

# TEN REASONS WHY WE NEED JESUS

## HOW THE 10 COMMANDMENTS LEAD US TO CHRIST

No god but me thou shalt adore.  
No image frame to bow before.  
My holy name take not in vain.  
My sacred Sabbath don't profane.  
To parents render due respect.  
All murder shun, and malice check.  
From filth and whoredom base abstain;  
From theft and all unlawful gain.  
False witness flee. And slandering spite;  
No covet what's they neighbor's right.

*Poems by Ralph Erskine, Scottish Presbyterian Pastor (1685-1752)*

### WHY GOD GAVE US THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments are among the most familiar portions of the Bible. Over the years, the church has observed at least three uses for these time honored divine imperatives. First, they provide the basis for good society. As such they function to restrain sin in general. Second, they serve as a standard of obedience and holiness for Christians to pursue with the help of God's Spirit (James 1:22-23). They show believers those things with which God is pleased. However, there is a third more basic purpose for the Ten Commandments—an evangelical or gospel purpose. It is this use upon which these meditations will focus.

St. Paul writes that, "the law [which includes the Ten Commandments] was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). Again, he says, "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). In other words, the most important purpose for which the Lord gave the Ten Commandments was to show us that we are sinners in need of a Savior. Thus Paul insists that, "Through the law we become conscious of sin" (Rom. 3:20; cf. 4:15), and again, "I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet'" (Rom. 7:7). In

this sense the Ten Commandments are intended to lead us to despair in our ability and attempts to earn salvation by our own efforts. Rather, we must cast ourselves upon the mercy of the sinless Son of God who alone can save. St. James declared, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10); Paul insisted that no law breaker "will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:10). In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that these commandments reach beyond mere outward behavior and strike the very depths of our hearts. For example, most of us have never taken a human life. But all of us have unjustly thought or spoken ill of another (Matt. 5:21-30). We are all law breakers.

As the Lord Jesus bore our sin, he also did so as a sinless Savior. He kept the law perfectly in our place. First he submitted himself to baptism by John claiming, "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). Hebrews further states that Jesus "has been tempted in every way, just as we are—*yet without sin (emphasis mine)*" (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22). Jesus is thus supremely qualified to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). When we receive him by faith his righteousness becomes ours. Thus, each of the Ten Commandments provides for us a reason why we need Jesus. Let us consider each of them in turn and allow them to point us to him who "is the way and the truth and the Life" (John 14:6).

### 1. WE NEED JESUS TO REIN IN OUR WANDERING HEARTS

Several years ago a group of sociologists and scholars engaged in a study of American society. The results were published in a book entitled, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. In a chapter on religion a young nurse named Sheila was interviewed and her thoughts found to be "significantly representative" of American life. She commented, "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice." The authors noted

that, “this suggests the logical possibility of over 220 million American religions, one for each of us.”<sup>1</sup>

The first commandment reads, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:2; cf. Deut. 5:7). From the onset we are reminded of our sinful propensity to follow after non-existent gods of our own making. John Calvin observed that our hearts are “idol factories.” We are abundantly capable of manufacturing gods to our own liking. Under the old covenant, the Lord reined in this tendency by making promises confirmed with appending signs. For example, Abraham was promised an offspring who would eventually bring blessing to all nations. The sign of circumcision was a visible means to keep this promise alive and the hearts of believers fastened to it. It was this promise making God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—who was the one true and living God alone worthy of complete loyalty. But the story of the Old Testament is the story of wandering hearts and God’s covenant people seeking other fancies. St. Paul, observing the proliferation of this tendency in his own day, has well said, “Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear” (2 Tim. 4:3).

However, this commandment seeks to keep us attending to God and his promises. The New Testament teaches that these promises find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (2 Cor. 1:20). With the coming of the Savior we now enjoy the one final revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-3). Thus the Lord shines his light in our hearts “to give us the light of the glory of God *in the face of Christ (emphasis mine)*” (2 Cor. 4:6). What the old covenant saint lacked, in that God’s promises were seen vaguely in shadows, we

now enjoy in fullness through Jesus Christ who walked this earth and left his final testimony.

Throughout the Gospel of John we are reminded of the importance of looking to Jesus alone. If you desire to see the Father, look to Jesus for he says, “Whoever sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45), and again, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). If you seek to know God, then seek to know Jesus who again says, “If you knew me, you would know my Father also” (John 8:19; cf. 14:7). If you want to honor God, do so by honoring Christ for he desires “that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father” (John 5:23). The first commandment insists that we trust the God of Scripture alone, but Jesus insists that, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me” (John 12:44; cf. 14:1). Furthermore, to reject this Jesus is to reject the true God. Jesus furthermore says, “He who hates me hate my Father as well” (John 15:23). Finally, Mark adds, “Whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me” (Mark 9:37).

