

GOD'S
PURPOSE
IN
REVEALING
THE LAW

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International Ministries

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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CONTENTS

GOD’S PURPOSE IN REVEALING THE LAW.....	1
GOD’S LAW IS CONTAINED WITHIN THE CONSCIENCE OF MAN.....	1
GOD’S PURPOSE IN REVEALING THE LAW.....	7
WHEN CAN GOD’S LAWS BECOME A STUMBLING BLOCK ?.....	14
THE LAW OF GOD AND THE LAW OF MOSES.....	16
THE MORAL LAW.....	17
THE CIVIL LAW.....	19
THE CEREMONIAL LAW.....	21
THE LAW CONCERNING THE SABBATH.....	23
WHY DO CHRISTIANS USE SUNDAY AS THEIR DAY OF WORSHIP ?.....	31
THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SABBATH AND THE LORD’S DAY.....	33

GOD'S PURPOSE IN REVEALING THE LAW

GOD'S LAW IS CONTAINED WITHIN THE CONSCIENCE OF MAN

Background Reading: Romans 2:6-13

As we now know, in Old Testament times God established a Covenant with Israel and revealed His principles to them through the Mosaic Law. The rest of the world was, and is, in fact, under another law, whether they are aware of it or not. This law operates through the conscience of man. Certainly from the beginning, mankind was created with a conscience which, if allowed to do so, would convict him in regard to sin. For as we have learned, God's moral principles, also known as the spirit or intent of the Mosaic Law, are written on men's hearts. The conscience bears witness to this fact, operating by the thoughts of a man to either accuse him or defend his actions.

“...as we have learned, God's moral principles, also known as the spirit or intent of the Mosaic Law, are written on men's hearts. . .”

If the conscience becomes seared or warped because of sin or the dictates of culture, the person concerned will not feel convicted of sin on a moral level, e.g. they may feel no guilt in regard to theft, adultery, or even murder, etc. So the conscience is not a totally reliable guide. Nevertheless the God-given ability to discern good from evil, right from wrong, was and is contained within the conscience, God's truths concerning moral standards having been written on the heart of man. And the very existence of the conscience (moral light) is evidence of God having implanted in man His basic moral principles.

It is not a matter of whether the conscience is allowed to function properly or not, for this is not an issue in judgement. Rather, judgement is based on performance, i.e. whether the individual makes use of that which has been given. An example of this principle can be seen in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

Mankind was and always will be judged according to the light given to him - and this light, apart from God's revelation of Himself through His Word and creation itself, comes through the conscience. In other words, God's basic principles, or the basic elements of moral living contained in the Mosaic Law, were written on people's hearts from the beginning of mankind's existence. And the conscience will, if allowed, bring conviction in regard to moral issues, concerning whether something is right or wrong. We see these truths outlined in Romans 2:14-15:

ROMANS 2:14 *(For when the Gentiles, who have not the Law (of Moses), do by nature the things contained in (required by) the Law (behave according to Godly standards), these, having not the Law (as directed by their conscience), are a law unto themselves (having been given a standard of right and wrong through their conscience):*

ROMANS 2:15 *Which show the work of the Law written in their hearts (means that no one, whomever they might be and wherever they might be, is absent of all Light), their conscience also bearing witness (but which can be seared), and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another (conscience does not prove a reliable guide, as is proclaimed here); (E.S.B.)*

Therefore the Gentiles who did not know the Mosaic code, in exercising moral functions, showed that a law was implicit within them.

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(moral light) is evidence of God having
implanted in man His basic moral
principles. . . ”***

Man's conscience, at times, however, does not make him aware of sin. This can come as a result of cultural dictates, false teaching, habitual sin or environmental influences. In other words, the conscience can be warped if it is not allowed to function as it should. For instance, through committing habitual sin, some people yield willingly to the sin nature to the extent that they override their conscience to the point where they can sin without any sense of guilt. The more a person sins, the more that person's conscience will become seared or hardened so that they may reach a point where they feel no sense of guilt, even concerning serious sin. So there are people who can murder fellow human beings in cold blood without a second thought, feeling no guilt in regard to their actions. (Premeditated murder is to be distinguished from having to kill an enemy in war). Others allow Satan to pervert their thinking to the extent where they call good “*evil*” and evil “*good*” (Isaiah 5:20).

In such cases, man needs to be given an intellectual knowledge of sin in order to at least give the conscience a chance to begin to function properly again. This is one of the things God set out to do through the Mosaic Law.

Today the Word of God in its entirety reveals to man the full knowledge and extent of sin - so man is without excuse. As man allows the Holy Spirit to convict him of sin, he is given the opportunity to repent and lead a life transformed through the grace and power of God.

However, whether man recognizes that he is a sinner or not does not alter the fact of his accountability. This is because man has been given the means of salvation and is responsible before God to search for truth and to cross the bridge that God has provided. God has done all He can to deal with the terrible scourge of sin - it is now up to man to avail himself of God's gracious and wonderful gift (Luke 11:9-10).

Note: Today nearly all of mankind has opportunity to read, hear or become aware of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by some means or another. This being the case, while opportunity is available, if people do not seek and then receive God's free gift of salvation, they will be judged and found guilty as unrepentant sinners. Man must recognize he cannot earn his salvation, and is lost without a Saviour.

“...Today nearly all of mankind has opportunity to read, hear or become aware of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by some means or another...”

Now the scriptures state that man is without excuse not to believe that there is a Creator, for creation bears witness to the fact.

ROMANS 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them (speaks of the universal objective knowledge of God as the Creator; which is more or less in all men); for God has showed it unto them (means that His Signature is in Creation). (E.S.B.)

ROMANS 1:20 For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen (explains Verse 19), being understood by the things that are made (Creation demands a Creator), even His Eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (the Creation tells us of the Eternal Power of God, and is obvious to all): (E.S.B.)

PSALM 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament (their expanse) shows His handiwork.

