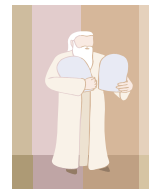


Preacher's Pen points

About that “Eleventh Commandment”



Recently Gail Kerr in her weekly Tennessean column cited a British newspaper that asked its readers the following question, “If you could add one more commandment to the ten commandments, what would it be?” Mrs. Kerr, having read some of the responses, suggested a similar proposal to local readers. The answers sent in by readers could perhaps be said to cover the spectrum from the sublime to the ridiculous. But the possibilities of suggesting an “eleventh commandment” got me thinking about the unstated but often presumed view that the Ten Commandments are still God’s law for Christians today.

The Ten Commandments in Modern Thought

The religious world has consistently had difficulty handling the issue of how we use the OT in our religious practice. The most commonly affirmed position is that we should distinguish between the “moral” law and the “ceremonial” law of the OT. And it is affirmed that the “ten commandments”, as moral law, should still be obeyed as God’s law based on their statement in the Law.

Difficulties of this Position

However, this position raises immediate problems. Obeying the fourth commandment demands, in the context of Ex. 20, that its observers do no work on the seventh day of the week, that is, Saturday! Seventh Day Adventists, among others, advocate that Christians today should observe the Sabbath, assembling and resting on Saturday. The remainder, who meet on Sunday, seek to resolve the problem by making Sunday the “Christian Sabbath” and urge obedience to the fourth command with this new definition of the “Sabbath” day. I believe both groups are wrong!

Finding a Solution

The real problem in this case is the failure to realize that the Ten Commandments were a part of the old covenant given by Moses which has become “*obsolete*” and which was replaced by a “*new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah*” (Heb. 8:7-13). Consistently the NT urges Christians to realize that the Law (including the obligations of the Decalogue) could not save those who attempted to live under its demands (Gal. 2:16). Instead, it affirms that Jesus Christ, having fulfilled the Law, removed it as a basis for righteousness and brought into its place a new covenant, given by the Holy Spirit, that liberates the disciple from the obligations of legal righteousness (Col. 2:8-15). Simply put, the Christian has been “*released from the Law*” that he might be “*joined to Christ*” and bear the fruit of righteousness through faith in Him (Rom. 7:1-6).

Does this mean then that the principles taught in the Decalogue have no application in the Christian’s life?

Not at all! Jesus in His teaching stressed the inward moral principles that would produce the righteousness the Law was intended to impart (Mt. 5-7). He stressed love of God and love of fellowman, the practice of which would not only achieve external conformity to the Law, but would also result in an inward righteousness to which the Ten Commandments pointed. The bottom line is this: Obeying the Ten Commandments, per se, is not necessary to salvation; but following the teaching of Jesus is absolutely necessary. Obeying Him will glorify and please God; and there will be no need for an “eleventh commandment”.

—Johnny Felker (www.truthchasers.com)