

## CHAPTER 8

# THINKING ABOUT THE LAW AND THE COMMANDMENTS

Why did God give the law? What can the law do for a person? Can the law save a person? Can a person gain eternal life by trying to keep the law? Suppose a person keeps all of the commandments except for one. Would this person be considered a keeper of the law or a breaker of the law? What is the penalty for breaking the law? In what ways can the law be compared to a mirror? Is the law something bad or is the law something good? Did anyone ever keep the law and obey the commandments perfectly?

These are some of the questions we will answer as we think about God's law and God's commandments.

### 1. THE LAW CONDEMNS ALL MEN.

Think about yourself. Have you kept God's law or have you broken God's law? Are you GUILTY or are you INNOCENT? Consider **the greatest commandment** of all. This is the "KING OF ALL LAWS" and it is found in Matthew 22:36-38 (see also Deuteronomy 6:5). Have you obeyed this command perfectly? Are you able to say this: "Every day of my life I have loved God with **ALL** my heart and with **ALL** my soul and with **ALL** my mind"? \_\_\_\_\_ Have there been times in your life when you have not loved God as much as you should have? Have you always given God first place in your life? Has the Lord always been your "first love" or have you loved other things or other people more than the Lord? Have you kept (obeyed) the greatest commandment of all? \_\_\_\_\_

Consider the second greatest commandment. It is found in Matthew 22:39 (see also Leviticus 19:18). Have you obeyed this command perfectly? Have you loved other people perfectly or have you failed to love others as you should? Are there times when you are selfish (thinking about self before others) and unkind and unthoughtful? Have you kept (obeyed) the second greatest commandment? \_\_\_\_\_

### Testing Yourself

Let us now consider some of the 10 Commandments (found in Exodus chapter 20). We will only consider six of these commandments. TEST YOURSELF by checking either TRUE or FALSE:

<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE	<p><b>Read the 1st Commandment (found in Exodus 20:3).</b>  I HAVE <i>ALWAYS</i> PUT THE LORD FIRST AND I HAVE <i>ALWAYS</i> GIVEN THE LORD FIRST PLACE IN MY LIFE. I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> LET ANYTHING OR ANYONE ELSE TAKE THE PLACE THAT GOD SHOULD HAVE IN MY LIFE.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE	<p><b>Read the 3rd Commandment (found in Exodus 20:7).</b>  I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> TAKEN THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN OR USED GOD'S NAME IN A CARELESS OR THOUGHTLESS WAY. I HAVE <i>ALWAYS</i> TREATED GOD'S NAME WITH REVERENCE AND RESPECT.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE	<p><b>Read the 5th Commandment (found in Exodus 20:12).</b>  I HAVE <i>ALWAYS</i> HONORED MY PARENTS AND HAVE GIVEN THEM THE HIGHEST RESPECT. I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> DISOBEYED MY PARENTS AND WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I <i>NEVER NEEDED</i> OR <i>DESERVED</i> A SPANKING.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE	<p><b>Read the 8th Commandment (found in Exodus 20:15).</b>  I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> STOLEN ANYTHING FROM ANYONE. I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> TAKEN ANYTHING THAT DID NOT BELONG TO ME. I HAVE <i>ALWAYS</i> RESPECTED THE PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS OF OTHERS.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE	<p><b>Read the 9th Commandment (found in Exodus 20:16).</b>  I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> GIVEN A FALSE WITNESS AGAINST ANYONE. I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> SAID SOMETHING ABOUT ANOTHER PERSON WHICH I KNEW WAS NOT TRUE. I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> LIED BUT I HAVE <i>ALWAYS</i> BEEN HONEST ABOUT EVERYTHING. I ONLY SPEAK WHAT IS TRUE.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE	<p><b>Read the 10th Commandment (found in Exodus 20:17).</b>  I HAVE <i>NEVER</i> COVETED OR DESIRED SOMETHING THAT SOMEONE ELSE HAD. I HAVE NEVER HAD A STRONG DESIRE FOR MY NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE OR SWIMMING POOL OR BOAT OR AUTOMOBILE OR WIFE. I HAVE <i>ALWAYS</i> BEEN TOTALLY CONTENT AND SATISFIED WITH WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO ME</p>

How did you do? If you answered TRUE, this means you have obeyed the command. If you answered FALSE, this means you are guilty of breaking the command. How many times did you check TRUE? \_\_\_\_\_ How many times did you check FALSE? \_\_\_\_\_ Are you a GUILTY breaker of the law or are you an INNOCENT keeper of the law?

