

## What is the purpose of the 10 Commandments?

Most every believer knows Ephesians 2:8, 9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast." The message is clear, salvation is by grace.

But Paul and the other New Testament writers do not stop there. Over and over, they tell us that we are to live the Christian life just as we were saved – by grace through faith. For example, Paul wrote in Colossians 2:6, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him." Notably absent is any mention of the Law, or the Ten Commandments. With that being the case, what then is the purpose of the Law?

### The Law shows us our need for Jesus Christ

God gave the Law to convict us of our sin and our need for a Savior, so that we would turn to Jesus for salvation. In Romans 3:19, 20, we see this purpose spelled out for us: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."

Can anyone measure up to the righteous requirements of the Law? Absolutely not! When we look into the Law, we see ourselves for who we really are – sinners by nature. As hard as we may try, it is impossible for us to live up to the Law. So under the Law, we stand condemned, guilty as charged.

Not only does the Law condemn us, it also brings about death. Notice Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3: "for the letter kills... the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone..." There is no doubt that Paul is talking about the Ten Commandments. When we understand that the punishment of violating the Law is death, we see our true condition apart from Christ – dead in sin.

At one time in his life, Paul thought his obedience to the Law would earn him eternal life. He actually believed that he was faultless as for legalistic righteousness. But then the Law did its work in his life. He recorded his stark revelation in Romans 7:9-11: "Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death."

*Life's Toughest Questions:*  
9. What is the purpose of the 10 Commandments?

God wanted Paul to know that he was dead in sin. Why? So that he would turn to Him for life. Unless a person knows his need for a Savior, he will never turn to Christ for salvation. The Law is God's tool to open the eyes of the lost to the truth of who they are apart from Jesus Christ. The Law is for the lost, not the saved. Concerning the purpose of the Law, Paul wrote, "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24).

## We are no longer under the Law

Once the Law has done its work in our life, there is nothing more for it to do. As a matter of fact, it is powerless to do anything other than condemn us and show us that we are spiritually dead. It is much like a mirror. A mirror can show us that our face is dirty, but it is powerless to wash our face. The Law shows us that we are dead and that's it. It cannot give us life. It is powerless to do so.

Only Jesus can give us life. When we turn to Him by faith, we are made alive together with Him. As a result, "we are no longer under the supervision of the law" (Galatians 3:25). We are now under the supervision of Jesus Christ, and we are to be led on a daily basis by His Spirit who lives in us.

So what is the purpose of the Law, or the Ten Commandments? To show the lost that they are dead in sin and in need of life. Has the Law done its work in your life? If so, have you trusted Jesus Christ and received His resurrected life?

For more information on the purpose of the Law, we recommend the following resources:

*Growing in Grace (Book)*  
*Law and Grace (Audio Series)*  
*A Closer Look at Law and Grace (Bible Study Guide)*  
*Faith That Pleases God (Book)*

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1225 E. Rosemeade Pkwy., Carrollton, Texas 75007  
469.546.6360 • realanswers.net

