

## THE DECALOGUE (THE TEN COMMANDMENTS)

"Are the Ten Commandments For Believer's Today?"

### INTRODUCTION

Dispensationalists like some of the Baptists and Charismatics would say that the Ten Commandments have been abrogated and not for Christians today. They would probably regard the Ten Commandments like old newspapers to be discarded. To discard the Ten Commandments is like a man prospecting for gold, then finds the largest gold nugget, and throws it away because he is not able to recognize gold when he sees it! Dispensationalists want to live holy lives but they throw away the Ten Commandments which is the yardstick that is not only the standard to measure holiness but is the guide to holy living!

This afternoon we shall study the Scriptures to discover how the Law of God (especially the Ten Commandments) is the lamp unto our feet and light unto our path! Before we begin, we need to understand that the Gentiles do not have the Law of God in their hearts.

**I. Gentiles and the Law of God in their hearts? -- Romans 2:13-15 (KJV),** *“(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)”*

i. Hearers versus Doers – 2:13

The logic of law is that the person who hears the law must do the law. The singular purpose of the law is that the law must be obeyed. The laws of God were given to be "done." This is called the "works of the law." Not to "do the Law" would make the hearing of God's Law vanity.

The justification of God is very clearly taught here. The ones who are considered just in the eyes of God are the obedient ones, not the possessors of the Law. The Bible is not talking about another way of salvation here, especially for those who have not heard the gospel. Paul is also not saying that man can be saved by obeying the Law. What the Bible is arguing is that the Jews say that they are righteous in God's sight because they ARE THE POSSESSORS OR GUARDIANS OF GOD'S LAW; but God says, it is not possible. The Jews have missed the point. One must be a "doer of the Law" to be just in the eyes of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught the same truth. The doer of the Law must do the Law perfectly from the day he is born to the day he dies. If he so much as breaks one of the laws, he has broken all the laws. All that he has done will come to naught! The standard for doers of the law is perfection. NOTE: PAUL IS NOT TEACHING salvation by works. All are born and conceived in sin. They are already disqualified i.e. broken the Law even before they begin.] Paul is trying to prove to the Jews that they are also sinners like the Gentiles by using the Law of God i.e. special revelation to do so!

**Matthew 7:24-27,** *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."*

ii. Gentile example – 2:14-15

The apostle Paul then uses the Gentiles as an example to drive home the above point. The Gentiles were not made guardians of God's Law. They never had the Law. The phrase "which have not the law" literally means "the ones who continually do not have the law." However, if they do the things that are in the Law even though they do not have the Law, God says that they are the ones who have actually obeyed the Law. The Gentiles who do not have the inspired Law of God but do **"the things contained in the law"** such as obey parents, love parents, do not get angry easily, tell the truth, and care for their children, **"are a law unto themselves."**

The phrase **"are a law unto themselves"** means that these laws that the Gentiles obey are a law to them even though they are not given the actual Law of God. In other words, they have captured the essence of what the Law of God was meant to be when God first gave them to Israel. God's laws were never meant to be listened to only, to tickle the ears, without obedience. The Law was given to Israel for Israel to OBEY and to live out in their lives so that Israel would be a light to a world that is in darkness. The Law was given to show how great sinners Israel was so that she would repent of her sins and find salvation in Christ both in OT times as well as in NT times.

NOTE -- Bear in mind that this is not a reference to salvation but an illustration to teach the Jews the importance of obedience versus the mere act of possessing or hearing the Law without obedience.

This obedience of the Gentiles who do not have the Law (i.e. special revelation of God) shows **the work** of the law written in their hearts. It is NOT **the Law** that is written in their hearts. It is only the effects or product of the Law that is written in their hearts. The Gentiles cannot be said to have the law written in their hearts as if the Ten Commandments were given to Israel on top of Mount Sinai and invisibly to the Gentiles in their hearts. If that is true, then God would have to judge everyone based upon the Law, for His creation, i.e. general revelation, would then be an insufficient basis for judgement. That is why God used special revelation (i.e. the Law in Romans 2) to condemn the Jews and He used general revelation (i.e. creation in Romans 1) to condemn the Gentiles. God cannot use special revelation to judge the Gentiles because they were NOT given the Law of God and that would be unjust on His part. God cannot use general revelation to condemn the Jews because firstly that would be insufficient and secondly they have been given the Law of God.

