

The Law's Loving Purpose

From: **Know and Believe:**

A Lifetime Journey toward Rediscovering God's Love for You

Taken from Chapter 5: The Law's Loving Purpose

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 that 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 that it was a response to the people's demands to speak to them through Moses. Whatever one's particular view on that 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 have put our faith in Jesus have been made 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. ²⁰Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. ²¹Is 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. ²²But 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.** ²⁶For 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 our righteousness will no longer be that of keeping the law, but by believing in Jesus Christ. Not until Jesus' death and resurrection could we be completely forgiven of all sin forever.