

The Law Established by the Gospel.

by John Gill

The doctrine of faith establishes the law of God and makes it effectual to answer its designed purposes.

Topics: "Faith and Works", "The Role of the Law"

Description

John Gill preaches on Romans 3:31, emphasizing that faith does not nullify the law but rather establishes it. He addresses concerns that the doctrine of grace leads to moral laxity, arguing instead that true faith results in obedience to God's law. Gill explains that justification comes through the righteousness of Christ, which fulfills the law's demands, and that believers are called to live in accordance with this law, empowered by grace. He asserts that the moral law remains relevant and is upheld by the gospel, which provides the means for true obedience. Ultimately, Gill encourages Christians to embrace the law as a guide for righteous living, demonstrating their faith through good works.

Transcript

THE LAW

Established by the Gospel,

A Sermon,

Preached March 22, 1739, at the Monthly Exercise of

Prayer, at the Reverend Mr. Wilson's Meeting-House

in Goodman's-Field

ROMANS 3:31

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.

That vice and immorality, disobedience to the laws of God and men, prevail among us; and that practical religion and powerful godliness greatly decline, will he acknowledged by every serious, thoughtful, and considering Christian; but what are the springs and sources of this sad scene of things, or to what all this is to be ascribed, is not so generally agreed; in this men differ. The opposers of the doctrines of grace attribute it, at least, in part, to that scheme of truths which we justly esteem the gospel of Christ; nor can they think there is any reason to expect, that moral virtue and practical religion will rise and gain ground

among us, so long as this is the subject of our ministrations.

"They spare not to charge the whole with a tendency to licentiousness, to open the door to libertinism, and give men a loose to live at pleasure, in all manner of impiety. Particularly the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, imputed by God the Father, and received by faith, is branded with this infamous character. It is suggested, that if this doctrine is true, the law is made void, obedience to it becomes unnecessary, and good works are insignificant things; and that it can be of no other use than to discourage good men in the performance of duty, and to encourage bad men in a course of wickedness."

To remove this charge and imputation is my view in reading these words unto you. The design of the apostle, in this epistle, is to set in a full and clear light, the doctrine of justification; in which he first proves that all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, are sinners, are under sin, (Romans 3:9) the pollution, guilt and power of it; and so are arraigned, accused and convicted by the law, as transgressors; which law pronounces the whole world guilty before God, stops the mouth of every man, and puts all to silence; so that they have nothing to say in vindication of themselves, or why judgment should not be given against them, and be executed on them: whence it must most clearly follow, That no man can be justified in the sight of God by the law, by the deeds of it, or by any obedience of sinful man unto it.

The apostle goes on to shew, that the matter of justification, or that by which a sinner is justified, is the righteousness of God; (Romans 3: 21, 22) a righteousness in which Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit, are concerned. God the Father sent his Son to work it out, and bring it in; he has approved and accepted of it, and graciously imputes it to all the elect. The Son of God is the author of it; who is our Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, God and man in one Person, God over all, blessed for ever.

Hence it has that fulness, sufficiency, and virtue to justify all to whose account it is placed; which the righteousness of a mere creature could never do. The holy Spirit of God discovers this righteousness to a poor, sensible sinner, brings it near to him; sets it before him; works faith in him to lay hold upon it, and receive it, and pronounces him justified by it in the court of conscience. This righteousness, the apostle says, (Romans 3:21) is manifested without the law, that is, in the gospel; in which it is revealed from faith to faith; though it is witnessed, a testimony is bore to it, both by the law and the prophets; and that it is unto all, applied unto all, and upon all, put upon all as a robe of righteousness, even upon all that believe; for there is no difference; (Romans 3:22) that is among men, among Jews or Gentiles; no distinction made between righteous men and sinners, or between some, being greater, others lesser sinners; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23) are through sin depraved, and are destitute of the glorious image of God, that rectitude and uprightness of nature, in which man was created; and therefore stand in need of the justifying righteousness of Christ, by which they must be justified, if at all.