The Gentiles' conscience bears witness to this truth. As Gentiles, we have experienced this in our own lives. "their thoughts the mean while accusing" means that when they sin they know they have done wrong; "or else excusing one another" means that when they do what is right, they feel good about themselves. For example, the Gentiles know that when they obey their parents they have done well and they feel good. They do not feel ashamed or fearful. However, if they sin such as lying to parents, they feel guilty and bad about lying to their parents.

**Conclusion** – It is not the possession of the Law that counts but the obedience of the Law. To demonstrate this point, Paul cites the conscience and life of Gentiles.

## II. **Ten Commandments Deliberately Given to God's People – Exodus 19:1-8**

1. Israel left Rephidim and was camped at the foot of the Mount Sinai. Moses went to God and God instructed Moses.

2. Moses reminded Israel of three things that the LORD did:

- a. *“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians”, and* – This was a stark reminder of the Ten Plagues which destroyed the most powerful nation in the world at the time. Egypt was reduced to near nothing. The culmination of this destruction was the death of Pharaoh and his elite charioteers who were drowned in the Red Sea. In their intense hatred they foolishly rushed headlong into the path between the two walls of the parted Red Sea. God commanded Moses (cf. Exo 14:26 ff.) to bring the two walls of water down upon Pharaoh and his charioteers. They were all killed that fateful and most eventful day in Israel’s history. The people of Israel were born that day. Egypt was like the womb of a mother which must give birth once the time of pregnancy was full. This message reminds Israel of the holiness and awesome power of her own Lord over her enemies.
- b. *“how I bare you on eagles’ wings”, and* – The Lord was the One who brought Israel out of Egypt. The eagles’ wings describe the swiftness of the exodus. Israel had been in bondage for 430 years when they came out of Egypt.

Suddenly, without any prior warning, a man called Moses walked out of the wilderness and into the court of the most powerful man in Egypt and demanded Israel’s release. After the ten Plagues, Israel was quickly thrust out of Egypt by God’s mighty hand.

The verb used here is “bare” which means “to carry”. The subject of this verb is the Lord Himself and not an angel. God personally saw to the details of Israel’s exodus and He literally carried Israel away like an eagle that would protect its family with its life.

The Lord’s tenderness for and protection of Israel are highlighted here.

- c. *“brought you unto myself”*—The Lord did not cast Israel aside or thrust her to fend for herself. The Lord brought Israel out of Egypt into His fold. The picture is one of ownership. Israel belongs to God and none else. He will protect, feed, nurture and watch over Israel. No harm will come upon Israel for no enemy is more powerful than the God of Israel.

3. Israel was special to the Lord. This was a "conditional specialty." The condition was obedience to God’s Word. Hence the Bible says, *“if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.”*

Did this mean that Israel would cease to be God’s people if they did not obey God’s Word? If this is true, does it not mean that God’s plan of salvation was conditioned upon Israel’s obedience? Why then did God alone walk through the parted animals in Genesis 15 when Abraham asked God to confirm His covenant with him, i.e. through Abraham the Messiah would ultimately come?

This was NOT a condition for the coming of the Messiah. The promise that God made with Abraham in Genesis 15 was for the coming of the Messiah which was a

covenant dependant entirely upon God's faithfulness. God never fails. His faithfulness is true always. This was a condition for blessing.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the condition for blessing was always dependent upon obedience to God's perfect and Holy Word! If Israel disobeyed God's Word, she would live in sin and God would punish. She would not be a peculiar treasure to God and definitely not a kingdom of priests and a holy nation! Israel would become a kingdom of idolaters and an unholy nation.

But if Israel would obey God's Word and keep His covenant, then they would truly be His peculiar treasure, i.e. like a jewel to God. Why is that so? If Israel, who bore the Name of God, lived like God wanted them to live, outsiders would look at them and see the attributes and character of God in Israel. God would be pleased as these outsiders would one day glorify God as well by believing in Him. This is just as true today for New Testament believers!

4. A kingdom of priests refers to Israel being mediators between God and man. This means that their testimonies will have the mediatory impact to the Gentile nations. The phrase "holy nation" refers to a people set apart for God's use and their lives are characterized by acts of holiness. This was to be the great power of influence that Israel would have if she walked in the ways of God and kept God's covenant according to Holy Scriptures.
5. Moses asked that of the people of Israel as God commanded him. He did so verbatim. The response of the people was, "*All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.*" This response was given to God.

