

Purpose of the Law

An Excursus on the Law The Believer's Relationship to the Law

Spurgeon wrote that "The **law** is also very useful, because it shows us our defections and stains. It is like the looking-glass which my lady holds up to her face, that she may see if there be any spot on it (cf James 1:23-25+). But she cannot wash her face with the looking-glass. When the mirror has done its utmost, then there are the same stains. It cannot take away a single spot, it can only show where one is. And the **law**, though it reveals our sin, our shortcomings, our transgressions, it cannot remove the sin or the transgression. It is weak for that purpose, because it was never intended to accomplish such an end."

FIRST A SHORT "DETOUR"

Before looking at the **purpose of the law** let's look at one often overlooked (and unwanted) **'side effect'** of the law. So while law clearly is holy (Ro 7:12) and has as its primary purpose to reveal our sin, the law also has the somewhat paradoxical effect of **increasing our sin**. This is an effect in both believers and non-believers alike. Indeed, this is one of the great dangers of a legalistic spirit in a believer. To say "I won't" in reliance on my natural power is to put myself in effect under the law which is exactly where my flesh wants me to be placed! Living under the "Law" never changes us. If we focus only on what we should not do, we will be pulled more powerfully to do it. Now you may be reacting to that statement saying "Show me the Scriptures that support your premise." So let's look at a few passages...

For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were **aroused by the Law**, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. (Romans 7:5+)

And again Paul says...

But **SIN** (Like a harsh dictator. Not what we commit but that which causes us to commit sins! Cf OUR FALLEN FLESH), taking **opportunity** ([aphorme](#) = "a launching point," a "base of operations," or "launching pad" - a vivid picture of what sin does when working with the law) through the commandment (THE LAW), produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. (Romans 7:8-10+)

Ray Pritchard comments - Notice two key phrases. Verse 8 says "sin seizing the opportunity" and at the end of verse 9 "sin sprang to life." Those are military terms. They're terms for waiting in ambush. The Delta Force waits in ambush, finding the moment, springs into life and without warning captures the enemy. Paul says, "When I saw the law and when I realized what it said, suddenly sin, which was already within me, sprang to life and ambushed me. Suddenly the law says 'Don't covet' and that's all I wanted to do! The law said 'Don't' and that's all I wanted to do! The law said don't and I did." Let's see if I can illustrate this. Human beings are so perverse that the easiest way to get us to do something is to tell us not to do it. What do they call that? Negative psychology. Parents use it all the time. Works 80-90% of the time. We all use it! If you don't want your children to do something, order them to do it. If you want them to do something, tell them not to do it. The law works this way. God says Don't, and he says it for our good. Don't, don't, don't, don't. When we hear the word don't, something in us begins to say "Do, do, do." When we hear somebody say "Do, do, do," there's something in us that says, "I won't, I won't, I won't." There is something within us that makes us fight against anybody who tells us to do something or not to do something. That is the bent to sin that is inside us all.

Here's another illustration. We see the sign on the fence that says Wet paint. Do not touch. All normal people do the following. This is what I do, whether normal or not. Wet paint. Do not touch. I look around, place my hand right on the fence. Yes, it's wet. Then I don't know where to wipe my hands. Because it's wet! But you're not sure until you touch it. But it says Do not touch. So you touch! The sign says Keep off the grass. So what do you do? You have a picnic right by the sign. The sign says 55 mph. What a joke! You can't find anybody going 55. To be safe on the road you've got to keep up with the flow of traffic. The

slowest person is going 58 miles per hour! But the sign said ...We all know you shouldn't throw rocks through windows at stores. Why is it that they don't have signs that say "Do not throw rocks through windows?" Because there wouldn't be a single window left in 24 hours if they put up that sign.

Because there's something in us that makes us want to "do" when the sign says "don't":

But this is nothing new. **Augustine** wrote about this tendency to disobey 1500 years ago. "There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it and carry our spoils away. We took off a huge load of pears ... not to feast on ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply in order to become a thief... . The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing." (Quoted in Kent Hughes, Romans, p. 140) Things haven't changed much in 1500 years, have they? You pick the pears not to eat but to throw away. Not because you need pears but because you just want to show that you don't have to follow that dumb rule! That's the power of sin and the power of law to arouse or stimulate sin. The more it says **don't**, the more we want to **do**!

In his letter to the Corinthians Paul alludes to the **power** of the law to stimulate **sin**

"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" The sting of death is sin, and the **power** ([dunamis](#)) of sin is the law. (NLT = "the law gives sin its power.")(1Co 15:55-56+)

Note that **sin** has **power**, [dunamis](#) power, inherent power to cause us to commit sin if we are not being controlled by the Spirit and walking by the Spirit (see Gal 5:16-17+).

Augustine - Nothing could be truer. For a prohibition always increases an illicit desire so long as the love of and joy in holiness is too weak to conquer the inclination to sin (**ED: WHERE DOES THAT FRUIT OF LOVE AND LOVE COME FROM? THE HOLY SPIRIT OF COURSE - HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN BRING FORTH THAT SUPERNATURAL FRUIT WHICH IS LIKE AN EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION**). So without the aid of divine grace it is impossible for man to love and delight in sanctity. CITY OF GOD

I will never forget an illustration of this by Charles Swindoll who described a beautiful "putting green" like lawn in his front yard. And to keep it pristine, he placed a sign so the kids would not ride their bikes over the lawn "**STAY OFF THE LAWN**." You guessed it! Kids began to ride "rampant" over his "putting green" lawn. That's the effect of the Law!!!

In Galveston, Texas, a hotel on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico put this notice in each room **NO FISHING FROM THE BALCONY** Yet every day, hotel guests threw in their lines to the waters below. Then the management decided to TAKE DOWN THE SIGNS – Guess what happened? The fishing out of the windows of the rooms stopped!

Martin Luther on "**The power of sin is the Law.**" "Who has ever heard that said about God's commandment and law, which, after all, was given and instituted as holy and good by God? And still St. Paul can say that sin would be feeble and dead and could effect nothing if it were not for the Law. The Law renders sin alert and strong and prompts it to cut and to pierce. If it depended on us, sin would very likely remain dormant forever. But **God is able to awaken it effectively through the Law**. When the hour comes for sin to sting and to strike, it grows unendurable in a moment. For the Law [dins](#) this into your ears and holds the register of your sins before your nose: "Do you hear? You committed this and you committed that in violation of God's commandments, and you spent your whole life in sin. Your own conscience must attest and affirm that." In that way sin already shows its power. It frightens you so that the whole world becomes too confining for you. It agitates and strikes until you must needs despair. And there is neither escape nor defense here. For the Law is too strong, and your own heart abets it, which itself denounces you and condemns you to hell. Therefore sin requires nothing else than God's law. **Where that enters the heart, sin is already alive and able to kill man if it wants to, unless he lays hold of this victory, which is Christ, our Lord.**

Paul says the "power of sin" is derived from the law. Place yourself under law even in the most subtle of ways) and you have just given sin an opportunity to stimulate you to commit sins! The take message for all of us is to assiduously avoid legalism in any shape, form or fashion, lest we arouse our old master Sin! Beware!

Run, John, Run! The Law commands

But gives me neither feet nor hands.
Far grander news the Gospel brings
It bids me fly and gives me wings!

THOUGHT - Dear brother or sister in Christ, this little [ditty](#) begs the question -- are you "**flying**" or are you "**dying trying**," trying in vain, in your own strength, to defeat a sinful habit, to please God (2Co 5:9+), to merit His smile, to curry His favor, to earn His grace? If so, then quit "**trying**" (yourself) and begin daily "**dying**" (to self - cf Mk 8:34+) and the Spirit will give you "wings" (cf Ro 8:2+) so that you might be (supernaturally) enabled to *soar like an eagle*, for Jesus promised if you abide in His Word you would be His disciple and would "know the truth, and the truth will make you free" and "if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:32, 36) Isaiah echoes the truth that "those who wait (trust in, hope) for the LORD will gain new strength (the literal idea is exchange their strength for His strength). They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary (WHY? BECAUSE THEY ARE RELYING ON SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH FROM THE SPIRIT AND NOT FROM THEIR NATURAL SELF)." (Isaiah 40:31+)

Finally let us ponder Paul's teaching in Romans 6:14+ that "sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under (the enslaving power of) **law** but under (the transforming power of) **grace** ." This eternal truth begs a simple question -- how can **Sin** be master over us in our everyday Christian walk? What might we do that would bring us back under the yolk of bondage to the Law? The answer is clear from Romans 6:14+ that whenever we make choices that in effect place us under the law, we are in effect promoting sin to a position of "master." And beloved, we do this every time we begin to try to live the Christian life by keeping a list of "do's and don'ts" either as a literal list or mental checklist.

THOUGHT - [Philip Bliss](#) (who died at the young age of 38) was meditating one day on Hebrews 10:10+ and after he finished was led to compose his famous hymn [ONCE FOR ALL](#) (see below). Of course the fact that we have been eternally sanctified in Christ and are free in Him does not mean we can now live lawless lives (aka [antinomianism](#)), but that our salvation in Christ is fully sufficient and precludes the need to legalistically keep the Law in a vain attempt to add to the finished work of Christ (cf Jn 19:30+). The Law is now internal, having been written on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10+) and the indwelling Spirit daily provides us with the power to obey the law of love (Gal 5:14) out of love, not legalism (cf Ro 8:13+). The lost man thinks that **freedom** is the **right** to do anything he desires in order to please himself, but **true freedom** in the New Covenant with Christ is the **power** to do what we should, doing so to please our Father in Heaven! Indeed, **oh, happy condition!**

Free from the law—oh, happy condition!

Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.

*Once for all—oh, sinner, receive it;
Once for all—oh, doubter, believe it;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.*

2 There on the cross your burden upbearing,
Thorns on His brow your Savior is wearing;
Never again your sin need appall,
You have been pardoned once for all.

3 Now we are free—there's no condemnation;
Jesus provides a perfect salvation:
"Come unto Me," oh, hear His sweet call,
Come, and He saves us once for all.

4 Children of God—oh, glorious calling,
Surely His grace will keep us from falling;
Passing from death to life at His call,
Blessed salvation once for all.

In Exodus 20+ (see Ex 20:1-2, 3-4, 5, 6, 7-9, 10, 11, 12, 13-16, 17, 18) we find the "Ten Commandments" which embody the essence of God's Law. For simplicity one can divide the OT Law into the following 3 categories (although in fairness it should be noted some commentators recognize only a moral and ceremonial division)...

(1) **Moral**, as for example the 10 commandments in Exodus 20 (all but the Sabbath are also commanded in the NT). We are called to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

(2) **Ceremonial**, which includes the Tabernacle, the sacrificial system, special days, weeks and feasts.

(3) **Civil or judicial** which dealt with laws specific to Israel such as the cities of refuge, stoning for certain offenses, etc.

The **moral law** is still in force for believers but as explained below is now written on our hearts and is to be obeyed in the power of the Spirit and under grace (not "under law").

The **ceremonial law** was fulfilled in Christ, Who was the substance of all the OT shadows (see Col 2:16, 17+, Heb 10:1+). As we see especially in the book of Hebrews, all of the types and shadows pointed to and are fulfilled in Christ. E.g., Jesus Lamb the Father provided for the sacrifice, so there is now no need for a better or fuller sacrifice for sin. In short, the ceremonial law vanishes with the coming of the One it was designed to foreshadow.

The **civil law** specific to Israel is no longer relevant to the NT believer. And yet so many NT believers today remain confused about their relationship to the OT Law and issue addressed in this "excursus".

Why did God speak to Israel from the mountain (the "Ten Commandments") in Exodus 20:20?

And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."

Clearly God gave the Law to His chosen people **that they might not sin**. For Israel, the fear of the Lord and the commands of the Lord truly were vital as a beginning to obedience (cp relationship of holy fear and obedience - Job 1:1, 28:28, Neh 5:5, Ps 34:11, 12, 13, 14-[note](#), Pr 8:13, 14:27, 18:6, Eccl 12:13, 14, Acts 5:11, 9:31, 2Co 7:1-[note](#), 1Pe 1:17-note). Someone has suggested that we might visualize the Ten Commandments in terms of protection: protection of health in man's relationship with God, and the protection of health in man's relationship with other men. Notice that God clearly does not state that He gave the Law that they might be saved but in order to show Israel their sinfulness.

Commenting on Exodus 20:20 **J Vernon McGee** writes...

The Law presented a very high standard. The Law of the Lord is perfect. It demands perfection. If you are trying to be saved by keeping the Law, you will have to be perfect. If you are not perfect, you cannot be saved by the Law. I thank God that under grace He can take a poor sinner like me and save me. Grace reveals something of the goodness and wonder of our God. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

How does **David** describe the **Law**?

The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. (Psalms 19:7-[Spurgeon's note](#))

Thus the Law is without flaw and has perfect integrity, and is capable of restoring, reviving, converting and refreshing. The Law can result in the conversion of the sinner (see below) and can restore the saint when he wanders.

Paul writes explains the **purpose** and **character** of the Law...

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, YOU SHALL NOT COVET (remember ALL CAPS in the NASB identifies a specific quotation from the OT, in this case from)... 12 So then, the Law is **holy**, and the commandment is **holy** and **righteous** and **good**. (Ro 7:7, 17-note on Ro 7:7 , Ro 7:12)

Dwight Pentecost explains the "**holiness**" of the Law noting that...

All angelic creation beholds the holiness of God; but fallen, sinful men, because of their blindness and separation cannot behold the holiness of God without being consumed by it. God therefore revealed His holiness by reflecting it in a mirror. The Law was a mirror to reflect the holiness of God to men, but at the same time to protect them from being consumed by the brightness of God's glory. Mankind could know that God is a holy God through the revelation in the Law. Sin is sin, not simply because it injures society, or an individual in society, or the one committing the sin. Sin is sin because it is unlike the holiness of God.

Ray Stedman has a nice illustration of the **power of the Law** to awaken the sleeping giant called "The Sin" within every man writing...

I was in the Colorado Rockies this past week. A man met me to take me into the mountains for a conference. When I came out to the curb, he was waiting in his new, powerful, shiny Lincoln Continental. I got into the car and expected him to turn on the ignition. But to my amazement, he started driving without turning on the engine -- or at least that's how it seemed to me. I suddenly realized that the engine had been running all the time. It was so quiet that I hadn't heard it. As we moved up into the Rockies, the power of that engine became manifest. We traveled up the steep grades in those great mountains without difficulty because of the power released by the touch on the accelerator. Now, that is something like what Paul is describing here. Sin lies silent within us. We do not even know it is there. We think we have got hold of life in such a way that we can handle it without difficulty. We are self-confident because we have never really been exposed to the situation that puts pressure upon us -- we never have to make a decision against the pressure on the basis of the commandment of the Law "*Thou shalt not...*" But when that happens, we suddenly discover all kinds of desires are awakened within us. We find ourselves filled with attitudes that almost shock us -- unloving, bitter, resentful thoughts, murderous attitudes -- we would like to get hold of somebody and kill him, if we could. Lustful feelings that we never dreamed were there surface and we find that we would love to indulge in them if only we had the opportunity. We find ourselves awakened to these desires. As the great engine surges into life at the touch of the accelerator, so this powerful, idling beast within us called sin springs into life as the Law comes home to us. We discover something that we never knew was there before. ([The Continuing Struggle](#))

Paul explains the purpose of the **Law** in **Galatians 3:19-25**...

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Related Resources:

- [What does it mean that Christians are not under the law? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What should Christians learn from the Mosaic Law? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What was the purpose of the Levitical Law? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the spirit of the law? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the difference between the ceremonial law, the moral law, and the judicial law in the Old Testament? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus fulfilled the law, but did not abolish it? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is natural law? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Law vs. grace-why is there so much conflict among Christians on the issue? | GotQuestions.org](#)

A SIMPLE SUMMARY OF THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

1). **Law reveals** sin for what it is.

"Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the **Seed (Christ)** should come (Gal 3:19+).

"Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Ro 3:20+),

"What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "**YOU SHALL NOT COVET.**" 8 But **Sin**, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law **Sin** is dead. 9 I was once alive apart

from the Law; but when the commandment came, [Sin](#) became alive and I died." (Ro 7:7-9+)

Though the law is not itself sinful ("the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good." Ro 7:12+), the Law does have the effect to **arouse** sin!

"For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, **which were aroused by the Law**, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." (Ro 7:5+)

PRINCIPLE - The **law** by itself arouses within us the desire to disobey. There is something about saying "Don't" that makes us want to "Do." There is something about saying "Do" that makes us want to "Not Do." We all by nature instinctively rebel inwardly against rules and regulations. The sign says, "Wet Paint. Do not touch." What do you do? You touch it.

Calvin - "As in a mirror we discover any stains upon our face, so in the Law...."