The same inspired writer proceeds to observe, that the impulsive and moving cause of justification, is the free grace of God, being justified freely by his grace. (Romans 3:24) Grace moved Jehovah, the Father, to resolve upon the justification of his elect. Grace set his thoughts at work; employed his infinite wisdom to find out a way whereby these, though they should fall into sin, might be just with God. Grace put him upon ordaining, calling, engaging, and sending his Son to fulfill all righteousness in their room and stead; and it was grace in him to accept of it, for and on the behalf of them; and to impute it to them, who, in themselves, were sinners and ungodly.

The grace and love of the Son greatly appear in his voluntary engagement to be the surety and substitute of his people, in his readiness to do the will of God, in his cheerful coming down from heaven about this

work, and in the gracious manner in which he wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness. The grace of the Spirit is abundantly manifest in the revelation and application of the justifying righteousness of Christ, to a poor, sinful, unworthy creature, and in bestowing faith as a free gift upon him, to apprehend and embrace it as his own.

The meritorious or procuring cause of justification, is placed in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God, in his infinite wisdom, and of his free rich grace, hath set forth or fore-ordained, to be a propitiation, to satisfy divine justice, by being an expiatory sacrifice for sin, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, adds the apostle, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just; that is, appear to be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:25, 26) So that by this wise and happy scheme, both the grace and justice of God wonderfully agree in the justification of a poor sinner, and are thereby greatly glorified.

From the whole, the apostle deduces several inferences and conclusions; as that upon this scheme, there is no room nor reason for boasting in the creature; and asks, (Romans 3:27)"Where is boasting then? it is excluded; by what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith; that is, the doctrine of faith, and particularly the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness; also that a man is justified, or whoever is justified, is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law; that God is the God both of Jews and Gentiles; and that there is but one way and method he makes use of in justifying of either, and that is, by faith and through faith; phrases which are synonymous, and expressive of one and the same thing; and then, in the words of our text, removes an objection which he easily saw would be raised against the doctrine he had advanced, Do we then make void the law through faith?

There were some who thought they did make void the law by the doctrine of faith: This was an objection common in the mouths of the Jews, and had been often leveled against the ministry of Christ and his apostles; and therefore the apostle Paul could be no stranger to it. Our Lord himself was traduced by the ignorant and ill-natured men of that generation in which he lived, as an Antinomian, both in doctrine and practice: as one in doctrine, which is evident, from those words of his in his own defence; Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. (Matthew 5:17) Whence it is clear, that some had entertained such thoughts of him, that he came to destroy the law, and imagined that he did make it null and void by his doctrine and ministry: and that they charged him with being one in practice, is certain from the account he gives of their calumny and detraction when he says, The Son of man came eating and drinking; and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; but wisdom is justified of her children. (Matthew 11:19) Now if they called the Master of the household so, it is no wonder that they of his household, his disciples and followers, should be treated in the same opprobrious manner.

Accordingly, when Stephen, being filled with the holy Ghost, disputed with the Jews concerning the Messiah and the gospel-state, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake; they suborned, and set up false witnesses, who said and swore, that he ceased not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law. (Acts 6:13) When the apostle Paul returned unto Jerusalem, after he had travelled over a large part of the Gentile world, preaching the gospel of the grace of God with great success; James, a fellow-apostle, observed to him how many thousands of the Jews there were which believed in Jesus, and yet were all zealous of the law, and strenuous advocates for it; who had been informed that he had said many things among the Gentiles, contrary to Moses and his law, which were highly displeasing to them; and therefore he put him upon a method to conciliate himself to their

affections; which method did not succeed according to desire and expectation: for the Jews having observed one Trophimus, an Ephesian, with him, whom they supposed he brought into the temple; they cried out, Men of Israel, help, this is the man that teacheth all men every where, against the people, and the law, and this place. (Acts 21:8) From all which it is most manifest, that the apostle must be fully acquainted with, and he aware of this popular objection to his doctrine; and which he here makes answer to; partly by way of detestation and abhorrence, God forbid; a way of speaking he often makes use of, when vile objections were made to his doctrine, or such wicked consequences drawn from it, as were abominable to him; as when he observes, What shall we say then?

Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid: How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? (Romans 6:1, 2) Again What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid Nay, I had not known sin but by the law. (Romans 7:7) Once more; If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, Is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid : (Galatians 2:17) and partly he replies to this objection, by asserting the contrary, yea, we establish the law; in like manner as Christ had done before in a passage already referred to, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill; and indeed, he is not destroying, but the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. (Romans 10:4) By faith here we are to understand either the grace or the doctrine of faith, or both.

Faith may be considered as a grace; which by an inspired writer is defined to be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen: (Hebrews 11:1) It is a grace peculiar to the chosen of God, and precious; it is a fruit and effect of electing love, and so an evidence of it; and is therefore styled The faith of God's elect. (Titus 1:1) It is a gift of God, (Ephesians 2:8) an instance of his grace; and a special blessing of the everlasting covenant; it is not obtained by the industry, power and will of man; it is implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God, and the power of his grace; whence it is said to be the faith of the operation of God. (Colossians 2:12) This grace has a considerable place and concern in the justification of a poor sinner before God, in the court of conscience.

This is the eye of the soul, by which it sees and looks unto the righteousness of Christ for justification; for that in the gospel is revealed from faith to faith; (Romans 1:17) it is the hand of the soul, by which it receives the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness from the God of its salvation; (Psalm 24:5) or in other words, by which it receives abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness. (Romans 5:17) Hence such as are possessed of it, are said to be justified by it; not by it as an habit implanted in them by the Spirit of God; for, as such, it is a branch of sanctification; nor as an act performed by them; for as such, it is their act and deed, under the influence of the Spirit of God; but relatively, organically, or objectively considered; that is, as it relates to, and is concerned with, or has for its object Christ's righteousness; or as it is a means of apprehending and receiving that as its justifying one; for faith itself doth not make us righteous; it is not our righteousness, nor does it give us one; no, nor an interest in Christ's; but it is that grace by which we claim our interest in Christ's righteousness; by which we have the knowledge and perception of it, and possess that spiritual peace, joy and pleasure which arise from it: it is that grace by which we live on Christ as the Lord our righteousness; who was delivered into the hands of justice and death for our offences; and was raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:25) Now faith considered as having such an hand in this affair, is no way contrary to the law of God; that is not made void by it; nor is obedience to it, on the account of faiths rendered unnecessary and insignificant, as will be shewn hereafter.

Again; By faith may be meant the doctrine of faith; and that either as it may intend in general the whole gospel, or in particular, the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness. The whole gospel

sometimes goes by the name of faith, and is called, The faith once delivered to the saints; our most holy faith; and the faith of the gospel; (Jude 3) because it contains things to be believed at once, upon the credit of the revealer, and not to be disputed by carnal reason: it proposes, and points out the great object of faith, Jesus Christ; its language is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved: (Acts 14:31) it is the means, in the Spirit's hands, of begetting and implanting the grace of faith in the hearts of God's elect: Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:7) Yea, the word preached is unprofitable, unless it be mixed with faith by them that hear it. (Hebrews 4:2) Now there is an entire harmony and consistency between this doctrine of faith and the law of God.

The law is so far from being made void by it, that whatsoever is against that, is also contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, committed to the trust of his servants. (1 Timothy 1:9-11) Moreover, since the apostle is manifestly insisting, in the context, upon the doctrine of a sinner's justification before God, it is reasonable to suppose, that this is what he principally designs by faith; and it is not to be wondered at, that this should be so called; since the grace of faith is of so much use in it, to the apprehension, knowledge and comfort of it and since it is so fundamental an article of faith, that he that goes off from it, is said to be removed unto another gospel; Christ is become of no effect unto him: and whosoever seeks to be justified by the law, is fallen from grace; (Galatians 1:4, 6) that is, from the doctrine of it.

