

The Veil that Remains

Lightning streaked across the sky. Thunder crashed. Flames of fire shot upward and outward from the top of Mount Sinai. A trumpet blast shattered the awe-struck silence of the wilderness. The voice of God spoke. It was in this terrifying scene that Moses was called to receive the Ten Commandments (plus the other 603 commandments of the Law) from Jehovah. Moses said he was so scared he shook violently (Hebrews 12:21).

We are told that when Moses came down from the mountain, his face shone so brightly from the encounter with God that the Israelites could not look directly at him. Initially, he placed a veil over his face so he could go out among the people.

When I was in the Baptist church, I had always heard the veil preached as a good thing. The glory of God and the Old Testament Law was so great. However, many years later, when I was studying the Bible—instead of just listening to sermons—I discovered that the veil Moses wore was not a good thing. In fact, it hindered the revelation of God, negated a crucial scriptural revelation, and kept the Israelites (and Gentiles) in bondage to this day. We need to rethink the veil in the light of the New Covenant.

What in the world am I speaking of? I'm so glad you asked.

In 2 Corinthians chapters three and four, Paul addresses this story and the implications for the Jewish people and the Church today.

“But if the **ministry of death**, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, **which glory was passing away**, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if **the ministry of**

condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what **is passing away** was glorious, what remains is much more glorious” (2 Corinthians 3:7-11 NKJV Emphasis mine).

Let’s unpack this verse. That Paul is referring to the *Law of Moses* is evident because he says it was engraved on stone. He IS talking about the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law. The first thing to consider is the wording Paul uses to describe the Law of Moses in comparison to the New Covenant:

- “The Ministry of Death!” The Law of Moses cannot bring life. It brought a curse on everyone who could not keep it—and we are told in no uncertain terms that no one can keep it. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23 and elsewhere). Let’s get past this idea that the Law of Moses is keepable—it is not. Jesus alone fulfilled the Law of Moses, and it is only in Him that we have the righteousness demanded by the Law. Anything else is self-righteousness, and Paul said he did not want to have his own righteousness, which is of the Law, but the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:9).
- The glory of it is passing away! We are told in several places that the Law of Moses would end. Trying to resurrect the Law of Moses is a mistake. It ended for good about September 8, 70 CE, when Titus destroyed the temple, and the sacrificial system ended.¹ Again, in Hebrews, we hear the same terminology used. In Hebrews 8:13, the writer concludes that the Old Covenant is “ready to vanish away.”² The word translated “vanish away” means ‘disappearance.’ Strong’s Dictionary notes this word meant “abrogation or the repeal or abolition of a law, right, or agreement.” That is the main point of this article. The Law of Moses ended, and many people—Jews, Gentiles, and the Church still don’t realize it. They continue to act as if it is still binding on everyone. It is not.

- “The ministry of condemnation.” Paul is really using some pretty bad terms to describe the Law of Moses. Notice he did say it was God-given and that it was glorious. However, he said that compared with the New Covenant, it was nothing but death and condemnation and would give way to the glory of the New Covenant. Romans 8:1 declares that there is now (after Christ) no condemnation for those in the Spirit. We have been delivered from the condemnation brought by the Law of Moses. In Galatians chapter three, Paul says that the Law of Moses brought a curse because we could not keep it. He states emphatically that Jesus “became a curse for us” when he was crucified.
- That which remains (New Covenant) after that which “passes away” (Old Covenant) will be even more glorious than the previous one.

It should be evident from the language Paul uses and the tiny bit of commentary I provided that the Law of Moses is not something we want to perpetuate in the Church. I could give you many more verses that speak to the same issues concerning the Law of Moses. One would be John 1:17, “The Law came by Moses, and Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” There was no grace in Law. Moses, representing the Law, disobeyed God once and could not enter the promised land. The Mosaic Law is unbending—it can only be broken. Hence, Moses breaking the tablets when he came down from the Sinai the first time is a poignant object lesson. Joshua (in Hebrew—Jesus in Greek) could bring us into the promises of God—but Moses could not. That is the overarching principle in the story of the wilderness wanderings.

