

Is the Law of God a Curse?

What did Paul mean by, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law”?

The apostle Peter warned that false teachers would come along and deliberately blaspheme God and cast away the law of the Lord through their false teachings: “But there were also false prophets among the people [of Israel], as indeed **there will be false teachers among you, who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies**, personally denying *the* Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And **many people will follow as authoritative their destructive ways; and because of them, the way of the truth will be blasphemed**. Also, through insatiable greed they will with enticing messages exploit you for gain; for whom the judgment of old is in *full* force, and their destruction is *ever* watching” (II Pet. 2:1-3).

This devious approach causes most Protestants to completely misunderstand such critical passages as Galatians 3:13: “**Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law**, having become a curse for us [to save us from our sins] (for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree’).” Typically, they violate this verse, *misreading* it as if it meant, “Christ has redeemed us from the law, which is a curse.” **Such an absurd reading is completely incorrect and without foundation—because THE LAW OF GOD IS NOT A CURSE!**

The truth is that **the perfect law of God is a wonderful blessing—not a curse!** Sin is the curse! Obedience to the laws and commandments of God results in numerous blessings (Deut. 28:1-14; Lev. 26:1-13). Sin—the transgression of the law (I John 3:4)—**results** in curses (Deut. 28:15-68; Lev. 26:13-45). Christ has redeemed us not from the law itself, but from the **curse of breaking the law**—the very curse we brought on ourselves because of our sins. He provides forgiveness and redemption through His perfect sacrifice and shed blood—redeeming us from the *death penalty*, which is the *curse* of breaking the law. **He has not redeemed us from keeping the law of God**—as if one no longer has an obligation to keep the laws and commandments of God.

The Purpose of God’s Laws and Commandments: Before we can grasp what Paul actually wrote, we need to understand God’s view of His own law and why He gave it to Israel and mankind. After wandering in the wilderness for forty years—because of Israel’s lack of faith and their sin against God—Moses was inspired by God to write this concerning the law: “And now, O Israel, hearken to the statutes and to the judgments which I teach you, in order to **do them, so that you may live** and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers gives to you. **You shall not add to the word which I command you; neither shall you take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you**” (Deut. 4:1-2).

The children of Israel were to keep the commandments of God so that they might *live* with God’s blessings. Thus, God’s laws are obviously not a curse. How can Protestants possibly believe that Jesus abolished the entire law—“nailing it to the cross”—when God commanded the children of Israel not to *add* to it or *diminish* anything from it? (Also see Deuteronomy 12:32 and similar references.)

God is a God of love. He gave His laws and commandments to be a *blessing* for Israel and a *benefit* to all mankind. “Therefore, know this day and fix it in your heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath. There is none other. Therefore, you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you this day, so **that it may go well with you** and with your children after you, and so **that you may prolong your days upon the earth**, which the LORD your God gives you forever.... And you shall be **careful** to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you **so that you may live** and

that **it may be well with you**, and **you may prolong your days** in the land which you shall possess. Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God commanded to teach you so that you might do them in the land where you go to possess it, that you might fear the LORD your God, to **keep all His statutes and His commandments** which I command you, you, and your son, and your son's son, **all the days of your life**, and **so that your days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be diligent to observe it, so that it may be well with you**, and that you may greatly multiply, as the LORD God of our fathers has promised you, in the land that flows with milk and honey" (Deut. 4:39-40; 5:32-33; 6:1-3).

With these passages in mind, we need to ask: What is a converted person's attitude toward the laws and commandments of God? Does the Lawgiver reject, despise and ridicule His own laws? Absolutely not! Since truly converted people have the laws and commandments written in their hearts and minds (Heb. 10:16), they will love them, think on them and live by them in the spirit of the law (Rom. 7:6), as did King David. Notice his attitude toward the laws and commandments of God which he exalted and praised as perfect: "**The law of the LORD is perfect**, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: **the commandments of the LORD are pure**, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether, more to be desired than gold, yea, much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

"Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Oh, cleanse me from my secret faults; and keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; do not let them rule over me; then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression" (Psa. 19:7-13).

David never once called the law a curse! He fully understood that God gave His laws to mankind to **define** righteousness and sin. If we obey, the law is not a curse, but a blessing. If we disobey, we bring the curse of the law for disobedience upon ourselves.

We also find much spiritual understanding about God's laws and commandments in Psalm 119. Notice the following key verses:

- Psa. 119:142 "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and **Your law is the truth.**"
- Psa. 119:151 "**All Your commandments are truth.**"
- Psa. 119:160 "**Your word is true** from the beginning."
- Psa. 119:172 "**All Your commandments are righteousness.**"
- Psa. 119:97 "**O how love I Your law!** It is my meditation all the day."
- Psa. 119:113 "I hate those who are double-minded, but **Your law do I love.**"
- Psa. 119:119 "You destroy all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore **I love Your testimonies.**"
- Psa. 119:127 "Therefore **I love Your commandments above gold**—yea, above fine gold."
- Psa. 119:140 "**Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it.**"
- Psa. 119:159 "Consider how **I love Your precepts**; O Lord, according to Your loving kindness give me life."
- Psa. 119:163 "I hate and despise lying, **but I love Your law.**"
- Psa. 119:167 "My soul has kept Your testimonies, and **I love them exceedingly.**"

David's solemn, converted attitude of love toward God and His laws—as evidenced throughout Psalm 119—is undoubtedly prophetic of Jesus Christ's attitude and **love** of God's

laws and commandments which He had during His ministry in the flesh when He “magnified the law and made it glorious” (see Isaiah 42:21) revealing its spiritual intent and purpose.

An in-depth study of the entirety of Psalm 119 should be undertaken by the reader for a more comprehensive understanding of the laws and commandments of God.

Quoting from the Old Testament, Jesus Christ expounded on the greatest commandment of all: “ ‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ **This is *the* first and greatest commandment**; and *the* second *one is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ **On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets**” (Matt. 22:37-40). Reflecting on what Jesus said, the apostle John wrote that love and commandment-keeping go together like a hand and glove: “By this *standard* we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments; and **His commandments are not burdensome**” (I John 5:2-3).

Far from being a curse, God’s Law is a wonderful blessing—a shield, a safeguard, a light on a dark path. As the apostle Paul wrote, “the law *is* indeed holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12). Is it any wonder that King David exclaimed, “O how love I Your law!”?