Now by this particular doctrine also, the law is not made null and void; nor are good works, done in obedience to it, useless and unprofitable. By the law, I apprehend, we are to understand not the ceremonial law, that law which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them, the Jews, until the time of reformation; (Hebrews 9:1) that is, the gospel dispensation, or times of the Messiah; which law only had a shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of the things; and could never, by its daily or yearly sacrifices, make the comers thereunto perfect; (Hebrews 10:1) and therefore there was a disannulling of the commandment, for the weakness and unprofitableness of it. (Hebrews 7:18) This law is indeed made void and useless; Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition which stood between, separated and distinguished between Jew and Gentile; he has abolished in his flesh the enmity, that which was the cause of so much enmity between the people of Israel and the nations of the world, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; (Ephesians 2:14, 15) wherefore no man should now judge or condemn Christians in respect of meat or drink, or of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ; (Colossians 2:16, 17) he is the sum and substance of all these ceremonies: nor was this law abolished and made void until it was fulfilled in and by Christ; for every type and figure, every shadow and sacrifice, every office and ordinance pertaining to that dispensation, had their entire accomplishment in him.

But by the law in this our text, I judge, the moral law is intended; that law which was written in Adam's heart in innocence; some remains of which are to be observed in fallen man, and even among the Gentiles, destitute of a divine revelation; and because of the depravity of human nature, and the treachery of human memory, and because this law was so much obliterated, and almost erased out of the hearts of men; a new edition of it was delivered to Moses in writing, calculated particularly for the people of the Jews; and which is opposed unto, and contradistinguished from the gospel of Christ; the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17) The sum of this law is love to God and to our neighbour; and is established by sanctions of rewards and punishments, promising life in case of obedience, and threatening with death in case of disobedience.

Now to make void the law, according to the import of the word here used, is to destroy and abolish it, to render it idle, inactive, weak, useless, and insignificant; and to establish it, according to the notation of the word in the text, is to make it stand, to place it upon a sure basis and firm foundation, or to make it effectual to answer the ends and purposes for which it is designed. Upon the whole, the observation on the text, or the doctrine of it, is this; that the moral law is not made null and void, but is established both by the grace and doctrine of faith.

The proposition consists of two parts, a negative and an affirmative, I shall first consider the one, and then the other. First, The negative part of the proposition is, That the law of God is not made void either by the grace or doctrine of faith. 1. Not by the grace of faith. It is certain, indeed, that believing and working, or faith and works, are continually opposed to, and contradistinguished from each other in the business of justification; every one that has read his Bible, with any care, will be able to observe this.

How often does the apostle say, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law ; (Romans 3:28) and that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ? Even we, says he, have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16) And a gain; To him that worketh not, but believeth, on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:5) But then it should he known., that faith is not opposed to the doing of good works, in obedience to the law of God, from right principles, and with right views; but to trusting to, and depending upon them, and glorying in them, as the matter of justification before God, and acceptance with him; for that there is an entire agreement and consistency between faith in Christ, and works done in obedience to the law upon gospel principles, will clearly appear from the following hints.

Let be observed then, That that faith, only is right, which looks to and lays hold upon Christ's righteousness for justification, that is attended with good works, as fruits of righteousness; for as the apostle James says, What doth it profit, my brethren. though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Faith if it hath not works, is dead being alone: (James 2:14, 17) and such a faith can never be true and genuine, nor of any use and advantage; though good works do not, and cannot justify a man's person before God; yet they justify a man's faith or evidence the truth of it before men; they are fruits of faith, and so testimonies of the reality of it.

A man may say, adds the same apostle, thou hast faith and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works (James 2:18) Yea, he further observes, that by works faith is made perfect; and that, as the body without the spirit is dead; so faith without works is dead also. Not that the essence, perfection, and life of faith lie in, or flow from works; but because, as one rightly judges, works are second acts, necessarily flowing from the life of faith; and faith is said to be perfected by them, not with an essential perfection, as the effect is perfected by the cause; but with a complemental one, as the cause is made perfect, or rendered actually complete in the production of the effect.

Faith is not an idle, inactive, inoperative grace but a very industrious, active, and working one; it works by love to God and Christ, to fellow-Christians and fellow-creatures; and love, by which faith works, takes a large compass of operation; it is very extensive, both as to its objects and its acts. Hence that which is perfect, as it is in Christ, is the fulfilling of the law; and though love is imperfect in the saints, yet so far as it acts aright, it acts in agreement with the law; and therefore the law can never be made void by that faith which operates by it.