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Suppose that you checked TRUE four times and checked FALSE only once. This means that you kept all of the commandments except one. Are you a keeper of the law or a breaker of the law? The answer is found in James 2:10--"For whosoever shall keep the \_\_\_\_\_, and yet offend in \_\_\_\_\_ point, he is \_\_\_\_\_ of all."

What does James 2:10 really mean? Suppose there were a person who kept every single commandment of the law except for one. He obeyed the law perfectly except for one commandment which he broke. James 2:10 says, "He is \_\_\_\_\_ of all!" Even though he only broke one commandment, HE IS STILL A LAWBREAKER!

A father says to his teenage son: mow the lawn, wash the car, paint the fence and carry out the trash cans. The son mows the lawn, washes the car and paints the fence, but he does not carry out the trash cans. He does all but one. Is he an obedient or disobedient son? \_\_\_\_\_ Is he guilty of disobeying his father? \_\_\_\_\_ Partial obedience is actually disobedience.

The 7th Commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). Today adultery is being practiced more and more as married persons are being unfaithful to their marriage partners. But someone might say, "I have never been unfaithful to my wife and have never committed an act of adultery, so I'm not guilty of breaking this command." But notice how the Lord Jesus got to the heart of this commandment in Matthew 5:27-28, "You have heard that it was said by them of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery; But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." A missionary once related a true incident that took place when he was an unsaved student in high school. For some reason, one of the students had a Bible in the cafeteria even though he was not a Christian. The table was full of male students, including the person who later became a missionary. The young man with the Bible had it opened to Matthew 5:28 (the verse quoted above) and he was showing it to everyone at the table. One of them made this comment: "This condemns everyone of us!" They all recognized that they were guilty of lust! They were ready at that point for someone to come along with the gospel message! However, no believer was near the scene. Thankfully one of those students later heard the gospel from a godly campus missionary, Donald Fullerton, while a student at Princeton University, and passed from death unto life, and became a faithful servant of Christ.

How many laws must be broken for a man to become a LAWBREAKER? \_\_\_\_\_



If you have a chain with just one of the links broken, is it still a broken chain? \_\_\_\_\_ Consider a person who has committed murder, but who has never committed adultery (see James 2:11). Is this person a transgressor (breaker) of the law? \_\_\_\_\_

Think about a rubber band. If you cut the rubber band in 10 places with a pair of scissors, will you have a broken rubber band? \_\_\_\_\_ If you cut the rubber band in only one place, will you still have a broken rubber band? \_\_\_\_\_

Think of a man suspended over a cliff hanging on for dear life to a rope. Suppose that five crows start pecking at the rope in five different places. The rope then breaks in five places simultaneously, because the five crows all finished pecking through the rope at the same time. Will the man fall to his doom? \_\_\_\_\_ Suppose only one crow pecked at the rope at only one place. If the rope only breaks in one place, will the man still fall to his doom? \_\_\_\_\_ It only takes one break to make a broken rope!

Has anyone ever kept God's law perfectly? Has anyone ever kept the 10 Commandments perfectly? Has anyone ever obeyed perfectly all of God's commands? In John 7:19 Jesus spoke to the religious people of His day and He said, "Did not Moses give you the \_\_\_\_\_, and yet \_\_\_\_\_ of you \_\_\_\_\_ the law." *Not one* of them kept the law! They were all **LAWBREAKERS!**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Man who ever kept God's law perfectly. In John 7:18 we learn this about Jesus Christ: "no \_\_\_\_\_ is in Him." Also 1 Peter 2:22 tells us that Jesus "did no \_\_\_\_\_." Jesus never broke any laws, no, not one!