Man only has to look up to the sky on a cloudless night with an open heart to know there is a God. This is because there is an inbuilt desire within man to seek his Creator so as to worship Him. If man opens up to this he will, as he seeks to find God, be taken by the

Father to the Cross of Calvary - for God will move heaven and earth to bring the open, seeking heart to the knowledge of salvation (Matthew 7:7-8). Therefore man is without excuse not to believe that there is a God.

Note: The evidence of this inbuilt desire to worship the Creator is seen across the cultures where it is misdirected and twisted into the worship of false gods.

The Word of God also tells us that every man has been given “*the measure of faith*” (or access to “*the measure of faith*”) to believe there is a God (Romans 12:3). (This scripture also applies to the saved who are given both faith for justification and access to “*the measure of faith*” required for service and obedience.)

This “*measure of faith*” for the heathen is really an inward moral light, contained in the conscience, which gives man the ability to acknowledge a Creator.

Scripture also tells us:

ECCLESIASTES 3:11 He (God) has made every thing beautiful in his time: also He has set the world (eternity) in their heart . . . (In this Verse, the word “world” should have been translated “eternity.” God has made everything beautiful in its season and, at the same time, given to man the consciousness of “eternity.”) (E.S.B.)

Therefore man was created with “*eternity*” in his heart, which is the ability to know and acknowledge that there is life beyond death. This is spiritual knowledge or truth given by God, residing in the heart of man. This, combined with nature’s declaration that there is a God, a Creator, will enable man, with a proper focus and an open mind (or open heart), to have his God-given awareness activated. This proceeds from the “*measure of faith*” we have all been born with, but which is suppressed by sin or an improper focus. Once man acknowledges God the Creator, he is then responsible to seek for Him.

***“...Therefore man was created with
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there is life beyond death. . .”***

Sin and an improper focus, as stated, will suppress but not extinguish this gift, this inward moral light, and man's natural inclination is to seek out his Creator. Sin will stifle this inward motivation, however, and man can, through his own choosing, simply block off to the existence of a Creator. If man denies this part of himself, he will do himself damage, for only through being open to this light can he discover God. The measure of faith is a measure of awareness of God supplied by God's grace. Man is therefore responsible for seeking truth, but he will not discover truth on his own terms, only on God's terms!

God reveals Himself to man as man is open and seeks. Man is responsible for seeking the answers to life, but those answers can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit. Man cannot discover them any other way.

Our conscience should also tell us that our fleshly impulses are evil, and we need to repent - but we then also need a power to deliver us. Therefore if we are truly open and look at the things that exist, we would believe there is a God. The next logical step is to seek to know Him so we can be delivered from this evil within. If a person truly does this, they, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, will find Christ (Matthew 7:7-8).

Satan has, however, polluted God's previously perfect world and blinds men to the fact of their responsibility to their Creator, which is written on their hearts (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

God's sovereign grace allows man, through his conscience, when man is open, to be aware of certain truths and principles. Therefore the knowledge there is a God is instinctive in man - if he opens up to it. He is then responsible to seek His Creator in a progressive and ongoing way.

Satan tries to hinder man from taking up this responsibility. He, as head of the Kingdom of Darkness, is “father” to all those in his

Kingdom. Because of this, he blinds man to the truth of his responsibility by promoting sin in his life so that his conscience becomes seared.

To remove the blindfold of deception and unbelief, man needs God's power. It is the Anointing of God which can enable a person to hear and receive the Gospel - God's New Covenant between man and Himself through Christ (Isaiah 10:27b). The Anointing impacts on the darkness that man is engulfed in and anaesthetizes it for that moment so that man can be given a chance to truly hear the truth as it is preached or shared. Without the Anointing, God's convicting power on the words, the spiritual power of darkness will block the person from hearing with his heart the message that would bring release from that darkness.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN REVEALING THE LAW

Background Reading: Galatians 3:19-24

The Law we are speaking of here is the Mosaic Law, the set of commandments handed down by God through Moses to the nation of Israel. The Law covered every aspect of life and indicated what God expected of His people in their dealings with one another (the horizontal level) and with Him (the vertical level). The Mosaic code was incredibly comprehensive and gave the children of Israel a blueprint for living according to God's righteous standards.

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and indicated what God expected of His
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vertical level). . .”***

To examine God's purpose in revealing the details of the Mosaic Law, let's turn to Romans:

***ROMANS 5:20 Moreover the Law entered, that the
offence might abound (be identified as such and indeed***

increase). But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (increase):

ROMANS 7:7 *What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? God forbid (man's condition is not caused by the Law of God, for the Law is Holy; rather it is exposed: E.S.B.). No, I had not known sin (I would not have known what sin was), but by the Law (means that the Law of Moses defined what sin actually is, but gave no power to overcome it: E.S.B.): for I had not known lust (coveting), except the Law had said, "You shall not covet (tells us that the desire for what is forbidden is the first conscious form of sin; this is the sin nature at work!"). (E.S.B.)*

Scripture shows that it was God's desire to have a special relationship with a people who reflected His holiness and through whom He could display His grace. In Old Testament times, God chose the nation of Israel for this purpose. Note that the people of Israel were not chosen because they were special, but became special because they were chosen.

One of God's purposes in giving Israel the Law was to keep this nation holy (separated unto God) - not through them keeping the Law, for this they were unable to do, but through the sacrifices bringing about atonement for their sin. Through this He showed to the world that there was indeed a God of love, compassion, mercy and judgement. The ultimate purpose of keeping the nation holy (through the atoning sacrifices) was so that God could point to and teach about the Messiah Who was to come into the world through this nation. Then of course He would introduce the Messiah to the world through them.

Israel was holy in God's eyes only through these atoning sacrifices that were a type of the Christ to come. His sacrifice would, in its effectiveness, flow backwards to the very day the sacrifices were being offered under the Old Testament Covenant. In reality, hundreds of years before Christ walked on this earth, the Atonement provided through the Cross was a lifeline to redemption through God's marvellous foreknowledge and grace.

Thus, by God's mercy and grace, those who entered into the Old Covenant were indeed blessed, for through obedience to God's Word

they, ahead of time, entered into Christ (the promise). In this way, death and aspects of the curse were held at bay.