Paul continues his commentary on the veil in Second Corinthians.

“...Unlike Moses, **who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.** But their minds were blinded. **For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament,** because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being

transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:13-18 Emphasis mine.)

Ah, now we see the real issue. Initially, Moses put the veil on his face because the glory was so great, and the Israelites couldn't look at him. Later, the motive changed. The glory was fading. Either Moses was unconscious of it, or he did not want the Israelites to see it was fading. Either way, the veil hid the fact that the glory of the Law of Moses was fading away until it vanished. That is another shadow of New Testament truth. Until Jesus came to fulfill the Law of Moses and replace it with the New Covenant, the Law was the glory of God. However, when God offered the Israelites a New Covenant—not like the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:9)—the Old Covenant faded and was abrogated. The idea of fading carries with it a gradual diminishing. The Glory of the Old Testament faded away over the 1500-year period of Israel's Pre-Messianic history. The reason was the Israelites could never keep the Law and—worse yet—regularly turned from it to idolatry. Consider God's estimation of the Law regarding Israel's hypocrisy. It should be obvious the original glory was fading fast.

“When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.” Isaiah 1:12-14.

Paul declares the “veil remains unlifted” today. In other words, some people (Jews, Gentiles, and Christians) do not see that the glory completely faded from the Old Covenant nearly 2000 years ago. Paul said their minds are “blinded,” and a veil still covers their heart. Notice this was both an intellectual issue and an emotional issue. When our thinking and feelings are tied together, they become set like concrete, and it is tough to change what we believe. While this is specifically true of unbelieving Israel, it also has an application within the Church today.

He goes on to say that “turning to the Lord” should remove the veil. The Spirit of the Lord brings liberty (from the Law of Moses) to Christ-followers. Of course, this is true for millions of Christians from the first century until Jesus comes back. To be born-again, a person must believe they are “saved by grace through faith” (Ephesians 2:8-9). To mix Law and Grace is not truly believing the gospel and therefore not trusting Christ as savior. And this is one reason why so many people—claiming to be Christians—still try to promote many aspects of the Law of Moses. They are like the Jewish legalists of the first century. ‘*Yes, Jesus is the savior, but you still must follow the Law of Moses.*’ You still must be circumcised and keep the Sabbath, and watch what you eat—yadda, yadda. To them, Jesus only replaced the animal sacrifices. Paul fought this idea with everything he had in him.

The Christians in Galatia were troubled by Jewish legalists insisting the new Christian converts keep the whole Law of Moses, including circumcision. Paul refutes this, stating that if you were circumcised (as a religious requirement and acceptance of the Law of Moses), Christ would mean nothing to you. He sums up his thought in Galatians 5:4, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

For the Christian, there is NO justification through the Law of Moses or any part of it. *What is justification? First, justification is a legal term. Our salvation is a legal issue, although you do not obtain it through legalism.* Here is what others have said.

“A short definition of justification is “the act of making someone right with God.” Justification takes place when **God declares** those who place their faith in Christ to be righteous”³. Emphasis mine.)

“Justification is the declaring of a person to be just or righteous. It is a legal term signifying acquittal, a fact that makes it unpalatable to many in our day”⁴.

With those definitions in mind, consider how many Christians still approach the issue of justification. We often hear things (during supposed evangelism) like: “You need to get right with God and quit sinning.” Or “You can’t go to heaven with sin in your life.” Or “God demands righteousness.” The sin issue

must be dealt with through faith in Christ—there is no dispute. However, we leave people with the idea that from that prayer forward, righteousness is all about self-effort (I don't sin), not the continued imputed righteousness of Christ credited to their account.

