

Answers on law

Stewarton Bible School

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Question

I've heard it said that the law of God has been abolished at the cross and is now obsolete. Is this the case?

Answer

No it isn't. The Saviour did not come to abolish his father's law, but to fulfil it. (Matt 5:17-20) The word fulfil means to carry out, to do, to perform, to *obey*. Had the Messiah abolished the law, He would have contradicted his own words, for heaven and earth are still here.

Besides, *we* could hardly be called *sinners*, for "sin" by definition is /"the transgression of the law"/ (1 John 3:4) and as Paul so clearly puts it /"where there is no law there is no transgression."*/ (Romans 4:15)

The Bible classifies *all* men as sinners: this means that Yahweh's law must still exist, for no one can break or transgress a non-existing law.

Christians who speak and write against the law of the Most High are unwittingly furthering the cause of Satan the *Lawless One*; and are adding to the enormous catalogue of sin of which the world is already guilty.

Question

Where does faith and grace come into this matter of keeping the Feast Days? Surely Stewarton Bible School must know that Christians are *under grace* and not under law!

Answer

To begin with, let us make it perfectly clear that we know that every sinner who accepts salvation *is saved by the grace of the Almighty; and the salvation is a free gift made available to us by God through His Son Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah*. This is a well known fact. We also know that the main reason for our salvation is not merely that we live forever, but that Ephesians 2:5&8 "in *the ages to come* He (Yahweh) will shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Jesus Christ." Furthermore we know that Yahweh's grace towards mankind was evident in the *past ages*:

Genesis 6:8 /"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."/

Exodus 33:13-16 /"Moses found grace in Yahweh's sight."/

Jeremiah 31:2 /"Israel found grace in the wilderness."/

Indeed "He (Yahweh) giveth grace unto the lowly", no matter what age they may happen to live in. (Prov 3:34) The Almighty's grace, we conclude, is not just a new Covenant feature, but an age-old environment and personal trait of the Most High which immediately manifested itself when man sinned and salvation became necessary. Yahweh's grace, in other words, has been extended to *all* His followers since Adam sinned in the garden of Eden.

What, then, is the relationship between grace and law? And what does it mean to be *under grace*? Briefly here are the facts concerning this misunderstood matter.

1. All mankind has sinned; and all have come short of the glory of God. What is sin?
Sin, as stated above, is the transgression of Yahweh's law. Sin is doing what the Almighty tell us not to do. Sin is breaking Yahweh's commandments. Sin is disobedience, and all of us have sinned. (1 John 3:4, Isa. 53:6)
2. The punishment for sin, according to another section of Yahweh's law, is death - eternal death. This means that all mankind are under a death sentence, for all have sinned (Romans 6:23). Being under the death sentence of the law is referred to in the Scriptures as being "under the law."
3. But Yahweh in His infinite mercy provided a way of escape from that death sentence, the sentence we all came under because we all sinned. *That way of escape is Christ*, who died on our behalf. And because of this provision, because Messiah has paid the price, the death penalty, Yahweh offers pardon and life through him to all who accept it.
4. All repentant sinners who accept Yahweh's wonderful offer of mercy and who place their faith in the Messiah (Yahweh's son) are pardoned of their sins and they find grace in His sight. In other words in His manifold mercies Yahweh forgives the repentant sinner his transgressions, cancels the terrible death sentence hanging over us and places us *under grace*. Please note that the Almighty did not cancel the law. Had He done that at Calvary we would not be sinners, for we could hardly transgress a non-existing law. No, what He did cancel was the "sentence of death" we were under before we repented.

To be "under grace" means to be a recipient of Yahweh's mercy, grace and favour, to have one's sins forgiven and to be no longer under the death sentence of the law. That is what being "under grace" means.

5. Now then, while we are in Christ - "under grace" - on the Highway of Life so to speak, the question is: Are we now permitted to break Yahweh's law? Are we at liberty to do those things which constitute sin? Are we now free to worship idols, to blaspheme, to forget the Sabbath day, to dishonour our parents, to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie and covet another's goods etc?