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The Mosaic Law was given, as we have learned, to expose sin for what it was. At the same time this exposure was intended to reveal the holiness of God.

When the Law was given, sin became recognizable as sin, a blatant transgression of God’s Laws. Thus by the Law came the full knowledge of sin, for by the conscience, only part knowledge of sin, at best, could be gained.

The main purpose of the Law was thus to expose sin and define it as such, as well as to declare God’s righteous standards. When this took place, offences abounded - because of the depraved nature of man. This means that if a law from God is put in front of man, he tends to either rebel against it, or else find he cannot keep it. Both options reveal man to be a lawbreaker from birth. Why is this so? It is so because man doesn’t have the power to keep all of God’s Laws or to do that which is right. (**Note:** Because of the sin nature, the giving of a law or regulation often stirs up the very desire in man to do the exact opposite - to break the law given - Romans 7:8) So the fundamental intent of revealing the Law was to demonstrate the impossibility of keeping it. Indeed scripture says if man offends in only one part, he is guilty of disobeying all the Law.

***JAMES 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole Law
(Law of Moses), and yet offend in one point, he is guilty
of all. (This proclaims in no uncertain terms the
impossibility of the Believer finding Victory through the
Law, whether the Law of Moses, or any type of Law. It
simply cannot be done!) (E.S.B.)***

JAMES 2:11 For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” said also, “Do not kill.” Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the Law. (The breaking of even one Commandment puts the person in the position of a “transgressor.”) (E.S.B.)

Even if a man thought wrongly, he would break the Law and so became guilty as a transgressor. Once this situation became obvious, it should have shown man that all he could do was throw himself on the mercy and grace of God through the sacrifices. This was the intent of the Mosaic Law.

“. . .The main purpose of the Law was thus to expose sin and define it as such, as well as to declare God’s righteous standards. . .”

Sin existed and was active before the written Law was given - obviously. And people died as lost sinners (Isaiah 5:13-15). The same is true today for those who do not seek the God Who will lead them to the Saviour and the Cross. But when the Law was given, to fully expose sin and give it definition, the result was an increase in sin, as we have previously learned from Romans 5:20.

ROMANS 5:20 Moreover the Law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

Because of man’s innate sinfulness, when the Law was given to reveal God’s righteous standards, this actually incited men to sin - to commit more sin and greater sin. Such is man’s inclination and drive to oppose God and His holiness. This springs from minds and hearts darkened by the sin nature and polluted by sin.

Denney says, *“The offense is multiplied because the Law encountering the flesh, evokes its natural antagonism to God*

(antagonism of the flesh to God), and so stimulates it into disobedience. As the offense multiplied, and for several reasons, the need of Redemption, and the sense of that need were intensified.” Vincent explains, “Not primarily of the greater consciousness and acknowledgment, but the increase of actual transgressions”.¹
(underlines added)

As we have seen, this led Paul to ask, “What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?” He then answered his own question, “God forbid. No, I had not known sin but by the Law” (Romans 7:7).

ROMANS 7:14 *For we know that the Law is spiritual (means it is totally of and from God): but I am carnal, sold under sin* (Paul is referring here to the Fall - the problem is not the Law, it is man’s utter sinfulness which the Law revealed).

Sin was already widespread before the Law was given, but the Law made sin known for what it was, rebellion against God’s Laws, and therefore an affront to His holiness. Clearly God wanted His people to recognize sin and live according to His righteous standards. However no man can keep God’s Laws purely by self-effort, and so the Law’s real purpose was to reveal to man his utter sinfulness and lack of moral strength - and thus to lead him to the Saviour.

ROMANS 7:12 *Wherefore the Law is holy (in fact it reveals God), and the commandment (each one) holy, and just, and good* (the Law is like a mirror which shows man what he is, but contains no power to change him). (E.S.B.)

ROMANS 7:13 *Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid* (by no means - once again, it is not the Law that is at fault, but rather the sin in man which is opposed to the Law: E.S.B.). **But sin** (the sin nature), **that it might appear sin** (be recognized as such), **working death in me** (trying to keep the Laws of God in one’s own strength in order to gain favour with God will bring death not life - this is religion) **by that which is**

good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

ROMANS 3:20 Therefore by the deeds (the works, the observance) of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight (justification comes by faith not works): for by the Law is the knowledge of sin (the Law defined sin, it could not bring deliverance from it).

We will use an example to help illustrate the principle of the knowledge of the law revealing sin. If a person had cancer but was not aware of it, we could say it was not “alive” to them simply because of their ignorance of it. However this would not alter the fact of the cancer’s reality, and its devastating effects if left in an unattended state. If the person then went to the doctor for a medical checkup and learned that they had cancer, then that knowledge would become “alive” to them, and hopefully this would motivate them to seek treatment.

Similarly, if people continue to sin even though they do not recognize their actions as sin, the consequences will be no different. If their actions are revealed to them as sin, however, they may then be motivated to change their actions.

“. . .Because of man’s innate sinfulness, when the Law was given to reveal God’s righteous standards, this actually incited men to sin - to commit more sin and greater sin. . .”

The purpose of the Mosaic Law was to reveal sin (and point man to the Cross). Even today the moral conduct prescribed through the Mosaic Law (e.g. the ten commandments) shows sin for what it is - rebellion against God’s commands which will always result in some kind of spiritual consequence. This is because the breaking of God’s Laws will give the enemy legal ground to afflict the person concerned. Therefore, in any perfect order, whenever there is a transgression of the law, there will also be a penalty. The purpose of

the penalty is to dissuade the offender (and others) from committing the offence, or to encourage him (and others) to seek help to stop - so that peace and order will eventually reign.

The Law had served its purpose when it led man to the point of recognizing and acknowledging how sinful he was, in both his state and his actions. It completely unmasked him before God, as described graphically by Paul (Romans 7:14-24). In fact the Law acted as a mirror for man, revealing him for what he was. It could, however, give man no empowerment to live righteously and as we have learned, was intended in reality to lead people to the promise of the Saviour for salvation.

