

STATEMENT OF RELIGIOUS CONVICTION

REGARDING THE USE OF THE MORAL LAW FOR OUR SOCIETY

I: The Source of Our Convictions

Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church confesses, along with all the churches of the Presbyterian Church in America and all true churches of Christ throughout the ages, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments alone are the perfect source by which we know what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man.

II. The Teaching of the Bible Concerning the Moral Law

Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church believes that the Scriptures specify that the moral law is the declaration of the will of God to man (Deut. 5:31-33^[1]; 1 Pet. 1:15,16^[2]). The 10 commandments are the summary of God's moral law that is to be found right through Scripture. God's law is not a discovery made by man, but a divine revelation and therefore it binds every human being that ever lived or ever shall live. Even the Atheist will have to answer to God on Judgment Day why he has denied God and His revelation (Romans 2:14-16^[3]). God's moral law will never change and is the moral standard for society for all eternity. Although the ceremonial laws in Scripture have been fulfilled and abrogated, the Christian still has the obligation of keeping the general equity of the judicial laws of God.

God saved Christians not only to enter heaven, but He saved Christians to a life of obedience and total surrender. Therefore, Christians especially are obligated to obey God's perfect law. God requires perfect and absolute obedience from all mankind (Galatians 3:10^[4]).

Is God's standard of absolute obedience as stated in the Bible too high? Although it is not attainable in this life, the standard is not too high. If mankind did not fall with the sin of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:18^[5]), all mankind would have conformed to this standard of perfect, absolute obedience to God's law. Since God is a never changing God, we cannot expect God to change His standard. God's standard was the same ever since He created man. It is mankind who has changed after the fall of Adam and Eve, not God.

God promises eternal life when His moral law is fulfilled. Eternal life cannot be obtained in any other way than by fulfilling God's moral standard. Eternal life still depends upon absolute obedience to God's moral law. Since it is not attainable for mankind with a sinful nature to be absolutely obedient to God's law, God provided the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The second Adam obeyed and fulfilled God's moral law perfectly on the Christian's behalf as his

representative (Romans 5:19^[6]). The gospel does not involve a lowering of God's standard of perfect obedience; it involves a substitution of the person who complies with the terms. God graciously accepts Christ's fulfillment of the law as if it was the believer himself who fulfilled it. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is reckoned to the one who has a saving faith (Romans 4:11^[7]). The believer's sin is reckoned to Jesus Christ, and therefore God's penalty of death for sin was satisfied in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for the believer's sins.

Human beings cannot save themselves by good works or good character. Christians are saved on the merit of Christ's redeeming work on the cross and His perfect obedience of the moral law. Unregenerate people cannot keep the moral law at all so as to please God. Even the "good works" of the unregenerate people are sins and not acceptable to God (Romans 8:7, 8^[8]; Titus 1:15^[9]; Isaiah 64:6^[10]).

All human beings are called to obedience and therefore all have received some knowledge of God's moral law. Even those who are ignorant of the Bible have some knowledge of the moral law from the natural revelation in the human heart (Romans 1:20^[11]; 2:15^[12]), therefore, all stand guilty before God and need the saving grace of God.

Often the objection to this teaching of Scripture is that those who believe it are guilty of legalism. Jesus condemned legalism in Scripture. Legalism is a type of religion where people (a) seek eternal life through obedience to the law, and/or (b) glorify man-made laws to the level of God's laws. Christians should never embrace any form of legalism. However, people today are confused to what legalism is, and therefore many become antinomians (anti-law) in practice. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). God teaches us in 1 Cor. 7:19 "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God". How can you be sure that you are a Christian? 1 John 2:3 answers "And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments". Keeping God's law is of extremely high importance; everyone is commanded to keep His law. However, Christians are not keeping God's law as a means of salvation, but because they are already saved in the Lord Jesus Christ! A Christian should express his thankfulness to God for his salvation not only in words of prayer and praise, but also in taking care to live according to God's moral law as the rule of obedience.

The Christian is not liberated from the moral law in the sense that he does not have to keep and honor God's moral law anymore; the moral law still applies to God's children. The only difference between the Christian and the non-believer is that the Christian is not under the penalty of the law because he received salvation from Christ in grace, while the non-Christian is still under the penalty of the law (Romans 6:14^[13]). The Christian is freed from the penalty of the law, but not from the precept of the law as a standard of obedient living (Matthew 5:17-19^[14]; 1 John 2:3^[15]).

III. Conclusion

Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church proclaims that through history, societies and cultures have changed, but God and His requirements have not changed. God's moral standard for our society is revealed in His moral law as revealed in Scripture. The Christian in the twenty first century is therefore still bound to live in thankfulness an obedient life with God's moral law as the rule for faith and practice. Mankind still has to keep all of the Christian Sabbath day holy (Sunday), not only one hour, but the whole day; they still are not allowed to use the Lord's name in vain; they have to honor their parents and authorities placed over them; they are still obligated to live a pure life and refrain from having any sexual relationship outside of the marriage covenant; they still have to honor life and protect the life of others, even the life of the unborn, etc. In other words, mankind learns what kind of life glorifies God from the moral law of God as given in His Word. Christians are to obey God's law, for that is how redeemed people live [1 Cor. 7:19^[16]; Ephesians 2:8-10^[17]; John 14:15, 21^[18]].

Take Note: All quotes from Scripture are from the "New American Standard Bible" version.

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[1] Deut. 5:31-33, " 'But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess.' "So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. "You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess.

[2] 1 Pet. 1:15, 16, "...but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

[3] Romans 2:14-16, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."

[4] Galatians 3:10, “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”

[5] Romans 5:18, “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”

[6] Romans 5:19, “For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”

[7] Romans 4:11, “...and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,...”

[8] Romans 8:7, 8, “...because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

[9] Titus 1:15, “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.”

[10] Isaiah 64:6, “⁶For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”

[11] Romans 1:20, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

[12] Romans 2:15, “...in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...”

[13] Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

[14] Matthew 5:17-19, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called

great in the kingdom of heaven.”

[15] 1 John 2:3, “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.”

[16] 1 Cor. 7:19, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.”

[17] Ephesians 2:8-10, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

[18] John 14:15, 21, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments....He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”