

Why the 10 Commandments? #1 of 3; Why God made rules - 20200704

Hi all,

I closed the last series on grace asking why then did God give the law? If grace empowers, if it has purpose and is holy, teaches and establishes our heart, why would we have ever needed 10 Commandments?

Here is the answer: Ignorant but guilty

Sin came upon all mankind, but man didn't know what it was when they sinned, so couldn't be held accountable:

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death came through that sin, so death has passed to all mankind. For before the law (of Moses) was given, sin was in the world, but there is no account of sin kept when there is no law. Yet death still ruled from Adam to Moses (when God gave the law), even in the lives of those who didn't sin in the same way as Adam." Romans 5: 12-14:

That was God's problem - man had sinned yet had no idea what sin was, so He could not hold anyone accountable.

Earlier in 4:15 Paul had made the same statement: "...where there is no law, there is no transgression."

Mankind did not have any standard in the earth that told them about right and wrong, sin and life - they were sinning and dying and not knowing why. What was God to do?

Think about it. From Adam to Noah's no one had ever said there was any absolute right and wrong. The same with Abraham - he walked with God, but God never gave him a list of absolutes that were right, and absolutes that were wrong. The same in the time of Joseph and Pharaoh. We take it for granted that stealing is wrong, but that wasn't known back in the day. Who said stealing my neighbor's cow is wrong? You and what army?

Who says it is wrong to murder my neighbor and take his property? You and what higher authority? There was none.

Paul spoke of those times in Acts 14: 16-17: "God made the heavens and earth and sea and everything in them. In times past He let all nations go their own way. But He did not leave Himself without a witness in that He did good, giving you rain and crops and seasons and filling your hearts with joy with good harvests..."

And in Acts 17: 29-30 he said this: "...we should not think God is made of gold, silver, or stone, an image made by man. In the past God overlooked such ignorance..."

So He had a problem - man was sinning, man was in idolatry, man was ignorant of sin and righteousness, but He could not hold them accountable. What was He to do?

Introducing Moses and the Law

Paul provides the solution in Romans 3: 10-19: "...as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks after God...and whatever the law says, it is (given) for those who are under its authority so that the whole world may be silenced from excuses and the whole world may be accountable before God.

Paul said in Romans 7:7 the law brought the knowledge of sin. The law defined sin for mankind. Because sin was running unrestrained in the lives of ignorant mankind from Adam to Moses, God gave the law to define for mankind what was sin and what was righteousness. He had to define for them what was good and what was evil. This made the whole world guilty for they suddenly saw their sinfulness. *

It was like blinders being taken off, for before the law they did not know there was a standard of right and wrong. No one had definitively said there were absolutes: It is wrong to lie, to steal, to murder, to lust after someone else's spouse or possessions, and so on.

God gave the Law to Moses in 3 parts: Worship law which told how sinful man might approach God, dietary/sanitary law which told them how to eat and behave wisely so they may stay free from sickness and disease, and moral law, which told how they should treat one another.

These 3 categories took 613 commands (the most commonly agreed to number), which are summed up by 10 Commandments, which are themselves divided into 2 sections: God and man. They are summed up by 2: "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12: 30-31)

Paul would later tell the Galatians in 3: 19 and 21 that the law was added because of sin, and if a law could have been given that would have given life, God would have given it.

We saw in Romans his statements that the law was given because of sin, but his statement that if it were possible for eternal life to be given by a law, a rule, a formula, God would have given it. His point was that the law does nothing but show a person they are guilty. It does not impart life. That's why Paul wrote in I Timothy 1:9:

"The law is not made for a righteous man..." and the reason is that the law was given to educate mankind what sin is and that they are guilty of sin. That's it. Paul's point is that grace has now come, so we know what sin is, we have the Answer, and in Him we are at peace with God.

Next week; Why living by legalism at its root, tries to manipulate God by formula, declarations, and performance based faith, all while not actually knowing Him and His heart.