GALATIANS 3:11 But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident (for it is impossible for anyone to keep the Law perfectly): for, “The just shall live by faith.” (Habakkuk 2:4 - the way of salvation is through faith not works)

GALATIANS 3:24 Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster (our trainer; our guardian) to bring us unto Christ (what the Law was supposed to do), that we might be justified by faith (in Him - the Law was meant as a temporary measure).

In the Old Testament, before the Saviour's arrival, the people's only hope was to throw themselves on the mercy and grace of God through the sacrificial offerings for the atonement of their sins. This provision could only cover their sins until Christ came to cash in the promissory notes pertaining to that Covenant. Spiritual regeneration could then be realized in Christ, but then and only then could the slate be wiped clean. When Jesus rose from the dead, those whose sins had been “covered” under the Old Covenant could then become those who were led “*captivity captive*” into eternal life with God (Ephesians 4:8-10). Amen.

***“ . . . The Law had served its purpose
when it led man to the point of
recognizing and acknowledging how
sinful he was, in both his state
and his actions. . . ”***

Remember that if a person wanted to live by law (which they can't), if they were to break only one law, God's Word says that they would then be guilty of all (James 2:10-11). One sin in one lifetime, only one, and they would become guilty - totally and absolutely guilty of breaking all the Law of God. In other words, by one sin they become a transgressor of all the Law.

WHEN CAN GOD'S LAWS BECOME A STUMBLING BLOCK ?

In the Apostle Paul's day, the Law of God became a stumbling block to many religious people, and unfortunately, this is still true today in regard to the Bible's moral standards.

How could this be?

In Paul's day the religious people obeyed the letter of the law and thought they were righteous - indeed the Pharisees were so full of pride that they failed to recognize their long promised Messiah! Just as it was then, many unsaved people today also believe that just living according to the Bible's basic moral standards will secure them a place in heaven or gain them favour with God while on earth. On this basis, they too feel they have no need of a Saviour. However, good works alone will never give people rightstanding with God. It is only through repentance and the acceptance of Christ's Lordship that people can step into this privileged position. Indeed without regeneration, the sin nature is so pervasive in our lives that even our so-called "righteous acts" are "*as filthy rags*" before the Lord (Isaiah 64:6).

“ . . In the Apostle Paul’s day, the Law of God became a stumbling block to many religious people, and unfortunately, this is still true today in regard to the Bible’s moral standards. . . ”

The fact is that many unbelievers live moral lives, even better than some Christians, but they are not empowered by the Holy Spirit to live Godly lives in Jesus.

This empowerment can only be obtained through people making Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour, and then yielding to the Spirit of Grace. This is because only after spiritual regeneration do we have, in a potential sense, God’s empowerment. This comes through the graces of His Divine Nature energizing our human nature so that we can live in the way He desires us to. God thus sent His Son into the world to do for man what the Law had been unable to do. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans tells us:

ROMANS 8:3 For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (those under Law had only their willpower, which is woefully insufficient; so despite how hard they tried, they were unable to keep the Law then, and the same inability persists presently; any person who tries to live for God by a system of laws is doomed to failure, because the Holy Spirit will not function in that capacity), God sending His own Son (refers to man’s helpless condition, unable to save himself and unable to keep even a simple Law and, therefore, in dire need of a Saviour) in the likeness of sinful flesh (this means that Christ was really human, conformed in appearance to flesh which is characterized by sin, but yet sinless), and for sin (to atone for sin, to destroy its power, and to save and Sanctify its victims), condemned sin in the flesh (destroyed the power of sin by giving His Perfect Body as a Sacrifice for sin, which made it possible for sin to be defeated in our flesh; it was all through the Cross): (E.S.B.)

ROMANS 8:4 That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us (through the energies and graces of the Divine Nature), who walk not after the flesh (in self-will and our own strength), but after the Spirit (as yielded vessels, being led and empowered by Him).

So we see that what the Mosaic Law could not do (make man righteous before God) because it was weakened by the flesh (it had no power to deal with the sin nature), God did for us through the sacrificial death and Resurrection of His Son. Now it is possible for us, the regenerated, to live righteously before God - as we yield to the Holy Spirit moment by moment, thereby receiving the empowerment we need through the energies and graces of the Divine Nature.

THE LAW OF GOD AND THE LAW OF MOSES

The “Law of God” and the “Law of Moses” are interchangeable phrases which are used throughout God’s Word. The word “law” can also refer to many different aspects of God’s Word including the Decalogue (Ten Commandments), the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) and the whole Word of God (e.g. Psalm 119).

“...The “Law of God” and the “Law of Moses” are interchangeable phrases which are used throughout God’s Word. . .”

Moses brought down the Ten Commandments, inscribed on tablets of stone, from Mount Sinai. At this and other times God also gave him other laws relating to feast days, holy days, sacrifices, offerings, clean and unclean foods, the construction of the Tabernacle and civil matters. All these commandments form part of the Mosaic Law and are recorded primarily in the books of Exodus and Leviticus.

The Mosaic Law can be divided into three sections:

1. **The moral law**, which applied to people's individual lives.
2. **The civil (social) law**, which governed the national or social life of the people.
3. **The ceremonial (religious) law**, which applied to the religious life of the people.

Another way of looking at the Mosaic Law is in terms of two sets of criteria, "the spirit of the Law" and the "letter of the Law." As we have seen, the spirit or intent of the Mosaic Law was based on God's universal principles and laws. "The spirit of the Law" has always been written on men's hearts (even though man had no real power to keep this law) and it still applies to us today. But the statutes and ordinances, otherwise known as "the letter of the Law," were intended to be only of an interim nature, and applied specifically to the nation of Israel. God's principles, however, have not changed and neither have His laws which express and demonstrate them. Indeed God's principles are the same yesterday, today and forevermore.

THE MORAL LAW

Background Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

The ten commandments encapsulate and declare the broad principles of God's moral law. They were the foundation for all the other laws, were directed towards the individual, and revealed God's requirements of man.