Matthew Henry - There is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to repentance, and therefore to peace and pardon, but by trying our hearts and lives by the law.

Spurgeon - There could not have been a better law. Some talk about the law of God being too severe, too strict, too stringent, but it is not. If the design had been that men should live by the law, there could not have been a better law for that purpose; and hence it is proved that, by the principle of law nobody ever can be justified because, even with the best of laws, all men are sinful, and so need that justification which comes only by grace through faith.

[Plumb lines \(plumb bobs\)](#) are not meant to straighten the building but to tell one how crooked it is and where change is needed. The Law was given as a plumb line to show us our need for a "divine reconstruction."

2). Law shuts up (shut in on all sides, describes fish caught in a net or trap which is a common way of fishing) all men under sin... (until they enter) "by faith (into) **Christ** Jesus"

"But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." (Gal 3:22+)

Spurgeon - All of us, by nature are shut up like criminals in a prison that is so securely bolted and barred that there is no hope of escape for any who are immured within it. But why are all the doors shut and fastened? Why in order that Christ may come and open the one only eternal door of salvation: "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believes."

3). Law keep men in custody under the Law. [Keep](#) is a military term for soldier on guard, the Law keeps unbelievers under protective custody - they cannot escape.

"But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed." (Gal 3:23+) "until we could put our faith in the coming **Savior**" (NLT)

Spurgeon - Well do I remember when I was "shut up" in this fashion. I struggled and strove with might and main to get out, but I found no way of escape. I was "shut up" until faith came, and opened the door and brought me out into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

4). Law serves as a tutor ("guardian," "custodian," "disciplinarian.") to lead us to Christ. The [pedagogue](#) had the responsibility of taking a child to the schoolmaster in the morning and leaving him there) -

"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith." (Gal 3:24+) "until **Christ** came" (NLT)

Spurgeon - The [pedagogue](#) was a slave who led the children to school, and sometimes whipped them to school. That is what the law did with us; it took us under its management, and whipped us, and drove us to Christ.

Related Resource:

- Summary of **Purpose of the Law** (some duplication)

Martin Luther explains how the law can drive one to the depths of despair so that all that they can do is cast themselves upon God's grace...

The Law must be laid upon those that are to be justified, that they may be shut up in the prison thereof, until the righteousness of faith comes - that, when they are cast down and humbled by the Law, they should fly to Christ. The Law humbles them, not to their destruction, but to their salvation. For God woundeth that He may heal again. He killeth that he may quicken again.

Earlier in Galatians Paul had explained the relationship of the Law and justification (being declared righteous) writing...

nevertheless knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the Law** but **through faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and **not by the works of the Law**; since **by the works of the Law** shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

Note the repetition of the phrase "**works of the Law**". Clearly the Law was never given to man that he might achieve justification before God by keeping the Law. James makes this impossibility clear recording that...

whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10)

And the penalty for stumbling, even if only on just one point of the Law, is stated by Paul who writes that...

as many as are of the works of the Law are **under a curse**; for it is written, "**CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.**" (Galatians 3:10+)

Paul went on to record the **solution for the curse** all men were under writing that...

Christ redeemed (paid the ransom price to set us free from the power of Sin and the debt we owed for our sins committed, past present and future) us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE (quote from Deut 21:22-23)" (Galatians 3:13+)

In **Galatians 2:16+** Paul had explained that we are justified or declared righteous by faith in Christ Jesus and not by keeping the Law. The problem that existed at the time Jesus presented His **Sermon on the Mount** was that the religious leaders, especially the Pharisees had devised a legal system that consisted of manmade additions and perversions of God's original "holy and righteous and good" Law. The legal system of the Pharisees was designed to circumvent the requirements of the holiness of God and the demands of His Law as He intended it to be kept - from the heart and not based on external observances. And so the Pharisees had categorized the Old Covenant into 365 negative commandments and 248 positive commandments. They taught that if men kept all 613 laws, they would be righteous and thus acceptable in the sight of God.

So if no one could keep the Law and be made righteous, how would a sinner become righteous before a holy God? Paul alluded to this in Galatians 2:16, but further explained it in **Romans 8** writing that...

what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the **flesh** (our fallen sin nature inherited from Adam), God did: sending His own Son in the likeness (this is a critical distinction - He was like us but He Himself never committed sin) of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned (a past tense completed action - when Jesus hung on the Cross as the Offering for sin, God condemned Sin once and for all at that moment in time - at that moment God deposed Sin of its dominion or right to rule over those who would place their faith in Jesus) sin in the flesh, **in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us** who do not walk (habitually, as a lifestyle = present tense) according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (notes Romans 8:3, 8:4)

There it is - **sinners "fulfill" the requirement of the Law** by placing their faith in the One who fulfilled all "the Law and the Prophets" (Mt 5:17). Who are these people? Paul explains here in Ro 8:4-note that they are those who habitually conduct their lives according to the Holy Spirit and not those who walk continually according to the **flesh**. Obviously saved sinners still sin, but Paul's point is that this is not their lifestyle (cf Paul's explanation of why licentiousness can no longer be a genuine believer's lifestyle - Ro 6:1,2, 3, 4-see notes on Ro 6:1-3, 6:4)

The Pharisees should have been aware that God had prophesied about this glorious provision in the Old Testament. Their problem was the same as it is today in every unbeliever --the heart of the problem is the problem with our heart as recorded by Jeremiah...

"The **heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick**; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9 of Genesis 8:21 where Moses records that "**the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth**")!

Jehovah through Jeremiah prophesied of the **New Covenant** declaring...

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant (Old Covenant of Law) which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "**I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34) (See study of New Covenant in the OT)

In **Ezekiel** God explained the "**heart transplant**" further, declaring...

Moreover, I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; and I will **remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh**. And I will put **My Spirit within you** and **cause** you to walk in My statutes (God's Part), and **you will be careful** to observe My ordinances (Man's Responsibility). (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Paul writes a perfect parallel to Ezekiel 36:27 in his letter to the **Philippian** saints...

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out** (command to make this your lifestyle = present imperative) your salvation with fear and trembling (Man's Responsibility); for it is God who is at work (Greek = *energeo* ~ "energizing" continually = present tense) in you, both to will and to work (*energeopresent* tense) for His good pleasure (God's Part). (Php 2:12, 13-See notes Php 2:12; 13)

In summary not only did God promise sinners who placed their faith in Christ **anew heart** but He also promised them **His Spirit** Who would ensure that the saved sinner, now a saint, would be able to walk according to His statutes. His Spirit now **indwells** us and is not only our power to keep the Law but also our **seal** and **pledge** of future inheritance

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1Cor 6:19-note, 1Co 6:20-note)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were **sealed** (official mark of identification that placed on an important document usually made from hot wax and impressed with a signet ring which officially identified the document with and under the authority of the person to whom the signet belonged. God owns the signet which sealed believers!) in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a **pledge** ("earnest" = a down-payment guaranteeing full payment ~ God's Spirit is the down-payment giving us a foretaste and guarantee of the coming glory of heaven. In Greek today this word is used for an engagement ring!) of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ep 1:13, 14-notes)

Jesus inaugurated the **New Covenant** on the night He was betrayed...

And while they were eating (the Passover Meal which here becomes synonymous with the New Covenant meal), Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." (Mt 26:26, 27, 28)

And although the promise of a New Covenant was originally given to the Jews (cf Jeremiah 31:31), the covenant was extended to the **Gentiles**, who with the Jews were reconciled into one body (the church) through the Cross so that both Jews and Gentiles now have their access in one Spirit to the Father through the Great High Priest, Christ Jesus. (see Ep 2:11-22-note, especially Eph 2:14, 15-see notes Ep 2:14; 15). Writing to the predominantly **Gentile church** in Corinth **Paul** instructed them

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you **proclaim the Lord's death until He comes**. (1Co 11:23, 24, 25, 26)

Comment: The Lord's Supper pictures each partaker as if they were "preachers" exhorting themselves to look back on Christ's life, death, burial and resurrection, and to look forward to His second coming and to live in the light of the firm foundation and certain hope, respectively.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF BELIEVERS TO THE LAW

Let's review. Where does this leave believers today in regard to the Law? Jesus fulfilled the Law and inaugurated the New Covenant in His blood. In this New Covenant, the Law has not been abolished for us as believers but is written on our hearts, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit -- *"I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it"* (Jer 31:33, cp 2Co 3:5,6). Now when we as believers **walk by the Spirit** and not under the Law (Ro 7:6-note, Ro 8:4-note, Gal 5:16, 17, 18, 25-notes on Ga 5:16, 17, 18, 25), we will fulfill the desire of the Spirit and not the desire of the **flesh**. Enabled by the indwelling Spirit and amazing grace (cp 1Co 15:10, 2Co 12:9-note, 2Co 12:10-note), we now can carry out what the Law requires (Jas 1:25), motivated by reverential fear (cp 2Co 7:1-note, 1Pe 1:17-note), love for our heavenly Father and a desire to be pleasing to Him, not out of legalism or a cringing fear of condemnation. God's Law is no longer an external rule that we find burdensome (cf Mt 23:4, 23; Gal 5:18-note). Because God has given us a **new heart** committed to Him, we desire to please Him by obeying Him (2Cor 5:9). Whereas when we were still in Adam, before we were regenerated by grace through faith and placed into Christ, we struggled and fought against God's Holy Law, now we find that we have a heart to obey it and a desire to be holy as He is holy (1Pe 1:15, 16-notes; 16, Php 2:12, 13-see notes Php 2:12; 13 where God even gives us the *"want to"*, the desire to obey - note our part in those verses) and to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:48-note), having obtained in Christ a righteousness that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees. No, beloved, our obedience is not yet perfect, but the general tenor of our life is ever Godward toward our true home in the Kingdom of Heaven, for our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Php 2:12, 13-see notes Php 2:12; 13, cf Re 11:15-note).

Although we have alluded to this above, let us ask again what was the problem of the Scribes and Pharisees? They knew that the Law was good and spiritual and sought to keep it. Their problem was the same problem that all men had -- their hearts were "uncircumcised" (spiritually speaking). Ro 2:29 (see note) explains that a real Jew (one in the Kingdom of Heaven) is one who has experienced "circumcision... of the heart (the same thing Ezekiel called a "new heart" in Ezek 36:26), by the Spirit, not by the letter (Law)". The religious leaders of Jesus' day were futilely attempting to deal with their sinful hearts inherited from Adam (cf Ro 5:12-note) by living according to the letter of the Law. They were blind to the prophet Ezekiel's teaching that promised them a new heart. As explained above, the Law could not change the Scribes and Pharisees on the inside where they needed change. The problem was their flesh which refused to cooperate with God's holy Law. What was the solution? They desperately needed to see the **poverty of their flesh** (Mt 5:3-note) that they might enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Note that although keeping the law won't get one into heaven, those who are in the kingdom of heaven by grace are not free to live lawlessly. That is the fear of the legalist who says that if you take away the law as a means of earning merit, then there is no reason to keep it. They say believers will live as they please for the Law is no longer able to check their behavior (anti-nomian = against the law). Someone has composed a rhyme which echoes this fear...

**Free from the law, O blessed condition!
I can sin as I please, And still have remission.**

Clearly from Jesus' teaching in the Beatitudes this is **NOT** what He is saying. Christians are to be those not who live morally loose but who are continually poor in spirit depending on His Spirit, who mourn over their sins against a holy God, who continually hunger and thirst for righteousness and who are single mindedly living for God. Genuine citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven therefore can hardly be characterized as those who continue to live lawlessly or licentiously!

Paul anticipated a similar argument from the Romans and so rhetorically asked...

Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. (NASB) (The first edition of the NLT is somewhat easier to understand *"Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law."*) (Ro 3:31-note)

Sinclair Ferguson summarizes the relationship the **Christian** to the **Law** writing that...

It is a great mistake, then, to think that Jesus abolished the commandments and taught us that 'all we need is love.' For love means fulfilling the law (Ro 13:10-note). In fact, in the New Testament it is John, the 'apostle of love,' who underlines the important place of the law for the believer. To show that love and law harmonise in the Christian life, he frequently echoes Jesus' words,

'If you love Me you will obey what I command (Jn 14:15) and, *'If you obey My commands you will abide in My love'* (Jo 15:10.). *We know that we have come to know God if we*

obey His commands (1Jn 2:3). Those who keep His commands live in Him, and He lives in them (John 15:4). Love for God means keeping His commands (1Jn 5:3).

In this respect, the Christian life is like one of the mighty steam engines of the railways of the past, the kind on which Casey Jones used to go 'a steamin' and a rollin!' They needed fuel for the fire for power. But they also needed tracks, to direct their energy.

Love for Christ, in the power of the Spirit, is the energy of the Christian life. But that love needs tracks on which to run if it is ever to get to its intended destination. God's law provides us with those tracks.

That is why many places in the New Testament allude to the teaching of Exodus 20 (the giving of the Ten Commandments through Moses). These commandments are the sacred way in which we are to walk. Rather than restrict us, these tracks give us freedom to move in a Godward direction. ([Ferguson, Sinclair: Sermon on the Mount :Banner of Truth](#)) (Bolding added)

In Christ, God's love was expressed and His law was satisfied.

Though freed from the law with its stern demands--
No longer ruled by its harsh commands--
I'm bound by Christ's love and am truly free
To live and to act responsibly.
--DJD

John MacArthur (in his highly recommended commentary on [Matthew](#)) gives an **excellent summary of the believer's relationship to the Law...**

There is indeed a paradox in regard to the law, and it is especially evident in Paul's letters. **On the one hand we are told of the law's being fulfilled and done away with, and on the other that we are still obliged to obey it.** Speaking of the Jews and Gentiles, Paul says that Christ "is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace" (Ep 2:14, 15-see notes Ep 2:14; 15.) When the church came into existence the "dividing wall" of **civil, judicial law** crumbled and disappeared. (**Ed note:** some examples of "civil law" - cities of refuge, Nu 35:6, restitution Nu 5:6, 7, Nu 35:15, etc)

In God's eyes Israel was temporarily set aside as a nation at the Cross, when she crucified her King and rejected His kingdom. In the world's eyes Israel ceased to exist as a nation in A.D. 70, when all of Jerusalem, including the Temple, was razed to the ground by the Romans under Titus. (Her restoration nationally is but a preparation for her restoration spiritually, as Romans 9-11 teaches)

The **ceremonial law** also came to an end. While Jesus was still hanging on the cross, "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38). The Temple worship and the sacrifices were no longer valid, even symbolically. That part of the law was finished, accomplished, and done away with by Christ.

There is even a sense in which God's **moral law** is no longer binding on believers. Paul speaks of our **not being under law but under grace** (Ro 6:14-note). But just before that he had said, "**do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts**" (Ro 6:12-note), and immediately after verse 14 he says, "What then? **Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!**" (Ro 6:15-note). Those in Christ are no longer under the ultimate penalty of the law, but are far from free of its requirement of righteousness.

To the Romans Paul said, "**For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes**" (Ro 10:4-note), and to the Galatians he wrote, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are **not under the Law**" (Gal 5:18-note). But he had just made it clear that Christians are not in the least free from God's moral standards. "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Gal 5:17-note). The law that was once "our tutor to lead us to Christ" (Gal 3:24+) now leads us as "sons of God through Christ Jesus" to be clothed with Christ (Gal 3:26, 27+), and His clothing is the clothing of **practical righteousness. If Christ's own righteousness never diminished or disobeyed God's moral law, how can His disciples be free to do so?**

Paul harmonized the idea when he spoke of himself as being "without the law of God but under the law of Christ" (1Cor 9:21). **In Christ we are anything but lawless** Christ's law is totally different from the Jewish

judicial and ceremonial law and different from the **Old Testament moral law**, with its penalties and curses for disobedience (Ed note: we are not to stone adulterers, disobedient children, etc). But it is not different in the slightest from the holy, righteous standards that the Old Testament law taught.

The Old Testament law is still a moral guide, as in revealing sin (Ro 7:7-note). Even when it provokes sin (Ro 7:8-note), it helps us see the wickedness of our own flesh and our helplessness apart from Christ. And even when we see the condemnation of the law (Ro 7:9, 10, 11-see **notes** Ro 7:9; 10 ; 11), it should remind us that our Savior took that condemnation upon Himself on the Cross (Ro 5:18-note, Ro 8:1-note; 1Pe 2:24-note; etc). Whenever a Christian looks at God's moral law with humility, meekness, and a sincere desire for righteousness, the law will invariably point him to Christmas it was always intended to do. And for believers to live by it is for them to become like Christ. It could not possibly be otherwise, because it is God's law, and it reflects God's character. "So then," Paul is careful to remind us, "**the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good**" (Ro 7:12-note).