It is a sad commentary on American society that we could conceivably have as many religions as we have individual citizens. This kind of religious innovation is the norm in the modern world. But religious pluralism clearly demonstrates that, in our fallen condition, we do not cease to be religious. Rather we seek gods of our own making. The first commandment drives us to Jesus who reins in our sinful capacity to manufacture gods by directing us to the true and living God who can only be known through him who is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

## **2. WE NEED JESUS TO BRING FOCUS TO OUR LIFE AND WORSHIP**

Place a picture of Jesus in the sanctuary and there will likely be little or no protest. Try to remove it and you can split the church. It mystifies me how easily we form emotional attachments to religious objects. How quickly and subtly they then become

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<sup>1</sup> Robert N. Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 221.

objects of devotion!. I've witnessed "Christians" weeping before statues, caressing sacred stones, and ecstatically praying before images.

The golden calf incident in Exodus is the quintessential story of idolatry. Moses was on Mt. Sinai too long. The people impatiently demanded of Aaron a god they could see and touch. Aaron capitulated and made an idol. "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt" (Ex. 32:4). Their reasoning may seem brash and obvious to us today. But the deception was probably much more subtle. Perhaps they reasoned, "God is strong and mighty. What better way to depict him than with that animal that pulls our loads and carries our burdens. God is our great provider. What better way to symbolize him than with the beast that gives us milk and meat."

But the Lord God had made it clear in his second commandment, "You shall not make for yourself an idol 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" (Ex. 20:4-5a). All manmade images of God can be nothing more than unworthy caricatures—cartoons that ultimately mock him. They can do nothing more than reduce him to manageable size. All such images are misrepresentations of the Living God. What's more, the human heart in its sin possesses the uncanny ability to crave what it can see and touch and forget him who is to be approached only "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). Even the bronze serpent (Num. 21:9) that the Lord provided to save life soon became venerated beyond its intent (2 King 18:4). However the commandment argues that God is jealous with a holy and righteous jealousy. He will not share devotion with manmade images of any kind. Through Isaiah he says, "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols" (Isa. 42:8).

In one sense, however, human attraction to images is understandable. Images grab and focus attention. This is especially true with regard to things invisible. God is infinite,

eternal, and unchangeable—beyond our imagination and ability to comprehend. He is great and we are small. He is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). We are a wisp of smoke (James 4:14). Solomon admitted this much in his dedicatory prayer: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27). We need our Lord nearer and more approachable. Images and idols seem to accomplish that for us. But sadly those same images lead us farther away.

That is why we need Jesus. He is *the* one way our infinite God can become near and personal to us (1 Pet. 3:18; cf. Eph. 2:14-18). He is the one who images for us our unseen heavenly Father. St. Paul says of Jesus, "He is the image of the invisible God," (Col. 1:13), and again, "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col. 2:9). It was Jesus who shared the divine glory with the Father before the world began (John 17:5) and thus "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [is seen] in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). The author of Hebrews reminds us that, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb. 1:3). That is why he later insists that we, "Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2) and not some mere visible representation of him. Our Father is to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). Jesus is the truth (John 14:6).

However, since Jesus has ascended into heaven and no longer walks on earth, might we make use of portraits and statues as aids of devotion? Certainly not, for soon they too would become ends in themselves. That is certain! Christians rather are called upon to "live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Our attachment to Jesus as the image of the invisible God is sufficiently accessible to us in his Word and sacrament. Let our hearts and minds meander there. Moses and the Prophets anticipated his coming. The Gospels reveal his passion. The Epistles explain his purpose. Revelation portrays his glory. The one tangible moment where we meet our Savior is at the Lord's Table. Here he is seen with the eyes of faith. As Horatius Bonar has said, "Here, O my Lord, I see

thee face to face;/here would I touch and handle things unseen,/here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace,/and all my weariness upon thee lean." These things are sufficient in and of themselves. Anything else in the form of images and idols truncates our spirituality, leads us astray, and creates appetites for things God never intended.

The nineteenth century Princeton professor and preacher, Archibald Alexander, exposed this propensity for misdirected devotion in the human heart:

By association, objects which have nothing interesting in themselves acquire an importance, by reason of the persons or things which they constantly suggest to our minds. The rock of Plymouth has nothing in it which renders it intrinsically superior to thousands of rocks in the country [for instance]....*And the more intimately these associations are related to religion, the deeper and more permanent the feeling becomes. By the abuse of this principle much superstition has been generated (emphasis mine).*<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle John wrote, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life" (1 John 1:1). It is this Jesus, the very author of life, upon whom the eyes of our faith must be fixed.

### 3. WE NEED JESUS AS THE SOURCE OF GOSPEL GRACE

It was inevitable that the movement Jesus spawned acquire some designation that distinguished it from the world. For a while it was simply called "the Way" after John 14:6 where Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). However, St. Luke observes, "The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch" (Acts 11:26; cf. 26:28). It was this

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<sup>2</sup> Archibald Alexander, *The Log College* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1851, 1968), 9.

name that stuck. From the early church to the modern church the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are called by his name. At St. Paul's public hearing, King Agrippa so designated the movement when he retorted, "Do you think that...you can persuade me to be a Christian?" (Acts 26:28). For St. Peter, the label was one of honor: "If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (1 Pet. 4:16). The Proverbs reminds us that, "A good name is more desirable than great riches" (Pro. 22:1).