Until then, blessings,

John Fenn

www.cwow.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com

Why the 10 Commandments? #2 of 3; Effects of legalism - 20200711

Hi all,

Last week I established why God gave the Mosaic law - because sin was in the world but up to that point no one knew exactly what sin was. There was no standard of absolutes, no knowledge of right and wrong until God gave those absolutes to Moses.

It was God who said not to look on the nakedness of another man's wife or daughter. It was God who said if you're responsible for something it is a sin to blame someone else for your conduct. It was God who said it was wrong to lust after your neighbor's shiny new chariot and to be happy for them and happy with your 10 year old model.

Following the rules didn't and doesn't pave the road to heaven

The rich young ruler said he had kept all the law since his youth, yet recognized he didn't have eternal life - he was right before God and man, but didn't have the life of God.

The writer of Hebrews said this in 7:19: "For the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand, a better hope is offered by which we draw near to God." If you grew up in a religious home or a religious church, you realized you could never be perfect enough for your parent, or your pastor, or (you thought) for God. The law makes nothing perfect. You can never do what you need to do to make mom happy. To make dad happy. To make God happy.

Abel and Cain brought offerings to the Lord. Abel submitted to righteousness and offered an innocent animal's blood as a covering for his sin, but Cain offered the work of his own efforts, vegetables, to God. God accepted the blood but not the vegetables.

Cain is the father of false religions for that reason. All other religions are man's efforts to come to God on man's own terms, with the exception of Christianity, in which God came to man on His terms. God says 'forsake your ways and your thoughts (and come up to mine), for my ways and my thoughts are higher than yours...' (Isaiah 55)

So if a Christian fasts to influence God, or gives money to try to move God, or works long hours at church thinking God is pleased and therefore He might heal a loved one - all those things are like Cain offering vegetables to God. The law makes nothing perfect.

I fast because I want to quiet myself before God that I might become more sensitive. I give because I first give myself to the Lord in love, and then give to man from that love. I serve people because I love them for Christ also died and lived for them as well as me. I do all things from the inside out, not from the outside in.

What Paul said:

Last week I quoted Paul when he said the law, legalism, brought the knowledge of sin. He also said this:

"...the strength of sin is the law." I Corinthians 15: 56

Legalism actually opens the door for sin, strengthening any tendency for sin in our lives. Look at Cain. Resentment he had towards Abel sprung up when his offering was not accepted - he became angry at his brother, not God. Trying to come to God in his own legal structure strengthened sin in him.

You know how diets go. The more you have said you will not have dessert today, the more you think about dessert all that day. An old time minister observed in his day the churches that preached the most about teens abstaining from premarital sex had the most pregnant teenagers in their congregation. The more they preached against alcohol the more drunks were among their members. Living by an external law actually strengthens sin in one's life because you're always trying to measure up to those impossible standards, fail, and go to that weakness.

Legalism measures only the external

Paul said in I Timothy 1:8-9 that the law is good if you use it right, but the law is not made for a righteous person. There is value obviously in knowing the absolutes, knowing how we should and should not act. There is value to it.

Our faith actually confirms the law for God's standard is now in us in Christ. In Romans 3:31 Paul said our faith actually establishes, or confirms (the value) of the law. When I don't lie but instead tell the truth, I am doing it because Christ has made me an honest man, not because God told Moses it is a sin to lie. But by not lying I establish and confirm the law.

But if you live by a rigid external scaffolding of rules and regulations you think God wants of you, instead of walking with Christ in you, you will only harm yourself and become frustrated with God and man.

In Romans 4:15 it says, "The law works wrath", and that is true. Those who are legalistic are the most angry and unhappy people around. They have a set of right and wrong and they get very upset if they think someone is not living up to those standards - the result is wrath, that explosive, boiling inside, anger that explodes one day.

The letter kills

In II Corinthians 3: 6, 7, 9 Paul observes several things, first of which is this; "...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Anyone who grew up in a legalistic home with rigid rules that upon breaking, brought down the wrath of your mom or dad, knows the letter of the law kills. It kills the relationship a child has with their parent. It kills the relationship a church member has with their church and/or pastor. If they perceive God is like that, it can kill one's walk with God.

