

# Meet the Ten Commandments

*The Ten Commandments*

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Well, this morning we began a wonderful, vital and very very critical series on the 10 Commandments and today we're simply going to meet the 10 Commandments, that's the title of today's message, "Meet the 10 Commandments." In one sense, it's a brief introduction, an overview introduction to this text that is going to occupy our attention for the next few months over the course of time. I don't even know how to begin to express how important all of this is and how fundamental it is for you individually and for our church and for the universal church and for the world at large. There is nothing less than a comprehensive call to holiness that is made upon the hearts of every man, woman and child that the 10 Commandments expresses to us.

The 10 Commandments express God's enduring moral law for all of mankind. It regulates not only the outer man but the inner man as well. It reveals the holiness of God in ultimate terms, and yet without fear of contradiction I say this, that even in the church, in Truth Community Church specifically and more broadly speaking in the church, the professing church at large, there is a vast and profound ignorance and indifference to the 10 Commandments, in part, perhaps because the importance of them has never been explained and pressed upon people, but it's also a recognition of a developing spiritual lethargy in the hearts and minds of people, that what God says is actually not that important to us as long as he comforts us and makes our lives what we want them to be.

I started studying for this series about two years ago, just short of two years ago, and I'm not done yet in all of my preparation for the fullness of the series, but I've come to believe this and I say it without fear of contradiction, I believe that many profound spiritual ills can be traced directly to that lamentable ignorance and indifference to the 10 Commandments. It is no wonder that there is a lack of the fear of the Lord amongst the people who even claim to know him. It is no wonder that there is so much pride and self-sufficiency among the professing people of God, it is no wonder that among many many preachers there is a lack of urgency in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and substituting other themes as the dominant note of their pulpit ministry. It is no wonder that there is a lack of urgency among people like you in hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, of crying out for the word of Christ, the redemption that is found in his blood alone, it is no wonder that there is a lack of urgency in that hearing of the gospel of Jesus Christ when the 10 Commandments are ignored, misunderstood and marginalized in such

an obvious way. It is no wonder that there is a lack of practical holiness among the people of God when the significance of the 10 Commandments is neglected and ignored. It is no wonder that there is a lack of profound love for Jesus Christ and a desire to obey him when the 10 Commandments have been ignored like they have. You see, it's inevitable, all of these things and more are inevitable because the 10 Commandments reveal the infinite holiness of God and they reveal the way in which you and I fall infinitely far short of his holiness and are utterly condemned by what his holiness requires of us and what his holiness exposes in our hearts. It is no wonder that there is such an appalling condescension and scorn toward truly biblical preaching among the professing church today when the 10 Commandments have been ignored and marginalized, and it is no wonder, speaking about those who claim to be pastors, it is no wonder that there is such an appalling prevalence of moral failure among men who claim to be preachers and teachers of the word of God when the 10 Commandments have not been seriously addressed and taken to heart in the church at large. The reason that there is a lack of the fear of the Lord why there is so much pride and self-sufficiency, why there is a lack of urgency in the preaching and in the hearing of the word of God, the reason that there is a lack of concern about practical holiness, the reason that there is a lack of love for Jesus Christ, the reason that there is such an appalling condescension toward biblical ministry, the reason that men in ministry so frequently fall and disqualify themselves morally only to be restored quickly by those who were following them, the reason for all of that pattern of ungodliness is that hearts have not been struck down and laid low by the infinite holiness of God as it is revealed in the 10 Commandments. Over the course of time, I have no doubt but that the Lord will vindicate that introduction that I have just made.

Today here at Truth Community Church, today here in the ministry of this pulpit, we began our effort to reverse that trend in reliance on the help of the Holy Spirit as we do, and may God help us as we take our first step in that direction. I want to ask you to stand as we read the 10 Commandments from Exodus 20, as we read them in an overview fashion and then pursue what the Lord has for us here today. Exodus 20, beginning in verse 1.

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. 12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13 You shall not murder. 14 You shall not commit adultery. 15 You shall not steal. 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Please be seated.

