



# The Ten Commandments

Sermon Transcript  
April 3, 2016

Introducing The Ten Commandments  
Romans 6-8

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on April 3, 2016 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio copy of the sermon on CD is available by request at (860) 563-8286. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com).

## Sermon Text: Selected Passages from Romans 6-8

Romans 6:14 - *“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”*

Romans 7:7 - *“Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would have not known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’”*

Romans 7:12-25 - *“So the law is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means. It was sin producing death in me.” “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So not it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is good, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I myself serve the law of God with my mind but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”*

Romans 8:1-4 - *“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So not it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is good, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” **corrected verse in audio recording***

## Introduction

This morning we begin a series on the Ten Commandments. I can't emphasize enough how important the Ten Commandments are to our faith. You can't understand the events we celebrated last weekend—the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection—if you don't understand the role these commandments play in the Scriptures. You can't understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus if you don't understand the role the

Ten Commandments play in living out our faith.

The Ten Commandments are Bible 101. They form the foundation of our faith. Generations prior to us, sermons and studies on the Ten Commandments were common place. All of the major catechisms contained a section where you not only learned the Ten Commandments, but you also learned what it meant to break them and what it meant to obey them.

I find it curious how often Christians today bemoan the removal of the Ten Commandments from the public schools and from displays at public buildings. I think there is something to bemoan about that loss. The Ten Commandments do serve as a form of restraint for any culture. What we are witnessing today in our culture when it comes to morality is the absence of moral restraint. There is no unifying moral code that holds our culture together. In fact, that is what Proverbs 29:18 warns us about, *“Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.”* When you remove God’s moral code from a culture, everyone does what is right in their own eyes. And so, consequently, what is evil is considered to be good and what is good is considered to be evil. At one point, every child in the Western world learned the commandments and these principles shaped much of Western civilization. But that is not the case anymore.

And yet, while I bemoan the loss of a moral order in our culture, I am more concerned this morning by how unfamiliar the Ten Commandments have become within the church community. I bemoan the loss of these commandments within the life of the church. Thomas Ascol writes, “Today, not only have the commandments been expelled from our schools and our courthouses, they have effectively been discarded from our churches. Less than 1% of all church members can even recite the Ten Commandments.”<sup>1</sup> Now, I am not sure how accurate that statistic may be. But perhaps, the more pointed and personal question is this; “Can you recite the Ten Commandments?” You should know them by heart. I want to challenge you to memorize them by the end of our series on June 12.

You shall have no other gods before me.  
You shall not make for yourself any idols.  
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.  
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Honor you father and your mother.  
You shall not murder.  
You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.  
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  
You shall not covet.

By the end of this series, not only do I want you to be able to recite the commandments, but I want you to understand why they are so important. They help lead us to faith in Jesus. They define for us what it means to love God and to love our neighbor. And furthermore, this culture that has lost its moral anchor, needs the church to be a reflection of the character of God in this world. We reflect God's character by keeping the commandments. So yes, I want you to be able to recite the Ten Commandments. But more than that, I want us to be able to say like the psalmist in Psalm 119:97, "*Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.*" By God's grace, as has been promised with the new covenant, may the law of God be written on our hearts so that God can shine through his people to a world that desperately needs to know God.

## **Law and Grace**

I think part of the reason the Ten Commandments have taken a back seat in the life of the church is because we have gotten confused over the relationship between "the law" and "grace." We are very good, and appropriately so, at saying that we are saved by grace through faith. We do not earn our salvation. It is truly a wonderful gift from God. And then, furthermore, we are told in Romans 6:14 that "*you are not under law but under grace.*" So what does that mean? On the surface, it seems as though it pits the law against the grace of God. Does it mean that we are free from the law of God? Does it mean that the Ten Commandments do not apply to those who are under grace?

First of all, when I am talking about the law of God, I am not talking about the Old Testament sacrificial system. Jesus is the final sacrifice for sin. Nor, am I talking about the civil laws we find in the Old Testament that were given to help govern the affairs of ancient Israel. Rather, with the Ten Commandments, we are talking about the timeless moral law of God. God does not change. For example, in Ephesians 6:1-4 we find the commandment, "*Honor your father and your mother.*" Paul explains what that means for children in verse 1, "*Children obey your parents.*" And then he says this, "*for this is right.*" Ernest Reisinger says, "The law alone tells us what is right. And while a Christian is under grace, that grace never changes what is right."<sup>2</sup>

So in what sense are we *not under law*? It might be helpful when quoting from Romans 6:14 to actually read the entire verse, "*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*" The law of God is good but it is limited in what it

can do. For example, you can't take the listing of the Ten Commandments and say, "I am really going to work on these commandments and make myself presentable to God." These commandments can't save you. The law of God is helpful because it tells us what God expects of us. These commandments help us understand how far we fall short of God's standard. Actually, the law condemns us. If you were to stand before God under the law, you don't have a chance. It renders you guilty. Even if you think you are better than someone else because you never literally murdered someone or never had an extra-marital affair with someone, you are still more guilty than you probably realize. And if for argument sake, you think you keep these laws better than others, James says in James 2:10, "*For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point, has become accountable for all of it.*" By the way, that is purely a hypothetical statement. Trust me. You have not just failed at "one point." And so, the law of God condemns us.

