



Randy Schroeder served as a youth leader, teacher, deacon and missionary while he worked in the advertising and marketing business for more than thirty years. Randy was called into full time ministry in 1998 after being ordained under the International Ministers Forum. He and his wife founded Gateway to Freedom, an in-home based ministry located in Southeast Michigan. The author currently resides in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

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The Right Beginning, But **Missing The Mark**

by Randy Schroeder

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:14)

As I was preparing the teaching for our Friday evening fellowship, the Spirit of the Lord spoke to me about a very familiar passage in Deuteronomy (D'varim). By the time I finished listening to that quiet voice, I was so stirred up that I wanted to shout “the word” at any believer who would listen. Yet, my heart was sorrowful beyond description as I felt the heartbeat of our Messiah groaning for His bride.

Before I share “the word” and the specific verse that prompted my understanding, allow me to relate a little true story about my life which demonstrates the point the Spirit wants to make.

Several years ago we bought a boat. It was a time when all our children were young and living at home¹. The boat was large enough to sleep all five of us and navigate the Great Lakes – well at least Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River.

In order to be able to explore the “exotic” places beyond the waters’ horizon, I thought it would be prudent and beneficial to attend the U.S. Coast Guard boating classes. One of the courses contained an extensive section on navigation – which was exactly what I needed to find that city or safe harbor beyond my vision.

I had great respect for the instructing officer because he had many years of boating and navigational experience. I intently listened, learned and believed the “old salt,” as he explained how I could determine compass bearings, way points, and all the other nautical details needed to navigate in unknown waters. As I recall, I passed the course with a perfect score and great anticipation to get under way for our family’s new adventure across the Great Lakes.

The following week, our family set off on our carefully plotted course toward a river channel that led to a Canadian inland city. As we planed atop the less than two foot waves, each driver carefully stayed on the correct compass heading. After nearly two hours of wind and waves, we arrived on the other side of the lake, in sight of land. However, we were mystified that we were not where we were supposed to be! Even high powered boating binoculars were of no avail in finding the entrance marker buoy to the channel. Somehow our implementation of the teacher’s instructions resulted in missing the mark. Further, we missed the mark by several miles because with the binoculars I could see more than a mile. We didn’t even know

¹They are all married adults with families of their own now.

In order for us to apprehend the hope of our salvation and have a good conscience toward God, we must repent for our sins. However, if we ignore and either intentionally or unintentionally break Jesus’ commandments given through Moses, how shall we ask forgiveness, maintain a good conscience toward God and fight the good fight?

Paul instructed Timothy in how not to allow his faith to become shipwrecked, but to fight the good fight. He further declared what happens to believers who blaspheme: *Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. (1 Tim 1:18-20)*

If we can’t hear or choose not to allow the leading of the Holy Spirit to be our ultimate teacher and follow man’s reasoning and religious traditions, we are susceptible to being deceived and led astray from the high calling God has on our lives. Now is the time that each of us must ask, “has the teaching of man blocked the still small voice of the Holy Spirit from revealing the truth of the Word to us?” Are you ready to ask, hear and change course? Or, are you content to simply follow the crowd.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. (Mat 5:17)

Beloved, have we soiled the garments of righteousness that Christ gave us? Let us wash our garments clean and white by the “*water of the washing of the Word.*”
(Eph 5:26) – the whole Word.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24)

By His Grace,
Randy

God forbid (absolutely not).” In other words, we are to adhere to the instructions given to Moses so that we don’t knowingly or unknowingly sin by transgressing the law.²

The book of Acts records the apostles and elders’ consideration for the course to be plotted for the believer’s life. This was stirred by the very question we are considering, “should the New Testament believer follow the laws of Moses?”³ Putting aside our former teachings let us read first what Peter said. Then we’ll read James’ proposed and agreed upon solution to the question.

And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.
(Acts 15:8-11)

Thus Peter affirms that our salvation comes by the purifying of our hearts by faith and that by His grace we are saved – both Jew and Gentile. Then James speaks and the council agrees to the following which was subsequently written in a letter to the churches:

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. (Acts 15:19-21)

Let us notice that this is a course for our life that doesn’t burden the new believer with all the laws at one time, but rather commands them to begin by keeping only four of them. After stipulating only four, James says that the way, or the rest of the course, can be learned “in the synagogues every Sabbath day.” This is not a direction to abandon the teachings of Moses.

² This is not to be in obedience to man’s interpretations, but as our teacher, the Holy Spirit, sheds light upon the Word of God.

³ Acts 15:5

Rather, it was a way to begin and keep the believer on the correct course for his life when the only written Word was in the synagogue.

