**Is Christianity complicated?**

***How Ten Commandments Became Two***

**SCRIPTURES**:

Matthew 22:37-40; John 14:4; Deuteronomy 6:5 & 13:3; Joshua 22:5; etc.

We know it is wrong to murder, steal, and cheat; but since there are many instructions given in the Bible on how we ought to be living our lives, just how do we know if we are ***really*** doing the right thing? Is Christianity ***THAT*** complicated? Of course not! It may actually be that God's ways are actually too simple for us to grasp! How can this be?

As a matter of fact, the whole law of God can be summed up in two simple commandments.

In **Matthew 22:37-40**, Jesus says: “‘*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*"

Two simple commandments!

Just. Two.

It’s as simple as that! You know, if everybody loved the Lord and each other like Christ taught us to do, there would be no murder, no hate, no bitterness, no adultery, no stealing nor any other kind of sin, if we only loved the Lord with all our heart and our neighbor as our own self!

Now I know you’re thinking “***Ummmm, Pastor Tim? There are TEN Commandments,***

***-not-***

***-just-***

***-two-***

And, yes you’re right - there are. So **why** would Jesus just talk about just **two** commandments, then? I mean, He ***is*** God – He gave them to Moses in the first place to give to the Chosen People – Israel, didn’t He? Is this an example of God going back on His own sworn Word? Absolutely not – and we’ll see why shortly.

Research has shown that many Christians, much less non-believers can’t name all Ten Commandments – do we think we can do better? Let’s try...

Now, let’s find them listed right in **Exodus 20:1-17**: and let’s take turns reading them:

1. *You shall have no other gods before me.*
2. *You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*
3. *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*
4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*
5. *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*
6. *You shall not murder.*
7. *You shall not commit adultery.*
8. *You shall not steal.*
9. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*
10. *You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”*

This was one big huge event when it happened in the life of Moses. The fact that God would go so far as to physically manifest His special 10 commandments on real live tablets of stone tells me that these commandments should never be taken lightly or for granted.

Most people who’ve been brought up in the church have heard about these 10 commandments while going through grade school and then high school and learned about them in reference to the story as to how they all came about. In fact, thanks to movies and how the Ten Commandments have impacted so many areas of life, law, politics and the like, even people who know very little about Jesus know at least something about the Ten Commandments. Maybe because of this weaving of these icons of truth through so many aspects of life, many modern Christians often seem to take these special Ten Commandments for granted and really don’t realize their power and authority. But, Jesus made sure we couldn’t do that when He explained how God looks at them.

The 10 commandments are good, basic, moral laws that help keep us out of trouble with ourselves, one another– and with God. God knows what is best for all of us and He simply wants all of us to be able to live in peace and harmony with one another and to abide within His will for us.

Sadly, too many think that the 10 commandments are somehow going to “take away our fun” or make following God’s will some sort of grim and cheerless chore for all eternity. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, if we look at the Ten Commandments in reverse, we see a fairly accurate picture of what we see in the world today:

**1st commandment**: Thou shalt have other gods before me

**2nd commandment**: Thou shalt make graven images and shalt bow down and worship them

**3rd commandment**: Thou shalt take the Lord's name in vain

**4th commandment**: Thou shalt forget the Sabbath and not keep it holy

**5th commandment**: Thou shalt disrespect your father and mother and make fools of them

**6th commandment**: Thou shalt commit murder

**7th commandment**: Thou shalt be unfaithful to your spouse and commit adultery

**8th commandment**: Thou shalt steal and rob from other people

**9th commandment**: Thou shalt tell lies and bear false witness against others

**10th commandment**: Thou shalt covet thy neighbor's wife and home

If anything is grim and cheerless, it’s the kind of world where the Ten Commandments are trampled underfoot and ignored – and we see this every day, aren’t we?

Maybe there **is** a good purpose for these laws – and maybe there **is** a way of looking at them that gives us an even deeper glimpse into the heart of God for His people.

And there is – Jesus explained it in the verse I gave you earlier from Matthew Chapter 22

“‘*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*"

Though we see 10 commandments listed in Exodus, in Matthew when Jesus said the law hangs on the two commandments He spoke of, it’s because the 10 commandments can be easily divided into two basic sections. The first section deals with *the things that directly reflect upon our relationship with God* – and are basically about loving and obeying God. The second section has to do with *how we should govern our own selves in relation to one another*. So, you can see that, truly, the 10 commandments **DO** all hang on the 2 Jesus gave us.

If we open our bibles to John chapter 14 verse 24 Jesus said “*Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*”

God wrote the original Ten Commandments with His own handwriting upon tablets of stone – but those tablets were broken by Moses when he found the Israelites sinning in idolatry and all manner of evil when he came back from his meeting with God on Mount Sinai – and Moses had to make two new tablets and take them back up the mountain – where he then cut into the rock the laws as God dictated them to him once more. God told Moses His laws *twice* – and, as any child knows - if a father has to say it twice - he ***really*** means it!

