

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

KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS

If ye love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15

The vast majority of those who profess to know CHRIST in saving faith, and a goodly number of those who simply consider themselves to be morally upright men and women, would consider that they “keep” the “commandments” of the LORD. These same folks, if asked, would likely define the “commandments” as being the list of laws given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, which are usually called the “Ten Commandments.” They would define the “keeping” of these commandments as outwardly obeying these decrees of the Law. We often see these “commandments” plastered on yard signs and monuments, in the communities of those who take pride in “keeping the commandments.”

This was the definition of the “commandments” which the rich young man held to, who came to the LORD and asked, “*Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*” (Mar 10:17) The LORD then reminded HIM what the “commandments” were and he said, “*Master, all these have I observed from my youth.*” (Mar 10:20) In this interchange we see that the LORD knew what his “definition” of the “commandments” were, and HE answered him according to his own understanding. While the LORD never told him that he had not “observed” these “commandments”, HE did point out that his knowledge of what it is to truly obey the Law was sadly lacking.

Paul confessed “*I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*” (Rom 7:9-12) This is the exact place where the LORD brought this young man. He was “alive” without the law once, (i.e.; having no true knowledge of the spiritual nature and operation of the Law) thinking that he did “*keep the commandments*”. Yet when the LORD enlightened him as to the pervasive nature of the Law, he went away sorrowing as he realized that he had not kept the commandments at all, but was satisfied with an external obedience to those precepts which he had been taught, and followed from his “youth”.

We would certainly never be opposed to teaching young men and women (or old ones for that matter) what the letter of the Law demands, nor of exhorting them as to the Holiness of those precepts. Yet at the same time we would never instruct any that adhering to these “commandments”, in an outward, moralistic manner, would be what the LORD demands of those that “love HIM”. The Pharisees were quite convinced that they were keepers of the Law, and they lived lives which were above reproach in a moral sense. Yet the LORD called them “hypocrites”, children of the devil, and workers of iniquity. (see Mat.15:7;23:13; John 8:44; Mat.7:23)

So, we are brought to understand that to “keep the commandments” is quite a bit more involved than simply being aware of ten precepts, and setting them up as a sort of check list, by which to gauge our obedience to the LORD. The LORD gave the Law to Moses, for the house of Israel, and promised to bless them according to their obedience to that which HE set forth. This conditional promise was not in anywise lacking in sincerity, but it was sadly lacking in power, since it depended upon the ability and desire of men to adhere to its conditions. “*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) “*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) “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” (Heb 10:1) “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; --- For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Heb 10:12-14)

What men could never do, the LORD JESUS CHRIST has done, for HE has kept the Law in its every “jot and tittle”, without any exception or failure thereto. What the Law demanded, HE has fulfilled. What the Law required, HE has supplied. Thus, the promise is sure to everyone for whom HE has come into the world as their “LAW-KEEPER.” The sons of GOD are freed from the Law’s demands and condemnation. *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom 8:1-2)*

The Law of Moses is as much in force today as it ever was. That law cannot be changed in any way, nor can it be disregarded without consequences to those who are under it. *“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. 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 3:19-20)* This is a very bleak outlook for all who are under the Law, because they are under its curse, from which they cannot escape by any activity of their flesh.

The glorious liberty of the sons of GOD is found in their being set free from this curse by the sovereign mercy of HE who is the SAVIOR of sinners. They have not simply been forgiven for their sin, but they have been removed from the jurisdiction of the Law itself. *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Rom 6:14) “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 3:24-25) “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” (Gal 5:18) “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” (Rom 7:4)*

Paul said *“When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” (Rom 6:20)* For those who are born again, a shift in allegiance has taken place. Because of that which CHRIST has done in their behalf, they have been set free from the “bondage of sin” and are now the “servants of righteousness.” *“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Rom 6:18)* Therefore he exhorts them to *“Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” (Rom 6:11-12)* He is not telling them to “make believe” that this is true, but rather to embrace the fact that it is true according to the work of CHRIST in their behalf.

Thus, recognizing the holiness of the Law, the weakness of their flesh, and the power of their REDEEMER, they are to walk accordingly. Rather than obedience to CHRIST being a burden, it has now become their delight even as David confessed, *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.” (Psa 119:11-12)* Their sinful flesh remains unchanged, but their desire to be found as “law keepers” is now stirring within them. This is what the apostle described as being *“free from sin.” “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” (Rom 6:22)*

A man cannot be a “law keeper” apart from an understanding of the absolute holiness of the Law and the absolute fulfilment of that Law by the work of JESUS CHRIST. This understanding is given to none but those who are made new creatures in CHRIST. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2Cor 5:17)*

So, what is it to “keep the commandments”? It is to bind the teachings of CHRIST upon our hearts as one would anything that is precious and of great value to himself. *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (1Cor 10:31) “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” (1John 3:23-24)* mam