Paul concludes Romans 7 by thanking "God through Jesus Christ our Lord" that even though his flesh served "the law of sin," his mind served "the law of God" (Ro 7:25-note). The penalty of the law has been paid for us by Jesus Christ, but also in Him the righteousness of the law is "fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Ro 8:4-note; cf. Gal 5:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24-note). ([MacArthur, J.: Matthew 1-7 Macarthur New Testament Commentary Chicago: Moody Press](#)) (Notes, bolding and color added)

Arnold Fruchtenbaum - The Purpose of the Law of God- Five things should be noted in dealing with the purpose of the law of God.

1. **First**, the law of God was not a means of salvation. God never gave commandments as a way of earning salvation. The purpose of the law of God, regardless of which law or which dispensation, was never to be a means of salvation (Rom. 3:20; 8:3; Gal. 3:21).
2. **Secondly**, the purpose of the law of God was to intensify man's knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:19–20; 5:13, 20; 7:7, 13; 1 Cor. 15:56; Gal. 3:19).
3. **Thirdly**, the purpose of the law of God was to reveal the holiness of God (Rom. 7:12).
4. **Fourthly**, while the purpose of the law of God was not a means of salvation, it was to lead man to the means of salvation, which is saving faith (Gal. 3:24).
5. **The fifth purpose of the law of God** is to provide the rule of life for the believer. Once a person is saved, some of the questions he might ask are: "How then shall I live?" "What does God expect of the believer?" In other words, "What kind of lifestyle does God want him to conduct?" For the believer in the Old Testament, the rule of life was the Law of Moses. For the believer now, the rule of life is the Law of the Messiah. But regardless of which law it was, the law of the Adamic Covenant, the law of the Abrahamic Covenant, the law of the Mosaic Covenant, the Law of the Messiah in the New Covenant, or the future law of the Millennial System, the law of God was never given to attain salvation. Rather, it was to provide a rule of life for the believer (**ED: AND WHEN JESUS ASCENDED HE SENT US THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES US THE DESIRE AND THE POWER TO OBEY THE LAW OUT OF LOVE** - see Php 2:13NLT+).. (Messianic Bible Study Collection)

Rod Mattoon - THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW—Ro 3:20

No one is justified by the deeds of the law. The purpose of the Law of God's Word is to give us the knowledge of sin; the knowledge of right and wrong, good or bad. The Law of God's Word magnified the sin of men by pointing out that man's sin was wrong and evil. Romans 5:20—Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: People who depend upon religious deeds to get them to Heaven need to understand they will fail because they are filthy before God.

Isaiah 64:6—But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Exodus 20:1-17 Law Reveals Need of Grace by Theodore Epp

The Mosaic Law was not given to produce salvation. The purpose of the Law was to help people see how far short they had fallen of God's righteous demands so they would cast themselves on the grace of God.

Even during the time of the Law, grace was made available through the specified sacrifices for sin. These pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the sacrifice for sin.

But because Jesus Christ came and offered Himself as the sacrifice for sin, the Law is no longer needed.

According to Romans 5:20, the Law was given so that God could reveal more of His grace: "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

When the people gathered at Mount Sinai and heard God speak, they became frightened and "stood afar off" (Ex. 20:18). This is also the result of today's preaching of the Law apart from the context of the grace of God.

Law set forth what man ought to be; grace sets forth what God is. We behold the face of Christ in the Holy Scriptures, and we see who God is by beholding Christ, "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

We know and understand what Christ has done for us as we study the Scriptures and see Him revealed in even the Mosaic Law.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24)

Brian Harbour - What then is the proper use of the law? Or to express it another way, what is the purpose of the law? Paul answered in verses 9-10.

1 Timothy 1:9-10 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

On the surface, this does not seem to answer the question about the purpose of the law, but when we dig a little deeper it does. What is the purpose of the law? Paul addressed that question at length in his Roman epistle. For example, in Romans 7 Paul wrote: "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law." The purpose of the law is to reveal to us what sin is. It is like a mirror into which we look to see what God expects of us and how far short we have fallen. So when we use the law to acknowledge our sinfulness and our need for the righteousness of God, we have used the law properly. That is the purpose of the law.

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A man walked into the psychiatrist's office, sat down on the couch, and started stuffing tobacco into his ear. The doctor shook his head and said, "I believe you've come to the right place. Can I help you?" The man responded, "Yes, do you have a light?" That man had a problem. He just didn't know where the solution was to be found.

Similarly, the people to whom Paul wrote in his Galatian letter had a problem but they didn't know where the solution was to be found. They thought the solution was to be found in the law. On the contrary, Paul informed them, the law was part of the problem. The solution was to be found in Christ. Only through faith in him could their sin problem be solved and their broken relationship with God healed. The solution to their problem was not their righteousness but the righteousness God credited to them by faith.

This was no new method, however, but is in fact the way God has always operated. To prove his point, Paul referred to the experience of Abraham. He quoted from Genesis 15:6 where God made certain promises to Abraham, and Abraham believed what God said. At that point, the biblical writer concluded: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (3:6). Paul continues this line of thought in verse 15.

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Galatians 3:24-25 In the final verses of our text, Paul presents another image of the law. He describes the law as a "tutor." The Greek word here is "child-leader" that describes something we do not have today. A "child-leader" was a slave who had disciplinary control over a child. He cared for the child on behalf of the parents. Most of the pictures of "child-leaders" from the ancient world show them with a big stick with which they would enforce discipline. The "child-leader" would take care of the child until he was old enough to be taken to a teacher. The "child-leader" was not the teacher. He prepared the child for the teacher. The teacher would then instruct the child about life.

1. The law, Paul said, serves the same purpose as a "child-leader." It disciplines us and restricts our actions until such time we are able to go to the teacher. The law, in this sense is like a fence. It outlines the basic rules for life and warns us of the consequences if we break through the fence.
2. The law is like a magnifying glass that makes the wickedness of our lives stand out.
3. The law is like a policeman who locks us up.
4. And the law is like a fence that defines the context in which life is to be lived.

The law is important for those reasons. The law was given, for those purposes. But

- the law does not erase the wickedness of our lives; and
- the law does not set us free, and
- the law does not motivate us to stay inside the fence.

The law simply prepares us for a fuller manifestation of what God began with Abraham—the plan by which a person can become righteous before God because of our faith. This righteousness is not based on our goodness; it is based on God's grace. (Harbour Verse by Verse)

Galatians 3:19 Don Fortner

'Wherefore then serveth the law?' - Gal 3:19

The law of God is holy and just and good. But it becomes a very great evil when it is perverted and used for something other than its divine purpose.

Now Paul tells us what the design and purpose of God's law is. It was never intended by God to be a means of justification or sanctification, a motive for Christian service, a rule of life for believers, or a code of moral ethics. The law of God has but one singular purpose. It exposes man's guilt and sin before God, shutting him up to faith in Christ alone for salvation. 'It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.' 'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' To use the law for any other purpose is to pervert and abuse the law.

Once a man comes to Christ by faith, the law has no more claim upon him and no longer has dominion over him. The law was not made for a righteous man. The language of Holy Scripture in this matter could not be clearer or more emphatic. 'After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.' 'We are not under the law, but under grace.' 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' '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.' We who are free dare not entangle ourselves again with the yoke of bondage. Our freedom has been purchased at too high a price, the precious blood of Christ. We have a higher, better, more effectual motive for our obedience, service and devotion than the law given by Moses. 'The love of Christ constraineth us!' When true love reigns in the heart there is no need for law. Love for Christ causes us to love one another. This love makes God's elect patient, kind, honest, generous and faithful. And this love is the fulfillment of the law. (Grace for Today)

Ps. 1:1 Blessed

That is the first note in the music, not of this Psalm only, but of the whole collection. The Hebrew word is an interjection, and might fittingly be rendered, 'How happy!' It is derived from a primitive word meaning literally, "to be straight," which is used in the widest sense. Its real thought is that of prosperity, resulting from straightness. Thus the very word suggests a moral value, and relates happiness thereto. Its most common use is that suggested by our word, "happy." This opening word indicates at once what man supremely desires for himself, and what God desires for him. The variety of the tones of the music in this collection of songs is one of its great wonders. The strains are major and minor. Here are glad and exultant psalms of praise; and here are also sad and despondent dirges. Throughout, the particular note results from this desire for happiness or blessedness. When it is possessed, the songs are jubilant. When it is absent, they are despondent. The moral value suggested in the word itself is emphasized in this first song.

The central light thereof is found in a phrase: "**The Law of Jehovah.**" The man delighting in that law, meditating on it, conforming to its requirements, is the man who is prosperous—he is the happy man. The positive teaching is strengthened by the negative—"The wicked are not so." In their counsel, their way, their seat, there is no permanence, and therefore no true prosperity, and so no real blessedness.

The purpose of the Law of Jehovah is ever that of ensuring the prosperity, the happiness of man. It is framed in infinite wisdom, and inspired by perfect love. To rebel against it, therefore, is the uttermost folly, and the most definite wickedness. To obey it, is the true wisdom, and the one and only goodness. Misery is the offspring of wickedness; happiness is the offspring of goodness. The Law of Jehovah discovers to man the way of goodness, and so teaches him the way of happiness. (G Campbell Morgan - Life Application from Every Chapter of the Bible)

John Phillips on the purpose of the law - It has two chief functions:

First, to probe the soul for sin...

Second, to prepare the soul for salvation.

The lesson of the Law was simple: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (v. 19). The point and purpose of the Mosaic Law was to underline and emphasize the existence and extent of sin-until the One to whom the Abrahamic covenant referred came, the One who was to deal, once and for all, with the entire question of sin to God's eternal satisfaction. The Law itself does not save. It was not given to Abraham but to Moses. Moreover, it was not given to Moses when Israel was yet in Egypt "in the house of bondage." God did not arm Moses with the tables of the Law and send him back to Egypt with the demand that Israel keep the commandments to be saved. On the contrary, He first redeemed them by the blood of the Passover lamb, then baptized them "unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Having first saved them, then separated them, He brought them to Sinai and gave them the Law-to show them how a saved people should live and to set before them the standard of behavior that God expects of His redeemed people.

In fact, the great purpose of the Law was to educate people in the scope and seriousness of their sin. It was "added because of transgressions," Paul says. The people had hardly shaken the dust of Egypt off their sandals before their complaining began. They came to Marah and complained because the water was bitter. They wished themselves back in Egypt and murmured against Moses because they had nothing to eat. They came to Rephidim and were ready to stone Moses because there was no water to drink. Even as God was giving Moses His Law on Mount Sinai-making it possible, indeed, for Him to come and pitch His own tent among them-they were dancing around the golden calf. The Law was given because of sin, to state plainly, edict by edict, what a redeemed people must do and must not do. They marched on to Kadesh-barnea and then wished themselves back in Egypt when they heard about the giants in Canaan. Then, perversely, when sentenced to death in the wilderness, they as suddenly changed their minds and presumptuously voted to go on into Canaan in defiance of God. They listened to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and raised the flag of rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Even the spectacular death of the conspirators did not silence them. They turned in fresh fury against God's anointed man. They provoked Moses at Kadesh because, again, there was no water. They went whoring after the women and the gods of Moab. They complained about the manna. No wonder the Law was added. Even so, it did not annul the promise.

All down through the long roll call of the commandments sounded the triumphant note of grace. Failure under the moral law brought severe penalties. It also brought guilt. The ceremonial law, the whole system of sacrifices and offerings, made provision for guilt in lieu of Calvary. So, the Law taught a lesson: transgressions were culpable and punishable. God does not condemn sin in the sinner and then condone it in the saint. The word for "transgression" is parabasis, which carries the idea of stepping aside. The word is always used of a breach of the Law. The Law was added to give conscience a standard by which it could monitor human behavior. Conscience, although it is a reasonably efficient goad, is a very unreliable guide; the popular saying "Just let your conscience be your guide" is very bad advice. For instance, when John Huss was burned at the stake, a widow approached the authorities carrying a fagot of wood that she wished to donate to the good cause. "Put it up close to the blasphemous heretic," she said. John Huss, bound to the stake, heard the woman. "What have I ever done to you," he asked her, "that you should hate me so?" The woman replied, "You are a heretic. It is a good work to burn a heretic. I am poor, and wood is scarce and expensive. I cannot afford this fagot; but to acquire merit, I wish to have a share in burning you." Such is conscience. The conscience of John Huss said, "Give your body to be burned." The conscience of the woman said, "Give your fagot to burn him." Obviously, conscience needs an outside, authoritative, and divinely inspired standard by which it can be regulated. The Law provided such a standard. The Law was added, not to annul the promise but to show us how helpless we are when it comes to meeting our obligations to God. It is also intended to teach us how great is our need of that Seed, who was the chief subject of God's great promise to Abraham. That is why the Law was in force from the time of Moses until Christ. Or, as Paul puts it, "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.".....

There is no great rivalry between the Law and the promise-not when the different function of each is understood. How could there be when God was the Author of both? **What was the great purpose of the Law?** To make us aware of what righteousness is all about. What was the great purpose of the promise? To provide that needed righteousness in the Person and work of Christ (the Seed). There was no contradiction, no rivalry, and no inconsistency. The goal of both was righteousness for fallen man. The Law was given to prove something-our utter inability to attain a standard of righteousness acceptable to a holy God by any amount of law keeping and the fact that no law exists that can give life. The Law underlines death. The promise was given to provide something-the life and the righteousness that we need, both of which are found in Christ alone.

Stephen McDowell - The purpose of government

The Biblical purpose of government and civil law is to restrain the evil action of men in society (Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2). True law reveals what is right and wrong, and hence, exposes lawbreakers. But law in itself cannot produce what is right, therefore, you cannot legislate good. However, you can legislate morality for, in fact, all law legislates morality. Some people declare "you can't legislate morality," which is true if they mean you cannot make people moral by passing laws. If we could make people moral by law alone, then law makers could simply enact legislation to produce a perfect society. They could bring salvation by law. However, every law

reflects someone's morality. All laws everywhere are based upon the moral presuppositions of the law makers. Laws against murder reflect a moral belief. Laws against theft are based upon the command to not steal. All law has a moral concern. The important question is whose morality does it legislate. From a humanistic perspective, the attempt is made to regulate and provide all things through government and law. Humanists believe that it is through the force of law that evil will be eliminated and utopia established on earth. Judges, legislators, and others have attacked and struck down Biblical law, saying morality cannot be legislated, but have themselves legislated morality—a new morality based on men's selfish desires. But even worse, they have attempted to bring salvation by law, which is contrary to Christian belief. The law cannot save us; it is not the purpose of the law to do so.

The law cannot change or reform man; this is a spiritual matter. Man can only be changed by the grace of God. He cannot be legislated into a new morality. From a pagan perspective there is no hope of internal regeneration to save man, therefore, a pagan view attempts to bring salvation to man and society through the instrument of law. Humanists cry out the loudest about not legislating morality, but they are the ones trying to save mankind through law and government.

The goal of many of our laws (and governmental actions) today is a "saved" society, where there is more peace and goodwill among men and that all that is negative is eliminated, such as poverty, crime, war, disease, prejudice, ignorance. Law can restrain sinful man from acting evilly, for the fear of punishment is a deterrent, but he cannot be changed by law. Unless the evil heart of man is changed, there will be no advancement toward a better society. Humanistic law seeks to save and change man internally. Since the government (and laws issued thereby) is the instrument for such change, the government becomes the savior in a humanistic society. We need rulers who understand the purpose of law and government so they will not try to make the law do what God never intended it to do, that is, save us. (Building Godly Nations)

Ray Pritchard - The purpose of the law can be stated this way.

It is to tell us what is right and what is wrong.

If you don't like the expression "law", just think of the Ten Commandments. God gave them to Moses so that we would know what is right and what is wrong. Paul uses the specific example of the Tenth Commandment to illustrate his point. I think he is referring to an experience from his youth when he was training to be a Pharisee, sitting at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel. Like most of us, Paul in the beginning thought that he was very good. He came to the First Commandment—No other gods. "No problem. I've got that one." No idols. "I don't have any idols." Don't take God's name in vain. "I don't ever do that." Keep the Sabbath. "The Jews love to keep the Sabbath!" Double check that one. Honor your father and mother. "I always do that." Don't murder. "Wouldn't think of it." Don't commit adultery. "No way." Don't steal. "I'm okay there." Don't bear false witness. Check. He always tells the truth. He comes to number ten—Thou shalt not covet. BOOM! Direct Hit! Right on the heart! No check for that one. Because by its very nature the Tenth Commandment is different. The other nine you can brush off and say that they just refer to outward behavior. You can say, "Well, I haven't shot anybody, so I haven't committed murder and I haven't actually jumped into bed with anyone, so I haven't committed adultery," so you can rationalize those away. But you can't rationalize the Tenth Commandment. It's talking about what goes on in the heart. When Paul read "Thou Shalt Not Covet" suddenly he realized, "I covet all the time. I want stuff I know I shouldn't have. I'm greedy for things. I see what other people have and I wish I could have it." That's the way coveting works. Coveting simply means uncontrolled desire. Either wanting something you shouldn't have or wanting more than you have or wanting what rightfully belongs to someone else. What Paul is saying is this: That the law catches us all. It forces us to look not simply on the outside where we may look pretty good but at the inside at the ravenous monster within.