(a) The first four commandments showed what was required of man in regard to his vertical relationship with God:

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make unto yourself any graven image.

3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.

(b) The remaining six commandments gave direction concerning man's horizontal relationship with man:

5. Honour your father and your mother.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
10. You shall not covet.

It is plain from the Ten Commandments that right and wrong were not to be determined by the voice of society, but by the voice of God.

***“...God's Laws remain absolute and
unchanging, no matter how much our
western culture or any other culture
seeks to adopt moral relativism as the
code by which behaviour is judged. . .”***

Note: The same is true today. God's Laws remain absolute and unchanging, no matter how much our western culture or any other culture seeks to adopt moral relativism as the code by which behaviour is judged. This philosophy declares that moral standards are to be regarded as subjective and thus subject to change. This means that society's moral standards will be determined by either the whim of the majority or by those who have the strongest voices. People's consciences then become warped and seared through

constant exposure to immorality, and in this way they become oblivious to the moral laws, concerning man and God, which are written on their hearts.

Whether or not people acknowledge or discern God's righteous standards does not make people more or less accountable. The light is there, and God's Laws are in existence, just as road rules are in existence. Whether we know the rules, or choose to drive on the wrong side of the road, makes no difference. We will be held accountable - whether dead to God or alive to Him.

THE CIVIL LAW

Background Reading: Exodus Ch.21, Ch.22, Ch.23:1-13

The civil law of the Mosaic Code was concerned with the statutes and judgements which related to Israel's social affairs. The civil law was given so that peace and order could be maintained throughout the land - within the family, the state and other spheres of human interaction.

These laws were concerned with the administration of justice, people's property rights, the care of the poor, the training of children, the punishment of criminals and many other matters. They also dealt with personal relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, and included such concerns as slavery, the oppression of widows and orphans, money lending and avengers of blood.

“ . . . The civil laws given in Old Testament times, however, were specific to Israel and were structured in accordance with man's legal position and spiritual state at that time. . . ”

The civil laws given in Old Testament times, however, were specific to Israel and were structured in accordance with man's legal position and spiritual state at that time. For example, if people committed a sin such as murder or adultery, it was required by law

that they be stoned to death. One reason for this may have been to stop the spiritual consequences of such sins from being passed on to succeeding generations and so “polluting” the nation (Numbers 14:18). Christians, however, are in a different legal and spiritual position and can (by God’s grace, through the Blood of Christ), if they repent, be forgiven of practising these types of sins and cleansed of their consequences (1 John 1:9). In this way the effects of such sin can be totally erased or nullified. Truly the message of the Gospel is always about restoration through the power of the Cross.

As Christians, the standards set out in the Word in regard to our Christian conduct are based on our legal and spiritual position, and our potential strength in Christ (Ephesians 4:25-32; Ephesians 6:1-9). Therefore while we are fortunate that the consequences of sin can be removed through repentance and faith, we are also now under a much heavier obligation. For example:, Jesus said:

MATTHEW 5:27 *“You have heard that it was said by them of old time, ‘You shall not commit adultery’ (This was the seventh of the 10 commandments - Exodus 20:14.).*

MATTHEW 5:28 *But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” (The Lord here is not denying the Law of Moses but taking it to its proper conclusion in Himself in the New Covenant. He is here identifying the root cause of sin which is the evil heart of man.).*

Our sin therefore is not just in action but in thinking and intent. This much heavier responsibility and obligation is because under the New Covenant, we have access to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit - so that we can live as God desires. Furthermore, we can enter the throneroom of grace for help in time of need, we have the Name of Jesus and His authority to bind and loose the enemy and also a heavenly High Priest Who has interceded on our behalf. None of these advantages were available to the Old Testament Saints. Because of our privileged position, the requirements of the New

Covenant are much more stringent. With our increased liberty and potential in Christ comes a greater responsibility and obligation to obey, not through willpower, but by the Divine power given to us, as Believers, through Christ's Resurrection. Therefore having been raised with Christ in "*newness of life*" (the Divine Nature), let us walk in the empowerment afforded to us by the Cross.

THE CEREMONIAL LAW

Background Reading: Leviticus Ch.11; Ch.12; Ch.16; Exodus 23:14-19

The Mosaic ceremonial law was primarily concerned with the requirements which related to the extensive sacrificial system - the means by which the people's sins could be atoned for. Instructions were given concerning the priestly duties within the Tabernacle, the construction of the Tabernacle and its purpose. These ordinances gave direction in regard to furnishings, clothing, and ceremonial duties such as hand washing etc. which accompanied the blood sacrifices that atoned for the people's sins.

“ . . . The Mosaic ceremonial law was primarily concerned with the requirements which related to the extensive sacrificial system. . . ”

Also within the ceremonial law was the holiness code which outlined the requirements of a holy people. It consisted of regulations prohibiting the eating of certain foods, etc., and also dealt with people being in clean and unclean states. For example, if a person had leprosy, sores or skin disorders, they were considered unclean and were separated from the people until their time of cleansing was completed.

The purpose of the ceremonial law was threefold:

1. It required obedience to God. Israel as a nation was set apart by God to be the womb of the Messiah, and as such, was required to walk in obedience to Him. This was a condition of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:9-10).
2. It provided sacrifice to cover sin so that eternal death could be kept at bay (Leviticus Chs.1-5, Ch.16).
3. It acted as a type-pattern to point to Calvary e.g. the sacrifices, feasts and Tabernacle.

Today the Old Testament ceremonial law relates to us as follows:

1. Obedience pure and simple, for example to dietary laws, is no longer required (Acts 10:9-16). However we are still required to obey God's instruction and commands under the New Covenant.
2. Sacrifice to cover sin - this was fulfilled in Christ's once for only sacrifice.
3. Type-patterns - the sacrifices and ceremonies pointed to Christ and because they are fulfilled in Him, are no longer required.

