

Law vs Gospel - An Explanation

- ▶ The Mosaic (Old) Covenant was a covenant of works and spiritual performance and has been entirely and completely replaced by the New Covenant which is the covenant of grace and faith.
- ▶ Some aspects of the Old Covenant “carry over” just as some stipulations in a workplace agreement might be found in the new agreement, but the old agreement is finished and has no more power for the believer
- ▶ Nine of the ten commandments still apply (except the Sabbath) and we are still called to holiness not lawlessness
- ▶ We are dead to the Law (Rom 7:1-6, 10:4, Gal 2:16-21)
- ▶ We are no longer under the law (Rom 6:14; Gal 3:10; 4:4,5; 5:18)
- ▶ The Law was a tutor to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:21-26)
- ▶ Legalism cuts us off from grace (Gal. 5:1-4, Php 3:9)
- ▶ We serve by faith, by the Spirit and not by the letter (Gal 5:4, Rom 2:29; 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6)

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LAW – Living By The Letter (Old)	SPIRIT – Living By The Christian Conscience (New)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Law-Keepers, external obedience ▶ Blessings and curses ▶ Do this and you will live ▶ Bible & tradition focus – know Scripture not Christ. Jn 5:39,40 ▶ Law came through Moses ▶ Letter – “by the book” ▶ Servants / Slaves with offices ▶ Clean / unclean, excludes people and things. External qualifications. ▶ Should, must, ought to, have to, rules, regulations, justified by works ▶ Literalism & Rigidity, condemnation, death, judgment, harsh, unbending ▶ Passing away ▶ Focuses on the visible ▶ Earthy city ▶ Numerous ritual observances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Spirit-Followers, led by the Spirit ▶ Forgiveness of sins ▶ The righteous shall live by faith ▶ Christ-worshippers (who also love God’s Word) Spirit & Truth Jn 4:23,24 ▶ Grace & Truth through Jesus Christ Jn 1:17 ▶ Spirit – via the conscience Heb 5:14 ▶ Sons with gifts and callings ▶ Inclusive, “one new man”, unity out of diversity. Character qualifications. ▶ Promises, faith, general principles, love, conscience, justified by faith ▶ Life-giving, considerate, merciful, reasonable, easily entreated, forgives ▶ Endures forever ▶ Beholds that which is unseen ▶ Heavenly city ▶ One sacrifice for all time

How To Control The Spirit of the Law, Legalism & Retaliation

As born-again, bible-believing Christians we are unlikely to do “wicked wickedness” such as robbing a bank but we can sometimes engage in “righteous wickedness” such as vengeance, legalism and spiritual cruelty. We can be like the Pharisees wanting to stone the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1-11). We can become law-conscious and full of indignation, wrath and anger!

This is especially so if we feel hurt by the process, if our rights have been violated, if we see something as “completely wrong” or if we feel that “justice” has to be served by our anger. Even people who are lazy, rude, incompetent, or inefficient may become the subject of our so-called “righteous anger”.

James 1:19-20 *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

This does not mean that you cannot call the police if there is gang activity outside your house! However it does mean that we should forsake the spirit of vindictiveness and of judgment of others.

It is almost impossible to stop being angry if we stay focused on that which is irritating us. The more we think about the matter the angrier we get. We need a new perspective, one that is built upon God’s Word and on an eternal perspective.

First of all we have to tell ourselves: “I am not the Judge, I am a sinner saved by grace, I need mercy and forgiveness, kindness and patience so I must show these things to others if I am to receive them from the hand of God” (Matthew 5:7, James 2:13). Love is patient, so instead of rushing to an impatient judgment we should grant forbearance and forgiveness (Colossians 3:12-13).

Another way to stay calm is to change the time perspective from the immediate moment (where we are being hurt) to the eternal perspective where God wipes away every tear. Everything in this life is “just Monopoly money” and is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31; James 1:10,11; 1 John 2:15-17; Revelation 21:1-4). No sane person cries over losing that which has no value. Our life is being watched from heaven, as if through a one-way mirror and it is not how much we end up with at the end of the game that counts (because it all goes back in the box). The rich man who had Lazarus at his gate went to Hell because his attitudes were selfish and cruel even though he looked like a Monopoly winner in this life! Selfish, vindictive and retaliatory attitudes make Christians into losers and not into winners. But if we bear our afflictions properly there is a great reward.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (17) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

We need to make definite decisions about the way we see things and the way we react to things. We should train ourselves in the art of instant forgiveness, and in keeping no record of wrongs. We need to decide “in the grand scheme of things this just does not matter”.