This reply would come back to haunt Israel and God would punish Israel severely; they would break their word in a few days' time. God does not take what we say lightly.

6. Sanctification an Indisputable Pre-requisite – Exodus 19:9-15
  - a. After Israel agreed to the terms for blessing, God brought them to the next level of commitment! God would now appear to them in a way that He will never do again. It was the first and last time God would appear to an entire nation and speak with them directly without any intermediary like an angel or through visions and dreams!

God did this through Moses so that the people of Israel would believe Moses forever! Whatever Moses said to them would be the very words of God!
  - b. The people of Israel had to be sanctified before the Lord would appear and speak with them. They needed two days for sanctification. The Lord would appear to them on the third day.

Sanctification involved "washing their clothes." Why did they have to wash their clothes when the people themselves were unclean and not their clothes? The people had to wear clean clothes as they prepared to meet the Lord on the third day. The washing of clothes implied that they needed to wash themselves as well. This external cleanliness was symbolic of the holiness that must be

found in Israel. Hebrews 10:22, *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

- c. Although the people were sanctified, it did not mean that they would be able to approach God without His permission. The mountain was holy ground. It was covered by a thick dark cloud. Barriers were in place to prevent any unwanted persons from touching the Mount of Sinai. Man or beast that touched the Mount when God’s presence came upon it would die - either stoned or shot through. There was no exception because God is no respecter of persons.
- d. When the trumpet sounded the people of Israel were to draw near the mountain which represented the presence of God (God would descend and cover it with the thick dark cloud). Moses told the people exactly what God expected of them and they obeyed. Moses added one requirement that God did not mention. That requirement was that there should be not be any conjugal relationship between husbands and wives during this period as well.

7. The Mountain was Holy – Exodus 19:16-25

- a. The people of Israel obeyed. On the third day, just as God said, He appeared to them in the morning. There was thunder and lightning and a thick cloud came upon Mount Sinai. The voice of the trumpet sounded exceedingly loud and the people were supposed to come forward toward the quaking mountain! Instead, the people were frightened.

The purpose of God’s devastating and awesome appearance was to put the fear of God into their hearts and lives. They needed to realize that God is a holy God and that man is a sinful creature who cannot come near to God and hope to live as long as he remains in his sin. His sin must be dealt with through a sacrifice where blood must be shed. Hebrews 9:22, *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”*

Sin must not be trifled with. It must be taken serious and be seen from God’s perspective. A low view of sin will result in a life of compromise and a frivolous perspective of God. Salvation would be disdained and lowly esteemed. The result is a weak love for Christ and a lackadaisical appreciation of salvation. This is seen in Christianity today. God’s first and only appearance to a nation and to declare to them the Ten Commandments in His own voice was not only a unique experience but a never to be repeated event. The people of Israel and all the world must never miss the message that THE ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD IS HOLY!

- b. Moses then brought the people of Israel from their camp sites toward the nether (lower) part of the Mount. 2,000,000 plus people standing at the foot of the Mount, waiting anxiously for what the LORD was going to say to them must have been a sight to behold!

Before there was any voice from heaven, the Bible says that the mountain was covered in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it. The smoke filtered downwards and covered the entire mountain and it quaked greatly. The word

quake means “to shudder with terror.” The purpose was that the people of Israel would shudder in fear and tremble before the presence of the LORD. It was loud and dark and mysterious and magnificent all at the same time.

The voice of the trumpet sounded as God promised. The voice was long and it grew louder and louder. Moses spoke and the LORD called Moses to go up to the top of the mountain. Moses went all the way up.

While he was up there, the LORD said to him, *“Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.”* The distinction was made by God. The ordinary Israelites could not come near; if any broke through the barriers they would surely die. The priests, on the other hand, had to sanctify themselves as they would be given permission to come near to God. The priests had not been appointed yet. This means that this instruction was for the near future; after they were consecrated, Aaron and his sons were allowed to come near to God in their inaugural sacrificial offerings (cf. Lev 8, 9 & 10). Aaron’s two older sons offered strange fire and were consumed by fire sent by the LORD to punish them. Moses warned them here but they did not listen and paid the price of disobedience with their lives.

