

Whatever Happened To God's Law? A Defense Of God's Legal Claim Upon His People

By Brent Bradley

Moral Law, by Ernest Kevan, (Escondido, California: The den Dulk Foundation. Distributed by Puritan Reformed Publishing, Phillipsburg, New Jersey) 76 pages, appendices.

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This brief yet helpful treatise on the perpetual authority of the moral Law in the life of the believer would have come in handy about 15 years ago when, as a relatively inexperienced pastor, I set out as a young David to do battle with the Goliath of antinomianism. My formal and personal theological studies had produced in me a conviction that God's moral Law is of perpetual and binding authority, but my ability to defend that position from Scripture was limited. Ernest Kevan provides the Biblical arguments by examining the moral Law in its manifold relationships to the believer. The brevity of the book encourages reading by busy pastors as well as layman. Its language and organization make it understandable, and its content is persuasive.

While the doctrine of God's Law can be studied from many perspectives, Kevan's purpose in writing the book is limited; "to present a discussion of the Law of God in the life of the believer." Of particular concern is the decline in holiness that has characterized the Church as she has abandoned or undermined the authority of the Ten Commandments for those in Christ. Always insisting that moral Law was never designed to be a ground for justification, Kevan persistently argues that the Law is essential for the believer to live for God's glory. He says, "...the bestowal of power for a holy life needs to be accompanied by instruction in the pattern of it." He insists on the grace of Christ as the only ground of salvation, but presents His moral Law as the standard which defines the holy life into which believers are introduced by their salvation. "There would be fewer moral tragedies among professing Christians if the salutary instruction of the Law of God were more conscientiously heeded. Let the believer look alone to Christ for the enabling power of a victorious life—as indeed he must—but let him at the same time remember that holy

living consists not in emotional delight, but in keeping the commandments of God.”

Kevan is careful to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding by defining his terms, and dealing with erroneous presuppositions about God's Law that often cloud the debate over the place of God's Law in the life of the believer. He carefully states the objections and criticisms of his opponents and answers them forthrightly and convincingly. For instance, in response to the notion that the Law must be rejected because man is unable to keep it, Kevan responds, “...it is often forgotten that, similarly, man has no power to obey the Gospel. The command to believe is as impossible as the command to obey, and so the Gospel seems to speak just such impossible things as does the Law.” In a similar vein, he points out the inconsistency of those who compare the Law apart from the power of the Spirit with the Gospel accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. To be sure, the Law apart from the effectual working of God's Holy Spirit is a “dead letter”. However, if both the Law and the Gospel are compared from identical perspectives, both will be found to be powerful when accompanied by the work of God's Spirit, and "dead letters" when considered apart from it.

That Kevan felt compelled to write this book is a sad, but telling, commentary on the condition of much of the evangelical Church. Moral Law does not deal with any of the more controversial elements concerning the Law of God, such as the place of the Old Testament case laws in the New Testament economy and if, or how, they are to be applied. It deals only with the abiding validity of the Ten Commandments which gives substance to the two duties of believers to love God supremely and to love their neighbors as themselves. Kevan wrote because he, like many faithful men today, faced widespread opposition to the simple truth that citizens of God's Kingdom, who have been purchased by the blood of Christ, are under obligation to be governed by His Law. Indeed, believers have been saved by grace through faith “for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). No doubt the author's burden to write stemmed from seeing first hand the tragic fruit that antinomianism had brought forth in broken lives of the people to whom he ministered. Surely the need to write such a book speaks volumes about the condition of the Church and the decay in her ranks. Let the undershepherds of God's flock faithfully proclaim God's Holy Law that we might see sinners humbled and brought to the feet of the Savior. Let them then instruct the flock in the way of life as set forth in the perfect Law of liberty.