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No Rules for Christians Other Than to Love God and Love Others?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to answer someone who says Jesus' fulfillment of the Law means that loving God and loving others are the only rules Christians have to follow and fulfilled prophecies in the Bible.

* How would you answer someone who says Jesus' fulfillment of the Law means there are no rules Christians have to follow other than to love God and love others?

* Can you give more details about fulfilled prophecies in the Bible?

Transcript

I'm Amy Hall and you're listening to the hashtag SDRask Podcast from Stand to Reason featuring Greg Koukl. Okay, Greg, in the last episode, we were talking about the law and the gospel and the Christians relationship to the law. And as it is, we're talking about the law and the gospel and the Christians relationship to the law.

And as it happens, I don't know how else keeps happening, the very next set of questions actually has a question about the law. And this is, I think people get confused sometimes when we talk about the Christians relationship to the law because they think we're saying, by the way, this is exactly what Paul addresses in Romans. They think they're saying, oh, the law is bad then? No, no, no.

Paul says the law is not bad. The law is good. And he goes so specifically through how we are to view the law in Romans.

So I recommend that to everybody. But here's a question from Josh Carey that has to do with this. How would you answer someone who says that Jesus' fulfillment of the law means that there are no rules Christians have to follow other than loving God and loving others? Well, that's antinomianism.

Okay, that means that there is no law, anti-nomos. Okay, like Deuteronomy,

Deuteronomy, Second Law, anti-nomos, no law. Okay.

And it's clear that this isn't true because the New Testament, which talks about Jesus fulfilling the law, is thick with moral imperatives that we are to live by. We are to be holy as God is holy and without holiness, no one will see God. Those are in the New Testament.

Peter says, make your election more sure by adding these qualities of virtue. That's, I think that's 1 Peter, chapter 1. We also see a similar kind of list in Romans 5 where because we are justified by grace, we rejoice and then we rejoice also in our tribulation because tribulation produces all these things and these things produce other things. These are all virtuous things that are supposed to be produced in our life.

And we participated in that. Titus chapter 3 has a very powerful statement about the grace of God. I love this passage because I think it puts everything in its perfect balance.

Okay. And what Paul writes to Titus is he says, when the kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. Not according to deeds which are general righteousness, but by the washing.

Let's see, I probably should look it up because I'm going by memory a little bit here, but generally by the washing and regeneration of our spirit. I'm just going to go there. Sorry, because it's such a powerful passage to make the point.

So let me just find it. Sorry, I didn't kind of look at this. This is the way my mind work here.

It is Titus 3. Okay, here it is. When the kindness of God, this verse four through seven, the kindness of God, our Savior appeared and his love for mankind appeared. He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done and righteous us.

So he's disqualifying that the law, but according to his mercy. In other words, the means by which we are justified by God is not the law. And that's his point.

But according to his mercy by the washing and regeneration renewing by the Holy Spirit rebirth, whom he poured out upon us richly through Christ Jesus our Savior. So that being justified by his grace, there it is again. He says the same thing multiple times.

We would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Grace, full stop next verse. This is a trustworthy statement and concerning these things.

I want you to speak confidently so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. Good deeds are not profitable for justification.

Our deeds. They don't acquit us. They condemn us.

Okay. The deeds follow justification as appropriate acts of virtue that are characteristic of our new birth and the work of the spirit in our lives. And since the law is good, the law characterizes things that are good.

And we can use the law as a kind of guide for our behavior. But as Paul says in Galatians five. All these sinful things are contrary to law.

He's got this list of good. But those who are led by the spirit who are walking in the spirit. They're not under the law.

Why? Because you're already fulfilling the law by the spirit's power. You were doing the things that the spirit of the law, which is summed up in love, God and love, men. And therefore, by contrast to the deeds of the flesh, walking in the spirit, putting to death the deeds of the flesh is the way Paul puts it in Romans eight, then we are going to manifest those fruits of the spirit that are there in Galatians.

Because this is what Paul's talking about in Romans seven. We actually started in Romans six and read through Romans eight. Because what you find is that Paul's talking about how when they were joined to the law, the law had no power to help them to put their sin to death.

And then he says, what happened is we have now died and we've been joined to Christ. We've died with him. We've risen with him.