Paul argues in the book of Romans that “Abraham Believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” The word he used for accounting meant inventory accounting or something that was attributed—or credited—to one's account. We get the word *logistics* from it. Abraham's righteousness no longer depended on his moral character or religious performance. Righteousness was imputed to him. The following passage reinforces this with David.

But to him who **does not work** (works of the Law) but believes on Him who **justifies** the ungodly, his **faith is accounted for righteousness**, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom **God imputes righteousness apart from works**: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord **shall not impute sin.**” (Romans 4:1-8 emphasis mine.)

So, you decide! Are you “right with God” because you didn't sin today or because you believed in Jesus and God imputed (credited, accounted) righteousness to you even though you might have sinned today?

Still, many born-again Christians have this duality going on. They are saved but are hindered in their lives because they have been taught they are bound to certain aspects of the Law. It is quite strange that Christians don't want to keep the whole Law (there were 613 commandments—not just 10). They just want to keep the parts that they can do. James and Paul said if you didn't keep the whole Law perfectly, you were guilty of it all (James 2:10 and Galatians 3:10). The Law of Moses were not something you could pick and choose on a whim.

The biggest duality Christians have is honoring the Sabbath Day. Those who say we must heed the Law of Moses don't keep the Sabbath. Who gave them the right to change one of the most critical aspects of the Law of Moses—and

one of the Ten Commandments, I might add? There is no Biblical or ecclesiastical justification for Christians not keeping the Seventh Day Sabbath **IF** you insist that the Old Covenant is still binding to a degree on Christians. (For a complete discussion on the issue of the Sabbath and the Saturday/Sunday controversy, please download my free eBook: True Sabbath: The Sabbath is not a Day, it is a Person.⁵)

You cannot say you don't have to keep a seventh-day Sabbath (or change it to Sunday) in one breath and say you have to keep the Ten Commandments in the next breath. Please note I am not advocating keeping a Seventh-day Sabbath. Paul made it clear we are free from observing Holy Days as a requirement of righteousness. My point is that Christians who want to keep parts of the Law are hypocritical and—according to James and Paul—bound to keep the whole Law—or bring themselves under a curse.

The fact is, the Old Testament Law was always a temporary covenant. Paul argues this point in Galatians chapter three. He reminds them that the Covenant with Abraham, based on faith, was 430 years before the Law of Moses given on Sinai and, therefore, could not annul the Covenant of Faith. The Law was added until Jesus came, who received the covenantal promise made to Abraham.

Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made....Therefore **the law was our tutor** to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. **But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.**" Galatians 3:15-24

Using an “if-then” statement, we might say, If the Law was our tutor, and we are no longer under a tutor, then we are no longer under the Law of Moses. The issue could not be more apparent.

Many Christians who believe in a pretribulation rapture say that the Church was added and will be removed so God can go back to dealing with Israel, where He left off 2000 years ago. They refer to the last seven years or “Daniel’s Seventy weeks” as proof. The first 69 weeks (483 years) were separated from the 70th week (7 years) by the church age. The Church age is characterized as a “parenthetical period” that starts with the resurrection and ends with the rapture of the church—at which time the last seven years of Mosaic Law kick back in. However, we see that 1500 years of Mosaic Law was the *parenthetical period* between the Covenantal promise to Abraham and the advent of Christ—to whom the promise was made.

The scene on Sinai was an Old Testament shadow of Jesus’s transfiguration on the mount when the disciples saw Him talking to Moses and Elijah. Moses represented the Law and Elijah, the body of prophetic word to Israel (the Law and the prophets, as was commonly referred to by the Pharisees). They were talking with Jesus, but Jesus was the only one who was transfigured.

