

## **Christian Discipleship in light of the Utterly New Covenant**

CSAP 521 Study Paper Discerning the Distinction between Law and Gospel in light of Five Positions<sup>1</sup>

As a Christian I have for some time resisted conceptualizing *Christian* discipleship in terms of Matthew 16:24 where Jesus states, “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.*” My wariness of that view is driven NOT by any resistance to the Lordship of Christ, but by two of my firmly-held interrelated convictions (one doctrinal; the other exegetical). As a *Lutheran* Christian I believe that *Christian* Baptism (as opposed to John the Baptist’s – Acts 19:1-6) entails in part our personal identification with the death and resurrection of Christ in a manner that parallels the practice of circumcision in the Old Testament (Colossians 2:11-13). In addition, however, I embrace Baptism as a sacramental *means of grace*<sup>2</sup> through which God literally unites (*sum-phutos*) believers with the benefits of both Christ’s finished work on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. In other words, discipleship that is *Christian* is intrinsically tied to participating in the dual aspects of the power of Christ. The Apostle Paul writes, “*For if we have been united with [Christ] in a death like his we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his... So you must also consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 6:5, 11). Where this interpretation is relevant to the thesis of this paper is that the source of a person’s “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4) is not found within one’s own sinful self as though we have the innate capacity for self-transformation, but instead is sourced in the indwelling Christ who enthrones the sinner’s heart (Galatians 2:21) insofar as one’s “old nature” is dethroned through “daily repentance.”<sup>3</sup> Although I have up to now not *conceptually* distinguished between Matt. 16:24 and Rom. 6:4, I had vaguely sensed that these two visions of discipleship do not harmonize. It was Wayne Strickland and Douglas Moo who identified for me how it can be that these disparate visions of discipleship within the same testament of the Bible can be reconciled.

Strickland for example replied to another writer, “*Bahnsen seems to suggest that the testimony of Christ is more authoritative than Paul’s. Why not rather present an argument based on the principle of progressive revelation—subsequent revelation is clearer and more complete revelation—so that for the church, we should be guided by Paul’s assertions...Keep in mind that **Christ operated during the law epoch, not the church age.***” (boldface mine).<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Moo states, “*Important as the teaching of Jesus is for the issue of the Christian and the law, it is over-shadowed by Paul’s letters. This is partially because we cannot always be sure whether Jesus was addressing the situation that would prevail after his redemptive acts had opened the new era of salvation **or the situation during his earthly ministry when the old covenant was still in effect.***” (boldface mine).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Gundry, ed. *Five Views on Law and Gospel*. (Zondervan, 1999), p.162.

<sup>2</sup> The belief that God employs baptism as a means through which He brings about the salvation of sinners.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism*. *Concordia Lutheran Confessions*. (Concordia, 2006), p.462.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley Gundry. Op.cit, p.162.

<sup>5</sup> Op.cit. (1), Moo, p.323. \*\* As of Matt. 16:24, Jesus had yet to ascend into heaven so as to *indwell* His people (John 14:23b).

In light of their insights I conclude that Rom. Ch. 6 should be understood as the New Covenant equivalent of the discipleship Jesus had spoken of prior to Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42). Indeed, although the term disciple is employed in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, the Apostle Paul neither, ever, applied the term to himself, nor did he identify other Christians by that title.

