

“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF”:
PAUL’S APPEAL TO THE MORAL LAW IN GALATIANS 5:14

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Richard Winston

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Introduction¹

This paper examines Paul’s use of the law in Gal 5:13–26, particularly his citation of Lev 19:18b in 5:14b.² Does Paul expect certain aspects of the Mosaic law to have binding authority on believers in Christ? This question affects how we understand the role of the law in the New Testament era, and helps readers of the Bible discern which commands they should follow when reading the Old Testament. I argue that Paul appeals to Lev 19:18b in Gal 5:14b because certain Old Testament commands continue to have moral authority in the New Testament era. I also argue that the OT itself and contemporary Judaism provided Paul with a mechanism for discerning which commands exercise authority over believers in Christ.

Two ideas support the accuracy of this thesis. First, Paul’s statements about believers being free (5:1, 13) and “not under the law” (5:18; cf. 3:23; 4:4–5, 21) mean that believers are free from the curse of the law, and do not mean that the law has no continuing authority over the

¹ Special thanks to Katherine Acree, Charles Barrett, Joseph Pipa, and Frank Thielman for reading a draft of this paper and offering insightful feedback.

² Paul refers directly to the law in 5:14, “the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’”; 5:18, “if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law”; and 5:23, “against such things there is no law” (unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible [The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®], copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.). I also argue that Paul implies a reference to the law in the discussion of “freedom” in 5:13 (see also 5:1).

While there is some dispute over whether 5:13 begins the third part of the letter (Ronald Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 243 [5:13 begins the fourth major section in Fung]; Douglas Moo, *Galatians*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013], 339) or continues it (Thomas Schreiner, *Galatians*, ZECNT [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 330), most agree that 5:13 at least begins a new paragraph, and so I begin the analysis here (Richard Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC [Dallas, TX: Word, 1990], vii–viii, begins a major section at 4:12, but does identify 5:13 as beginning a subsection).

Regarding the end of the passage, the vocative in 6:1 inclines me to begin the next paragraph/section there (so most versions). Others, such as Moo, *Galatians*, 370, and Schreiner, *Galatians*, 353, mark 5:25 as the beginning of the new section due to the emphasis on community and caring for another that continues into 6:1ff. Since the last direct reference to the law occurs in 5:23b, the precise end of the passage does not affect the discussion of the law in 5:13–26. Both proposed endings place analysis of the well-known “law of Christ” (6:2) outside of the scope of this paper.

believer. Second, Paul appeals to Lev 19:18b because he can discern which commands from the Torah have enduring moral authority beyond the Mosaic era.³

Believers are Free from the Curse of the Law

Paul declares the believer's freedom from the curse of the law when he writes that believers are free (5:1, 13) and "not under the law" (5:18; cf. 3:23; 4:4–5, 21). Paul refers to the believer's freedom three times in Galatians. In 2:4, Paul refers to "our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus." In 5:1, Paul declares, "For freedom Christ has set us free," and admonishes the Galatians, "do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Finally, in 5:13, Paul states, "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

Paul uses the critical phrase "under the law" (ὑπὸ νόμον) five times in Galatians.⁴ In 3:23, Paul writes, "before faith came, we were held captive under the law." Christ was born "under the law" (4:4) in order "to redeem those under the law" (4:5). Those who are being tempted by the Judaizer's false gospel "desire to be under the law" (4:21).⁵ Believers are led by the Spirit, and are therefore "not under the law" (5:18).

³ Modern readers can employ Paul's hermeneutics and also discern which laws have continuing authority for believers in Christ.

⁴ ὑπὸ communicates the idea of subordination, under the rule or control of another (BDAG, 1036; Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 389).

⁵ On the use of the term "Judaizers," see Ἰουδαῖζω in 2:14. On the nature of their teaching as a "false gospel," Paul accuses the Galatians of turning to "a different gospel" (1:6), which is not another gospel, but is a distortion of the gospel of Christ (1:7).

One line of interpretation argues that “under the law” refers primarily to being under the law’s authority.⁶ Combined with the idea of freedom, this line of interpretation proposes that believers are free from the authority of the Mosaic law, particularly because of the salvation-historical shift that has taken place with the advent of Christ.⁷ While being “under the law” may entail additional ideas such as existing under a curse and the power of sin and hostile spiritual powers, the phrase itself does not communicate these ideas.⁸ Because believers are not under the authority of the law, they are not obligated to obey any of the Mosaic laws.

I argue that such an interpretation does not adequately account for Paul’s full discussion of freedom and what it means to be “under the law” throughout Galatians. Both ideas mutually inform one another, and together they communicate the idea that believers are free from the curse of the broken law, and free from the obligation to obey the Mosaic covenant as a means of justification. Support for this interpretation arises from Paul’s purpose in writing Galatians, his discussion of the believer’s freedom, and his understanding of the phrase “under the law.”

Paul writes to the Galatians because false teachers were trying to compel the Gentile believers in Christ to adopt circumcision and submit to the Mosaic law.⁹ Paul objects to this on

⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 273; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 240; Moo, *Galatians*, 246, 320; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 333.

⁷ Moo, *Galatians*, 357; Thomas Schreiner, *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 73; idem., *Galatians*, 246–47, 345.

⁸ Betz, *Galatians*, 272; Bruce, *Galatians*, 240; Moo, *Galatians*, 247, 320, 343; Walt Russell, “The Apostle Paul’s Redemptive-Historical Argumentation in Galatians 5:13–26,” *WTJ* 57 (1995), 336, 339; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 246–47, 345.