Jesus was perfectly **INNOCENT** and **RIGHTEOUS**. What about you? According to Romans 3:19 are you **INNOCENT** or are you **GUILTY**? \_\_\_\_\_

### Is the Law Bad?

When we test ourselves by God's law, we all discover that we are guilty lawbreakers. Does this mean that the law is something bad? No, the problem is not with the law, the problem is with **us!** "The law is \_\_\_\_\_, and the commandment \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_" (Romans 7:12). There is nothing wrong with the law!

The law is a reflection of God Himself. God is **HOLY** and **JUST** and **GOOD**. So also the laws that God gave to men are **HOLY** and **JUST** and **GOOD**. The law shows forth God's righteous requirements. The problem is that sinful man is **unable to do** what God's holy law requires.

Think of yourself with a dirty face looking into a mirror. You might say, "What's wrong with this mirror? This mirror shows me with a dirty face!" Nothing is wrong with the mirror. The real problem is that you have a dirty face. The good mirror shows you that you have a problem. In the same way God's good law shows sinful man that he has a problem (see Romans 7:14--The law does not have a problem, **I DO!**).

## 2. THE PENALTY FOR BREAKING THE LAW IS DEATH.

If you get caught stealing something from a store, there is a penalty (punishment) involved. If your parents get caught for speeding, there is a penalty that they must pay. The same is true for the laws of God. When God's laws are broken there is a penalty that must be paid.

Consider Exodus chapter 21 (the chapter which immediately follows the chapter containing the Ten Commandments). According to verses 12,15,16,17, what penalty (punishment) was given to **LAWBREAKERS**? \_\_\_\_\_

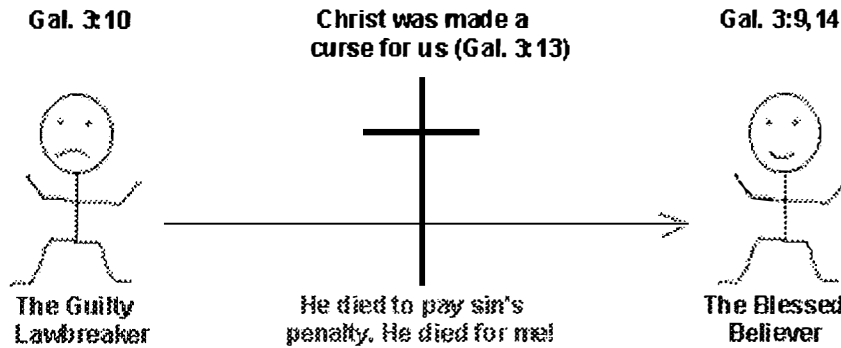
In Romans 1:29-31 we have a long list of sins. Are you guilty of any of the sins listed in these three verses? \_\_\_\_\_ In verse 32 we learn that there is a penalty: "they which commit such things are \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_." We learn the same thing in Romans 6:23-- "the wages of \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_." **LAWBREAKERS (SINNERS) DESERVE DEATH.** The penalty for breaking the law is death and death means separation from God and punishment by God (compare 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Matthew 25:41,46). Guilty lawbreakers deserve the death penalty.

In Galatians 3:10 we learn that guilty lawbreakers are under God's curse: "For as many as are of the works of the \_\_\_\_\_ are under the \_\_\_\_\_: for it is written, \_\_\_\_\_ is everyone that continueth not in \_\_\_\_\_ things which are written in the book of the law to \_\_\_\_\_ them." This verse is saying that those who do not perfectly obey the law are under God's curse.