### **One Matter on which there is Complete Agreement**

To the question of the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Christian life, there is on the one hand unanimity of agreement by the authors in the *Five Views on Law and Gospel (Law and Gospel)* text<sup>6</sup> that sinners are not saved by means of keeping the Mosaic Covenant. Willem Van Gemeren for example states, “*The law was never intended to be the means of salvation or the gaining of inheritance.*”<sup>7</sup> \*\* Greg Bahnsen notes, “*Recognizing that in God’s sight no one could be justified (Psalm 143:2)... the Old Covenant witness was that righteousness had to be **imputed**, even to the great father of the Jews, Abraham (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom 4:3; Gal. 3:6)*” (emphasis in text).<sup>8</sup> \*\* Walter Kaiser says, “*The conditionality taught in [Exodus 19:8 and 23:3,7] does not relate to the promise of eternal life or salvation in either the Old or New Testament, [but] instead, the conditions related to the quality of life lived in that promise. All who believed in the Old Testament trusted in the Man of Promise who was to come.*”<sup>9</sup> \*\* Wayne Strickland writes, “*God never intended his law to provide spiritual redemption for his people. Not only does the New Testament specify that Old Testament saints were saved by faith rather than works (e.g., Rom. 4:3) but the few Old Testament passages that comment on the **way** of salvation confirm that obedience to the Mosaic stipulations is not the requirement for redemption*” (emphasis in text).<sup>10</sup> \*\* And Douglas Moo states, “*...the Mosaic law, while implicitly holding out the promise of salvation to those who would do it, was never intended to be, and could never in fact be, a means of salvation ... the law holds out the promise of salvation, but because of human sinfulness, it cannot confer salvation.*”<sup>11</sup> Indeed with respect to the conceptual separation of Gospel from Law, Moo highlights the consensus view that “*God did not give Israel the law so that the people could attain eternal life by it. He gave it to a people whom he had already made his own by his sovereign and gracious act of calling them out of Egypt.*”<sup>12</sup> As Andrew Lincoln states, “*The historical prologue of Exodus 2:6 immediately sets the Decalogue within the context of the history of salvation and God’s deliverance of His people from Egypt.*”<sup>13</sup> For example, at the beginning of Exodus 20:2, commonly identified as the “Preamble,” Yahweh claims Israel as His unique people, while in the latter half, commonly identified as the “Historical Prologue,” Yahweh rehearses what Israel had indeed just

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<sup>6</sup> Op.cit. (1).

<sup>7</sup> Van Gemeren. Op.cit. (1), p.33.

<sup>8</sup> Bahnsen. Op.cit. (1), p.96.

<sup>9</sup> Kaiser. Op.cit. (1), pp.191, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Strickland. Op.cit. (1), p.232.

<sup>11</sup> Moo. Op.cit. (1), p.324.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> A.T. Lincoln. *A Biblical and Theological Perspective*. D.A. Carson, ed. From Sabbath to the Lord’s Day. (Wipf & Stock, 1999), p.356

experienced as their salvation, namely that they had been “*brought ...out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery*” (all Scriptural references referenced by me, unless specified otherwise, are from the ESV version of the Holy Bible).<sup>14</sup> Albert Baylis describes their circumstance as follows: “*What [meritorious] works has Israel done? Crossing the sea when God opened its waters? Complaining about lack of food and drink? Beating the Amalekites when God was their warrior? What have these people done to qualify themselves? The answer is clearly, ‘Nothing.’ ... They have simply received God’s gracious promise to Abraham and were graciously delivered from Egypt.*”<sup>15</sup> It should also be noted that Mosaic Law was a legal covenant (comparable to modern contracts), whose form Baylis describes as *similar in pattern to ancient Hittite treaties*.<sup>16</sup> As such, covenants are inviolable commitments (Gen. 15:7-16),<sup>17</sup> which indicates that Yahweh binds Himself to keeping His promises even at the cost of the death of His incarnate Son (Rom. 8:32).

### Where the Authors’ Disagreements Lie

In terms of the singular consideration of the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Christian life,<sup>18</sup> the disputes among the five authors are by-and-large five-fold: 1) Is there an exegetical basis for judging the relationship between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant to be either continuous or discontinuous, or both? 2) What is the actual *nature* of the relationship between the two Covenants with respect to the question of continuity across time? 3) What role does the law of God, taken in the broadest sense, play in the sanctification of the Christian as opposed to a person living under the first (Mosaic) Covenant? 4) How does the *authority* of the Mosaic Law bear on the life of the Christian, whether they be Jewish or Gentile? 5) Do Law and Gospel each enter into the work of Christian sanctification? And if so, how do they interact with each other?