In the Bible the name of God is the embodiment of his being and character. His name—or names—is the means by which he reveals himself. To speak the name of God is to profess who he is. To bear his name is to embrace the life he offers. To malign his name is to reject his amazing grace. So important is the name of God in disclosing himself that reverent regard for it is protected by the third commandment: "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name" (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Misuse of God's name is the mark of the age. We certainly see it in cheap talk, angry oaths, and unguarded banter. But it also runs more deeply wherever divided hearts and worldliness exist. We find it in the church when word and sacrament are neglected, grumbling and gossip prevail, hypocrisy and duplicity reign, and false doctrine and worship are endured. Honesty demands that we confess our propensity to misuse God's name. We are all guilty!

That is why we need Jesus. Bound up in the name of Jesus—not as a magical incantation, but as the revelation of God in Christ—is *the* source of all gospel grace. When Peter and John were arrested in the temple courts they were hauled before the same Sanhedrin that had crucified the Lord Jesus just weeks before. Boldly proclaiming the gospel they declared, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is *no other name (emphasis mine)* under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Deliverance is found in the name of Jesus! When Peter engaged Cornelius the Roman Centurion of Caesarea with the gospel, he learned that God's grace was available to gentiles as well as Jews.

Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus he recalled how, “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins *through his name (emphasis mine)*” (Acts 10:43). Indeed, pardon is found in the name of Jesus! Furthermore, St. John stated that his gospel was written with a specific aim in mind. Complimenting and supplementing the three gospels which preceded his own, he insisted upon this purpose: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life *in his name (emphasis mine)*” (John 20:31). Eternal life is found in the name of Jesus!

The primary purpose of the third commandment is to foster reverence for the names by which the Lord God is revealed. But, there is no greater revelation of God than that found in the person and work of his Son Jesus Christ. Hebrews states this clearly, “In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” who is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:2-3). Having opened his disciples minds to the Scriptures, our Savior departed this world with this commission to his church, “The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached *in his name (emphasis mine)* to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47). Later the Apostle Paul would remind the church of the exalted nature of the name by which it is known. In fact a day was coming when all creation would acknowledge the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

All the blessings of the gospel find their source in the name of Jesus. We need Jesus because there is power in his name – power to create life, power to grant pardon, and power to provide salvation. He whose name is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) is also able to save completely all who come to God through him because he

always lives to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25). We who misuse his name so often can find all sufficient gospel grace in him who freely lends to us his name.

#### 4. WE NEED JESUS FOR OUR ETERNAL REST

We are people of habit. Most of us need regular schedules and routines to function. Life’s rhythms and regularities give a sense of security and definition. Whether its Monday night football, Wednesday morning coffee klatch, Friday night bridge club, or Sunday morning worship, what we do week after week, month after month, year after year shapes and forms us into the people we are. It is our habits that distinguish us.

The fourth commandment recognizes this human need by providing a *sacred* rhythm of work and rest. Grounded upon a creation ordinance the Lord says, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all you work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God....In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:8-11; cf. Deut. 5:12-15). This Sabbath cadence of work and rest was to be a distinguishing mark for the people of God. Regarding it the Lord insists that, “This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so that you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy” (Ex. 31:13).

The Sabbath rest was designed by our Lord for spiritual rejuvenation. Worship of the living God is to be its central interest. Whether because of age, infirmity, or exile, the Psalmist in Psalm 42 was no longer able to enjoy those important seasons of worship among the gathered people of God which profoundly fashioned his life. He is left only with memories: “My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitudes, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among

the festive throng” (Psa. 42:3-4). But alas, these things for him are now out of his reach. What is even sadder still, however, is the countless number of professing believers today who do not even fall in love with the Sabbath, as the Psalmist did above, because they are so cavalier in their honoring of it in the first place. Their hearts do not ache for want of it. If there is money to be made, work to be done, places to see, or things to do, the Sabbath is neglected. It has been observed that we are prone to worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship. The impropriety of Sabbath breaking is hardly in our consciousness anymore. The words of the Lord through Isaiah, to many, seem archaic. “If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’S holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob” (Isa. 58:13-14).

What’s more, with the loss of Sabbath consciousness has come a loss of heavenly hope. Perhaps that is why we are so consumed with worldly pleasures and driven with worldly accomplishments. These things, we believe, insulate us from the proven fact that we are all going to die! And yet, the Lord gave his people the Sabbath rest, not merely to equip them to live life fully, but to face death confidently. Hebrews 4 points out that, “the promise of entering his rest still stands” (Heb. 4:1). The *rest* spoken of here is the eternal rest of heaven to which the weekly Sabbath is a mere witness. In Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christian and Hopeful climb the Delectable Mountains where they met the Shepherds of the Hill. Some commentators on Bunyan believe this is a picture of the Sabbath where Christians are warned and instructed by pastors and where they retire “to behold the Gardens and Orchards, the Vineyards and Fountains of water; where also they drank, and washed themselves, and did

freely eat of the Vineyards” – vivid images of the means of grace.<sup>3</sup> On the Delectable Mountain the Pilgrims were also given a “Perspective-Glass” – a telescope – and granted the privilege to see the gates of the celestial city – heaven – if only from a distance. “Then they assayed to look, but...they could not look steadily through the Glass; yet they thought they saw something like the Gate, and also some of the Glory of the place. Then they went away and sang.”<sup>4</sup> John Newton calls the Christian Sabbath, “Day of all the week the best, emblem of eternal rest,”<sup>5</sup> and Christopher Wordsworth writes, “From you, like Pisgah’s mountain, we view our promised land.”<sup>6</sup> The author of Hebrews states, “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest” (Heb. 4:9-11). Yet, all our efforts fail because in the end we too are Sabbath breakers. We do not treasure the sacred gifts the Lord gives for our good and his glory.