We need to correct our feelings e.g. “This may feel important and earth-shattering and a Big Deal but if I think about it objectively it is really just small potatoes”. Will this still be important in five years time?

You are not responsible for fixing the world, educating people or showing them their faults. Their faults are God’s business and most of the time are just none of your business. Only correct faults if they are in your direct line of management responsibility. We need to develop godly forbearance of a wicked and evil world, knowing that God will do the judging and until then it is just not our task.

Ephesians 4:1-3 *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling with which you are called, (2) with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, (3) endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

You have no right to “obliterate” people. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9)! God has not given us the right to throw thunderbolts at people!

Luke 9:52-56 *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. (53) And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. (54) And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? (55) But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. (56) For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

Remember the 4 R’s : Resolve, Resent, Reject, Revenge - these represent the natural trajectory of any human dispute. If you do not resolve, you move into resentment and then you put distance between you - and you go into rejection and finally if the issue still burns in your heart you go into revenge mode which is really ungodly. So don’t dwell on how you have been wronged but quickly resolve things!

Matthew 5:23-24 *Therefore if you offer your gift on the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, (24) leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

Romans 12:18-21 *If it is possible, as far as is in you, being in peace with all men. (19) not avenging yourselves, beloved, but giving place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (20) Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him. If he thirsts, give him drink. For in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. (21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

We need to forget about what we are “owed” since we ourselves have been forgiven so much by God! This is the point of the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35 – who ends up in prison because of his unmerciful attitude! We need to forgive “seventy times seven”. Being indignant and insisting on our ‘rights’ and our “recompense” will only get us into deep spiritual trouble.

Resist the list of judgment and duty words such as : ought, should, must, and have to. The world is complex and cannot be easily divided into right and wrong since each of us is part sinner and part saint.

If we live by the “Law Book” we will be judged by the Law and since none of us is perfect we will be condemned for the knowledge of the law only brings death. (Romans 2:12, 3:19 7:5, 8:2, Galatians 2:16)

We need to let go of our legalistic tendencies and stop living by the letter and instead live by the Spirit!

Romans 7:5-6 *For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin worked in our members through the law to bring forth fruit to death. (6) But now we having been set free from the Law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of the letter.*

2 Corinthians 3:6 *who also has made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive.*

This is a spiritual work that flows from the new nature.

Colossians 1:9-12 *For this cause we also, since the day we heard, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, (10) that you might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every work and increasing in the knowledge of God, (11) **being empowered with all power, according to the might of His glory, to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness,** (12) giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*

Colossians 3:12-13 *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender feelings of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, (13) forbearing one another and forgiving yourselves, if anyone has a complaint against any. As Christ forgave you, so also you do.*

If our anger gets an enduring foothold in us it can do us immense damage and even let the Devil into our lives. **Ephesians 4:26-27** *"Be angry, yet do not sin." Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, (27) and do not give the devil an opportunity to work.*

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In extreme cases of murderous rage it can even imperil our entire walk with God:

1 John 2:9-11 *The person who says that he is in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. (10) The person who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no reason for him to stumble. (11) But the person who hates his brother is in the darkness and lives in the darkness. He does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

1 John 3:14-15 *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love one another. The person who does not love remains in death. (15) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him.*

No true Spirit-filled Christian wants to end up in the same spiritual state as the Pharisees who were full of their own legalistic rage and anger. We have to repent of our desire to judge others. We need to remember that we are all fallen and that we all sin and that we all have many faults and make many mistakes in life. This requires constant prayer, vigilance, and daily repentance.

James 3:17-18 *However, the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, willing to yield, full of compassion and good fruits, and without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. (18) And a harvest of righteousness is grown from the seed of peace planted by peacemakers.*