As we contemplate the 10 Commandments, one of the things that we're going to see over the course of time is that they are intended to be taken as a unit. The book of James tells us that the one who violates one commandment has violated them all in the sense that when you break the one commandment, you have violated the holiness of the lawgiver who gave it and therefore you violate it, it's as though you have thrown a rock through a pane window, the whole thing is shattered. Another thing about the nature of the 10 Commandments is, and part of the reason that they are trivialized and marginalized so badly, is that people tend to think about them in external ways only and have the ability maybe to cite two or three of the Commandments not knowing the full weight of the 10 and say, "Well, you know, I've never murdered and I've never committed adultery and therefore, you know, I must be okay." Well, Jesus gives the lie to that in the Sermon on the Mount when he makes it clear that the law regulates not only the outer man but the inner emotions and the inner affections of the heart, and so this is very profoundly searching as we will see in the months to come. My point in this introductory message is simply to acquaint some of you maybe for the first time or to remind you exactly where to find the 10 Commandments in the Bible. That's a starting point. They are recorded for us here in Exodus 20, a substantially identical version also found in Deuteronomy 5. If we're going to talk about the 10 Commandments, we ought to at least know where to find them in the Bible, that's a beginning point. Along with that, to recognize that what the 10 Commandments present to us is a matter of magnificent revelation of the holiness of God and the implications of his holiness for mankind and for his people.

So when we recognize how broad they are, when we recognize that they regulate both the outer and the inner man, and we realize that they go far further than what we ever suspected before, we should be expecting to find things that we are hearing with the ears as though for the first time. You must, you absolutely must set aside any possible sense that you might have that, "This doesn't apply to me." You must set aside, "Well, maybe I've heard this before. This can't possibly be this serious. Why are we in the Old Testament instead of the New Testament?" We need to set all of that luggage, all of that baggage aside and come and let God's word speak to us with clarity and with power as this word is intended to do. What we're going to do today, it's a little bit ambitious and it will obviously be just so very introductory, what we're going to do today is we're going to look very quickly at each one of the 10 Commandments. Ten points in this message today just to introduce the 10 Commandments, to meet them, as it were, and then once the

introductions have been made, in subsequent weeks we will go back and get to know them better.

So the 10 Commandments open with a preface. They start with a historical context that the Lord gives in the opening two verses here in Exodus 20. We're going to look at the historical context, I believe next week. This is just an introduction. We're just sitting down for a first acquaintance with them here. We're leaving all of the exposition and all of the context and all of the rules of interpretation, we are leaving all of that for the future. We just want to see them for the first time here today. So the 10 Commandments contain a preface that you find in the first two verses. Exodus 20:1 and 2.

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

God gave this law after Egypt had surrendered the people of Israel, as it were, to his power. After he had redeemed them, after he had brought them out of slavery, God revealed this law to them through the hand of Moses, through the words of Moses. And so there's this historical context that God says, "This is who I am. I am the One who has delivered you from Egypt. I am the covenant-keeping Yahweh. I am God Himself. I am the One who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and therefore I speak with authority over you," he says to the people of Israel as he reveals his word.

Now in like manner, God speaks with no less authority over us even if we are not biological Jews. Every one of us has been made in our mother's womb by the hand of God, Psalm 139. Those who are in Christ have been purchased by the shed blood of Jesus Christ so that God has an ownership right over you by right of creation and by right of redemption. He has utter authority over you and he has complete authority to command every aspect of your life, every aspect of your thinking, every aspect of your emotions, every aspect of every affection of your heart. All of it comes under the broad umbrella of God's great authority by the sheer significance of who he is and who we are in response to him. He's the Creator, we're the creature. He's holy, we're sinful. We say we're Christians, then we're under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And as we'll find in some of the early commandments, one of the aspects that we need to come to grips with as we contemplate these things, is that those of you who claim to be Christians, those of you who claim to know the Lord Jesus Christ, we all have to come to grips with the fact that Jesus says plainly in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" There is this utterly unthinkable hypocrisy of naming him with our lips but ignoring the things that he tells us to do, the kinds of people that he tells us to be, and just kind of rubbing the magic lamp of prayer looking for a genie to come out and fix our problems but otherwise living as though there's really not much need to contemplate his Lordship.

