

The Ten Commandments

1 'You shall have no other gods before me'.

2 'You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.'

You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.'

3 'You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.'

4 'Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.'

5 'Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.'

6 'You shall not murder.'

7 'You shall not commit adultery.'

8 'You shall not steal.'

9 'You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.'

10 'You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.'

When I was a child, if you went into an Anglican church, very often somewhere, you would see displayed 'The Ten Commandments'. On a wall, behind the altar, in stained glass windows, they would usually be there somewhere. Try doing that these days; in many places of worship they have disappeared; perhaps this is out of embarrassment.

Those of you who were here last week will remember that I was more than a little critical about some of the ways the Church of England, in particular goes about its business seemingly following social trends in many places rather than proclaiming the gospel. 'Nice Church' is how I referred to this movement.

This week in our readings, we have the '10 Comandments' which demonstrates why 'Nice Church' will not do.

There is nothing 'nice' about them. They are commandments for one thing. They are not 'guidelines' for socially acceptable living. Nor are they the 'pick and mix, choose which ones you like and leave the rest' variety.

No, they have been laid down as the pinnacle of godly living. Not the 'trend of the age' living, but eternal godly living. Not only are they there to prevent you from offending, or sinning, against the Lord your God, they are there to train you in holiness and to allow you to live as a godly example to your neighbour.

So, without looking them up, I thought we would discover how many we can name...

Now, for a little bit of private introspection, how many of these do you break on a regular basis, or have broken occasionally? Even just a little bit? You don't have to break the commandment big-time for the sin to count against you!

Take commandment No. 8 for instance: '**You shall not steal.**'. How many of you have always declared every centime that you should on your tax declaration? Or taken that pen home from the office, without asking first? We've all done that! Ok, it is not the same as robbing a bank, but it is still, technically, stealing from someone.

Is there anyone who has broken all ten at some point during their lifetime? (Me, in some way or other!)

It may be that some of us are still holding that sin, because we must remember that sin hangs around until it is confessed and repented of.

Now, I could stop here and leave you all feeling slightly sheepish, at least, if not downright upset, but I am not going to do that. I want us to go on to the last two verses of our text, 19 and 20:

The Purpose

19(the people) said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not let God speak to us or we will die.'

20 Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.'

This is interesting. The people want Moses to speak to them, for fear they will die should God do so. This one of the very reasons why today, the church appoints ministers to preach the gospel and remind them of that which is in the previous scriptures given to the people of God.

More than that, Moses says: 'God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.'

In other words, a person is not to fear unintentionally getting something wrong. God knows we are human and he also knows that from time to time we will make mistakes we shouldn't. That isn't the problem, so much as what does the person do about it?

If they recognise they have broken a commandment, rather than dwell for a lifetime on it, they need to do something to bring about 'at-one-ment with the Lord their God.'

In to OT, this was done mainly through some sort of sacrifice. For us, the Lord has already made the sacrifice for sin required. All we need to do is recognise the fault, repent of it and seek forgiveness for it from the Lord, either one-to-one with the Lord, or, as some do, through the auspices of a priest; and then, try not to do it again!

This changes our negatives into positives and sets us right to continue our walk with the Lord and our ongoing training in holiness with him. The Ten Commandments are always worth a read from time to time, just to make sure you are keeping in step with the Lord.