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Isaiah 64

Read verses 1-3: God has two ways to deal with men. He can deal gently, but firmly with family matters among his children; or he can make legal judgments against unbelievers with whatever intimidation is required to gain their attention. It is interesting to consider how we want a thorough and effective police force when we need protection; but how we object to strict rules when they are inconvenient to our daily lives. Nobody wants to see the California Highway patrol in their rear-view mirror, but they do want to see the San Diego police cruiser when you are walking through a dark alley in the inner city at midnight.

However, to the one who does not try to earn his salvation but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them." (Romans 4:5-8)

Those who are outside of the family are slaves to their sinful passions, and they are unable to escape the consequences of breaking God's law.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

Once we join God's family we do not have to sin. God gives us strength over sin as we surrender everything to him in prayer.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13)

What choices does God have when the world rejects him; and is heading for a waterfall of eternal hell? It is the same as disobedient children...tough love and more harsh methods. Moses recorded that God came with a loud trumpet voice and earthquake and smoke and fire when the 10 Commandments were delivered. Today, the top of that mountain is still charred black. The 10 Commandments were not delivered for believers. They were hard rules for unbelievers.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. (Exodus 19:16)

The giving of the commandments made the people very afraid. Sinners just won't stop sinning unless they realize they will not be allowed to. The Bible records that that generation of Jews in the desert died as unbelievers (despite the daily miracles). To the contrary, at another time later on, Elijah was one of the only believers on earth...who sought refuge at the place where unbelievers feared. Elijah went to a cave on Mount

Sinai to meet God; and experienced a similar phenomenon. Our dad is strict, but he will protect us.

The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13)

The 10 Commandments are a perfection standard because God can only receive perfection in his presence. He is holy; and any sin or sinner is automatically destroyed in his presence. The shock and awe of God's wrath was at times used to make the people listen to the prophets.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe you forever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD (Exodus 19:9)

Without a cloud covering the people would have died seeing God face to face.

In a sense; Biblical-Old Testament legalistic standards are intended as harsh. We need to grasp that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Unfortunately people try their hardest to live sin free. You cannot even

come close. The point is for us to surrender to the fact that we are owned by sin until Jesus sets us free. The tough Old Testament Biblical laws are to force us to come to the conclusion that any righteousness on our part is impossible to keep. Oh God; is there any other way?

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:18-21)

If we have the Holy Spirit living in us we are exempt from having to be perfect on our own. God is perfect; and God is in us now. We are a very plain ceramic mug (made of dirt) filled with the most precious thing in the universe (God's Holy Spirit). The vessel does not matter. The net contents define the cargo manifest....not the packaging.

People are greatly confused about the 10 Commandments. They are not a path to salvation; since no man can keep them. They were given to unbelievers as a love substitute. If you do not care about your neighbor you may be tempted to harm him if there were no consequences.

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." However, **the Law is not of faith; on the contrary,**

“HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:10-14)

The perfection standard in the laws of Moses require 100% compliance to unbelievers. There is no grading on a curve.

What conclusion should we make about the account of the giving of the 10 Commandments? Were the Jews who cried out to God for deliverance from their captors actually believers (read below)

Read Acts 7:35-43

Read Exodus 19:1-17

Were the 2 million Jews in the wilderness escaping 400 years of Egyptian slavery believers or unbelievers?

And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? (Hebrews 3:17)

We all have a huge capacity to see God's daily provision and miracles of life; and still remain apathetic to the things on God's heart.

Read verse 4: We do not know what all awaits us in heaven

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God

knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

Read Revelation chapter 4

Read verses 5-7: When you read the scriptures it is important to consider that a mixed crowd is being addressed. The vast majority, in many cases are unbelievers; with a few believers sprinkled in. As you walk into the average church many people sitting around you are unsaved. God wants a relationship with us. Showing up at church does not make us a Christian. This helps us understand how a scriptural passage vacillates between harsh talk and loving talk. Otherwise you could become confused about the blessings and curses that are spoken. That is why Jesus spoke in parables. A parable is a story that illustrates a spiritual point; but seems to be a mere story about nature or farmers on the surface. The unbelievers will not understand the spiritual lesson behind the basic story. The Holy Spirit is our Bible interpreter. This is why we need to approach the Bible in a heart of prayerful worship...not like reading a newspaper.

Beyond the need to differentiate who is being addressed, there is another level of complexity in comprehending scriptures. Every believer is a saved sinner. We still commit sins; but all is forgiven. Comparing a believer to an unbeliever is like a farm-animal comparison. There is a difference between a sheep and a pig. Sheep occasionally fall into the mud; but they regret it; and try to avoid it. A pig will contently-wallow in the

mud with no regret or conscience issues. Being saved is not that we have kept extra clean. We are no more sinless than unbelievers...we just accept the truth about ourselves and about God. It includes recognition of our vile thoughts and troublesome lusts and outbursts of hatred we all have (until the day we die). Despite the sinful nature in our body, we do grow in love and become more separated from our sinful pasts as we grow in grace and Christian maturity. Being a Christian 40 years is meaningless. Some brand-new believers are more mature in their faith than long-term believers. It all depends on how aggressively you apply yourself and submit yourself in prayer and scripture and to glorify God. That is why we cling to Jesus; so that our new nature from God that is within us will dominate our old man. There are two forces that compete within us depending on what we are feeding our brain. Another aspect of salvation is letting the old nature within us die. My self-will to obtain my way takes a back seat (because I considered the old me dead) to my spiritual life as I fellowship with God.

For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:5-6)

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Verse 7: says that no person calls on the name of the LORD without outside inspiration. That seems odd to us who have reached out to God in

prayer. What this verse is saying is that even our acts of repentance and prayers; and any desire to do good actually begins from God giving us an impulse to do so. Faith is truly a gift from God. This is important information for the person who feels hopelessly doomed to repeating sins from the past. We are like a corpse that God keeps breathing life back into. Just turn to God; and ask for him to deliver you from your helpless state.

Read verses 8-12: God has dealt pretty harshly with the Jews and at times with the church at large. In reality most of those threats to the people of God to repent was directed to posers. True believers were not intended to hear the slap downs. Even so, prophets like Jeremiah and others lived through the judgments experienced by the surrounding unbelievers. We have the same struggles and hardships as unbelievers. We share these life challenges; plus more. There is nothing easy about being a believer. We are called to do the impossible. It takes God's heart to show love to our enemies.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be

perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-47)