

The Breadth of God's Moral Law

Selected Scriptures

Last week we introduced the Ten Commandments and talked about the *permanence* of the moral law. Today I want to finish our introduction by examining the *breadth* of the moral law. Last week our emphasis was on how far-reaching the Ten Commandments are in their scope. This week I want to show you how far-reaching these Ten Commandments are in their application.

Last week we saw that every human being—from Adam and Eve until the last human born at the end of the age—is bound to the same moral standard that is reflected in these commandments. And there is a sense in which even redeemed saints in heaven for all eternity will be bound by these commandments, because there will be no more sin, and therefore we will finally be perfectly obedient to the moral demands of the Ten Commandments.

We also saw last week that the same moral standard contained in the Ten Commandments was originally inscribed on the human heart at creation. From Adam to Moses, people were judged sinners because they violated this standard, which was written on their hearts by the Creator. That is precisely the point Paul makes in Romans 5:13-14, where he writes, "**Sin is not imputed when there is no law.**"

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses . . ." Now if sin is not imputed where there is no law, and people were judged as sinners between Adam and Moses, there must have been *some* law in force. And there was. It was the moral standard that is inscribed on every human heart, and Paul says so explicitly in Romans 2:14-15: "**For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts.**"

So the divine moral code was inscribed on the human heart from creation, and all these commandments did was make it explicit, confirm it in writing, and make inescapable these truths, which we have a sinful tendency to neglect and deliberately repress.

In other words, the Ten Commandments were designed to highlight our moral duty and bring it back to the forefront of our spiritual consciousness. So these commandments did not institute a *new* and *different* standard of righteousness; they merely codified and literally set in stone the standards which God had always required of Adam's offspring.

Now, at the end of the hour last week we saw where Jesus said that the whole moral law hinges on two commandments. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus said,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

That means every eternal moral precept of the law of God is an exposition of those two commandments. And every ceremonial and civil requirement of the law was designed to illustrate some point related to one or the other of these commandments: love the Lord your God wholeheartedly, and love your neighbor as yourself.

By the way, both of those commandments were expressly set forth in Moses' law. You'll find the First Great Commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5. It is the centerpiece of that portion of the law known as the *sh'ma*. "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.**" That same command, to love the Lord thy God, is repeated five more times in Deuteronomy: 11:1; 19:9; 30:6; 30:16; and 30:20. That is the First Great Commandment.

The Second Great Commandment is found in Leviticus 19:18: "**Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.**"

Notice that both the First and Second Great Commandments demand love. And this is significant. It means the whole moral law is all about genuine love—love

for God, and love for one's neighbor. That is why Scripture says the principle of love is the highest, greatest, and most enduring of all moral principles—because every aspect of biblical morality and ethics is ultimately just a specific application of the principle of love—either love for God or love for one's neighbour. That is why Romans 13:10 says, "**love is the fulfilling of the law.**" And verse 8 of that same chapter says, "**he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.**" And Galatians 5:14 says, "**All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**" And Colossians 3:14 calls love "**the bond of perfection.**" And 1 Timothy 1:5 says "**the [whole] purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.**" And James 2:8 refers to the command to love your neighbor as "**the royal law.**"

And we saw last week that the Ten Commandments are nothing more than an expansion of the First and Second Great Commandments. The first four commandments deal with our duties to God. They simply show in greater detail what it means to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The fifth through tenth commandments give our duties toward our neighbors. They show in greater detail what it means to love our neighbor as ourself.

So the Ten Commandments tell us *how* we ought to love God and love our neighbors. These ten commandments are

nothing more than an expansion of and an exposition of the first and second Great Commandments. And as we work our way through them in the next few weeks, keep that in mind. These are not a list of duties for duty's sake; they are practical instructions teaching us how to *love*. That is the heart and soul of all biblical ethics.

Now, this list of Ten Commandments is a marvel of clarity and compactness. In a few brief words, God has given us a list that summarily comprehends our whole duty to His moral law.

Now, when I say these laws summarily comprehend our duty, I mean just that. First, they are a summary, not an exhaustive list, of duties. Our moral responsibilities are *summed up* for us here. The list is abridged and condensed. As David said in Psalm 119:96, "**Thy commandment is exceeding[ly] broad.**"

This is not an exhaustive list of every duty God requires of us; it is a *sample* and a *summary* of our moral responsibility before God. This is a short view of everything Scripture sets forth regarding what the law of God demands of us. In the words of Thomas Boston, "The Ten Commandments are the heads of all the duties of the law largely contained in the whole Bible." These are categories that comprehend the whole duty of man. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole**

matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." The Ten Commandments give us broad categories for *all* the commandments we are to keep.