We're not in a good position spiritually, beloved. We're not all that we think that we or like what we want to think that we are, and the 10 Commandments expose that, and because the 10 Commandments are an expression of the authority of God and because we

are under his authority by right of creation and by right of redemption, it behooves us to come and to study and to learn and to submit and to change in response to what he has revealed to us in his word. This is his moral law. This is his enduring moral law that applies even to the lives of Christians today. We do not obey this law in order to be saved. We can't, the law condemns us and exposes our sin. The law, for those who are in Christ, the law does not threaten us with its punishment because Christ has endured that punishment on our behalf at the cross, however, the law is still an expression of the moral will of God and how we are to live, how we are to know him, how we are to please him, and it's from that understanding. We'll address all of that more in future weeks, but it's from that understanding that God speaks with authority to his redeemed people and we are to hear and we are to heed, we are to listen and we are to obey, and we are to take this seriously deep in our hearts and find in it the way that God would lead us forward from the present point of our spiritual sanctification.

So let's look at these 10 Commandments. What are these 10? Well, the first four commandments are vertical in nature, that's referred to as the first table of the law. The second table, the last six commandments, are horizontal and deal with our relationships with men and with property and with our inner man. And one thing that we should take a look at, in addition to revealing to us the holiness of God, go back to the book of Matthew 22. The 10 Commandments are revealing to us the holiness of God and you could say this without saying too much, the 10 Commandments are giving us instruction on how we are to love God and to love our neighbor. Jesus makes this very very clear. A lawyer came up to him in Matthew 22:35, and asked him a question because he wanted to test him. He said in verse 36, Matthew 22:36, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And Jesus said to him in verse 37, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." In other words, there is an underlying principle in the 10 Commandments that are designed to teach us how we are to love God and how we are to love our neighbor.

So they reveal to us the holiness of God and they show us how it is that we are to respond in faith and obedience to the great holiness of this great and majestic God, and in responding to him, we are to love him and to fear him and to trust him and to obey him. The 10 Commandments teach us that. In addition to that, the second table, the final six, give us an idea of what it is like, what it means to love our neighbor, and how we need the purifying impact of this to cleanse our minds of the sentimental mush by which the word "love" has come to be associated in our thinking. We need to cleanse our minds of all of these things and the word of God is going to have that cleansing, sanctifying impact on us as we go through this text together.

Now, so let's start with the 10. This will be one of the, this may be the message with the most points that I've preached certainly in a long time, 10 points today corresponding to the 10 Commandments. The first commandment. The first commandment is, no false gods. The first is, no false gods and we're just doing little brief summary terms to get the

thoughts stimulated in our minds. The first commandment is this found in verse 3, God says,

3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

In other words, this commandment has both a negative and a positive implication to us. This commandment requires us, God commands us to forsake and to never go back to any other preeminent object of our affections, to forsake all false gods, and on a positive sense, to know him as the one true God. The God of the Bible commands us to know him and to acknowledge him as the one and only true God and that there is no other. This commandment implicitly condemns and rejects all false religion that is not rooted in the exclusive revelation of God found in the 66 books and no more of the holy Bible, and every other god and every other system of worship is to be rejected. Why is that? It's because God is holy and there is no other real God, and so we are to recognize his holy, exalted, separate place in the universe, acknowledge him as the Creator of heaven and earth, the giver of life in whom we live and move and have our being, and to forsake every other competing truth claim that would be in contradiction with his exclusive place and his exclusive revelation found in Scripture.

Beloved, even in the Scripture reading that I did from the book of Acts 4 earlier, this point is made about the Lord Jesus Christ when it says, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven among men by which we must be saved." So there is this arresting wake-up call right from the start as if God is saying, "Understand who you're dealing with here." It is the most holy God, the only one true God, and that means that we are to honor him exclusively and reject everything that lifts itself up as a rival to him. We are to acknowledge him alone as our God. You are to love him and to worship him and to glorify him exclusively. Why? Because he is holy. Because he is separate. Because he is alone in majesty therefore he is to be alone, the object of your supreme affections. Everything else is subordinate to that. Everything that is contrary to that must be forsaken, repented of, and never gone back to again.

The first commandment is that there are to be no false gods in your heart. Now secondly, the second commandment, no false worship. No false worship. The second commandment is this, look at verse 4, it goes for three verses here.