And we've died to the law, just like if you die, you're released from the law that was over you. And so what happened is now we're joined to Christ and he says so that you can bear fruit. That's the result of this.

And then in chapter seven and eight, he talks about how when you're under the law, you, he says, you know, you, there are two options here. And then in the mind, you see that the law is good and your body, you're under the law of sin, which is in the members of your body. And then he says, but now we're, we're under the law of Christ.

In other words, we are joined to Christ and we have the Holy Spirit. Now we can put our sin to death. So all this has been going towards putting your sin to death and bearing fruit for God.

That's really clear in those chapters. So he says the law is not, it's not, it's not that we are nullifying the law. We're actually establishing the goodness of it because we don't have to, we don't have to hide laws or get rid of laws to make ourselves better.

We can, we can uphold all of that, the goodness of it, even if we're not under it in terms of it ruling over us and judging us. So, so we come to this question here that there are no rules Christians have to follow that all that is just to give us kind of a background of our relationship to the law. But what he says here is that there are no rules Christians have

to follow other than loving God and loving others.

But the question is, how do we know what love is, what is love, what does that look like. And so I went through and I found some verses that actually address how we know what love is. And this is the first one and considering what Paul has said so far in Romans.

We have that whole background of not being under the law. But here's what he says in Romans 13, 8 through 10. He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law for this you shall not commit adultery you shall not murder you shall not steal you shall not covet and if there is any other commandment.

And so, if you end up in this saying, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Now notice he's not saying and this is how a lot of people in our culture take this.

He's not saying that now we love because that's better than all of these rules. We just are smiling and nice and say have a nice day. Yeah, what he's saying is do what you want.

The rules are defining what love is for you. This is why you don't commit adultery because this is how you express love. Now I found a couple.

By the way, it's interesting. He starts with a sexual sin. He says don't do this actual sin because that's not an example of love.

Okay. I mean, there are more sexual sins that he talks about in the New Testament that are problematic. First Corinthians nine but I've since sexual sin is a big part of our culture's expression of love cultural idea of love.

You know, love is love. Remember love is love after all. So why are you getting down on homosexuality.

So I have a couple more verses. This one is second John five and six. And here's what he says.

Now I asked you lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning that we love one another. Okay, so he's talking about loving one another. He's not talking about loving God here.

He's loving one another. And this is love that we walk according to his commandments. So what love is walking according to God's commandments as to how we will treat each other regarding each other.

Right. And then first John five to by this, we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe his commandments. So again, he's putting it in terms of loving the other people when we follow God's commandments.

I'll tell you what this kind of confirms in me, fortunately, and that is how biblically illiterate so many Christians are. And I think the daily bread is great because I like those people and they handle versus great. Okay, but if this is your diet, all you're getting is a crust each morning.

If you read it in the morning, it's a good crust, but it's just a crust. You're not reading through your Bible, especially New Testament here regarding these things to get the full counsel of God. You're going to have all kinds of inadequate understandings.

You've read all these passages. There's this claim, okay, well, Jesus fulfilled the law. I read that in the sermon on the Mount.

Therefore, no more rules. Well, wait a minute. Keep reading.

There are all these rules. In fact, in the sermon on the Mount, there's all these rules about fasting and about tithing to show off to other people as are rules. And these are commandments that apply to us that you've read in these passages here.

How is it that people miss this? And I think the way they miss it is they don't read it. And I guess because it's so, it's right there. And anyway, it's frustration to me because many of these things, and I'm not trying to put anybody down here, but I am troubled.

And a lot of these questions that we answer are questions that a more thorough reading of scripture would supply an answer. And it's not because we have this esoteric understanding of theology and philosophy and apologetics. There's obviously some issues like that.

But sometimes it's just keep reading. Just keep reading. Understand.

Look at, look up the word law in the New Testament. Find every verse in the New Testament talks about law, then gather these together and then read them. This will give you a balanced understanding about how this is used.

And this is what you've been doing is just reading some other passages. How can somebody say that there's no rules when the text says, keep the commandments? This is how you love. Keep the commandments over and over and over again, the same kind of thing in the New Testament, even given the fact that Jesus has fulfilled the law.

