

# The Law of Moses

by J.C. Philpot

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*The sermon argues that the law of Moses and human attempts to restrain sin have failed, and that the gospel is the only effective way to bring about true obedience and sanctification.*

**Scripture:** Romans 8:3, 2 Corinthians 5:15, Galatians 3:24, Ephesians 2:8, Titus 2:14, 1 John 1:7

**Topics:** "Gospel Power", "Moral Law"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot contrasts the ineffectiveness of human laws and the law of Moses in restraining sin and producing righteousness with the power of the gospel to transform hearts and lives. He emphasizes that the moral law only brings bondage, guilt, and fear, while the gospel brings mercy, hope, and the light of God's countenance. Philpot encourages believers to focus on the gospel, pointing to the love of God displayed in Jesus' sacrifice and the power of His blood to cleanse and save. He urges believers to live in response to the gospel's influence, walking in God's fear and praising Him.

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## Transcript

(Excerpted from Philpot's sermon, "Not Our Own")

Imagine that you are ignorant of the gospel and of God's way of preventing evil and of bringing about good- and were called upon to design some plan whereby a man might be most effectually restrained from the commission of sin, and made obedient to the law of God. Now, what plan would you adopt? Most probably you would lay down strict rules of life; you would appoint certain seasons of prayer and meditation; you would call upon a man to withdraw himself from all worldly society, and prescribe to him a certain path of religious exercise in which he is to walk all the days of his life, that by fasting, self-denial, and continual mortification of the flesh, he may tame and subdue his rebellious lusts and attain unto perfection and holiness.

Well, in laying down all these plans and schemes, you would be doing what Popery has ever done, and what is the main foundation of all the monasteries and nunneries that are now everywhere springing up in this country.

So you see, that you have been already envisioned in your plans and projects; and that hundreds of years before you were born, only what the 'wisdom of man', such as it is, had labored hard to restrain men from evil, and to bring forth in them that which is good. And how have all these attempts succeeded? Is there less crime in the country? Do severe laws deter men from the commission of theft, violence, and even

murder? Has not sin always proved too strong for every restraint which human laws have put upon it?

And the very law of God itself, which threatens a solemn curse against all who are found guilty under it, revealing the wrath of God against all transgression and all transgressors- has it ever restrained men from evil? Has it ever subdued and tamed the carnal mind? Has it ever produced obedience acceptable to God, or brought forth any one good word or work? No! on the contrary, has it not rather, as the Apostle speaks, put fresh life into sin, "for without the law sin was dead," and thus sin, taking occasion by the commandment, works in us all manner of evil? We thus find that no law, whether the law of the land, or the law of MOSES, can restrain or subdue sin, or bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

But now, I will assume that you know something, spiritually and experimentally, of the gospel; that you have been led to see, that what is called the moral law never has been able to subdue sin, for the carnal mind is not subject to it, neither indeed can be; that though holy in itself, for the law is "holy, just, and good," it has never produced any inward sanctification of soul and spirit; that all its works are dead works, and that though the soul is naturally wedded to it, it has never yielded thereby a living offspring, or brought forth fruit acceptable to God. You may have tried to keep it- have set it daily before your eyes as your guiding rule- have endeavored to obey it and conform your life to it; and yet after all your labors you have never been able to satisfy the breadth of its demands, or render to it an obedience which could pacify your own guilty conscience.

All that you reaped from it was hard bondage, guilt, doubt and fear. You never obtained by it one gleam of mercy, one answer to prayer, one breaking in of the light of God's countenance, one visitation of the presence of Jesus, one testimony that you were in the right way, or one evidence that the Lord was at work upon your soul. If ever, amid all your hard bondage, any beam of light and life, any ray of hope, any prospect of mercy, any intimation that you should not perish, came into your soul, it was from a different quarter; it was through some beams of the gospel which broke in through the mist and fog of your legal bondage.

I will assume, then, that you have tasted, felt, and handled something of the sweetness and power of the gospel. Now you set another way to work, and you are able to show, from your own experience of its power, the effect which it has had both upon your heart and upon your life; and this has wrought a change not only in your views of what the gospel is as the power of God unto salvation, and what the Gospel can do, as influencing both heart and life, but has also put a new speech into your lips and turned you to speak the pure language of Canaan.

You do not now urge the law as a binding rule upon those who have believed through grace, and make Moses their husband instead of Christ. You know from your own experience that the law never made you fruitful in any one good word or work, and that nothing ever attended it but darkness, bondage, guilt, barrenness, and death. You cannot, therefore, urge that as a guiding rule upon others, which in your own case you found so ineffectual either to guide or rule you; and therefore when you would endeavor to persuade those who fear God to live to his glory, you would set before them not the law with its curses, but the gospel with its blessings. You would set before them the exceeding love of God in the gift of his dear Son, the surpassing grace, mercy, and condescension of Jesus in dying for a guilty race. You would point to his sufferings in the garden, and to his agonies on the cross, and show that there is no other sacrifice for sin but his precious blood shedding and death; and that every poor, guilty, self-condemned wretch who comes unto him, casts himself upon his free mercy and grace, and looks to him and to him alone as his all-sufficient Savior and complete salvation, will not be cast out, but sooner or later will obtain pardon and

peace.

You would further tell him, that when he feels the bleeding, dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ in his soul, it will constrain him by every sweet constraint henceforth not to live unto himself, but unto him who died for him and rose again. And as you set these things before his eyes and speak of the influence which they have produced upon your own heart and life, you bind him, as it were, by every gospel motive to live to God's praise and to walk in his fear.

Now such a mode of persuading to obedience would be right, would be consistent with the promises and precepts of the gospel, would be in harmony with the preaching and teaching of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, would be more or less accompanied with the testimony of the blessed Spirit and the approbation of God, and so far as owned and blessed of him, would make itself manifest in the hearts and lives of those among whom it was preached.

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