***“ . . . Also within the ceremonial law was
the holiness code which outlined the
requirements of a holy people . . . ”***

Note: Most of the ceremonial and civil laws were only intended to be temporary, and pertained specifically to Israel as a nation in the Old Testament period, the type-patterns pointing to Calvary. The moral laws, however, were intended to be permanent. The principles on which the civil laws were founded (e.g. protection of the innocent, justice and equality for all, human rights and property rights) were also intended to be permanent, being moral to begin with. This includes the principle of tithing - which is moral in its foundation,

being our duty to the Lord as our Jehovah Jireh. In this we acknowledge Him as our Provider by giving back to Him a portion of what we believe He has given to us. Thus this principle extends into the New Testament, providing for the structure by which God's Word can be ministered. As we have learned, the temporary aspects of the Mosaic code can be viewed as "the letter of the Law" and those parts of the Mosaic code which were intended to be ongoing or permanent can be viewed as "the spirit of the Law." This is an important consideration in New Covenant teaching where we now have no obligation to the letter of the Law but we are under a heavier obligation to obey the spirit of the Law - God's eternal principles.

As the Israelites obeyed all the laws which God gave them, they prospered in all they did. When they chose to disobey or forget God's Laws, however, they suffered loss and placed themselves into bondage (Deuteronomy 11:26-28; Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

THE LAW CONCERNING THE SABBATH

Background Reading: Hebrews 3:7-4:11

It is clear from New Testament teaching that the strict laws pertaining to Sabbath Day observances no longer apply under the New Covenant.

COLOSSIANS 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat (by what you eat), or in drink (by what you drink), or in respect of (with regard to) an holyday (religious festival), or of the New Moon (celebration), or of the Sabbath Days:

COLOSSIANS 2:17 Which (such things) are a shadow (type-patterns - having only symbolic value) of things to come (all the observances under the Mosaic Code were meant to point to Christ and Calvary); but the body is of Christ.

ROMANS 14:5 One man esteems one day (the Sabbath) above another: another esteems every day alike

*(considers each day sacred, and scrutinizes his walk accordingly). **Let every man be fully persuaded (convinced) in his own mind (Romans 14:23).***

In Old Testament times, the Sabbath Day was a mandatory day of rest for the whole nation of Israel. Even the animals were subject to the Sabbath Day, and were supposed to be spared from works of service to their human masters on this day. The Sabbath was defined as the day of rest by the fourth commandment. The Sabbath Day was the seventh day of the week, i.e. Saturday, and was considered to be a day of absolute rest - not so much a day of worship but of rest. In this Age of Grace, however, we are not bound by law to keep the Sabbath Day - for today, the physical Sabbath is fulfilled in a spiritual sense. Christ is our Sabbath, and we cease from all works involving trying to gain favour with God because we are now regenerated - saved by grace through faith. In Christ we live in the eternal Sabbath, the eternal rest from our own works in regard to gaining salvation or favour with God. Every day is our Sabbath, and by the power of the Spirit each day is kept holy.

“ . . . In this Age of Grace, however, we are not bound by law to keep the Sabbath Day - for today, the physical Sabbath is fulfilled in a spiritual sense. . . ”

The Sabbath Day observance was a physical type-pattern of the spiritual truth of the eternal Sabbath Day rest. The fourth commandment points to Christ, and to the “*rest*” that can only be found in Him. Indeed the Bible speaks of three “*rests*” - His creation rest, His Sabbath rest and His Redemption rest which is God’s true rest. The first and second point to the third, and God invites sinners to enter this rest.

EXODUS 31:16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual Covenant.

EXODUS 31:17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed.

“The “rest” in which the Lord engaged after the six days of creation, and the Sabbath rest under Israel, were always meant to typify the “rest” which would be provided by Christ, because of what He did at the Cross. . . the Sabbath was not for worship, but rather for “rest.” Now that Christ has come, the symbol is no longer needed as should be obvious . . .

If a Christian attempts to find “rest” by Sabbath keeping presently, rest will not be found, and that goes for any other similar effort. “Rest” is found only in Christ, which always refers to His great Sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary.”²

Christ is God’s rest. All those outside of Christ have no peace with God and hence no spiritual rest, being at enmity with Him. Positional or legal sanctification is resting in what Christ has already done (by faith).

Indeed as Christians we have entered legally into God’s eternal rest - but we also need to enter experientially into this rest on a day to day basis (Hebrews 4:10). We do this by yielding ourselves to Him, obeying all that He commands and ceasing to lean on our own knowledge and understanding. With this attitude in mind, we should regard every day as the Lord’s Day.

“ . . . Indeed as Christians we have entered legally into God’s eternal rest - but we also need to enter experientially into this rest on a day to day basis. . . ”

Through our faith, we can enter into God’s rest by accepting the invitation Jesus gave in Matthew 11:28-30:

MATTHEW 11:28 *“Come unto Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (from your own works - dead works).*

MATTHEW 11:29 *Take My yoke (the cross of self-denial - Luke 9:23) upon you, and learn of (from) Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.*

MATTHEW 11:30 *For My yoke is easy (to the surrendered heart), and My burden is light (when held up by the grace of God).”*

It is only when we are led and empowered by the Spirit of Truth that we can enter into the eternal Sabbath on an experiential basis. In this position of rest, we allow God to fulfill His role as our provider and protector. It is by His grace and our faith that we can be led and empowered so that we cease struggling in fruitless and empty works. Then His yoke is “easy” and His burden “light” - and the glory belongs to Him.