Owe no man any thing, saith the apostle, but to love one another; for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false Witness; Thou shalt not Covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying; namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 8:8-10) Again; As faith without works is dead; so, on the other hand, works without faith, are dead works also; yea, Whatsoever is not of faith is sin: (Romans 14:23) and without faith it is impossible to please God, (Hebrews 11:6) or to perform any duty acceptable unto him.

Hence the law, and obedience to it, can never be made void by this grace, and the exercise of it, or its concern in justification: since the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned? (1 Timothy 1:5) Besides, believers, or such as have true faith in Christ and his righteousness, are the only persons that are capable of yielding spiritual obedience to the law, or of performing good works in a spiritual manner. Men may as soon expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles, as to imagine that good works, such as are in all their circumstances so, can be performed by any evil man.

Men must become the workmanship of God, and be created in Christ Jesus, in order to perform good works; which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them; (Ephesians 2:10) they must be made new creatures, and put on the new man; which after God is created in, unto righteousness and true holiness; (Ephesians 4:24) and such as are born again, who have the Spirit of Christ within, them, the grace of Christ bestowed on them, and particularly, have the grace of faith, and that in exercise, are best qualified for doing works of real righteousness, and acts of true holiness: of all men in the world, such as have believed in Christ, as the Lord their righteousness and strength, ought to be careful to maintain good works for necessary uses; and these, indeed, are zealous of them, and are heartily desirous of performing more than they do, to testify their love to Christ, and to adorn his doctrine: which doctrine of grace teaches them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, they should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. (Titus 3:8 and 2: 11, 12) Add to these things, that that faith which is concerned in a sinner's justification, looks to Christ as the end, the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness; it lays hold upon a righteousness which is every way commensurate to the Law of God; which answers all its demands, and gives it all it requires; a righteousness with which God is well pleased, justice is satisfied, and by which the law is magnified and made honourable; (Isaiah 42:21) a righteousness that is complete and perfect, pure and spotless; by which all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and in which they shall glory: wherefore that faith which spies this in Christ, looks to him for it, and says, Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; (Isaiah 45:24, 25) can never be contrary to the law of God, or do any thing by which that is made void and useless. 2.

Nor is the law made void by the doctrine of faith, particularly by the doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ. Indeed, according to this doctrine, the law does not justify, nor can any man be justified by the deeds of it; the law neither has, nor can it have, any such use, since the fall of man; this makes the righteousness of another necessary, and justification to proceed on another foot; For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. (Romans 8:34) Man, through sin is dead; and he must be made alive before he is capable of working righteousness, or of yielding obedience to the law: there must be life before there can be righteousness.

Now if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law: (Galatians 3:21) but inasmuch as there never was any such law which could give life to a dead sinner, there can be no justification by it. The argument used by the apostle, is sufficient to give satisfaction to any one that has any regard to Christ or true Christianity; if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain; (Galatians 2:21) but though this use of the law is set aside by the doctrine of faith, yet all its real and proper uses continue untouched by it, and remain in full force; we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully. (1 Timothy 1:8) There is a lawful and there is an unlawful use of the law; the unlawful use of the law is to seek for life, righteousness and salvation by it; the lawful uses of it, and which are not made void by the doctrine of faith, are such as these: One use of the law is, to inform us of the mind and will of God; it is a transcript of his holy nature and unchangeable will; and therefore is itself holy just and good, (Romans 7:12) as it must needs be, since it comes from him; it teaches us what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God; it points out to us our duty both to God and man; what should be done or not done by us; it directs us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and strength; and to love our neighbour as ourselves; which, in a few words, contain the sum and substance of it.

Another use of the law is, to convince of sin: for by the law is the knowledge of sin; (Romans 3:20) of sin original and actual, of the sin of our hearts and nature, as well as of the sin of our lips, lives and actions: I had not known sin, says the apostle but by the law: for I had not known lust, that is, known it to, be a sin, and sinful, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (Romans 7:7) Not that the law can or does of itself, really and thoroughly, spiritually and savingly, convince of sin; for this is the work of the Spirit of God: but then the Spirit of God makes use of the law to work in men through convictions of their sinful, lost, and miserable condition by nature.