Now for a little bit let us head back into the Old Testament as there are some verses that point to these two commandments that Jesus gave us.

We will first look at Deuteronomy Chapter 6 verse 5, chapter 13 verse 3,

*Deut 6:5 “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

*Deut 13:3b “... The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

See, Jesus wasn’t teaching a new thing, here. He was only reminding the people of what had already been told to them hundreds of years in the past – which they’d ignored and didn’t obey. The priests and scribes that had confronted Jesus should have known these things themselves - but they had become so ***blinded*** by their many rabbinical laws and an outward show of piety that they had completely lost sight of the most important things of all – the very things that not only the Ten Commandments themselves, but all of the many Levitical laws of the Old Testament were only more detailed explanations and examples of!

The second book of the Old Testament we will look at is a verse in Joshua chapter 22 verse 5

Joshua, 22:5 “*But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.*”

Love Him. Walk in obedience to Him. Keep His commands. Hold fast to Him. Serve Him. None of these things are anything but a beautiful example of God’s love - that He grants us the privilege to love Him, walk with Him, even to serve Him and hold to Him like a small child holds onto their father.

Is that really so much to ask to give to the One Who gave us the very breath we breathe, in fact, created everything that exists in perfection and gave it to us as a creation day gift? After all He has given to us – is our love, our obedience, our service to Him so much to ask in return?

Finally we’re going to head to Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18 and verse 34

Lev 19:18 “*Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD*.”

Lev 19:34 “*The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God*.”

Alongside of loving and obeying God – we are also to love and care for one another. Not seeking revenge, not bearing grudges, treating even strangers as if they were our flesh and blood brothers and sisters – loving others at least as much as we love our own selves - these are the things God tells us we should do to one another.

But is this how we treat one another? No, far from it. We live in a world where just the opposite is the rule – where getting your own at the expense of everyone else is considered to be success and the degree to which we are greater or lesser successes depends on the degree of how far we are willing to go to hurt others to get what we want.

Many people today are no longer looking for truth, but instead they are looking for a smooth, easy, comfortable religion that will allow them to live the way they please and still give assurance of salvation. They don’t want to hear about laws or commandments.

Today the Ten Commandments are being forcibly removed from schools, government institutions and other public places. Having no moral law taught or displayed cannot be without repercussions as we now find sex, pornography, violence and crime have become accepted as normal in television, movies, music and the internet. If all this moral decay isn't disturbing enough, we now observe Christian organizations with their internet sites exhorting that we no longer have to observe the Ten Commandments. Some of these web sites not only attack the validity of the Ten Commandments but also condemn other Churches that do teach loving obedience to the law as Jesus Christ instructed. Just a few decades ago, anyone claiming the law was abolished was accused of **antinomianism[[1]](#footnote-1)**. Yet today, we see more and more Christians embracing the thought of not having to obey the Ten Commandments at all. To keep them or not to keep them has become a pivotal issue as we approach the closing crisis of Earth's history in these last days.

Jesus was very clear that He still, as He always had, intended that the Ten Commandments be kept. He sort of repackaged them into a simpler form – reducing ten to two – but the two contained all that the ten had contained – there was no loss or change to the law itself.

Some Christians have even been saying, “*The Holy Spirit told me we don't need to obey the Ten Commandments anymore.*” With so many contradictory teachings, how can one possibly know what is really true or false in regards to the Ten Commandments? There is of course only one way and that is what is found in the Holy Bible. God's Holy Spirit will never tell us anything that is contrary to His Word, for “*He is the same yesterday, today and forever.*” Hebrews 13:8.

Pushing aside all other areas of confusion for the moment, let's go straight to the end of the story and read the final word on what the Holy Bible says in regards to the Ten Commandments:

Revelation 22:14-15 says “*Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”*

So, if all we have to do is love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves, does this mean we can take the Lord's name in vain, worship idols or even deny God the quality time of praise and worship He wants from us on His Holy day? What about others; does it mean we can lie, steal, murder, disrespect our parents or sleep with another's spouse? No – because if one loves God with all their heart and others as themselves, they will be obeying every single one of the Ten Commandments. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 22:40 after quoting these Old Testament words that ALL the law hang on these two Commandments.

Jesus while referring to the Ten Commandments also used these straightforward and easy to understand words. In John 14:15, He quotes from the second of the Ten Commandments, “*If you love me, keep my Commandments*.” and in John 15:10, “*If you keep my Commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's Commandments, and abide in his love.*” Jesus obeyed the Fathers Commandments and He asks us to demonstrate our love for Him by doing the same. We also find in 1 John 2:4, “*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*” The words of this last verse are something to consider very seriously.