#### 1. The Question of Continuity: Either/Or, or Both/And?

Marcion of Sinope (85-160c CE) took perhaps the most extreme (and heretical) view of any person in history who claimed to speak on this matter in the name of Christ. While he believed Jesus was in some sense savior, he **rejected the Old Testament and its God entirely** and, consequently, accepted very little of the New Testament, namely a heavily-mutilated Gospel of Luke and ten of the Apostle Paul’s Letters.<sup>19</sup> That reality amounts to an inadvertent concession as to how indebted the New Testament is to the Old. In stark contrast, Walter Kaiser affirms continuity between the two Testaments by stating, “*It is the moral law of God found in the Decalogue and the Holiness code of Leviticus 18-19 that must act as the absolute norms against which all other commands in God’s law are to be judged, interpreted, and applied*”

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<sup>14</sup> *The English Standard Version. The Lutheran Study Bible*. Edward Engelbrecht, ed. (Concordia, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Albert Baylis. *From Creation to the Cross*. (Zondervan, 1996), p.122.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 141, n. 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Op.cit.* (13), note on Gen. 15:17. \*\* Institute of Theological Studies. Bruce Waltke. *Understanding the Old Testament* (2009). Session 6.

<sup>18</sup> I am addressing the term “relationship” as an existential matter as opposed to merely a conceptual one.

<sup>19</sup> J.L. Neve. *A History of Christian Thought*, v.1. (Muhlenberg, 1946), p.57.

today ... what is needed just now is a reading of and a response to the law of the Lord—just as it was needed in the day of Moses.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Van Gemeren notes that, “Under both covenants the Lord has one standard for ethics. / Clearly Jesus did not abrogate the law! Indeed he called for a more radical observance. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>21</sup> Bahnsen likewise writes with reference to 1 Timothy 1:8 (“The Law is good, if one uses it lawfully”), that “It is Paul’s infallible testimony that there should be no doubt about the inherent goodness of the moral instruction contained in the commandments of the Old Testament Law.”<sup>22</sup> To Kaiser’s assertion stated earlier, however I would reply that the eternal relevance of the character of the author of the Ten Commandments is not being challenged by the other authors. Their concern is more subtle than Kaiser’s expressed concerns. It should be further noted that the apparently “eternal” endurance of the authority of the Old Covenant is not as certain as English translations of the Hebrew text might imply. Strickland points out that the Old Testament covenant cannot be argued to be eternal on the basis of English translations of the OT word “*olam*” for the reason that the term means “lasting for an age.” / “All Christian interpreters agree that...discontinuity embraces Mosaic Law in some sense. The question then becomes, “How much is continued and how do we know what is continued and what is not?”<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, significant passages are being overlooked by the three writers just cited. Although I am in no way suggesting a moral equivalence between them and Marcion’s extreme discontinuity leanings, there are numerous indications that the New Testament regards the coming of Christ as the inaugurator of a fundamentally new schema of salvation. That this is indeed the case was anticipated in the Old Testament itself through the prophet Jeremiah who, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit proclaimed, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD. I will **put my law within them, and will write it on their hearts**” (Jeremiah 31:31-33 – **boldface mine**). Notice here that Jeremiah is specifying a future covenant that won’t merely be an extension from the present, but will also be a new (*chadashah*) one. Although less explicit, the LORD promises through Isaiah with respect to Israel’s covenantal future, “Behold, the former things have come to pass and **new things** I now declare...” (**boldface mine** – Isaiah 42:6, 9). And he further states, “Behold I am doing a **new thing**; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (**boldface mine** – Isaiah 43:19).

In the New Testament likewise there are indications based solely on exegesis in distinction with theology that certain aspects of the Gospel of Jesus Christ entail **dis**-continuity with

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<sup>20</sup> Kaiser. Op.cit. (1), p.198.

<sup>21</sup> Van Gemeren. Op.cit. (1), pp.36, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Bahnsen. Op.cit. (1), p.94.

<sup>23</sup> Strickland. Op.cit. (1), pp. 344, 346.

the Mosaic covenant. The apostle John for example highlights the distinction between the two covenants in the strongest terms by the literary means of disjunction alone: “For the **law** was given through Moses; **grace** and truth came through Jesus Christ” (boldface mine – John 1:17).