The LORD then told Moses that only Aaron and Moses were allowed to come up. The rest of the priests had to remain below. The urgency of the LORD’s request was not so much to scold Moses but to hurry him for fear that out of curiosity the people might trespass and be killed. Then Moses went down and told the people exactly what the LORD said to them.

They went up the Mount in Exodus 24.

### III. PURPOSE OF THE DECALOGUE (Galatians 3:19-26; Romans 7:1-25)

#### 1. As a Schoolmaster – Galatians 3:19-26

**Galatians 3:19-26**, *“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”*

- a. The immediate context that precedes this passage contrasts the way of salvation. If it is by the law, then it is no more grace. The sinner has to choose one of two ways of salvation. [NOTE: Paul is not saying that the way of the law is an alternate way of salvation.] If the sinner believes that he can be saved by the law, then he cannot be saved by the way of grace. The two ways are

mutually exclusive. It is an either/or situation. The reality is that Christ has redeemed us from the law and therefore a truly born again believer will not go back to the way of the law.

The professing believer cannot say that he believes in Christ and then believes his salvation is complete by obeying the law. To do this is to have no salvation. Such a belief is tantamount to believing another gospel. It is also wrong to believe that Christ is only good enough to save but not good enough to sanctify him. He has to obey the laws of God to sanctify himself. This is limiting the extent and scope of the salvific work of Christ on Calvary. The Arminians believe that Christ's salvation is complete but their ability to believe comes from within their hearts. They contribute to the faith of their own salvation. [NOTE: This is different from saying that Christ's salvation is incomplete and that I contribute to Christ's salvific work.] They believe that if they contribute to or co-operate with God in the faith of their own salvation, then the moment they stop believing, they will lose their salvation. To maintain their faith and hence their salvation, they must continue to live a holy life. The moment they stop living a holy life, they lose their salvation. The measure of their holy life is the Ten Commandments. The motive behind their obedience to the Ten Commandments is that they must keep obeying the Commandments as well as praying and reading God's Word and evangelizing. Their motive is therefore wrong.

- b. In Galatians, Paul explains the purpose of the Decalogue. He begins by asking a very apt and pointed question. What is the purpose of the law? The law was given to show us how sinful we are and to drive us to God, as well as to restrain us from sinning now that we know what God expects of us. This ultimately points us to the "*seed should come to whom the promise was made.*" This is a reference to Christ. The agency from which Moses received the law was the angels. Although this is not stated in Exodus 20, it is stated in **Hebrews 2:2**, "*For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.*" The word "ordained" means "arranged thoroughly or specially prescribed." This means that the Decalogue was given to Moses via the angels.

We need to ascertain the identity of the mediator used in Galatians 3:19b and 3:20 respectively: "in the hand of a mediator" and "*Now a mediator is not a mediator of one*". There are two views to this: it is either Moses or Christ.

If it refers to Moses, the arguments include:

- Moses was the man who received the Ten Commandments from God to be given to Israel.
- Moses was specifically asked by the people of Israel to be their mediator in Exodus 20:19.

COMMENT – Moses was the "mediator" in terms of speaking on behalf of God to the Israelites. In fact, Moses was not so much a mediator but more of "God" to the people. Exodus 4:16, "*And he shall be thy spokesman unto the*

*people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God."*

But if he ever was one, his capacity was limited to while he was alive. The ultimate mediator was not Moses, as the fundamental basis for Moses being the "mediator" was founded upon Christ. The text in Galatians points to an ultimate mediator.

If it refers to Christ, the arguments are as follows:

- This mediatorship lasts beyond Moses' lifetime. Moses was not the source of the mediatorship as he had no inherent ability to do so. Christ, on the other hand, is eternal and He is truly the mediator of both Israel and the world.
- Not anywhere in the Bible has Moses been called a mediator, whereas Christ has been categorically stated as our Mediator. 1 Timothy 2:5, "*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*"
- The only other "mediators" were the Levites who acted as types of Christ. This means that the legitimacy of their mediatorship was not in themselves or their system but in Christ alone. In other words, if Christ had not been expected to come, they would not have an efficacious ministry at all. Theirs was a temporary ministry pointing to the final and permanent ministry of Christ. Furthermore, the priests would mean "mediators"; the passage refers to "a mediator".

