

**Above The Law**  
**Exodus 20:1-4; 7-19**  
**Philippians 3:4b-14**  
**October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008**  
**Rev. Steve McCoy**  
**First United Methodist Church**  
**Marquette, MI**

Who remembers having to do this test in Sunday School? It was the test if you could recite all ten commandments from the Bible. I think I was in the second grade if I recall correctly, but I got my Sunday school pin (which I have no idea where it is now) for standing in front of the class and reciting the 10 commandments. Then watched as others who had not done it yet or missed one or two would covet your pin and certificate that you had just “earned.”

Now the commandments are important in our lives. They are still the basic of our moral under girding as a people who call themselves Christians. We in this country have attempted to even pass laws venerating these laws as the ultimate laws. The commandments got a lot of attention a few years back and I believe that in all of these arguments about the law and foundation we forget what rides above all of these laws. It is the love of God from which these flow.

Along comes Jesus who had a little something to say about that. Which one is the greatest! Well none of them matter if you do not have the love of God in your heart and soul and mind and strength or the love of neighbor. Above this law is Gods law which comes out of Gods love and grace given to all of Gods children.

Then along comes Paul who when the early church at Phillipi is struggling with these same questions has, a little something to say too. Paul reminds his readers that he was blameless in the law. If anyone could boast about being a good Jew, it was him. He had everyone beat. But none of it mattered he says without Christ. He counts all of that loss so that through Christ he might gain. He gave it all up to do what he was doing now and wouldn't change a thing. You see Paul finally realized that it was not the following of the law but the acceptance of God's grace is what matters. The law is given to us out of Gods grace, but we cannot

find that grace simply by doing the law, there has to be more. Paul is very adamant about this. The NRSV tells us that he thought of this as garbage, the NIV calls it rubbish. But Paul is much stronger, the King James Version which Eugene Peterson captures in the Message which was read from, has the best translation, dung! Paul in effect says his previous righteousness was not worth a pile of... well you get the point.

Part of what makes us one above the law, is that Christ is being reminded that we have been given a great gift. It makes no difference of what we have done in the past, but are we still bearing fruit today in the ways that we can. That is part of being a good steward with what God has given us.

As an example, Brett Blair shares the story of Once upon a time at a church meeting a wealthy member of the church rose to tell the rest of those present about his Christian faith.

"I'm a millionaire," he said, "and I attribute my wealth to the blessings of God in my life." He went on to recall the turning point in his relationship with God. As a young man, he had just earned his first dollar and he went to a church meeting that night. The speaker at that meeting was a missionary who told about his work in the mission field. Before the offering plate was passed around, the preacher told everyone that everything that was collected that night would be given to this missionary to help fund his work on behalf of the church. The wealthy man wanted to give to support mission work, but he knew he couldn't make change from the offering plate. He knew he either had to give all he had or nothing at all. At that moment, he decided to give all that he had to God. Looking back, he said he knew that God had blessed that decision and had made him wealthy.

When he finished, there was silence in the room. As he returned to the pew and sat down, an elderly lady seated behind him leaned forward and said, "I dare you to do it again."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Brett Blair, [www.eSermons.com](http://www.eSermons.com)

Gods desire to make us One in Christ, means we cannot rest on the law alone, we cannot rest on our laurels of what we have done in the past. We can never consider ourselves to be above the law, but must trust the one who rises above it, in Christ. It is through Gods grace that we can follow the law, and that we can always be striving to do God will. On this day when we gather around the table we will seek the presence of Christ, to break down the barriers that separate us, including the laws that we hold so fast to, and remember that we all are gathered to gather as one in Christ because of that grace and forgiveness. It requires nothing but it calls upon us to give our all. When we do we can truly understand that though there is but one loaf, we who are many are one in Christ Jesus.