That is why we need Jesus. The Sabbath can only reinvigorate life; Jesus regenerates life. The Sabbath grants only the sense of heaven; Jesus is the source of heaven. From the Sabbath we see glory at a distance; through Jesus we see the glory of God in his beloved face. Jesus granted to his disciples on the Sabbath those gifts that sustain life. Then he declared, “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28). The Sabbath gives rest for our bodies; Jesus gives rest for our weary souls. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give your rest” (Matt 11:28).

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<sup>3</sup> John Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 141.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>5</sup> John Newton, “Safely Through Another Week,” in *Trinity Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1990), #391.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Wordsworth, “O Day of Rest and Gladness,” in *Trinity Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1990), #392.

## 5. WE NEED JESUS TO CONQUER OUR REBELLIOUS HEARTS

Israel's wilderness wanderings are the proverbial picture of life in a sinful world. All of its hardships, challenges, and uncertainties are present along with its glory and shame. Sadly, the children of Israel did not leave a stellar legacy for us to follow. The mark of the generation that came out of Egypt was the spirit of rebellion. They complained about the water (Ex. 15:24; 17:3). They complained about the food (16:2-3). They complained about their leaders (Num. 16:41-42). They even complained about the Promised Land (Num. 14:2-4). But in the end, they were complaining against the Lord (Num. 16:11; 17:5, 10). They did not want to live under the Lord's authority or those whom he appointed.

Sound familiar? Americans are intensely independent. We complain against anything that we feel encroaches upon our personal autonomy—our self rule. We complain about our work. We complain about our government. We complain about our parents or we complain about our kids. We even complain about our church. Perhaps some complaints are justifiable. But at its root this too is the spirit of rebellion. Like the king's subjects in the parable of the ten minas we say, "We will not have this *man* to reign over us" (Luke 19:14, KJV). Negatively, Jude describes such godless rebels as, "Grumblers, and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage" (Jude 16). Positively, St. Paul admonishes Christians, "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe" (Phil. 2:14).

How do we rise above this blight in the soul? Can this spirit of rebellion ever be contained? The answer lies in the fifth commandment: "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you" (Deut. 5:16; cf. Ex. 20:12). On the

surface the fifth commandment concerns the sanctity of the family as the environment of nurture and growth. However, at its foundation it concerns respect for all proper authority by cultivating a submissive spirit toward those whom the Lord has ordained (Rom. 13:1-2; Col. 3:18-4:1). The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* recognizes this when it responds in question #64: "The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals."

As children, our first world was the home. Here we should have learned that "authority" and "submission" are things to cherish, not to chaff at. However, our world soon enlarged to include the church with its pastors and elders as under-shepherds to the Chief Shepherd—Jesus (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Here we discovered that the honor toward authority we learned in the home would extend to others whom God appointed. Eventually we entered the world of school, work, and society all of which require civility and cooperation for the common good. Yet the spirit of rebellion is not easily contained. The author of Hebrews reminds us of its power and outcome among the children of Israel, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion [in the wilderness] during the time of testing in the desert...Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief" (Heb. 3:7, 16-19). Here we see that the lives of those who came out of Egypt were cut short and much blessing was lost because of their spirit of rebellion—that spirit which in essence is nothing short of unbelief.

That is why we need Jesus! Only the power of the gospel can ultimately conquer our rebellious hearts. Jesus the very Son of God, "Humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:8). His glory was preceded by his submission: "For I have come down from heaven not to do my

will but to do the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38; cf. Phil. 2:9); and again, "I seek not to please myself but him who sent me" (John 5:30). He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "May this cup [of Calvary] be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). St. Paul says regarding the grace of our Lord of Glory, "That though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

According to the Psalmist, the nations conspire and the people's plot in vain against the Lord's rightful and sovereign rule. They rebel! "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One [Messiah]" (Psa. 2:2). Ultimately all rebellion is against the Lord. The Psalmist continues, "'Let us break off their chains,' they say, 'and throw off their fetters'" (Psa. 2:3). To the rebellious, even the kindly rule of the benevolent King is oppressive. That is why the commandment can only show us our sin. But Jesus can redeem us from our sin. The commandment will only frustrate us in our failure. But Jesus will free us by his favor. From the law we learn our duty. From the gospel we gain new desires to do his will. That is why those who trust in Christ will never be disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6).