The answer is perfectly obvious: we must stop doing these things. Indeed it was for doing these very things that we came to be under

the death sentence of the law in the first place. Being "under grace" if anything should prompt a person to be more obedient, more righteous and more holy than he ever was. Being "under grace" does not mean that you are at liberty to break the law of the Most High. For if you continue to do that you are being disobedient; and disobedience is sin. That is exactly the point the Apostle Paul makes when he asks:

Romans 6:15-16 "Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?" His answer is:

Romans 6:15-16 "God forbid. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

6. What does all this mean? It means that all believers who have accepted Yahweh's offer of life are no longer under the death sentence of the law, but under His grace. It also means that in that environment of grace they are to live lives of obedience - unto righteousness. Not that our obedience will save us. Oh no; for we are saved by grace, by placing our faith in Christ, by personally excepting Yahweh's measureless mercy and free gift of life. That's how we are saved. But obedience is nevertheless vital. It exhibits a believer's faith. It testifies to men and angels more effectively than a million words that believer is no longer a blatant sinner but a person who is actually doing what the Almighty commands. (James 2:17-26) How very true is Paul's statement when he says: Romans 6:16 "His servants ye are whom ye obey."

Question

If Christians are required to keep the Sabbath days mentioned in Leviticus 23, then what do texts like Romans 14:5-6, Colossians 2:16-17, Galatians 4:9-10 and Ephesians 2:15-16 mean?

Answer

These four passages, sad to say, are amongst the most misunderstood in all of Scripture. And because they are *critical*, which means that any misinterpretation of them will result in many believers sinning, it is vital that they are understood. To aid understanding we will quote each text in turn and then briefly explain its meaning.

Romans 14:5-6 "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth no regard it ... verse 10... for we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ."

In this passage Paul is not saying that the Sabbath commandment is done away with. Nor for that matter is he saying that Sunday is the Sabbath; or even that Saturday is the Sabbath. The identity of the Sabbath day is not being established in this text.

1. A difference of opinion concerning the Sabbath does exist, with one person honouring one day above the next, and a second believer treating all days alike.
2. And we should not judge one another on the matter, but make up our own minds with a view to the coming judgements.

In other words, believers ought to investigate and examine this conflicting issue of which - if any - is the Sabbath day and decided the matter for themselves, *and not judge others*. And why is self-determination so important here? The answer is because "we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ" and give our own reasons for our actions.

Colossians 2:16-17 "Let no man therefore judge you in meat and drink, or in respect of a 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."

The message of these verses is similar to that in Romans 14:5-6. In Romans 14 Paul admonishes believers not to judge one another. In this passage, he is telling us not to allow ourselves to be judged.

And why does Paul mention meat, drink, Sabbath days and new moons in the same verse? The answer is, because "meat, drink, new moons, and Sabbath days" are "shadows", "tokens" or "emblem types" of great spiritual realities still to come. And though they are extremely beneficial when properly understood and applied, they are of little practical value to the Christian who spends his energies and time criticising others.

Having said this, however, it would be very unwise for a believer to conclude that since these things are spiritual "tokens" they are, therefore, of little account and that Paul is here giving all Christians a free pass to ignore Yahweh's Sabbath, foods, and new moon law.

That is most certainly *not* what Paul is saying. Indeed when we examine the Apostle's other writings - and take a close look at his actions - we notice that he went to great lengths to honour the Almighty's Sabbath days and to prove to the brethren in Jerusalem that the reports about him teaching believers to forsake the law and old customs were simply not true, because the fact was that he (Paul) walked in an "orderly way and kept the law." (Acts 21:20-24, Acts 20:16)

What, then, does this passage mean? It means exactly what it is saying. Just like that passage in Romans it concerns a believer's *mental attitude* towards himself and others. In Romans 14 Paul says "do not judge others, but allow them to make up their own minds as

regards to their diet and the days they honour." In Colossians 2 he says "Do not allow others to judge you". In neither passage is the identity of the true days discussed.