Yeah, there's just so much confusion about our relationship to the law because, yes, we've died to the law. We've been released from the law. But we are supposed to become like Christ.

We're supposed to reflect God to the world. And how do we know who God is? Well, this is when we're instructed by the law. So we can find out what God loves and who he is and his character from the law.

And that's how we know how to act. Now that we still get our power from the Holy Spirit because we are not under condemnation of the law, but the law is still good. And we still learn from it.

And I think this is where people get confused. But I do have a post called the law is good if people want to look into that. And I have some other links to how we should look at the law.

Also a book that we've referred to in the past and I have a sitting next to my reading chair in my office. But it's something about 20 questions or 40 questions about the law. Is it by Hamilton? I don't know.

I can't remember the title much less. But I know it's sitting there and we've made reference before. Maybe you can find it included in your notes.

Well, I think that was by James Hamilton. If I remember right, like 40 questions about the law or something like that. Yeah, it was good stuff.

Well, hopefully I'm close. Maybe I've given you enough clues that people can find it. All right, Greg, let's stay in the Old Testament here for Josh's question.

Okay. And he asks, is it often referenced that there are multiple fulfilled prophecies in the Bible. However, no one seems to explain the details.

Can you please lay out what they are and how we know for sure they were fulfilled. Also, shouldn't legitimate prophecy be very specific versus generalized. Well, this is a hard question.

And I have a harmonics book. If you ever write a book, don't write a book with a title. It's hard to remember because it's hard to recommend it.

But this is a good one. And I think it's principles of biblical interpretation. And who's the guy at Denver Seminary? The theologian.

Okay. Well, he is what there's like three authors to it. And this, I think is an excellent book, but it's a textbook.

We recommend a fee and stewards book, how to read the Bible for all it's worth. And that's great popular book. This is a textbook.

And this is going to help you with these more challenging kinds of interpretive issues. And the answer is that it's not easy to determine what is actually prophetic and what isn't. Sometimes we know because New Testament writers under the influence of the Holy Spirit identified certain passages as being fulfilled in the life of Christ.

But you go back to the passage and you wonder, how do they get this out of this? I don't

know. And sometimes it's because the Jews understood this historically through time to be a reference to the Messiah. Now, sometimes the passage is actually identified as Messiah, anointed one, Psalm 2, for example.

They take counsel of the Lord and against the Lord and his anointed. And that anointed could mean anointed king, but Messiah means anointed one. And so sometimes it's got this longer range reference.

And the Jews were familiar with this. And this is why they identified certain passages, even prior to Christ as messianic passages. There were messianic Psalms, there are messianic passages, etc.

I don't know the process they went through to understand that. And, you know, maybe that process is some of it is lost on us because these things happen in ancient ages where people understood the language better and they understood the circumstances and they understood this is a reference to something more. Sometimes look at the Virgin shall give birth.

Well, that's that word. Virgin in Isaiah seven actually means maiden or young woman. Well, how do you get in a see to be referencing something in the immediate context, but there are clues that is referring to something further distant as well.

And when the Greek New Testament was translated, I should say when the Hebrew was translated into Greek, called the Septuagint prior to the time of Christ, this passage was translated as Parthenos, which is, I think that was the word, but the word means virgin. Is it part on us? I can't don't quote me on the Greek word, but the word in the Greek means virgin and nothing else. So even before Christ, they understood this to be a reference to a virgin birth.

That's why it's in the Septuagint that way. So, there's a lot of different references. Sometimes you have something like out of Egypt, I have called my son.

So the prophecy was fulfilled out of Egypt. I have called my son. Wait a minute.

I don't see that. Well, that's a typological that's a that's a typology where the Jews were in Egypt, then they come out and then Jesus as an infant goes to Egypt and then he's brought back to Israel. And so probably what the reference there is the typology.

So the messianic prophecy is a strange thing. And there's a lot of different variations to it. I heard Stephen Meyer, Mr. Intelligent Design do a wonderful talk on this.

30 years ago, you know, when I had him come to Hope Chaplain and give a presentation as part of the Master Series of Christian thought. And he pulled this all together. And actually, I was just recently talking to him and apparently still working on this.