What about the rest of the Ten Commandments? Do you remember what Jesus said? He reminded people that the Bible says, Don't commit adultery. Then he explained what that meant. "If you look at a woman to lust after her, you've committed adultery already in your heart." Adultery is not confined to the physical act of unlawful intercourse. It also includes what goes on in the heart. Then he said, "If you hate your brother without a cause, you're a murderer." You don't have to shoot somebody. You can just hate them. You can kill them with your thoughts, you can kill them with your lips, you become a murderer with your mouth.

Prone to Wander - The law of God reveals the fact that you are a sinner. If you understand the law of God, you understand that you can't sing "How great I am" because you're not so great. The law reveals the fact and reality of sin in your own heart. One of our favorite hymns contains this telling line: "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love." Another hymn contains the line: "Take away our bent to sinning." Something within us is bent towards sin. Something within us makes us prone to leave the God we love. If you don't believe that, it is only because you haven't come close enough to the law yet. When the law of God is rightly understood it forces you to face the fact and the reality of your sinful condition. That's number one, the law reveals the fact of sin. (From his sermon Whatever Became of Sin?)

J D Watson - The Mosaic Law was a temporary schoolmaster that was designed to lead Israel to maturity, that is, Christ. Once Christ arrived, was crucified, and rose again, He became the controlling force in the believer's life. The Mosaic Law, therefore, was

Devotionals from Today in the Word -

Galatians 3:15-18 TODAY IN THE WORD

One stormy and extremely cold Sunday morning, a minister was on his way to church. On the road he met one of his neighbors, who, shivering miserably, said to him, "It's very chilly, sir." "Oh," replied the minister. "God is as good as His word." The other, not comprehending, asked what he meant. The minister answered: "God promised about three thousand years ago, and He still makes it good today, that 'as long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat...will never cease.'" The minister's reply was meant as a joke, but his point is true: God always keeps His covenants and promises.

In today's reading Paul observes that when a human covenant is ratified, no one sets it aside or amends it, neither the author nor a second party (v. 15). Of course the implication is that if that is true with people, it is even more true with God. A second covenant, the law, could not set aside the promise made to Abraham (v. 17).

The Abrahamic covenant could only be fulfilled by Christ (v. 16). Only in the infinite Son of God could all the families of the earth be blessed. But Christ is viewed in this chapter as also being the head of a new family; all who receive Him by faith become sons of Abraham in a spiritual sense (Gal. 3:28-29).

A most startling and amazing truth becomes clear. The age of law was merely a parenthesis between the age of promise and the age of grace (v. 18). All of the legalistic teaching the church has endured for nearly two thousand years is entirely incompatible with the teachings of grace and the spirit of promise.

APPLY THE WORD

Two days ago, we suggested that you review the biblical narrative of Abraham and Sarah. If you did so, you probably found yourself held spellbound by a story filled with impossible promises, difficult journeys, angelic visitors, and obedient faith.

Galatians 3:19 TODAY IN THE WORD

What, then, was the purpose of the Law? - Galatians 3:19

If we think back to our illustration yesterday on the willfulness of toddlers, someone might ask, "Why go through all the trouble of giving them instructions if they are just going to do what they want?" This question misses the true point of the instruction. We want to protect children from things that will harm them, but we also want to train them so that they can make wise, healthy choices when they are mature enough to choose for themselves.

Paul entertains two questions that his preceding argument might raise: first, why was the Law given if the promised blessing comes by faith; and second, does the Law oppose the promises? The response begins with the observation that the promise of an inheritance for Abraham's seed was ultimately directed toward Christ (v. 16). That is, the "many people" who follow the Law and call Abraham "father" are not in the first instance the object of the promises. He points out next that the promises were given before the Law (vv. 17-18). The Law does not trump or set aside the prior promises.

Having laid this groundwork, he turns to the first question—why the Law? The Law served the purpose of cleansing sin, but only in a provisional and temporary way. The commands and sacrificial system were limited, not full and perfect, in dealing with sin. The Law was always only intended to be in effect until Christ "the Seed to whom the promise referred had come" (v. 19).

His answer to the second question—does the Law oppose the promises?—is closely linked with his answer to the first. The Law was provisional and temporary, so it could not bring about the righteousness that comes by faith (v. 21).

APPLY THE WORD

The blessing of the promise was for all nations, but many people are still waiting to hear this good news.

Galatians 3:19-25 TODAY IN THE WORD

The law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. - Galatians 3:24

Star of the popular reality show, Supernanny, Jo Frost flies in to help frazzled parents who have come to their wits' end because of their children's behavior. Her practical, no-nonsense style and advice helps parents to identify why their own discipline is failing. Jo Frost has become a modern-day Mary Poppins.

Paul describes the important purposes of the law in today's reading, one of which is to act as a "nanny" for God's children. As we'll study today, God's law has various functions. We'll understand that the law and the promise are not at odds with each other. They don't work against each other but rather towards the same end. The law was an essential part of God's plan. It was never the primary means of relating to God, for we've already seen that the promise was given first, centuries before the introduction of the law. But it was necessary for an appointed time.

Of course the question Paul anticipates from the Galatians for all the arguments he's made so far is this: If faith supersedes the law, if our inheritance comes through Abraham and not the law, then why did God even give the law? What are the purposes of the law?

The law was necessary for the purpose of revealing and condemning sin. The Old Testament law, with all of its regulations for human behavior and interaction, with its strict guidelines for sacrifices and worship, revealed the depravity of human beings. It revealed our inability to ever measure up to God's standards. It illuminated the hopeless state of humanity before God. In this sense, the law imprisons and holds us captive (v. 23).

But the law's functions aren't exclusively negative. In a positive role, the law serves as our guardian. It holds us captive, yes, but in so doing, keeps us safe and delivers us finally into the arms of Jesus. Once Jesus had come, the hopelessness of our spiritual state, as revealed to us by the law, would be the very thing to drive us towards an embrace of God's grace.

APPLY THE WORD

The Mishnah, the written collection of Jewish oral teachings and traditions, teaches that following the law leads a person to life: "Lots of Torah, lots of life." Paul says that the law can never impart life or spiritual well being. Even today, we have to be very careful of our tendency to want to define our spiritual lives by rules and regulations, keeping a list of do's and don'ts. Following rules doesn't make us Christians and doesn't ensure our favor with God. Faith in Jesus does.

Galatians 3:19-22 TODAY IN THE WORD

In 1838 the British government sent word to Jamaica that slavery was at an end and that therefore those who were slaves were now free. On that night of emancipation, a mahogany coffin was made. Former slaves filled the coffin with whips, branding irons, coarse clothing, handcuffs, and other tools and symbols used during their years of bondage.

The coffin lid was bolted shut and at midnight the coffin was lowered into a grave, dug especially for the occasion. Then the thousands gathered celebrated their new freedom by singing the doxology!

Once released, people who have known slavery would never willingly surrender their freedom. Instead, they move forward joyfully to a new way of life. This is the very point Paul is trying to make to the Galatians. "'You have been set free from the law's condemnation,'" he tells them, "'so start acting like it!'"

If the law is not in force for the believer now that Christ has come, what good was it? What function did it serve? The answer is that the law was given until the Seed should come and that it was therefore only preparatory, ending with the coming of Christ (v. 19).

If law is inferior to promise, is there opposition between these two divine arrangements? Paul says, "'Perish the thought.'" The law is all right as far as it goes, but it really could not compete with the promise because it could not give life.

The function of the law was to convict transgressors. The picture in verse 22 is variously painted by translators as "'shut up like a fish enclosed in a net,'" "'enclosed entirely by barriers,'" and "'shut up on every side as in a prison.'" Everything pertaining to men--thoughts, words, and deeds--is all locked up and thus doomed under sin.

APPLY THE WORD

We've nearly reached the halfway point of our study of Galatians. We hope you are enjoying and learning from this meaty book!

We suggest today that you sit back and reorient yourself to the "'big picture'" of Paul's epistle. (If you're working today on the tax forms that are due tomorrow, you could do one of these activities as a break!)

Galatians 3:23-25 TODAY IN THE WORD

A good teacher is like a guide, not only knowing but also showing the way. A teacher's life-experience can be a valuable part of a student's learning experience.

With these axioms in mind, in 1986 evangelist Leighton Ford began a ministry to find and develop young evangelical leaders. In 1992, he started the Arrow Leadership Program, a focused, group-oriented, two-year training program emphasizing evangelism and leadership skills. Ford told Christianity Today: "'I sensed a desire among the younger generation of emerging leaders for a highly personalized leadership development program. They hungered for mentoring relationships with older leaders and affirmation between peers--and above all, a program that stressed character development alongside skills for growing ministries.'"

As Paul explains in today's reading, the law was God's "'development program'" for the Jews, teaching and guiding them. First, yesterday's main idea continues: that the law led to the fulfillment of the promise. The verb in verse 23 often has the connotation of protecting rather than imprisonment for punishment, and probably should be so understood here. God protected His children from the excesses of the heathen nations through the controls of the law. The purpose of this protective function of the law was to urge or push people to faith.

In verse 24 the law as a teacher leads men to faith. In Greek the law is called "'paidagogos,'" not a "'didaskalos.'" In other words, the law was an inferior slave or servant ("paidagogos") committed with the task of bringing the master's son to school or to the

schoolmaster ("didaskalos"). The "pedagogue" was charged with disciplining the child and giving him moral training, by protecting him and regulating his outward habits. That was all the law could do; but when it led the son to Christ, its work was finished. Christ was the schoolmaster ("didaskalos"), a point of Paul's illustration which would have been clear to the Romans of that day.

APPLY THE WORD

Salvation is one of the most precious gifts God has given us. As we've been studying Galatians, our hope is that you are gaining a greater appreciation for God's grace and our redemption in Christ.

Glen Spencer - Sometimes believers have the tendency to ignore the law as something that is done and over with. We often hear folks proclaim, "We are not under the law, but under grace." I do understand that we are not bound to ceremonial law. However, the moral law of God is absolute for all ages and all people. Even as New Testament Christians we need to understand that the law is not something to be detested, but something to delight in.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (Psalms 1:2)

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. (Psalms 119:97)

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. (Psalms 119:165)

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; (1 Timothy 1:8-10)

Moody Bible Commentary - The purpose of the law was never to save. It was to enable Israel to know how to avoid sin and thus God's temporal judgment as a corporate people, so that she could begin to fulfill her role in representing Him in the world. Salvation for the Jewish people was always through having a faith similar to Abraham's, not through keeping the law.

GALATIANS 3:19-29 THE MIRROR, FLASHLIGHT AND PLUMBLINE

Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

The law has never saved anyone, and it never will. God did not give it to redeem us from sin but to show us our need of salvation. That's why the apostle Paul called it "our tutor."

In an unforgettable sermon, evangelist Fred Brown used three images to describe the purpose of the law.

First, he likened it to the small mirror dentists use. With the mirror they can detect cavities. But they can't drill with it or use it to pull teeth. The mirror reveals the decayed area or other abnormality, but it can't fix the problem.

Brown then drew another analogy. He said that the law is also like a flashlight. If the lights go out at night, you use it to guide you down the darkened basement stairs to the electrical box. When you point it toward the fuses, it helps you see the one that is burned out. But after you've removed the bad fuse, you don't insert the flashlight in its place. You put in a new fuse to restore the electricity.

In his third image, Brown likened the law to a plumbline. Builders check their work by using a weighted string. If this plumbline reveals that the work is not true to the vertical, the plumbline cannot correct it. The builder must get out a hammer and saw.

Like the mirror, flashlight, and plumbline, the law points out the problem—sin, but it doesn't provide a solution. The only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the law. Only He can save. —D. C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

'No' Power

Read: Romans 7:1-6

We have been delivered from the law, . . . so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. —Romans 7:6

I remember seeing a newspaper photograph of three signs nailed to a big oak tree. Their message was obvious. On the top sign were printed the words, "No Trespassing," on the middle one, "No Hunting," and on the bottom, "No Nothing."

The newspaper's accompanying comment read, "'No Trespassing,' 'No Hunting,' well, that's a landowner's prerogative. But 'No Nothing' makes you want to beep your horn, shout out the window—anything to resist a little."

The apostle Paul was very familiar with the urge behind such a response. In Romans 7 he pointed out that the law actually awakens rebellious desires within us (v.5). Being told not to do something excites our sinful nature to express itself.

Our rebellious response to negative rules points out our need for a strong, compelling motivation to do what's right. Paul said that we can go beyond a list of do's and don'ts to a love relationship with Christ Himself (v.6). The law carries with it the sentence of death because of our inability to keep it (v.10). But being united to Christ results in life.

By daily walking and talking with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we can go from "no" power in the law to all power in Him. By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Though freed from the law with its stern demands—
No longer ruled by its harsh commands—
I'm bound by Christ's love and am truly free
To live and to act responsibly.
—DJD

In Christ, God's love was expressed and His law was satisfied.

Toddler's Creed

Read: Acts 20:32-38 | Bible in a Year: Isaiah 17-19; Ephesians 5:17-33

You shall not covet. —Romans 7:7

Elisa Morgan, president of MOPS International (Mothers Of Pre-Schoolers), shared this insight into a child's view of the world:

Toddler's Creed

If I want it, it's mine.

If I give it to you and change my
mind later, it's mine.

If I can take it away from you,
it's mine.

If I had it a little while ago,
it's mine.

If it's mine, it will never belong to
anyone else, no matter what.

If we are building something together,
all the pieces are mine.

If it looks just like mine,
it is mine.

Anyone who has ever known a toddler knows the truth of that creed. We expect to see this trait in toddlers, but we despise it in adults. It is called covetousness.

The apostle Paul, who had led an outwardly religious life before he became a follower of Jesus, wrestled with that sin (Rom. 7:7). After carefully studying the law, he recognized covetousness for what it was. But God in His grace changed Paul. Instead of being a coveting, grasping man, he became a truly generous person (Acts 20:33-35). Generosity may be the acid test of whether or not we are still spiritual toddlers.

Have you allowed Jesus Christ to create in you a new, giving heart? Or are you still following the "Toddler's Creed"? By Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Gratefulness overcomes selfishness.

Ephesians 5:3-4 But immorality or any impurity or **greed** must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather **giving of thanks**.

Forbidden Fruit

Read: Romans 7:7-13

The sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. —Romans 7:5

In Galveston, Texas, a hotel on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico put this notice in each room: No Fishing From the Balcony

Yet every day, hotel guests threw in their lines to the waters below. Then the management decided to take down the signs—and the fishing stopped!

In his Confessions, Augustine (354-430), the well-known theologian, reflected on this attraction to the forbidden. He wrote, “There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it . . . We took off a huge load of pears—not to feast upon ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of the forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply to become a thief. . . . The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing.”

Romans 7 sets forth the truth illustrated by Augustine’s experience: Human nature is inherently rebellious. Give us a law and we will see it as a challenge to break it. Jesus, however, forgives our lawbreaking and gives us the Holy Spirit. He imparts a new desire and ability so that our greatest pleasure becomes bringing pleasure to God. By Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Why do we keep on trying
The fare of this world’s sin
When God has set before us
The joy of Christ within? —JDB

Forbidden fruit tastes sweet but has bitter consequences.

What The Law Can't Do

Read: 1 Timothy 1:3-11

The law is good if one uses it lawfully. —1 Timothy 1:8

Evangelist Fred Brown used three illustrations to explain the proper use of God’s law. First, he likened the law to a dentist’s mirror. With that little mirror he can spot cavities. But the dentist doesn’t drill with the mirror. The mirror can reveal a cavity, but it can never repair it.

Brown then compared the law to a flashlight. If the lights in your home suddenly go out, you use a flashlight to guide you through the darkness to the electrical box. The flashlight enables you to see the blown fuse or tripped circuit-breaker, but you don’t insert the flashlight in its place.

In his third image, Brown likened the law to a plumb line. A builder uses a weighted string to see if his work is properly aligned. If he discovers a mistake, he doesn’t use the plumb line to correct it. He uses his hammer and saw.

The apostle Paul said, “We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully” (1 Tim. 1:8). The law of God reveals the problem of sin, but it doesn’t provide a solution. The answer is found in Jesus Christ. He bore our guilt on the cross and now offers us new life. When we put our faith in Him as our personal Savior, He forgives us and enables us to live by His strength in ways that please Him. What the law can’t do, Christ can. Have you asked Him to be your Savior? By Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Study

What does Galatians 3 say about

our relationship to the law? (vv.11-14,24-25).