Galatians 4:9-10 "But now, after that ye have know God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, where unto ye desire again to be in bondage. Ye observe days, months, and times and years."

The key words in this passage are "how turn ye again." They mean:
New English Bible "how turn ye again"
Jerusalem Bible /"how can you want to go back to" Amplified Bible
"how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly and worthless elementary things (of all religions before Christ came) whose slaves you once more want to become."

To whom was Paul writing? He was writing to the Galatian believers - to converted pagans. What were they wanting to do? They were wanting to "*turn back*" to the weak and beggarly elements, of the days, months, and times and years that they had kept before they became followers " of Christ. In other words, they wanted to turn back to the pagan festivals they had previously observed. And this fact, understandably amazed Paul.

Had he been writing to converted Jews, then we will allow that the "days, months, seasons and years" of verse 10 may have meant Yahweh's Feasts and that these converts were wanting to go back to celebrating them. But Paul is *not* here writing to Jewish believers, he is writing to converts from Paganism; and the only celebrations to which they could possibly go back *were the heathen festivals they had previously known*.

Also bear in mind that Paul honoured Yahweh's Feasts (Acts 18:21, Acts 20:16, 1 Cor. 16:8). It is therefore unthinkable that he would refer to them as "weak and beggarly elements" in one instance and strive desperately to keep them in the next.

Ephesians 2:15-16 "Having abolished in his flesh the *enmity*, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances for to make himself of twain one new man, so making peace. And that he may reconcile both unto God in the one body by the cross, having *slain the enmity* thereof."

There lies hidden within the human heart a deadly element known as *sin*. At the epicentre of sin - which is disobedience to Yahweh's law - is a spiritual ingredient called *enmity*. Enmity is hostility. In every carnal mind this sinful element called enmity or hostility towards the Almighty exists, and it finds expression in acts of disobedience (sin). Elsewhere Paul says:

Romans 8:7 The carnal (non-spiritual) mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

If you read Ephesians 2:15-16 again, you will see that it was this inherent *enmity* in the carnal mind that the Saviour came to abolish. He didn't come to abolish the law (Matt. 5:17-18) but man's *enmity* against God which immediately manifests itself when the Almighty's law is presented. The law, incidentally, is incapable of subduing the sinful nature of man. The law can only point the way to righteousness. It can only tell us what is right and what is wrong. Perfect and eternal though it is, the law is unable to subdue the hostility the carnal mind has for Yahweh.

Romans 8:3-4 "But God has done what the law could not do, (its power) being weakened by the flesh (that is, the entire nature of man without the Holy Spirit). Sending His own Son in the guise of sinful flesh as a offering for sin, God condemned sin in the flesh - subdued, overcame, deprived it of its power (over all who accept the sacrifice), so that the righteous and just requirements of the Law might be fully met in us, who live and move not in the ways of the flesh but in the ways of the Spirit."

Did you get that? Yahweh sent His Son to subdue, overcome and deprive sin of its power over human nature. In other words He sent His Son to slay the root cause of sin - which is enmity towards God.

And why did the Saviour come to slay man's inherent enmity against God? The answer is: "In order that the righteous requirements of Yahweh's Law might be fully met in us."/ (Romans 8:4)

If the reader is an honest seeker after the truth he/she will immediately recognise that the Apostle Paul is not introducing strange and contradictory teachings in these passages; but is in complete harmony with all other inspired writers from Genesis to Revelation. What he is doing in these passages is highlighting some extremely important but little understood truths:

1. That we should not judge others or even allow ourselves to be judged in this matter of Sabbath, new moon, and food observance. (Romans 14:5-6, Colossians 2:16-17)
2. That we should not hanker after or turn back to the festivals of paganism as those ancient Galatian believers were doing. (Gal. 4:9-10)
3. That there is an inherent *enmity* (hostility) in the carnal mind against the Almighty and His law. (Romans 8:7)
4. And that the Messiah came to abolish (slay) that enmity *in order to make mankind obedient to Yahweh's Law*. (Ephesians 2:15-16, Romans 8:3-4)

That is what these texts are telling us.