In other words, you cannot approach the Ten Commandments with the notion that they mean what they say and imply nothing more. Now that may jar the ears of some of you seminary students, because one of the first principles you learn in hermeneutics is that we ought to take Scripture at face value, let it say what it says, and be careful not to go beyond what is actually written. And that *is* a generally sound principle for interpreting Scripture. When we speak of *exegesis*, we're talking about an interpretation of Scripture that draws its meaning from the text and the context, and does not import ideas foreign to the text into it. When the preacher or Bible teacher imports his own ideas and biases into a text, we call that *eisegesis*—and that is a bad thing. We're not supposed to force into a text of Scripture meaning that is not there. And ordinarily, the way to practice good exegesis is to allow the text to speak as literally as possible, being careful not to seek meaning beyond what the words actually say.

But remember this: sound exegesis draws meaning not only from the text but also from the context, and the full context of the Ten Commandments includes everything we learn about these laws from the totality of the Old and New Testaments. Remember, a large portion of the Sermon on the

Mount was Christ's own exposition of the decalogue, and that therefore becomes part of the context in which we have to interpret these laws. Paul and the other New Testament authors also had much to say about the principles of the Ten Commandments, and what they wrote becomes even more context by which we are to interpret this passage.

And by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we discover that these commandments are exceedingly broad, and the principles they aim to teach us go far beyond the bare literal meaning of the words. And I want to begin proving that to you this morning. We'll see it again and again as we work our way through the Commandments.

I hope you are ready to take notes. Last week I had only one point, so there was no outline to take down. This week I have gone to the other extreme. I have ten points, so you had better be ready to write.

Here are ten rules for interpreting the Ten Commandments. And I'll be drawing these principles from various places such as the Sermon on the Mount, the New Testament epistles, the Old Testament wisdom literature, and so on. By comparing Scripture with Scripture, we learn much about how God Himself expects us to interpret the Ten Commandments, and here are some basic guidelines.

Rule 1:

1. THE LAW IS SPIRITUAL.

In Romans 7:14, Paul wrote, "**The law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.**" As carnal people, we have a tendency to think of the law in a carnal way. But the commandments of the law are meant to deal with more than merely our outward actions. The real aim of the law is to govern the inward motions of our heart. The law is spiritual, so it reaches the inward as well as the outward man. The Lawgiver Himself is a Spirit, and He observes all the thoughts and inclinations of our soul. He is as grieved with the impurities of our heart as He is with the overt sins of our behavior. And therefore His law governs not only our outward actions, but also our inward affections.

In the words of the Westminster Larger Catechism, the law "is spiritual, and so reaches the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures." It lays on our *understanding* the duty to know the will of God; it charges our *wills* with the duty to choose what is right and shun what is wrong; and it demands of our *affections* that we love the things that are to be loved and hate the things that are to be hated. It binds all the powers of our soul to obedience.

In other words, we are not supposed to give the law an external obedience only. Jesus expressly taught this, didn't He? It is not enough to abstain from the *act* of adultery. We must avoid even the thought of it. He said, "**I say unto you,**

That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5:28). Secret thoughts of adultery carry the same kind of guilt as the overt act. The same moral principle that prohibits adultery therefore condemns lust.

And it's not enough to forego killing your neighbor; you have to guard your heart so that you are not even guilty of hatred toward him. Jesus said (Matthew 5:21),

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

So the same moral principle that prohibits murder forbids us to have a murderous heart.

This principle applies to the whole law. God's law commands the heart—the immaterial part of us—not merely our external actions. And that is made inescapably clear by the First and Great Commandment: "**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy *soul*, and with all thy *mind*.**" That commandment (on which all the other commandments hang, according to Jesus) defines the realm in which God's law was designed to operate. It is not our

external actions, but our inward attitudes, where the law sets the starting point and true essence of our obedience.

That is precisely what Jesus meant when he said what comes from within us defiles us more than any food that goes into us. Mark 7:20-23: **"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.** All sin has its inception in the heart, and therefore when the law forbids us to sin, it is speaking primarily to the heart, not just dealing with matters of visible, external behavior. It demands not merely outward acts of obedience, but more importantly, the inward affection of love. Remember, **"love is the fulfilling of the law"** (Romans 13:10).

The law is spiritual, and therefore it is directed at our hearts, not just our external behavior.