What can we learn about the law in Romans 8:1-4?

God’s law pinpoints our problem; God’s grace provides the solution.

Looking For Loopholes

Read: Matthew 23:13-28

You also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. —Matthew 23:28

Many lawbreakers on trial for their crimes hope that legal loopholes can be found to keep them from being punished. If they have enough money, they gladly pay for the services of attorneys who can discover those escape hatches for their clients.

The search for loopholes takes place outside the courtroom as well. For example, the June 3, 1995, issue of the Spectator carried an article titled, "Even God's Law Has Loopholes." It tells about a rabbi in Jerusalem who devises ingenious ways of enabling himself and others to circumvent Old Testament law and Jewish traditions. The rabbi insists that he isn't trying to help his clients disobey the law. He says, "God's law is perfect. If God left a loophole, there was a reason. We are allowed to use it."

In Matthew 23, Jesus spoke out against religious leaders who skillfully twisted the laws of God to their own benefit. What would He say to you and me? Do we sometimes look for loopholes in the plain teaching of Scripture to excuse our disobedience to God and lessen our sense of guilt? Or do we prayerfully follow the example of the psalmist, who declared very simply, "I keep Your precepts" (Ps. 119:100). By Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God's Word was given for our good,
And we are to obey—
Not choose the parts that we like best,
Then live in our own way.
—Hess

The Bible's purpose is to light our way, not to cover our tracks.

Computer Ethics

Read: 1 Timothy 1:3-15

We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully. —1 Timothy 1:8

The Computer Ethics Institute has proposed 10 commandments for computer users. The laws include:

- Thou shalt not use a computer to harm other people.
- Thou shalt not snoop around in other people's computer files.
- Thou shalt not copy or use proprietary software for which you have not paid.
- Thou shalt always use a computer in ways that ensure consideration and respect for your fellow humans.

Many of us have had enough contact with computers to see the need for such rules. We may also realize, however, that merely publishing laws will not change human nature. Even the Law of Moses, which these principles imitate, was never able to change anyone's heart. No one can become good by keeping the commandments.

The Law's highest purpose is to show us God's perfect standards and our need for Christ. No one else has paid the price for our forgiveness. No one else enables us to love "from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). Christ doesn't change us by teaching us to keep the Law (Gal. 3:1-5). He transforms us by giving us a new heart. And that will affect even our use of computers. —M R De Haan II ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Think About It

- Will anyone get into heaven by trying to be good enough? Why not? (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:8-9).
- How can I please God? (Gal. 5:16-26).

A changed life is the result of a changed heart.

The Purpose of the Law Galatians 3:19–22

I. What Is the Law?

- A. The law was not a part of the original covenant made with Abraham; it "was added."
- B. The law was a temporary arrangement—valid only "till the seed should come."

C. The law "was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."

II. Is the Law Against the Promises of God?

A. The purpose of the law was not to give life.

B. The purpose of the law was to restrict the promise of salvation to those who believe. (Archie Edwards - Expository Outlines from Paul's Epistles)

Excerpts from C H Spurgeon's Sermon "See full sermon below [The Uses of the Law](#) (Galatians 3:19)

I. The first use of the law is to manifest to man his guilt. When God intends to save a man, the first thing he does with him is to send the law to him, to show him how guilty, how vile, how ruined he is, and in how dangerous a position...

II. Now, the second. The law serves to slay all hope of salvation of a reformed life. Most men when they discover themselves to be guilty, avow that they will reform. They say, "I have been guilty and have deserved God's wrath, but for the future I will seek to win a stock of merits which shall counterbalance all my old sins." In steps the law, puts its hand on the sinner's mouth, and says, "Stop, you cannot do that, it is impossible." I will show you how the law does this. It does it partly thus, by reminding the man that future obedience can be no atonement for past guilt...

III. And now, a step further. You that know the grace of God can follow me in this next step. The law is intended to show man the misery which will, fall upon him through his sin...

IV. And now, my dear friends, I am afraid of wearying you; therefore, let me briefly hint at one other thought. "Wherefore then serveth the law." It was sent into the world to shew the value of a Saviour.

Just as foils set off jewels, and as dark spots make bright tints more bright, so doth the law make Christ appear the fairer and more heavenly. I hear the law of God curse, but how harsh its voice. Jesus says, "come unto me;" oh, what music! all the more musical after the discord of the law. I see the law condemns; I behold Christ obeying it. Oh! how ponderous that price—when I know how weighty was the demand! I read the commandments, and I find them strict and awfully severe—oh! how holy must Christ have been to obey all these for me! Nothing makes me value my Savior more than seeing the law condemn me. When I know this law stands in my way, and like a flaming cherubim will not let me enter paradise, then I can tell how sweetly precious must Jesus Christ's righteousness be, which is a passport to heaven, and gives me grace to enter there.

V. And, lastly, "Wherefore serveth the law." It was sent into the world to keep Christian men from self-righteousness. Christian men—do they ever get self-righteous? Yes, that they do. The best Christian man in the world will find it hard work to keep himself from boasting, and from being self-righteous. John Knox on his death-bed was attacked with self-righteousness...

Question: "What is the difference between the ceremonial law, the moral law, and the judicial law in the Old Testament?"

Answer: The law of God given to Moses is a comprehensive set of guidelines to ensure that the Israelites' behavior reflected their status as God's chosen people. It encompasses moral behavior, their position as a godly example to other nations, and systematic procedures for acknowledging God's holiness and mankind's sinfulness. In an attempt to better understand the purpose of these laws, Jews and Christians categorize them. This has led to the distinction between moral law, ceremonial law, and judicial law.

Moral Law

The moral laws, or *mishpatim*, relate to justice and judgment and are often translated as "ordinances." *Mishpatim* are said to be based on God's holy nature. As such, the ordinances are holy, just, and unchanging. Their purpose is to promote the welfare of those who obey. The value of the laws is considered obvious by reason and common sense. The moral law encompasses regulations on justice, respect, and sexual conduct, and includes the Ten Commandments. It also includes penalties for failure to obey the ordinances. Moral law does not point people to Christ; it merely illuminates the fallen state of all mankind.

Modern Protestants are divided over the applicability of *mishpatim* in the church age. Some believe that Jesus' assertion that the law will remain in effect until the earth passes away (Matthew 5:18) means that believers are still bound to it. Others, however, understand that Jesus fulfilled this requirement (Matthew 5:17), and that we are instead under the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), which is thought to be "love God and love others" (Matthew 22:36-40). Although many of the moral laws in the Old Testament give excellent examples as to how to love God and love others, and freedom from the law is not license to sin (Romans 6:15), we are not

specifically bound by *mishpatim*.

Ceremonial Law

The ceremonial laws are called *hukkim* or *chuqqah* in Hebrew, which literally means “custom of the nation”; the words are often translated as “statutes.” These laws seem to focus the adherent’s attention on God. They include instructions on regaining right standing with God (e.g., sacrifices and other ceremonies regarding “uncleanness”), remembrances of God’s work in Israel (e.g., feasts and festivals), specific regulations meant to distinguish Israelites from their pagan neighbors (e.g., dietary and clothing restrictions), and signs that point to the coming Messiah (e.g., the Sabbath, circumcision, Passover, and the redemption of the firstborn). Some Jews believe that the ceremonial law is not fixed. They hold that, as societies evolve, so do God’s expectations of how His followers should relate to Him. This view is not indicated in the Bible.

Christians are not bound by ceremonial law. Since the church is not the nation of Israel, memorial festivals, such as the Feast of Weeks and Passover, do not apply. Galatians 3:23-25 explains that since Jesus has come, Christians are not required to sacrifice or circumcise. There is still debate in Protestant churches over the applicability of the Sabbath. Some say that its inclusion in the Ten Commandments gives it the weight of moral law. Others quote Colossians 2:16-17 and Romans 14:5 to explain that Jesus has fulfilled the Sabbath and become our Sabbath rest. As Romans 14:5 says, “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” The applicability of the Old Testament law in the life of a Christian has always related to its usefulness in loving God and others. If someone feels observing the Sabbath aids him in this, he is free to observe it.

Judicial/Civil Law

The Westminster Confession adds the category of judicial or civil law. These laws were specifically given for the culture and place of the Israelites and encompass all of the moral law except the Ten Commandments. This includes everything from murder to restitution for a man gored by an ox and the responsibility of the man who dug a pit to rescue his neighbor’s trapped donkey (Exodus 21:12-36). Since the Jews saw no difference between their God-ordained morality and their cultural responsibilities, this category is used by Christians far more than by Jewish scholars.

The division of the Jewish law into different categories is a human construct designed to better understand the nature of God and define which laws church-age Christians are still required to follow. Many believe the ceremonial law is not applicable, but we are bound by the Ten Commandments. *All* the law is useful for instruction (2 Timothy 3:16), and nothing in the Bible indicates that God intended a distinction of categories. Christians are not under the law (Romans 10:4). Jesus fulfilled the law, thus abolishing the difference between Jew and Gentile “so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross...” (Ephesians 2:15-16).

[What is the difference between the ceremonial law, the moral law, and the judicial law in the Old Testament?](#) from Gotquestions - highly recommended website

CONTRAST OF GRACE AND LAW

LAW	GRACE
The law prohibits	Grace invites and gives
The law condemns the sinner	Grace redeems the sinner.
The law says DO	Grace says IT IS DONE.
The law says, Continue to be holy	Grace says, It is finished.
The law curses	Grace blesses
The law slays the sinner	Grace makes the sinner alive.
The law shuts every mouth before God	Grace opens the mouth to praise God.
The law condemns the best man	Grace saves the worst man.
The law says, pay what you owe	Grace says, I freely forgive you all.
The law says “the wages of sin is death”	Grace says, “the gift of God is eternal life.”
The law says, “the soul that sins shall die”	Grace says, Believe and live.
The law reveals sin	Grace atones for sin.

By the law is the knowledge of sin	By grace is redemption from sin.
The law was given by Moses	Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
The law demands obedience	Grace bestows and gives power to obey.
The law was written on stone	Grace is written on the tables of the heart.
The law was done away in Christ	Grace abides forever.
The law puts us under bondage	Grace sets us in the liberty of the sons of God.

Adapted and modified from work by Dr M R De Haan - Studies in Galatians. Kregel Publications

The Three Uses of the Law

John Calvin (1509-1564)

That the whole matter may be made clearer, let us take a succinct view of the office and use of the Moral Law. Now this office and use seems to me to consist of three parts. First, by exhibiting the righteousness of God,—in other words, the righteousness which alone is acceptable to God,—it admonishes every one of his own unrighteousness, certiorates [informs], convicts, and finally condemns him. This is necessary, in order that man, who is blind and intoxicated with self-love, may be brought at once to know and to confess his weakness and impurity...

Thus the Law is a kind of mirror. As in a mirror we discover any stains upon our face, so in the Law we behold, first, our impotence; then, in consequence of it, our iniquity; and, finally, the curse, as the consequence of both. He who has no power of following righteousness is necessarily plunged in the mire of iniquity, and this iniquity is immediately followed by the curse. Accordingly, the greater the transgression of which the Law convicts us, the severer the judgment to which we are exposed...

But while the unrighteousness and condemnation of all are attested by the law, it does not follow (if we make the proper use of it) that we are immediately to give up all hope and rush headlong on despair. No doubt, it has some such effect upon the reprobate, but this is owing to their obstinacy. With the children of God the effect is different. The Apostle testifies that the law pronounces its sentence of condemnation in order 'that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God,' (Rom. 3:19). In another place, however, the same Apostle declares, that 'God has concluded them all in unbelief;' not that he might destroy all, or allow all to perish, but that 'he might have mercy upon all,' (Rom. 11:32); in other words, that divesting themselves of an absurd opinion of their own virtue, they may perceive how they are wholly dependent on the hand of God; that feeling how naked and destitute they are, they may take refuge in his mercy, rely upon it, and cover themselves up entirely with it; renouncing all righteousness and merit, and clinging to mercy...

But even in the reprobate themselves, this first office of the law is not altogether wanting. They do not, indeed, proceed so far with the children of God as, after the flesh is cast down, to be renewed in the inner man, and revive again, but stunned by the first terror, give way to despair. Still it tends to manifest the equity of the Divine judgment, when their consciences are thus heaved upon the waves. They would always willingly carp at the judgment of God; but now, though that judgment is not manifested, still the alarm produced by the testimony of the law and of their conscience bespeaks their deserts...

The second office of the Law is, by means of its fearful denunciations and the consequent dread of punishment, to curb those who, unless forced, have no regard for rectitude and justice. Such persons are curbed not because their mind is inwardly moved and affected, but because, as if a bridle were laid upon them, they refrain their hands from external acts, and internally check the depravity which would otherwise petulantly burst forth. It is true, they are not on this account either better or more righteous in the sight of God. For although restrained by terror or shame, they dare not proceed to what their mind has conceived, nor give full license to their raging lust, their heart is by no means trained to fear and obedience. Nay, the more they restrain themselves, the more they are inflamed, the more they rage and boil, prepared for any act or outbreak whatsoever were it not for the terror of the law. And not only so, but they thoroughly detest the law itself, and execrate the Lawgiver; so that if they could, they would most willingly annihilate him, because they cannot bear either his ordering what is right, or his avenging the despisers of his Majesty. The feeling of all who are not yet regenerate, though in some more, in others less lively, is, that in regard to the observance of the law, they are not led by voluntary submission, but dragged by the force of fear. Nevertheless, this forced and extorted righteousness is necessary for the good of society, its peace being secured by a provision but for which all things would be thrown into tumult and confusion...

To both may be applied the declaration of the Apostle in another place, that 'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,'

(Gal. 3:24); since there are two classes of persons, whom by its training it leads to Christ. Some (of whom we spoke in the first place), from excessive confidence in their own virtue or righteousness, are unfit to receive the grace of Christ, until they are completely humbled. This the law does by making them sensible of their misery, and so disposing them to long for what they previously imagined they did not want. Others have need of a bridle to restrain them from giving full scope to their passions, and thereby utterly losing all desire after righteousness...

The third use of the Law (being also the principal use, and more closely connected with its proper end) has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already flourishes and reigns. For although the Law is written and engraven on their hearts by the finger of God, that is, although they are so influenced and actuated by the Spirit, that they desire to obey God, there are two ways in which they still profit in the Law. For it is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what that will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this knowledge; just as a servant who desires with all his soul to approve himself to his master, must still observe, and be careful to ascertain his master's dispositions, that he may comport himself in accommodation to them. Let none of us deem ourselves exempt from this necessity, for none have as yet attained to such a degree of wisdom, as that they may not, by the daily instruction of the Law, advance to a purer knowledge of the Divine will. Then, because we need not doctrine merely, but exhortation also, the servant of God will derive this further advantage from the Law: by frequently meditating upon it, he will be excited to obedience, and confirmed in it, and so drawn away from the slippery paths of sin. In this way must the saints press onward, since, however great the alacrity with which, under the Spirit, they hasten toward righteousness, they are retarded by the sluggishness of the flesh, and make less progress than they ought. The Law acts like a whip to the flesh, urging it on as men do a lazy sluggish ass. Even in the case of a spiritual man, inasmuch as he is still burdened with the weight of the flesh, the Law is a constant stimulus, pricking him forward when he would indulge in sloth."— John Calvin (1509-1564), Institutes of the Christian Religion, II.vii.6-12

Spurgeon Quotes

Purpose of the Law

Imagine a case. Some young men are about to go to sea, where I foresee they will meet with a storm. Suppose you put me in a position where I may cause a tempest before the other shall arise. By the time the natural storm comes on, those young men will be a long way out at sea, and they will be wrecked and ruined before they can put back and be safe. But what do I? When they are just in the mouth of the river, I send a storm, putting them in the greatest danger, and hastening them ashore, so that they are saved. Thus did God. He sends a law which shows them the roughness of the journey. The tempest of law compels them to put back to the harbor of free grace and saves them from a most terrible destruction. The law never came to save men. It came on purpose to make the evidence complete that salvation by works is impossible, and thus to drive the elect of God to rely wholly on the finished salvation of the gospel.

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The heart is like a dark cellar, full of lizards, cockroaches, beetles, and all kinds of reptiles and insects, which in the dark we see not. But the law takes down the shutters and lets in the light, and we see the evil.

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The law stirs the mud at the bottom of the pool and proves how foul the waters are. The law compels the man to see that sin dwells in him, and that it is a powerful tyrant over his nature. All this is with a view to his cure. God be thanked when the law so works as to take off the sinner from all confidence in himself! To make the leper confess that he is incurable is going a great way toward compelling him to go to that divine Savior, who alone is able to heal him. This is the whole end of the law toward men whom God will save.