Question

All right, I can see that the Sabbath according to the Scriptures is the seventh day of the week, but how can the modern believer be sure that Saturday is the seventh day?

Answer

To prove that the day called Saturday is the seventh day of the week we will consider the history of mankind in three parts:

1. From the creation of the world to Israel's Exodus from Egypt
2. From the Exodus to the Apostolic era - when the Messiah walked on this earth
3. And from the Apostolic era to the present time.

1. From the Creation to the Exodus

We will suppose for the moment that the Sabbath was "lost" between the creation and the exodus. It may not have been of course, for Yahweh's laws were known and kept by faithful believers long before they were given to Israel at Mount Sinai (see Genesis 26:5) and the sacred (new moon) calendar and weekly cycle was followed as far back as the days of Noah (Genesis 7:11, 8:9-14) but even supposing that the Sabbath had been lost we can be certain that it was *identified* and established again by the Almighty in the days of Moses.

Here is how we know this fact. In Exodus 16:14-30 we read of how the Almighty fed Israel with manna. By the following three miracles - performed every week - Yahweh made known His Sabbath day to the whole nation.

- * He gave Israel twice as much manna on the sixth day
- * He withheld manna on the Sabbath, the seventh day
- * And He kept the manna given on the sixth day from spoiling overnight - which it normally did - in order that His people might rest on the seventh day.

By these three distinct miracles which occurred every week for 40 years Yahweh identified the seventh day as His Sabbath.

2. From the Exodus to the Apostolic Era Was the identity of the seventh day "lost" between the exodus and the time of Christ? The answer is *no* it wasn't; but again for the sake of this investigation we'll assume that it was.

We can be certain that it was *again identified* when the Messiah observed it, for just prior to his death on Calvary the Saviour categorically stated that he had kept his father's commandments. (John 15:10) He could hardly have said this if the day that he had been keeping for some thirty three years was the wrong one. Besides, if he had kept the wrong day he would have been a sinner and that would have disqualified him from being our Saviour.

We are, therefore, certain that the Saviour kept the correct seventh day Sabbath.

3. From the Apostolic Era to the Present Time

Has the identity of the seventh day of the week been "lost" over the past 1900 years? We can assure the reader that it hasn't been. Here is the proof.

Soon after the capture of Jerusalem in AD70 the *diaspora* took place.

The *diaspora* is the scattering of the body of Jews to lands other than their own. Initially the exiles had fled to the surrounding countries of Egypt, Syria and Phoenicia, but in the course of time, as persecution mounted, the Jews went further and further afield and today you will find Jewish communities in every country on the face of the earth.

With them the Jews took the Holy Scriptures and their knowledge of the true Sabbath day. Every seventh day since then orthodox Jews all over the world have remembered the seventh day.

And what do we find in the 20th century? We find the Jews still keeping the original seventh day Sabbath, the *same day* they knew at the time of the *diaspora*, which was the *same day* Jesus kept.

There is absolutely no disagreement or dispute amongst the Jews - scattered as they still are - as to which day is the seventh day of the week. Every synagogue in every country is in perfect agreement that Saturday is the seventh day.

Had there been any change of the day, any loss or gain of time, any deliberate or accidental slip or alteration in the weekly cycle - which would have resulted in the Jews in one country observing a different weekly Sabbath from Jewish believers in the next - then we would readily agree that the *identity* of the seventh day of the week was in doubt.

But we do not find that situation anywhere on earth. Instead we have in total agreement amongst all the Jews of all nations *that the day known throughout the world as Saturday is the seventh day of the week*.