⁹ Paul Achtemeier, Joel Green and Marianne Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 360; D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 465–68; David deSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, BHGNT (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), xii–xiv; Andreas Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum and Charles Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 419–20; Werner Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. A. J. Mattil (London: SCM, 1966), 193; I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 210; Moo, *Galatians*, 1–2; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 31–35; Frank Thielman, *Theology of the*

the grounds that supplementing faith with obedience to the law is tantamount to admitting that the work of Christ alone is not sufficient for justification (5:2–4; also 2:16, 21).¹⁰ When people submit to the Mosaic covenant with this motive, they are obligated to keep all of its commands in order to live (3:10b, 12b; 5:3).¹¹ No one can do this, and so those who try to find justification through the law exist under the curse of the law (3:10a, 3:11a; 5:4). Throughout the letter, Paul urges the Galatians to return to the true gospel (1:6–9; 4:12–20; 5:7–12), which proclaims that Christ bore the curse of the law in the believer's place so that they can receive the Spirit and be justified by faith (3:13, 14). As a result of faith in Christ, believers are free from the curse of the broken law.¹²

When Paul discusses the believer's freedom, he is referring to this freedom from the obligation to obey the law perfectly, and freedom from the resulting condemnation for failing to do so. In 5:1, Paul writes, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Although Paul does not explicitly mention the law, he almost certainly refers to it with the phrase "a yoke of slavery."¹³ The law is an enslaving yoke because

New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 262–63. Whether Paul wrote to north or south Galatia does not affect the conclusions of this paper.

¹⁰ Obeying the law and faith in Christ represent antithetical approaches to justification (deSilva, *Galatians*, 103). Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*, NovTSup 61 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 53, notes that if the Galatians submit to circumcision, they are transferring their allegiance from the Spirit (3:1–5) to circumcision (5:2–3), and obligating themselves to keep the whole law for salvation, which cannot be done.

¹¹ I say "with this motive" because in Rom 14:1–15:7 Paul addresses Jewish Christians who continue to submit to certain requirements of the Mosaic law for reasons of conscience. Paul does not identify them as cursed, nor does he say that they are under obligation to do the whole law. The crucial difference is that the false teachers were obligating the Galatian Christians to obey the law in order to be justified on the final day (see Gal 2:16; 5:7), whereas the Jewish believers at Rome were trusting Christ for justification, but were not fully persuaded that they were free from all of the dietary and ceremonial commands in the Torah.

¹² Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 60.

¹³ Moo, *Galatians*, 320. See Acts 15:10; Sir 51:25–26 cf. 1:26.

it brings with it the obligation to obey it perfectly (5:3; 3:10, 12), something that no Jew (or Gentile, for that matter) was ever able to do (Acts 15:10; 13:39).

Paul states in 5:13 that believers “were called to freedom.” Such language echoes not only the reference to freedom in 5:1,¹⁴ but also Paul’s earlier expression of astonishment that the Galatians would desert “him who called you in the grace of Christ” for a different gospel (1:6). God through the gospel calls believers to spiritual freedom. This freedom brings liberation from the condemnation of the broken law (3:13–14) when sinners trust Christ alone for their justification (2:16).

This understanding of freedom integrates well with our proposed understanding of the phrase “under the law.” Todd Wilson argues that in all five occurrences of “under the law” in Galatians, the phrase operates as shorthand for the fuller expression “under the curse of the law” (3:10, 13).¹⁵ Galatians 3:10 contains the phrase ὑπὸ κατάραν, “under the curse,” and 3:13 reads, ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου, “from the curse of the law.” The composite phrase is ὑπὸ κατάραν τοῦ νόμου, “under the curse of the law,” for which ὑπὸ νόμον functions as shorthand. Paul’s argument that those who do not perfectly obey the law exist under its curse (3:10–13) becomes the hermeneutical grid for understanding the phrase “under the law.”

Each occurrence of the phrase makes the best sense in light of this meaning. Before the coming of faith, the Galatians “were held captive under the law,” that is, under the law’s curse

¹⁴ A. Andrew Das, *Galatians*, Concordia (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 544 classifies the article in τὴν ἐλευθερίαν as previous reference, referring not only to the first occurrence of ἐλευθερία in 5:13, but also to 5:1 (τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ).

¹⁵ Todd Wilson, *The Curse of the Law and the Crisis in Galatia*, WUNT 2:225 (Tübingen: Mohr, 2007), 32–34. Similar approaches appear in In-Gyu Hong, “Being ‘Under the Law’ in Galatians,” *ERT* 26:4 (2002), 368; idem., *The Law in Galatians*, JSNTSup 81 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 190; Kwesi Otoo, “Walking in the Spirit: A Study of Paul’s Teaching on the Spirit and Ethics in Galatians 5:13–6:10” (PhD diss., Bangor University, 2014), 212.

and condemnation until they were justified by faith (3:24).¹⁶ Christ was born “under the law,” and took upon himself the curse of the law which arose from the law’s non-fulfillment (4:4).¹⁷ Because of Christ’s sacrifice, believers are redeemed from the curse of the law and adopted as sons (4:5).

Galatians 4:21 appears to oppose this understanding of “under the law.” Paul addresses those “who desire to be under the law,” and it is unlikely that they desire to be under the curse of the law.¹⁸ But Paul’s point is that the Galatians do not realize what they are really getting into by embracing the Torah.¹⁹ As Paul goes on to point out in 5:2–4, if the Galatians adopt the Torah, then they are obligated to keep the whole law, a path that ends under the curse of the law (3:10–13). Adopting the Torah is tantamount to admitting that faith in Christ is not sufficient for justification, and if the Galatians submit to the Mosaic covenant with that motive, then they are renouncing their spiritual freedom (5:1 cf. 4:31), and returning to the slavery that came to those throughout redemptive history that tried to obtain God’s promises through obedience rather than faith (the point of the ἀλληγορούμενα reading of redemptive history in 4:21–31).

Finally, in 5:18, Paul states, “if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” This verse warrants greater examination because of its occurrence within 5:13–26, and due to its

¹⁶ I do not deny that Paul makes a salvation-historical argument here about the era of the law giving way to the era of faith. But two things indicate that Paul intends for the salvation-historical to reflect the existential. First, Paul has already argued that believers before the law were justified by faith alone, with Abraham as the example *par excellence* (3:6, 17). Second, if Paul’s use of “we” includes his Gentile Christian readers (3:13–14 certainly appear to do so), then this indicates that those who were never ethnically under the authority of the law still existed “under the law,” that is, under its curse for failing to obey it perfectly (cf. Rom 2:13–15). The near occurrence of “under sin,” ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν in 3:22, which almost certainly means under the power of sin, also suggests that “under law” in 3:23 means under the condemning power of the law (Moo, *Galatians*, 246, points out this parallel but does not agree with my conclusion).