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Here we see that, and that brief section, verses 4 through 6, will be the subject of two messages in a few weeks so you get a sense of how much is there. Here we simply want to see this, for today we simply want to acknowledge a most basic principle that God

commands us to worship him in the right way. We must worship the true God in the right way, in the way that he has appointed us to worship him by. We are not free to simply make up our own rules and regulations of worship in utter disregard of Scripture. We are not free to just go off into our deer stand in the forest and pretend that we're communing with God and obeying God in worship because we're communing with him in nature. That is not the kind of worship that God has appointed. We must worship the true God in the right way.

Now in contradiction to everything about Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and other such kinds of religions, God forbids the use of images in worship in this text and that is representative of the fact that God is zealous for the manner in which he is worshiped. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman in John 4:24, "God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." We need to give thought to the way that we worship. You need to give thought to the way and to the approach that you make in your private life toward Scripture and toward prayer because all of those things are brought under the umbrella of the 10 Commandments. God is holy. God is holy and so we are not free to represent him in other images.

Soon after this, soon after this text of revelation, you will remember that Israel made a golden calf under the leadership of Aaron and Aaron said, "This is your God who led you out of Egypt." The idea wasn't so much that they actually thought that that golden calf was the thing that had led them out of Egypt, rather being a calf, being a strong animal, it was supposed to be a representation of who God was and it represented God in visual form to suggest something about the invisible nature of God. God says, "I'm having none of that." Anything created by human hands cannot possibly be a true representation of who God is. Pictures of Jesus cannot possibly be an appropriate thing for Christians to use and have hanging in their homes. A human artist, a sinful human artist cannot possibly rightly convey what the holiness of Christ looked like. There is nothing in a physical representation of God that can possibly rightly represent his invisible spiritual nature. It can only mislead and so God says, "There must not be any of that stuff because it will only mislead you about what My character is." And God has the right, God has the absolute prerogative to insist upon this from his people because he is God and he is entitled to tell us how it is that he must be worshiped, and we must worship the right God in the right way. Why? Because God is holy, God is set apart and therefore our worship must be set apart and done in a manner that is in accordance with what he has revealed.

Now look, it's inevitable that as we continue today and as we continue over the next few weeks and months, it's inevitable that all of our toes are going to get stepped on here by the word of God. It is inevitable that there is going to be conviction that is brought to us as a result of these things. That is not indicating that there is a problem with the word of God. If it makes us uncomfortable, if it exposes things that we've wrongly thought or wrongly done or wrongly had over the years, it's not a problem with the word of God. It couldn't possibly be that because the word of God is perfect, it is living, it is active, it is inerrant, it is infallible. If there's a conflict between us and the 10 Commandments, it's because there's a problem in us, not in the word of God, and we must approach it with that spirit of humility and prior submission and not pretend to reserve our private

judgment on whether these things are going to be right and true or not. You must worship the true God in the right way.

Now thirdly, the third commandment, do not take God's name in vain, or to state it more simply, honor the name. Honor the name of God. The third commandment is this, look at verse 7,

7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

The trivial use of the name of God, this is a true pandemic of great disease, this is something truly truly deadly. Whatever the command means, look at how seriously the Lord takes it. He says there at the end of verse 7, "the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." Who uses the name of God in an empty way without regard for the reverence that he deserves. And the implications of this command are vast. The name of God is holy because the name of God is the sum of all that he is.

So when we speak the name of God, we have no liberty whatsoever to use it in a casual, flippant manner. For you teenage girls that like to text out OMG and just say, "Oh, my God," and all of that, you need to understand that is a profoundly sinful use of the name of God. This is not how the name of God is to be treated at all. And for those of you who are of, you know, where your word isn't necessarily true, to say, "Oh, I swear to God that what I'm about to say is true," that is a profound sin against God. It is a flippant use, a flippant taking of an oath when Jesus said your yes should be enough to be yes, and your no should be enough to be no. The name of God is holy and therefore it should not be lightly or flippantly on our tongues. The name of God is holy and therefore when we pray to him, it requires the full engagement of our faculties, not a rote memorization or a rote recitation of some prayer that we've heard, or praying with our lips when our minds are distracted in a thousand different places.