Galatians 3:20 teaches us that the mediator has to act between two parties. This is the basic meaning of a mediator. In this context, the mediator has to be between Israel and God. The identity of the mediator in Galatians 3:19 is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since God is one, the mediator for the world has to be the same - the Lord Jesus Christ!

- c. **All under sin and there is no law available that can bring righteousness** -- The giving of the law did not in any way diminish or negate God's promise of a singular mediator for all mankind. If there had been a law that could bring about eternal life, God would have given it to us. Then righteousness would have been by obeying this law. But this law does not exist. The problem is that mankind is already in sin. The present state of sin in all mankind means that we are already in a state of condemnation. We are already disqualified.
- d. **Only through Christ** -- Hence the Lord Jesus Christ was given to those who believe. It is only through Christ that a sinner can be saved. It is not through good works or the obedience of some "law".
- e. **Before salvation, sinners are under the law, our schoolmaster**— Before we were saved we were under the law. The law was our schoolmaster. The purpose of the law was to point us to Christ. The law reveals to all sinners how



great sinners we are. If we die in our sin we end up in Hell. Christ is the only One who can save us from our sins and deliver us from Hell.

- f. **After salvation, no longer under the schoolmaster** – After we are saved we are no longer under the schoolmaster. What it means is that the law which once condemned us can no longer condemn us, for we are saved by grace through faith. The child of God is now under grace and no more under the law which condemns and cannot save. The child of God is no more under condemnation. He has been saved. His relationship with God is reconciled by Christ's blood. No one can condemn the Christian any more, not even the law of God which used to! As children of the living God, the power of the law of God to condemn ceases immediately. Christians look at the law now and smile. Previously he would cry.

**NOTE:** From Galatians, we learn that the Law was our schoolmaster pointing the sinner to Christ. Once the sinner receives Christ as Lord and Saviour, he becomes a child of God. He is no longer under the law. He is not afraid of the law anymore.

## 2. The Law is Forever Holy – Romans 7:1-25

**Weakness of the Law -- Romans 7:1-6,** *“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 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. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”*

- a. **Law is impotent against a dead man** -- The greatest limitation of the law, including the Law of God, is in the fact that when the sinner dies the power of the law ceases to work in his life. It has no more hold or control over him. Paul uses the illustration of a marriage relationship to demonstrate his point.
- b. **The Christian is now dead to the Law** – The Christian is dead to the law by Christ. He is now married to another who is Christ. There must be presence of the fruit of salvation which is an evidence of the genuineness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- c. **Delivered from the Law** – When we were sinners before salvation, i.e. still in our flesh, the motions of sins, i.e. the passions of sins, reacted to the law of God to condemn us which leads to death. But now that the believer has been delivered from the law when he died in Christ, he now comes under a new law. This is the newness of the spirit and no more the oldness of the letter which condemns.

**Purpose of the Law Explained -- Romans 7:7-13**, *“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”*

- a. **There is nothing wrong with the Law.** This is the conclusion given by the apostle Paul here when he asked a rhetorical question and answered the question himself with an emphatic “GOD FORBID”!
- b. **The Law was given to reveal sin** – Paul cited one example from the Ten Commandments to prove his point. The tenth commandment says, “Thou shalt not covet!” Paul says that he did not know that to covet was sinful until the law says he cannot covet. To covet is an intense emotion of envy or jealousy for something which belongs to someone else. The tenth commandment brought all sorts of emotions into the heart and mind. The commandment made alive the feelings and emotions which Paul never had before. This is the power of the Decalogue. The struggle had begun. In the past when he coveted, he felt no guilt. Now that he knows it is sinful and the vengeance of God will come upon him, his conscience is made alive to this and the inner man struggles. The verb “wrought” means “to bring fully.” The law brought fully to Paul’s heart all sorts of concupiscence which means “to set one’s heart upon something.” In this case it is to set the heart upon many things that belong to others.
- c. **No Law, no sin** – Before the Decalogue was given, sinful man lived a life with his conscience free of any wrongdoing. Sin was dead without the law. He thought he was alive and fine when there was no law. The moment the law came, sin revived, i.e. his conscience knows what sins are. The standard has been revealed. When there was no standard all was well. Everything was relative. Everyone’s conscience was free from guilt and condemnation. The moment the Law came, all was different. The knowledge that he is a sinner killed him. He knows he deserves death.