## 6. WE NEED JESUS TO HELP US LOVE THE UNLOVELY

There is nothing more fundamental about the nature of true Christianity than its life affirming quality. There is nothing more obnoxious to the human mind than murder and mayhem in the name of religion. The Bible teaches that human life comes from God, and that every person is precious having been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). There is no other religion or philosophy in existence that grants this level of respect for human life. Where the gospel flourishes, the respect for human dignity flourishes. When the gospel is diminished, human worth dies with it.

When God created Adam, he placed him in the garden with the

Tree of Life as a sign and seal of the life he enjoyed by God's grace. When he disobeyed, he died—first spiritually, then later physically. Yet, God did not abandon the hope of life for he offered the promise of a Savior (Gen. 3:15). Adam's faith in this promise is revealed when he names his wife "Eve" — which means "life" — "because she would become the mother of all the living" (Gen. 3:20). Cain rejected life when he took the life of his brother Abel out of jealousy and rage.

That human life possesses distinction and dignity apart from other kinds of life is revealed in the Bible in two ways. First, God placed a heavy *penalty* upon those who would with malice take the life of another. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed." The reason? "For in the image of God has God made man" (Gen. 9:6). Second, God issued a *command* as a protection of human life. He said pointedly, "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). Later, in order to curb the sinful propensity toward revenge, the Lord established six cities of refuge so that one who took a life by accident might flee for safety (Num. 35:6-34). In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commented on the sixth commandment. He made it clear that its scope included more than murder. Anyone involved in malicious name-calling and harboring undo anger to others diminishes human dignity, violates this commandment, and offends God (Matt. 5:21-24). I expect that few if any reading this have ever taken a human life. Yet how many of us have engaged in gossip, ridicule, or vile talk with the intent to compromise the character and reputation of another? How many of us have withheld our love from our spouse in order to inflict control and punishment? How many of us have stood silent in this culture of death which so cavalierly discards the life of unborn infants and ignores or takes advantage of the fears and frailties of the aging. Jesus summarized our duty in two simple commands: love God with a whole heart and love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:28-31). We do neither very well. That is why we need Jesus!

Our Lord's mission on earth was clearly stated when he said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that

they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Not only is our Lord concerned with life in heaven some day, but also with the richness of life right now. Christians love and value life (1 Pet. 3:10) because their Savior did. Peter knew he had no one else to turn to when he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). And he was right, for Jesus insisted, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28). Later Christ would say, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26). And again, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). And yet his life was not so dear to him that he would not give it up so that others might live. "I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:15). Indeed, "Greater love has no one that this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Later in his first epistle John would say that, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11).

How could the church founded upon such a life-loving and life-giving Savior be anything but life-affirming and life-promoting? How could we who follow him who sought to rescue the perishing, encourage the languishing, and enliven the dying seek anything else but to serve our fellow with gospel hope. To be sure there have been times when the church has gotten off track. It has conquered and killed in the name of Jesus—bringing only shame to itself. But this was not the Jesus of the Bible. God sent our Jesus to "bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of the spirit of despair" (Isa. 61:1-3). It is not always easy to love the people of God—but love we must. It is even harder to love the lost of this world—but in the strength and love of Christ we can.

We need Jesus to help us love the unlovely because every soul is created in the image of God. Sin has ruined that image, but it has not obliterated it. The commandment shows us that we fail to affirm life as we ought and points us to the author and giver of life. The commandment nudges us to embrace Jesus in whom we "may have life and have it to the full." By his grace may we become agents of life as we seek to serve the gospel of life to the ends of the earth!

## 7. WE NEED JESUS AS THE GROUND OF COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

Fidelity to one's word has long been regarded as the glue that holds both family and society together. Public servants are required to take an oath of office before being granted the privilege to serve. Courts will enforce business contracts with legal sanctions. Marriages are sealed with mutual promises in the presence of witnesses. We rightfully lose confidence in anyone who cannot keep their word—at least with regard to the first two. Sadly, breaking vows of marriage is widely regarded today as having little consequence except for the immediate parties concerned. A couple may affirm before God and his people that they will forsake all others and remain faithful to each other "so long as they both shall live." But the unspoken caveat is quite often "so long as romance continues, passions burn hotly, or you continue to please me." When those things change, society grants the privilege to look elsewhere.

The Bible, however, calls this infidelity a sin, not a privilege. The seventh commandment is direct: "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18). Malachi refers to the marriage bond as a covenant, and those who violate it are said to "break faith" with the wife of their youth (Mal. 2:15). Jesus further notes that the commandment concerns not only the *act* of infidelity, but the thoughts and intents of the heart as well. "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28). People used to recognize

that every adulterous *act* undermined all of society. A public person who was cavalier with his marriage vows would not have had the public trust. How could one's word be trusted in one sphere if it was not held with integrity in another?

However, there is another more serious consequence to infidelity. It undermines the church's covenantal integrity and thus the very gospel itself. The seventh commandment directs us not only to moral purity and faithfulness to our vows of marriage. It directs us to Jesus. Marriage as God designed it is a picture of the church as the Bride of Christ. Jesus is the bridegroom. He loves his church and gave his life for it (Eph. 5:22-33). In his word he promises life to those who trust in him. The bride is washed clean by the blood of Christ and is called upon to live out her life in holiness, obedience, and faithfulness. Christians are to emulate this pattern in their marriages before their children and a watching world so the gospel might be given the shape that our Lord intended. When we are unfaithful to the Lord, we mar the beauty of the church and weaken the covenant bond that we enjoy with Christ. The Bible routinely sees this compromise as spiritual adultery. Jeremiah asks:

If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers – would you return to me now?" (Jer. 3:1).

