



# Laws in the Heart – Which laws



By Elder David Kidd

## Laws in the Heart – Which laws?

Law in the law books - that's normal. Law in the statutes - that's normal too. But law written in the heart – now that's a strange concept for many who think it's okay to break the law as long as you don't get caught.

Hebrews 8:6-13 and 10:12-22 show that from Christ's death there is a New Covenant between God and man in which God writes His laws on believers' hearts. Hebrews 8:10 & 13 say:

*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts** ... In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old.*

The question though which this article will begin to address is 'which laws' does God write on the heart? Several contenders are considered below.

### Law of Moses (Torah)

We know Torah includes Ten Commandments written by the finger of God and the laws of Moses written in a book – over 600 laws. We also know that the Sinai covenant has been replaced by the covenant written and sealed in Jesus' blood (Hebrews 8:13, 9:10, 10:9). Should we therefore conclude that the whole Torah is now irrelevant? Not so fast. Doesn't the Apostle Paul write in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all scripture is profitable for us, and in 1 Timothy 1:8 that 'the law is good if one uses it lawfully'? Further, there are many Mosaic laws I'm sure we'd all still agree with (which we'll see in a moment). Perhaps then we shouldn't be so fast to conclude that the Torah is irrelevant to our lives. That's an extreme position we would be unwise to adopt.

On the other extreme, however, some will conclude from Matthew 5:17-19 that the whole Torah still applies. Jesus said:

*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly ... till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Matt. 5:17-18*

We know though that Jesus offered Himself as the sacrificial lamb and that this fulfilled the sacrificial component of the Torah. Not even regulations concerning one of the most sacred aspects of Old Testament sacrificial law - Passover, apply anymore because Christ is our Passover. Clearly then, Jesus' words above must have a different interpretation to that of some extremists who condemn others if they fail to keep Passover and all manner of Old Testament laws.

Also, to argue that the entire Torah should be on our hearts ignores how sections of it clearly don't apply anymore. Clearly laws pertaining to the priesthood, tabernacle, or capital punishment do not apply. Nor do the laws "concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:10). There were also various discriminatory laws which God imposed to distinguish his holy nation from the gentiles (laws of separation). See Leviticus 22:10-11 and Deuteronomy 14:21, 15:3, 23:3-6 & 20 for examples of these laws.

We can therefore safely conclude that the entire package of Old Testament law will not be written on our hearts today. Nevertheless, there is much in the Torah that defined sin and which most of us would agree still defines sin. This leads us nicely into the next candidate for the law which is to be on our hearts.

### **Moral laws of God**

The moral laws of God are those laws which define righteous and unrighteous conduct. Christians would generally agree that the sexual morality laws of Leviticus 18 prohibiting sexual conduct with kin, members of the same sex and animal kind (conduct described by God as abominable) remain relevant. Similarly we would agree with the moral laws in Leviticus 19:13-18 about swiftly paying our employees, not cursing the deaf and loving our neighbours as ourselves. Further, most Christians would affirm the moral nature of the Ten Commandments. Whilst some would question whether the Sabbath is a 'moral' law, morality and Sabbath rest are intimately connected. Overworking employees is immoral. It disturbs their relationship with God, family, friends, brethren, and the needy (whom there is little time for). Working ourselves too hard does the same.

I think we could agree that God's morals do not change. He is the "same, yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). What was once an abomination to Him surely still is. Hence, God's moral laws would definitely constitute part of this law on our hearts.

### **Law of love**

Others would like to add 'love' to our heart law on the strength of Paul's writings such as:

*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'* (Galatians 5:14)

*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, You shall not commit adultery ... You shall not steal ... and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in the saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law. Romans 13:8-10*

The point of these verses is that if we are guided by God's love we will fulfil God's law. Love is a great guide. It's the more excellent way. An attitude of true love toward God and our neighbour will lead us to behave appropriately towards them. Notice however, from these verses that love is not the law God writes on our hearts. Rather love is what helps us to fulfil God's law. Love is not the law – love is love.

The scripture above also says the law is *summed up* by love. Of course a summary does not replace what it summarizes. However, walking in love will see us go far in keeping God's law.

Let's also be mindful that simplifying everything down to 'love' brings a certain danger. Some who do this fall into the error of thinking they don't need the Bible, and after a

while their concept of love becomes very much *their* own concept of love. We should never forget Jesus' words in John 14:15 – “If you love Me keep My commandments, or John's words in 1 John 5:3 – “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.”

There will be times when our concept of love brings us into sharp conflict with God's concept. For example, the Bible says to expel a heretic from the church. We may love them, and our love may counsel more tolerance, but there comes a time when God's love says ‘no’! Or, the Bible prohibits certain love relationships, but our love may say ‘well, as long as they aren't hurting anyone it's okay’. Hence, we need to be careful with subjective notions of love.

### **The law of Christ**

Some will say it's only the laws of Christ that God writes on our hearts. There are only two direct Bible references to ‘the law of Christ’.

Firstly, Paul wanted to become all things to all men so he became “to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but *under law toward Christ*), that [he] might win [them]” (1 Corinthians 9:21). Paul talks here of not being without law toward God whilst at the same time being under law toward Christ. This sounds a little confusing. How can Paul be both? When one recognises that the Father and Son are on the same page concerning what they consider to be right and wrong it makes more sense. Revelation 14:12 shows this by defining the Saints as “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus”. God and Jesus do *not* have different laws. Christ's laws will be on our hearts, just as God's moral laws are, since there is no difference between them.

The only other direct reference to the ‘law of Christ is “[b]ear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). Certainly Jesus commanded this. We must help our brethren with their burdens. Jesus commanded us to do many things. Of course these laws must be on our hearts too because we respect Christ. But are Jesus' New Testament commands the only laws God writes on our hearts? Perhaps the reader now sees that the answer to the question of ‘which laws’ is - ‘it's a combination of laws’.

### **The Law of the conscience**

Our individual consciences add to this combination. James writes that ‘to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin (4:17). Any time we act against what our conscience tells us to do or to refrain from doing, we sin. Paul writes in Romans 2:13-16:  
... For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another ...

### **God writes His law**

Since we are clearly told that God is the heart writer, and since God is not the author of confusion, then one may be excused for querying, ‘why all Christians don't have the same laws on their hearts?’ Satan, false teaching, entrenched tradition, and our own

slackness in studying God's word have a lot to do with this. However, let us not make too much of the differences, because in reality sincere Christians only debate over a small percentage of God's laws and have most of the same laws on their hearts.

**The greater issue**

Perhaps then the greater issue is not so much which laws are written, but rather the condition of our hearts towards the laws we know apply. Do we have a passionate heart for at least the law we know represents God's will? Do we pay due regard to the spiritual intent of the law? Do our hearts break when we know we have sinned? Do we yearn for God's righteous ways as King David showed he did in Psalms 119 where he wrote:

*I will delight myself in thy commandments ... (v47) ... The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver (72) ... O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day (v97).*

Let's yearn for God's righteousness in our lives as King David did!