Going to the synagogue was the route by which the believer could hear the Word, but it did require Holy Ghost discernment/teaching to separate the Word from the traditions of men and spread abroad the light of Christ. For didn’t Jesus say, *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* (John 14:26) And so it is, even today.

It is noteworthy to also notice, that this was the way of the Holy Ghost – the true Teacher, “*For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;*”(Acts 15:28)

I could provide several scripture verses, including the words/commandments of Jesus, to demonstrate why our Westernized theology produces a course for our life that will end up having us miss the mark. Instead, let me share the verse that prompted the stirring of my spirit that I spoke of in the beginning of this “letter.”

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. (Deu 4:2)

Many of us are so familiar with this verse (and its companion in Rev 22:19)⁴ that we overlook its deeper significance in light of the church theology we’re discussing. If today’s teachers claim that salvation through Jesus’ blood negated, or made of no effect, the statutes and judgments given through Moses, then we make our hope of salvation of no avail. Let me explain.

Our Savior fulfilled (clarified and kept) Moses writings. He also said that none of it would pass away until the completion of all things: *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth*

⁴(Rev 22:18,19) For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Mat 5:17,18)

Jesus summarized the law into two commandments⁵, but did not change or negate the “law.”⁶ Those who claimed that He did are accusing the incarnate Word of having sinned by breaking His own commandment not to add to, nor diminish the Word. In other words, if Jesus changed, minimized, replaced or negated any of Moses commandments, He would have sinned. And we know that’s ridiculous for as the Word says:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Heb 4:15)

Furthermore, if He changed or annulled the law that it has no affect upon us, then those who say so are accusing Him of not being able to be our Pascal (Passover) lamb without spot or blemish. What blasphemy! When I “saw” this truth my spirit was grieved because “even today those who profess to be His disciples indirectly accuse the Messiah of being a sinner.”

Thus, dear reader, even if you’ve taken possession of the right “boat” in receiving salvation through Christ Jesus, don’t miss the mark of the city calling to you from over the horizon. Make sure you are taking the right pathway through the waves and winds of life by keeping all His commandments as the Spirit reveals them to you from Genesis to Revelation. *[In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)]*

The Master said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)* He pointed to the commandments of Moses when He summarized them in the two telling us to love God and love our neighbor. Thus, we don’t obey in order to be justified. We are to keep His commandments because we love Him, the Father and the Holy Spirit.

⁵(Mat 22:37-40) Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

⁶ He fulfilled the Levitical laws by His resurrection which brought forth the eternal/spiritual heavenly Melchizedek priesthood as contrasted to the temporal/physical Levitical priesthood. Heb 7:11-19

which direction to steer in order to search for the channel marker buoy. In a nutshell, we were lost with no port or channel in sight!

I knew the way – or how to start on the right course. But what the teacher had left unsaid or what I had not accounted for was the wind, waves and steering error of the trip that took us away from our destination. An experienced navigator knows to bear a few degrees one side of the mark so that they know which way to turn for the final approach.

I relate this little life experience to demonstrate how we can spiritually “miss the mark” after a lifelong journey of faithfully following a teacher’s (or pastor’s) instructions. If this were not so, then how come Jesus will say to many who were shepherds of the faith (They had cast out demons, prophesied and done many miraculous works.), “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work lawlessness.” (Mat 7:23) Words like that from our Savior, should make us stop and reflect, “are we following just a teacher (or pastor) or the Word of God and the true Teacher?”

Most teachers in the Western churches focus on the New Testament accounts of the life and work of our Messiah. Just like having the right boat (ark), that’s absolutely necessary to begin our spiritual walk. We must believe that by faith He, *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,..” (2 Tim 1:9)*

However, more often than not they also teach that because we are under a covenant of grace through the blood of Jesus, we don’t need to follow the teachings and instructions (Torah) of God given through Moses. As a matter of fact, many totally negate the Old Testament as having any application to our life today. After all, they reason, according to Romans 6:15 we are not “under” the law. And that is correct; we are not condemned under a sentence of death once we have made Jesus our Savior. However, let us examine the whole passage from which that statement is taken. *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. (Rom 6:15)*

Notice, that we who are redeemed by the blood of the lamb through faith and His grace toward us are not under, or condemned by the law, but the question is, “shall we sin?” To which Paul says, *“God forbid”* – or in today’s vernacular, **“absolutely not!”** We are not to sin. John defines sin as: *Who-soever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (1 John 3:4)* So let me restate Paul’s Romans 6:15 commandment by using John’s definition: “What then (now that we’ve accepted Christ)? **shall we transgress the law,** because we are not under the law?”