Again he asks:

Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear, she also went out and committed adultery. Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart

but only in pretense (Jer. 3:6-10).

Notice here how Israel's dalliances directly influenced the spiritual character of her "sister" Judah. Individual unfaithfulness affects everyone. Whether we break faith with our spouse or the Lord, adultery is a serious and consequential sin.

That is why we need Jesus. Our Lord continues to hold out the gospel of hope to both moral and spiritual adulterers. Jeremiah was called to proclaim the gospel of grace. In euphemistic terms of sexual unfaithfulness he continues:

"Return, faithless Israel," declares the LORD, "I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful," declares the LORD, "I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt—you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree and have not obeyed me," declares the LORD (Jer. 3:12b-13).

How is this any different than when Jesus said to the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you....Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11)? Furthermore, how is this different than when our Lord says to us, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.... Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev. 19:7-9).

St. Paul was passionate for spiritual fidelity among believers. As a servant to Christ's bride he said, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may be led astray from your sincere devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2-3). When a bride stands before her future husband she is presented arrayed in white. The beauty of her adornment does not represent *her* purity, for she, like her bridegroom, is a sinner. Rather, it represents the gospel. For Jesus, the bridegroom bore

our sins and we his church are robed in his righteousness. It is his adorning grace by which we are beautified (Eph. 5:25-27).

## 8. WE NEED JESUS AS THE AUTHOR AND GIVER OF LIFE

As I write, our church building has just been broken into for the second time this summer. Our security is once again shattered. We wrestle with the sense of violation. We are angered and thus unsettled about the way it makes us feel. Thievery is disruptive of every level of human association. It is a cancer to society and corrosive to the soul. Thus the activity necessarily finds its place in the eight commandment, "You shall not steal" (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:19).

However, stealing is a sin that masks itself in subtle ways. Not all of its manifestations are as bold and blatant as that of our assailant. Humans are takers at heart and thus thieving is part of our nature. It begins when we are born and is nurtured in our childhood where we presume the world revolves around us. We take, consume, demand, and absorb. We are not naturally heavenly minded so our hearts by default are bound to the here and now. Some of these affects, of course, can be minimized through good parenting. But, we do not enter the world as naturally born givers. Jesus insists, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

The sin of thievery is clever and shrewd. We presume leisure is our lot so we steal time from God and others (Eph. 5:16). We believe our goods are *our* gain so we withhold our "tithes and offerings" and thus "rob" God (Mal. 3:8-10). We routinely steal glory from God by not giving him credit for every good and perfect gift—tangible and otherwise (1 Cor. 10:31; James 1:17). We possess enough pride to believe we are owners when the Lord regards us as stewards (Psa. 24:1). St. Paul even found it

necessary to admonish believers in Ephesus, "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need" (Eph. 4:28). Thievery is more than evil activity, it is a caustic attitude. Perhaps most of us will never be drawn into desperate deeds of larceny. But lurking in the dark recesses of each of our hearts is enough self absorption to make us vulnerable to keep for ourselves what rightfully belongs to others. Stealing is a sin that condemns us all. That is why we need Jesus!

Jesus, the sinless Son of God, was the *only* person who ever lived on earth who gave of himself completely. He is the quintessential giver. He proclaims, "The man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1-2). Elsewhere he insists that "no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Furthermore, he likens those who take his office upon themselves as "thieves and robbers" (John 10:8). He exclaims, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Again, our Lord explains his mission on earth, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to *give (emphasis mine)* his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). John announces that, "God so loved the world that he *gave (emphasis mine)* his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Love is the greatest act of giving and Jesus does it perfectly, withholding nothing. It is through Jesus that God the Father "demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God's love in Christ is a gift. It cannot be earned or deserved, taken or stolen. It is a gift freely offered as Paul says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). We who are in Christ thus possess this gift by which Jesus grants us not only life, but livelihoods though which we can become givers instead of takers (Eph. 4:28). Paul tells us, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God" (2 Cor. 9:11). Indeed, "God loves a cheerful

giver” (2 Cor. 9:7) which is born of a grateful heart and through Christ can only say, “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (2 Cor. 9:15).

The Proverbs says, “A gift opens the way for the giver and ushers him into the presence of the great” (Pro. 18:16). How wonderful is the gift of God in Christ which brings us into the very presence of God himself! Before we are overwhelmed with thoughts of revenge and condemnation because of our loss at church—matters left for God and courts—let us remember our thief needs Jesus. As Christ delivered us from our own thieving ways, let us thank God for the opportunity to pray for a soul that is lost and in need of a Savior.