All of these verses use the Greek word entole (pronounced en-TOL-ay) that is *always* used for the Ten Commandments in the New Testament, so we can easily see how God feels about our loving obedience to His law. 1 John 5:3 “*For this is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments: and his Commandments are not grievous.*”

Were the Ten Commandments nailed to the cross? Is the very sin that started with Adam and Eve and nailed our loving Saviour to the cross *something God no longer cares about*? Did Jesus die so we could continue living in lawlessness? Is this what the Bible **really** says about the Ten Commandments, or are these just lies from our adversary who is determined to keep and steal everyone he can from God's kingdom, especially as we draw closer to this Earths final days? Romans 6:23 says Jesus died to redeem us from the penalty of sin which is death by taking the penalty for our sin upon Himself, not so we could continue living in sin, which is breaking the Ten Commandments.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The law of God serves three purposes:

First, it is a moral “code of conduct” by which we are to conduct ourselves. Its instructions help us to live moral lives in the sight of God and with one another.

Secondly, it is a yardstick by which to measure one’s moral guilt – that is, what level of sin a person has. Without some sort of measure, it would be impossible to determine if a person’s activities were sin or not – so the measure by which that is gauged is the Ten Commandments. The Commandments thus act as a litmus test, of sorts, to determine if a person is a sinner or not – by which even the thought of breaking one of these commandments – one is a sinner... and there has only ever been one person who was found to be entirely and purely innocent of all sin or even sinful thinking 0 the God-man, Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, the Commandments are a tool of the Holy Spirit by which the Holy Spirit can convict a person of his or her sinfulness and bring them recognition of their need for a Savior.

Every single person will be judged by the mighty moral code of God's Ten Commandments. To break just one is to be guilty of sin entirely. The Bible plainly demonstrates that the Ten Commandments are like a chain of ten links. When one link is broken, the whole chain is broken. And so it is with the Ten Commandments. Those who stand in the judgment will have to meet the acid test of the Ten Commandments. If a practicing thief should seek entrance into the kingdom, he would be rejected. This is why Paul says thieves will not inherit the heavenly city. Furthermore, the Bible specifically declares that idolaters, adulterers, liars and covetous men will not be in the kingdom. Why? Because the Ten Commandments forbid those things and men will be judged finally by this law. Not one single person will be admitted into heaven that is WILFULLY violating any one of the Ten Commandments because breaking one of the Ten Commandments is breaking them all.

But, this is not all. Not only did Jesus *simplify* the law – He *magnified* it.

Before this, it was thought that it was only a person’s ***actions*** that were judged – BUT...

Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28 : “*You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart*.”

Now, He reveals it is not simply the **act**, but even ***thinking of the act*** that is sin!

On the Day of Judgment, when all the books are opened and every deed and thought we’ve ever done or thought is read out before the Throne of God – even if you had never actually done ***any*** of these things – if you only have ever had even the ***thought*** of doing so - you are as guilty as if you ***had*** done it.

What a sobering thought! How can anyone escape the wrath of God if we are to be judged on the fleeting thoughts of our minds as well as the deeds of our hands??!?!

The truth is we **can’t**.

We can’t obey the moral code. Our behavior just doesn’t measure up to it – not even our *thoughts* can measure up. And, because of that, we look at the Ten Commandments and we hear what Jesus said we are to do – and we realize we are hopelessly lost cases before the great judgment seat of God – without hope, and without any defense – that our very thoughts will convict us!

But the Good News is that Jesus not only magnified the law– He brought about its fulfillment and its remedy as well!!!

Why was Jesus Christ condemned to die? What was the real purpose of the Ten Commandments and the reason for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the real truth on how we are saved? Multitudes have heard emotional talks on sin and salvation but they still don’t understand the logic and reason that required a blood sacrifice. So let's push aside all the rubbish and confusion that has obscured the truth on how men are saved and see what the Bible really says.

Just imagine the horror of standing before a judge and hearing the sentence of death pronounced against you. Can you imagine how you would feel? Probably not. But you have felt the driving guilt and fear when God's Word stabs you with the sentence: “The wages of sin is death.” From Romans 6:23. So why do we feel fear and guilt? Because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23.

The words are there and the meaning cannot be misunderstood. The word “all” might just as well be spelled Mark Snider or Tim Roberts. The shocking fact is that we are all under the sentence of death! We have been found guilty before the law and there is no court of appeal in the world that can reverse that sentence and find us not guilty. The fact is we are guilty as sin. According to 1 John 3:4, “*sin is the transgression of the law*,” and we must plead guilty to breaking the law. Whose law did we break? Paul answers quickly, “*I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet*.” Romans 7:7. There's the answer! The Ten Commandments are the law that is broken and demands death for the transgressor. In desperation we sinners search for a way to be justified in the sight of those broken Ten Commandment laws! How can the sentence of death be turned aside?!?!?! Can a man atone for his own sins by obeying the Ten Commandments of God for the rest of his life? Back comes the answer in language that no person can possibly misinterpret: “*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.*” Romans 3:20.