The writer of Hebrews says:

HEBREWS 4:2 *For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them (the Israelites in the wilderness): but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith (belief) in them who heard it.*

HEBREWS 4:3 *For we who have believed (shows that faith is the key in this matter) do enter into rest (no longer struggling in our own works to try and gain favour with God), as He (God) said, “As I have sworn in My wrath, they (the people of Israel who did not believe and perished in the desert) **shall not enter into My rest** (because of their unbelief and subsequent disobedience) . . . ” (Psalm 95:11)*

HEBREWS 4:8 *For if Joshua had given them rest (in the Promised Land, being only a symbol of the true rest to come), then would He (God) not afterward have spoken of another day.*

HEBREWS 4:9 *There remains, therefore, a (true) rest to (for) the people of God (this rest can be found only in Christ);*

HEBREWS 4:10 *For he who is entered into His rest (anyone who enters God's rest), he also has ceased (rests) from his own works (through faith in what Christ has done), as God did from His. (God rested on the seventh day when Creation was finished. And we can Rest in Christ because the Plan of Redemption is finished, of which God's Rest was a type: E.S.B.).*

HEBREWS 4:11 *Let us labour (hasten) therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall (by following the Israelites' example of unbelief) after the same example of unbelief.*

The Gospel proclaimed to the Israelites in the wilderness was not that of a spiritual rest in Christ for He had not yet been to the Cross. Their Gospel would ultimately be the same as ours but at this point consisted of the Good News of rest in the Promised Land, a place flowing with milk and honey, after hundreds of years of slavery. However to have taken hold of the promise would have finally brought them, after the Resurrection, from Abraham's Bosom to heaven itself. So the Gospel was the same, there being only one Gospel.

“ . . It is only when we are led and empowered by the Spirit of Truth that we can enter into the eternal Sabbath on an experiential basis. . . ”

Now the message of this Gospel was salvation - whether physical, as with the Hebrews of the Exodus, or spiritual, as with Christians today. The condition for receiving the promises of the Gospel was faith - to believe what God said. Thus as the scripture declares, "*Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness*" (Galatians 3:6; Genesis 15:6). This Gospel was preached to Abraham who believed God when He said "*in you shall all families of the earth (all nations) be blessed*" (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8).

However the Good News did not "*profit*" Israel in the wilderness because they would not believe God concerning the Promised Land and, as a result, perished in the desert. They did not believe and trust in God, negated the promise through "*an evil heart of unbelief*" (Hebrews 3:12) and did not enter into God's rest.

Now what is perhaps the greatest hindrance to belief - to faith? Works that are done to obtain favour from God are the greatest hindrance to faith. This means that people may see such works as going to church, studying the Word and helping the needy as their part of a contractual agreement with God. This amounts to a tradeoff mentality - "If I do this for You, then I expect You to do this for me." But our works can never be used as a basis for obtaining favour or receiving grace in time of need. This is to do religious works. This is what the Israelites did with the Law - they trusted in the rituals and the observances, and obtained no favour because there was no faith - only empty works (Isaiah 1:11-14).

From faith will come works, not the other way around. God's grace is at work to cause His will to be done, and ultimately this grace leads to a rest in regard to the Christian's performance. Works are done as a response to the knowledge of God's will, i.e. when we are being led by the Spirit. As we flow in this we rest, knowing that God is in control and is responsible for whatever outcome eventuates - given that people's wills are involved and God, in His love, will never force. There is a rest involved in this. To be conscious of God's will and the doing of it, being focused and directed by this knowledge, not our own ideas, will prevent "burnout" in ministry. The same principles applies to the normal Christian experience.

“...God’s grace is at work to cause His will to be done, and ultimately this grace leads to a rest in regard to the Christian’s performance. . .”

We need to seek, find and flow in God’s will, relying on His graces to lead us to the hurting and the lost, inviting them to church to hear the Gospel. We also need to be supporting local ministries and allowing ourselves to be developed through teaching so we can fulfill whatever potential and whatever calling we have. To flow in God’s will in this way enables the Christian to enter into this same Sabbath rest from religious works. Again faith will produce righteous works, being the fruit of faith. But these works will be centered at the Cross and will not be viewed as a means of gaining favour or prompting a certain response from God. Flowing in this way will provide no excuse for slackness and alternatively will not produce “burnout” which often results from the driving force of zeal directed in the absence of wisdom.

Every step needs to be ordered by the Lord:

PROVERBS 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding (ideas, plans, insight).

PROVERBS 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths (self-will is man’s biggest downfall; our “ways” should be yielded to the Creator Who knows all and loves all - Luke 12:6, 7, 31).

Sadly many, with good human intentions, have even travelled overseas as missionaries, doing “good works” as a replacement, however unknowingly, for relationship and finding the true will of God. We can apply this principle to many aspects of the normal Christian life. Again let us consider carefully the scripture, “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord*” (Psalm 37:23). This puts an onus on the Christian, let alone the minister, to prayerfully

seek and find the true voice of the Lord and not follow their own biased inclinations, no matter how “good” they may seem. Indeed God knows us, our capabilities and potentials, our past and our future, and we need to gain from the Father His plan for our lives - for ultimately many other lives will also be affected.

In Christ, we are not our own anymore for we have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). So God now legally owns us, and this even includes our time, for eternity.

“...God knows us, our capabilities and potentials, our past and our future, and we need to gain from the Father His plan for our lives. . .”

If we have sought God’s will and so chosen to enter into God’s rest, we indeed have ceased from struggling, through our own works, to please Him. Indeed it is not by our own works that we become the righteousness of God in Christ. It is by grace through faith in Jesus’ shed Blood that we gain a position of righteousness. As we have said, true faith will always be accompanied by works of righteousness - good fruits which flow from commitment and faith.

Faith will therefore produce works of righteousness. We can never receive anything from God today by merely observing law (doing good works). It is only as we obey from a position of faith that we can receive anything from God, or indeed give anything to God. Note that the prescribed order for rest will always involve faith - belief and trust in God. Faith gives us rest. Without faith our obedience becomes legalism (“letter of the law”), without proper connection to the Spirit. Works performed in this way are not done out of relationship.

Thus all who are in Christ have entered, in a positional sense, into the eternal Sabbath, for Christ is Himself the true Sabbath. But to know the joy of it experientially, we must do what God commands from a heart of faith and love. As we yield to the Spirit, the energies and graces of the Divine Nature will give us the desire and then the power to do God’s will, and thus, in His rest, to produce fruit of eternal value. Amen!

WHY DO CHRISTIANS USE SUNDAY AS THEIR DAY OF WORSHIP ?