## 9. WE NEED JESUS BECAUSE HE IS THE TRUTH

Pontius Pilate was a modern man. He would have been comfortable in today’s America. When he examined Jesus at his trial he was direct, “Are you the king of the Jews?” After bantering back and forth, Jesus finally admitted, “You are right in saying I am a king.” He then explained, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” Pilate’s sneering response was simple, “What is truth?” (John 18:33-38). Like the modern man, Pilate posed the question, not because he was searching for the truth, but because he was cynical about ever finding it. This exchange between these two *kings* reveals a fundamental conflict between the world and the church. Is there eternal truth by which to live and order our lives, or are we at the mercy of power brokers and public opinions?

This ancient and modern conflict and confusion regarding truth is effectively breeding division and destruction across our land. Candidates for public office are not concerned with truth, but perceptions. Students in our universities do not search for truth, but perspectives. Public debates strive not to embrace truth, but opinions. Our amazing computer technology does not lead us to greater truth, but saturates us with baron data—useless factoids. There is no center that holds our lives together. Truth is

something we create for ourselves, not a transcendent reality for all to embrace. It is constructed rather than received. For instance, the difference between a man and a woman is no longer the obvious anatomical features, but how one thinks of himself or herself. Thus in Pilate’s world there are no longer two sexes, but four, five, or six sexes—however one perceives himself.

The importance and preservation of truth is at the heart of the ninth commandment, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20). The context is that arena where the truth of a matter is to be established and honored—that is, in a court. Yet a love for truth must extend beyond there to all of life. Society cannot function without a regard for truth. What’s more, how can we engage in human respect and interaction without respect for truth? How can we ever hope to search out the greatest mysteries without the hope that truth exists? How can we even talk about God without knowledge of the truth?

That is why we need Jesus! It is said of him that he is “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Truth is not a set of cold detached facts about a thing; it is bound up in a person who himself is Creator and Redeemer. Truth is thus not merely propositions in which to believe, but a person with whom we relate. Furthermore, Jesus claimed, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Matters of ultimate reality regarding the nature of God and the universe can be discovered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews says, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Heb. 1:3). St. Paul insists, “He is the image of the invisible God...He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:15-17). The “secret” of the universe cannot be rightly apprehended without apprehending the divine Son of God. Jesus says, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Finally, he says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). The truth that is found in Jesus is liberating and life changing. Here in Jesus

is truth about divine forgiveness, covenant faithfulness, sustaining grace, the blessed hope, and the glorious consummation of all things in Christ. This is truth that leads sinners to faith, hope, and love. It makes life worth living – and dying worth anticipating.

The church exists for truth's sake. It exists to proclaim Jesus as Lord of all and Savior of sinners – “No one comes to the Father except through me”! The church is not a social club, a benevolent civic organization, or an entertaining diversion for those who are bored with life. It does not exist to make people feel good about themselves, to solve the world's problems, or to pander to sin. The church exists to tell the truth to people – that is, the truth that is in Jesus. Some, like Pilate, will yawn in boredom, rail in anger, or react in hostility. Yet others will run to Christ and fall before him in worship. Regardless, the church's ministers are charged by Christ to, “Preach the Word” and to do so “in season and out of season.” They are to “correct, rebuke, and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Without truth life will unravel. Many believe we are witnessing such an unraveling in our day. Preaching the truth of Jesus is “out of season.” It is no longer popular. Churches are caving into secularism by providing entertainment, social diversions, and Christless Christianity in the place of its divinely appointed mission. The world of Pilate is a world of despair and false hopes. It breeds excitement for the moment but does nothing, nor can it do anything, to prepare the soul to meet God. The world of Pilate is a world of power and pain. It thinks it is everything, but in reality it is nothing. It sifts the human souls in the hour glass of time and sweeps them away as a morning mist. As in Shakespeare, “It struts and frets its hour upon the stage, full of sound and fury – signifying nothing.” The Kingdom of Christ, however, is a Kingdom of Truth. It is about the Truth that leads to eternal life. It offers Truth that roots our faith in the person and work of Jesus; Truth that establishes our hope for the future; and Truth that sends us forth in a life of love for the unlovely. Pilate said, “What is truth?” Jesus said, “I AM!” Pilate's cynical unbelief did not change that one bit.

## 10. WE NEED JESUS AS OUR HEART'S DESIRE.

When considering the Ten Commandments, we find the last one is different from the others. The first nine arguably concern behavior. The tenth concerns inordinate desire. Through self deceit we may think we have done well with the first nine. But the tenth will convince us otherwise. The first nine are mutually exclusive. The tenth permeates them all. Although on the surface we may appear to avoid the prohibitions of the first nine, the tenth shows us we have violated all of them. The final commandment reads, “You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 4:21).

Covetousness is craving what belongs to another. It is an attraction to that which is forbidden. Whenever we seek ultimate pleasure in things, we are coveting. Covetousness is setting our affections on things of this earth rather than things above (cf. Col. 3:1-2). It is the sin of believing the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Covetousness lies at the root of all deeds of rebellion, murder, adultery, stealing, and lying. When it concerns another man's wife it is called the “lust of the flesh.” When it concerns another's property it is called “the lust of the eyes.” When it concerns disrespect for authority it is called “the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). The fear of consequences may curb our propensity toward such deeds. But, a covetous heart keeps them all very near at hand.

