

“The Law in the Gospel Life”

There is no more practical question than that of the relationship of a Christian to the law of God. Whenever we hear the radical claims of salvation-by-grace, we immediately ask the following questions. “If we are ‘free from the law’ does that mean I don’t have to obey the law of God?” “Why then should I strive to live a holy life?” ...

The law’s true purpose is instructive. It points beyond itself, just as the tutor seeks to prepare the children for lives as adults, as free persons...It seeks to show us our need for salvation by grace (because we cannot obey it). It even indicates our need to move beyond rewards and punishments into a motivation of gratitude and love toward God as the basis for our obedience. So the law continually emphasizes...that we need a righteousness, a power, a love for God beyond ourselves and beyond the law...

The gospel means that we no longer obey the law out of fear of rejection and hope of salvation-by-performance. But when we grasp salvation-by-promise, our hearts are filled with gratitude and a desire to please and be like our Savior...Grateful joy is a motive that will lead to much more endurance in obedience than fearful compliance. Fearful compliance makes obedience a drudgery that can’t take adversity...Without the gospel, we may obey the law, but we will hate it. We will use it, but we will not truly love it...

Law and grace work together in Christian salvation. Many people want a sense of joy and acceptance but they will not admit the seriousness of their sin. They will not listen to the law’s searching and painful analysis of their lives and hearts. But unless we see how helpless and profoundly sinful we are, the message of salvation will not be exhilarating and liberating. Unless we know how big our debt is, we cannot have any idea of how great Christ’s payment was. If we do not think that we are all that bad, the idea of grace will not change us.

If we obey God’s law *without* a belief that we are already accepted and loved in Christ, then in all our ‘doing-good’ we are really looking to something more than Jesus to be the *real* source of our meaning, and happiness At the moment we sin it is because we are looking to something to give us what only Jesus can give us...”

The law shows us as we really are. And so the law points us to see Christ as He really is: our Savior, the one who obeyed the law on our behalf and then died in our place so that we might receive the promised blessing.

- Timothy Keller (77,84,86,87)

The Normal Christian Life

The normal Christian Life isn't the norm for many Christians. The key to living the victorious Christian life is not a new spin on the old, old story... It's as old as the New Testament. Experiencing normal Christianity through the week yields such a sweet, intimate, obedient relationship with God that we don't attend the worship service to get recharged; we attend the services to discharge our worship and praise to the Lord because we're overflowing with love and gratitude (Psalm 23:5).

By letting Christ express His life through us on a moment-by-moment basis, we experience the overcoming, abundant life that Jesus spoke of (John 10:10). Many Christians have taken the independent, do-it-yourself exit off God's "freeway." Cordless Christianity explains why many Christians experience unexciting or perhaps defeated lives. It explains everything from the so-called male mid-life crisis to depression, sheer boredom to anxiety attacks, passivity to dominance, abrasiveness to "wimping out," the workaholic to the sofa spud, legalism to hedonism, perfectionism to slovenliness, etc. These are all manifestations of living in the power of human flesh. Jesus Christ is the only One who ever lived the Christian life, and I have found that by letting Him express His life through us, by faith, we experience the Christian as God intends.

How much faith did you place in yourself to acquire salvation? None. Then why do you trust in your ability, your talent, your strength, your charisma, your education, your intellect, your beautiful earthsuit, even your spiritual gifts, to live the life that you acquired by faith? Oh, the folly of such independent living! Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus is not a life. He didn't give you a type of life, nor did He set the curve for a life-style, leaving you some principles by which to live. Christ (drumroll) is (drumroll) your (drumroll and crashing cymbals) life. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to [sin]" (Colossians 3:3-5). Eternal life is not a mere extension of your old, sinful Adamic life. Here is God's definition of eternal life: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life-and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us" (1 John 1:1-2). Christ is the eternal life you signed up to acquire if you are born anew. Eternal Life is a Person, not an extension of your old Adamic life, not an "it," not a phenomenon or a set of values. And this Person, who is Himself Eternal Life, is to express life through you, by faith, as you present yourself to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). This is not to be understood so much as to be believed and acted upon.

There is so much more to your salvation than a one-time experience which guarantees heaven. Living the Christian life is experienced via using the same faith by which you got saved. It is experiencing a moment-by-moment, intimate, personal relationship with Christ who indwells you-living "in vital union with [Him]" (Colossians 2:6 TLB). In addition to trusting Christ as Savior and Lord, God wishes that you would trust Christ as life through you to face each day for you. God says it like this in Galatians 3:1,3: "You foolish [Christian], who has bewitched you? ... Having begun by the Spirit [God's power and grace, by faith], are you now being perfected by the flesh [depending upon your own resources-human effort]?"

...Paul writes, "The life which I now live in the flesh [in the body] I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). For years I knew I would die embracing my faith in Christ, but I never knew I was to live by that same faith in Him. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Somehow the key is to live like the branch on a vine lives, depending upon the life of that vine. Now hold that thought.

IN CHRIST:

You are forgiven:

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (NIV)

You are justified:

Romans 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. (NIV)

You are at peace with God:

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (NIV)

You are saved from wrath:

Romans 5:9-10 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (NIV)

You are not condemned:

Rom 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, (NIV)

Ephesians 1:4 He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. (NAS)

You have free access to God:

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (NIV)

Ephesians 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. (NIV)

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (NIV)

Hebrews 10:19-20 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, (NIV)

You are loved and cared for:

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (NIV)

1 Pet 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (NIV)

Hebrews 13:5-6 ...God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (NIV)

You are complete in Him:

Colossians 2:9-10 For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority. (NAS)

You have His life in you:

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. (NAS)

Colossians 1:27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (NIV)

You have His righteousness:

1 Corinthians 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. (NIV)

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (NIV)

Philippians 3:9 and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. (NAS)

You are a new creation:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (NIV)

1 Corinthians 6:11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (NIV)

Titus 3:4-6 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, (NIV)

Your inheritance is guaranteed:

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (NIV)

Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (NKJ)

You are blessed with heavenly blessings:

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (NIV)

You have been raised and seated in the heavenly realms:

Colossians 3:1-4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (NIV)

Ephesians 2:6,7 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (NIV)