Moo’s comment on Jesus’ words in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matt. 5:17) are helpful in identifying the flow of God’s providential movement from the Old to the New Covenant. He states, “Jesus’ insistence that he had not come to ‘abolish’ (*katalu’o*) but to ‘fulfill’ (*plero’o*) the prophets (5:17) deserves to be ranked among the most important NT pronouncements of the significance of the Law of Moses for the NT era.” / Thereby he concludes, “Integral to Matthew’s gospel, then, is a scheme of salvation history that pictures the entire OT as anticipating and pointing toward Jesus.”<sup>24</sup>

Although none of the authors in *Law and Gospel* make reference to Luke 9:31, I deem the vocabulary Luke employs there to bear very strongly on the relationship between the two covenants that are under consideration. Specifically Luke states that Moses and Elijah “spoke of [Jesus’] departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” I fail to understand why the Greek word that is routinely translated “departure” is not instead transliterated “exodus.” I emphasize this point for four reasons: 1) The term “exodus” is by definition much truer to the context than is “departure.” 2) The term “exodus” is not difficult to understand. 3) It is at least conceivable that Jesus really was claiming to bring about an “Exodus” by His finished work on the cross, and 4), the standard English translation of the word as “departure,” makes no logical sense at all while, on the other hand, the literal transliteration as “exodus” fills the statement with its proper biblical context and meaning. When for example Jesus took the bread and the cup “on the night when he was betrayed” He explicitly stated according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as Paul,<sup>25</sup> “This is [*esti*] my body” and “this is [*esti*] my blood.” He was thereby diverting the focus of that Seder service away from the original Passover event back at the first *Exodus*, with its focus on the slaying of individual lambs and making the claim that He is the fulfillment of the first Exodus event. Indeed, He is the *real* Passover Lamb (John 1:29) who has come in order to deliver *all* who are enslaved in sin (whom, according to Jesus, include every last person – John 8:31-36) from consequences of sin that are of a kind which transcend temporal and political considerations. In other words, the lambs slain under the Old Covenant were but a shadow of the substance of the person and work of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:17, Hebrews 9:22-26; 10:1) who transcends all peoples and all times (Ephesians 1:19-23).

Additional passages which indicate ontological<sup>26</sup> discontinuity between the two covenants on exegetical grounds alone include first of all Galatians 2:19-20. It is on the one

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<sup>24</sup> Moo. Op.cit. (1), pp.350, 351.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

<sup>26</sup> I include the term “ontological” in order to distinguish between the “new-creation” aspect of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 5:17) in terms of the power of the good news that leads to inner transformation, and the specifically instrumental nature of the message itself. My claim is that the additional power of the Holy Spirit and indwelling presence of Christ in the Christian sets the Gospel of Jesus Christ apart from the nature of saving grace in the OT.

hand difficult for me to harmonize v. 19 (“*For I through law died to law*”)<sup>27</sup> with similar language in Romans 6:4 (“*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death...*”). While the latter states that in baptism sinners are brought into relation with Christ so as to participate in His death, in the former, Paul implies a different context in which, under the reality of the Gospel, the law no longer has any authority in his spiritual welfare. It is, in other words, like the *paidagogos*, variously translated as “guardian” or “custodian,” who in Paul’s illustration (3:24) oversaw our lives until we came to Christ, so it is that the law in one context has the authority to approach only so close with respect to the well-being of a Christian. It is significant that in Gal. 2 Paul doesn’t speak of heeding the law in order to become receptive to the Gospel.

It is in Romans chapter 7 (esp. vs. 4, 6) that I judge St. Paul to employ the stronger exegetical emphasis for discontinuity between the two Testaments with respect to the Law of Moses. Granting as he does that the laws pertaining to civil contracts lose their binding jurisdiction upon the death of one of the two participants in the agreement (7:1-3), Paul states that on the basis of the death of Christ, the Law of Moses is no longer binding on the person who has become a “slave” of “righteousness” (Rom 6:16-18). So Paul concludes, “*Likewise my brothers, you have **died to the law** through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit for God*” (7:4), and also “*But now we are **released from the law, having died to that which held us captive**, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code*” (in both cases **boldface mine** – 7:6). As for the *theological* import following on this text, that will be addressed in section 3, below.

