

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: *Covenant: God's Way of Relationship*



Teaching Sermon Notes: “Moses: The Covenant of Law, Part One”

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## **Moses: The Covenant of Law**

Through Abraham, the emerging nation of Israel already lived in covenant relationship with God. God hears the groaning of Israel and “remembers His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” (Exodus 2.24) The long period of servitude had been predicted, foretold to Abraham. It is to a covenant and redeemed people that God brings the law-covenant of Sinai.

Yahweh chose these people to be His people. Israel acknowledged Yahweh as their God. Covenant is the larger concept and takes precedence over law. “Covenant binds persons; externalized legal stipulations represent one mode of administration of the covenantal bond.” (O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*) In the Mosaic covenant, God renews His ongoing commitment to His people who live with Him in covenant relationship.

The distinctiveness of the Mosaic covenant can be seen in its external summation of the will of God formally ordered. This law stands outside man, demanding conformity to it. It is given to a redeemed people and addresses itself to man in sin, unlike the covenant of “works” given at creation. Integral to the Mosaic covenant stipulations is the gracious provision of a substitutionary sacrificial system. (Exodus 34.28; Deut. 4.13; Deut. 9.9, 11, Galatians 3) We will go deeper into that when we trace the grace in the Covenant of Law.

The Mosaic covenant did not detract from the promise of the Abrahamic covenant and did not disannul the previous covenant. (Galatians 3.17) Neither did it offer an alternative to the covenant of promise or replace it or run alongside it or set the covenant of promise aside. The giving of the law did not suspend the Abrahamic covenant. It has always been justification by faith as in Genesis 15.6. Even in the time of the Mosaic covenant, a person was deemed righteous by faith. Israel was to maintain the law, not in order to enter the favored position of covenant/redemption, but in order to continue in the blessings of the covenantal relationship already established. Always, it is redemption by grace through faith in the work of the substitutionary sacrifice (Christ) provided in the covenant promise.

There is an organic relationship of the law-covenant to previous covenant administrations. We can notice the references to the will of God and the expectation, even the necessity of obedience in each of the biblical covenants. (Genesis 3.19; Genesis 9.6; Genesis 12.1; 17.1, 14; Exodus 4.24-26, e.g.) The legal codification under Moses, however, predominates.

We can also see the organic relationship of law in administrations subsequent to Moses. Both the Davidic covenant and the new covenant in Christ recognize the significance of divine law in redemption. (1 Kings 2.1-4; Psalm 119.97; Hosea 8.12) This is easier to see than when we talk about the new covenant and relationship to law. We are under grace (Romans 6.14), released from the law (Romans 7.6), released from law’s custody and tutelage (Galatians 3: 23-25), and

yet Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill (Matthew 5.17-19). The law's function is to reveal sin and to teach what is right, to expose sin. But it has no power in itself to produce righteousness.

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."...Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." Romans 7:7, 12

While man cannot please God by his own deeds of righteousness (Romans 3; Titus 3) and there are many who want to achieve right standing before a holy God by means of personal law-keeping, that's not the proper role of the law in the history of redemption. (Romans 2, Galatians 4) That kind of legalistic misapprehension of the Sinaitic law-covenant results in slavery because of resorting to natural human resources as a means of pleasing God. The purpose of the giving of the law at Sinai was to lead to Christ, not away from Him. (Galatians 3.24) Such ideas close people off from Christ and the reasons God gives grace.

So the giving of the law as the will of God for His people increased awareness of sin, falling short of the glory of God, of His standard. Just as Abraham tried to provide a son for himself and so fulfill the promise of God, the Judaizers of Paul's day tried to provide a righteousness for themselves through the keeping of the law and so fulfill the promise of God. It's not about an individual's personal resources as law-keeper, but about God's provision of grace to keep His commandments.

The people of God are under obligation to reflect the holiness and righteousness of God. God redeemed a people unto Himself. To a redeemed people He gave His Law. The law under Moses provided outward rules and regulations reflecting those obligations. They were written in stone. It's like saying, "You are My people whom I have chosen and redeemed. And this is how you will be the demonstration people of God, by adhering to the following commandments." But God is after the heart, the law written in the heart. God is after an internal desire to keep His laws and ways.

Many people "want to know what love is," as the song goes. The commandments of God define what love is. Love is the keeping of the commandments because they show us what love is through stipulations of law. If you love God, you will demonstrate that love by not having any other gods before Him, by not making graven images of the creation, by not worshipping or serving any other gods, by honoring His name, by remembering the Sabbath principle. If you love God, you will also love the people of God. You will honor father and mother (authority figures). You won't murder, steal, lie, commit adultery, or covet. Your love will be seen in your loyalties and in your desire to keep God's laws and ways as a reflection of His heart and mind and will. In the new covenant, God gives His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Grace that you might obey through faith which works by love.

In the new covenant today believers continue under the provisions of other administrations of the covenant of redemption/grace (Romans 16.20; 2 Peter 3.5-7; Romans 4.16, 17, Romans 15.22, e.g.) So as believers today live in the inner reality of the new covenant, how does the covenant of law enter into our lives?

1. Our fullest state of blessedness comes from keeping God's laws. (Ephesians 6.1-3, Matthew 7.24-27; James 1.22, e.g.) We are to make use of the means of grace available to us to obey actively God's laws.