You say, "Well, if that's true, then we're all really guilty before God." Yeah, that's the point. That's how holy God's name is and we are to recognize the holiness of God, recognize the holiness of his name and – watch this – and therefore respond to him with reverent fear, with sanctified thoughts, with sanctified prayers, with a sanctified sense of who he is. And in light of this third commandment, there is no measuring, there is no measuring the greatness of the guilt of the entire world on this commandment alone. The name of Jesus Christ is used as a cuss word. It's used to condemn people when they cross someone.

I don't watch any television anymore except for an occasional sports event, I suppose, but even when I stopped watching, you couldn't watch, you couldn't watch 15 minutes of regular secular programming without this commandment being violated as if the holy exalted name of God was no better than the refuse found in the ditch of a messy farm, and entitled to no more respect than the refuse on the street. Now how is God not going to vindicate his name against all of its violations that are just saturated in the culture around us? Do you see the problem? God says, "Don't do that. No one who does that will



go unpunished. I will not leave him unpunished." We should understand that the pulsating wrath of God must be great on this third commandment alone. We are to use his name and to use his word with respect in our hearts and with the purity of lips that is fitting for the great holiness of his name. And beloved, the fact that this sin is so common and so acceptable even within the walls of a Christian church, does not mitigate the black nature of its sin by a single stroke. We are to take God's name, use it with respect because he is holy.

We must have no false gods because God is holy, he is set apart, he is alone. We must worship the true God in the right way because he is holy and that's what he requires. We are to not use his name in vain, we are to honor his name because he is holy. Do you start to see the theme here? Fourthly, the fourth commandment, remember the Sabbath. Remember the Sabbath. The fourth commandment is this, remember the Sabbath, beginning in verse 8 where God said,

8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

This commandment is showing God's authority over daily life and in the structure of the way that life is to be lived over the course of time. It requires six days of labor and work, reminding me in the moment, of the New Testament command that says if a man doesn't work, neither let him eat. This idea of universal income to able-bodied people who don't work is a travesty. God requires labor and work and in the Old Testament the seventh day was set apart for rest. We'll get to this commandment soon enough in two or three months probably. Good Christians view the present-day application of this command differently and we'll address all of that when the time comes, but for now it's enough to simply say that God in requiring us to worship him in the right way, sets aside times of worship for his name to be honored, and why does he do that? It's because he is holy, that there is to be an incorporation into our life, a recognition of a principle of reverent worship to him, of reverent times of gathering with him in Hebrews 10:24 and 25, "Don't forsake the gathering of yourselves together." God calls his people to remember the Sabbath and what that means we'll look at in future weeks.

The fifth commandment, honor your father and mother. Honor your father and mother. It's a happy coincidence that we would land on this on Mother's Day, but the fifth commandment is this, honor your father and mother. Look at Exodus 20:12.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

God's sovereign authority stands behind this command to honor earthly authority. God establishes earthly authority starting with parents and then other applications of authority and social relationships flow out from there. We'll find that the application of this command, the significance, the implications of this command go far beyond family relationships and go to the whole matter of dealing with authority. Ultimately this commandment informs all of our duties in all of our relationships, and we honor authority because God is holy and he established that authority to be honored.

Look over at Ephesians 6 where this is repeated. The Apostle Paul repeats this command and specifically calls upon it in a New Testament sense to apply the moral implications of this fifth commandment to the New Testament times. Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." Paul takes that commandment, applies it to Gentiles in the Christian church, giving us a sense that these commands extend beyond the nation of Israel. There's a lot of reasons to believe and understand that, this is just one indication of it.

The fifth commandment is honor your father and your mother. What God does here, what's happening in the 10 Commandments is he's established this vertical principle of honoring him in the first four commandments, and now he goes and he starts to expand it out in a horizontal way in human relationships and he starts with this premise of honoring authority, honoring parents, and that this is the key to loving our neighbor is to begin to understand something about the importance of honoring authority.

Now that means that for those of you with young children, it is imperative for you to teach them to honor you. It's not an ego trip to do that, you are teaching them to honor the command that God himself established. Your children are to obey you, they are to heed you, they are to listen to you, and their natural bent toward defiance, their natural bent toward disobedience is not something to be coddled, not something to be laughed at, it is something to be corrected at the earliest of stages. Why? Well, because it's right but also because it instills upon them something of the importance of honoring the commandments of God and they learn it first at your knee. We honor authority because God is holy and this is what he commands. God is the sovereign authority over all and he delegates authority in different earthly realms, and as part of our obedience to God, part of our honoring of the authority of God, we honor the lesser authorities that he places in authority over us.