So when Paul says in Romans 6:14, "*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace*", the first thing we need to recognize is that with Jesus we are no longer under the condemnation of the law. That is the conclusion Paul is moving towards in his argument in Romans 6-8. In fact, Romans 8 begins with that wonderful declaration, "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" When you come to faith in Jesus, who died on the cross for your sins, you are placed *under grace*. You are no longer under the condemnation of the law. On the cross, Jesus took upon himself the curse of the law. It says in Galatians 3:13, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'*"

Here is the burning question Paul is addressing in Romans 6 goes like this. "Because we are now under grace, can we keep on sinning?" If we are saved by grace, does it really matter how we live? Here is how Paul asks this question, "*What then, Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?*" Do you know how Paul answers this question? He says, "*By no means.*" Instead, what he says is that we are still called to obedience to God. But now, because we are under the grace of Jesus, God is giving us the desire to do what is good and right. The law of God is not something that is simply imposed upon us. It is a law that is now written on our hearts and we long to keep it.

The problem is not with the law. The problem is with my heart. Paul says in Romans 7:12-13, "*So the law is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means. It was sin producing death in me.*" The problem is my sinful heart, not the law of God. In Psalm 19:7 we are reminded that "*The law is perfect.*" And in Psalm 1 we are reminded that blessed is the one whose *delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*"

A famous preacher from a generation before us, Martin Lloyd Jones, said it this way, “The Christian is a man who of necessity must be concerned about keeping God’s law.” He talked about our tendency to put law and grace as principles that oppose one another. But instead, he said, “We are not ‘under the law’ but we are still meant to keep it. . . . So the Christian is a man who is always concerned about living and keeping the law of God.”<sup>3</sup> Paul puts it this way in Romans 3:31, “*Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? On the contrary, we uphold the law.*”

And so very simply put, the Ten Commandments are very important for us to understand. They are relevant to living out the Christian faith. The fact that we are under the grace of Jesus Christ, does not make them obsolete. Quite the contrary. They become the growing passion of our hearts. They become our delight. By way of introduction, I want to share with you four things you need to keep in mind about the Ten Commandments as we begin this sermon series.

### **The Ten Commandments Reveal God’s Character**

When the commandments are given in Exodus 20, before the first commandment is even stated, God sets the context for them by saying, “*I am the LORD your God.*” These commandments flow from the very character and nature of God. The name for God in this passage is that sacred name that the Jewish worshiper couldn’t even bring himself to pronounce. It is taken out of Exodus 3, when Moses encounters God at the burning bush and asks God for his name. It is here where God says, “*I AM WHO I AM.*” God is the “Great I AM.” God is the self-existing God. He has no beginning and has no end. There is nothing that caused God to be. By God, all things are created and held together. The mantra we hear over and over again when we read of the account of the creation of the world in Genesis 1 is “*and God saw that it was good.*” By all that God has made, we see that God is good.

So it is with his commandments. They reveal the goodness of God. The reason the word “law” gets a bad wrap is because our sinful hearts see “law” as something that is restrictive. When a law is presented, there is something inside of us that wants to challenge it and rebel against it. But as any parent can testify, we say “no” to things when our kids ask us because we love them. We want good for them. Again, the problem is not with the law, but with our sinful hearts. These commandments reveal to us that good nature of God.

Earnest Reisinger says that when he teaches the commandments to children, he puts it

this way . . . . “What would it be like . . . .

If everyone would love and serve God?

If no one would worship idols, money or pleasure?

If no one would curse or take the Lord’s name in vain?

If everyone would see how good God is to have provided one day a week to worship, rest and do acts of necessity and mercy?

If all children would obey their parents, and everyone would honor those in authority, such as teachers and civil authorities, and therefore we would have no need for police, jails or courts?

If no one would murder and we would feel safe anywhere at night?

If no one would commit adultery, so that we would have no broken homes?

If no one would steal and we would have no need for locks or locksmiths?

If no one would bear false witness, that is lie?

If no one would covet, and all people were content with who they were and what they possessed?

What would it be like if all these things were the common experience of life? Reisinger says, that invariably the kids answer the question by saying, “it would be like heaven!”<sup>4</sup> That is because, these commandments reflect the good nature of God.

