

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.

Galatians 3:19

Man, in his natural state, has a love/hate relationship to the law of GOD. On the one hand he is in a state of rebellion against it in his mind by wicked works, despising any and all restrictions which he would perceive to be contrary to the fulfilling of his carnal desires. On the other hand he has an unshakeable notion in his religious flesh that the law of GOD can actually serve him well and cause him to merit the favor of GOD as he imagines himself after a fashion to keep its precepts, at least occasionally and to some degree.

Paul being the epitome of a "religious man", (by his own admission, a Pharisee of the Pharisees) said that he was *"alive without the law once."* (Rom 7:9) As we study the context of this passage it is clear that he has reference to the time when he was without a true understanding of the law. When he says he was *"alive"* without the law, he means that when he was walking in the darkness of his fleshly religion (though he was a Jew) he had no understanding of the pervasive nature of his sin, thinking himself to be righteous because of an outward adherence to the law. In this state he considered himself to be a "keeper" of the law and one who was worthy of the blessings which he thought to be attached to such "law keeping".

He goes on to say *"but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."* (Rom 7:9) He is speaking here of being awakened to the spiritual nature of the law. When he saw the law for what it was, a revealer of his sin nature, it killed all hopes that he had in his religious flesh of ever keeping it and it brought him under its condemnation. *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* (Rom 3:20)

There is no fault in the law, it is both "holy and just", nor has it ever been changed, abrogated, or canceled. It stands in all of its glory even as it did when the LORD declared it to Moses on Mt. Sinai, in a covenant with the nation of Israel. Even then if the Israelites so much as came near that mountain they perished, so too now should any man, as sincere and honestly religious as he might be, think that he can keep this law; that man shall surely perish under its just condemnation for *"the soul that sinneth, it shall die."* (Eze 18:4)

If you took a poll of the majority of those who claim to believe the Bible to be the word of GOD, believers and unbelievers alike, you would find that most would confess that they think men ought to "keep" the "ten commandments". Most would testify that they try to keep them and would believe that they are somewhat successful in the attempt. In doing so they would be found in the same condition that Paul was in before he was given eyes to see the depravity of his own nature and the complete weakness and inability of his flesh to measure up to that Holy law.

We often hear men say that the "ten commandments" are a "road map" of life, or a guideline to live one's life by. This is a total misunderstanding of the holiness of the law, but more importantly a complete lack of knowledge of the sinful nature of men. The best "road map" ever

printed will not do a man any good if he has no car in which to get to his destination and is blind and unable to read it clearly. Such is man's condition. *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."* (Rom 8:3)

So what is the "purpose of the law"? Paul said it was *"added because of transgressions"*. Now as a Jew he is speaking of the Mosaic law. Yet we know that the "law of GOD" is greater and precedent to the law given to Moses. Man has never been without the "law of GOD". The LORD said to Adam, *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* (Gen 2:16-17) Some would say that GOD put man on "probation" to see what he might do and lo and behold he disobeyed GOD. *"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."* (Gal 3:21)

The truth of the matter is that even this commandment was given because of the "transgression" because the LORD spoke prophetically and declaratively when HE said *"in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* There were no ifs involved here. Men are transgressors, but there is no sin where there is no law, therefore the law was "added" to reveal the wickedness of men. This is most especially made manifest in the details of that "law" which was given to Moses and then summarized by the LORD when HE said, *"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."* (Mar 12:29-31)

The purpose of the "law" is to manifest sin. When a man who has spiritual life is told he must love the LORD with all of his heart and mind, he will fall upon his face and cry out for mercy, because he knows the task is too great and his heart far too wicked to even approach unto the throne of GOD let alone to love HIM without mixture of error. When the same man is told he must love his neighbor as himself he will immediately realize the impossibility of such a task, knowing all too well his own consuming love of his own self and way.

The purpose of the "law" is to shut the mouths of all who might think they are innocent. *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."* (Rom 3:19) Those HE has hardened will see it clearly revealed in the day when HE comes to judge the Living and the Dead, for it is by this law that all of the reprobate world will be judged. They will seek to hide from the face of HIM whose Holy and Just law is made manifest in contrast to their evil deeds.

The law serves another purpose unto them HE has loved from before the world's foundation. Paul is pleased to describe to the Galatians the mercy of GOD, as HE is pleased to manifest the work of the SPIRIT in those objects of HIS grace. *"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."* (Gal 3:23-25)

The purpose of the law is to teach HIS children their need of CHRIST. When a man is born again by the SPIRIT and renewed by the washing of regeneration, he can begin to see the absolute wickedness of his own heart and way, in contrast to the absolute holiness of the kingdom of GOD. This eye-opener would indeed drive him to despair and leave him without any hope were it not for the fact that this same revelation is ultimately accompanied by an unfolding of the complete work of CHRIST to satisfy the claims of that broken law, and to fulfill it in its jot and tittle in the behalf of all of those HE came to redeem. Abandoning all hope of keeping the law, he is compelled to flee to HIM for protection. *"we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."* (Heb 6:18-19) mam