So somebody might keep an eye open for Stephen Meyer talking about prophetic fulfillment because he had a nice way of kind of bringing all these little bits and pieces together and explaining how that worked. But I can't remember exactly what he said, but I will tell you my practical adjustment to the ambiguities of messianic prophecy. I try to cite the messianic prophecies that seem to be very, very clear in their reference to a future Messiah, or at least the New Testament authors thought that Isaiah 53 is probably one of the most obvious.

And I've never done this, but somebody said, you can just present this passage to Jews and have them read it and ask them who's this talking about. And they're going to say, Jesus, because so much there seems to be clear. Psalm is it 22? That begins, my God, my God, why has thou forsaken me? That whole Psalm reads kind of like a crucifixion, which didn't happen until hundreds of years later as a form of capital punishment.

But it's like a first person account of what's going on in a crucifixion from the perspective of the one being crucified. And that's where the psalmist talks about their wagging their heads and they're saying things as they walk by, they cast lots for my garments, they divide them and all these things that happened to Jesus when he was on the cross. According to the historical record.

So there are some passages that seem to be straight ahead, very clearly messianic prophecies that can be offered as prophecies fulfilled the life of Jesus, even even the place of Jesus birth. When Herod asked, what does the prophecy say? Where was he? They go to the Bethlehem passage to verify that fact. So I think there are enough prophecies that seem to be pretty straightforward.

Daniel 9 has more the 70 weeks prophecy that I think are pretty reliable in common understanding when you explain them to point to Jesus as the Messiah without having to go to these other ones. And these other references that seem ambiguous and you don't see how they tie in. I think that would be the way to go.

So that's the way I deal with messianic prophecy. Do you have any thoughts on it? Because he actually doesn't specify messianic. Do you have any thoughts on any other prophecies that? Well, characteristically prophecies are precise in order that it can be known that they're fulfilled.

And this is true about most of the prophecies that I'm aware of in the Old Testament, the ones that seem to be fallen this other category are ones that are referenced in the New Testament as having been fulfilled in Christ. And then you look back in the Old Testament and you read it in his context and you say, well, I'm reading this and I'm not getting that this is supposed to be applied to Christ. So I just read book of Acts chapter two.

And they cite the passage where let his house be desolate and another man take his

place. Okay, so they see that as a reference to the circumstances they're facing. Judas defected so they got to find theethias I think or or whatever his name is, you know, he's easily forgettable because he's the second string, right? So he takes his place but you look at that you say, where did they get that? I don't know.

Okay. But under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they made this utterance. They draw this conclusion.

So You know, Greg, you mentioned reading Isaiah 53 to a Jewish person. And I immediately thought of Shane Rosenthal who used to work for the white horse in and now he has to his own podcast called the humble skeptic. And he read Isaiah 53 before he was a believer and it impacted him.

Oh, no kidding. And he actually recommended just recently in the last few days, a book called the moody handbook of messianic prophecy studies and expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament. Excellent.

Excellent. So if somebody's that's it looked, I took a look at it earlier and it looked a little bit academic. So if you're up for that, try that book.

Yeah, but that's what's necessary with this kind of question. Yes. It's precisely what's necessary.

Yeah. And also, Greg, I did look up the other book, the 40 questions book. And I was wrong.

It was Thomas Schreiner is the author. So 40 questions about Christians and the biblical law. Yeah, there you go.

That's it. That's it. I see the cover here.

And now the one on biblical interpretation. Hmm. I still, I feel this is the problem with bad titles, you know, but it's whatever.

Well, if we think of it, maybe in the next episode, we'll let you all know what Greg was thinking about. You've probably mentioned it before on the show, other show also. I have and it's the, I can see it's sitting right in my bookshelf, but I can't see the whole title.

And who is that I'm thinking from Denver seminary? One of the, he also wrote a book about the book. The gospel of John historical reliability of the gospel of John. Anyway, he's one of the three authors that I'm expecting.

I'll get a text tonight at some point. Yeah. Three of the morning.

I'll wake up, but there will be. Well, thank you all so much for listening and thanks for sending in your questions. Make sure if you have a question, you send it to us on Twitter

with the hashtag S T R ask or you can send it through our website at str.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocle for stand to reason.