Ever one to overhype things, Peter suggested they build three tabernacles on the spot—one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. Peter’s intention was good. He was going to place Jesus on par with Moses and Elijah. That was quite an honor in granting equal status. The problem was Peter totally missed the issue. Jesus had the surpassing glory portrayed by the transfiguration. Moses didn’t! Elijah didn’t! Jesus did! That this was the point is evident when God tells the disciples, “This is my beloved Son, hear Him” Matthew 17:5. Jesus was exalted above Moses and the prophets. The new revelation from Jesus trumped the previous revelation—whose glory was fading fast and soon to be gone entirely within 45 years.

Paul explains how the veil is lifted in Christ. But first, we should consider the imagery he is using. The veil is on the face of Moses. What do we see if we were to “lift the veil?” Nothing! The glory of the Old Covenant and the Law of Moses is gone—faded away long ago—not to be reinstated in the last days.

Paul says the Spirit of Liberty will lift the veil. We might ask, “Liberty from what?” Bondage to the Law of Moses, of course. It is not liberty to sin or to do whatever we want. It is the liberty to worship and serve God without the condemnation of the Law hanging over our heads. Remember, Paul characterized the Law of Moses as “the ministry of death” and “the ministry of condemnation.”

In an interesting passage, the writer of Hebrews makes an important statement that I am not sure I have ever heard preached (except me, and I use it a lot).

“...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Hebrews 9:14

The blood sacrifices of the Law could not cleanse your conscience. The blood of Jesus can. It is not that a person can't serve God with a guilty conscience; it is that they probably will not because of the condemnation continually ringing in their spirit. Too many Christians fail to serve God today because of this issue—and the Church perpetuates that guilt, condemnation, and the shame it produces. We need to reread Romans 8:1. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ....”

This is not some obscure teaching from Paul somehow detached from the rest of Paul's theology and teaching; consider how he reinforces this in Romans 8:2. “For the **law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** has made me free **from the law of sin and death.**”

Paul says there are two laws at work. One supersedes the other. There is a “Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ.” It is as real as the Law of Moses. And it sets us free from the Law of Moses.

Consider two other laws that work the same way: the laws of gravity and aerodynamics. We are all subject to the Law of Gravity, just as we are all subject to the Law of Sin and Death (without Christ). However, by applying the laws of aerodynamics, I can overcome the Law of Gravity (even though it

still exerts control over everyone else). I do not do away with gravity, but I found a law that supersedes it. If I ever stop applying the Law of Aerodynamics, I will quickly discover that gravity is still around. This is what Paul meant when he said, “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” Galatians 5:4. If we stop walking in the Law of the *Spirit of Life in Christ*, we “fall” back to legalism, which cannot save us. This is no different than if the engine on your airplane stops and you cease operating in the Law of Aerodynamics. You will once again fall back to earth under the Law of Gravity.

Paul’s conclusion is when we stop exalting the glory of the Law of Moses (a legalistic approach to justification and righteousness) and look steadfastly to the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ, we are changed into the image of God. The Law of Moses could never make us like God, but the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ can.

The “**veil that remains**” still hinders the nation of Israel and the Church today. Paul said when Moses is read, the veil was still there. That is the result when Christians try to put the New Covenant on equal status with the Old Covenant. The Judaizers of the first century fought against the Gospel message of justification by grace through faith with everything they had.

We are seeing a resurgence of legalism in the Church today. It takes several forms. On the one hand, we see an emphasis on tradition, rules, and manmade standards of holiness. On the other hand, we see an attempt at legalism through the various *Jewish Roots Movements*. While Christians need to understand the Bible and our heritage from a Jewish perspective, we do not need to go back and keep certain aspects of the Law of Moses. Unfortunately, many Christians are not well enough versed in the difference between the Old and New Covenants. They get sucked back into keeping the Law, which usually includes Seventh-day Sabbath-keeping and Old Testament dietary laws at least, and even more radical legalism at worst. (Please get my book *Test the Spirits* for a more thorough discussion concerning the good and bad of the Jewish Roots Movements.⁶ Christians need to be reminded that Paul and James said if you try to keep any of the Law to please God, you are required to keep it all or become guilty of it all.