The sixth commandment, you shall not murder. You shall not murder. The sixth commandment is found in verse 13. I think it's two simple words in the Hebrew text translated in English with four words,

13 "You shall not murder.

Now this, again, is rooted in the holiness of God. God is the Lord and the giver of life. God is sovereign over our days and so he forbids the taking of innocent life that he has created, and the anger and the hatred that undergirds murder, the act of murder is

forbidden and what Scripture teaches us as we understand the 10 Commandments and the fullness of comparing Scripture with Scripture, is that this command goes and regulates the motions of your heart as well.

Look over at Matthew 5. Now most of us, if not all of us in here, might say, "Well, I've got this command covered. I haven't physically killed anyone." Jesus is having none of it, none of that superficial attitude because the 10 Commandments not only forbids certain external acts, these summary commands are also forbidding the inward attitudes that lead to the act in its culmination, and so it's not simply murder that is forbidden but that which leads up to murder, and Jesus makes this plain in Matthew 5:21 and 22. "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder,' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'" Jesus goes on and clarifies what the original intent of the command was. He says, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell." Not having done the physical deed and yet the commandment convicts and condemns to the point that hatred and angry words are enough to send you to hell. Now which one of us hasn't been angry with someone at some point in our life? Which one of us hasn't reacted badly in circumstances and spoken harshly and vindictively toward someone else at some point in your life? Which one of you hasn't harbored the most vile thoughts of revenge against someone who has wronged you and nursed the grudge and bitterness and resentment that that causes? Which one of you is free and innocent from that aspect of this command? Do you see the problem?

God said in the third command, "I'm not going to leave unpunished anyone who takes My name in vain." Jesus clarifies and explains the sixth commandment saying that the anger of your heart is enough to send you to hell. This puts a whole different perspective on it, doesn't it? This changes the whole nature of the way in which we think things. We realize that to use a very crude picture here, that the 10 Commandments are poking around in our hearts and exposing rotten wood behind what looked like a perfectly fine wall. You punch out the drywall, you get beyond the external application alone of the command, and you reach underneath and you find that there's all of this corruption underneath, that the termites of sin have totally corrupted everything that was underneath the outer man. This is a problem because this is a violation of the holiness of God and he has made it repeatedly clear that he will not tolerate the violations of these commandments. There will be punishment to be had for them. Here we all are only six commandments into it and realizing that we're all thoroughly condemned by what they have to say and by what God requires, and what his holiness means in its application to our lives.

I'll go back to what I said in the introduction. When you understand how holy God is as revealed by the 10 Commandments and you understand some of the implications of what these commandments require, and you understand how far short you fall, do you see why the 10 Commandments would produce a fear of the Lord? "God, what am I to do?" Do you see why the 10 Commandments promote humility and dependence in contradiction to the pride and self-sufficiency of our age even within the church? Do you see when there is such condemnation from the law of God why the preaching of the gospel of Jesus

Christ is so urgent? Men are guilty and going to hell and only the gospel of Christ can answer that crisis. Do you see why there must be urgency in you in hearing the word of God you're guilty before him in yourself? "What must I do to be saved?" the Philippian jailer cried out under like conviction, understanding that he was condemned by what was happening around him and the cry of his heart goes out, "What must I do to be saved?" Do you know how often I hear that question from people? It ain't often. It's just not important to them. Oh yeah, people like to gather together, like to hear the word of God, like to fellowship with each other and go out afterwards and all of that stuff is just great, but at the core of true Christian fellowship are people who have been captivated by the conviction of sin that God's law brings upon them and by an urgent necessity of saying, "I must have my guilt forgiven, what must I do to be saved? Where is salvation to be found?" And when we set aside the law of God to do other things and talk about other things, the urgency of the gospel sets like the sun as well.