2. Not living in righteousness, not keeping God's laws and ways, brings chastening and correction. (Hebrews 12.6, 1 Corinthians 11.30-32, 2 Timothy 3.16, 17, e.g.) Believers have an obligation to do the will of God.
3. Judgment will be dispensed according to one's own deeds, good or evil. Yes, salvation comes by faith in the work of Christ alone, but at the judgment seat of Christ, our deeds done in the body will be judged. The commandments tell us what is good and what is evil in the eyes of God.

A better way to view the commandments of God is to see them as not only organic, but also progressive, a progressive unfolding of God's will, a fuller manifestation of the truth of God. The covenant of law advances an understanding of the God of covenant by its provision of an externalized summation of the will of God, by its external defining of love for God and neighbor, and by setting the people of God apart from other peoples. Israel was to be the demonstration people of God, and the covenant of law guides that demonstration to set aside Israel from the Gentiles. It is a national covenant and so provides a codified law to God's own nation. (Exodus 19.5, 6) Israel could now stand in a better relation to the God of the covenant, with a standard and with a grace to know when that standard is broken. It is the grace of God to define sin so that it can be confessed and atoned for. God provided a means for people to understand the nature of their sin and see their need for a Savior, a substitutionary sacrifice for their sin. The law is a great ray of light shining in the darkness of the heathen world. In revealing sin, the covenant of law humbles people. In seeing oneself as a covenant-breaker, pride is broken and the way prepared for Christ. The covenant of law shows a pattern of life pleasing to God. That is why the moral law is not abrogated in the new covenant, only the ceremonial laws of Israel which found their fulfillment in Christ, and the civil laws which ended with the coming of the kingdom of Christ.

Advancement in revelation from God enables advancement in life experience. So, we shall find that the Davidic covenant is an advancement over the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant brings the reality of the shadow and type.

The covenant of law ministered death and condemnation because of law's effectiveness in revealing sin and so subject man to the curse. The new covenant is a ministry of the Spirit and a ministry of righteousness revealing life and so subjecting man to blessing. The new covenant is more glorious and excels in that glory. (2 Corinthians 3) Moses veiled himself, but no veil covers the ministry of the new covenant because its glory does not fade. Believers today stand unveiled in the presence of the Lord. Moses passed from glory to fading glory. Believers in the new covenant go from glory to glory. This is because the Lord, who is the Spirit, lives within every believer and by the Spirit, believers are changed into the likeness of God's own son. The glory of the new covenant in Christ is an abiding glory and more excellent.

Moses was the law-mediator and ministered as a servant in God's house. Christ is the law-originator and rules as Son over God's house. (Hebrews 3.5, 6)

<sup>4</sup>For Christ is the end (or goal or purpose or point aimed at) of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. (Romans 10:4)

Christ perfectly fulfilled the righteous demands of the law, and also put an end to the law as a way of achieving righteousness for anyone who believes. "The convicting, condemning power of the law exhausts its accusations in Christ." (O. Palmer Robertson) Paul will write, "Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." (1 Timothy 1.5)

There was no power in the old covenant to give life. There was sacrifice for sin, a covering for sin, but it wasn't permanent. Power to give life only comes from the indwelling Spirit of life, the Promise of the Father given through faith in Jesus Christ. The Law is good, spiritual, and holy. We should regard it with reverence and seek to have a heart that is law-abiding.

Today, many believers see laws and rules and say, "I don't have to..." Lawlessness reigns in their hearts. They don't have to, they think, because they don't want to keep rules. They want to do their own thing, be a law unto themselves. Jesus had a different attitude. He said, "I have come to do Thy will, O God." He lived in active, voluntary submission to the will of the Father. That meant keeping the Father's law, in mind, in word, in heart, in deed, in all things, in all fullness. Jesus discerned between the traditions of men and the law of His Father. He demonstrated and continues to demonstrate loving the Father. He remained loyal even when forsaken and betrayed. He loved His own to the death. He loves us and will not be tempted by us to do evil, to do what is against good as defined by the Godhead. He does no harm. Love does no harm.

Being "under grace" does not mean that we can do what we want and be a law unto ourselves. It means that we are now empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead lives pleasing to God, law-abiding lives that will bring blessing and bear the fruit of righteousness in the kingdom of God for His glory and for our good. We need to examine our attitude towards the law—God's laws, the laws of the land, the laws of our homes, law in general. Only in the rare incidence of the civil laws of men conflicting with the moral laws of God are we to move as outlaws against the laws and traditions of men. Even at that, we should try to work within law to change civil laws, but if we cannot, then we must adhere to keep a good conscience before God.

Neither are we to use the law for evil intent and personal gain, as did Jezebel. It is a misuse of position and power. Rather, we are to demonstrate the love of God as the people of God; to demonstrate the love for God and for one another. This is the love of God; that we keep His commandments, which are not grievous but a delight to the one who desires to please the Father and live in a relationship with Him that will bring blessing and bear much fruit that remains for Christ.

Duty or delight, but duty is better than lawlessness. We need to see the value of the commandments as a rule of life, as a revelation of the will of God, as directives to our walk with God, as a standard against which we examine ourselves and to which we fall short because of our sinfulness, as a means of humility, as a means to increase our hatred against sin, and as a means of valuing and appreciating the perfection of Christ, His obedience and love in all things. The Law restrains corruption, shows what sin deserves, delineates the curse for disobedience, and serves as a deterrent to lawlessness. The commandments are a gift of grace from a loving Father. When this restraint against evil is taken away from a family, a people, or a nation, lawlessness and terror reign. Amen.

With a supreme loyalty and attachment to Christ, may we obey through faith which works by love.

Blessing the LORD today,

*Mary Craig*

Mary Craig, D. Min.

**“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”**  
**Revelation 21:7**

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