**For God’s Purposes**

Based on [Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Dt4.1-2)

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Pentecost 14

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Especially these verses…

This week my son Noah got an owiee on his foot. He was trying to drag his bicycle to go outside when I heard a crash and a cry. Mom and I went to see what had happened and he was sitting there holding his foot. “Let me see” I said…and very unsurely and reluctantly he unfolded his hands to reveal…nothing. “Not a scratch” as they say…nothing. Nothing but a foot fully intact.

So mom helped him to his feet and he was favoring that foot a bit. We figured he just bruised it, and turns out we were right. As new parents Two years ago we might’ve rushed him to the hospital, now we just hug him and tell him to shake it off. And he does, and his foot is fine, but, at the time, Noah knew he’d hurt his foot, and so something had to be done. No scratch, no blood, but Noah said, “I need a band aid, mom.”

Noah noticed that, when he would hurt himself he’d usually get a band aid. And children are so logical; you can just imagine the gears turning in his head. Because we’d usually put a band aid on and say, “**There, all better**.” He thought a band aid was actually a remedy, that it somehow had healing properties. He didn’t understand the **purpose** of a bandage.

Today I want to talk to you a bit about the purpose of God’s Law. We have a reading from Deuteronomy, one of the earliest books in the bible. Moses wrote it, the guy who brought the 10 plagues to Egypt, the Israelite who parted the Red Sea, the prophet and leader of Gods people who reminds in this deathbed sermon of his to keep God’s commands and do them, “**For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him**?”

Moses says, **You are Gods people**. That’s something to be proud of, that’s something that ought to affect and control the way you think and live. That’s something that not everyone can say. Not everyone is a child of God, not back in Moses’ time and not today. What makes a people “God’s” people, is that God is *near* to them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, God directed the movie of Salvation according to a certain plot. The premise is that mankind was created near to God, and then, because of sin, God and Man were separated. Not divorced, but separated, living apart, with perhaps the occasional conjugal visit. And so the plot of the bible unfolds by showing us how God and man, who were separated, can get back together again.

God has conjugal visits with his people, the Israelites. He gives them his command, his law, so that if they keep it, eventually; all the nations of the world might see God’s people and say, “**Hot dog! Now that is a wise and understanding nation.” “My, my, my! That is a people to whom God is near.”** By living by what God says, his people, both the Israelites back in the day; and you, his church to-day, are a light unto the world. Because if God is near to you; he is near to the world through you.

Moses’ understood this. He knew that God’s law was something to be proud of, to learn, not just once but over and over again as your daily bread, to teach to your children and your children’s children. God’s Law was to be more essential to their life than food; more beneficial to their children’s development than hockey. God’s law was to be the Canadian dream for his people; they were to cherish it above anything the world would offer.

And after Moses died, God’s people did cherish it for a while. Even a broken clock is right twice a day. The problem was, as the generations passed, it became clear that God’s people couldn’t keep his law, which was to be expected. God’s law is righteous, his rules are just, and what he demands from his people is perfection. Parents, do you demand anything less from your kids? Do you say, “**Johnny, you don’t have to be perfect, just try not to steal too much. Just respect me, your parent sometimes and that’ll be good enough.**” No, that’s push-over parenting. Real parenting demands perfection, and when the standard is not met offers forgiveness.

Even after God’s people received the law, and were enthusiastic about it, they eventually fell into sin again. The Law of God proved to be an impossible demand for his people. For some, that brought them to their knees in repentance; for others, the Pharisees they turned God’s law into something else.

Eventually, as with any great gift from God, his people separated the gift from its purpose. An automobile is a wonderful gift, isn’t it. It’s something that you use to get from point A to point B with the least amount of time and money spent. But go to a car show sometimes, and you’ll see these restored old tanks that, when it comes to fuel economy, drink like a fish…and yet people find it worthwhile, even extend their line-of-credit to make it look better than new. They could drive a new car off the lot for half the price it took to resurrect some old Chevy Impala from the grave. Why? Well, the thing was given a new purpose; the car is to be valued for its look and style, not for its usefulness.

It came to pass that, in Jesus time, and even today, people use God’s law for the wrong purposes. They thought that they could earn God’s grace by keeping his law. God never promised to save them with his law, instead gave his law so that his people could glorify him by knowing his commands by heart and keeping them, and when they fail, receive forgiveness. The purpose of God’s law is to show us what righteousness is. The purpose of the Law is to point us to our Saviour.

God’s Law points us to Jesus. God’s Law says, remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, and Jesus is our Sabbath rest. God’s law says do not eat unclean foods, and you still shouldn’t eat unclean foods. But as our Gospel lesson shows that’s easy enough for us, because there is no such thing as unclean foods anymore, because Jesus has made all foods clean.

God’s law was never a remedy for sin, it was a mark of God’s people. At best it was a bandage, something that would cover the exposed skin and keep it from infection. Something that would protect his people from the snares of the world and set them apart as his own until the messiah would come to heal the wound forever.

So, dear friends in Christ, listen to God’s commands. Do not murder, do not steal, do not murder your brother with hate and malice. Turn to God’s commands to give glory to him, but don’t forget their purpose. Don’t expect them to save you. Only the one who can keep God’s law perfectly can save you, and he died on the cross in perfect obedience to God, and he was raised again on the third day because he was so perfect, that death couldn’t hold him. He is the one who shows that the separation of sin is over, and that God is near to you.

“For Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” God’s rules help us to see Jesus, the name above all names.