

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

Men write laws to limit and control behavior. God did not! Quite to the contrary. Please consider: **“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19).** The Law was given not to make men holy, but to make them guilty.

Neither God, nor Moses expected the Law to improve the behavior of God’s people. After writing the Law Moses commanded the Levites: **“Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?” (Deuteronomy 31:26-27).** Receiving the Law did not keep the Hebrews from rebelling.

Instead of diminishing the power of sin, the Law actually increases it. Please consider: **“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law” (1 Cor. 15:56).** If you are commanded, for example: “Thou shalt not think about lemon pie”, your immediate reaction will probably be to think about lemon pie. Paul echoed this truth by saying: **“I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. 7:7).** The command to touch not, taste not, and handle not, has an appearance of wisdom, but is of no value in stopping the lust of the flesh (Col. 2:23). The way to eliminate lust is not by laws, but by promises: Peter understood this and wrote: **“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakes of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:3).**

He that despised Moses’ Law died without mercy (Heb. 10:28). The penalty of breaking God’s Law was sever. When a man, for example, was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath he was placed in ward until the Lord passed judgement. On that occasion God Himself commanded that the Sabbath breaker be put to death. To emphasize to the whole nation the danger of disobeying the Law, God commanded: **“all the congregation shall stone him with stones” (Nu. 15:35).**

In spite of the severe punishment prescribed by Law, it was still “weak” with regard to its ability to change human behavior. The “Good News” is that what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God has now accomplished by sending Jesus (Rom. 8:3). Before receiving Christ the motions of sin produced by the Law produced death (Rom. 7:5). Now, because of Christ, we are delivered from the Law and death, and enjoy the new way of the Spirit and life (Rom. 7:6).

No! The Law is not sin! Of course not. It is holy, just, and good for it does precisely what God designed it to do (Rom. 7:12). God designed it to make men guilty, and it does! God gave it as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith, and it does (Gal. 3:24). The idea that the foundation of our faith cannot be seen, makes it difficult for unbelievers to accept (Heb. 11:1). Salvation by faith is not the sinners’ first choice. Only the very desperate will dare to risk their eternal destiny on a Savior Whom they cannot see, and promises yet to come.

Paul reflected his own desperation by confessing: **“The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:16 - 24).** Yes! Paul could be delivered, but not by Law. The Good News is that there is no condemnation to anyone who is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). If your vain struggle to keep the Law brings you to Christ to be justified by faith, it is doing precisely what God designed it to do.

While much more needs to be said on this subject, we can emphatically say that nobody can be justified by Law, but by the Law we do receive the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20).