

**GOOD NEWS**  
for the unsaved  
WORLD!

(#186)  
The Law and salvation.

1

**SOME CONSIDERATIONS – RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE LAW, GOOD WORKS.**

**ALL people have an obligation to do what is righteous.**  
That is why **ALL** people will be judged for what they have done.

**FOR THOSE FOLLOWING JESUS.**

[God's] righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done."  
To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.  
But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.  
There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.  
For God does not show favoritism.

**FOR THOSE NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.**

Romans 2:5b-11 (NIV)

2

**Different ways the word "Law" is used in the New Testament.**

- **All the regulations of the Old Covenant.** Generally, these could be divided into 3 broad categories:
  - ① **Moral laws.** These are a reflection of God's character, and can be summarized by the two greatest commands: Love God and love neighbor (including foreigners) – Deuteronomy 6:4; Leviticus 19:18, 34).
  - ② **Civil laws.** Regulations for governing Israel, these were a reflection of the moral law within the Old Covenant context. In Jesus' day, the Romans were in control, so most of these regulations could not be followed. (Actually, the Jews rarely followed them throughout their history.) When understood in context, these regulations illustrate the nature of *righteous* laws of government. (Today, they are normally ignored, or else taken out of context, criticized and mocked.)
  - ③ **Ceremonial (religious) laws.** Regulations and sacrifices pertaining to Israel's relationship with God. Many of these things were a picture of what Jesus would accomplish under the *New Covenant*.

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- **The laws of love for God and neighbor.** In both Old and New Testaments, we learn that these two commands *summarize* all our obligations toward God and other people – all the other commands.
- **The moral law.** Under the *New Covenant*, the focus is on the moral law – the 10 Commandments, summarized in the laws of love for God and neighbor. The 10 Commandments teach us how this love is to be expressed toward God and neighbor. (Love is *not* undefined or distorted, as the world often does.)  
[What about the rest of the Law of Moses? ① The sacrifices are no longer needed; and ② governments tend to invent their own arbitrary laws, ignoring Scripture's guidelines for justice.]
- **Human tradition.** The Jews had come up with their own regulations, which often distorted or nullified the Law of God. Jesus and the apostles *always* condemned these "laws."
- **"Law" (as a general term).** Occasionally, it refers to the *concept* of regulations, principles, or rules that govern people.

★ **NONE** of these can *earn* us salvation. ★

4

**How do we identify good works?**

- **Without the Bible, there is no objective standard to define which works are "good."**
  - ✓ **NOT from creation** – People can learn from nature, because it reveals some things about God. But they suppress what they can learn, because they don't like the fact that it *does* reveal some things about God (Romans 1:18-20+).
  - ✓ **NOT from conscience** – People can learn from their consciences, because God embedded that conscience within them. But because of our sin, what the conscience says tends to be suppressed and corrupted (Romans 1:14-15; Titus 1:15-16). Even a clear conscience is imperfect, and does not prove a person innocent of sin (1 Corinthians 4:4).
  - ✓ **NOT from religion** – Religion may restrain some sin and promote some good things. But being the invention of humans, it is part of their rebellion against the true God, and blinds people with a distortion of the truth.

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- **Under the Law of Moses (the Old Covenant), God revealed the most perfect expression of "good works"** – a reflection of his own character.
  - ✓ This Law includes moral laws (a reflection of God's character), civil laws (a reflection of the moral law within the Old Covenant context) and ceremonial (religious) laws (a temporary measure, to be done until Christ fulfilled all that was required).
  - ✓ Since it was revealed by God and defines what is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12), doing these works would give people the best chance of *working* their way to salvation ... *if it were possible*.

**WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY?** Can we become righteous by obeying the law – the "works of the law," which are the best expression of "good works" that exists in the universe? **LET'S FIND OUT!**

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**RIGHTEOUSNESS BY OBEYING THE LAW.**

**It is a lifelong venture.**

- We must begin life righteous and continue throughout life righteous, without ever committing even one "tiny" sin.
  - ✓ Jesus accomplished this. ... him who had **no sin** ...  
2 Corinthians 5:21b (NIV)

[We] have a high priest ... [Jesus] who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet **without sin.**  
Hebrews 4:15 (CSB)

- We only need to break the Law once to come under the Law's curse.
 