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The law tells you that unless you perfectly obey you cannot be saved by your doings, it tells you that one sin will make a flaw in it all, that one transgression will spoil your whole obedience. It is a spotless garment that you must wear in heaven; it is only an unbroken law which God can accept. So, then, the law answers this purpose, to tell men that their acquirements, their amendings, and their doings, are of no use whatever in the matter of salvation. It is theirs to come to Christ, to get A new heart and a right spirit; to get the evangelical repentance which needeth not to be repented of, that so they may put their trust in Jesus and receive pardon through his blood. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" It serveth this purpose, as Luther hath it, the purpose of a hammer. Luther, you know, is very strong on the subject of the law. He says, "For if any be not a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, and outwardly refrain from sin, as the Pharisee did, which is mentioned in the gospel, he would swear that he is righteous, and therefore he conceiveth an opinion of

righteousness, and presumeth of his good works and merits. Such a one God cannot otherwise mollify and humble, that he may acknowledge his misery and damnation, but by the law, for that is the hammer of death, the thundering of hell, and the lightning of God's wrath, that beateth to powder the obstinate and senseless hypocrites. For as long as the opinion of righteousness abideth in man, so long there abideth also in him incomprehensible pride, presumption, security, hatred of God, contempt of his grace and mercy, ignorance of the promises and of Christ. The preaching of free remission of sins, through Christ, cannot enter into the heart of such a one, neither can he feel any taste or savor thereof; for that mighty rock and adamant wall, to wit, the opinion of righteousness, wherewith the heart is environed, doth resist it. Wherefore the law is that hammer, that fire, that mighty strong wind, and that terrible earthquake rending the mountains, and breaking the rocks, (1 Kings 19:11, 12, 13.) that is to say, the proud and obstinate hypocrites. Elijah, not being able to abide these terrors of the law, which by these things are signified, covered his face with his mantle. Notwithstanding, when the tempest ceased, of which he was a beholder, there came a soft and a gracious wind, in the which the Lord was; but it behoved that the tempest of fire, of wind, and the earthquake should pass, before the Lord should reveal himself in that gracious wind."

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What, then, is the purpose and limit of the law? It sets before us a straight path. Right up the mountain side I see the way to the summit. But I have fallen into an abyss; I am bruised and broken; I cannot stir an inch. What is the use of a straight road to me? Here I must lie, at the bottom of the crevasse, and perish, unless something more than a straight road is shown to me. The way is before me, but I am weak, and cannot stir. The law tells us what we ought to do, but that does not enable us to do it. Still, it is useful to know the way in which we should go; for that will show us how far we have fallen, cause us to be discontented with our present state, and prepare us to accept help, if help should come. The law can do that.

The law is also very useful because it shows us our deflections and stains. It is like the looking-glass which my lady holds up to her face that she may see if there be any spot on it. But she cannot wash her face with the looking-glass. When the mirror has done its utmost, there are the stains all the same. It cannot take away a single spot; it can only show where it is. And the law, though it reveals our sin, our shortcomings, our transgression cannot remove the sin or the transgression. It is weak for that purpose, because it was never intended to accomplish such an end.

The law also serves another purpose: it upbraids us for our sin. Did you never feel its ten-thonged lash coming upon the back of your conscience? What furrows these ploughers make! "Condemn him," says whole ten-throated law. The first commandment says, "Condemn him: he has broken me;" and the second command says, "Condemn him: he has broken me;" and the third says, "Condemn him: he has broken me." Not one of them is silent, all clamor for their due; and if you know your own heart truly, you confess that not one charges you falsely, seeing that hate is murder, and the thought of folly, sin. When conscience is really awake, what pain, what anguish the law will bring to the spirit! But it cannot heal you. It cannot speak peace to you. It cannot forgive you. To convince and to condemn is all the law can do. It is too weak to save even one poor sinner.

Again, the law can tell you what you ought to do, but it gives no inclination to do the right. On the contrary, without any blame to the law, it often creates inclination to do otherwise. Paul says, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." There are some things men would not think of doing if they were not forbidden, but the very forbidding of them makes some desire to do them. Many a thing which is commanded we might have freely done if it had been left to our own choice, but such is the perversity of our nature that, being commanded to do it, straightway we refuse. We kick against the commandment. The law does not sweetly incline us to holiness, but, through the weakness, or, rather, wickedness of our flesh, it often stirs up the obstinate and rebellious propensities which are in our nature. Certainly the law does not incline us to righteousness; but "sin, taking occasion by the commandment," works in us all manner of evil.

The law is weak in another way. It does not lend us any aid towards the fulfillment of its commands. It says, "This do, and thou shalt live. Make the bricks; make the bricks;" but it gives us no straw wherewith to make them, nor can we find any in all the land; so we are worse off than Israel in Egypt. The law in and of itself does not contribute to our obedience to its commands; nor does it restrain us when we go astray. It thunders out, "Thou shalt not kill;" but when the heart darts its thought of bitterness, or the hand raises the assassin's knife, it does not hinder: it looks on cold and unmoved. It aids us not in any way: because it cannot. Only grace can do that. We have to look to another source for help in holiness.

And when we have broken the law, it brings no remedy. Of mercy the law knows nothing. Thou hast broken the law: there is the penalty, and thou must bear it. Through having committed sin thou hast brought upon thyself a grievous malady. The law points out the malady, but it never brings any medicine with which to cure it. It pours in no oil and wine; it is no good Samaritan. It is not the law's business to do that. When Her Majesty's judge is on the bench, his business there is to administer the law, and to see that the rules of the nation are carried out fairly and justly. He does not sit there to provide for the poor or to help the sick, but to judge men, and condemn the guilty. This is all that the law was meant to do. In that it is weak through our flesh, there are some things which the law cannot do.

On one occasion some workmen were quarrying some rocks; and having made all ready for a blast — drilled the holes, filled them with gun-cotton, and connected the fuzes — they warned everyone away from the place of danger. Then the fuzes were lighted, and the workmen themselves withdrew; but, to their horror, they saw a little boy, attracted by the lights, running towards them. Those strong men raised their voices, and shouted to the boy, “Go back! go back!” — they could do no more. But of course the boy, having the same nature as the rest of us, only went the more quickly forward, and into the clangor. Still the men cried, “Go back! go back!” They were like the law, powerless; not because their voices were weak, but because of the material with which they had to deal. But the mother of the boy heard the call, and seeing the fearful peril in which her child was placed, she dropped on one knee, opened her arms wide, and called, “Come to mother! come to mother!” The boy stopped, turned, hesitated a moment, and then ran to her embrace; and in listening to her call, and obeying it, he escaped the danger which threatened him. What all the shouts of the strong men could not do, the gentle voice of the mother accomplished. Their voices were like the law, which says, “Go back! go back!” Her voice was like the sweet sound of the gospel, “Come to Jesus! come to Jesus!” “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son” easily accomplished. Behold here the wisdom, and might, and love of Jehovah!

Is it not a grand thing when a wise person, seeing a difficulty which he did not produce, comes in and sets everything right? Through our sinful flesh there has come a great warp in the original order of things. God cannot be glorified by the law, for we have broken it; and we cannot be saved by the law, for we still continue to break it; but God himself comes in, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

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The law is intended to show man the misery which will fall upon him through his sin. I speak from experience, though young I be; and many of you who hear me will hear this with ears of attention, because you have felt the same. There was a time with me, when but young in years, I felt with much sorrow the evil of sin. My bones waxed old with my roaring all day long. Day and night God’s hand was heavy upon me. There was a time when he seared me with visions, and affrighted me by dreams; when by day I hungered for deliverance, for my soul fasted within me: I feared lest the very skies should fall upon me, and crush my guilty soul. God’s law had got hold upon me, and was strewing me my misery. If I slept at night I dreamed of the bottomless pit, and when I awoke I seemed to feel the misery I had dreamed. Up to God’s house I went, my song was but a groan To my chamber I retired, and there with tears and groans I offered up my prayer, without a hope and without a refuge. I could then say with David, “The owl is my partner and the bittern is my companion,” for God’s law was flogging me with its ten-thonged whip, and then rubbing me with brine afterwards, so that I did shake and quiver with pain and anguish, and my soul chose strangling rather than life, for I was exceeding sorrowful. Some of you have had the same. The law was sent on purpose to do that. But, you will ask, “Why that misery?” I answer, that misery was sent for this reason: that I might then be made to cry to Jesus. Our heavenly Father does not usually make us seek Jesus till he has whipped us clean out of all our confidence; he cannot make us in earnest after heaven till he has made us feel something of the intolerable tortures of an aching conscience, which is a foretaste of hell. Do you not remember, my hearer, when you used to awake in the morning, and the first thing you took up was Alleine’s Alarm, or Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted? Oh, those books, those books; in my childhood I read and devoured them when under a sense of guilt, but they were like sitting at the foot of Sinai. When I turned to Baxter, I found him saying some such things as these:—“Sinner, bethink thee, within an hour thou mayest be in hell. Bethink thee; thou mayest soon be dying-death is even now gnawing at thy cheek. What wilt thou do when thou standest before the bar of God without a Saviour? Wilt thou tell him thou hadst no time to spend on religion? Will not that empty excuse melt into thin air? Oh, sinner, wilt thou, then, dare to insult thy Maker? Wilt thou, then, dare to scoff at him? Bethink thee, the flames of hell are hot and the wrath of God is heavy. Were thy bones of steel, and thy ribs of brass, thou mightest quiver with fear. Oh, hadst thou the strength of a giant, thou couldst not wrestle with the Most High. What wilt thou do when he shall tear thee in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver thee? What wilt thou do when he shall fire off his ten great guns at thee? The first commandment shall say, ‘Crush him; he hath broken me!’ The second shall say, ‘Damn him; he hath broken me!’ Thethen, in their own righteousness. But look! look! look! I see a man coming forward out of that motley throng; he marches forward with a steady step, and with a smiling eye. What! is there any man found who shall dare to approach the dread tribunal of God? What! is there one who dares to stand before his Maker? Yes, there is one; he comes forward, and he cries, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Do you not shudder? Will not the mountains of wrath swallow him? Will not God launch that dreadful thunderbolt against him? No; listen while he confidently proceeds: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that hath risen again.” And I see the right hand of God outstretched—“Come, ye blessed, enter the kingdom prepared for you.” Now is fulfilled the verse which you once sweetly sang:—

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, through thy blood, absolv’d I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”

explains what is common called the threefold use of the law:

“Scripture shows that God intends His law to function in three ways, which Calvin crystalized in classic form for the church’s benefit as the law’s threefold use.

Its first function is to be a mirror reflecting to us both the perfect righteousness of God and our own sinfulness and shortcomings. As Augustine wrote, “the law bids us, as we try to fulfill its requirements, and become wearied in our weakness under it, to know how to ask the help of grace.” The law is meant to give knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-11), and by showing us our need of pardon and our danger of damnation to lead us in repentance and faith to Christ (Gal. 3:19-24).

A second function, the “civil use,” is to restrain evil. Though the law cannot change the heart, it can to some extent inhibit lawlessness by its threats of judgement, especially when backed by a civil code that administers punishment for proven offenses (Deut. 13:6-11; 19:16-21; Rom. 13:3, 4). Thus it secures civil order, and serves to protect the righteous from the unjust.

Its third function is to guide the regenerate into the good works that God has planned for them (Eph. 2:10). The law tells God’s children what will please their heavenly Father. It could be called their family code. Christ was speaking of this third use of the law when He said that those who become His disciples must be taught to do all that He had commanded (Matt. 28:20), and that obedience to His commands will prove the reality of one’s love for Him (John 14:15). The Christian is free from the law as a system of salvation (Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:15-19, 3:25), but is “under the law of Christ” as a rule of life (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2).” ([Source](#))

Related Resources:

- [Threefold Use of the Law](#) - R C Sproul
- [Three Uses of the Law](#)
- [What was the purpose of the Levitical Law?](#)
- [What does it mean that Christians are not under the law?](#)
- [Does God require Sabbath-keeping of Christians?](#)
- [How can we experience true freedom in Christ?](#)
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- [What is the purpose of the Mosaic Law?](#)
- [What is the law of Christ?](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus fulfilled the law, but did not abolish it?](#)
- [Law vs. grace-why is there so much conflict among Christians on the issue?](#)
- [What should Christians learn from the Mosaic Law?](#)

Spurgeon excerpt from his sermon [The Great Birthday and Our Coming of Age](#)

What a difference between the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ when he shows them plainly of the Father and the teaching of the priests when they taught by scarlet wool and hyssop and blood! How different the teaching of the Holy Ghost by the apostles of our Lord (GRACE), and the instruction by meats and drinks and holy days (LAW). The **old economy** is dim with smoke, concealed with curtains, guarded from too familiar an approach; but now we come boldly to the throne, and all with unveiled face behold as in a glass the glory of God. The Christ has come, and now the Kindergarten school is quitted for the college of the Spirit, by whom we are taught of the Lord to know even as we are known. **The hard governorship of the law is over.** Among the Greeks, boys and youths were thought to need a cruel discipline: while they went to school they were treated very roughly by their pedagogues and tutors. It was supposed that a boy could only imbibe instruction through his skin, and that the tree of knowledge was originally a birch; and therefore there was no sparing the rod, and no mitigation of self-denials and hardships. This fitly pictures the work of the law upon those early believers. Peter speaks of it as a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear (Acts 15:10). The law was given amid thunder and flaming fire; and it was more fitted to inspire a wholesome dread than a loving confidence. Those sweeter truths, which are our daily consolation, were hardly known, or but seldom spoken. Prophets did speak of Christ, but they were more frequently employed in pouring out lamentations and denunciations against children that were corrupters. Methinks, one day with Christ was worth a half century with Moses. When Jesus came, believers began to hear of the Father and his love, of his abounding grace, and the kingdom which he had prepared for them. Then the doctrines of eternal love, and redeeming grace, and covenant faithfulness were unveiled; and they heard of the tenderness of the Elder Brother, the grace of the great Father, and the indwelling of the ever-blessed Spirit. It was as if they had risen from servitude to freedom, from infancy to manhood. Blessed were they who in their day shared the privilege of the old economy, for it was wonderful light as compared with heathen darkness; yet, for

all that, compared with the noontide that Christ brought, it was mere candle-light. The ceremonial law held a man in stern bondage: you must not eat this, and you must not go there, and you must not wear this, and you must not gather that. Everywhere you were under restraint, and walked between hedges of thorn. The Israelite was reminded of sin at every turn, and warned of his perpetual tendency to fall into one transgression or another. It was quite right that it should be so, for it is good for a man that, while he is yet a youth, he should bear the yoke, and learn obedience; yet it must have been irksome. When Jesus came what a joyful difference was made. It seemed like a dream of joy, too glad to be true. Peter could not at first believe in it, and needed a vision to make him sure that it was even so. When he saw that great sheet let down, full of all manner of living creatures and four-footed things, and was bidden to kill and eat, he said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." He was startled indeed when the Lord said, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." That first order of things "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation;" but Paul saith, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." Prohibition upon mere ceremonial points, and commands upon carnal matters are now abolished, and great is our liberty: we shall be foolish indeed if we suffer ourselves to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. Our minority was ended when the Lord, who had aforetime spoken to us by his prophets, at last sent his Son to lead us up to the highest form of spiritual manhood.

Christ came, we are told next, to redeem those who were under the law; that is to say, the birth of Jesus, and his coming under the law, and his fulfilling the law, have set all believers free from it as a yoke of bondage. None of us wish to be free from the law as a rule of life; we delight in the commands of God, which are holy, and just, and good. We wish that we could keep every precept of the law, without a single omission or transgression. Our earnest desire is for perfect holiness; but we do not look in that direction for our justification before God. If we be asked to-day, are we hoping to be saved by ceremonies? we answer, "God forbid." Some seem to fancy that baptism and the Lord's Supper have taken the place of circumcision and the Passover, and that while Jews were saved by one form of ceremonial we are to be saved by another. Let us never give place to this idea; no, not for an hour. God's people are saved, not by outward rites, nor forms, nor priestcraft, but because "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law," and he has so kept the law that by faith his righteousness covers all believers, and we are not condemned by the law. As to the moral law, which is the standard of equity for all time, it is no way of salvation for us. Once we were under it, and strove to keep it in order to earn the divine favour; but we have now no such motive. The word was, "This do and thou shalt live," and we therefore strove like slaves to escape the lash, and earn our wage; but it is so no longer. Then we strove to do the Lord's will that he might love us, and that we might be rewarded for what we did; but we have no design of purchasing that favour now, since we freely and securely enjoy it on a very different ground. God loves us out of pure grace, and he has freely forgiven us our iniquities, and this out of gratuitous goodness. We are already saved, and that not by works of righteousness which we have done, or by holy acts which we hope to perform, but wholly of free grace. If it be of grace it is no more of works, and that it is all of grace from first to last is our joy and glory. The righteousness that covers us was wrought out by him that was born of a woman, and the merit by which we enter heaven is the merit, not of our own hands or hearts, but of him that loved us, and gave himself for us. Thus are we redeemed from the law by our Lord's being made under the law; and we become sons and no more servants, because the great Son of God became a servant in our stead.

