

How to Know We Know God

“And hereby we do know that **we know him, if we keep his commandments**” (1Jo 2:3). “And he that **keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him**, and he in him” (1Jo 3:24). John didn’t say that we know God when we’re believers but when we’re keeping His commandments. That we must keep His commandments to know Him, then when we keep His commandments we know that we know Him.

There are two main distinctions to recognize with the law of Moses: (1) the moral *righteousness* of the law; (2) the non-moral *actions* of the law. The moral *righteousness* of the law is expressed in the second half of the Decalogue, “Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet” (Exo 20:13-17). Such morality is true of all people made after the image of God. But the non-moral *actions* of the law, “the deeds [*actions*] of the law” (Rom 3:20,28), “the works [*actions*] of the law” (Gal 2:6,3:2,5,10), are the ordinances God imposed upon His people by circumcision, mainly abstinence from unclean meats, keeping the Sabbath day, observing the annual feasts, and animal sacrifices.

Jesus Christ upheld the moral righteousness of the law: “Think not that I am come to destroy **the law, or the prophets**: I am not come to destroy, but **to fulfil**” (Mat 5:17); “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: **for this is the law and the prophets**” (Mat 7:12); “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments **hang all the law and the prophets.**” (Mat 22:37-40). Paul and James agreed: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law**” (13:9-10); “**For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even** in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal 5:14); “If ye **fulfil the royal law** according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (Jas 2:8).

However, Christ set us free from the actions of the law: “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man” (Mat 15:11); “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him” (Mar 7:15); “all things are clean unto you” (Luk 11:41); “the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at

Jerusalem, worship the Father” (Jhn 4:21); “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself” (Rom 14:14); “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal 5:1).

That Peter “did eat with the Gentiles” (Gal 2:12), was when the Lord sent him to Cornelius’ house, “Rise, Peter; **kill, and eat**. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never **eaten any thing that is common or unclean**” (Act 10:13-14). These were the actions of the law Paul was addressing with the Galatians, “no one is justified by **the works [*actions*] of the law** but by **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ**. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by **the faithfulness of Christ** and not by **the works [*actions*] of the law**, because by **the works [*actions*] of the law** no one will be justified” (Gal 2:16 NET).

False teachers were compelling the Galatians to be circumcised, “they constrain you to be circumcised” (Gal 6:12). But this was a different message than what Christ and His apostles preached, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8). Circumcision requires doing all the law, “For I testify again to **every man that is circumcised**, that he is a debtor to **do the whole law**” (Gal 5:2-3), not just the moral righteousness but also the non-moral actions. Paul’s message was that keeping one commandment fulfills all that’s required, “**For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even** in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal 5:13-14).

The false message of salvation by faith being preached today is given credibility by conflating the moral righteousness of the law with its non-moral actions. Therefore, when Paul stated, “a man is justified by faith [*faithfulness*] without the deeds [*actions*] of the law” (Rom 3:28), “a man is not justified by the works [*actions*] of the law, but by the faith [*faithfulness*] of Jesus Christ” (Gal 2:16), rather than justification by Jesus Christ’s faithfulness and not the non-moral actions of the law, it’s supposedly justification by our believing and not by morally righteous living. It’s a different “gospel” message than what Jesus Christ and His apostles preached.

Christ bound the moral righteousness of the law upon us while also freeing us from its non-moral actions. We know God by keeping His commandments, therefore we know that we know Him when we’re keeping His commandments, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1Jo 2:3).