

10 Commandments Pt 1 Introduction “The Purpose of the Law” -July 27, 2025, Exodus 20

Introduction: Last week we concluded our series on Why We’re Presbyterian. Today, we start a new series on the 10 Commandments. I’ll ask you to turn in your Bibles to Exodus 20. While you’re doing that, I’ll remind you why we stand for the reading of God’s word. In Nehemiah 8:5, when Ezra opened the Book, all the people stood up. We stand up because of honor. We stand when someone of higher honor enters a room. Observers and participants in a court of law are required to stand when the judge walks in. We stand to greet guests and people of special significance. We stand in honor of the reading of God’s word.

Read text

Today, we are examining *WHY* are we talking about the Ten Commandments?

I. The Old Testament is focused on them:

A. Tablets in the Ark of the Covenant (Dt 10:2, 31:26) The stone tablets containing the 10 Commandments are the immutable, permanent, unchanging will and character of God. Exodus 34:28 refers to the Decalogue, as it’s sometimes called, as the “covenant.” This is called the Mosaic covenant. The ark of the *covenant* is so called because of what it contains. The Decalogue is the reflection of the character of God and He calls His people to relate to Him by faithful obedience.

B. 613 laws outlined primarily in three books: Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy

1) Three divisions (Calvin):

Moral (Ex 20; Dt 5), Civil (Ex 21-23), Ceremonial (Ex 25ff; Dt 4:13-14)

2) Two **Tables** reflecting the great commandments (Dt 6:5; Lev 19:18)

C. Prophets preached them (Dt 28-30) and the consequences. Faithfulness leads to blessing, disobedience results in curses. This was lived out in real time with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of ancient Israel. Their captivity was a direct result of their gross and continued disobedience. I just read in Nehemiah 8:17 “The entire assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths. The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day. And there was exceedingly great gladness.” Of course, this is the ceremonial law, but it goes to make the point that they could not even obey the easy laws, much less the moral law. They couldn’t even participate in a seven day camp out festival. The result was that God punished them. When they obeyed, there was gladness. The prophets preached the law, and specifically the moral law. The old testament is focused on it.

II. Jesus said they were important: Matt 5:17-19 “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” There is a whole so-called version of modern Christianity that says that the law is not important. They only want to emphasize the “love of God.” They ignore the requirements of God. They misrepresent God. They whitewash Jesus as someone with no standards. Jesus Himself said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him. ²⁴ He who does not love Me does not keep My words.” -John 14:23-24.

So, the Old Testament focused on the Decalogue, and Jesus reaffirmed it. Thirdly,...

III. Church history **emphasized** them:

Early Church to Reformation (1st–16th Century):

- High Emphasis: The Ten Commandments (Decalogue) were central in early Christianity. Early Church Fathers like Augustine integrated them into moral teaching, and they were used in catechesis.
- Medieval Period: The Medieval Church emphasized the Commandments in sermons, confessions, and often used them as a framework for examining sins. The commandments were taught through catechetical texts like the *Didache* and later through the Church’s moral theology.
- Reformation: Protestant reformers, especially Lutherans and Calvinists, elevated the Ten Commandments as a guide for Christian living. Martin Luther included them in his *Small Catechism* (1529), emphasizing their role in revealing sin and guiding behavior. Reformed churches, like those following Calvin, stressed them in worship and education, often reading them aloud.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Questions 39—83 deal with the Law. Over **40%** of the catechism is devoted to it’s discussion.

Q. 39. What is the duty which God requireth of man?

A. The duty which God requireth of man, is **obedience** to his revealed will.

Q. 40. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?

A. The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.

Q. 41. Wherein is the moral law summarily comprehended?

A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the **ten commandments**.

The church has always maintained that the commandments were good and useful. Still in effect. Until 5 minutes ago, almost all of Christianity had some form of emphasis on the

Decalogue. I'll give you one guess as to what changed. With the push towards liberalism and especially since the end of the second great war, any mention of the 10 commandments has been mislabeled as legalism. A more ooey gooey, squishy morality of "love" has been preached. Instead of a God who requires certain moral bar, and punishes sinners in hell, we now have an all accepting father who just wants us to come home even if we continue to disrespect Him and ignore His law. This "God loves you..." only gospel is actually another gospel. It is not the message preached by Jesus or the apostles, or that we saw for 1800 years of church history. It is a modern damnable heresy. The church has always preached law and gospel. Without the former, the latter is not needed. The latter without the former is no good news at all. It is baseless sentimentalism. It just makes people feel good without having any substance or root in the Scriptures.