Calendar Changes

Some point out that the civil calendar was changed in the sixteenth century and the weekly cycle itself was altered - all over the world - so no one can be certain that Saturday is the true seventh day of the week.

Those who use this argument are misinformed. Here are the facts of history: In the year 1582 the Julian calendar (named after the Emperor Julius Caesar) was found to be 10 days late when compared with the position of the sun. That is, the vernal equinox was not occurring on or about March 21st - as it should do in a correct solar calendar - but was gradually receding towards the beginning of March. The reason for this error was that the Julian calendar worked on the basis that a year was 365¼ days in length, whereas in truth it is about 11 minutes more than that. Over the centuries this 11 minute discrepancy accumulated causing the Julian calendar to steadily recede, till by the sixteenth century it had lost 10 days and the equinox was occurring on March 11th.

To correct this discrepancy Pope Gregory XIII ordered that 10 days be added to the Julian calendar dates to bring them into line with the sun.

The month of October was chosen for the amendment and in the calendar of 1582 that month appeared as follows:

OCTOBER 1582

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

| | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

You will notice from the above that *the weekly cycle*, the order of the days of the week, *remained unchanged* even though the Gregorian calendar dates had increased by *ten* between the Thursday and the Friday. In other words in both calendars the day after Thursday 4th was still a Friday.

This amendment understandably, was not very popular in some countries mainly because it had been organised by a Roman Catholic Pope. Several Protestant countries refused to acknowledge it and continued to use the Julian calendar; but one by one they came into line. Here is a short list of when they did:

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Germany (Catholic States) | 1583 |
| Germany (Protestant States) | 1700 |
| Netherlands | 1700 |
| England | 1752 |
| Rumania, Turkey and Russia | 1919 |

All those years between 1582 and 1919 while both calendars were in use, the sequence of the days in the *weekly cycle* was the same in every country. In other words Sunday in Rome in 1900 was also Sunday in Russia in that year even though both countries were using a different calendar. And as each nation adopted the Georgian calendar it simply added 10 days to its Georgian Calendar date. There was no need to change the order of the days of the week, because they already agreed.

To summarise:

- * Yahweh re-identified the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath in the days of Israel's Exodus from Egypt
- * The Messiah kept the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. Had he not done so he would have been a sinner.
- * Calendar changes did not affect the weekly cycle.
- * Jewish communities around the world have since the *diaspora* kept track of the seventh day Sabbath, and all agree it is the day called Saturday.

These facts prove that Saturday is the seventh day of the week.

Question

How does one keep the Sabbaths of the Almighty?

Answer

The commandment at its basic level is "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The second part about "resting from ones labour" is added in order that the first part "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." can be met. The original Hebrew word translated "holy" in our English Bibles is *qadosh* or *qodesh*. Besides meaning "sacred"

this word means to "separate" to "set apart."

The Sabbath day in other words is a day that Yahweh *set apart for sacred use*; and He wants us to remember that fact and to keep the day holy - set apart. How is it done? What is involved? What does one do or not do on the Sabbath?

Without attempting to pontificate on so deep a matter - and certainly with no intention of judging another believer's performance - we offer these brief guidelines about Sabbath observance with a prayer to the Almighty that He will use them to fulfil in every reader the spiritual potential latent in him or her.

1. The Sabbath is a day of *rest from Labour*.

The Hebrew word translated "labour" in Exodus 20:9 is *abad*. It means "to do", "to serve". Who are we allowed to serve, what are we allowed to do on the first six days of the week?

The answer is "Six days shalt thou labour (serve) and do thy work." In other words you may serve your own interests for six days each week; but on the seventh day - the Sabbath - you must stop serving your own interests and devote that day to the service of the Almighty. Why? Because that is His holy (*qodesh*) day; it has been set apart for His service.

2. *What is Yahweh's work and how may we become engaged in it?*

We find our answer in the Scriptures.