Rule 2:

2. THE LAW IS EXCEEDINGLY BROAD.

Remember Psalm 119:96: **"thy commandment is exceeding[ly] broad."**

More is actually required by the commandments than is expressed in the bare words of the commandments. When God issues a command, He demands more than the external

or mechanical performance of a duty. When He gives a prohibition, He demands more than mere abstinence from some outward action.

In other words, in each of the commandments, more is intended than is spoken. The commandments are given to us in the form of *synecdoche*. Do you remember that term from your high school English classes? A *synecdoche* is a figure of speech in which in which a part is used to signify the whole. We say, "There are some new faces here this morning." That's synecdoche. When we use the word "faces" like that, we are referring to the whole person, but the part is used in place of the whole. My friend Philip DeCourcy (who is a pastor from Northern Ireland) once told me, "I got a new motor this week." And for a moment, I thought he was saying he had to replace the engine in his car. But then I realized he was referring to his car as his "motor." He was using synecdoche. Some people refer to their car as their "wheels." That's synecdoche. (I refer to *my* car as an automobile. That's hyperbole.)

The precepts of the Ten Commandments are given to us in the form of synecdoche. More is intended than is spoken. Edward Fisher, in a 17th-century work called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, wrote this: "We must not stick upon the bare words of any of the Ten Commandments, nor rest satisfied with the bare literal sense, but labor to find out the

full spiritual meaning of every one of them, according to other places of Scripture."

For example, the fifth commandment simply says, "**Honour thy father and thy mother.**" But I am convinced that the moral principle that underlies that law governs our obedience to every superior. The same moral principle that commands us to honor and obey our parents also demands that we show honor, respect, and submission to everyone who is in authority over us. The Old Testament saints understood this, and that is why Elisha referred to Elijah as "father," even though Elijah wasn't his literal father.

For similar reasons, you will find this question and answer in the Westminster Larger Catechism:

Q. 124: Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment?

A: By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

That is precisely why Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:1-2 and said, "**Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and . . . [treat] The elder women as mothers.**"

So by implication, that fifth commandment governs how we should treat everyone who is in authority over us. In fact,

this commandment by implication governs every relationship in life. Here's another section from the Larger Catechism:

Q. 126: What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?

A: The general scope of the fifth commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, or equals.

Here's what that means: We should show honor even to our inferiors—because we are commanded to prefer one another in honor, are we not? Romans 12:10: "**Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.**" And 1 Peter 2:17: "**Honour all men.**"

Not only that, but even though the fifth commandment is addressed to children, it has implications for fathers and mothers as well. For children, the law *explicitly* demands that they honor their parents. But for parents, it *implicitly* demands of them that they be honorable.

So there is always more in these commandments than the bare words explicitly state, and the person who limits his or her application of the commandments to the literal meaning—no more or less—is making the same error with regard to the law that the Scribes and Pharisees made when they reduced the law to its letter. The letter of the law is never the full meaning of the law. And we will observe this truth time and again as we look at the individual

commandments and see how they are applied throughout Scripture.

Rule 3:

3. THE LAW IS PERFECT.

The law is perfect and it therefore requires perfect obedience. Let me read from the catechism one more time: "The law is perfect, and binds everyone 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."

Psalm 19:7: "**The law of the lord is perfect.**" Deuteronomy 32:4: "**He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.**" And the standard of perfection that the law requires of us is equal to God's own perfection.

Let me say it another way: God's law is perfect, and the commandments themselves require perfection. Partial obedience is the same as disobedience. The smallest defect in our obedience is utterly fatal. As James says, "**whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.**"

That suggests also that the laws are perfectly interconnected. The whole law is knit together as a unit.

Think of it this way: Since the overarching principle of the law is love, the same duty is required and the same sin is forbidden—only in different respects—in each of the divine commandments. The commandments are so closely related and so intricately intertwined that to violate one is to breach the principles of all the commandments.

The person who breaks the seventh commandment and commits adultery has also violated the seventh commandment, because he coveted his neighbor's wife. Break *any* of the commandments and you have violated the First, because you have in practice dethroned God and put something or someone else in his place in your heart. That's why James says that disobedience to any point of the law is virtually disobedience to the whole law in its entirety.

So the law is perfect, and it therefore requires perfect obedience. That is the very standard Jesus affirmed in Matthew 5:48, when he said, "**Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.**"

Rule 4:

4. EVERY COMMANDMENT HAS BOTH NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE CONNOTATIONS.

Wherever an evil is forbidden, the contrary good is commanded. And wherever any good is commanded, the contrary evil is forbidden. Every affirmative commandment comprehends the negative prohibition as well; and every negative commandment also comprehends the positive duty.

