

The Real Purpose of the 10 Commandments

Most people (even those who think of themselves as Christians) are surprised to learn the real purpose of the 10 Commandments. What most people don't realize is that the Commandments were never intended to be just a set of goals or ideals that we should **try** to live up to. Instead they demonstrate GOD'S PERFECT STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. A standard that none of us has been able to keep, nor can we ever hope to attain.

The Bible says, "There is no one who is righteous in God's sight, not even one...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:10&23). Therefore, we should not deceive ourselves into thinking that trying to keep the 10 Commandments is the same as actually keeping them. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that if anyone disobeys just one of the Commandments (even only one time), that person is guilty of being a lawbreaker in God's sight and is in imminent danger of facing divine judgement, justice and condemnation.

When Jesus was on the earth He made it clear that keeping the Commandments is not just a matter of outward compliance or external obedience. He said, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder...' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment...You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." In other words, Jesus is saying that hatred is analogous to murder and lust is commensurate with adultery. This means that the 10 Commandments not only apply to our ACTIONS, but also to our THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, MOTIVES AND DESIRES. The Bible says, "For man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Jesus summarized the Commandments by saying, "Thou shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind and strength. And thou shall love your neighbor as yourself". In view of these two statements, as well as what Jesus teaches about anger and lust, can any of us ever claim that we are innocent in God's sight or that we have obeyed His commands? Could you honestly say that you have always (without any exception) loved God with all of our heart, mind and strength? Or, can you honestly say that you have always loved your neighbor as much as you have loved yourself? Add to this the fact that Jesus also said that we should "love our enemies" and it becomes apparent that WE ALL FAIL MANY TIMES IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS. Perhaps this is one of the the reasons that the Bible says, "Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by obeying the Law [the 10 Commandments, etc.], rather through the Law we become conscious of sin [i.e., the 10 Commandments make us aware of how bad our sin really is]...We know that a person is not declared righteous in God's sight by keeping the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ...For by obeying the Law no one will be declared righteous in God's sight." (Romans 3:20, Galatians 2:16)

The Bible makes it clear that the Commandments can never take away our sins or make us righteous in God's sight. Instead, GOD USES THE 10 COMMANDMENTS TO SHOW US HOW SINFUL AND UNRIGHTEOUS WE REALLY ARE and that that we are in desperate need of a savior. The good news is that God Himself has provided the savior we so desperately need. God sent His only Son into the world to die in our place as our 'substitute sacrifice.' Not only did Jesus pay the full penalty for our sins by His death on the cross for us, but He offers His perfect divine righteousness to each one of us as a FREE GIFT !!! "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known...This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who

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believe.” (Romans 3:21-22) The “righteousness” that God gives to those who simply believe in Jesus for their salvation, comes only “from God”. This means that it is not something that we have in ourselves, nor is it something that we can ever hope to produce or achieve. In fact, it is none other than the perfect righteousness of Jesus Himself that God imputes to us (credits to us) the moment we first put our faith in Jesus Christ alone. The words “faith” and “believe” are synonyms. Both of these words mean to rely on or trust in someone other than yourself. When you rely on what Jesus has already accomplished for you by His death on the cross (and not on your own devotion, effort or good works), God gives you this wonderful gift without cost. His gift to you includes the forgiveness of all your sins and a home with Him in heaven forever! See Romans 4:1-8, 5:6-10, Acts 16:30-31.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified [declared ‘perfectly righteous’ by God] freely by His grace through the redemption [the price paid] that came by Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-24) These two verses include both bad news and good news. The bad news is that in ourselves, we all fall drastically short of God’s perfect holiness and divine glory. This means that we are completely unable to do anything to change our sinful and helpless condition. However, the good news is so good that it completely takes away the bad news! The good news is that God justifies us “freely by His grace through the redemption [the price paid on the cross] that came by Christ Jesus!” (Romans 4:5, 4:23-25 & 5:1, 1 Peter 1:18). By His death on the cross, Jesus paid the penalty for all our wrong doing, offering Himself as a sacrifice “for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2). This means that our sin debt has been completely paid off as far as God is concerned. Christ’s blood shed on our behalf redeems us (sets us free) from all of the judgment and condemnation that we rightfully deserve. Anyone who believes in Him receives a full pardon from their guilt, as well as complete forgiveness of all their sins. Not only are all of our past sins forgiven, but Jesus also died for all of the sins that we will commit in the future. (John 5:24, Acts 10:43 & 13:38-39)

This is why the Gospel of Jesus Christ is such good news! When we believe in Him as our only hope and savior, God makes us right with Him and righteous in His sight. All without cost, effort or devotion. This is true only because of what Jesus has already accomplished on our behalf on the cross when He paid the full cost for our forgiveness. It is a free gift that we don’t deserve and that we cannot earn or help to earn in any way. Our part (your part) is only to receive with simple childlike faith the gift that God offers. The last words that Jesus said on the cross were “It is finished [It is paid in full]!” He has done everything required for us to receive forgiveness of our sins, the righteousness of Christ Himself (imputed to us by God) and eternal life with Him in heaven forever. See John 3:15-18, Ephesians 2:8-9. “God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood...” (Romans 3:25a) The blood of Christ is the only payment accepted and endorsed by God the Father. Through Jesus “we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom.” (Ephesians 1:6).

The word “atonement” relates back to the old sacrificial system when an innocent lamb (or other animal) was brought to a priest to be offered on behalf of a person who had sinned. In this way, the lamb became the payment (the atonement) for the guilty person. However, this kind of sacrifice did not actually remove sin, it only served as a “constant reminder of sin” (Hebrews 10:3-4). It was also a picture of Christ’s future “once and for all sacrifice” for us (Hebrews 7:27). When John the Baptist first introduced Jesus, he referred to Him as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Although Jesus was

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completely innocent and without sin, He took our place and bore our guilt and punishment.
(See 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:24 & 3:18)

As a result of the justice carried out on the cross, God now “justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” As mentioned previously, believing in what Christ has already done for us is the only means of receiving God’s gift of salvation and justification (Acts 16:31). Because no one can be justified by the Law (or by personal obedience, doing good deeds, or performing religious acts and rituals, etc.), God alone receives the glory. If we had any part in our salvation we could rightfully take some of the credit, “but not before God!” Salvation by grace means that God, not man, is honored and glorified! See Romans 4:1-5, Galatians 6:14. The apostle Paul, the author of the book of Romans, repeats and re-emphasizes what he said previously, a person is justified (pronounced ‘perfectly and eternally righteous’ by God) through faith in Jesus Christ alone “apart from” trying to obey God’s laws and commandments which were intended to show us our own sinfulness and our need for salvation through Jesus Christ alone. See Romans 4:13-16, Romans 4:23-25. Forgiveness was procured for us by Christ’s death. When we believe in (trust in) Him, God miraculously credits to us Christ’s own righteousness - His perfect divine righteousness! On this basis we stand without fault before God and we are fully accepted in the Son He loves! (Romans 5:1-2, Ephesians 1:6. “[Christ was sacrificed] to demonstrate [God’s] justice...so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:25b-26)

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