¹⁷ Hong, “Being ‘Under the Law’ in Galatians,” 370.

¹⁸ As Moo, *Galatians*, 246, poignantly observes.

¹⁹ Hence the full question in 4:21, “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?”

proximity to 5:14. It also brings to light the fundamental reason that Paul gives for believers being liberated from the curse of the law.

Advocates of the view that “under the law” refers to being under the authority of law argue that those who have the Spirit are free from the law’s authority because they do not need it in order to obey God.²⁰ External authorities cannot compel virtue; only the Spirit can produce obedience from within.²¹ To impose the ethical standards of the Torah on believers would kill true freedom, and unleash the power of sin within the Christian community.²²

The argument that believers do not need the law because they have the Spirit betrays a false antithesis. It implies that believers do not need to be told what to do because the Spirit will lead them.²³ However, Paul teaches that the Spirit provides the power to obey, without immediately commenting on whether external standards will regulate that obedience. Paul poses one of the key questions of the book in Gal in 3:3: “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” The Galatians began their Christian life by means of the Spirit, and they must continue their Christian life by the same means. If the Galatians do not need

²⁰ Betz, *Galatians*, 281; deSilva, *Galatians*, 113; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 247; Moo, *Galatians*, 357; Peter Oakes, *Galatians*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 171; Wayne Strickland, “The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensational View,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 229–79 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 276–77.

²¹ Bruce, *Galatians*, 241, 243.

²² Bruce, *Galatians*, 240; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 345–46.

²³ Bruce, *Galatians*, 255, is explicit: “the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God’s, but it is the fruit of that divine nature which God gives.” More nuanced is Moo, *Galatians*, 357, arguing that the purpose of this section is to show “the utter effectiveness of the Spirit to provide the power and ethical guidance that the agitators are claiming only the law can supply.” Similarly Betz, *Galatians*, 273; deSilva, *Galatians*, 113.

external commands, then what is the purpose of the imperatives “serve one another” (5:13), “walk by the Spirit” (5:18), and “keep in step with the Spirit” (5:25)?²⁴

Furthermore, to insist that the imposition of law always produces disobedience does not fully account for the anthropological change that takes place when believers are placed into Christ.²⁵ Such a view implies that the problem is the imposition of law: whenever laws are applied, disobedience is the result.²⁶ This is true when the law is imposed on a person still in bondage to the power of sin. Paul states in 3:21, “if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.” But Paul goes on in the next verse to make clear that the reason the law cannot give life is because “Scripture imprisoned everything under sin” (3:22).²⁷

In contrast, believers in Christ have experienced a fundamental anthropological change, and the commands of the law does not produce disobedience and death. Believers walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh (5:16).²⁸ As believers walk in the Spirit, they

²⁴ James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 116, argues that despite the dismissive language of 3:15–5:12, we must conclude that “Paul did continue to maintain an external norm for Christian conduct, and that he summed it up in the love command drawn from the Torah.”

²⁵ Advocates of this view do not deny an anthropological change, but I do not think that they have carried it to its logical conclusion.

²⁶ Suh, “‘It Has Been Brought Completion’: Leviticus 19:19 as Christological Witness in Galatians 5:14,” *JSPL* 2:2 (2012), 119, takes a similar approach based on an apocalyptic viewpoint. According to Suh, Christian freedom is incompatible with “the depth of evil that has enslaved humanity through the law.” Such a view invites the accusation, “Is the law sin?” which Paul answers in Rom 7:7.

²⁷ Paul develops this idea in more detail in Rom 7:7–11. He also hints at it in Gal 3:10–12 in the implied claim that no one can do all that is required in the law. On the legitimacy on this implied claim, see Thomas Schreiner, “Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A Re-Examination of Galatians 3:10,” *JETS* 27 (1984), 151–60, and idem., “Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders,” *WTJ* 47 (1985), 245–78.

²⁸ The OT anticipates this anthropological change using the language of heart circumcision (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4), which is a metaphor for regeneration (see Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity: The Doctrines of Salvation, the Church, and Last Things* [Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010], 51).

experience victory over the flesh (5:17).²⁹ These verses essentially restate in positive form what Paul was commanding in 5:13–14: when believers do not use their freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, they through love serve one another and fulfill the law.³⁰ Therefore, those who are led by the Spirit are not under the condemnation and power of the broken law (5:18).³¹

In conclusion, the phrase “under the law” refers to the condemnation and curse that comes to those who do not fulfill all that the law demands. Paul does not use the phrase to comment on whether believers are still obligated to keep certain aspects of the Mosaic law.³² He simply intends to communicate that those who have the Spirit belong to those who have been freed from the law’s curse and condemnation. The law does not provide power to obey, but Paul has not ruled out the possibility that the law provides guidance for obedience to those who have the Spirit.

Believers Obey the Moral Law

The second task of this paper is to determine whether Paul commands believers to obey any part of the Mosaic law. We answer this question by examining the nature of Paul’s appeal to Lev 19:18b in Gal 5:14b.³³ The main issue of interpretation concerns whether Paul appeals to the authority of the Mosaic law in citing Lev 19:18b.³⁴

²⁹ For a defense of this explanation of 5:17, see Schreiner, *Galatians*, 344–45.

³⁰ Wilson, *Curse of the Law*, 123, writes, “For when the empowering agency of the Spirit excludes the ‘desires of the flesh’ (5.16), believers are enabled to serve one another through love and thus fulfill the Law (5.13–14; 6.1–2; cf. 5.5–6).”

