

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God...

- I You shall have no other gods before Me
- II You shall not make for yourself a carved image
- III You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
- IV Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy
- V Honor your father and your mother
- VI You shall not murder
- VII You shall not commit adultery
- VIII You shall not steal
- IX You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
- X You shall not covet

-taken from Exodus 20:1-17

THE LAWLESS

God has set for us a standard to use as a gauge for our lives. This holy standard for conduct is found in the Bible. God has made His standard clear to us; this standard is referred to throughout the Bible as the “law”. God has given us the law with a goal in mind. We need to talk about that goal as His ultimate purpose in giving the law.

Remember how God gave Moses the Ten Commandments’ on Mt. Sinai? Those Ten Commandments (or literally “Ten Words”) were given by God as a summary of His law. The stone tablets that Moses brought down from the mountaintop were the moral laws which were to be strictly obeyed. They were absolute, unchangeable. Later, Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments even further in answer to a question asked of Him by a lawyer. Jesus said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”² Jesus more fully explained what it meant to truly obey the law. He declared that anger toward a brother without cause was the same as murder. He declared that lust was the same as committing adultery.³ God desires not just an outward obedience to His law, but an inward, heart obedience. Paul also explained the implications of true obedience to God’s law when he said, “I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said ‘You shall not covet.’”⁴ Coveting- desiring the possessions of others, is a heart matter.

Keeping the law, as the Bible makes clear, is no easy matter. In fact, it is impossible to keep God’s perfect standard. We are told “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”⁵ John helps us understand sin. He writes, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”⁶ The definition of sin is lawlessness. We have all sinned; we have all broken the law of God. We have not been able to keep the perfect standard that God has set and commands us to keep!

It gets worse. We are cursed by the law.⁷ We are condemned by the law. The Bible tells us, in many places, that we are “under the law” as sinners.

It gets even worse. No one can be justified (or made right before God) by his or her own goodness.⁸ We are not good. Paul tells us that we are “dead in trespasses and sins.”⁹ Jesus reminded a rich man, who thought he had kept the law perfectly, that no one is good.¹⁰ We are told by the Bible that “our righteousness is as filthy rags.”¹¹

When we measure ourselves against God’s standard we are condemned! The law condemns us. God will judge us according to His law. He will use it to deliver us into eternal punishment.¹² This is hell.

“Wait a minute,” you say, “I’m not that bad! I’ve never killed anyone; I’ve never robbed a bank; I’m not a drug addict. Surely God wouldn’t punish me. Compared to other people, I’m not that bad!” There are lists given in the Bible of the kinds of people who will be condemned under the law. Those who are wicked and unrighteous definitely include

the murderers, adulterers, drunkards, homosexuals, and thieves. Also we find in these same lists people condemned under the law who are covetous, envious, proud, boasters, and disobedient to parents!¹³ We find those condemned who have selfish ambitions and are jealous!¹⁴ We find those condemned who are gossips and busybodies¹⁵ and those who are liars!¹⁶ If you've violated the law at any point you are condemned by it before God.¹⁷ We are not to compare ourselves to others, but to the law of God!

This means that God has set for us a perfect standard and commanded us to keep it, but no one can! This means that God has set for us a standard that He will use to judge us as unworthy and condemn us to hell. You might respond, "That's not fair!" Reading again in Scripture we learn exactly the opposite. Paul tells us that the law is good.¹⁸ Not only is the law good, but Paul says it is just." You might ask in astonishment, "How can the law be good for me? How does it help me?" Paul tells us that the law has a high purpose. He refers to the law as "our tutor" (our schoolmaster).²⁰ In other words, the purpose of the law of God is to teach us. What does it teach? It

teaches us of our base sinfulness, it teaches us of our unworthiness, it teaches us of our utter hopelessness and ultimate condemnation. The law drives us to our knees; it causes us to beg God for mercy; it causes us to cry out for forgiveness. It causes us to understand that we are not good within ourselves and we need to urgently seek someone or something outside of ourselves.

THE LORD

Now that we know who we are and recognize our need- God has prepared the way for us to be brought out from under the curse of the law. God's plan is clearly revealed in the Bible. The story is told of Jesus' life in the Gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus was born. The very Son of God came to live as a man on Earth. Jesus was born "under the law"²¹ and lived for some thirty-three years. The Bible tells us that He was "without sin."²² Jesus perfectly obeyed the law His entire life. Christ did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He perfectly obeyed the law of God for us.

Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin and declared Himself to be the Son of God. This was a religious court of law. He was accused of blasphemy (an unpardonable violation of the law) and condemned by the religious leaders, to death.²³ Jesus stood trial again before Pontius Pilate, a government official. Jesus was now accused of sedition- one who openly rebelled against the Roman government and sought to lead the people in rebellion. Pilate succumbed to the wishes of the people and turned Jesus over to soldiers who would have him put to death. Nevertheless, Pilate declared that he could find no fault in Him.²⁴

Jesus, who had perfectly obeyed the law, was now prepared to die on the cross by crucifixion- a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Jesus was truly a sacrifice without “spot or blemish” before the law.²⁵

For hundreds of years the Jews had been offering lambs as sacrifices to God every day in the temple. A lamb “without blemish” was offered on the altar every morning and every evening by the priests for the nation.²⁶ This was commanded by God at Mt. Sinai

when the law was given to Moses.²⁷ The complete law given to Moses required the people to also bring lambs for individual sins (see the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers). Also, at the annual Feast of Passover, each household was to prepare and enjoy a special meal. This celebration centered around the killing and preparation of a lamb “without blemish” for the dinner.²⁸ These animal sacrifices are referred to as that part of the law known as the ceremonial law.

When Jesus began his public ministry at thirty years of age, John saw Jesus coming toward him as he was preaching in the wilderness. When John saw Jesus he boldly declared, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”²⁹ It is clear that the lambs being killed and sacrificed daily by the Jews were to foreshadow (or picture for us) the coming of the Lamb of God who would make the ultimate sacrifice of Himself.³⁰ Under the law, the final sacrifice has been made³¹ in that Jesus Christ died on the cross—a perfect sacrifice for our sins. He has taken our place to suffer the punishment we deserve.

Three days later, He rose from the grave.³² His body came back to life³³ after having been killed by “lawless” men.³⁴ Jesus had victory over death and, now the question is asked, “Oh Death, where is your sting?”³⁵ Jesus, after he rose from the grave, was seen by hundreds of people.³⁶ After showing Himself as proof that He had returned from the dead, He ascended into heaven.³⁷ Jesus Christ now sits ruling and reigning from His throne as King over all the creation for all eternity.³⁸ Christ continues to work on our behalf today by making constant intercession (prayer) for His people to the Father.³⁹

THE LOVE

Now God’s plan is fully revealed. He has “made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.”⁴⁰ The revelation of God’s plan- “to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth”⁴¹ is accessible to all who would receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

In summary, we now review His plan of salvation for us. God gave the moral law- His perfect standard to Moses on Mt. Sinai. God commanded the law be kept. No one can obey the law of God because we are sinners. The law curses and condemns us and will be used by God to judge us ... but, the law is good. It reveals to us our sinfulness and drives us to Christ. We recognize our need for forgiveness and for Christ, because He has done for us what we cannot possibly do for ourselves. He perfectly obeyed the law for us. He died on the cross in our place receiving the penalty of our sins under the law. He rose bodily from the dead to conquer death for us. Christ personally sits in heaven reigning as King and praying for His people. And He will come again!⁴²

This is God's plan. It is all of God and none of ourselves! It is a plan that the Father has chosen for us⁴³ and a plan that we could not even know except the Father had chosen to reveal it to us. In His great love and His great mercy He offers us a way to receive forgiveness for our lawlessness. We can take no credit nor boast in ourselves. The plan of salvation is given as a undeserved gift⁴⁴ to a rebellious and sinful

people from a holy God. To accept what Christ has done for us, we are not arrogant and proud. We are cast down by our sinfulness and humbled by His love.

The love of God is spoken of throughout the Bible. It is supreme love- love beyond what we could ever give or experience apart from Christ. The Bible says, “God is love.”⁴⁵ We think we love. We love our Mother or wife or child, but the love of God is deeper than anything ever imagined or experienced.⁴⁶ This love even amazes the angels of heaven, for whom Christ did not die!” It is this love manifested by Christ that stirs the inspired hosts of heaven to sing praises to the Lord day and night without ceasing!⁴⁸ A Roman soldier who was responsible to oversee the crucifixion and stood at the foot of the cross, watched Jesus die. The man could not help but cry out, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”⁴⁹ The world had never seen such love and never knew real love before Christ laid down His life.

THE LIFE

Now that you understand who you are- a hope-

less, helpless sinner, and who Christ is- the Saviour of the world, you should urgently fall to your knees and cry out to Him for mercy. You must put your trust and faith in the finished work of Christ alone. You do not deserve forgiveness, you cannot merit forgiveness, you cannot earn forgiveness; it is a priceless gift. This is God's plan for you and the only way to receive pardon for your sins. Have you experienced the love of God today? If not, there is no time to delay!