Again; Another use of the law, not made void by the doctrine of faith, is, to be as a glass to believers themselves; to behold therein by the light of the divine Spirit, the deformity of their souls by sin, and the imperfection of their obedience; whereby they grow out of love with themselves, and quit all dependence on their own righteousness for justification. So the apostle Paul, comparing himself, his heart and services, with the pure and holy law of God, thus expresses himself; We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. (Romans 7:14) In this view of things the psalmist David was able to make such an observation as this; I have seen an end of all perfection: thy commandment is exceeding broad; (Psalm 119:96) that is " I see that the law of God is so large and broad, and my obedience to it so short of it, and so imperfect, that I despair of ever attaining perfection by the deeds of it."

It was, no doubt by the light of the Spirit, and as beholding herself in the glass of the law, that the church saw, and so said, that her righteousness was as filthy rags, and herself as an unclean thing. (Isaiah 64:6) Hence, There is a farther use of the law to believers, and that is, to make the righteousness of Christ more dear and valuable to them for when they see how imperfect their own righteousness is, and how far short of the demands of the righteous law of God their obedience comes; and when they behold what an everlasting righteousness Christ has brought in; how perfect it is in itself, and how agreeable to the law; insomuch that it is not only fulfilled by it, but magnified and made honourable; they are at once delighted with it, fix upon it, and desire to be found in Christ not having their own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Philippians 3:9) Once more; Another use and office of the law is, that it is a rule of life, that is, of action, walk and conversation to the saints; who are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ: (1 Corinthians 9:21) and as it is in the hands of Christ, and held forth by him, as King of saints, and lawgiver in his church, it is to be observed and attended to by them; and as persons born again, being under the influences of the

blessed Spirit, and having his gracious assistance, they delight in the law of God, after the inward man; and though with the flesh, they sometimes, to their great regret and sorrow, serve the law of sin; yet, at other times they are enabled cheerfully, and with the mind, to serve the law of God. (Romans 7: 22, 25) To say no more; though God's justified ones, are as such, delivered from the wrath and condemnation of the law; Christ having redeemed them from thence by being made a curse for them; (Galatians 3:13) and having the sentence of condemnation executed upon him, which their sin deserved, so that there is now no condemnation to them that are in him; (Romans 8:1) they are passed from death to life, and shall never enter into condemnation: yet the law remains a cursing and damning law to others; it lies against Christless sinners; it pronounces them guilty, and accurses them; it says to them that are of the works of it, and are under it, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the boo/c of the law to do them; (Galatians 3:10) yea, it is the killing letter, the ministrations of condemnation and death unto them.

Thus the law, as to these uses of it, both to saints and sinners, is not made void by the doctrine of faith. Perhaps it will be asked, Is not the law, in some sense, destroyed and abolished? Does not the apostle say to believers, Ye are not under the law, but under grace? (Romans 6:14) Yea, he affirms that they are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; and that they are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein they were held. (Romans 7:4, 6) And elsewhere, (2 Corinthians 3:11) he argues from the former glory of the law, to the more excelling glory of the gospel, thus; If that which is done away, that is, the law, was glorious, much more that which remaineth, that is, the everlasting gospel, is glorious.

To which I answer, That the law, as a covenant of works, is abolished, and done away; in this sense, it is made void to believers. Adam was a covenant head and representative of all his posterity, in which he was a figure of him that was to come; the law was given to him and to all mankind in him, promising life on condition of obedience, and threatening with death in case of transgression. Adam soon broke this covenant, whereby sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men! for in him all have sinned, (Romans 5:12, 14) God's elect themselves not excepted.

These were considered in Adam, their natural and federal head; they sinned in him, and fell with him; the sentence of death passed on them as on others; the reason why it was not, and never will be executed upon them is, because Christ, in the everlasting covenant, became their surety and substitute: engaged to bear the punishment of their sins, and make satisfaction to the law and justice of God for them; which he has done by his sufferings and death; and so has delivered them from the law, as a covenant of works; and from all that misery, destruction and death, it entailed upon them wherefore they are not under the law, as a covenant of works, but under grace, the covenant of grace.