## 2. The Relationship between the Two Covenants with Respect to their *Natures*

I previously affirmed (pp. 1, 2) the continuity of the covenants with respect to the means of salvation it offers, namely that it not only is to be *received* by faith alone. Indeed it *must* be received on that basis. Moo writes, “*The Pentateuch ... when seen as a whole, takes a decidedly pessimistic viewpoint on the ability of Israel to fulfill its covenant obligations...The law’s failure to deliver because of human sin is one of the clearest and most persistent themes of the OT.*”<sup>28</sup> Kaiser, who vehemently disagrees with Moo’s position as a whole,<sup>29</sup> nevertheless states, “*Therefore, whatever Israel [wrongfully] thought they were doing by trying to attain righteousness by working for it, it certainly **did not originate with God in his law** as described by God’s revelation to Moses*” (**boldface mine**).<sup>30</sup>

I find that the challenge of discerning the modes of continuity between the two Covenants under discussion is NOT as clear as distinguishing black from white. Determination

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<sup>27</sup> In both cases “law” (*nomos*) lacks the definite article which, despite the opinions of many of the authors in *Law and Gospel*, in this passage indicates to me that the term “law” is employed not in reference to the Decalogue, but as a principle (in opposition to Gospel) which accuses sinners.

<sup>28</sup> Moo. Op.cit. (1), p.335.

<sup>29</sup> Kaiser. Op.cit. (1), pp.393-400.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p.182.

of the context is a decisive criterion for delineating where distinctions must be drawn. Bahnsen wisely cautions, “As we have already observed—the New Testament teaches that some portions of the Old Testament law were ‘shadows’ of the coming Messiah and his redemptive work (Heb. 9:9; 10:1, Col. 2:17). ... These descriptions however do not accurately apply to moral laws of the [OT] such as those that forbid adultery or oppressing the poor. Such laws do not foreshadow the redemptive work of Christ.”<sup>31</sup> With respect to another context he states, “The Bible repeatedly illustrates that the pagan nations were judged by the same moral standards as the Mosaic law ...Consequently it is unreasonable to expect that the coming of the Messiah and the institution of the New Covenant would alter the moral demands of God as revealed in his law.”<sup>32</sup>

### 3. The Role of the Law of God in the Sanctification of the Christian

Although I agree most fully with Strickland and Moo’s position concerning the question at hand, I also challenge certain of their statements. Strickland, for example, writes “The so-called third use of the law does not withstand the scrutiny of Paul’s testimony.” He expands further on that assertion by stating, “...it is not the moral law of the Mosaic code that the Holy Spirit employs to supervise the believer; rather it is the law of Christ that is made imperative by the Spirit.”<sup>33</sup> By “third use of the law” is meant the Law of God as employed for the purpose of guiding individuals in a wise manner according to the design of the Creator (Psalm 19:7-10; Psalm 119:9-16). While Romans 3:21f. emphasizes that sinners are saved by faith in Christ alone **apart from** works of law (3:21 and 28), he concludes that section where he raises the rhetorical question, “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?” by replying “By no means! On the contrary we uphold the law.” The Lutheran Confessional statements in the Book of Concord indicate why that is necessary: “Since believers are not completely renewed in this world, but the old Adam clings to them even to the grave, there also remains in them the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. Therefore they delight indeed in God’s Law according to the inner man, but the law in their members struggles against the law in their mind; hence they are never without the Law, and nevertheless are not under, but in the Law, and live and walk in the Law of the Lord, and yet do nothing from constraint of the Law.”<sup>34</sup> I offer an additional challenge to Strickland’s assertion. It is not “the law of Christ” which Paul appeals to, but instead circumstances described in the Pentateuch (1 Corinthians 10:1-12), in his call to Christians to “take heed lest,” as he states, “he [or she] fall.”

I similarly disagree with Moo’s assertion, “The popular notion that the Mosaic Law should be preached as a preparation for the Gospel, revealing sin and one’s need of salvation, has slim biblical support.”<sup>35</sup> It must be countered that the Apostle Paul on occasion appeals to

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<sup>31</sup> Bahnsen. Op.cit. (1), p.104.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.112.

<sup>33</sup> Strickland. Op.cit. (1), p.80.

<sup>34</sup> *The Solid Declaration of the Book of Concord: VI. The Third Use of the Law.* <http://bookofconcord.org/sd-thirduse.php>

<sup>35</sup> Moo. Op.cit. (1), p.339.

