

## **Sin, the Enemy of Good**

**What is sin? What does the Bible say?**

**I John 3:2 – 7** tells us: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”*

“*Transgression of the law*” is a four-word phrase that is translated from one Greek word, “anomia,” which means literally , “*without law.*” Sometimes translated “*law-lessness*” or *law-less*. It is more than breaking this or that rule. It is an attitude. It is an attitude of selfishness, wanting to have our own way no matter what. Without law everyone would be doing whatever he or she wanted to do – that is known as anarchy. Anarchy can be a problem in a world full of selfish, sinful people.

And it is a problem in this world. The Bible says – *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way”* (Isaiah 53:6) The Old Testament records how Moses dealt with this problem with the people he led out of Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 12:8** says he told them: *“Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in their own eyes.”*

Then Moses gives them his solution to the problem -

**Deuteronomy 13:18** – *“Thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord thy God.”*

## **When you keep the commandments – you are doing that which is right in the eyes of God!**

But why should we do what God says? Why should we keep His instructions or law? Some people answer because God is sovereign – He is the Creator and the most powerful being in the universe and that gives Him the right to tell us how to behave. We all have seen the popular bumper sticker – *“God said it, I believe it, and that’s all there is to it!”* Some would add to that – *“and if you don’t, you know what will happen to you!”* But is that all there is to it? Is there is no better reason to keep God’s law?

We will find the answer to that question when we find the answer as to why God gave the law in the first place.

**Romans 3:20** - *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*

**I Timothy 1:8,9** - *“But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient,”*

The law is given to inform the unlawful how to be lawful. For example, when kids are misbehaving and doing disorderly and hurtful things, the parents must “lay down the law” for the good of the household. Our Heavenly Father has had to do that for the human race.

**Deuteronomy 6:24,25** *“And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, **for our good always**, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.”*

For many when they read the word “law” in the Bible, the Ten Commandments automatically come to mind. But when the Bible uses the word “law” it is not always referring to the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments do have the distinction of being the only words written by the finger of God Himself! However, God, through Moses, gave numerous other laws, civil law, health law, and ceremonial law. Looking at the following passages, we see that law in the Bible can be placed into one of five classifications.

**1) Health law – Laws given to ensure the physical health of God’s people. Exodus 15:26** *“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.”* (Remember, to the writers of scripture, what God does not prevent He causes. He did not afflict the Egyptians with disease, they were diseased because they did not follow good health practices. You reap what you sow.)

**2) Civil law – Laws given to govern civil society, laws that act as a deterrent to crime, just as the death penalty is today. Deuteronomy 21:21** *“And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.”* (These particular laws applied only to the ancient nation of Israel and ceased to be in force when Israel ceased to be a nation ruled by God.)

**3) Ceremonial law - Laws regulating the sacrificial services at the Sanctuary. Numbers 9:3** *“In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it.”* (These laws were no longer in force after Christ’s death and the destruction of the temple.)

**4) Moral (right) law – Laws to regulate personal individual behavior. Psalm 119:172** *“My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.”* (Moral means right. The moral (right) laws will always be in effect.)

**5) Law as a principle, a force - Romans 7:23** *“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.”* (This is not speaking of any written law or code, but the force or power of human desires.)

We should always consider the setting in which the word “law” is used to properly understand which class of “law” is being referred to. Otherwise we might – “throw the baby out with the bath water” as some have done with the Ten Commandments, claiming they

were discarded along with all the other laws given to the ancient Jewish nation of Israel.

When we look at the Bible as a whole we can see that God's law forms a pyramid. In the book of Exodus we read that after bringing His people out of bondage in Egypt, God gave them many commandments and laws. Later in the New Testament, Jesus lumps them all into two commandments -

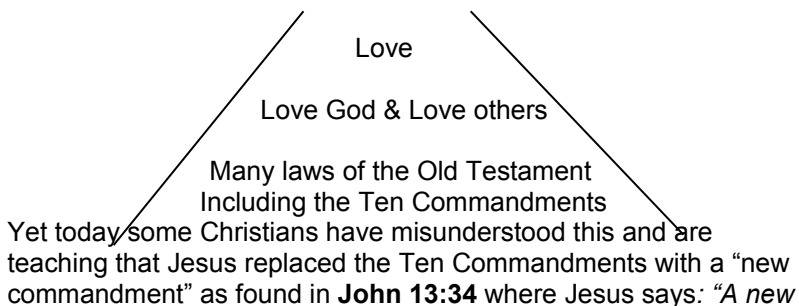
**Matthew 22:36-40** *“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

When we get down to the book of Galatians, all the law is condensed down into one word – “love.”

**Galatians 5:14** says: *“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”*

The word love in this text is translated from the Greek “agape,” which means an unselfish decision to be concerned about the welfare of another, no matter what they've done or who they may be, spouse, friend, family or even an enemy.