Again: The law is abolished and done away, as to the form of administration of it by Moses. The whole frame of the Mosaic economy is broke to pieces; which was signified by the two tables of stone being cast out of his hands and broken, when he came down from the mount; which were afterwards renewed, and put into the ark, a type of Christ; in whose hands, and not in the hands of Moses, is the law to be considered. The Jews said to the poor blind man, that was cured by Christ, Thou art his, that is, Christ's disciple; but we are Moses's disciples. (John 9:28) They valued themselves upon the latter; we Christians upon the former.

Moses, indeed, was a faithful servant; but he was only a servant: Christ is a Son over his own house; and it is he that we are to hearken to. When Moses and Elias were with Christ on the mount, at the time of his transfiguration, a voice was heard, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye

him; (Matthew 17:5) not Moses and Elias, but hear the well-beloved Son. Moreover, the law is destroyed as a yoke of bondage. As it was a covenant of works, and as administered under the former dispensation, it tended to bondage, and induced a servile spirit on those that were under it, It was not. only a rigid schoolmaster, but a severe taskmaster; not only setting hard lessons, but requiring strict and perfect obedience, without giving any strength to perform, or directing where it is to be had; but now, in Christ's hands, it is a perfect law of liberty; (James 1:25) and such as are called by grace, are made a willing people in the day of Christ's power upon them; not only to be saved alone by him, but to yield a cheerful obedience to the law, as given forth by him.

In this view of it, its commandments are not grievous; this yoke is easy, and this burden is light; the saints serve it with pleasure, not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of spirit! (Romans 7:6) Likewise, As has been already observed, the people of God are freed from the malediction of it, and condemnation by it, and so from the terror of it; it is a terrifying law, as it is a cursing and damning one; wherefore, to such, who desire to be under it, it may be said, what the apostle did, Do ye not hear the law? (Galatians 4:21) it speaks wrath and vengeance, cursing and bitterness: it is a voice of words, of terrible Words; which they that heard at mount Sinai in treated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; for they could not endure that which was commanded.

But now the case is different with us under the gospel-dispensation; the scene is altered; the face of things is changed; we hear a different voice; love, grace and mercy, instead of wrath and vengeance: blessing and salvation, in the room of cursing and condemnation: we are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest; but we are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly, and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven; and to God the judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:18-20, 22-24) Once more; The law is abrogated and made void, with respect to justification.

We are not to seek for, and expect life and righteousness by obedience to it; and should we, our seeking would be in vain, and our expectation would be disappointed. Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith but as it were by the works of the law. (Romans 9:31, 32) The same success attends all those who pursue the same scheme; by which they discover their ignorance, vanity and pride; their ignorance of the strictness of the justice of God; their vain opinion and conceit of their own righteousness; and their haughty and contemptuous rejection of the righteousness of Christ; all which is expressed in these few words; For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish a righteousness of their own, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:3) This is to act contrary to God's declared way and method of justifying sinners.

There can be no justification by the deeds of the law; this use of the law is entirely abolished; we are not to obey it with any such view, or for such a purpose; no, we are to yield obedience to it, as in the hands of Christ from a principle of love to him; and to express our gratitude for the numerous mercies we receive from him, and through him; and to testify our professed subjection, and our sense of obligation to him. But now, though the law is made void as a covenant of works, it still continues a rule of action, walk and conversation; though it is done away as to the form of the administration of it by Moses, the matter, the sum and substance of it remains firm, unalterable, and unchangeable in the hands of Christ; though it is destroyed as a yoke of bondage, it is in being as a perfect law of liberty; and though believers are

delivered from the curse and condemnation of it, they are not exempted from obedience to it; and though they are not to seek for justification by it, they are under the greatest obligations, by the strongest ties of love, to have a regard to all its commands.

So much for the negative part of the proposition. I proceed, Secondly, To consider the affirmative, and to shew that the law is established by the grace and doctrine of faith. The perpetuity of the law is maintained hereby. The race of faith always views the law in the hands of Christ, looks to him as the fulfilling end of it, and is attended with works done in obedience to it. According to the doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ, all the precepts of the law are fulfilled, its penalty endured, and itself continued as a rule of righteousness.

