

What Good is the Law of God?

Acts 13:26-39 Galatians 3:19-29 Matthew 5:17-20

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The Law of God is the 10 Commandments; and in Biblical times it included the Mosaic Law, which was everything associated with the Old Testament worship rites, including sacrifices, priests, holy days and circumcision. The false teachers in the New Testament era were teaching that you could believe in Jesus, but you [also](#) had to **obey** all the commands and laws of God in order to be saved¹. Over the centuries, this has grown into many different false teachings about earning your own salvation by good works, effort, achievement, or merit. Every attempt to earn your own salvation is clearly **condemned** in Scripture ... it falls under **God's curse**. All attempts at contributing to your own salvation is all summarized by the Biblical phrase “*works of the Law*”:

By works of the Law **NO ONE** will be Justified. Galatians 2:16

Therefore **NO ONE** will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the Law; rather, through the Law we become conscious of our sin. Romans 3:20

¹ Teachers advocating acceptance of Christ on Jewish conditions are often referred to as **Judaizers**... They did not deny the perfect life of Christ or his innocent death on the cross. Rather, they asserted that the way to receive the benefits of this Christ was through the time-honored method of joining God's covenant people, that is, by becoming “proselytes,” converts to Judaism. Thus they urged the Galatians to believe in Christ AND keep the Old Testament ceremonies. . . . For example, these teachers made trouble for the Christians in Antioch of Syria by insisting that “*unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved*” (Acts 15:1). And when a council was called in Jerusalem to settle this matter, they again showed their true colors. Luke then tells us, “*Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses’* (Acts 15:5)”. Panning, Armin J., Galatians, Ephesians (The People's Bible) (p. 7). Northwestern Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

The Law of God, and man's own works, were never intended to be

- ➡ a road map for you to follow for salvation;
- ➡ nor a checklist that you complete to earn the forgiveness of sins
- ➡ nor merit badges that you collect to gain favor with God

IT IS EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE!

The Law of God is meant to show you how *deep in sin* you are, how *depraved* and *corrupt* your sinful nature really is, and how *utterly unable* you are to save yourself! St. Paul explains it like this:

Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin ... we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the Law was our teacher until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Galatians 3:22-24

St. Paul says that the Law of God is a *prison guard* that locks you up in sin; it is a *teacher*, that teaches you about your sin².

The Law of God is meant to show you how *deep in sin* you are, how *depraved* and *corrupt* your sinful nature really is, and how *utterly unable* you are to save yourself!

Do you remember how the Law of God is taught in the Small Catechism? The Law of God --- that is the **10 Commandments** for us in the New Testament era --- is taught as a *curb* and a *mirror*.

Like a *curb* in the street, the 10 commandments serve to guide all societies on earth in a form of morality and decency. No matter where you go in the world, there are laws about killing and stealing. It is wrong in every nation throughout

² The Law of God is also like "gas on a fire!" The Law of God incites your sinful nature **to sin even more** – like throwing gas on a fire! St. Paul writes in Romans 7:7-8 "What shall we say, then? Is the Law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the Law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, **produced in me every kind of coveting**. For apart from the law, sin was dead." Here is an everyday example that some of you will relate to: does a 65MPH speed limit (Law) make you want to go 66+MPH? The Law can actually incite you to break it!

the ages to commit adultery and lie about your neighbor. The Law of God works like a **curb** in the street, to guide nations in morality and decency.

On a more personal level, the Law of God is like a **mirror** in which you see yourself. When you look into the law of God, that is the **10 Commandments**, they reflect back to you where you have sinned against God and against other people. **They show you your sin**; they expose your self-centeredness; they reveal your lack of love towards God and your neighbor. The Law of God works like a **mirror**, to show you how you have fallen short of the will of God.

The Law of God was never intended to save you; rather the Law of God shows you how **deep in sin** you are, how **depraved** and **corrupt** your sinful nature really is, and how **utterly unable** you are to save yourself!

The Law of God shows you that you are a Law breaker; the Gospel of Christ shows you that Jesus is a Law keeper.

Jesus taught us today that He is the one who will obey the Law of God perfectly for us. He is the perfect Law **keeper**.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. Matthew 5:17

Jesus’ fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets is given to you as a gift of salvation³. His perfect life is credited to you through faith, it is a gift that God gives to you, it is a promise that He makes to you. You believe it. You trust it. You have faith in Christ. Salvation comes by faith in Christ and never by your own works!

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Romans 3:28

³ This is the incredibly important doctrine called “The Perfect Obedience of Christ”. He is a summary: “What we should have accomplished, namely, the fulfillment of the whole Law, **Christ has done for us**. He has fulfilled the Law for us. What we should have suffered, namely, the punishment for our sins, and God’s wrath in time and eternity, that **Christ has suffered for us** when He gave His back to the smiters and when His side was pierced on Golgotha. Abiding Word, 1947, II.331

We have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law Galatians 2:16

Faith is the work of God through His powerful Word. The Holy Spirit creates faith when you hear the good news about Jesus, His perfect life, and His death and resurrection. Salvation does not come to you by your own good works; it comes to you by faith alone, by trusting God's promises in Christ. And that faith and trust is God at work in and through you.

As far as God is concerned, your righteousness *does* surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law! It is not because of your work; but because of Jesus' perfect work -- *He is the Righteous One!*

As God's righteous people, through faith in Christ, we now **go back** to the Law of God *to learn about holy living*. We are **NOT** going back to it to earn our salvation --- Christ has already done that. Rather we look to the Law of God as a **guide** to teach us what is right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error, as we live as God's people in this sinful world. The **10 Commandments** guide our sanctified lives of faith. We learn how to love God and how to love our neighbor from the **10 Commandments**. We learned to value authority, life, marriage, possessions, and people's reputations. We learned to guard our own hearts from sin and temptation. We learn to hallow God's Name and to seek His Kingdom. The Law of God guides our daily living as Christians.

The Law of God is very important to us!

It is not a route to salvation; but it is

- A **curb** for all nations;
- it **exposes our sin** so we see our need for Jesus, the Son of God, Who is the Savior of the world;
- and it **guides, shapes, and directs** our daily Christian faith and life.

Amen!

Lord Jesus Christ, the holy and righteous one in heaven above.

We thank you for fulfilling the law for us and in our place,

something that we could never do on our own.

Help us to learn from your law to repent of our sin and to confess it to you.

Help us to trust in your gospel of forgiveness and live in peace with you.

Guide us in our daily lives by the 10 commandments, so that we may live wholly and godly lives of faith in this crooked and perverse world.

Amen

Acts 13:26- 39

St. Paul said, “Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. 27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. 28 Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. 32 “We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: “‘You are my son; today I have become your father.’ 34 God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, “‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ 35 So it is also stated elsewhere: “‘You will not let your holy one see decay.’ 36 “Now when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. 37 But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. 38 “Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39 Through him everyone who

believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.

Galatians 3:19-29

Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. 20 A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one. 21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. 22 But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. 23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. 24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. 26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Matthew 5:17-20

Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.