³¹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 204, comments, “In this verse the emphasis lies on the spiritual inability in which man lives, if he has only the law.” See also Hong, “Being ‘Under the Law’ in Galatians,” 368; Thomas Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 172; Wilson, *Curse of the Law*, 123.

³² Ridderbos, *Galatians*, 186–87.

³³ According to Moisés Silva, “Galatians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 785–812 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 809, Gal 5:14 contains the

Paul's citation of Lev 19:18b in Gal 5:14b flows from his discussion of the believer's freedom in Christ. After declaring that believers "were called to freedom," Paul admonishes the Galatians, "Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh" (5:13a). The Galatians must not view their spiritual freedom as a license for sinful expression.³⁵ Rather, they must enter a new form of servitude: "through love serve one another" (5:13b).³⁶ Paul then grounds his admonition to love in the citation of Lev 19:18b: "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (5:14).

One approach to Paul's citation argues that while Christian love corresponds to the command of Lev 19:18b, Paul is not commanding obedience to Lev 19:18b.³⁷ In other words, the

only direct citation of the OT in Gal 5–6. Betz, *Galatians*, 276, suggests that Paul does not quote the LXX directly, but rather takes the quotation from primitive Christian tradition such as Matt 5:43; 19:19; Mark 12:31||Matt 22:39||Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:1; Jas 2:8; *Did.* 1.2; *Barn.* 19.5 [cf. 19.2]; Justin *Dial.* 93.2. However, Betz also claims that "Rather primitive Christianity as a whole was in some way related to that branch of Rabbinic Judaism which tried to explain the essence of the Torah by referring to Lev 19:18." Either way, then, Paul grounds his imperative in the command of Lev 19:18b.

J. C. O'Neill, *The Recovery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1972), 71, argues that 5:13–6:11 is a later addition to the epistle, noting, "I can find nothing specifically Pauline in the collection." This is an odd statement in light of the citation of Lev 19:18b in Rom 13:9. Also, the vice and virtue lists of 5:19–23 are paralleled by Rom 1:21–23; 13:12–14; 1 Cor 5:10–11; 6:9–10; 2 Cor 12:20–21.

³⁴ The form of Paul's citation does not raise any issues as it matches the LXX exactly (*ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν*). In fact, Craig Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 1–109 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 29, claims, "wherever the text [Lev 19:18] is excerpted in the NT, it follows the LXX verbatim." In addition, the LXX faithfully translates the MT (*וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ*), removing any questions of interpretation due to translation. The Göttingen LXX records some minor variations, but none of them better reflect the MT.

According to Suh, "It Has Been Brought to Completion," 117, "Lev 19:18 is the most frequently cited pentateuchal text in the New Testament."

³⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 158. Fung, *Galatians*, 243, suggests it is more likely that Paul's opponents have mistakenly drawn this conclusion about his preaching. The entry point for such is discussions is John Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Vancouver: Regent, 2005).

³⁶ Bruce, *Galatians*, 241. Calvin, *Galatians*, 159, writes, "The method here explained of restraining liberty from breaking out into wide and licentious abuse is, to have it regulated *by love*" (emphasis original).

³⁷ Betz, *Galatians*, 275; Christopher Chandler, "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself": (Leviticus 19:18b) in Early Jewish-Christian Exegetical Practice and Missional Formulation," in "What Does the Scripture Say?" *Studies in the Function of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, Volume 1: The Synoptic Gospels*, ed. Craig Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, 12–56 (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 40–47; Bernard Ukwuegbu, "Paraenesis, Identity-

authority for Paul's command to love does not rest on the fact that it is contained in the law.³⁸

Paul does not command believers to obey any part of the law.³⁹ Paul derives his ethics from Christian revelation, which sometimes overlap with and correspond to the ethics of the Mosaic law.⁴⁰ But the purpose of the law, to produce a loving community, is fulfilled another way: by the leading of the Spirit.⁴¹

Such a view sits comfortably with Paul's insistence throughout Galatians that believers in Christ are free from the Mosaic law and must not submit to it (3:23–25; 4:4–5, 21; 5:1, 13, 18). However, we have argued above that the purpose of Paul's argument is to refute the role of the law in justification.⁴² The believer's freedom from the law has a specific scope: freedom from

defining Norms, or Both? Galatians 5:13–6:10 in the Light of Social Identity Theory," *CBQ* 70:3 (2008), 546–47; Strickland, "Inauguration," 276–77.

³⁸ Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 294. Betz, *Galatians*, 275, suggests that Paul may appeal to Torah to lower the opposition of Jewish-Christians who are devoted to the law by showing them that Christian ethics aren't radically distinct from Torah ethics.

³⁹ Das, *Galatians*, 552; Philip Esler, *Galatians*, NTR (New York: Routledge, 1998), 204; Hübner, "Das ganze und das eine Gesetz: Zum Problemkreis Paulus und die Stoa," *KD* 21:4 (1975), 243; idem., *Law in Paul's Thought: A Contribution to the Development of Pauline Theology*, trans. James Greig, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 36–41; Hong, *Law in Galatians*, 178; Moo, *Galatians*, 348; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 337 (this differs from Schreiner, *Fulfillment*, 171–72); Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 435n64.

⁴⁰ Bruce, *Galatians*, 243; Das, *Galatians*, 552–53; Feuillet, "Loi," 53–54; Hays, "Galatians," 323; Hong, *Law in Galatians*, 178; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 242–43; Mageto, "Ethic," 89; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 511–13; Moo, *Galatians*, 348; idem., "Law of Christ," 360; Oakes, *Galatians*, 171; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 337; Strickland, "Inauguration," 277; Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 434–35.

⁴¹ Bruce, *Galatians*, 242–43; Martinus de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 342; deSilva, *Galatians*, 115–16; Esler, *Galatians*, 204; Gordon Fee, "Freedom and the Life of Obedience (Galatians 5:1–6:18)," *RevExp* 91 (1994), 206; Fung, *Galatians*, 247; Walter Gutbrod, "νόμος," in vol. 4 of *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley, 1022–90 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 1076; Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, 36–41; H. A. W. Meyer, *Hanbuch über den Brief an die Galater*, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1880), 302–03; Moo, *Galatians*, 348; Russell, "Paul's Redemptive-Historical Argumentation," 340; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 334–35, 337; Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 436–37.

