

Love Letter or Law?

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Is the New Testament merely a collection of “love letters” containing nothing more than polite suggestions of behavior? None can deny that this portion of the Bible reveals the incomparable (and all but incomprehensible) love of God and His Son for sinful man. John 3:16 truly constitutes the New Testament in summary: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Many professed believers parrot the view that the New Testament pertains exclusively to grace and love. Liberal theologians have helped millions conceive of the latter portion of the Bible as utterly bereft of rules, commandments, or regulations. A mere avowed faith in and a mushy “love” for the Christ allow great freedom of worship and daily behavior. To liberals, it is “unlawful” to speak of “the law of Christ”; they like to remind us that “we are saved by grace” rather than by law. What shall we say to this averment?

- **First**, the concept of sin does not exist apart from law, “for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Therefore, “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Rom. 4:15), and “sin is not imputed when there is no law” (5:13). If the New Testament—which became effective at the death of Christ (Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:15–17)—is “all grace and no law” (as liberals insist), then it has been impossible for anyone to sin since Calvary.

- **Second**, the concept of grace presupposes the existence of sin. We have our redemption and forgiveness of sins “according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). In the absence of sin, therefore, grace is irrelevant, even as in the absence of law, sin is impossible. Those who deny that the New Testament is the law of Christ thereby obviate the very purpose of and need for grace.

- **Third**, the concept of spiritual death, eternal condemnation in Hell, rests upon sin: “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). If there is no law, there is no sin; if there is no sin, there is no condemnation. Denial that the Gospel is the law of Christ therefore implies the doctrine of universalism.

- **Fourth**, Paul called the New Testament “the law of the spirit of life in Christ” (Rom. 8:2), and he said he was “under law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21). We are urged to fulfill “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2), which James describes as a “perfect law” (Jam. 1: 25).

The spiritual song, "Give Me the Bible," describes the Gospel correctly: "Precept and promise, law and love combining...." Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

[Note: I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, September 7, 2012.]

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