

Monday Morning Rewind – February 15, 2010

Good morning! Happy President's Day. On Sabbath we continued our Community Conversations series by looking at the Ten Commandments. It seems that Catholics, Jews, and Christians of all stripes are rallying to defend the Ten Commandments against assaults by the courts, the ACLU, and the secular humanists who want religious symbols (including the Ten Commandments monuments) removed from public places.

But even as people of faith demonstrate, establish days to honor the commandments, and proclaim the everlasting righteousness and morality of God's law, there are mixed messages concerning the commandments coming from the very camp that endorses them. On the one hand, Christians are saying that the commandments are still as relevant as they were 3,500 years ago. But on the other hand, it is common teaching among many of these same Christian groups that the law has been nailed to the cross--that now that grace has come, law has been done away with. This is an attack we never expected. In many respects it resembles "Friendly Fire."

Friendly fire is a military expression meaning fire from one's own side or allied forces, as opposed to fire coming from enemy forces. For examples, on April 14, 1994, two U.S. Air Force F-15 fighters accidentally shot down two U.S. Army Black Hawk Helicopters over Northern Iraq, killing all twenty-six peacekeepers onboard. Lieutenant Colonel Scott A. Snook, wrote about the incident in a book entitled *Friendly Fire*. Snook examines several factors responsible including something he calls "practical drift"--the slow, steady uncoupling of practice from written procedure--to complete his explanation of how this tragedy occurred.

When it comes to the Ten Commandments, it seems there is within the Christian family of faith, a "practical drift"—a slow, steady uncoupling of practice from the written Word of God. Are we committing spiritual fratricide?

Here are some examples of "Friendly Fire" shots against the commandments:

- **Jesus came to abolish the law.** Jesus clearly states that His mission was not to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17-19). Rewind to Matt. 5:21-48 to see how Jesus magnified the law rather than abolished it.
- **The law was nailed to the cross.** This unfortunate shot comes from a misunderstanding of Colossians 2:14. This could only mean the handwritten law of Moses, not the moral law of the Ten Commandments which was spoken by God himself (See Exodus 20:1, 18, 19) and then later penned with His own finger.

The sacrificial system came to an end at the cross, but the moral law embodied in the Ten Commandments, is universal and just as important and necessary as ever. Shawn Boonstra of *It Is Written* writes: "To suggest that Christ abolished God's moral law creates a logical absurdity. He came to deal with our sin problem, which was a result of transgressing God's law. If the moral law has been abolished, sin itself must have come to a halt at the cross of Christ—and if that's the case, no one since that time has actually needed a Savior!"

It was our sin, not the law, that was nailed to the cross. Do you see the strategy of the enemy? Last week it was the immortality of the soul and the doctrine of eternal punishment, this week it's the law of God. Get rid of death and you don't need a Savior. Get rid of the law, you get rid of sin and you still don't need a Savior. **Satan's strategy in these last days is to eliminate the need for Jesus!**

God's law reflects His character, and God's character is seen in His Name (Ex. 33:18, 19; 34:5-7). In the last days, God writes His name on the foreheads of His people (See Rev. 14:1) Receiving God's name in the forehead means we have become like Him! And that's why Satan is angry. He doesn't anyone to bear the image and character of Christ. He didn't want it for Adam and he doesn't want it for you. (See Rev. 12:1.7)

If we reject God's law, we reject His character or Name. The only other group identified in Revelation with something on their foreheads are those receiving the mark of the Beast. **The faith that matters now and at the end of time is a faith that obeys God's commandments and holds to the testimony of Jesus.**

- **All you need is love.** Some very sincere Christians believe that all God expects from us during the dispensation of grace is love. They emphasize that a personal relationship with Christ is all

that is needed for salvation. This is partially true, however, it's important that we understand what this "relationship" involves. Jesus Himself explained what it meant to be in relationship with Him. See John 14:15, 21; John 15:14; Mark 3:35. Jesus was making it clear that to love Him is to obey Him. **If we claim to have a relationship with Christ, we will keep His commandments.**

- **We're not under law but under grace.** If Paul means in Romans 6:14 that grace does away with God's law, he is in contradiction with himself in the same book of Romans when he says: "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law" (Rom. 3:31); and again: "So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (Romans 7:12).

Paul's point is that nobody is justified or saved by trying to keep the law. First, you can't. And even if you did, your nature is still sinful. **Keeping the law doesn't save you. Abiding in Christ does.** Does grace get rid of the law? No. **Grace doesn't cancel the law, it forgives us for breaking it and empowers us to keep it.**

We don't *have* to keep the law to be saved. We *get* to keep it. To God's children--those who have been saved by His grace and have His character and law in their minds and hearts (see Hebrews 10:16, 17)—God's commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). **We don't obey in order to earn salvation. A life of obedience to God's law is how saved people live!**

We may think that the biggest threat to our traditional values is secular humanism, or post-modernism. But the biggest threat we face today may be coming from the friendly fire of Christians themselves who seem to be confused over whether God's law is dead or still stands. (Or whether there are ten commandments or only nine.)

Some are worried that if the monuments and symbols are taken away there will be nothing to point sinners to Christ. Wrong! That's why we're here! We're to be living stones, living memorials to the unchanging character of God. My life and yours should speak louder than a stone. And with God's help, our lives will proclaim the glory, character, and grace of God. Let the rocks keep silent while we praise Him! --Pastor Randy

p.s. Join us Wednesday night for part 2 of "Friendly Fire" If you missed the live presentation on Sabbath, watch the archived program at www.kunaconversationslive.org.

Randy Maxwell
Pastor, Kuna Seventh-day Adventist Church
www.kunasdachurch.org
2 Chron. 7:14

"The need is great. The key is prayer. The time is now."