The OT emphasized the commandments, Jesus confirms them, church history reaffirms them. Lastly, we will consider the pragmatics...

IV. The Commandments are **beneficial** to us: 3 ways...

A. Shows us our need for the **gospel** by displaying the holiness of God. As said earlier, the commandments are a display of God's character. It is wrong to lie because God is a God of truth. It is wrong to commit murder because God is a God of life. It is wrong to be an adulterer because God is faithful. We cannot ever completely obey the commandments, and that shows us our need for a Savior. The law holds up a mirror to show us our sinfulness and make us aware of our need for Jesus.

B. Restrains Evil (1Tim 1:8-11)

1. Society in general. Prov 29:18 "Where there is no vision (revelation), people cast off all restraint, but how blessed is he who keeps the law." Society as a whole is better off with a standard of morality. When people cast off all restraint, there is chaos and destruction. The consequences of sin are lived out in real time. All you have to do is look at any inner city where people are allowed to be addicted and homeless, and you see the effects. California as a state has cast off any personal responsibility in the name of compassion. It is not compassionate to allow people to destroy themselves. It is not loving to allow open drug use and no fault divorce, and sodomy, and adultery, and fornication, and homosexuality, and theft, and laziness, etc. etc. Society was better when the law of God was upheld. People looked better, and were better. Our cities have become dump grounds. Our towns are dilapidated. The law of God restrains evil. It holds it back.

2. American culture and history. American vision has a great article on this detailing how the 10 Commandments are a part of the American law system.¹ There are about 50 displays of the Ten Commandments inside and outside the United States Supreme Court.² Our land was built on God's law and gospel. We would do well to return to our roots.

The commandments show us our need for Jesus, they restrain evil, and they contribute to...

C. Human **happiness**: "to reveal the path of freedom and holiness to those who desire to please God.

Ps 119:97 "Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day."

Ps 19:7-9: "The law of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul;

The testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes.

⁹ The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of Yahweh are true; they are righteous altogether.

You know what you call having a restored soul, living wisely with rejoicing being enlightened and having a clear path? You call that blessed. You call that happy.

Rom 13:8-10 "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. ⁹ For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does not work evil against a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* Law.

Application:

1. **Memorize** the Ten Commandments.

2. **Thank** God for the gospel. We can never perfectly obey and so we have the forgiveness of sins offered through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

3. **Obey** God and live free.

It is sin to disobey. It is not ok. It is death. When does God expect us to obey? Why would we put off being blessed? Obedience should be immediate.

¹ <https://americanvision.org/1473/ten-commandments-supreme-court/>

² <https://lc.org/newsroom/details/111224-thou-may-display-the-ten-commandments>

Parents, you do your children a disservice when you repeat your commands without immediate consequences. Children are not to be reasoned with. You teach them that God is ok with them being slow to obey. He is not. You teach them that obedience is optional. It is not. It is not for you and it is not for them. Freedom is found in faithfulness. Sin brings death. Obey God.

1 Cor 6:11 says “And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” We have been freed from the penalty and power of sin. We have the opportunity to “Flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with all those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart.” 2Tim 2:22

Summary: The Ten Commandments are good and beneficial for us as Christians and for all of society. Oh that God would grant our people repentance and faith! Oh, that He would find us faithful people, walking with Him in uprightness and truth... holy and happy!

For Christ and His kingdom, world without end. Amen!

Closing prayer: Our God and Father, thank You for Your mercy. You have not given us what we deserve. Thank You for Your grace. You’ve blessed us with what we don’t deserve. Help our love for You to drive us to be shaped by Your word. Find us people informed by those who have come before us, equipped by Your word and empowered by Your Spirit to make disciples of all nations, starting with these United States, The Great State of Texas, and our home here in the Permian Basin. May You use us in our generation, to destroy the works of the devil and build the glorious kingdom of our God and King. As we come to the table of communion, meet with us as we remember that Christ gave His life as a ransom for many. In Jesus’ name, Amen.