The Law, upon the gospel-scheme, is as unchangeable, and more so than the laws of the Medes and Persians; not one jot or tittle of it has passed away, nor shall ever pass away; for all is fulfilled, and will be preserved. The spirituality of the law is asserted and secured upon the foot of faith, and the doctrine of it. The Pharisees of old, as much as in them lay, made void the law, as to the spirituality of it, at the same time they pretended to be advocates for it; by insinuating as though the law only regarded the external actions of life, and was not concerned about the secret motions, inward thoughts and lusts of the heart: whereas, such as have believed in Christ, and understand his gospel, have other notions of the law; and know that it is spiritual. (Romans 7:14) A true believer, in the exercise of the grace of faith, beholds the inward corruption of his heart and nature; and mourns over it, as contrary to the pure and holy law of God; and at the same time, according to the doctrine of faith, with pleasure views, that he is justified by the blood of Christ, even by that blood which cleanseth from all sin, (Romans 5:9; 1 John 1:7) of heart, lip, and life.

The perfect righteousness of the law is established by faith, and the doctrine of it. Whatever the law requires, according to this doctrine is given it. Does it require pure and spotless holiness of nature? There is in Christ an entire conformity to it in this respect; who is holy, harmless, and undefiled; and as such, is an high priest that becomes us, is suitable to us, as being our sanctification and our righteousness. Does the law require sinless and perfect obedience to all its commands?

Christ has always done the things that pleased his Father, and done all things that are pleasing to him; he has perfectly obeyed the whole preceptive part of the law. Does the law require of, and threaten transgressors with the penalty of death? Christ being made sin, was made a curse for his people, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. So that the law, in all respects, is magnified, and made honourable by him, according to the doctrine of faith,. We bring to the law in Christ our head, or rather he in our room and stead, a righteousness which answers all the demands of it, and casts a lustre and glory upon it and indeed, all the obedience of angels and men put together, does not, and cannot give the law such glory and honour as the obedience and righteousness of Christ does.

Whence it is clear, that the law is so far from being made void, that it is thoroughly established by it. Obedience to the law by believers, is enforced upon them by the best of motives, and yielded to it by them, under the best of influences; it is enforced on gospel motives and principles. Read over the epistles of the apostle Paul, particularly those to the Ephesians and Colossians, and you will easily see how the saints are exhorted to all the duties of life, incumbent on them in their families, the churches, and the world; and are encouraged to a performance of them upon the principles of grace, and by the doctrines of it; and according to the covenant of grace, they have the best assistance promised, provided and afforded to them.

I will put my law in their inward parts, says the Lord, (Jeremiah 31:33) and I will write it in their hearts. And again; I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Once more; By the doctrine of faith we establish the law, or make it stand; because we place it in the best of hands, and upon the surest foundation. The law was put into the hands of Adam; but it did not long continue there; it was quickly transgressed and broken.

The two tables of stone, with the law written on them, were put into Moses's hands; but he, as he came down from the mount, cast them out of his hands, and broke them to pieces beneath it: but now the law, according to the doctrine of faith, is put into the hands of Christ; and there it stands, and will stand firm and sure to all generations; yea, it will stand unchangeable and unalterable to all eternity. We say, The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, and he will save us. (Isaiah 38:22) In this view of the law, how amiable and lovely must it look in the eyes of saints; they cannot but delight in it, as satisfied by Christ, and take pleasure in obeying it, as it is in his hands; the language of their souls is that of David's O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119:97) And as there is a pleasure attends an observance of it, there is peace in it; though it doth not arise from it, nor is founded on it: Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them. (Psalm 119:165) Such as are believers in Christ, ought not only to be careful to maintain, but even to excel, to go before others in good works.

Let us therefore, by divine assistance, shew by our lives and conversations, the truth of this doctrine, that "the law is not made void, but established by the gospel." Let us, as it is the will of God we should, with well-doing pat to silence the ignorance of foolish men; and shame them who falsely accuse our good conversation in Christ. Let us make it appear, throughout the whole of our conduct, under the gracious influences of the Spirit of God, that we have a proper regard to the unchangeable law of God, as to the everlasting gospel of Christ Jesus.

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