This is one of the most difficult truths for sinners to swallow. They have to humble themselves and realize that they are not really alive but dead.

- d. **Ordained to life but found death** – Could there be a contradiction? Galatians says that the law cannot bring righteousness as all are under sin. Galatians 3 refers to the state of sinful man in that he is already a sinner and there is no law given to him to obey that could change that state.

In Romans, the emphasis is on the Law whereby the perfect obedience of the Decalogue, which reveals to man the absolute standard of God, would result in life. But this perfect standard, which reveals the rule of life eternal, brought

about instead the shortcomings in all sinful men, which resulted in death. Sin took advantage of the awakening of sin in the heart of the sinner and deceived the sinner by making him commit the sin and the result was that it killed the sinner. Burkitt puts it this way, “As if the apostle had said, ‘Sin, or the corruption of my heart and nature, being stirred up by the commandment which forbids lust, and condemns it, enticed me, and persuaded me, and prevailed over me, to yield to the lusts of my own heart, and then condemned me, and slew men for yielding to them.’ See here the true and genuine nature of sin: it first deceives, and then destroys: It deceived me, saith the apostle, and then slew me. Sin doth perfectly besot the creature, and renders it injudicious: it befools and deceives us, it pollutes and defiles us, it doth debase and degrade us, and, without repentance, damns and destroys.”

- e. **The Law is Holy** – The Law is holy and the commandment is holy, just and good. There is nothing wrong with the Decalogue. The problem lies with the recipient of the law. What the law brings out in the sinner is the depth of his sins. He is not just a sinner but a great sinner. It is like a perfectly clean mirror that reveals to us how terribly dirty our faces are. Before we look at the mirror, we know that our faces are dirty because we can feel and touch the dirt. But the moment we stand in front of the perfectly clean and undistorted mirror, we see the extent of the gore and filth. Now the problem is not the perfectly clean mirror which shows up our very dirty faces. The problem is that our faces are very, very dirty!

The Decalogue reveals to us that sin is not to be treated lightly but is very heinous. The phrase used by Paul in Romans is “exceeding sinful.” This phrase literally means “hyperbolically sinful.” Burkitt writes correctly, “that sin is therefore exceedingly, yea, unmeasurably sinful, poisonous and pernicious, because it kills men, and not only so, but it kills men by that which is good, to wit, the law. That which was appointed for life, becomes the occasion of death; consequently was in the world.

“Ah! sinful **sin**, hyperbolically and out of measure **sinful**, thou art a contempt of God's sovereign authority, a contrariety to his infinite holiness, a violation of his royal and righteous law, and the highest affront that can be offered to the majesty of the great and glorious God.

“Thou hast made man like a beast, like the worst of beasts; worse than the worst of beasts; yea, sin is worse than the devil himself, than hell itself. Sin made the devil what he is: A devil and hell never had an existence till sin had one: God was never angry till sin made him angry.

“Oh sin! 'tis thou that makest hell to be hell; and the more sin the more hell. Well might the apostle then say here, **Sin, that it might appear sin, worketh death in me, and is become exceeding sinful.**”

NOTE: The Decalogue as revealed in this passage of Romans 7 is holy, just and good. Its purpose is to reveal the greatness of the heinous nature of sin in sinful man.

**The Law is Spiritual -- Romans 7:14-25**, *“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”*

- a. **The Law is spiritual but the Christian is carnal** – This is the struggle in every Christian’s heart. Paul says that he is carnal, present tense. If he had meant to describe his struggle with sin before salvation he would have used the past tense. The truth is that the sinner did not struggle with sin at all when he was dead in sin. He loved sin. Sin was his master. The struggle comes only after conversion as this passage explains. The phrase “sold under sin” means “he is sin’s unwilling slave.” There are times in a Christian’s life when he will fall into sin. He is not perfect. This passage argues against the notion of sinless perfection in the believer’s life. He may try not to sin and wants to be led by the spirit but he will fail at times. This is not to say that each time he sins, he treats his sin lightly or tries to excuse himself by saying that God already pre-determined that he would fall into sin. May God forbid a truly born again believer from ever thinking this way!