In v7 he calls the law the 'ministry of death' and in v9 'the ministry of condemnation'. Living a religious life by the law kills, gives strength to sin, causes wrath, condemns, produces death, and is therefore not for a righteous person.

Yet how many millions of people through the centuries have thought God wanted them to jump through hoops or over hurdles to please Him?

How Abraham changed everything

Abraham grew up in Mesopotamia, a land with gods and goddesses for every purpose and every occasion. If you wanted your crop of Einkorn or Emmer wheat to be blessed (ancient kinds of wheat you can still buy today, even online, largely unchanged from the days of Abraham), the resident of Mesopotamia would take a sample of seed to the temple, make an offering to the fertility god or goddess, have sex with the temple prostitute to seal the deal, and hope you they had appeased that god or goddess to bless this year's crop. That was the religious legal system.

When Abraham came to know God, that religious system became obsolete. God stepped out of eternity to have a relationship with man. The God who entered into covenant with Abraham could not be bought. He could not be forced, manipulated, nor controlled. Abraham entered into a relationship based religion with the unseen God. The Bible calls that 'faith'. Faith responds within the framework of one's walk with God. Faith is our response to grace.

Abraham discovered faith wasn't about molding God into his image and what he wanted in life, it was about him being molded into God's image and what He wanted in life. Balancing grace and faith is next week, until then, blessings,

John Fenn

www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com

Why the 10 Commandments? #3 of 3, Balancing grace & faith - 20200718

Hi all,

How do we live in the empowerment of grace while surrounded by a religious world that would like to externally control us by their rules? I closed last week talking about when God came into personal relationship with Abraham it made all religious formulas obsolete.

Perfect in the law yet they knew they didn't have Life

The Rich Young Ruler came to Jesus asking, "Good Master, what must I do to have eternal life?" in Matthew 19: 16.

He told the Lord he kept all the law since a youth, yet realized obeying those rules had not brought him eternal life.

The Jewish leader Nicodemus came to Jesus by night in John 3, seeking the same eternal life. Peter acknowledged when others turned away, that Jesus had eternal life, in John 6:68. Paul stated in Philippians 3: 4-8 before he knew the Lord he too was perfect in the law, yet needed Christ.

These men realized that obeying the Law of Moses did not bring them eternal life. All the law did was point out sin and provide a way to temporarily remove sin between a person and God in this life; it had little to do with eternal life. How sad it is today that some Christians believe that obeying the Mosaic law will assure them a place in heaven, when in fact the law makes nothing perfect and therefore cannot give eternal life. As already covered, Paul said if there could have been a law that would have granted eternal life, God would have given it. (Galatians 3:21)

Grace is harder than the law

I have shared how the law was divided into 3 categories: Worship, dietary/sanitary, and moral. Those 613 laws are not impossible to follow, for the Rich Young Ruler and the apostle Paul both stated they were blameless in the Law. They weren't perfect people, but when they missed God they made the appropriate sacrifices or offerings, and were restored.

But now we have the living Christ in our spirit. In Hebrews 9: 16-17 the writer says a testament (a Last Will and Testament) is not put in force unless the one who made the Will dies. His point is that when Jesus died it caused His Will to be put in force, but then He was raised from the dead by the Father so that He might become the Executor of His own estate. An Executor oversees the Will to make sure the wishes of the one who made it is enforced. That is one reason we have Christ in us - He died to put it

into effect, and rose to oversee its execution from within us. Think of that. From within us He oversees the execution of His Testament - His Will.

That is much more difficult for us than merely obeying 613 rules. Now God Himself lives in us to oversee our lives from the inside. Under the law I could steal from my neighbor, get caught, apologize and make sacrifice to God, and be clean before God, all while still hating my neighbor and continuing to hold resentment against him.

In grace I cannot hate my neighbor in my heart because Christ is in there too - so He deals with me about my love walk. He is observing and weighing out the content and motives of my heart, and deals with me to forgive and walk in love.