⁴² Ridderbos, *Paul*, 281–83; Silva, "Galatians," 810.

the curse that comes to those who cannot do all that the law requires (3:10–14; 5:2–6). It does not necessarily follow that the law has been abrogated in every respect for the believer.⁴³

I argue that Paul expects believers to obey the law through the power of the Spirit. The appeal to Lev 19:18b in 5:14b is an appeal to the authority of the command, “love your neighbor as yourself.” This command, although contained in the now-obsolete Mosaic covenant, transcends that covenant and is applicable in the age of New Covenant. Proof for this assertion arises from the function of the command within Leviticus 19:1–37, the use of the command in Second Temple Judaism, and Paul’s view of the role of various laws in those who possess the Spirit.

The function of Lev 19:18b within Leviticus itself provides the first clue to the enduring authority of the command, “love your neighbor as yourself.” Leviticus 19:18b appears within the section of the book that details God’s prescriptions for Israel’s holiness, particularly as those prescriptions would be lived out in Israel’s interactions with one another.⁴⁴ The essence of the command is clear, particularly when read in conjunction with 19:17: the Israelites must not hate

⁴³ Silva, “Galatians,” 810; Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 60.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., R. Laird Harris, “Leviticus,” in vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin, 499–654 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 534; Gordon Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 4. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 1:599, and Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven, CT: 2008), 1596, point specifically 19:2, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”

their fellow Israelites (19:17), but must love their neighbor as they love themselves (19:18).⁴⁵

God requires that his people exercise a positive attitude of heart and mind toward one another.⁴⁶

Several commands of a diverse nature surround the command of Lev 19:18b.⁴⁷ However, Lev 19:18b gives them unity. Leviticus 19:1–37 contains three principal sections (2b–10, 11–18, 19–37), and the love command of v. 18b brings the second section to its literary and theological climax.⁴⁸ Based on this structure, Gordon Wenham concludes, “Lev. 19:18 epitomizes and expresses the principles governing all the laws that surround it.”⁴⁹ The various commands of the chapter exemplify the principle of love, and find their unity as applications of this central command.⁵⁰ The Israelites cannot obey God’s laws without loving their neighbor, and when they love their neighbor, they are obeying God’s laws. In addition, the various sins prohibited flourish when people do not love their neighbors.⁵¹

⁴⁵ The parallel language in 19:34, “You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and *you shall love him as yourself*,” indicates that the original scope of this command extended to aliens and strangers as well as fellow Israelites (so André Feuillet, “Loi de Dieu, loi du Christ et loi de l’esprit d’après les Épîtres pauliniennes: Les rapport de ces trois lois avec la Loi Mosaique,” *NovT* 22:1 [1980], 54; R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980], 199). Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, AOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 354, suggests that “neighbor” (v. 18) “refers to all people with whom the addressee has a relationship, including those whom the addressee hates.”

⁴⁶ Harrison, *Leviticus*, 199. Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17–22, 1653–54, notes that such a command also implies corresponding deeds.

⁴⁷ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 263, writes, “This chapter covers such a variety of topics that the modern reader finds difficulty in seeing any rhyme or reason in its organization.”

⁴⁸ Harrison, *Leviticus*, 165; Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17–22, 1646; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 264, 267. Blomberg, “Matthew,” 28, calls v. 18 the “theological zenith” of Lev 19:1–37.

⁴⁹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 274.

⁵⁰ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 274.

⁵¹ Paul House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 145; Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17–22, 1656; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 274. The context is similar to the discussion of the fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5:16–24. When believers indulge the flesh, the same kinds of sins that Lev 19:1–37 prohibits flourish (see esp. vv. 4, 16, 20, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33). When believers bear the fruit of the Spirit, love flourishes (Gal 5:22). Joseph Pipa, *Galatians: God’s Proclamation of Liberty* (Geanies House, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2010), 196, argues that the deeds of the flesh in Gal 5:19–21 are all violations of God’s law.

Furthermore, Leviticus 19:1–37 quotes or alludes to all ten commands of the Decalogue.⁵² Since Lev 19:18b expresses the essence of the commands of Lev 19:1–37, Lev 19:18b also expresses the essence of the Ten Commandments. According to Exod 34:28 and Deut 4:13, the Ten Commandments constitute the essence of the Mosaic covenant. This reveals that Leviticus 19:18b functions as one of the most fundamental commandments, not only in Lev 19:1–37, but in the Mosaic covenant itself. The commandment therefore provides a hermeneutical key which enables a person to rightly interpret the law, to highlight the priorities of God’s law, and even to subordinate various commandments under principle heads.

The use of Lev 19:18b within discussions of the law in Second Temple Judaism further highlights its function as a fundamental, summarizing commandment within the law. In *Jub.* 7:20, Noah bears witness to his sons “so that they might do justice and cover the shame of their flesh and bless the one who created them and honor father and mother, and each one love his neighbor and preserve themselves from fornication and pollution and from all injustice.”⁵³ Later, in *Jub.* 36:7–8, Isaac calls on his sons to swear an oath that “each one will love his brother with compassion and righteousness and no one will desire evil for his brother from now on and forever and all the days of your lives.”⁵⁴

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* contain several references to Lev 19:18b. *T. Reub.* 6:9 reads, “I call to witness the God of heaven that you do the truth, each to his neighbor, and that you show love, each to his brother.”⁵⁵ Similarly, *T. Iss.* 5:1–2 exhorts, “Keep the Law of

⁵² Wenham, *Leviticus*, 264. See also Harrison, *Leviticus*, 195; House, *OTT*, 144.

⁵³ James Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), 2:70.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:124.

⁵⁵ Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:785.