Galatians 3:10 could also be *re-written* as a BLESSING: "BLESSED IS EVERYONE THAT CONTINUES IN ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW TO DO THEM." This means that the person who keeps God's law perfectly (every day of his or her life) is BLESSED. But here is the problem: It is impossible for sinful men and women to keep God's holy law perfectly. We have all sinned and come short of doing what God's holy law requires (compare Romans 3:23). The BLESSING is out of the reach of sinful men. As **LAWBREAKERS** God's curse is upon us. Is there any hope?

### 3. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT CHRIST DIED FOR LAWBREAKERS.

Jesus Christ has rescued sinful men from the curse of the law: "Christ hath redeemed us from the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ being made a \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).



There is good news for every lawbreaker on the face of the earth! Jesus Christ came into the world to save you (1 Timothy 1:15). On the cross He was cursed so that you might be blessed. Do you believe that He did this for you? Are you thankful? Because of what Christ has done, God now offers men the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23). Have you received this gift?

### 4. WHAT MUST I DO TO HAVE ETERNAL LIFE?

#### The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-22)

Suppose someone were to ask you this question: "What must I do to have eternal life?" (compare Matthew 19:16). How would you answer this? Those who know the Bible would

probably say, "To have eternal life you must believe on Jesus" (see John 6:47 and John 3:16). But this is *not* the answer that Jesus gave the rich young ruler. In Matthew 19:17 Jesus said, "If thou wilt enter into life, \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_." According to Jesus, eternal life may be obtained by keeping the law!

Actually both answers are true. There are two ways to obtain eternal life:

- 1) A person may obtain eternal life by keeping God's commandments (by obeying God's law perfectly every day of his or her life).

This is the *legal way* of getting saved.

**Problem:** Do you think that there has ever been a person (apart from the Lord Jesus Christ) who has ever done this? \_\_\_\_\_ Is it possible for sinful men to perfectly keep God's holy law?

- 2) A person may obtain eternal life by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and receiving Him as Saviour.

This is the *grace way* of getting saved.

**Solution:** Even though God's holy law condemns the best men, God's grace is able to save the worst men IF THEY BELIEVE ON JESUS.

In other words, there are two ways to get to heaven. One way is to live a perfect life (obeying all of God's laws perfectly). The other way is to trust the Saviour who came to save sinners.

Jesus knew that this rich young ruler would never be saved by trying to keep the law. Jesus wanted to show this man how sinful he really was. Did the rich young ruler think that he was a keeper of the law or a breaker of the law (Matthew 19:17-20)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you think he really was? \_\_\_\_\_ The young ruler was a religious and moral man. **He was good enough to deceive himself and bad enough to damn himself.** His goodness prevented him from knowing his badness.

This man was really a guilty **LAWBREAKER**. Do you remember what the greatest of all commandments is (Matthew 22:36-38)? Did this man love God with all his heart or did he love his possessions more (Matthew 19:21-22)? \_\_\_\_\_  
Was he guilty of breaking the greatest commandment of all? \_\_\_\_\_

## A Certain Lawyer (Luke 10:25-29)

Notice the question that this *lawyer* (expert in the law of Moses) asked Jesus in Luke 10:25-- "Master, what shall I do to inherit \_\_\_\_\_?" Jesus then made this man answer his own question (see Luke 10:26-27). This man quoted the two greatest

commandments in the law: TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. Jesus said to this man: "This \_\_\_\_\_, and thou shalt \_\_\_\_\_." If a person wants to have eternal life there are only two things he must do:

1. *Love God perfectly*
2. *Love his neighbor perfectly.*

The problem is that Jesus Christ is the only Man who has ever done these two things PERFECTLY. Every other person who has ever lived has failed to love God perfectly and has failed to love others perfectly.

Remember, if we could keep the law perfectly then we would not need a Saviour and the death of Christ would not have been necessary (see Galatians 2:21). Only guilty lawbreakers need a Saviour, but righteous people who never break the law do not need a Saviour. How many of these righteous people are there (Romans 3:10)? \_\_\_\_\_ Therefore, how many of us need a Saviour? \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW.