Once you have been made spiritually alive in Christ, having received the love and forgiveness of our Saviour, you have become as a new creation.⁵⁰ You are a different person. You are no longer characterized by sin. In fact, it is was not uncommon for people in the Bible to change their names once they became believers to show they were new persons. Saul became Paul, Abram became Abraham, Sarai became Sarah, and Jesus Himself changed Simon's name to Peter. As a Christian you are a new person. Your interests, desires, and motivations change. You have committed yourself to wholly serve Christ.⁵¹ Jesus is your Lord.⁵² You are newly created for good

works for Christ.” God already has a plan for your life, too. He has determined a distinct calling for each of His children. You are not to come up with a plan of your own making, no matter how worthy it may be, and then ask God to bless it. You must prayerfully seek to know the plan God has ordained for you already. He has work for you to do for Him.

Now that you are a new person, you have a new family. You have brothers and sisters in Christ. Your relationships with fellow Christians are sacred, precious, sweet, beautiful relationships which are to be guarded and enjoyed.⁵⁴ These are the most important relations you have on Earth, because they are set apart by God Himself for you! It’s His plan again. We are thus called to a lifestyle of prayer, Bible study, obedience, and service. We are called to assemble ourselves together with other believers. We are called to pray for one another, love one another, and exhort one another.⁵⁵ We are to teach one another and protect one another from falling back into sin.⁵⁶ If we love God we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ. God commands us to love Jesus and our brothers and sisters.⁵⁷ This is the law for believers.

As a caution, we must hasten to add that the freedom, now received in Christ from the curse and penalty of the law, does not give us a license to sin. We, as Christians, are not “under the law” but we are not to be lawless.⁵⁸ We are commanded to obey the law of God which we now understand, as those who have been made spiritually alive, “is to believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another.”⁵⁹ This is a Christian summary of the law. When we love God and love others, then we do not desire to sin. The desire to keep His commandments is proof of true conversion.⁶⁰

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*All quotations cited in the text are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

EXPLANATION

The purpose of this booklet is two-fold. The first is to present the gospel in terms of the biblical use of the law. The gospel is about Jesus Christ and what He

has done for His people through His death (as a “perfect” sacrifice), His burial, and His bodily resurrection. The law points us to Christ by exposing human guilt and the sinfulness in every person.

The second purpose is to develop from Scripture the importance of the Law of God in the life of a Christian. We are not made right before God by obeying a set of rules, but if we profess Christ as Lord and Saviour, we will desire to honor His commandments in obedience. If you love God you will want to obey God.

The story of the rich young ruler is given in Mark 10: 17-22. This wealthy man asked Jesus, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (verse 17) Jesus referred him to the Ten Commandments as a perfect standard of conduct. Not recognizing his sin, the rich rider declared, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.” (verse 20) Jesus then told him plainly. “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” (verse 21) The rich man was not willing to make such a commitment to Christ and “went his way sorrowful for he had great possessions” (verse 22). Jesus was not calling this rich young ruler to perform good works, by aiding the poor, to gain eternal life. He was using the Ten Commandments to show the man his sin. This very wealthy man, who declared he’d kept all the commandments,

had broken the very first one- “You shall have no other gods before Me.” Money was his god, wealth was more important to him than God.

Some like to emphasize, “We are no longer under law, we are now under grace.” In a real sense this is true. As Christians, we are not condemned by the Law so we are not “under law”. The grace of God, through Jesus Christ, shields us from the penalty of our sins when we repent. At the same time the Law is very important in a Christian’s life. In fact, striving and desiring to keep the commandments of God is a proof that salvation has come into one’s life. Jesus said clearly, “If you love Me, keep My Commandments.” (John 14:15-1). John writes: “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (I John 2:34)

We are not saved by keeping the perfect Law of God (which is summarized in the Ten Commandments). It is impossible for us to flawlessly obey them anyway. Further, we are not saved by our good works, it is not as if we can do more good things than bad and be acceptable to God. (see Ephesians 2:8-9) Salvation is received by putting our trust in Jesus Christ alone, who did perfectly obey the Law for us. Once we are saved, through repentance and accepting what Christ Jesus has accomplished, we are called to obedience and holiness and good works, (see Ephesians 2: 10)

Hebrews 8:8-12

8 Because finding fault with them, He says “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

9 “not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

10 “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

11 “None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

12 “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”