How does Jesus summarize the Ten Commandments? When asked which of the commandments was the greatest, Jesus responds in Matthew 22:37-39, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” Do you know what is interesting about the answer Jesus gives to this question? Instead of pulling out one commandment, he summarizes the whole thing. The summary of the commandments is love. It is loving God and loving others. This is also helpful because it does not pit “love” against “law.” Rather, love is expressed through obeying the commandments. In fact, Jesus said, “*if you love me you will keep my commandments.*” Through the commandments, we learn of a good and loving God.

### **The Ten Commandments Reveal our Sinful Nature**

The second purpose for the Ten Commandments is that they reveal the sinful nature of our hearts. The first thing it does is that it defines sin for us. But then it also gives us a window into the nature of our hearts. It isn’t a pretty thing to look at.

Paul says in Romans 3:20, *“through the law comes knowledge of sin.”* In other words, by having the law of God, God has revealed to us what is right and what is wrong. Paul says it this way in Romans 7:7, *“Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would have not known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’”* Very simply put, this moral code given to us by God helps us know what is good and holy and what is not. Through the revelation of God, we have not been left in the dark as to what God requires of us.

Perhaps a quick glance at these commandments may cause you to think that they do not pose a daunting challenge and that they can be readily kept. But the more you study these commandments, you discover how far reaching these commandments truly are and how sinful our hearts truly are. Jesus hints at this when he equates the attitudes of anger and hate to committing murder and lustful thoughts to that of adultery. Furthermore, most of the commands are stated in the negative, *You shall not . . .* implying the sins of commission. But with each negative command, you also find the positive expectation and the reminder of the sins of omission, the things we fail to do when it comes to our duty to love God and to love others. So the commandment to not murder is also a commandment to do all I can do for the betterment of someone else. So, like peeling back an onion, you discover that these commands have layer after layer of meaning behind them. The deeper we go with these commands, the more you discover the sinful nature of your heart. As the Spirit of God brings these things to our attention, it becomes very convicting, as it should.

But here is what I think is the most significant thing I learn about myself with the revelation that comes to me with the giving of the Ten Commandments. It is not just the knowledge I gain about what is good and holy and what is not. Yes, these commandments help me “to know” what is sinful. But the biggest revelation these commandments give me about myself is that I can’t keep these commandments. Paul says in Romans 7:14-19, *“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So not it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is good, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”* Paul goes on to say, *“Wretched man that I am!”* and that is the biggest revelation about ourselves that comes to us through the Ten Commandments. I know it is not good to lie, but who here hasn’t lied? When pressed up against “the facts” and it is not looking good for you, who here hasn’t tried to wiggle their way out to make things look good for yourself at the expense of others. when in reality, you needed to



own up to something? The law of God reveals that there is something at work inside of us that is not good and it renders us guilty over and over and over again.

*“Wretched man that I am!”* As hard as it is to take an honest look in the mirror, you need to get to this point. The Ten Commandments will help you take a good look at yourself. Hopefully, you will get to the point where you cry out with Paul, *“Wretched man that I am!”* I know it is not a popular cry of our culture. But if you want to know God, it is a necessary cry. It is a cry that leads us somewhere. It leads us to Jesus.

### **The Ten Commandments Point us to Jesus**

The purpose of the Ten Commandments is not to leave us in our sin. The commandments point us to our need for Jesus. After Paul looks into the nature of his heart and cries, *“Wretched man that I am!”* he says in his very next breath, *“Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

In days gone by, children in the church learned the Ten Commandments before they learned John 3:16. The first thing the missionary John Paton translated into the native language of the tribal group he was ministering to was not John 3:16. The first thing he translated was the Ten Commandments. Why? Until we understand the terrible condition of our hearts and how we have rebelled against our Creator and until we understand how this renders us guilty and condemned; we will not understand our need for Jesus. The Ten Commandments can not save us, but they point us to the one who can. They point us to Jesus.

This is why the events we celebrated last weekend are so important to us. Jesus obeyed the commandments of God. When he died on the cross, he took our judgment and our punishment for our failure to keep the law of God. I like what it says in Romans 8:3-4, *“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.”* When we repent of our sin and turn in faith to Jesus, who died for our sin, by God’s grace we become righteous in God’s eyes. It is not because of anything we have done. It is because of what Jesus has done. He kept the commandments for us. He took our punishment for us. *“Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* That is where an honest look at the commandments leads us. They lead us to our need for Jesus. If you are yet to turn in faith to Jesus, I pray that through this study you will discover how much God loves you. By looking at these commandments, I pray that you will take an honest look at yourself and that by God’s grace you will be willing to cry out

with a heart of repentance, *“What a wretched man I am!”* But then I pray you look up and see Jesus, who did what you could not do for yourself. Through his death on the cross, Jesus took the penalty for your sin and in turning to him there is complete forgiveness of sin and embrace.