God, my children; achieve integrity; live without malice, not tinkering with God's commands or your neighbor's affairs. Love the Lord and your neighbor; be compassionate toward poverty and sickness."⁵⁶ *T. Iss.* 7:6 claims, "I acted in piety and truth all my days. The Lord I loved with all my strength; likewise, I loved every human being as I love my children."⁵⁷ Finally, *T. Dan.* 5:3 commands, "Throughout all your life love the Lord, and one another with a true heart."⁵⁸

Philo of Alexandria gives a particularly helpful insight into how Lev 19:18b functioned with reference to the rest of the law. Referring to the teaching of the law on the Sabbath day, Philo writes, "But among the vast number of particular truths and principles and truths there studied, there stand out practically high above the others two main heads: one of duty to God as shewn by piety and holiness, one of duty to men as shewn by humanity and justice, each of them splitting up into multiform branches, all highly laudable" (*Spec. Leg.* 2.62–63).⁵⁹ *De specialibus legibus* looks at the commandments of the Pentateuch under the headings of the Ten Commandments, reflecting Philo's conviction that duty to God and men constitute the two main heads of the law.⁶⁰

The Dead Sea Scrolls refer to Lev 19:18b, though with more sectarian nuance. The *Rule of the Community* states, "He is to teach them both to love all the Children of Light—each commensurate with his rightful place in the council of God—and to hate all the Children of

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1:803.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1:804.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1:809.

⁵⁹ Philo, *The Decalogue; On Special Laws, Books I–III*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 7:347. I first noticed this saying of Philo in Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 52.

⁶⁰ See also *Abr.* 208: "For the nature which is pious is also kindly, and the same person will exhibit both qualities, holiness to God and justice to men" (Philo, *Abraham; Joseph; Moses*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966], 6:103).

Darkness, each commensurate with his guilt” (1QS I, 9–10).⁶¹ The *Damascus Document* commands, “Each one must love his brother as himself, and support the poor, needy, and alien” (CD-A VI, 20–21).⁶² The *Damascus Document* also discusses the command in Lev 19:18a not to hate or bear a grudge against one’s neighbor (CD-A VII, 2–3; IX, 2–8).

Finally, rabbinic literature cites Lev 19:18b, and also utilizes the principle of love for neighbor as a summary of the law. Rabbinic literature postdates the NT letters, but may reflect traditions current during the time of Jesus. The use of Lev 19:18b here is consistent with the Second Temple Jewish works cited above. In *Midr. Gen.* 24:7, Rabbi Aqiba cites “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” as “the encompassing principle of the Torah.”⁶³ According to *m. Ábot* 1:12, Hillel commands, “Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving mankind and bringing them nigh to the Law.”⁶⁴ Lastly, to the would-be proselyte who requested “teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot,” Hillel answered, “What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is commentary thereof; go and learn it” (*b. Šabb.* 31a).⁶⁵

These citations demonstrate that the authors of these documents recognize the fundamental role that Lev 19:18b plays in understanding the law.⁶⁶ Several authors have

⁶¹ Michael Wise, Martin Abegg and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 117.

⁶² Wise, Abegg and Cook, *DSS*, 57.

⁶³ Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation*, 3 vols, BJS (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1985), 2:270.

⁶⁴ Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew, with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 447.

⁶⁵ I. Epstein, trans. and ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Socino, 1938), 140.

⁶⁶ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 243. Moo, *Galatians*, 346, claims, “Judaism gave no special attention to the command [Lev 19:18b]” (so also Dunn, *Theology*, 117n24), but the citations above argue against that. Regarding the rabbinic references, Mark Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed.

downplayed the significance of these distinctions within the law since Jewish teachers still insisted on the necessity of obeying all the laws.⁶⁷ We do not suggest that these documents claim abrogation of the other laws, only that they prioritize love for neighbor in their admonitions.⁶⁸ The literature of Second Temple Judaism cited above rightly interprets the command of Lev 19:18b as one of the foundational, core commands of the Mosaic law.⁶⁹

Paul agrees with this assessment of Lev 19:18b, and employs the command in a similar manner in Gal 5:14b. Evidence for this comes from Paul's introduction of the citation with the words, "the whole law is fulfilled in one word" (Gal 5:14a). The phrase "in one word" echoes

G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson 607–94 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 683, claims, "Rabbinic Judaism recognized the fundamental importance of the commandment to love one's neighbor."

⁶⁷ Robert Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition*, SNTSMS 28 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 170–71; Richard Hays, "The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in vol. 11 of *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander Keck, 181–348 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000), 323; Dixon Slingerland, "The Nature of *Nomos* (Law) within the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*," *JBL* 105 (1986), 41.

⁶⁸ Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 54–58. Thielman concurs that Paul's opponents in Galatia would have rejected such distinctions in the law if it led to the abrogation of any laws, especially circumcision, since they were likely galvanized by the opposition of the Hellenistic reforms under Syrian rule (58–59). Even Paul states that it is necessary to obey the entire law in order to be justified by the law (Gal 5:2–4).

However, Thielman also draws attention to Ps.-Phoc. I.8, II.9–21, II.22–41, II.59–69, II.42–47, I.3, II.175–206, whose ethical center does not discuss ceremonial laws such as circumcision, food, and Sabbath (55). Furthermore, Thielman refers to the story of Izates' conversion to Judaism in *Ant.* 20:38–48, which shows a liberal attitude by some to circumcision (56–57). These citations show that some Jews prioritized ethical over ceremonial requirements as the heart of biblical religion (for a similar argument, see Schreiner, *Fulfillment*, 156–57). Martin Friedländer, "The 'Pauline' Emancipation from the Law a Product of the Pre-Christian Jewish Diaspora," *JQR* 14:2 (1902), 269–70, even claims, "there already existed in the dispersion a Jewish party, or, rather, to be more precise, a Jewish sect which, on the ground of allegorical interpretation repudiated ceremonial law, rejected the rite of circumcision, Sabbaths and festivals, and other religious institutions" (emphasis original).