Mosaic Law for that very purpose (Rom. 2:17-24), as even Strickland acknowledges.<sup>36</sup> Moo's reply to his statement just above is that it was "*Jesus 'Gospel' demand*" which drew hearers to Himself.<sup>37</sup> Scriptural examples which contradict Moo include Stephen's preaching in Acts 7:30-53, Romans 7:7b-12, and Hebrews 9:15-28. That these passages come from a wide range of sources ought to give readers pause. Montanus was an individual from the 2nd century AD, who began a movement which assigned greater authority to the words alleged to be uttered through the indwelling Holy Spirit, than it did to the Apostles' teaching (codified in the text of the New Testament).<sup>38</sup> Although his views, deemed to be heretical by his Christian contemporaries, were not identical to context of this paper, they should caution Christians in our day from overextending otherwise valid theological insight as a means for disqualifying the legitimate employment of Mosaic Law in evangelistic preaching.

The five authors in *Law and Gospel*, together with the thesis of *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day*, are largely united in their interpretation of Romans 10:4 ("*For Christ is the end [(telos GK)] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*"). Strickland states, "*Thus this [Sabbath] command is dissimilar to the other nine commandments [in that it] is the only Decalogue imperative that is not reissued in the New Testament,*" while also noting at the same time that "*there is in fact no Sabbath transfer or shift taught in Scripture*" (boldface mine).<sup>39</sup> Moo offers great insight into how it was that Christians ultimately came to shift their day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday. He writes, "*Thus, as Jesus fulfills OT prophecies by doing what they predicted, and 'fulfills' Old Testament history by reenacting its events, so he 'fulfills' Old Testament law by making demands to which the law pointed forward...[H]e is claiming that his teaching brings the eschatological fullness of God's will to which the Mosaic law looked forward.*"<sup>40</sup> Consequently I summarize with approval A.T. Lincoln's position on the matter: namely that the only way to resolve Old Testament Law regarding the Sabbath and New Testament freedom to worship on Sunday is NOT by distinguishing between ceremonial and moral laws in the Mosaic Covenant, but by understanding that Jesus is the terminus of that very covenant (Romans 10:4). Indeed he states, "*The realities to come are summarized in Christ, who is the substance as opposed to the insubstantial shadows now outdated...That Paul without any qualification can relegate Sabbaths to the shadows certainly indicates that he does not see them as binding...*" (in clear reference to Colossians 2:18).<sup>41</sup> He takes this stance for the positive reason that "*Christ brings the [authority of the Mosaic Covenant] to an end so that the believer in Christ is not under law as the rule of life ... but instead walks by the Spirit [in a way that] the requirements of the law are fulfilled through the Spirit in his or her life (Rom. 8:4).*"<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Strickland. Op.cit. (1), pp.94-95.

<sup>37</sup> Moo. Op.cit. (1), p.340.

<sup>38</sup> J.L. Neve. Op.cit. (19), pp.59-60.

<sup>39</sup> Strickland. Op.cit. (1), p.81.

<sup>40</sup> Moo. Op.cit. (1), p.352.

<sup>41</sup> A.T. Lincoln. Op.cit. (13), p. 368.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.370.

## How Does the Authority of the Mosaic Law Bear on the Life of the Christian?

It is on this matter that I vehemently disagree with Van Gemenen's assessment of the capacity of sinners who must be saved by grace in the first place, to subsequently keep the law afterwards. In order to illustrate my objection I quote him extensively: "*Clearly, Jesus did not abrogate the law! Indeed, he called for more radical observance: 'Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commandments will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:19; cf. Mark 10:17-22; Luke 6:45; 12:36).'*" As Ladd writes, '*Jesus taught the pure, unconditional will of God without compromise of any sort...He abrogated not one commandment but instead intensified all...*'"<sup>43</sup> This explains why he urgently called on people to "*exercise faith in him.*"<sup>44</sup> He further states, "*The law is not replaced by the Spirit in the eschatological age. The Spirit [instead] opens people up to the law and transforms them to live by a higher ethics.*"<sup>45</sup> "*Obedience to the law brings real freedom.*"<sup>46</sup> / "*I cannot keep God's law unless I live by the grace of God...I need the grace of God to help me in the discipline of my heart (boldface mine).*"<sup>47</sup>

