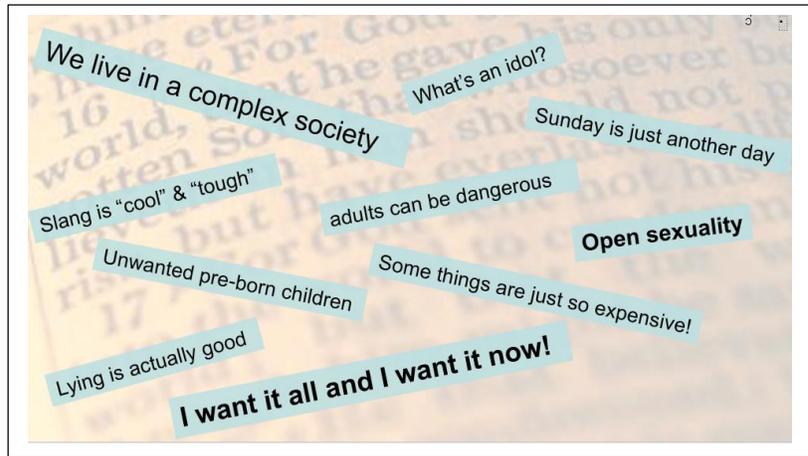


Why Bother?

Introduction Question #2



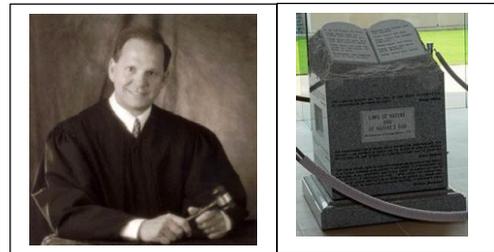
... be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ... the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, ... will be blessed in his doing. (Jms. 1:22-25, ESV)

In preparing ourselves to examine the Moral Law of God, we must first deal with three questions that often come up in this regard. The first question was: "Isn't the law done away with now that we are under grace?" We answered that by saying as Paul does: "By no means!" It is wonderfully true that we are freed from the condemnation of the Moral Law by reason of the finished, substitutionary work of Christ. Further, we are released from the barriers and sacrifices of the Ceremonial Law as worship by reason of this offering of himself for us as well. Christ's sacrifice was perfect and now there remains no further sacrifice to be made. Still, we are never "free" from God's Moral Law as that is the will of God for how we are to live our lives as Christians. God's character of morality is built into the very fabric of nature and, as Jesus reminds us in the Sermon on the Mount, it shall never pass away.

But that leads us now to the second question: "Hasn't our world changed so much, grown so big and complex that the 10 Commandments are simply irrelevant now? Wouldn't you agree that to live in modern society as we must, we have to operate by different rules? Isn't it true that life just isn't that simple anymore?"

You might remember the recent incident in Alabama when Judge Roy Moore was removed from the judicial bench. Outside the courthouse Judge Moore had installed a stone monument displaying the Ten Commandments. But he was ordered to have it taken away. Upon his refusal, both he and the monument were removed. Similar things have occurred with regularity throughout the United States in varying ways. This has all been done with the rationale and reasoning that culture and society in the United States has grown pluralistic. The people of the nation have grown beyond the single-minded appreciation for a Christian deity. We should, therefore, out of respect for this pluralism, remove from the official, public property of the nation any sign or significance that would suggest the authority of the Christian God or the presumption of a Christian worldview as being superior.

But as Christians, we really should not be surprised at this. For over a generation now, the evangelical church herself has worked theologically and practically to do the same thing! - to remove the

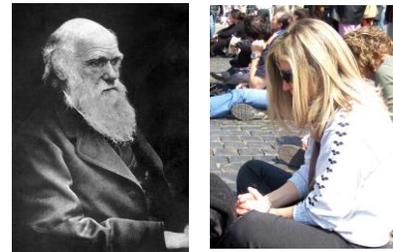


10 commandments from the church: remove it from her worship, from her teaching, and from calling for its observance in the practical day-to-day lives of her people. But why? Why has the church virtually led the way in this? There are several reasons for this taking place.