⁶⁹ Rikk Watts, "Mark," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 111–249 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 218, writes, "Love of neighbor became a key part of Jewish summaries of the law well before the first century." According to Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 52, reductions of the many laws to one principle such as Philo's "were common in Hellenistic Judaism, especially as a concession to the non-Jewish world, and we can be sure that Paul was familiar with them." Thielman also argues that such reductions would have been unremarkable to his audience (53).

Jesus also utilizes such summaries of the law in his answer to the lawyer in Matt 22:36–40||Mark 12:32–33||Luke 10:26–28. Even the "new command" that Jesus gives in John 13:34 repeats the "old" command of Lev 19:18b. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 484–85, writes, "The new command is not 'new' because nothing like it had ever been said before." Rather, "it is a command designed to reflect the relationship of love that exists between the Father and the Son (cf. 8:29; 10:18; 12:49–50; 14:31; 15:10), designed to bring about amongst the members of the nascent messianic community the kind of unity that characterizes Jesus and his Father (Jn. 17)."

τοὺς δέκα λόγους (“the ten words”) in Exod 34:8 and Deut 10:4 LXX.⁷⁰ The ten words of the Decalogue are fulfilled, that is, they find their full expression in the single command of Lev 19:18b.⁷¹ Paul summarizes the moral obligations of the law under one entry: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”⁷²

Furthermore, Paul employs this command as an expression of the ongoing moral will of God for his NT people. Paul commands believers not to use their freedom from condemnation as an opportunity to serve the flesh, but to serve one another through love (Gal 5:13). Why? Because (γὰρ) when believers love one another, they obey the fundamental requirements of the law, as Lev 19:18b commands, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal 5:14).

Believers do this because they are led by the Spirit and are not under the condemnation of the broken law (5:18). The difference between the person who tries to keep the whole law (5:3) and the believer who fulfills the law (5:14) is that believers possess the Spirit which enables them to obey the laws that have continuing validity in the present age.⁷³ After listing the fruit of

⁷⁰ deSilva, *Galatians*, 116.

⁷¹ BDAG, 828; Fung, *Galatians*, 246n16. Moo, *Galatians*, 348, draws attention to the passive voice in “fulfilled” (πεπλήρωται), and argues that Jesus “‘fulfills’ the whole law in his teaching by highlighting love for neighbor as the true and ultimate completion, or ‘filling up,’ of the law—and in his life by going to the cross as the ultimate embodiment and pattern of sacrificial love” (so also Hays, “Galatians,” 323; Peter Mageto, “Toward an Ethic of Shared Responsibility in Galatians 5:13–18,” *ERT* 30:1 [2006], 89). Suh, “It Has Been Brought to Completion,” 129, also argues from the perfect passive that the agent is Christ who completely obeyed the law.

The emphasis on the believer’s obedience in 5:13–15 makes it more likely that the believer is the agent of the passive voice. James 2:8 uses the active voice with reference to professing believers fulfilling the law: Εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν.

⁷² BDAG, 601. The parallel Rom 13:9 uses a verb that communicates the idea of summary: ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται.

⁷³ Suh, “It Has Been Brought to Completion,” 120, charges that in this view of the law “Paul’s Christology plays a miniscule part in how he shapes the opening frame of his parenesis that runs from Gal 5:13 to 6:10.” First, the direct emphasis of the passage is on pneumatology: “called to freedom” (5:13); “walk by the Spirit” (5:16); “led by the Spirit” (5:18). Second, however, this pneumatology is true for all who are in Christ by faith alone: “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (5:24). The argument that believers obey the law does not downgrade the Christology of Galatians or Paul’s critique of using the law for justification, but recognizes the anthropological change produced in those who are in Christ and have the Spirit.

the Spirit in Gal 5:22–23a, Paul concludes, “against such things there is no law.” The law does not condemn the fruit of the Spirit because such fruit is what the law commands.⁷⁴ Believers are not under the curse of the law (5:18) because they are led by the Spirit and enabled to fulfill the law (5:14).⁷⁵

God promised through the prophets that his people would obey his law in the last days (Jer 31:33). God’s people would be characterized by the Spirit, and the Spirit would move them to obey (Isa 32:15–16; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–32).⁷⁶ Some have argued against the idea that believers obey the law by distinguishing between keeping the whole law (ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι, 5:3) and fulfilling the entire law (ὁ πᾶς νόμος πεπλήρωται, 5:14), and suggesting that the believer’s fulfillment of the law is merely descriptive and not prescriptive.⁷⁷ Paul does maintain that only believers fulfill the law, not because believers are not obligated to obey the law, but because only believers have the Spirit. If the presence of the Spirit

⁷⁴ Notice that the first fruit mentioned in 5:22 is love.

⁷⁵ Dunn, *Theology*, 116; Timothy George, *Galatians*, NAC 30 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 380; Otoo, “Walking in the Spirit,” 212–14, 220–22; Pipa, *Galatians*, 185–87; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 281–83; Schreiner, *Fulfillment*, 171–72 (Schreiner, *Galatians*, 337, gives a somewhat different view); Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 52–54; Wilson, *Curse of the Law*, 123. Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 2nd ed., WUNT 29 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 64, recognizes that Paul calls on believers to obey part of the law here, but we disagree with his contention that this contradicts Paul’s other teaching on the law. E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 94–97, also argues that Paul expects believers to obey the law, but we disagree with Sanders’ contention that Christians do this in order to “stay in.” Calvin, *Galatians*, 159, sees an implication here that believers obey the entire Decalogue, because one cannot love one’s neighbor (the second table of the law) until one loves God (the first table). Therefore, the command to love one another implies obedience to both tables of the law.

⁷⁶ Otoo, “Walking in the Spirit,” 213, writes, “The post-exilic Jews maintained the hope that God’s presence in the Spirit would enable them to effectively obey the law.”