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."  
Galatians 3:10 (NIV)

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**It is a lifelong venture... AND WE HAVE FAILED.**

- Jesus succeeded. But the rest of us didn't / haven't / won't / can't. For us, it's too late. We were born as sinners, we have sinned, and we are under judgment.
 

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...  
Romans 3:23 (CSB)
- Breaking just one of the laws makes us *just as guilty* as someone who has broken all of them.
 

For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.  
James 2:10 (NLT)
- With our very first sin, we *earned* death. This is the reason death exists in the world.
 

For the wages of sin is death, ...  
Romans 6:23a (CSB)

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**QUESTION #1: If Jesus didn't sin, then why did he die?**

- The only reason he died was because he took our sins and punishment upon himself. He paid the penalty for all who are willing to look to him for salvation and righteousness.
 

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.  
2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)
- His resurrection proved that our debt has been 100% paid (if we have become his followers).
 

... Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.  
John 19:30b (NIV)
- For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.
 

Hebrews 10:14 (NIV)

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**QUESTION #2: What if we started now to perfectly obey the law?**

- It couldn't make up for all the past times we broke it. Having already sinned, the law can only condemn us. (Jesus can forgive, only because he took our condemnation upon himself.)
- One "drop" of sin is enough to contaminate us forever. It would forever destroy our possibility of becoming righteous. The very first sin to ever occur among humans demonstrated this:
 

The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, ...  
Romans 5:16b (NIV)

**PAUL, the greatest example of righteousness based on the Law.**

- Paul was faultless in following the law. He did it better at it than any of us ever will.
 

... as for righteousness based on the law, **faultless.**  
Philippians 3:6b (NIV)

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- Yet compared to what Christ's righteousness accomplishes, his own righteousness was garbage. So he chose to rely on Christ's righteousness, instead.
 

But whatever were gains to me I now consider **loss** for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a **loss** because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have **lost** all things. I consider them **garbage**, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.  
Philippians 3:7-9 (NIV)

He once viewed his self-made righteousness as a treasure – a great gain. Once he met Christ, he began to view it as trash – a complete loss, wasted effort. **It could not save.**

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**WHAT IS OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW?**

Our main focus here is on the Moral Law, which applies to all people in all ages. However, some passages that refer to Jews and their practices may include a focus on the entire Law of Moses – moral, civil, ceremonial. (Check the context.)

**① The Law and its commands are good, and they point to what is good.**

**How Scripture describes it:**

- Holy, righteous and good – Romans 7:12.
- It is "perfect"; obeying it brings freedom – James 1:25; 2:12.

**Having the right attitude toward it:**

- It is something to delight in – Romans 7:22.

The law *teaches* us what is right and good. It shows us how to live in a holy and righteous way. Even *before* the Ten Commandments – and before sin entered the world – God revealed to people how they were to live.

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### The "royal law": Love for neighbor. In what way is it "royal"?

Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well.

Jas 2:8 (CSB)

- It's the law of the King (God).
- This specific law represents and summarizes the other laws (some of which are mentioned in the context – see v. 11).
- It is the "king" of the laws, being #1 in greatness (along with the command about love for God).



#### Psalm 119

- This psalm describes the greatness and goodness of the Law, as well as the attitude of one who loves it.
- This follower of God had such a high regard for God's Law, that it took him 176 verses to express it!

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### ② Sin is evil, and has destroyed our relationship to the Law (and to God).

#### Sin uses the Law in ways contrary to the Law's original life-giving purpose.

- The Law was weakened by the flesh (our sinful nature) – Romans 8:3.
- Sin uses the Law to "kill" us – Romans 7:11, 13. We may have thought we were "alive"; but now we are made aware of our *real* condition (= dead).

#### The Law now condemns.

- It makes us aware of sin – Romans 3:20.
- It brings wrath – Romans 4:15.
- It brings death – Romans 7:10-11.

#### We now need the Law to *restrain* our sin.

- In this sense, the law is for evildoers, as an external restraint – 1 Timothy 1:9-10.

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#### The Law cannot SAVE us (not even the sacrifices and rituals).

- It *cannot* impart life – Galatians 3:21.
- The rituals can make nobody perfect – Hebrews 7:19; 10:1. (Sin has already ruined that possibility.)
- It cannot clear the conscience of the worshippers – Hebrews 9:9.
- It cannot take away sin – Hebrews 10:4, 11.
- Those who pursue the Law's righteousness will fail to attain it – Romans 9:31.