Shooting Ourselves in the Foot

First is that mistaken law/grace distinction that we have already discussed. During the twentieth century, particularly, broad evangelicalism taught that Christ's coming cancelled our need to attend to the Moral Law. But such teaching in the church did not lead to the spiritual freedom and Christian liberty they thought it would. Instead, "Christianized" cultural norms and expectations began to replace God's law. Self-preserving, Christian legalism began to be imposed. Manipulation began to address the aimlessness in human responsibility before God that rejecting the Moral Law allowed. The Christian's head turned, instead, to selfish pre-occupations. Sin has abounded even in the church.

Second, liberal theology has successfully challenged the authority of Scripture. When liberals began challenging the integrity of Scriptures' claim - of the truth of miracles, of creation, of the virgin birth and resurrection of Christ, and of the accomplishment of atonement, as examples - many conservatives did stand their ground on holding these things as truth. But they retreated in other ways. Such liberality was quietly accepted in people's thinking the same way as evolution has been accepted in the classroom. Christians began to be content just to regard and claim that their own, personal faith regardless of the show of so-called evidence and argument. An attitude became predominant that theology and science were two separate and unconnected things. Faith became more private, subjective, and less concrete. It became disconnected from objective reality. Christians began to just ignore how others lived their own, unbelieving lives. In other words, Christians gave in on the demand of secular science and allowed their faith to be relegated to nothing more than "religion".



Third, there was a philosophical abandonment of objective truth in society for the sake of political correctness. As more and more peoples and faiths came into America, they demanded the right to be heard and appreciated, Christians backed off again and compromised too quickly on the idea and claim of objective truth and simply went along with the idea of personal truth. Christians thought they were doing the opposite: "You can believe anything you want, it's a free country, but I'm sticking with the gospel." In reality, they were just giving in: "Just leave me alone to believe as I want and I'll leave you alone to believe what you want." Christians have abandoned the call to be apologists - to defend and explain the truth of the gospel. Instead, Christians have allowed their own comfort levels and desire for privacy to keep them from speaking out for truth and to call falsehood what it is and sin what it is.



Fourth is the rise of the seeker-friendly church and its approach to worship and ministry. Because no one is wrong anymore, the broad, evangelical church jettisoned the burden to declare error or to call people from darkness to the only, true light. Instead, the gospel was substituted with entertainment. The appeal became focused simply on perceived interests and felt needs. "Sin" was reduced to being a philosophical concept - something "out there" that, somehow, "affects us all" as victims. The idea of personal sins was simply regarded as being unnecessarily confrontational and judgmental. After all, we should "judge not that ye be not judged"! Growth, accountability and commitment - these were all intimidating, hostile words that were now out of place in the gathering of God's people. The evangelistic strategy of many became the idea that we are to reach a person in terms of what he already appreciates and wants. But this is to build the church solidly on an Arminian approach to the gospel - that man is not depraved but just

in need of a little help. It deliberately ignores the fact that what a sinner really wants more than anything else is to be left alone and told that he is alright.

And fifth is the constant temptation of the world for the Christian to be pressed into its mold to satisfy comfort, entertainment and desire. For all the ways that Scripture teaches a follower of Christ to be aliens, strangers and pilgrims in this world and to walk in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake, the world has even more offers, reasons, appeals, lures, programs and excuses - even evil, spiritual powers - to render the gospel call to life meaningless and to make such an effort appear silly and unproductive. Too many Christians have accepted this and participate eagerly in worldly things, while rationalizing to themselves that the way they live really has nothing to do with what they believe.

Another Reformation

What is the answer? Nothing short of another reformation of the Church and the people of God once again. God's people must return again to the Word of God and to God's Moral Law. Let us be clear



- this is not merely an advocacy for works-righteousness - we have already seen that works-righteousness has been precisely the problem: Arminianism has led our thinking to conclude and comfort ourselves into thinking that our own sinful hearts are not the issue!

Instead, we need to go back, as James tells us, to look intently into the mirror that is the law of God, to see our sinfulness before our holy God as he sees it and as it truly is, to repent of it, be forgiven our sins and know the truth of his restoration daily in our lives, to reflect, determine and commit ourselves to follow his Moral Law for it, alone, will bring light to our path.

David G. Barker, 2015

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