

# Law Is Not For the Righteous

Peter Ditzel

---

The following is excerpted largely from my response to a reader who took me to task for my saying that the fourth commandment is not for Christians. A bit of it is also from an email to a brother who asked about 1 Timothy 1:8. The difficulty with the first reader goes beyond Sabbath keeping. It is the error of believing that we must keep the law to obtain or maintain justification. It is a leaven that has spread throughout Christianity (Galatians 5:9). These people ignore the Bible's plain words, such as these penned by Paul: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

---

Dear Mr. Sabbathkeeper,

You have written to me asking me whether, since I say that Christians are not obligated to keep the fourth commandment ("Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy"), do I then believe that it is okay to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, and covet, prohibitions against these also being found in the Ten Commandments.

I am sorry to hear that you are not a righteous man. You might be shocked by this response. After all, it is you who are trying to get me to observe the Ten Commandments. But my response is soundly based on Scripture.

In 1 Timothy 1:9-10, the Holy Spirit writes through Paul, "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." By trying to keep the law, you expose yourself as truly lawless (that is, the law of Christ is not written in your heart), disobedient, ungodly, a sinner, unholy, profane, and so forth.

You are implying that what keeps you from sin is the letter of the law and the fear of punishment under the law. But a righteous man does not murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, covet, and so on, and he rests in Christ (our true Sabbath) because the law of Christ (love) is written on his heart and his righteousness is from Jesus Christ by faith without the law (Romans 3:21-22). Notice Galatians 5:22-24: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,

Copyright © 2011 wordofhisgrace.org

Permission is granted to reproduce this article only if reproduced in full with no alterations and keeping the copyright statement and this permission statement intact.

lawnotforrighteous.pdf

faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Getting back to 1 Timothy, Paul is saying that those who are trying to preach the law to Christians are barking up the wrong tree. This is an unlawful use of law. If people are going to be legalists, then let them go to the lawless and insubordinate. In 1 Timothy 1:9, the definite article "the" that appears in many English versions is not based on the Greek. The Greek of this verse has no definite article before "law." I believe that Paul purposely leaves the definite article off of law here because all law and any law is useful to keep sinful people in line. I think Paul is saying, Do you want to preach law? Go preach it to sinners. This, keeping sinful people in line, is a lawful use of law (see 1 Timothy 1:8). This is the way our governments use law.

So, do I believe that it is okay to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, and covet, and so forth? No, I do not. But I do not believe this because the Ten Commandments that were written on stone and given to the carnal Israelites prohibit these things. I believe this because the Holy Spirit working in me tells me so.