"What!" saith one; "then do you not seek to do good works?" Indeed we do. We talked of them before, but we actually perform them now. Sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under law, but under grace. By God's grace we desire to abound in works of holiness, and the more we can serve our God the happier we are. But this is not to save ourselves, for we are already saved. O sons of Hagar, ye cannot understand the freedom of the true heir, the child born according to promise! Ye that are in bondage, and feel the force of legal motives, ye cannot understand how we should serve our Father who is in heaven with all our heart and all our soul, not for what we get by it, but because he has loved us, and saved us, irrespective of our works. Yet it is even so; we would abound in holiness to his honour, and praise, and glory, because the love of Christ constraineth us. What a privilege it is to cease from the spirit of bondage by being redeemed from the law! Let us praise our Redeemer with all our hearts.

We are redeemed from the law in its operation upon our mind: it breeds no fear within us now. I have heard children of God say sometimes, "Well, but don't you think if we fall into sin we shall cease to be in God's love, and so shall perish?" This is to cast a slur upon the unchangeable love of God. I see that you make a mistake, and think a child is a servant. Now, if you have a servant, and he misbehaves himself, you say, "I give you notice to quit. There is your wage; you must find another master." Can you do that to your son? Can you do that to your daughter? "I never thought of such a thing," say you. Your child is yours for life. Your boy behaved very badly to you: why did you not give him his wages and start him? You answer, that he does not serve you for wages, and that he is your son, and cannot be otherwise. Just so. Then always know the difference between a servant and a son, and the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

The Uses of the Law

"Wherefore then serveth the law?"—Galatians 3:19

The apostle, by a highly ingenious and powerful argument, had proved that the law was never intended by God for the justification and salvation of man. He declares that God made a covenant of grace with Abraham long before the law was given on Mount Sinai; that Abraham was not present at Mount Sinai, and that, therefore, there could have been no alteration of the covenant made there by his consent; that, moreover, Abraham's consent was never asked as to any alteration of the covenant, without which consent the covenant could not have been lawfully changed, and, besides that, that the covenant stands fast and firm, seeing it was made to Abraham's seed, as well as to Abraham himself. "This I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Therefore, no inheritance and no salvation ever can be obtained by the law. Now, extremes are the error of ignorance. Generally, when men believe one truth, they carry it so far as to deny another; and, very frequently, the assertion of a cardinal truth leads men to generalise on other particulars, and so to make falsehoods out of truth. The objection supposed may be worded thus: "You say, O Paul, that the law cannot justify; surely then the law is good for nothing at all; 'Wherefore then serveth the law?' If it will not save a man, what is the good of it? If of itself it will never take a man to heaven, why was it written? Is it not a useless thing?" The apostle might have replied to his opponent with a sneer—he must have said to him, "Oh, fool, and slow of heart to understand. Is it proved that a thing is utterly useless because it is not intended for every purpose in the world? Will you say that, because iron cannot be eaten, therefore, iron is not useful? And because gold cannot be the food of man, will you, therefore, cast gold away, and call it worthless dross? Yet on your foolish supposition you must do so. For, because I have said the law cannot save, you have foolishly asked me what is the use of it? and you foolishly suppose God's law is good for nothing, and can be of no value whatever." This objection is, generally, brought forward by two sorts of people. First, by mere cavillers who do not like the gospel, and wish to pick all sorts of holes in it. They can tell us what they do not believe; but they do not tell us what they do believe. They would fight with everybody's doctrines and sentiments, but they would be at a loss if they were asked to sit down and write their own opinions. They do not seem to have got much further than the genius of the monkey, which can pull everything to pieces, but can put nothing together. Then, on the other hand, there is the Antinomian, who says, "Yes, I know I am saved by grace alone;" and then breaks the law—says, it is not binding on him, even as a rule of life; and asks, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" throwing it out of his door as an old piece of furniture only fit for the fire, because, forsooth, it is not adapted to save his soul. Why, a thing may have many uses, if not a particular one. It is true that the law cannot save; and yet it is equally true that the law is one of the highest works of God, and is deserving of all reverence, and extremely useful when applied by God to the purposes for which it was intended.

Yet, pardon me my friends, if I just observe that this is a very natural question, too. If you read the doctrine of the apostle Paul you find him declaring that the law condemns all mankind. Now, just let us for one single moment take a bird's eye view of the works of the law in this world. Lo, I see, the law given upon Mount Sinai. The very hill doth quake with fear. Lightnings and thunders are the attendants of those dreadful syllables which make the hearts of Israel to melt. Sinai seemeth altogether on the smoke. The Lord came from Paran, and the Holy One from Mount Sinai; "He came with ten thousand of his saints." Out of his mouth went a fiery law for them. It was a dread law even when it was given, and since then from that Mount of Sinai an awful lava of vengeance has run down, to deluge, to destroy, to burn, and to consume the whole human race, if it had not been that Jesus Christ had stemmed its awful torrent, and bidden its waves of fire be still. If you could see the world without Christ in it, simply under the law you would see a world in ruins, a world with God's black seal put upon it, stamped and sealed for condemnation; you would see men, who, if they knew their condition, would have their hands on their loins and be groaning all their days—you would see men and women condemned, lost, and ruined; and in the uttermost regions you would see the pit that is digged for the wicked, into which the whole earth must have been cast if the law had its way, apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Ay, beloved, the law is a great deluge which would have drowned the world with worse than the water of Noah's flood, it is a great fire which would have burned the earth with a destruction worse than that which fell on Sodom, it is a stern angel with a sword, athirst for blood, and winged to slay; it is a great destroyer sweeping down the nations; it is the great messenger of God's vengeance sent into the world. Apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, the law is nothing but the condemning voice of God thundering against mankind. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" seems a very natural question. Can the law be of any benefit to man? Can that Judge who puts on a black cap and condemns us all this Lord Chief Justice Law, can he help in salvation? Yes, he did; and you shall see how he does it, if God shall help us while we preach. "Wherefore then serveth the law?"

I. The first use of the law is to manifest to man his guilt. When God intends to save a man, the first thing he does with him is to send the law to him, to show him how guilty, how vile, how ruined he is, and in how dangerous a position. You see that man lying there on the edge of the precipice; he is sound asleep, and just on the perilous verge of the cliff. One single movement, and he will roll over and be broken in pieces on the jagged rocks beneath, and nothing more shall be heard of him. How is he to be saved? What shall be done for him—what shall be done! It is our position; we, too, are lying on the brink of ruin, but we are insensible of it. God, when he begins to save us from such an imminent danger, sendeth his law, which, with a stout kick, rouses us up, makes us open our eyes, we look down on our terrible danger, discover our miseries, and then it is we are in a right position to cry out for

salvation, and our salvation comes to us. The law acts with man as the physician does when he takes the film from the eye of the blind. Self-righteous men are blind men, though they think themselves good and excellent. The law takes that film away, and lets them discover how vile they are, and how utterly ruined and condemned if they are to abide under the sentence of the law.

Instead, however, of treating this doctrinally, I shall treat it practically, and come home to each of your consciences. My, hearer, does not the law of God convince you of sin this morning? Under the hand of God's Spirit does it not make you feel that you have been guilty, that you deserve to be lost, that you have incurred the fierce anger of God? Look ye here, have ye not broken these ten commandments; even in the letter have ye not broken them? Who is there among you who hath always honored his father and mother? Who is there among us who hath always spoken the truth? Have we not sometimes borne false witness against our neighbor? Is there one person here who has not made unto himself another God, and loved himself, or his business, or his friends, more than he has Jehovah, the God of the whole earth? Which of you hath not coveted your neighbour's house, or his man-servant, or his ox, or his ass? We are all guilty with regard to every letter of the law; we have all of us transgressed the commandments. And if we really understood these commandments, and felt that they condemned us, they would have this useful influence on us of showing us our danger, and so of leading us to fly to Christ. But, my hearers, does not this law condemn you, because even if you should say you have not broken the letter of it, yet you have violated the spirit of it. What, though you have never killed, yet we are told, he that is angry with his brother is a murderer. As a negro said once, "Sir, I thought me no kill—me innocent there; but when I heard that he that hateth his brother is a murderer, then me cry guilty, for me have killed twenty men before breakfast very often, for I have been angry with many of them very often." This law does not only mean what it says in words, but it has deep things hidden in its bowels. It says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but it means, as Jesus has it, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." It says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," it meaneth that we should reverence God in every place, and have his fear before our eyes, and should always pay respect unto his ordinances and evermore walk in his fear and love. Ay, my brethren, surely there is not one here so fool-hardy in self-righteousness as to say, "I am innocent." The spirit of the law condemns us. And this is its useful property; it humbles us, makes us know we are guilty, and so are we led to receive the Saviour.

Mark this, moreover, my dear hearers, one breach of this law is enough to condemn us for ever. He that breaketh the law in one point is guilty of the whole. The law demands that we should obey every command, and one of them broken, the whole of them are injured. It is like a vase of surpassing workmanship, in order to destroy it you need not shiver it to atoms, make but the smallest fracture in it and you have destroyed its perfection. As it is a perfect law which we are commanded to obey, and to obey perfectly, make but one breach thereof and though we be ever so innocent we can hope for nothing from the law; except the voice, "Ye are condemned, ye are condemned, ye are condemned." Under this aspect of the matter ought not the law to strip many of us of all our boasting? Who is there that shall rise in his place and say, "Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men are?" Surely there cannot be one among you who can go home and say, "I have tithed mint and cummin; I have kept all the commandments from my youth?" Nay, if this law be brought home to the conscience and the heart we shall stand with the publican, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The only reason why a man thinks he is righteous is because he does not know the law. You think you have never broken it because you do not understand it. There are some of you most respectable people; you think you have been so good that you can go to heaven by your own works. You would not exactly say so, but you secretly think so; you have devoutly taken the sacrament, you have been mightily pious in attending your church or chapel regularly, you are good to the poor, generous and upright, and you say, "I shall be saved by my works." Nay, sir, look to the flame that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair. The law can do nothing for us except condemn us. The utmost it can do is to whip us out of our boasted self-righteousness and drive us to Christ. It puts a burden on our backs and makes us ask Christ to take it off. It is like a lancet, it probes the wound. It is, to use a parable as when some dark cellar has not been opened for years and is full of all kinds of loathsome creatures, we may walk through it not knowing they are there. But the law comes, takes the shutters down, lets light in, and then we discover what a vile heart we have, and how unholy our lives have been; and, then, instead of boasting, we are made to fall on our faces and cry, "Lord, save or I perish. Oh, save me for thy mercy's sake, or else I shall be cast away." Oh, ye self-righteous ones now present, who think yourselves so good that ye can mount to heaven by your works—blind horses, perpetually going round the mill and making not one inch of progress—do you think to take the law upon your shoulders as Sampson did the gates of Gaza? Do you imagine that you can perfectly keep this law of God? Will you dare to say, you have not broken it. Nay, surely, you will confess, though it be in but an under tone, "I have revolted." Then, this know: the law can do nothing for you in the matter of forgiveness. All it can do is just this: It can make you feel you are nothing at all; it can strip you; it can bruise you; it can kill you, but it can neither quicken, nor clothe, nor cleanse—it was never meant to do that. Oh, art thou this morning, my hearer, sad, because of sin? Dost thou feel that thou hast been guilty? Dost thou acknowledge thy transgression? Dost thou confess thy wandering? Hear me, then, as God's ambassador, God hath mercy upon sinners. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And though you have broken the law, he has kept it. Take his righteousness to be yours. Cast yourself upon him. Come to him now, stripped and naked and take his robe as your covering, Come to him, black and filthy, and wash yourself in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; and then you shall know "wherefore then serveth the law?" That is the first point.

II. Now, the second. The law serves to slay all hope of salvation of a reformed life. Most men when they discover themselves to

be guilty, avow that they will reform. They say, "I have been guilty and have deserved God's wrath, but for the future I will seek to win a stock of merits which shall counterbalance all my old sins." In steps the law, puts its hand on the sinner's mouth, and says, "Stop, you cannot do that, it is impossible." I will show you how the law does this. It does it partly thus, by reminding the man that future obedience can be no atonement for past guilt. To use a common metaphor that the poor may thoroughly understand me, you have run up a score at your chop. Well, you cannot pay it. You go off to Mrs. Brown, your shopkeeper, and you say to her, "Well, I am sorry, ma'am, that through my husband being out of work," and all that, "I know I shall never be able to pay you. It is a very great debt I owe you, but, if you please ma'am, if you forgive me this debt I will never get into your debt any more; I will always pay for all I have." "Yes," she would say, "but that will not square our accounts. If you do pay for all you have, it would be no more than you ought to do. But what about the old bills? How are they to be receipted? They won't be receipted by all your fresh payments." That is just what men do towards God. "True," they say, "I have gone far astray I know; but then I won't do so any more." Ah, it was time you threw away such child's talk. You do but manifest your rampant folly by such a hope. Can you wipe away your transgression by future obedience? Ah, no. The old debt must be paid somehow. God's justice is inflexible, and the law tells you all your requirements can make no atonement for the past. You must have an atonement through Christ Jesus the Lord. "But," says the man, "I will try and be better, and then I think I shall have mercy given to me." Then the law steps in and says, "You are going to try and keep me, are you? Why, man, you cannot do it." Perfect obedience in the future is impossible. And the ten commandments are held up, and if any awakened sinner will but look at them, he will turn away and say, "It is impossible for me to keep them." "Why, man, you say you will be obedient in the future. You have not been obedient in the past, and there is no likelihood that you will keep God's commandments in time to come. You say you will avoid the evils of the past. You cannot. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.'" But you say "I will take greater heed to my ways." "Sir, you will not; the temptation that overcame you yesterday will overcome you to-morrow. But, mark this, if you could, you could not win salvation by it." The law tells you that unless you perfectly obey you cannot be saved by your doings, it tells you that one sin will make a flaw in it all, that one transgression will spoil your whole obedience. It is a spotless garment that you must wear in heaven; it is only an unbroken law which God can accept. So, then, the law answers this purpose, to tell men that their acquirements, their amendings, and their doings, are of no use whatever in the matter of salvation. It is theirs to come to Christ, to get a new heart and a right spirit; to get the evangelical repentance which needeth not to be repented of, that so they may put their trust in Jesus and receive pardon through his blood. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" It serveth this purpose, as Luther hath it, the purpose of a hammer. Luther, you know, is very strong on the subject of the law. He says, "For if any be not a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, and outwardly refrain from sin, as the Pharisee did, which is mentioned in the gospel, he would swear that he is righteous, and therefore he conceiveth an opinion of righteousness, and presumeth of his good works and merits. Such a one God cannot otherwise mollify and humble, that he may acknowledge his misery and damnation, but by the law, for that is the hammer of death, the thundering of hell, and the lightning of God's wrath, that beateth to powder the obstinate and senseless hypocrites. For as long as the opinion of righteousness abideth in man, so long there abideth also in him incomprehensible pride, presumption, security, hatred of God, contempt of his grace and mercy, ignorance of the promises and of Christ. The preaching of free remission of sins, through Christ, cannot enter into the heart of such a one, neither can he feel any taste or savor thereof; for that mighty rock and adamant wall, to wit, the opinion of righteousness, wherewith the heart is environed, doth resist it. Wherefore the law is that hammer, that fire, that mighty strong wind, and that terrible earthquake rending the mountains, and breaking the rocks, (1 Kings 19:11-13) that is to say, the proud and obstinate hypocrites. Elijah, not being able to abide these terrors of the law, which by these things are signified, covered his face with his mantle. Notwithstanding, when the tempest ceased, of which he was a beholder, there came a soft and a gracious wind, in the which the Lord was; but it behoved that the tempest of fire, of wind, and the earthquake should pass, before the Lord should reveal himself in that gracious wind."

