



Devotional Study Guide Journal

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The Law's Loving Purpose

From Chapter 5 of Know and Believe: A Lifetime Journey toward Rediscovering God's Love for You by C. D. Hildebrand

One evening while teaching a series on the difference between the Old and New Covenants, I gave a multiple-choice question as an introduction for one of the lessons. It went something like this.

As New Covenant believers, the Ten Commandments are:

- a. Our moral guide.*
- b. The ministry of death*
- c. The ministry of condemnation*
- d. Still a requirement for us to follow.*
- e. a and d*
- f. b and c*

The look on the gentleman's face who sat on the pew in front of me was unforgettable when it was revealed the answer was f. His mouth dropped open as his eyes read the answer again with a question mark creased in his forehead. He was visibly unsettled and then looked at me wide-eyed and baffled, nearly trembling. Then I shared the following verse with the class.

2 Corinthians 3:5-11

*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.⁷ But if the **ministry of death, written and engraved on stones**, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?⁹ For if the **ministry of condemnation** had glory, the ministry of righteousness*

exceeds much more in glory. ¹⁰ For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. ¹¹ For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

In Need of a Tutor

As those who now understand we are not in any way under the law of Moses, we are sometimes baffled as to why God would institute what Paul called the ministry of death and condemnation in the first place. Some believe it never was God's intention to establish the law but rather think the law was a reaction to the people's demands God speak to them through Moses. Whatever one's particular view on this subject might be, Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament letters, taught that the law had a specific plan and purpose.

First, the law set a moral standard for the nation of Israel by giving them very specific instructions about every aspect of life. Those of us who put our faith in Jesus are new creations. We are free from and dead to sin (Rom. 6). The Holy Spirit guides us from *within*. The grace of God teaches us to deny worldly lusts. The Israelites did not have these blessings. They needed *external* guidance as to what was acceptable behavior. They were like young children who needed to be told what was right and wrong.

Galatians 3:19-23

*What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. ²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ **But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.***

The law was perfect but didn't give life. The Ten Commandments were necessary to guide the people until faith would come. The phrase "faith would come" refers to the covenant in which we live. We are saved and live by grace through faith in Jesus. They were blessed and not cursed by obeying the law.

It cannot be emphasized enough. Under the New Covenant we are made righteous by faith not by following the law (Gal. 2:21). We are taught by the grace of God (Ti. 2:11-12), not by the law. We are led by the Spirit of God, not the law (Rom. 8:14). This is true because when we “came to faith” in Jesus Christ, we entered into His New Covenant, and most amazingly were made new creations and are made spiritually alive. We DO NOT NEED the law to save us, teach us, or guide us!

Galatians 3:24-26

*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by **faith**. ²⁵ **BUT after faith has come, we are NO LONGER under a tutor.** ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through **faith** in Christ Jesus.*

The law was lovingly designed to curb the growth of evil on the earth while leading man to Christ. All around them while in Egypt, the nation of Israel witnessed the continued growth of immorality and idolatry. However, God chose Israel to be set apart in order to bring forth the Seed who would die for all. Otherwise, mankind would have reverted to the same state in which it existed prior to the flood had it not been for the demands of the law.

The law’s primary purpose now is to lead people to Christ, so that they might be forgiven and thus righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. Not until Jesus’ death and resurrection could we be completely forgiven of all sin forever.

The Lawful Use of the Law

It is important to notice in Romans 7 that Paul does not say the law died in order for us to be free from it. He states we died to the law. In other words, the law is obviously still in existence, but we are no longer under the law but under grace and therefore no longer under the dominion of sin.

Romans 7:4-6

*Therefore, my brethren, you also have become **dead to the law** through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the **sinful passions which were aroused by the law** were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. ⁶ But now we have been **delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by**, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

Romans 6:14

*For sin shall not have dominion over you, **because** you are not under law but under grace.*

If the law arouses sinful passions, would it not have been a good idea to slay it as well? Why does it go on existing if it is the ministry of death and of condemnation? It is because the law still has a lawful purpose.

1 Timothy 1:8-11

*But we know that the law is good **if one uses it lawfully**,⁹ knowing this: that the law is **not made for a righteous person**, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the **ungodly and for sinners**, for the unholly and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.*

The only lawful use of the law today is to instruct unbelievers who are breaking the law that they need a Savior to set them free from the law's power over them. No one can make themselves righteous. They can try really hard to live a good life, but they will fall short of God's very high standards. As we quoted above, the law is a tutor to lead us to Christ. That is its only legitimate use of it. The law is not needed to teach or guide Christians. It can never make anyone righteous because righteousness is by *faith* in Jesus Christ alone.

Let me try to give some simple examples by asking these questions. Is it better for children to behave because they fear punishment and desire reward, or don't we prefer they obey because they *want* to? Both motivations result in good behavior, but only one of these are the result of a changed child.

Which marital love would you prefer to receive, a mandated love motivated by threatened punishment and promised reward or a love coming freely from the heart? The same is true of any relationship. No one wants to be obliged to be a friend to another, nor do we want to be "loved" by someone under coercion.

Many Christians today live holy and disciplined lives because they want God's love and favor and/or are afraid of His punishment. This was God's plan for those under the Old Covenant because He knew their sinful natures would tend toward unrighteousness (which is clearly demonstrated again and again), but His loving purpose of the law was to lead the nation

to Christ which would result in them being changed so they would *want* to please Him out of love for Him without the need for reward or punishment.

Saving Mankind

God's goal before time began was to bring a Savior into the world. We might not understand the intricacies of God's timing, but we know His intent was to keep evil at bay until Jesus would come. He chose to do this through the children of Abraham, and though they failed many times, His law continued to guide them to the moment when Jesus would arrive and save them. All of this elaborate planning was motivated by His intense love for them and for us—for you.

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Romans 7:5-6



Continuing the Journey

Law vs. Grace

When Jesus died on the cross, He did not say, "It is started." He said, "It is finished." Yet, there are many believers who firmly believe we are saved by grace through faith but that after we've been redeemed we live by law through works. Jesus saved them with unconditional love, but they have come to believe His love for them now as His child, is conditional on what they do and don't do.

When studying Scripture, they make little distinction between what God said and how He related to people before the cross and how He relates to people now. This brings about confusion because the same God who said to the Children of Israel under the law, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from

you, so that He will not hear,” says to those under the New Covenant, “I will never leave you or forsake you—no, not ever,” (Isa. 59:2, Heb. 13:5).

Which is it? Is God’s back turned to you with His fingers in His ears refusing to hear you or help you when you call upon Him because you are not behaving perfectly, or is He living inside of you having promised to never ever leave you? **If you think you are under the law and its blessings and curses, you will continue to struggle to know and believe God loves you.** When hardship comes your way as it does to every person on the planet, you might tend to think God is punishing you and simply accept it instead of turning to Him for deliverance.

If we do not understand that we are not under the law, we cannot fully understand grace because when we add law, any law, to grace, grace is negated.

Romans 11:6

And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

1. As you think on these things, how might trying to live in both covenants confuse someone on the topic of God’s love?
2. If the above question applies to you, what has changed (or needs to change) in your understanding of God’s immense love for you since you understood you are not under any part of the law?
3. How can a pastor or teacher in the body of Christ help those who are being saved to understand the topic of this chapter? What could youth pastors do differently? What about worship leaders and Sunday School teachers?