This short essay only covers a part of this Biblical issue. A book or books would be required to give it the thorough discussion it deserves, and the Church needs. I do need to add one additional thought, though.

Some will read this (typically those struggling with the veil) and think I am teaching hyper-grace or saying it is okay to sin. I am most assuredly not—trust me. Christians should be experiencing sanctification and overcoming sin. The same Paul who said, “We are free from the Law of sin and death,” said, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” The question isn’t, “Is it a sin,” but “What makes me right with God?”

Interestingly enough, Paul was accused of preaching Hyper-grace. And who accused him? The Jewish legalists who wanted to keep certain aspects of the Law. This very controversy sparked the greatest theological discourse ever. Paul’s response to this accusation resulted in the first half of the Book of Romans. Consider the core of the issue.

“Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Dead to Sin, Alive to God. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (Romans 5:20-6:2 & 15)

Being set free from the Law of Moses does not set us free to sin. It empowers us NOT to sin. As Paul argued, the Law gave sin its power. What we are set free from is the power of sin (continue reading Romans chapters 7 & 8), the guilt, shame, and condemnation of sin, and the need for self-righteousness to please God.

Sin does have consequences in our lives, but it is not all about “being right with God.” The imputed righteousness of Christ through faith makes us right with God—even when we are struggling with sin. This aspect of grace allows God to continue working in and through us when we fail. It is the mercy of

God not to impute sin to our account (Romans 4) when we do sin. The writer of Hebrews instructs us in this regard.

“Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God’s unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].”
Hebrews 4:16 Amplified Bible

When do I need grace and mercy? When I have failed. It is precisely then that I am invited to come BOLDY. How could I possibly come boldly if I am unrighteous? The imputed righteousness of Christ operating in my life invites and allows me to come boldly to the throne—not like a whipped dog with his tail between his legs—or in pride demanding my rights. But rather in bold humility through faith in God’s grace and mercy.

It is time the Church stopped teaching and practicing a lukewarm mixture of Law and Grace. Jesus is the beloved Son; hear Him.

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Postscript: I understand this is a novel idea for some people. Evangelicalism has so emphasized morality that it seems somewhat blasphemous to say our efforts at self-righteous morality do not please God. But they don’t. We are afraid to give anyone the slightest indication that they can struggle with sin and still be right with God. But they can. It is time that the Church placed more emphasis on what Jesus—the Last Man and the Second Adam—did for us than what the first Adam did to us. If anyone would like to discuss this issue further for the sake of clarifying any issue, please feel free to contact me at [steve@stevehighlander.com](mailto:steve@stevehighlander.com).

There are more free teaching materials, eBooks, articles, sermon notes, Bible studies, and more at [stevehighlander.com](http://stevehighlander.com). Please feel free to use any of my resources for your personal or group study. Send me a message and let me know that you found something helpful.

## Footnotes

[1] Some might argue that the Law ended with the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, God gave the Jewish people a 40-year grace period for the gospel message to spread and for the Jews to accept it. Jesus died in 30 CE, and the temple was destroyed 40 years later. Forty is the Biblical time of probation, and we see this played out in the lives of God's people and in the fact that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the promised land. This 40-year period represented one generation. The nation of Israel was bracketed by two 40-year periods — entering and exiting the land.

[2] This statement is because the temple had not yet been destroyed when Hebrews was written but would soon be. The writer did not say it HAD vanished away but was soon to vanish away—referencing Jesus's prophecy that not one stone would be left upon another (per Mark and Luke).

[3] <https://www.compellingtruth.org/justification.html>

[4] <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/justification/>

[5] <http://stevehighlander.com/true-sabbath/>

[6] Test the Spirits Revealing the Demonic Strategy in the Last Days by Steve Highlander. Print or Kindle versions for sale on Amazon.com or a nicely formatted eBook version is available for free on my website at <http://stevehighlander.com/test-the-spirits/>

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