It is my conviction, based in part on Romans 7, that the expression, "*my heart,*" which Van Gemenen appeals to is precisely the root of the problem for the reason that he fails to understand the *ongoing* reality of the *fallen* nature of the Christian. St. Paul to the contrary distinguishes between the additional inner **presence of Christ within** the Christian **alongside of the old Adam** ("*Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I [the new nature of the indwelling Christ] who do it, but sin that dwells within me*" (Rom 7:20. Note also Galatians 2:20). Paul is certainly most emphatic about the incapacity, even of the converted Christian, to fulfill the Mosaic Law **by our own power**, in his *Letter to the Galatians* (3:1-3) where he exclaims, "*Oh foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? ... Let me ask you only this ... Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit are you now being perfected by flesh?*"<sup>48</sup> I find it to be impossible to reconcile Van Gemenen's position on the role of Mosaic Law as an *empowering* agent in sanctification for the Christian believer, on either exegetical or theological grounds. For reasons that entail both the nature of the Gospel in the New Covenant, and the legitimate employment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Use of the Law (p. 7, above, esp. Gal. 3:24),<sup>49</sup> the Law functions as a standard in the form of a mirror, so to speak (James 1:23-24), for convicting humans so as to open sinners up to the Good News of Christ as the only escape from both our guilt (Romans 3:19-20) and our innate moral impotence and, consequentially, incompetence.

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<sup>43</sup> Van Gemenen. Op.cit. (1), p.38.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.39.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.45.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.58.

<sup>48</sup> The definite article "the" is absent in the Greek.

<sup>49</sup> "*God wants wild sinners to be restrained by civil discipline. To maintain discipline, He has given laws ... rules, and penalties.*" Apology to the Augsburg Confession, art. IV. Quoted in Op.cit. (14), note on Gal. 3:24.

#### 4. How Do Law and Gospel Interact with Each Other in the Process of Sanctification?

I previously argued that Romans chapter 7 highlights the aspect of discontinuity between the two covenants under discussion on specifically *exegetical* grounds (p. 5, above). Now I will make the case for the same distinction on *existential* theological grounds by identifying how St. Paul, as a former Jewish leader, understands Christian sanctification. In doing so I will treat Romans chapters 6-8 as a unified flow of thought. Chapter 6 begins with the rhetorical questions, “*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*” Setting aside the context behind Paul’s statement which is a reply to questions already being circulated by some members in the Roman faith community, it must be very clear to readers that life in Christ entails a *Christian* life of a kind that experientially flows from the nature of our indwelling Lord. In ch. 6 he introduces his argument by repeatedly stating that baptism entails the actual participation of the believing sinner in the death and resurrection of Christ (3-11). In chapter 7 he then unites doctrine with the reality of our on-going sinfulness. I disagree with Moo’s assertion that this section is not Paul’s self-description as a Christian, but as one who is under the law.<sup>50</sup> I do not agree with him, for example, that it is impossible to reconcile 7:14 with 6:6, 16-17, 18, 20, and 22. While I stand on my assertion on exegetical grounds, I also do so on the grounds of my own experience as a believing Christian. I embrace the Lutheran doctrine of *Simul Justus et Peccator*, which means, “*At the same time saint and sinner,*” in part because I know both aspects of that statement to be true of me to the core of my fallen being. It is precisely because of this inescapable conclusion that I find Paul’s answer in 7:4-6 to be liberating at a fundamental level. Paul here employs the strong terms, “*died to the law*” and “*discharged from the law,*” in order that readers may distance ourselves from any prospect of having the capacity to self-sanctify ourselves by means of the law. To the contrary, the sole agent of sanctifying power is the indwelling Christ through the Holy Spirit. Finally, chapter 8 concedes the existential elusiveness of participating in the life of the Holy Spirit because of our propensity to “*set our minds on the things of the flesh,*” while urging us to nevertheless “*set our minds [as opposed to our efforts] on the things of the Spirit.*” This matter has already been addressed in a variety of ways in this paper. So let me then simply close with the encouragement of the Apostle John who declared that “*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*” (1 John 4:4).

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<sup>50</sup> Moo. Op.cit. (1), p.334.