There is a reason why works will not justify a soul. If a man is found guilty of stealing and is sentenced to ten years in jail, he can indeed justify himself by works. By serving his ten year sentence, the man may satisfy the claims of the law. He is considered perfectly justified and innocent because he has worked out his deliverance by fulfilling the pronounced sentence. In the same manner, a murderer can be justified by works if he serves the twenty five years of his sentence. But suppose the sentence is death instead of twenty five years. Can the prisoner still justify himself by works? Not a chance! Even if he should work for one hundred years at hard labor, the law would still demand death. The truth is that, as it says in Hebrews 9:22–28 “without shedding of blood is no remission. … So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.”

This is why works can never save the sinner. The penalty for sin is not ten years in prison or twenty five years of hard labor. The sentence is death and the law cannot be satisfied except by the shedding of blood. That unchangeable law with its unrelenting death sentence could no more be removed than the throne of God could be toppled. The guilt of the past cannot be erased by resolutions of good behavior in the future. The sinner is forced to confess that he owes something that he cannot pay. The law demands death and he cannot satisfy it without forfeiting his own life for eternity. Now we come to that question that has created confusion for multitudes of Christians: If the works of the law cannot save a person, is it therefore necessary to keep the Ten Commandments law? Apparently this was a burning issue in the early Church, because Paul asked the same question in Romans 6:1. “*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”* In other words, does grace give us a license to disobey the Ten Commandments of God? His answer is: *“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*”

The Bible says sin is violating the Ten Commandments; the law which has been described as irrelevant by many modern theologians. Do not be deceived. Every one of those great moral commandments is just as timely and needful today as they were when God wrote them on those tablets of stone. We have seen how Jesus came to magnify the law and simplify its spiritual application, by making it far more comprehensive than the legalistic Pharisees of the day had ever imagined. Under the influence of Jesus Christ’s perfect life of obedience, we can see the spiritual details of law-keeping which are neither recognized nor made possible apart from Him. At this point we must be very careful to remind ourselves also what the Ten Commandments **cannot** do. Even though it points out sin, it has no power to *save* from sin. There is no justifying, cleansing grace in it. All the works of the law cannot save a single soul. Why? For the simple reason that we are saved by grace through faith, as a free gift. “*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” Romans 3:20.

We cannot earn forgiveness by working hard to obey the Ten Commandments. No sinner can gain favor and acceptance with God because he kept the law. The Ten Commandments were not made for the purpose of saving or justifying. They were made to show us our need of cleansing and to point us to the great source of cleansing, Jesus Christ our Lord. The Bible speaks of the law as a mirror to show us what kind of persons we really are. “*For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*.” James 1:23–25.

Looking into the mirror all day or rubbing the mirror all over your face will never provide any cleansing. The work of the mirror is to reveal the spot and to point the dirty one to the sink for actual cleansing. The Ten Commandments likewise can only condemn the sinner by giving him knowledge of his or her condition and then pointing them to the cross for true cleansing. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9: “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*.” and further emphasizes in Romans 3:20-28 “*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin....Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*”

It would be easy, wouldn’t it, to look at the Ten Commandments that became Two Commandments and think it means we don’t have to worry about those Ten any longer. Nothing could be further from the truth. The law can’t save us, it can only condemn us – but it also grants to us a framework upon which we can base our relationship to our Creator and our relationships with others around us. It is a beautiful way for God to show His love and care for us, just as any loving human father would, who wants his children to grow and become strong men and women one day – he doesn’t allow them absolute freedom, but he provides them with boundaries which allow them to grow strong and filled with good things.

If there were no law, there would be no need for God's grace which is His unmerited, undeserved favor to us that is preceded by the act of genuine repentance of our sin. If we *did* have to rely on keeping the law to be saved, we would be eternally lost as there has only ever been One who could and did keep them perfectly – our Lord and Savior, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. We are not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments - we are saved though FAITH in Christ's redeeming sacrifice - by the GRACE of God.

Let us pray...

Lord, thank you for the Ten Commandments and for Jesus Christ, who shows us the way. Help us to obey Your word and to follow You and You alone, as we pray the words as Jesus taught us:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."\* Amen.

1. Defined as: holding that, under the gospel dispensation of grace, [moral law](http://www.ask.com/wiki/Christian_morality?qsrc=3044)s are of no use or obligation for salvation because *faith alone* is necessary to [salvation](http://www.ask.com/wiki/Salvation_(Christianity)?qsrc=3044). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)