When God forbids us to profane His name; He also commands us to reverence it. When he says we should not steal, He in effect commands us to help preserve our neighbor's goods. When He forbids us to kill; He commands us to love. When He outlaws coveting; he commands us to be content with such things as we have. Every affirmative precept contains a negative command, and every negative command implies an affirmative. Every law has two sides to it that way.

That is the very nature of moral law. The duties laid on us by the law cannot be perfectly fulfilled unless we shun the vices it forbids. And we cannot avoid the sins it forbids unless we also cultivate the virtues it demands of us.

So holiness has a negative side as well as a positive side. We must not only perform all that the law requires; we must also avoid that which it forbids. And every commandment has this two-sided application.

Here's an example: Ephesians 4:28: "**Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands**

the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." There you see the negative prohibition of the eighth commandment, "**Thou shalt not steal.**" And from that commandment, Paul infers two positive obligations: work, and charity. Don't steal, but rather "labour, working with [your] hands the thing which is good, that [you] may have to give to him that needeth."

Here's another remarkable principle: wherever a promise is annexed to a positive precept, the contrary threat is included against anyone who breaks the command. The fifth commandment is the first one that contains a promise (Exodus 20:12): "**Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.**" Proverbs 30:17 gives the flip side of that: "**The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.**"

By the same token, wherever a threat is attached to a commandment against those who break it, the contrary promise is also implied for those who obey. the third commandment, Exodus 20:7, which forbids us to take the Lord's name in vain, contains an explicit threat against those who disobey. Listen to it: "**Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.**" That threat against those who break the law implies a contrary promise to those who obey

it. And Psalm 24:4-5 makes the contrary promise explicit, when it says that the one who has not "**sworn deceitfully. . . shall receive the blessing from the LORD.**"

Rule 5:

5. WHEN A SIN IS FORBIDDEN, ALL SINS OF THE SAME TYPE ARE ALSO FORBIDDEN; AND WHEN A DUTY IS REQUIRED, ALL DUTIES OF THE SAME TYPE ARE ALSO REQUIRED.

Remember, the Ten Commandments are a *summary* of our moral duties, so these are essentially ten categories. When we are given a duty, all duties of the same sort are required. And when we are forbidden to sin, all sins of the same type are forbidden.

When the Lord forbids adultery, He forbids all kinds of impure sexual relations. Bestiality, homosexuality, incest, impure thoughts, and misplaced affections are all comprehended and prohibited under the seventh commandment. That is how Jesus Himself applied the commandment.

Listen to John Colquhoun, an 18th-century Scottish preacher. He wrote:

Where great sins are expressly forbidden, all the lesser sins of that sort are forbidden; and they are prohibited under the names of the grosser sins in order to render them more detestable and horrible in our view, and also to show us

how abominable even the least of them is in the sight of an infinitely holy and righteous God.

Thomas Boston says,

When the Lord forbids us to kill, He forbids us also to beat and wound our neighbour; and all envy, malice, and revenge are forbidden at the same time When he forbids to steal, he forbids [forcible seizure], robbery, and all deceitful dealing by false weights and unjust measures. . . . When any sin is forbidden, all means and things leading thereto are forbidden. And so gross actions are named, not to pass over lesser ones, but to make them more abominable, while we see how God looks on them, giving them such gross names.

That very principle explains why Jesus said anyone who looks on a woman to lust after her is already guilty of adultery.

Rule 6:

6. WE ARE OBLIGED TO HELP OTHERS OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS, TOO.

The law places us under the duty of using whatever influence, authority, or opportunity we have—to encourage and assist others in their obedience of the law. Conversely, we are forbidden to be an accessory to, or have a hand in, anyone else's violation of these commandments. The apostle Paul says it this way (Romans 14:13): "**[Let] no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.**"

This is expressly stated in the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:10): "**The seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:**"

We are forbidden to partake in the sins of other people either by giving consent to it, giving occasion for it, giving encouragement to it, or being an accessory to it. And if our station in life affords us with influence or authority to dissuade someone from sin, it is our duty to do so.