III. And now, a step further. You that know the grace of God can follow me in this next step. The law is intended to show man the misery which will, fall upon him through his sin. I speak from experience, though young I be, and many of you who hear me will hear this with ears of attention, because you have felt the same. There was a time with me, when but young in years, I felt with much sorrow the evil of sin. My bones waxed old with my roaring all day long. Day and night God's hand was heavy upon me. There was a time when he seared me with visions, and affrighted me by dreams; when by day I hungered for deliverance, for my soul fasted within me: I feared lest the very skies should fall upon me, and crush my guilty soul. God's law had got hold upon me, and was strewing me my misery. If I slept at night I dreamed of the bottomless pit, and when I awoke I seemed to feel the misery I had dreamed. Up to God's house I went; my song was but a groan. To my chamber I retired, and there with tears and groans I offered up my prayer, without a hope and without a refuge. I could then say with David, "The owl is my partner and the bittern is my companion," for God's law was flogging me with its ten-thonged whip, and then rubbing me with brine afterwards, so that I did shake and quiver with pain and anguish, and my soul chose strangling rather than life, for I was exceeding sorrowful. Some of you have had the same. The law was sent on purpose to do that. But, you will ask, "Why that misery?" I answer, that misery was sent for this reason: that I might then be made to cry to Jesus. Our heavenly Father does not usually make us seek Jesus till he has whipped us clean out of all our confidence; he cannot make us in earnest after heaven till he has made us feel something of the intolerable tortures of an aching conscience, which has foretaste of hell. Do you not remember, my hearer, when you used to awake in the morning, and the first thing you took up was Alleine's Alarm, or Baxter's Call to the Unconverted? Oh, those books, those books, in

my childhood I read and devoured them when under a sense of guilt, but they were like sitting at the foot of Sinai. When I turned to Baxter, I found him saying some such things as these:—"Sinner, bethink thee, within an hour thou mayest be in hell. Bethink thee; thou mayest soon be dying—death is even now gnawing at thy cheek. What wilt thou do when thou standest before the bar of God without a Saviour? Wilt thou tell him thou hadst no time to spend on religion? Will not that empty excuse melt into thin air? Oh, sinner, wilt thou, then, dare to insult thy Maker? Wilt thou, then, dare to scoff at him? Bethink thee; the flames of hell are hot and the wrath of God is heavy. Were thy bones of steel, and thy ribs of brass, thou mightest quiver with fear. Oh, hadst thou the strength of a giant, thou couldst not wrestle with the Most High. What wilt thou do when he shall tear thee in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver thee? What wilt thou do when he shall fire off his ten great guns at thee? The first commandment shall say, 'Crush him; he hath broken me!' The second shall say, 'Damn him; he hath broken me!' The third shall say, 'A curse upon him; he hath broken me!' And so shall they all let fly upon thee; and thou without a shelter, without a place to flee to, and without a hope." Ah! you have not forgotten the days when no hymn seemed suitable to you but the one that began,

"Stoop down my soul that used to rise

Converse awhile with death

Think how a gasping mortal lies,

And pants away his breath."

Or else,

"That awful day shall surely come,

The 'pointed hour makes haste,

When I must stand before my Judge,

And pass the solemn test."

Ay, that was why the law was sent—to convince us of sin, to make us shake and shiver before God. Oh! you that are self-righteous, let me speak to you this morning with just a word or two of terrible and burning earnestness. Remember, sirs, the day is coming when a crowd more vast than this shall be assembled on the plains of earth; when on a great white throne the Saviour, Judge of men, shall sit. Now, he is come; the book is opened; the glory of heaven is displayed, rich with triumphant love, and burning with unquenchable vengeance; ten thousand angels are on either hand; and you are standing to be tried. Now, self-righteous man, tell me now that you went to church three times a day! Come, man, tell me now that you kept all the commandments! Tell me now that you are not guilty! Come before him with a receipt of your mint, and your anise, and your cummin! Come along with you! Where are you? Oh, you are fleeing. You are crying, "Rocks hide us; mountains on us fall." What are you after, man? Why, you were so fair on earth that none dare to speak to you; you were so good and so comely; why do you run away? Come, man, pluck up courage; come before thy Maker; tell him that thou wert honest, sober, excellent, and that thou deservest to be saved! Why dost thou delay to repeat thy boastings? Out with it—come, say it! No, you will not. I see you still flying, with shrieks, away from your Maker's presence. There will be none found to stand before him, then, in their own righteousness. But look! look! look! I see a man coming forward out of that motley throng; he marches forward with a steady step, and with a smiling eye. What! is there any man found who shall dare to approach the dread tribunal of God? What! is there one who dares to stand before his Maker? Yes, there is one; he comes forward, and he cries, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Do you not shudder? Will not the mountains of wrath swallow him? Will not God launch that dreadful thunderbolt against him? No; listen while he confidently proceeds: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that hath risen again." And I see the right hand of God outstretched—"Come, ye blessed, enter the kingdom prepared for you." Now is fulfilled the verse which you once sweetly sang:—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,

For who aught to my charge shall lay?

While, through thy blood, absolv'd I am

From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

IV. And now, my dear friends, I am afraid of wearying you; therefore, let me briefly hint at one other thought. "Wherefore then serveth the law." It was sent into the world to shew the value of a Saviour. Just as foils set off jewels, and as dark spots make bright tints more bright, so doth the law make Christ appear the fairer and more heavenly. I hear the law of God curse, but how harsh its voice. Jesus says, "Come unto me;" oh, what music! all the more musical after the discord of the law. I see the law condemns; I behold Christ obeying it. Oh! how ponderous that price—when I know how weighty was the demand! I read the commandments, and I find them strict and awfully severe—oh! how holy must Christ have been to obey all these for me! Nothing makes me value my

Saviour more than seeing the law condemn me. When I know this law stands in my way, and like a flaming cherubim will not let me enter paradise, then I can tell how sweetly precious must Jesus Christ's righteousness be, which is a passport to heaven, and gives me grace to enter there.

V. And, lastly, "Wherefore serveth the law." It was sent into the world to keep Christian men from self-righteousness. Christian men—do they ever get self-righteous? Yes, that they do. The best Christian man in the world will find it hard work to keep himself from boasting, and from being self-righteous. John Knox on his death-bed was attacked with self-righteousness. The last night of his life on earth, he slept some hours together, during which he uttered many deep and heavy moans. Being asked why he moaned so deeply, he replied, "I have during my life sustained many assaults of Satan; but at present he has assaulted me most fearfully, and put forth all his strength to make an end of me at once. The cunning Serpent has labored to persuade me, that I have merited heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God, who has enabled me to quench this fiery dart, by suggesting to me such passages as these: 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' and, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'" Yes, and each of us have felt the same. I have often felt myself rather amused at some of my brethren, who have come to me, and said, "I trust the Lord will keep you humble," when they themselves were not only as proud as they were high, but a few inches over. They have been most sincere in prayer that I should be humble, unwittingly nursing their own pride by their own imaginary reputation for humility. I have long since given up entreating people to be humble, because it naturally tends to make them proud. A man is apt to say, "Dear me, these people are afraid I shall be proud; I must have something to be proud of." Then we say to ourselves, "I will not let them see it;" and we try to keep our pride down, but after all, are as proud as Lucifer within. I find that the proudest and most self-righteous people are those who do nothing at all, and have no shadow of presence for any opinion of their own goodness. The old truth in the book of Job is true now. You know in the beginning of the book of Job it is said, "The oxen were ploughing, and the asses were feeding beside them." That is generally the way in this world. The oxen are ploughing in the church—we have some who are laboring hard for Christ—and the asses are feeding beside them, on the finest livings and the fattest of the land. These are the people who have so much to say about self-righteousness. What do they do? They do not do enough to earn a living, and yet they think they are going to earn heaven. They sit down and fold their hands, and yet they are so reverently righteous, because forsooth they sometimes dole out a little in charity. They do nothing, and yet boast of self-righteousness. And with Christian people it is the same. If God makes you laborious, and keeps you constantly engaged in his service, you are less likely to be proud of our self-righteousness than you are if you do nothing. But at all times there is a natural tendency to it. Therefore, God has written the law, that when we read it we may see our faults; that when we look into it, as into a looking-glass, we may see the impurities in our flesh, and have reason to abhor ourselves in sackcloth and ashes, and still cry to Jesus for mercy. Use the law in this fashion, and in no other.

And now, says one, "Sir, are there any here that you have been preaching at?" Yes, I like to preach at people. I do not believe it is of any avail to preach to people; preach right into them and right at them. I find in every circle a class, who say, in plain English, "Well, I am as good a father as is to be found in the parish, I am a good tradesman; I pay twenty shillings in the pound; I am no Sir John Dean Paul; I go to church, or I go to chapel, and that is more than everybody does; I pay my subscriptions—I subscribe to the infirmary; I say my prayers; therefore, I believe I stand as good a chance of heaven as anybody in the world." I do believe that three out of four of the people of London think something of that sort. Now, if that be the ground of your trust, you have a rotten hope; you have a plank to stand upon that will not bear your weight in the day of God's account. As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, "Unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." And if ye think the best performance of your hands can save you, this know, that "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Those who sought not after it have attained it. Wherefore? Because the one hath sought it by faith, the other hath sought it by the deeds of the law, where justification never was to be found. Hear, now, the gospel, men and women; down with that boasting form of your righteousness; away with your hopes, with all your trusts that spring from this—

"Could your tears for ever flow,

Could your zeal no respite know,

All for sin could not atone;

Christ must save, and save alone."

If ye would know how we must be saved, hear this—ye must come with nothing of your own to Christ. Christ has kept the law. You are to have his righteousness to be your righteousness. Christ has suffered in the stead of all who repent. His punishment is to stand instead of your being punished. And through faith in the sanctification and atonement of Christ, you are to be saved. Come, then, ye weary and heavy laden, bruised and mangled by the Fall, come then, ye sinners, come, then, ye moralists, come, then, all ye that have broken God's law and feel it, leave your own trusts and come to Jesus, he will take you in, give you a spotless robe of righteousness, and make you his for ever. "But how can I come?" says one; "Must I go home and pray?" Nay, sir, nay. Where thou

art standing now, thou mayest come to the cross. Oh, if thou knowest thyself to be a sinner, now—I beseech you, ere thy foot shall leave the floor on which thou standest—now, say this—

"Myself into thy arms I cast:

Lord, save my guilty soul at last."

Now, down with you, away with your self-righteousness. Look to me—look, now; say not, "Must I mount to heaven and bring Christ down?" "The word is nigh thee, on thy mouth and in thy heart; if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart, thou shalt be saved." Yes, thou—thou—thou. Oh! I bless God, we have heard of hundreds who have in this place believed on Christ. Some of the blackest of the human race have come to me but even lately, and told me what God has done for them. Oh, that you, too, would now come to Jesus. Remember, he that believeth shall be saved, be his sins never so many; and he that believeth not, must perish, be his sins never so few. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would lead you to believe; so should ye escape the wrath to come, and have a place in paradise among the redeemed!

The Law That Sets You Free

Dave Roper

(from Growing Slowly Wise)

Obedience is the road to Freedom. —C. S. Lewis

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.—James 1:19–25

James has been writing about the "word of truth," our sure defense against the devil. "This" [what he has written] "you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger" (James 1:19 NASB).

"Quick to hear" is an old rabbinical saying: "Quick to hear and slow to forget; he is wise."

It's not enough merely to know the Word. We must "listen [to it]" and "do what it says."

Here James enjoins the necessity of response. The difference made by the Word is the difference it makes in us, but for it to make any difference at all we must decide whether we will receive it with humility or place ourselves in opposition to it.

The point James makes is complementary to Jesus' parable of the sower and the seeds (Matthew 13:1–9). The seed is the Word that is "planted" in us. It comes to us through reading, through preaching and teaching and the counsel of wise friends. If we are good soil it will implant itself in us, take root, and eventually bear fruit. If we do not receive the Word it will go some other place and find root in someone else, happily producing the fruit of the Spirit. We will, however, have disturbed ourselves and become very unsound—angry and full of neurotic aggression.

The word James uses, translated "angry," suggests an ambient (in contrast to transient) anger. Archbishop Richard Trench defines it as "a settled habit of mind." It is deep-seated hostility and bitterness of soul, a restless, argumentative spirit that inveighs against righteousness, the goal to which this book is directed.

Odd isn't it, that when we will not "do" the Word—when we see our sin mirrored on its pages and walk away defiant, unrepentant—we degenerate into resentment against God and His people. That's because there is no moral stasis. We're either becoming more gentle and gracious, or more warped and embittered. There is, as philosophers say, no tertium quid—no third thing.

The way to grow in grace is to be "quick to listen"—to hear what God is saying to us. That's an idea James sets in contrast to being "slow to speak [talk]," i.e., chatter on about God's Word—analyzing it, dissecting it, abstracting it, all the while building walls of pride and reason so the heart can remain independent. "Saying and not doing," as you may know, is one of James' dominant themes.

James is concerned here with our tendency to approach the Bible as an object of intellectual curiosity—to study it assiduously, to

talk about it incessantly, but do nothing with the data we collect. This, James says, is like looking into a mirror and seeing dirt on our faces, but choosing to do nothing about it. We believe the Word, but we do not think in terms of repentance, faith, and obedience. Such reading, James insists, is downright dangerous.

C. S. Lewis has this sort of person in mind when he has his senior demon, Screwtape, give the following advice to his nephew, Wormwood:

The great thing is to prevent his (Wormwood's new Christian client) doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance. Let the little brute wallow in it. Let him, if he has any bent that way, write a book about it; that is often an excellent way of sterilizing the seeds which the Enemy plants in a human soul. Let him do anything but act. No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will.

The problem is that the more we keep the Word out of our will the more theoretical, abstract, and distant God becomes. Then terrible things begin to happen to us: our hearts begin to harden (because un-lived truth always brutalizes us), coldness sets in, and eventually bitterness overwrites our souls.

Truth does call for some discussion and understanding, but not as much as we think. There is an order in the way God reveals truth and that order is inviolate: He speaks; we obey; He explains—maybe.

It is simply not true that we must understand a text before we can obey it. God is not obligated to explain anything to us and there are some things He will never be able to explain until we get to heaven and have His pure heart. We must obey whether we understand or not. We must put an end to our garrulous, restless quibbling about God's Word and "humbly accept" it.

James' word, "humbly," is a great Greek word with no exact English equivalent. It refers to one who is teachable, tractable, modest enough to take counsel and learn. It is one who is willing to bow before each word in humble submission.

As T. S. Eliot put it:

You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel.

Note James' order: we must rid ourselves of "all moral filth and evil." "Moral filth" is anything that is dirty and that defiles us as human beings. (The word meant "earwax" in ancient medical textbooks.) "Evil" is a generic term for anything ugly and demeaning that "entwines itself" (the meaning of "prevalent") around our souls and entangles us.

James is not insisting that we set ourselves right before the Word can set us right. No, James is concerned here with a disposition, a fundamental willingness to put off anything that defiles us, body, soul, or spirit.

What James means is this: if we find ourselves reading the Word and unchanged by it, it may be that there is some unwillingness in us to let God repair everything that is unworthy or wrong. Unreadiness and resistance tie His hands.

What is the solution? To "humbly accept the Word," to drop our defensive posture, to read with a readiness to obey so the seed can germinate in the soft and yielding soil of our souls.

God can then use His Word to probe and delve into our pride, avarice, greed, hateful thoughts, resentful grudges, and indifference to human need. He can disinter the buried secrets and dark thoughts in us that so deeply defile us. He can speak to every harmful habit, every bad attitude, every troubling perspective, every destructive way of relating to others. He can begin to deal with all evil, malignant attitudes and actions—if we are willing to relinquish them. If we put ourselves in God's hands, He can and will begin to change us.

That's what James means by the "Perfect Law." It is perfect in that there is no law that is any better; it is perfecting in that there is no law that can make us any better. It is intended to move us toward God's perfect end—conformity to the character of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the Word "gives freedom." "The wise man alone is free," said the Stoic philosophers, "and every foolish man is a slave." Freedom is not the power to do what we want. (That's the worst sort of slavery.) It is the power to do what we should—to be godlike in all we do and say.

There is power in the Word. Those who look intently into Christ's perfect law and are ready to do it "will be blessed in their doing"—enriched and strengthened by God's grace to conform to His will. Change requires an alteration of our wills, but it is an alteration that cannot take place apart from Almighty intervention. Without God working through His Word we can do nothing; but with Him all things are possible. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," Jesus said, "for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

What I'm saying is this: the greatest enjoyment of the fruitfulness of the Word is available to those who interfere with it least. The Word will do its work if we receive it with a "noble and good heart" (Luke 8:15). Those willing to cooperate with God—who will let Him do whatever He wants to do, however and whenever He wants to do it—will yield a bumper crop of righteousness. God wills us whole and happy, and it will happen if we don't get in the way.

This sentiment is one piece with what James has been saying all along: God's intention is to make us full and complete. It's not that judgment will fall on us if we fail to make the proper response to His Word, it's rather that we miss out on all the good God has in store for us.

For a plant, the failure to bear fruit is not a punishment visited upon it, but an unhappy departure from the purpose for which it was created. So with us. Resistance to God's Word means that we miss out on the very purpose for which we were made—our freedom, our fruitfulness, our fullness.

In other words, if I make a deficient response to the Word of God I have not merely failed to live up to a set of rules God made up and handed down. I have failed to live up to my identity and destiny as a person. That is my tragedy.