As you can see, as we get closer to the end of the Bible, we have come from many “laws” and “commandments” to only one. So - the abiding, eternal principal of God's law of love – formed by the ten, the two, and the one, make up the pyramid - a pyramid of love!



*commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”*

But in saying this, Jesus did not do away with the law of the Ten Commandments, but rather He magnified them! He lived them in His own life as an example for us. When we begin to love God and one another as He did, those external commandments and laws become internalized – the law becomes written on our minds and in our heart.

**Hebrews 8:10** - *“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 minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”*

Again, this does not mean that the law of Ten Commandments is abolished – but it is to be moved from the tables of stone to the tables of the heart. For example – I don’t need a law written on the wall or in a book to remind me not to steal from my children - why? Because I love them and therefore I wouldn’t even think of doing such a thing.

We read earlier that the Bible tells us why we should do what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

**Deuteronomy 6:24,25** *“And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, **for our good always**, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.”*

If His commandments are for our good always – then what can we expect if we ignore or refuse to follow them?

**Galatians 6:7,8** gives us the answer, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”*

This universe is founded on physical and spiritual laws - the law of “reaping and sowing” or “cause and effect.” Bad actions = bad consequences. Right actions = good consequences.

The law of gravity is an example. The law of gravity is God's law. He put it into place and it serves for our good. If a man ignores the law of gravity and jumps out of an airplane at 12,000 feet without a parachute he would be killed. Did God kill him because he violated God's law?

No, he died because the law of gravity caused him to be pulled rapidly to the earth with such force that he was crushed. His death is the natural consequence of violating the law of gravity – and not because God got angry and punished him for disobeying His law.

It is the same with spiritual law. If we ignore or refuse to abide by God's good law of love, bad things will happen as result. If I commit adultery, someone gets hurt. If I bear false witness, someone gets hurt. There are natural, unpleasant consequences to every violation of the law of love. This understanding can help us understand how a person could claim to be free from the law.

The Apostle Paul wrote - *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."* (I Corinthians 10:23)

We are free to do anything we want to - *but* - sooner or later there will be consequences, either good or bad, depending upon our actions. Note carefully the next two verses.

**Ecclesiastes 8:11** *"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."*

**Numbers 32:23** *"But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out."*

Sooner or later, be sure *"your sin will find you out."* The only way to stop the consequences of sin is to stop the sin! The word *"sin"* is translated from the Greek word *"harmatia"* and it means, *"to miss the mark"*

**Romans 3:21-23** *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ"*

*unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”*

And what is the mark we miss? The glory of God. What is the glory of God that we come short of?

**II Thessalonians 2:14 :** *“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of **the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”*

Being like Jesus is our goal, our target – and by beholding Him we are changed into the same image, we become more and more like Him! But we sometimes miss the target – we may not do everything that is right, but if we are willing...if we do our best, we are accepted by God just as if we were perfectly righteous.

We are not *“under the law”* – but we *“agree with the law”* that it is good and we do not rebel against it. We are not keeping it just because God said so. We are doing our best to keep it because we know it is the right thing to do, because we want to behave that way! And if we are doing the things we want to do – we are free!

Here is the bottom line - remember what Satan told Eve back in the garden in tempting her to eat of that tree? He said – *“You will know good and evil, you will be wise –* In other words, Satan is saying, *you don’t need God to tell you what’s right and what is wrong, you are wise enough to determine for yourself what is right and wrong.”*

Today, most people believe that lie too. But regardless of what Satan has said, the truth is that mankind by himself is not capable of knowing right from wrong. However, if we believe God is who the Bible says He is the Almighty Creator - all wise - all knowing - even knowing the end from the beginning. That He is good and that He is love, and His love is a completely unselfish love that gave itself up at Calvary for us - If God is all that - wouldn't it be wise to listen to what He says? Wouldn't it be best to do those things He says we should do? Wouldn't it be foolish not to? True faith is trusting God enough to do those things He says are right. We will not do it all perfectly, we will struggle and we will fail at times. But God does not cast us away when we fail! As long as we do not turn away from Him and do the best we can, He will not leave us, and we have the assurance of eternal life.

**Jude 1:24** *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,”*

In conclusion, sin is not simply breaking God’s law or rules. Sin is choosing to go our own selfish way regardless of who may get hurt because of it. And the Bible says God hates sin – why? Because He wants things done His way? No - He hates sin because sin hurts and destroys His children! Don’t let sin destroy you – God will help you overcome.

**Response questions:**

1) Is it clear to you that sin is simply rebelling against what God says is good and right? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

2) Is it clear to you that sin hurts God and people? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

3) Will you take a closer look at God’s law of unselfish love and see if there is some area in your life that needs improvement? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_