What's more, covetousness is the essence of idolatry because it concerns our quest to find satisfaction. Thus, it is a matter of the heart. An idol is anything that competes with or replaces God as the source of satisfaction. Will children be satisfied when they break from their parent's authority? Will a man be happy if he sleeps with his neighbor's wife? Will one more possession give any of us more pleasure? Will asserting control over others make us more fulfilled? History and experience say a resounding,

“No!” The Proverbs say, “The unfaithful are trapped by evil desires” (Pro. 11:6). Isaiah asks, “Why spend money on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy?” (Isaiah 55:2). Jesus insists that, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Matt. 6:24). Yet, our covetous hearts keep desire alive for the things of this world and deceive us into thinking that the things we take, own, and control will quench our thirsty souls. But it will not! That is why we need Jesus!

The Christian faith claims that ultimate satisfaction can only be found in God as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He alone is altogether lovely (Song 5:16). The Beatitudes say, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matt. 5:6). But we don’t *naturally* desire God or his Word. We don’t desire Jesus in our lives. We don’t love his church or seek his righteousness because as Jeremiah says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure” (Jer. 17:9) by any human means. St. Paul knows well this inner turmoil that covetousness produces when he says, “For I have a desire to do good but I cannot carry it out....The evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing....When I want to do good, evil is right there with me” (Rom. 7:18-22). Paul acknowledges that the Ten Commandment pointed out his sin, “Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet’” (Rom. 7:7). But in the end the commandment was impotent to produce any real change in his heart. Thus he cried out, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (Rom. 7:24-25). Thanks be to God, indeed!

Through Jesus, God the Father did two things to conquer our covetous hearts. First, through Jesus, atonement was made to pay the penalty for our sin so our guilt might be removed and we might stand quitted before his throne (Rom. 5:8; Heb. 7:25). Second, through Jesus he sent the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-15) to

open our eyes to the glory of God in the face of his Son (2 Cor. 4:6), that we might see him in all his beauty and seek in him in his temple (Psalm 27:4). By his Spirit our covetous hearts are subdued, we are born again, and new life is evidenced by the heart’s new attachment to things above. We now desire to see him face to face. The Psalms are filled with testimonies of those who are redeemed of the Lord and whose hearts now find satisfaction in him. Asaph writes, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you” (Psalm 73:25). David says, “Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...who satisfies your desires with good things” (Psalm 103:2-5), and again, “The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him” (Psalm 145:18-19). Human desires and longings cannot be changed by a mere act of the will. They are too stubborn. But as the Holy Spirit turns our hearts to Jesus Christ we find by God’s grace that he has become the one in whom we take satisfaction. David reminds us, “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4). Thus, for those trusting Christ, “The desire of the righteous ends only in good” (Pro. 11:23).

The essence of idolatry is covetousness because it seeks satisfaction in temporal things. But Jesus fully satisfies because he is the divine Son of God who is worthy of our complete affections.

## DO YOU NEED JESUS?

Here are ten reasons why you need Jesus. Many wrongly believe that the Ten Commandments were given to us in order they might place us in good stead with God by observance of them. Most people willingly acknowledge their own imperfection, but at the same time believe that God is only concerned with the really bad things people do. When we learn of a heinous act of evil perpetrated on another, it is tempting to feel a little self-righteousness because, after all, we think, “I would *never* do anything that bad.” But the Bible teaches that when we compare ourselves with others we “are not wise” (2 Cor. 10:12) because in

most cases we are prone to think that we rise well above the average. The purpose of the Ten Commandments is to shatter this illusion that heaven can be earned by good works. The fact is, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The Ten Commandments serve to impress this truth upon our hearts. It is not safe to measure our spiritual state by the averages. For when we are measured by the perfect Law of God we are all found wanting—we are all condemned. The standard is the perfect righteousness of Christ. We are called upon to be "perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). This we can never do.

Before help is sought, we must first understand the danger we are in. A person adrift at sea will not respond to overtures of rescue until they are impressed with the desperation of their dilemma. Similarly a person lost in sin will not seek Christ as their only hope until they are first impressed with the desperation of their spiritual condition. The Ten Commandments serve to awaken us by God's grace to our need for deliverance from another source, other than our human efforts. They show us our need for the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul recognized that the Law was "holy, righteous, and good." Nevertheless, he noted that it produced in him an intense and uncomfortable sense of his lost and sinful condition. He says, "[I]n order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me...so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful" (Rom. 7:12-13). He then cries out, "Watch a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of Death?" upon which he quickly exclaims, "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24-25).

The Psalmist says, "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long" (Psalm 119:97). This love comes not because the Ten Commandments are the source of life, but because they are the means God uses to open our hearts to the life that is in Jesus Christ. My friend, do you see your sin for the evil that it is? Do you acknowledge that deliverance is out of your reach by your own efforts? Do see your need for Jesus? Do you sense the Spirit

of God tugging at your heart to trust him? Then respond without delay. He will freely pardon (Isa. 55:7), and you will never be disappointed (Psa. 22:5).