Do you see why ignorance and indifference to the 10 Commandments would produce a lack of love for Christ? Easy to explain. Jesus said, "He who has been forgiven much, loves much. He who has been forgiven little, loves little." If you think your sin isn't too big of a deal, it's just a couple of infractions here and there, you know, maybe I committed a couple of misdemeanors against God, then you're not going to value and love the Lord Jesus Christ who went to the cross to stand in your place and suffer the infinite wrath of God on your behalf so that you could be utterly delivered from it yourself. When you realize your guilt is great, you have a great appreciation for the great sacrifice, that substitutionary penal sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, you love and treasure him for that because you realize how guilty and condemned you were, and to be delivered from that and to have no condemnation in Christ Jesus is the greatest thing that could ever have happened to you. But if you think sin is a trifling matter, "Hey, what's the big deal? Jesus gave me a little bump up that I needed to get me over the finish line." No, Jesus resurrected you from the dead. And so the implications of this go everywhere and have a fundamental effect on the way that we think about ourselves in relationship to a holy God, and as we'll see in the weeks to come, it gets very detailed and practical. These things are brief but the implications go everywhere. They explode everywhere in your life.

The seventh commandment,

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

It's found in verse 14. God is a God of purity, God is a God of faithfulness, God established the institution of marriage and intends for it to be respected, so much so that in the New Testament in Hebrews 13, it says the marriage bed must be held in honor. God punishes those who violate sexual purity and he does it because he is holy, and as with the commandment of murder prohibiting the sin of anger, so also the commandment prohibiting adultery condemns and convicts the sin of lust. The inner man, that lingering look of desire on someone who does not belong to you, those subtle clicks of the computer, and feeding that sensual appetite in the privacy and darkness of your room, all of that violating this commandment, all of it violating the purity of the marriage bed, all

of it being a violation of the God who is holy who commands us to be separate and set apart. People talk about, "I want to know what the will of God is for my life. I've got to know what the will of God is for my life. You know, where should I go to school? What job should I take? You know, what should I do this week? What's the will of God for my life?" And utterly trivializing the whole thing by a self-centered preoccupation with matters of earthly concern. God will work out his will in the providential details of your life. He'll be faithful to lead you in the paths that he's appointed to you. If you really want to get concerned, especially as a young person, well, why limit it to young people? We all need to hear this. Scripture tells us what the will of God is. In 1 Thessalonians 4 it says, "This is the will of God, your sanctification." That is, that you abstain from sexual immorality. There is the will of God for you. Start there. Start with something revealed. Start with something that's rooted in the 10 Commandments. There's the will of God for you.

The eighth commandment, you shall not steal. Look at verse 15, Exodus 20:15.

15 "You shall not steal.

This commandment requires us to see that all things belong to God and it's not only a command against taking something that doesn't belong to you, it's a command as the New Testament teaches us, a command to do what you are able to do in order to provide for yourself and not take from others. In Ephesians 4:28, it says, "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather," you see, it's not just a negative prohibition, there is a positive commandment embedded in this, "but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need." It's not simply don't take that which doesn't belong to you, it's to give of what you have to someone who needs it. That's how far-reaching this commandment is. We are to be content with what we have because God is holy, because God has provided for us.

The ninth commandment,

16. "You shall not bear false witness

found there in verse 16. God is a God of truth. God is a holy God of truth. God is opposed to the father of lies. So we are forbidden from using words that injure another man's name, we are forbidden from fudging the truth, we are forbidden from all those things that misrepresent the way things really are, and when people are relying on what we are telling them to mislead them as to what the state of affairs actually is. Why is this a command? It's because God is holy. He is holy and is truthfulness. He is set apart. Scripture goes so far as to say in the book of Titus it is impossible for God to lie. There are some things that God cannot do and one of the things that God cannot do is he cannot lie because it would be a violation of his own eternal character of truth. Well, there's your standard for the way that you are to speak and to represent and to carry yourself.

Finally, the 10th and final commandment found in verse 17.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

To covet is to want what God has not given to us, and so in this command God commands us to be content with the life, with the wife that he has given to us, that we are not to envy the good that he has given to others and wish that they didn't have it. And in this 10th commandment, clearly, clearly showing even before the explanations of Jesus that we've already looked at, showing clearly that the moral law of God regulates all the emotions and affections and desires of your heart. It covers everything that you do, everything that you think, say and do in worship vertically to God, the 10 Commandments do, and then it regulates every earthly relationship and everything that you think about all of these things during the whole entire course of your life. It is comprehensive. With you I say about my own life and self, this is devastating. This shows that me in myself, that you in yourself, there is a vast gulf, there is an insurmountable gulf between the holiness of God and who we are. How are we ever going to come to terms with that? How is it ever going to be made right?