#### The "works of the Law" cannot JUSTIFY us (i.e., change sinners into righteous people).

- They cannot justify us – Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16.
- They can only make us aware of sin – Romans 3:20.

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#### Even so, the Law can point us to JESUS, who *can* save/justify us.

- The Law's "end" (goal) is to point to Christ – Romans 10:4. (The sacrifices and rituals have accomplished their purpose!)
- The "works of the Law" *can't* make us righteous; but they *can* point to our *need* to trust Jesus for righteousness – Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16.
- The Law and the Prophets testify to a righteousness that is apart from Law – Romans 3:21.
- The Law leads us to Christ (so that we can be justified by faith) – Galatians 3:24.

God saves us so that we can do good works (Ephesians 2:10). He also gives us his law, so that we can learn what good works are!

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### ③ If we turn to God for salvation, the original purpose of the Law can once again take effect in our lives!

#### Jesus accomplishes what the Old Covenant sacrifices can't accomplish.

- Through Jesus, we can be justified from everything the Law couldn't justify us from – Acts 13:39.
- Jesus *can* make us perfect... forever – Hebrews 10:14. (This is a perfection that is related to holiness.)

#### It requires trusting God (instead of our own efforts) to save us.

- We need to live by *faith*, trusting God to save us – Galatians 3:11.
- Those who do this will inherit the earth (just like Abraham) – Romans 4:13.
- Choosing to try "justification by the Law" is equivalent to abandoning God's saving grace – Galatians 5:21.

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### THE PURSUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: IT'S STILL AN OBLIGATION.

**Faith in Jesus does NOT remove the obligation; but makes fulfilling it possible.**

#### It's an obligation.

- We are to pursue it (as Paul instructed Timothy) – 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22.
- Those who *don't* do what is righteous are NOT from God – 1 John 4:6.

#### God makes it possible.

- Trying to establish our own righteousness won't work – Romans 10:3.
- It requires faith in Jesus Christ – Galatians 2:16.

#### Our attitude toward the law changes.

- God embeds his law within our hearts/minds; he gives us both the ability and the desire to do it – Hebrews 10:16; Philippians 2:13.

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**Anyone who is NOT living for righteousness is living for sin.**

**Our actions are a response of obedience— and we are a slave to the one we obey.**

- One master leads to death; the other to righteousness— Romans 6:16.
- We are to respond as people who have been brought into life— not as spiritually dead people. This means offering ourselves as instruments of righteousness— Romans 6:13.
- *If we are saved, then we must live as saved (not dead) people!*

**This obedience to righteousness *doesn't* mean we are "getting saved by works."**

- We have already seen that salvation is by grace, through faith, not works...— Ephesians 2:8-9 ... and that, in salvation, we were created for good works— Ephesians 2:10.

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**Our righteousness is to be lived-out, not merely "believed."**

**We must not only "hear" the Law... we must "do" it!**

- If we want to be righteous— Romans 2:13.
- If we want to be blessed— James 1:25.

**Bad examples (knowing truth is not enough):**

- Cain— He even had direct communication with God (see Genesis 4); but his actions were evil— 1 John 3:12.
- Demons— They believe the facts about God; but do not live based on those facts— James 2:19.

**Good examples (knowing and living the truth):**

- Abraham— He was righteous, because he trusted God *apart from works*— Romans 4:3 (applied to us— Romans 4:4-5). He also *lived*, based on that fact— James 2:21-23.
- Also, Rahab *lived-out* her new-found faith by protecting the spies— James 2:25.

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**Obedience to attain salvation... or obedience because of salvation?  
*They are incompatible OPPOSITES!***

**Obedying the law to earn salvation: A guaranteed failure.**

- It requires us to *live* by those laws— Romans 10:5. Our opportunity to *live* by the law ended when we first sinned.

***If it had been possible...***

- ✓ Then righteousness *would* come through the law [which it doesn't and can't]— Galatians 3:21.
- ✓ **AND** Christ's death would NOT have been necessary— Galatians 2:21.

**Living by faith, resulting in obedience: We can do it!**

- It requires us to *live* by faith— Romans 1:17.
- Obedience is now possible, as the result of *living* by faith.
  - ✓ Paul calls it the "obedience of faith"— Romans 1:5; 16:26.

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# < Your MISSION >

**Pursue the righteousness  
that comes through faith  
and results in good works.**

**That is what God saves and empowers us for!**

For we are **God's handiwork**, created in Christ Jesus to do **good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.  
Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

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