Bear in mind that the closer we are to God the holier we become. The holier we become the more sensitive we are to sin. Conversely, the further we are from God the less sensitive we are to sin. Sin would probably have to be the size of an elephant before we would call it sin. To the Christian who is very holy, like the apostle Paul, sin could be the size of a mustard seed and it would be a great sin to him. He understands the true nature of sin due to his understanding of God’s Word; and his holy and pure walk with God makes him regard a small sin as an exceedingly heinous “big” sin.

- b. **The Christian’s dilemma** – The knowledge of God enables the Christian to understand the will of God for his life. His head tells him what he ought to do to please God. But then his life cannot be lived perfectly according to what he knows is the will of God. He has this struggle. Unwillingly he still falls into sin. By this struggle he is actually acknowledging that the law is good. His regenerate mind tells him that it is good to obey the law even though he cannot obey the law perfectly.
- c. **The real culprit in committing the sin** – The real sinner in the believer’s life is his mortal flesh. The renewed mind says no but the flesh sometimes gets the better of the believer and he falls into sin. Hence the struggle described here, *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the*

*good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*” As long as the Christian remains in this mortal body there is “no good thing.” The ‘good thing’ here refers to “absolute goodness” in relationship to his life of sanctification. The phrase “sin dwelleth in me” means that this flesh still sins. When this body sins, sin lives in this body.

- d. **The law of the mind versus the law of sin** – The law of the mind which is regenerated says he should obey only the Bible, even all of the Bible. But there is another that runs counter to this desire, and that is the law of sin which is very much alive in the flesh. This law of sin is in the mind and heart and it controls our tongues, our eyes, our ears, our hands and our feet. These are the members of our bodies that still sin. The cry of despair from every obedient Christian is, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Paul says that with the mind he serves the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. But right before this, he thanked God for what Christ had done in his life that enabled him to have this struggle. For without Christ he would not even have this Christian dilemma. He would be in bondage to sin, and sin would be his master.
  
- e. **The righteousness of the law in every Christian** – Thank God that in Christ Jesus, the LORD will not judge us at all based upon this struggle. Hence, there is no condemnation from God. This is how God looks at every truly born again Christian in Romans 8:1-9, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That **the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

There must be a life changing experience whereby the Christian will not live after the flesh like the old man, but after the Spirit, even though it might not be perfection. It is the new struggle toward holiness and more holiness in his life.

Our salvation is not complete even though the work of Christ has wrought for us a complete salvation which is unto glorification. The climax of our salvation is glorification. In the meantime, we struggle with the Christian dilemma. Every true Christian’s mind and heart will tell him to obey the whole counsel of God even though the law of sin according to the flesh will cause him to fall into sin at times. He will struggle till he breathes his last breath and meets Christ face to face.

NOTE – The law is holy and just and good, and the fact that the Christian wants to obey the law perfectly (even though he knows he cannot) testifies to the goodness of the law in his life. His inability to keep the law perfectly does not diminish or negate the goodness and holiness of the law. The Christian knows in his regenerate heart and mind that the law of God is good for him and he will try his very best, with God's enabling, to obey all the Law all his life to God's glory.

**Law in our hearts** – The Law is in the hearts of all believers because the righteousness of the law has been imputed to them. This truth is taught in the OT -- **Psalm 37:29-31** (KJV), "*The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. 30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.*" -- **Psalm 40:8** (KJV), "*I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*" This is also taught in the NT -- **Hebrews 8:10** (KJV), "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*" This is the basis for the believer being able to obey all the Ten Commandments!

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Doers of the law are the only ones accepted by God. Can a Christian be said to have "done" the law? What about our salvation today - must it be reflected by some act of "doing" as well? Where does faith come into this picture of doing (see Hebrews 11:6)?
2. Can we say from Romans 2:13-15 that the Bible teaches that those who have not heard of Jesus Christ can be saved by their good works? What happens to those who die without ever hearing the gospel of Christ?
3. Can there be other avenues where holy living can be based upon that are objective if it is not through the law of God?
4. A daughter was asked by her father on the Sabbath to go to MacDonald's to buy a hamburger for him to eat. She refuses to do so saying that she cannot break the Sabbath day. How would you counsel the father and the daughter?
5. "The children's Bible contains pictures of Christ having black hair and a beard and this is wrong because it is not an accurate picture of Christ and must be banned." What do you say to this statement?