

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS REVISITED

An Exposition of the Law and its Application to the Christian



THIS IS LOVE,  
THAT WE WALK  
ACCORDING TO HIS  
COMMANDMENTS.

2 JOHN 1:6

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## Introduction: Read This First!

**John Bunyan** (1628-1688) was a foul-mouthed rascal in his youth whose mother and sister died in his early teens. After joining the Parliamentary army when he was sixteen, he returned home some time later, just as lost as when he enlisted. Upon returning home to join his father in working as a tinker, he married a poor woman at the age of 21 and decided to go to church only to please his wife.

After hearing a minister's sermon one Sunday, he suddenly felt as if the Lord was speaking directly to him and cornering him with the question, "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?" "It's too late," Bunyan muttered, "Christ will never forgive me now." Filled with despair, he decided to keep on sinning. But the Holy Spirit was softening his heart. He began reading the Bible and changed some of his ways, but after overhearing some women joyfully talking of Jesus as if He were a close personal friend, he recognized that his religion was based on empty works.

After attending the same church of the women he heard talking intimately of Jesus, Bunyan was exposed to the doctrine of God's grace. He learned even more by reading Luther's commentary on Galatians, and the Spirit of God transformed his heart. Shortly thereafter, following a season of struggle with assurance, Bunyan was given assurance—and then, his wife died. He had four children under the age of ten. The oldest, Mary, had been born blind. A few years later, he married a young woman named Elizabeth, who helped care for his children. The family was happy together, and his new wife soon became pregnant.

Although Bunyan wasn't trained as a minister, he was gifted to preach and teach, and God affirmed it in the lives of the congregations that he spoke to until he was no longer permitted by law to preach openly. He continued preaching at secret meetings in houses and barns until a warrant was issued for his arrest. Bunyan's imprisonment was difficult on his family, and he was told that he would be freed only if he no longer preached. He refused. For the next 12 years, Bunyan remained in prison writing and preaching when he could. Out of the sixty books Bunyan wrote during his life, his most famous is a story called *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It is an imaginative tale about a traveler named Christian. It depicts the way of conversion in a believer's life and his struggles through many situations as he meets unforgettable characters on his journey to the Celestial City. While the Bible was the most popular book in the English language, *The Pilgrim's Progress* became the second most popular.

Here is a scene that provides a key lesson for this study of the Law.

As Christian prepares himself for the journey, he is told by a friend that a little distance from the gate, he would arrive at the house of the Interpreter, at whose door he should knock, and he would show him excellent things. Christian arrives and asks to speak with the Master of the house. Then Christian explains:

"I have come from the City of Destruction and am going to the Celestial City. I was told by Good-Will, the man who stands at the narrow-gate, that if I came here—you would show me some lessons which would be a great help to me on my journey."

"Come in," invited Interpreter, "and I will show you some profitable things."

Interpreter commanded the servant to light a candle and bid Christian to follow them. So, they proceeded to a private room and opened the door. Inside the room, Christian saw a picture of a very serious man hanging on the wall. The man in the picture had his eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written

upon his lips, and the world behind his back. He stood as if he pleaded with men—and a crown of gold hung over his head.

Then Christian said, "What does this picture mean?"

Interpreter explained, "The man depicted in this picture is one in a thousand. He can beget children—and nurse them himself when they are born. And as you see him with his eyes lifted up to Heaven, with the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth written on his lips—this is to show you that his work is to understand and unfold difficult things.

"Similarly, just as you see him stand as if he pleaded with men, and also notice that the world is cast behind his back and that a crown hangs over his head—this is to show you that he lightly values the things of the present world—because of his love and devotion to his Master's service. Such a one is sure to have eternal glory for his reward in the world to come.

"I show you this picture first, because the man whom it portrays is one who the Lord of the Celestial City provides to be your guide in the difficult situations that you may encounter along the way. Therefore, pay attention to what I have shown you, lest, in your journey, you meet with some who pretend to lead you along the right path—while in reality, their way leads to death."

Let's make sure we understand who the characters are and what the picture means.

- Who is the man? *The ideal pastor.*
- Why does he have his eyes toward heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth on his lips? It is to show that his work is *the difficult task of unfolding the Gospel of Christ and the kingdom of God in the lives of men.*
- Why is he pleading with men, the world behind his back, and a crown hanging over his head? It is to show that *an ideal pastor values the Master's will and word above the things of this world.*
- Why is this picture being given first? Because Christ gives pastors as gifts to the church to lead His people in difficult situations in this world, and to guard them from false teachers (*Cf. Eph.4:7-13*).

The allegory continues.

Then Interpreter took him by the hand and led him into a very large parlor which was full of dust, because it was never swept. After Christian had contemplated this scene for a little while, the Interpreter called for a man to sweep the room. When he began to sweep, the dust began to so thickly swirl around the room that Christian began to be choked by it.

Then Interpreter said to a maiden who stood nearby, "Bring some water, and sprinkle the room." After she had done this, the parlor was then swept and cleansed with ease.

"What does this mean?" Christian inquired.

Interpreter explained, "This parlor is the heart of a man which has never been sanctified by the sweet grace of the Gospel. The dust is his original sin and inward corruptions, which have defiled the whole man. He who began to sweep at first is the Law. The maiden who brought and sprinkled the water is the Gospel.

"You saw that as soon as the man began to sweep, that the dust thickly swirled around the room, and became even more difficult to cleanse, nearly choking you to death. This is to show you that the Law, instead of cleansing the heart from sin, does, in fact, arouse sin, giving greater strength to it and causing it to flourish in the soul. The Law both manifests and forbids sin—but it has no power to subdue sin.

"Again, you saw the maiden sprinkle the room with water, upon which it was cleansed with ease. This is to show you that when the Gospel comes in the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart—then, I say, even as you saw the maiden subdue the dust by sprinkling the floor with water—just so is sin vanquished and subdued, and the soul made clean, through faith, and consequently fit for the King of glory to inhabit."

## Important Lessons Before Taking This Journey

- When you study the law, how will you begin to feel, and why?
- What is the wrong response to this feeling?
- What is the right response?
- How will you do this?

Read John 1:17 and 1 Corinthians 1:18, 30-31. Commit these verses to memory over the next several weeks. Each lesson will conclude with two questions to help *"subdue sin...make the soul clean through faith...and fit for the King of glory to inhabit."*

In the application section of each lesson we will seek to anchor our thinking under two headings:

THE COMMANDMENTS and CHRIST—Here, we will think how Christ Himself fulfilled each of the commandments in His life and ministry.

THE COMMANDMENTS and THE CHRISTIAN—Here, we will seek to find personal application of each commandment to our lives daily.

What is your takeaway from this opening lesson?