In other words, we have a duty not only to obey the commandments, but also to teach others to obey them. That is why Jesus said (Matthew 5:19), "**Whosoever . . . shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**"

Ahithophel was guilty when he counseled Absalom to sin. People are guilty even when they merely take delight in the sins of others, according to Romans 1:32. You can remain perfectly sober yourself, but if you give wine to your neighbor and make him drunk you are guilty, according to Habakkuk 2:15. First Timothy 5:22 says, "**[Be not] partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.**"

Rule 7:

7. WHEN A SIN IS FORBIDDEN, THE CAUSES AND OCCASIONS OF THAT SIN ARE ALSO CONDEMNED.

When we are forbidden to do something, we are also prohibited from providing any occasion for that sin. Thomas Watson wrote, "Where murder is forbidden, envy and rash anger are forbidden, which may occasion it. Where adultery is forbidden, all that may lead to it is forbidden, as wanton glances of the eye, or coming into the company of a harlot. 'Come not nigh the door of her house.' Prov. 5:8. He who would be free from the plague, must not come near the infected house."

That is why when children are commanded to honor their parents, parents are by implication commanded not to provoke their children to anger, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In other words, when God condemns the effect, He also by implication prohibits the cause from which the effect

flows. Hatred is the underlying cause of murder, and that is why Jesus said hatred is the moral equivalent of murder.

Remember, we are commanded to "**Abstain from all appearance of evil**" (1 Thessalonians 5:22), and that involves avoiding the *occasion* for evil, as well as the evil act itself. Don't "**give place to the devil**" (Ephesians 4:27). I like the way the NIV translates that verse: "**Do not give the devil a foothold.**"

Rule 8:

8. IT IS NEVER OK TO COMMIT A SIN IN ORDER TO AVOID OR PREVENT A GREATER SIN.

We are not permitted to "**do evil, that good may come**" (Romans 3:8). Once again, "**whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.**"

Someone invariably will try to think of a hypothetical situation where it is impossible to avoid sin and we are forced to choose the lesser of two evils. But Scripture very clearly promises that God will not place us in such circumstances. First Corinthians 10:13: "**God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.**" James 1:13: "**Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.**" It is never necessary, in the

providence of an infinitely holy and righteous God, to commit one sin in order to avoid another.

Nonetheless, while it is never all right to commit a lesser sin in order to avoid a greater sin, there are times when our duties to men must be set aside in order to fulfill our duties to God. And that brings us to—

Rule 9:

9. OUR OBLIGATION TO GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR OBLIGATION TO OUR NEIGHBOR.

In other words, the first table of the law sometimes must take precedence over the second table of the law. That is what Jesus meant when he said in Luke 14:26: "**If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.**"

Our love for our neighbor—and even our love for parents and spouse—must be subjugated to our love for God. When our love for people conflicts with our love for God, the latter must take priority over the former. We must prefer Christ over all the other objects of our affection. Jesus Himself said in Matthew 10:37: "**He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.**"

Love for God also takes priority over all our duty to earthly authority. Acts 5:29: "**We ought to obey God rather than men.**"

Rule 10:

10. WE MUST ALWAYS KEEP THE END OF THE LAW IN SIGHT.

The true aim and goal of the law is to conform us to the image of Christ for the glory of God. The goal is that *God* be glorified, not that *we* be elevated to some lofty height in the eyes of other men.

The Pharisees missed this point completely and therefore performed all their duties in order to be seen of men. That is a corruption of the purpose of the law. It turns the law into a tool for self-aggrandizement and therefore corrupts the very heart of the law, which begins and ends with love for God and love for others. First Timothy 1:5 "**Now the end of the commandment is [love] out of a pure heart.**"

If our obedience to the law becomes mechanical, or is tainted by any motive other than pure love for God, we have in effect broken the law. Because what the law demands of us, again, is nothing more or less than perfect love. That involves denial of self, love for our neighbor, and above all, a wholehearted love for God.

That's the point we began with, isn't it? And it is as good a place as any to end. I want to point out that this is exactly what Christ Himself preached:

- **Self-denial: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).**
- **Love for our neighbor: Matthew 5:43-45: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. . . . But I say unto you, Love [even] your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."**
- **And a wholehearted love for God: "This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:38).**

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (v. 40). In other words, all of Scripture is an exposition of these two great principles, and the Ten Commandments in particular are a summary statement of our whole moral duty. So when we study the Ten Commandments, we are seeing the very heart of what it means to be sanctified.

I hope you will keep this list, and keep these principles in mind as we work through the Ten Commandments in the weeks to come. You'll see me apply these ten rules over and over as we plumb the depth of these commandments, and my

hope is that as you see the great depth of meaning in these Ten Commandments, it will set your heart ablaze with a love for the law of God, and that you will devote yourself anew to applying the moral principles of the law in your own life.