

All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance.

Exodus 20:18

COMMANDMENTS

HAVE THIS RATHER ANNOYING HABIT.

Whenever I get something new, I find it almost impossible to discard the old. When my T-shirts have become so ratty and torn that more skin is exposed than concealed, and my good wife picks up a package of new shirts for me, I will invariably put the old torn ones back in the drawer and continue to wear them.

The floor of my closet is littered with the bleached and dying bones of old shoes, because I can't bear the thought of throwing away anything that might possibly have even one more day's use left in it. After all, if I need something on my feet to step quickly out into the rain, I'll of course choose old tennis shoes filled with holes over a pair of brand new oxfords.

Hanging above the old shoes in my closet are rows of shirts and slacks and sport coats—all several sizes too small. Who knows, I might just lose some weight one of these days...

When I replace a part on the tractor, I tuck the old worn part away for future emergencies; worn blades, after all, can be ground to a new edge, worth a few more trips around the lawn. When I break the handle off an old tool it's never discarded, but stashed away

for some alternate use. When I get a new and larger toolbox for Christmas, the sad old tool box with bent hinges and rusted bottom that it is replacing isn't thrown out, but simply assigned new duties.

We live in a throwaway society. Sitting in an auto dealership's showroom one day, awaiting the completion of repairs on my twelve-year-old car, I overheard a conversation between a woman and salesman. She had just arrived in a pickup truck which, by all appearances, seemed almost new. The paint was shiny and bright, the body was in immaculate condition, the model could not have been more than a couple years old. When asked why she wanted to trade it in for a newer model, she replied with a shrug, "It's time."

Trying to repair something like a toaster, coffee maker, or flashlight, I invariably discover that these modern conveniences have been designed so as to be irreparable; the manufacturer would rather you throw the old one away and purchase the very latest model—preferably from him—than fix the broken old one.

Jots & Tittles

Many years ago the Education Director at a Baptist church I was attending referred disdainfully to the Psalms as just “ancient Jewish poetry,” implying that the longest book in the Bible held nothing of value for the contemporary Christian.

Scattered throughout the body of Christ today are those who would treat the Old Testament as they treat last year’s apparently obsolete footwear. They rarely crack open their Bible to the more ancient texts, preferring instead to return again and again to the more familiar gospels or epistles. Some churches have even institutionalized this preference with the phrase “New Testament Church,” which erects an almost insurmountable barrier between Matthew 1:1 and Malachi 4:6, reducing what the Jews of Jesus’ day would have called “the Law and the Prophets” to quaint obsolescence.

The Lord Jesus, however, held to a different position. In His Sermon on the Mount he said,

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

Matthew 5:17-18

Though a young Christian might expect that He would be, Jesus did not come as the antithesis of the

Law given by God to Moses and Israel. He came, instead, as its *ultimate fulfillment*. In the Law God was telling the people of Israel, *Here’s what you would have to do to be acceptable to me—every one of you, man, woman, and child, every day of your lives.*

In Christ Jesus, God is saying to the world, *You see? You can’t do it, can you? I am still pleased when someone follows the behavior in the Law, but it was never intended to save you. Since you are incapable of keeping the Law, I am sending My Son to accomplish it for you. That is the measure of My love for you.*

Many Christians would like to throw away the Ten Commandments as ancient, obsolete text with no application for their lives. As regarding eternal salvation, they are correct: adherence to the ten rules (if it were even possible) will never guarantee entrance into God’s presence. But *within* Christ’s salvation by grace, the old rules still offer an outline for behavior pleasing to Father God.

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:14-17



*Holy Bible, book divine, Precious treasure, thou art mine;
Mine to tell me whence I came, Mine to teach me what I am.*

*Mine to chide me when I rove; mine to show a Savior’s love;
Mine thou art to guide and guard; mine to punish or reward.*

*Mine to comfort in distress, suff’ring in this wilderness;
Mine to show, by living faith, man can triumph over death.*

*Mine to tell of joys to come, and the rebel sinner’s doom;
O thou Holy Book divine, precious treasure, thou art mine.*

John Burton

This issue of *Reflections by the Pond* begins a brief series on God’s Ten Commandments.



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Reflections by the Pond is published weekly.
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