* It is lawful to do *good* on the Sabbath day (Mark 3:4)

* It is lawful to *heal* on the Sabbath day (Matthew 12:10)

* It is lawful to *rescue* someone on the Sabbath day (Matthew 12:11)

* It is lawful to engage in *spiritual activities* on the Sabbath, such as: attending church meetings, preaching, teaching, Bible study, prayer, visiting the sick and aged, walking in the countryside etc. (Luke 4:31, 6:1-2)

All these activities are permissible on the Sabbath day. Indeed these are the very things the Messiah did when He walked on this earth.

Sad to say the Pharisees did not agree with the Saviour on some of these points. They incorrectly supposed that he was breaking the Sabbath when he healed people. They misunderstood the fact that the Sabbath - Yahweh's *qodesh* day - had been set apart for that very purpose, *for doing good, for doing the Almighty's work*. The Saviour, however, knew what he was doing. Had he not as the Creator *made* the Sabbath in the first place? He was not only aware of *which day* was the Sabbath, but he also knew *how to keep it*. The reader will not go astray if he/she endeavours to do likewise.

3. *Activities to refrain from*

There are of course, certain things which though permissible on ordinary days should not normally be done on the Sabbath, for example:

- * Buying, selling, and engaging in business deals
- * Doing laborious field work
- * Persuing self interests

(See Nehemiah 10:31 and 13:13-21, Isaiah chapter 56, also chapter 58; but especially verses 13-14)

If you remember the Sabbath is Yahweh's holy day (the portion of time that He set apart for *His work*) and if you rest from your own labours and interests and *devote yourself to His service*, then you will be on the glorious path of Sabbath observance. And what's more, you will be blessed in this world and the next in direct fulfilment of this amazing promise:

Isaiah 58:13-14 "If thou restrain thy foot for the sake of the Sabbath, not doing they business on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of Yahweh, honourable; and *shalt honour him*, not doing thy own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking vain words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in Yahweh; and I will cause thee to ride upon high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of Yahweh hath spoken it." (Holy Name Bible)

4. *The Sabbath is a day for holy convocations*

The Hebrew word translated "convocation" in Leviticus 23:2 is *migra*. It means "a calling together" an "assembly". In other words wherever possible a believer should attend a religious meeting on the Sabbath. Religious "convocations" or assemblies were called for in order that the church may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Most High. The seventh day of the week has been set aside for *Yahweh's service*, and it is at these religious assemblies that His spirit is most active. So attend a Sabbath meeting if one is held in your area. If there is no Sabbath meeting, we can advise you on how to organise a Sabbath meeting in your area <sabbmeet.html>.

5. *Keeping the Feasts*

The Feast Days of the Most High are also days of rest and are kept in the same way as the weekly Sabbath, except that on them extra special meals - *feasts* - are partaken of. These are literal banquets, as already pointed out, typify the *spiritual nourishment* and *power* Yahweh's church is scheduled to receive in the near future when supernatural happenings similar to those which took place on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) will again occur.

Without allowing a Feast to deteriorate into a show of gluttony,

try to ensure that an extra special meal is served on the *Feast day*. In this way you will declare your faith in Yahweh's breathtaking Programme of Salvation which He has made possible through His Son, and prove your desire to partake of the *real spiritual banquets* that He has prepared for those who serve Him.

Yahweh has made many promises to the believer who is willing to observe His Sabbaths. Space does not allow us to print them all.

The End

Author: DBL Last Updated: 1985

By Rhoda: When I read this article I said to myself, "this study is so like what I agree with, that I won't have to do another study on it. I will just submit it with a few grammatical corrections. It truly does answer a lot of questions that a lot of people have. I will, however add that while the new moons are not "Holy" days, they are commanded to be kept (to determine when to keep the Holy days) and are as important as keeping the Sabbath, Holy days, and the dietary laws, other wise Paul would not have included them with those days. Read the studies included here on the New Moons for a deeper study on this topic.