There are several reasons the early Christian church chose Sunday, which is also called “*the Lord’s Day*” (Revelation 1:10), as their day of worship.

As we know, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ took place on the first day of the week, that being Sunday, and on that same day He appeared to His Disciples.

LUKE 24:1 Now upon the first day of the week (Sunday), very early in the morning, they (the women of Luke 23:55) came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

LUKE 24:2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

LUKE 24:3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

JOHN 20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week (Sunday), when the doors were shut where the Disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst (appearing suddenly), and said unto them, “Peace be unto you.”

Then one week later He appeared to them again, that also being Sunday, the first day of the week.

JOHN 20:26 And after eight days (Sunday to Sunday inclusive) again His Disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst (the same as eight days earlier), and said, “Peace be unto you.”

God also chose to pour out His Holy Spirit on the first day of the week which we know to be the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1;

Leviticus 23:15-16). This day was a Sunday, for it was always exactly 50 days from the Sabbath Day (the Saturday) after the Passover (Friday). These 50 days were of course numbered from the day after this Sabbath, which was the Sunday. This Sabbath Day also marked the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which lasted seven days.

“...There are several reasons the early Christian church chose Sunday, which is also called “the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10), as their day of worship. . .”

There are also accounts in scripture of the early church meeting together on the first day of the week.

ACTS 20:7 And upon the first day of the week (Sunday), when the Disciples came together to break bread (Sunday had become the primary day of worship for the early church), Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:2 Upon the first day of the week (Sunday) let every one of you lay by him in store (set aside a sum of money for the Lord’s work), as God has prospered him (in keeping with his income), that there be no gatherings when I come (no need for collections when I come).

Even the Book of Revelation records the Apostle John seeing the vision of the risen, glorified Christ on “the Lord’s Day” :

REVELATION 1:10 I (the Apostle John) was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day (Sunday). . .

We can see through scripture that many important events transpired on Sunday, the first day of the week, and that this day

became the obvious choice for the early church as the day of Christian worship. Paul seemingly continued this practice and today, Sunday remains the convenient day of worship for the whole Christian Church, the day that first and foremost commemorates the Resurrection.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY

The Sabbath was given to Israel under the Mosaic Law. The Lord's Day was instituted by Christians under grace and still continues today.

The Sabbath was on Saturday, the seventh day of the week, whereas the Lord's Day, which Christians universally celebrate, is on Sunday, the first day of the week. In Old Testament times, the Sabbath Day was a day of rest for the people of Israel according to the Law of Moses. The Lord's Day, however, is a day of worship for Christians (who have entered into the eternal Sabbath rest through Christ).

***“ . . . The Sabbath was given to Israel
under the Mosaic Law. The Lord's Day
was instituted by Christians under grace
and still continues today. . . ”***

In Old Testament times, compulsory obedience of the law of the Sabbath was required. In this present Church Age, we can voluntarily worship and are not under compulsion. However we are reminded in scripture that we are not to neglect to gather together corporately, which is part of our responsibility and duty as Christians. In the New Testament we do not find the wording “You shall not” or “You shall” but rather:

***HEBREWS 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of
ourselves together (in corporate meetings), as the
manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so***

much the more, as you see the day (of the Lord's return) approaching.

Another versions reads:

HEBREWS 10:25 Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people, but admonishing - warning, urging and encouraging - one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching. (Amp.)

Indeed the spirit of the Law would direct Christians to meet together even more than once a week on a corporate basis. The reasons for this are as follows:

- to lift one another up in the faith, for strength and encouragement come from Christians of like faith being assembled together
- to hear what the Spirit is saying by His grace through anointed ministers
- to be taught the principles of God under His Anointing
- to be brought to a position of progressive understanding concerning the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God
- to praise and worship God as a collective body dwelling together in the unity of the Spirit.
- to remember the suffering, death and Resurrection of Christ and us identified with Him
- to lessen, deflect and quench the effect of the world, the flesh and the devil on the Saints.

To accomplish all this, God bathes, indeed floods the meeting places of Believers with the special grace of His Anointing for all these purposes. This special Anointing that so many experience all around the world helps Believers to grow in the faith and better hear the voice of God whether it be through exhortation, rebuke, teaching or direction. Darkness in a Saint's mind quite often takes a back seat when he or she stands under this Anointing with fellow Believers.

These are only some of the reasons why Saints need to gather together, and so not be islands unto themselves, unaccountable to any headship. Hebrews 13:17 tells us to obey and submit to those who

have rule over us (who guide us or lead us or keep watch over us) in the Lord. This takes place within the protective confines of a corporate body of Believers who care for one another, and watch over one another, the ministry making sure the words of counsel, encouragement, exhortation and prophecy etc. remain pure and in line with the written Word.

***“. . .“Lone-ranger Christians,” who
travel from church to church doing what
they feel like when they feel like it,
display “self-ruled” as opposed to
“Spirit-led” Christianity. . .”***

“Lone-ranger Christians,” who travel from church to church doing what they feel like when they feel like it, display “self-ruled” as opposed to “Spirit-led” Christianity. This is very dangerous not only for them, but for others who listen to or are influenced by them. When Christians will not commit themselves to a particular place where their giftings can be used to help edify a local body of Believers, and where they can grow and be nurtured under a God-appointed local shepherd, they are doing themselves, and others, harm. Lone-ranger Christians do not mature in any great way in the faith because they become in a sense their own pastor, always doing what is right in their own eyes. The local church is God’s ordained structure for the Body of Christ, and is meant to provide checks and balances in terms of the teaching and application of God’s Word. We cannot please God outside His will for our lives, and we cannot serve Him effectively if we will not yield our lives as true Disciples. The rule in all of our meetings and in all of our lives should be, “Not our will but Yours be done Lord. Have Your way in us and through us. Amen.”

May you have the victory in Christ.

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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crossroadsministries.org.au

NOTES

NOTES

- 1 Denney, James, Expositor's Greek Testament; Vincent, Marvin R., Word Studies in the New Testament.
- 2 S.B.C. Exodus, pg.525.

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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