

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

“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.” —ROMANS 7:7

If we were to stop people on the street and read them the Ten Commandments, the general consensus would be that most of the commandments are good. We may not get ten out of ten in agreement, but perhaps six, seven or eight. Yet although we agree that the Ten Commandments are good, we have to admit they are unrealistic because with the exception of Jesus, every single person has broken the law of God. That raises a very important issue: why has God given a law we cannot keep?

If we ever get involved in making rules, a basic principle is that any rule people cannot keep is a bad rule, yet God has given a set of requirements in His law that we recognize as good, but are unable to keep. In fact, Paul says here, “I would not know what sin was except for the law. It is the law which actually makes me aware of my failure, because a failure I am.” We can be living in violation of the law with a totally clear conscience until we read the law. Suddenly we realize, “Uh oh, I’m a failure.” Is the purpose of the law simply to embarrass, humiliate and condemn us? That is the effect of the law, but is that the purpose? Why did God give the Ten Commandments?

The law was given in order to reveal the moral character of God so that human beings might understand what we are to be like as we were created in His moral image. But in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve acted in disobedience and at that moment, ceased to show what God is like. Since then, every man, woman and child have inherited a sinful nature and sin separates us from God. The point in God giving His laws was not as an arbitrary set of rules or guidelines so that we can sort out the mess our lives may be in, but so that we see ourselves in our unrighteousness and come to the realization that we need saving. As God knows we are incapable of keeping His law, He provided a solution in sending the life of His Son to indwell us in order to reconcile us to Himself.

Christ is the exact representation of the Father, and the only one capable of keeping the law of God. Without Christ, we are still in our sin, but when coming in humble repentance to Him, our sin is forgiven, washed away, and we have the transforming Spirit of Christ who works in us so that we may increasingly reveal what God is like.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You for revealing what You are like and for the work of your Holy Spirit in conforming me to your likeness.

TO REFLECT UPON: Which of the Ten Commandments do I need the Lord's help with the most?