### **The Ten Commandments Written on our Hearts**

This brings me to my final thought by way of introduction to the Ten Commandments. Having just finished our series on the book of Jeremiah and having just looked at the New Covenant, may I remind you the promise that comes to us with Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jeremiah says, *“I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts.”* As we come to faith in Christ, the Spirit of God begins to write the law of God in our hearts. It is what Paul is getting at in Romans 8:4, *“But those who live according to the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”* What is that law that the Spirit of God writes in our hearts? Paul says in Galatians 5:14, *“For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”* In fact, after listing the fruit of the Spirit—*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*—Paul adds, *“against such things there is no law.”* In other words, this love for God and love for others is now being formed in our hearts as we begin to look more and more like Jesus. God does that work inside us through the Holy Spirit.

And this is so important. By giving these commandments to the people of Israel, God was saying to them, *“this is what it looks like to be my people.”* So it is with us. We are the people of God in this world. Because of the love of Christ that is at work in us, wherever we go, we bring the presence of God with us. It is true that we do not keep the commandments perfectly. We are a work in progress. But the Spirit of God is at work in us by writing the law of God on our hearts and in doing so the love of God is shining through us and wherever we go we bring the presence of God with us. This is why we must understand the commandments of God.

### **Every Home a Church**

I want to invite you to process the truths we talk about on Sunday in your homes during the week. In Deuteronomy 6, where Israel is called to love God with all their hearts, the parents of families are encouraged to instill these truths in their children throughout the natural course of the day. So we are calling this, *“every home a church.”* Whether you live by yourself or whatever makes up your household, we are asking you to consider spending some time talking about these things.

Here is what we would like you to do:

Memorize the Ten Commandments

Review the questions and answers for the week and read one passage of Scripture each time

Q: How many commandments did God give on Mt. Sinai?

A: Ten Commandments

Q: What do the first four commandments teach?

A: Our duty to God

Q: What do the last six commandments teach?

A: Our duty to our fellow man.

Q: What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

A: To love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

Q: Can any man keep the Ten Commandments?

A: No mere human person, since the fall, is able to keep the commandments of God perfectly in this life, but breaks them daily in thought, word and deed.

Q: Of what use are the Ten Commandments?

A: They teach us our duty, make clear our condemnation, and show us our need of a Savior.

*Do we overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. Romans 3:31*

End with a prayer of thanks, confession and “help me.”

---

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Ascol, Foreword in *The Law and the Gospel* by Earnest Reisinger (Philipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1997) x

<sup>2</sup>Earnest Reisinger *The Law and the Gospel* (Philipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1997) 44

<sup>3</sup>Kevin DeYoung “Lloyd-Jones on Scandalous Grace that Isn’t Cheap” August 29, 2014, [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)

<sup>4</sup>Reisinger, 36-37

**Sermon Title:** Introducing the Ten Commandments  
**Sermon Text:** Romans 6-8  
**Sermon Date:** April 3, 2016

**COMMUNITY  
GROUPS**

## **Getting To Know Me Questions**

1. What is the worst thing you ever got in trouble for when you were in school? What are some of your memories about that experience?
2. Discuss the possibility of memorizing the Ten Commandments together as a group. What would you like to commit to memory by the next time you meet? How would you like to utilize the “Every Home a Church” guide in the context of your small group? Share ideas of how you plan to use it in the context of your home. How might you use the model of prayer suggested in the guide?
3. Share what you learned about the Ten Commandments from the message on Sunday.

## **Diving Into The Word**

4. Read Exodus 20:1-17 - What is the focus of the first four commandments? What is the focus of the last six commandments? What observations do you make of the commandments? Do you see a natural order and flow to the commandments? If so, what do you see? Which of the Ten Commandments most catches your attention? Why?
5. Read Matthew 22:37-39 - Jesus uses the word “love” to summarize the commandments. Discuss how using the word “love” to summarize the commandments impacts how you view the commandments. What do the Ten Commandments teach you about God?
6. Read Romans 7:12-25 - Discuss what you learn about yourself through the Ten Commandments. What does this passage say is your problem? How do the commandments point you to Jesus? (See Romans 8:3-4) How does this elevate the role of the Ten Commandments in your mind?
7. Read Galatians 5:13-14, 22-24 - Discuss what you discover here about the relationship between the commandments and the life of the believer in Christ.

## **Taking It Home**

8. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 - How and where would you like to naturally talk about your faith this week?
9. Having gone through the questions, spend time doing the Q & A for this week. Based on what you talked about offer the following kinds of prayers: Thank you—Confession—Help me