The law measures outward performance; grace measures the heart. That's why grace is harder than the law.

'Liberal Christians' and grace

As already shared, Paul said in Romans 3:31 we confirm the law when we walk with the Lord, because the law shows righteous living - we don't steal, lie, covet, but instead are honest, accountable for our lives, generous with others, and so on. The law provides the moral structure by which we live, while led by the Perfect One inside us who leads us on how to walk in that righteousness.

The law of Moses was purposely vague, for there is no way a mere 613 rules could be applied to every situation of every person who has ever or would ever live. Even by the time of Jesus the religious leaders had added their own 800 or so rules on top of the law of Moses, trying to remove any ambiguity.

The vagueness was done on purpose by God so that man would have to actually walk with God to know how to apply the law in any given situation. But that vagueness gave rise to different streams of Judaism who interpreted the vagueness one way or the other. This happened with Christians, for the denominations are largely due to either the vagueness of the law or the desire to emphasize one truth over other truths. The Baptists water baptize the whole person, the Methodists (at their founding) had a 'method' of waiting on God, the Lutherans follow Martin Luther and the Presbyterians are run by the presbytery (council of old men), and on it goes. The charismatics call their churches anything from 'grace' to 'living water' to 'life' or 'glory' or whatever other element they wish to emphasize.

But life requires actually knowing God, walking with God, to understand how to apply His moral law in life.

If a Christian does not retain the moral framework the law describes, they are not using the law wisely. So a Christian can love the Lord, yet choose to ignore the part of God's moral law concerning for instance male-female/male-male, and female/female relationships, even believing modern views that are clearly in contrast to the law. Yet they love the Lord. They often react out of hurt or protection for the hurting, not able to reconcile God's absolutes with their love for that person or persons who are dealing with those issues. So they love God but disagree with the moral law He gave.

The focus is on the Father AND the Lord

In I John 1:3 the apostle wrote that he was writing that they may have fellowship with him, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

There are no prayers in the New Testament to Jesus. From the Lord's prayers to the Acts 4: 24-30 prayer after being threatened by the religious leaders, to Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:17-20 and 3: 14-19, they are all to the Father. When we are told to come boldly to the throne in Hebrews 4:16, if you read the context, it is to the Father. It is the Father the apostle John sees in the whole of The Revelation 4, and to whom in 5:7 the Lamb that had been slain comes to 'take the book out of the right hand of Him who sits on the throne.'

If you want to walk empowered in the grace of the Father which was enabled through the work of Jesus, then talk to the Father. Ask of Him. Even Jesus said in John 16:23 in the days after He is taken away, "You will ask me nothing, but you will ask the Father in my name."

It is very simple - drop all religious exercise, and spend that time you would go through your formulas in giving thanks to the Father. Talk to the Father, find reasons to be thankful, directing worship to Him. He is the source of all good things. Thank Him for the sunrise, for the clouds, for the heat, for the cold, for the favor at the store, for the safe walk, safe trip, for guiding your footsteps. For letting you see the deer that crossed your path, for letting you see the pretty bird, for letting you see the silly squirrel and his antics. Give thanks, learn to shift your attention down into your spirit, for that is where you will find Him.

He isn't always verbal, but He is present in a most powerful way if you learn to turn your mind to focus to your spirit, and you can fellowship with the Father there - and the Lord too. And you can learn to distinguish between the voice of the Father or the Lord as the Holy Spirit communicates what He receives from them. (John 16:12-13, I Corinthians 2: 9-12).

Stop being religious, and just walk with the Father and Lord. The focus is on the Father, as Jesus' focus was, who said He only spoke and taught what He had seen and heard the Father do or say first. (John 5: 19, 30). May we live our lives like that. It is a life-long process, but if you seek Him directly and not through religious gymnastics, but directly, your heart to His heart, it will open a whole new realm. You'll find yourself surrounded by religious people while you walk quietly on, hand in hand so to speak, with the Lord and our Father. Amen. New subject next week, until then, blessings,

John Fenn

www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com