The purpose of the law is stated in Romans 3:20--"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the \_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_." This verse teaches us two important truths:

1. The purpose of the law is *not* to save (JUSTIFY) a person.
2. The purpose of the law is to show a person his sin (make him knowledgeable about his sin)--compare Romans 7:7-14.

Think again of a man with a dirty face who looks into a mirror. The DIRT is like SIN and the MIRROR is like the LAW. The purpose of the mirror is to show a person his dirt! We certainly would not wash our face with the mirror! The mirror tells us that we need to use the soap and water, just as the law tells us that we have sin and need to be cleansed. The *LAW* cannot cleanse us from sin, only the *LAMB* can do that (John 1:29). Just as the mirror should drive us to the sink, so the *LAW* should drive us to the *LAMB*.

As the sinner stands before God's holy law, all he can say is, "I'M GUILTY!" As the **believing sinner** stands before Jesus Christ, all he can say is, "Praise God! I'M CLEANSED AND FORGIVEN!" What the law could never do, God did by the sending of his own \_\_\_\_\_ (Romans 8:3). Praise God for the LAMB!

The law cannot save, but it can show a person that he needs to be saved. The law cannot cleanse a person from sin, but it can point out a person's sin. A mirror is not something that can be used to wash yourself, but it sure helps you to see what the problem is!

The law is holy but the law cannot make a person holy. It can show us how unholy we are. It cannot sanctify us. For a fuller study on this important subject, see our study entitled, *What Is The Believer's Rule of Life?*

## 6. THE LAW OF LOVE.

According to Matthew 22:36-40, all the law can be summed up by two simple commands: LOVE GOD and LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. See also Romans 13:8-10. In these verses we learn that “love is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the law” (Romans 13:10). This means that the person who LOVES GOD and LOVES HIS NEIGHBOR is fulfilling and keeping the law. He is not a breaker of the law but he is a keeper of the law.

Consider again some of the 10 Commandments. If a person really loves God, will he put any other god before Him (Exodus 20:3)? \_\_\_\_\_ If a person really loves God, will he make and worship idols (Exodus 20:4-5)? \_\_\_\_\_ If a person really loves God, will he take God’s Name in vain (Exodus 20:7)? \_\_\_\_\_

If a person really loves his neighbor, will he murder him (Exodus 20:13)? \_\_\_\_\_ If a person really loves his neighbor, will he steal from him (Exodus 20:15)? \_\_\_\_\_ **ALL OF THE LAW IS FULFILLED IN ONE WORD--THE WORD LOVE** (see Galatians 5:14).

It sounds so simple! To keep the law, all you need to do is to LOVE GOD and LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. This is easy to say but it is difficult to do. In fact, it is IMPOSSIBLE TO DO! Sinful men and women are totally UNABLE to love in God’s way. God says that such is a necessary requirement and they are unable to produce ONE DROP OF THIS KIND OF LOVE!

When a person is saved God does a wonderful thing. God Himself comes to live in the life of the believer. In Galatians 2:20 we read these words: “CHRIST LIVETH \_\_\_\_\_”. We could never do it ourselves, but CHRIST LIVES IN US! The LAWGIVER (Jesus Christ) has come to live in my heart. He is the only One who ever kept the law perfectly. I cannot love God and my neighbor, but CHRIST IN ME makes it possible!

In Galatians 5:22 we read this: “The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit is \_\_\_\_\_.” I cannot produce LOVE, but the God who is in me can! I need to make sure that I am walking in the \_\_\_\_\_ (Galatians 5:16) and staying in a right relationship with the Lord. The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts to make it possible for us to do what would be impossible in and of ourselves.

The following has been attributed to John Bunyan:

Run, John, Run! The Law commands;  
But gives me neither feet nor hands.  
Far grander news the gospel brings;  
It bids me fly and GIVES ME WINGS!

Are you saved? Do you have the Holy Spirit living in your heart? Has God made it possible for you to do the impossible? Is the Holy Spirit producing the fruit described in Galatians 5:22-23 in your life? Why or why not?

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