennomos</i>

Returning one last time to the Westminster Confession, we have a beautiful summary of everything we've been affirming in this clause: “Although true believers be not under the law, *as a covenant of works*, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, *as a rule of life* informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience.”⁹³ This statement not only confirms what we've been learning about the relationship of believers to the Law, but it also gives us extremely practical counsel for how to read such passages in Scripture. When the precepts of Scripture call us to obey the Lord with all our hearts, the first thing we remember is that this commandment comes to us not in the form of the Law of Works, but as the Law of Christ. We seek to obey the command, but we do it *from* life rather than *for* life, knowing that Christ, through His sufferings and perfect obedience, has redeemed us from the curses of the Law and merited for us its blessings. This, in turn, gives us the freedom to be completely honest before the Lord about the ways we've failed to live up to His command as a rule of life; and brings us to renewed praise and thanksgiving for Jesus' finished work on our behalf.

I'm so thankful for all the things that the Lord has taught me personally through this study. My prayer is that He would use it in powerful ways to continue strengthening His people and extending His kingdom throughout the world and among all the nations. I hope you have been encouraged. Our God is a holy God, as He has revealed in His Law. But His heart also bursts with mercies towards His people. For He did not simply give us a Law from heaven; but when that Law was shattered, He gave us His Son. And He did it all for this singular purpose: “to grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.” (Luke 1:74-75).

those works only, which are the fruits of union with Christ, and which are performed in faith, and to the glory of God, are genuine fruits of righteousness; whereas, all that are done before union with Christ, are spurious.” (Colquhoun, pp251-52).

⁹² Kevan draws out the nuances of the original Greek as well as the rich heritage of reformed thought when he writes: “The Puritan view of the relation of believers to the Law of God is well expressed by Thomas Taylor, who argues that the regenerate are never *sine lege*, nor are they *sub lege* in respect of justification, but they are nevertheless *in lege*, that is, within the compass of the Law for instruction, for subjection, and in so far as it is written within their hearts. Anthony Burgess, too, compares the expressions, 'of the law', 'without the law', 'under the law' and 'in the law', and affirms that in 1 Corinthians 9:21 the apostle 'callesh himself excellently, *ennomos to Kristus* [within the Law]'; and when Francis Roberts grapples with this expression of the apostle, he writes, 'No Christian believer is said to be *'upo nomon*, under the Law, nor is he *anomos*, without Law to God; but he is *ennomos*, in the Law, or within the Law to Christ.' [cf. p729]. The same interpretation is given also by Thomas Manton in his commentary on James. . . There is no doubt that the Puritans rightly grasped Paul's meaning here.” (p185).

⁹³ WCF 19.6.