

## The Ten Commandments – Winter 2016

### Week 1: Introduction & Preface

Exodus 20.1-2; Matthew 5.17-20; WLC 91-102; WSC 39-44

*“Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most of our religious mistakes.”*

John Newton

Resources for further study:

1. *\*\*The Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger & Shorter Catechisms\*\**
2. *The Ten Commandments*, by Joachim Douma
3. *Principles of Conduct*, by John Murray
4. *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, by Johannes Vos
5. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, by John Frame

Why did God give the Ten Commandments? How are we to apply the Law to our lives as Christians?  
Some distinctions are necessary:

- Moral
- Civil
- Ceremonial

Now only the moral law remains, and it is binding upon the people of God. Three basic uses:

1. The law is a mirror (James 1.25; Gal 3.15-29; Rom 7.7-12).
2. The law serves to restrain evil (1 Tim 1.9-10).
3. The law is a guide for Christians (Ps 119).

### Westminster Larger Catechism:

***Q. 95. Of what use is the moral law to all men?***

A. The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives: to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.

***Q. 96. What particular use is there of the moral law to unregenerate men?***

A. The moral law is of use to unregenerate men, to awaken their consciences to flee from the wrath to come, and to drive them to Christ; or, upon the continuance in the estate and way of sin, to leave them inexcusable, and under the curse thereof.

***Q. 97. What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?***

A. Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned; yet besides the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good;

and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.

But how should we interpret the 10 Commandments? The Westminster Larger Catechism is very useful and is consistent with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5, where he links the commandments with the heart-motive underneath.

**Q. 99. What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments?**

A. For the right understanding of the Ten Commandments, these rules are to be observed:

1. That the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.
2. That it is spiritual, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.
3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.
4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.
5. That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.
6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.
7. That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.
8. That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them; and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.

## THE PREFACE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

The law is given in the context of the covenant of grace. Remember the *when* of the ten commandments.

Exodus 19.3-6

*"Though a Christian is not under the condemning power of the law, yet he is under its commanding power. To love God, to reverence and obey him, is a law which always binds and will bind in heaven."*

Thomas Watson