⁷⁷ Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 434–35. See also Betz, *Galatians*, 274–75; Hong, *Law in Galatians*, 178; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 334–35.

among the Galatians signals the arrival of the age of fulfillment (Gal 3:1–5), then one should expect a Spirit-enabled obedience of the law by believers.⁷⁸

Some object to the idea that believers continue to obey part of the Mosaic law on the grounds that the Mosaic law is a whole, and Paul not does not enjoin obedience to just one part.⁷⁹ The entire Mosaic covenant has passed away, and believers are no longer under its prescriptions.⁸⁰ Paul's use of the law itself, however, warrants against that. Paul does indicate that parts of the law have been fulfilled and have passed away. When Paul refers to the ceremonies of the law in Col 2:16–17, he argues that Christ has fulfilled them. When Paul cites and alludes to the laws governing Israel's society in 1 Cor 9:9 (Deut 25:5) and 5:13 (Deut 17:7), he applies the underlying moral principle to the new situation in the church.

But Paul appeals to the foundational Mosaic laws in a straightforward manner. In Rom 13:9, he cites the commandments against adultery, murder, theft, and coveting, and states that they are summed up in the word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Those who love one another have fulfilled the law (Rom 13:8, 10). There, as in Gal 5:14, the summary commands of the law express the continuing moral will of God for his people.⁸¹

Paul may have viewed the Mosaic covenant as a whole (Gal 5:3), but he also believed that it enshrined certain moral principles that were in operation before the law and would

⁷⁸ Further indications that Paul viewed believers as living in the age of fulfillment arises from his statement that Christ rescues believers "from the present evil age" (1:4), and the implication that believers are part of "a new creation" (6:15).

⁷⁹ E.g., deSilva, *Galatians*, 115, "He does not himself distinguish between, for example, its ritual, civil, and moral commands with the goal or urging obedience to the last group (as, e.g., would John Calvin)."

⁸⁰ Schreiner, *Galatians*, 337.

⁸¹ Paul's use of the law in Rom 13:8–10 is debated along the same lines as his use of Lev 19:18b in Gal 5:14, and conclusions about his use of the law there must be established by that text. Our exegesis of Gal 5:14 may provide a starting point, however, and it appears on the surface that Paul is consistent in his use of the two texts.

continue thereafter.⁸² God's displeasure at Cain's treatment of Abel (Gen 4:1–6) and the mistreatment of the Hebrews by the Egyptians (Exod 3:7) bears witness to the necessity of neighbors loving one another as they love themselves before the institution of the Mosaic covenant. Likewise, although the era of the Mosaic covenant has come to an end (Gal 3:23–25; 4:1–7), believers are still obligated to obey the moral commands of the Mosaic covenant.⁸³ The original meaning of Lev 19:18b, and its use within the literature of Second Temple Judaism provide the hermeneutics that allow Paul to discern foundational commands which exercise continuing validity.

Conclusion

Paul appeals to Lev 19:18b in Gal 5:14b because certain Old Testament commands continue to have moral authority in the New Testament era. Paul's declarations that believers are free with reference to the law, and not "under the law" have a specific focus: believers are free from the condemnation of the broken law because in Christ they are free from the obligation to obey the law for justification. Believers should not submit to the Mosaic law as a covenant that regulates their relationship with God, but the Mosaic covenant does contain foundational moral commands that continue to exercise authority in the NT age. Paul discerns one of these commands through a contextual reading of Lev 19:18b and in light of its use within the literature

⁸² Philip Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Geanies House, Scotland: Mentor, 2010), 52–79, develops the idea that the Ten Commandments were anticipated in creation and operative until Sinai. Sinai enshrined in written form what has been in operation since creation. See also Willem VanGemeren, "The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ: A Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 13–58 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 19–22.

⁸³ Silva, "Galatians," 810, notes that the phrase "neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision" occurs three times (Gal 5:6; 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19), indicating a conceptual parallel in the three phrases which respectively follow: "faith working through love," "a new creation," and "keeping the commandments of God."

of Second Temple Judaism. Paul therefore commands his Christian readers to obey this command through the power of the Spirit.

This argument provides exegetical defense for labeling certain parts of the Law as moral, and compelling Christians to obey them. Paul's reading of Lev 19:18b in conjunction with the literature of Second Temple Judaism indicates that the law itself distinguishes between commands that have foundational moral weight and those that are applications of such commands. Paul's appeal to the law in Gal 5:14 indicates that commands with foundational moral weight have continuing validity into the NT age. These hermeneutics show the importance of interpreting OT laws within their original contexts, and giving attention to the way such laws function with reference to the rest of the law, as well as their use within the literature of Second Temple Judaism and the NT. Such hermeneutics enable readers of both Testaments to discern which commands have foundational moral weight, and are therefore of continuing obligation of the believer.

Further study in Paul could examine other passages to see if Paul employs consistent hermeneutics in his use of moral commands. If Paul consistently employs moral commands in a straightforward manner, as enduring expressions of God's moral will for his people, that would justify such labels such as "the moral law" for the Ten Commandments, and the acceptance of their enduring authority for New Testament believers. Such labels would not short-circuit exegesis, but would helpfully summarize the results of exegetical and biblical theology.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ D. A. Carson, "Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and New," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, 393–436, WUNT 2:181 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 429, writes, "the problem with the tripartite division of law, which as a device for explaining continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments, goes back to Thomas Aquinas, is that it attempts to construct an *a priori* grid to sort out what parts of the law Christians must keep or do, and holds that Paul must have adopted some such grid, even if he does not explicitly identify it. If instead we adhere more closely to Pauline terminology in this regard, we may still usefully speak of the tripartite division from an *a posteriori* perspective: *after* we have observed the patterns of continuities and discontinuities that Paul establishes, those old covenant laws which Christians 'fulfill' in a fashion most closely aligned with their

function within the old covenant may safely be labeled ‘moral,’ without fear that an *a priori* definition is domesticating Paul’s thought.” Consistent classification of such continuing laws as moral could justify the application of the tripartite division, not as an *a priori* category, but as a systematic summary of biblical truth.

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