The author, Philip Ryken, in his book "Written in Stone," says this. "The 10 Commandments display the character of God. They reveal His sovereignty, jealousy, justice, holiness, honor, faithfulness, providence, truthfulness and love." He goes on to say, "They express God's will for our lives because they are based on His character. The law is good because God is good and His goodness penetrates every aspect of His law."

You see, the problem is not that the law reveals our sin, the problem is that we're sinful. That's the rub with the law. The law is perfectly good, the problem is us. And so to meet the 10 Commandments, my friends, is to do nothing less than this, the 10 Commandments even in this introductory survey that's been so pathetic in its superficiality, even in that, to meet the 10 Commandments is to meet our desperate need for a Savior, to meet our desperate need for the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, the bad news is that you have broken this law and you can never keep it on your own. You have not kept it. If you started now, you would fail and said, "I'll be perfect from here on," you would stumble before you walked out the door. It's that high and lofty and you are that fallen and sinful.

The good news is, there is good news in this, the good news is that the conviction of sin that the 10 Commandments bring upon us has a purpose in the plan and the work of God. They are to convict us of our sin and to act as a tutor, as a teacher that leads us to Christ. When we see how high and lofty the holiness of God is, when we see how desperately lost and depraved we are, we are left with no alternative but the fact that we need a mediator with God or we will be utterly lost and condemned.

So in Galatians 3 it says the law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ so that we may be justified by faith. Do you see you could not possibly be made right, you could not possibly be declared righteous before a holy God by what you have done. We're all lost. We're all guilty. We're all condemned. We're all shut up and led away from our boasting

and self-righteousness. It could never be. The 10 Commandments close the door on self-righteousness and when it seems that we are locked in a room that we cannot escape, we look and we find there's another door. Christ said, "I am the door. Enter through Me and you will be saved." The good news is that such profound damning guilt was paid for in full by Jesus Christ on behalf of those that he redeems. The good news is that Christ in his life perfectly kept all of the 10 Commandments every moment of every day. His life of perfect righteousness was fulfilled and in a gracious act of voluntary self-sacrifice, he gave that precious life, he shed that precious blood on the cross to pay for the guilt of everyone who would come to him for forgiveness of sin.

So the 10 Commandments condemn us and they show us how great Christ must be if he kept all of this in moral perfection, and so the good news is that all the guilt of all of your sin can be redeemed in Christ and he calls you to repent of your guilt in earnestness and put your sole and solitary faith in him alone, realizing that God has appointed him as the only mediator by which he can be approached. You need a mediator. You need someone between you and God because you're lost without it. Christ is that one. He kept the law for us. He paid the penalty for sin. He rose from the dead. He literally did everything on our behalf. And so if you are redeemed today, give profound thanks for this great salvation because the greatness of the salvation is in proportion to the greatness of your sin, the greatness of your guilt, the greatness of the danger of eternal condemnation, and if you're convicted of sin, realize that you've never come to Christ on terms like this. Understand that he offers free mercy to you based on his finished work at Calvary. Jesus said, "This is the will of My Father." Do you want the will of God? Here we have it again, "This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Let's bow our heads in humility before our Lord.

*Father, we've met up with something of Your holiness here today as we've done this rapid survey of the 10 Commandments. I pray, Father, the only thing that I know how to pray in this moment with all of these friends in front of me, I pray that Your Holy Spirit would graciously, wisely, sovereignly, powerfully, apply it to each heart according to the need of each one in a manifold difference of ways, Father, achieving Your will through the work of Your Spirit through Your word. Do nothing less than that for us today and as we look toward the future of what Your word has to say for us, Father, the thunderings of the law have been answered in the grace of Christ and we have a fresh idea, something today, of how much we have been delivered from. This was no minor matter. This was infinite guilt before an infinite holy God and Christ has paid the price for all who believe. Help us to sing now with great appreciation for our Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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