

How We Love The Ten Commandments

Introduction

Andy Stanley says that the Ten Commandments don't actually apply to us¹ anymore because they have been replaced by Jesus. When Jesus gave us the one command to love one another as ourselves, Stanley says, He was replacing all the laws of the Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments. It is true that all the Ten Commandments are summed up in the command to love one another:

“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:8–10) (ESV)

If we obey Jesus' commands to love as He loved, we will fulfill the Ten Commandments. However, Paul does not say the Ten Commandments are no longer applicable, just that they can be stated more succinctly in one command. Furthermore, he demonstrates the importance of the Ten Commandments by tying them back to the command of Jesus that we love one another. In other words,

Paul indicates that the Christian is compelled to obey the Ten Commandments in order to fulfill the law of love. Obeying the command to “love one another” should result in an ongoing carefulness about obeying the Ten Commandments!

Stanley makes two errors. First, he confuses the use of the law in the life of the unredeemed and the use of the law in the life of the redeemed. The law of God proves the guilt of the lost, leading them to Jesus so that they may receive grace and forgiveness. This will take a little bit of explanation from Paul:

“²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.” (Galatians 3:23–26) (ESV)

The law was the guardian of mankind until Christ came. What does that mean? It means that the righteousness of God was displayed in His law. What level of righteousness does God require of mankind? It is spelled out in His law. But His law, though showing us the way of righteousness, also proves our guilt. Why? Because no man can keep all the laws of God.

¹<https://relevantmagazine.com/god/why-do-christians-want-to-post-the-10-commandments-and-not-the-sermon-on-the-mount/>

If we look simply at the Ten Commandments, we will see that everyone in this room (with the exception of newborn babies) have failed to keep these laws. Have you ever lied? Have you ever stolen? Have you ever coveted? Have you ever talked back to your parents? Do I have to go on?

The law shows us the path of righteousness. It also shows us that the flaw of evil is in every human heart. All are shut up under sin. All are guilty by the law. All are under the sentence of punishment because of the law. All of us need a Savior.

At the right time in human history, God sent that Savior, Jesus. He kept the law perfectly for he had no evil within Him. Being innocent, He offered His life as a payment for the sins of the world. He died as a substitute for you and me. He received our punishment.

Any sinner then, who puts his faith in Jesus will be forgiven of sins.

Therefore, the text says, we are not under the law anymore. We have been set free from the punishment of the law. The use of the law in your life has changed. No longer does it serve as the guardian, teaching you the righteous path and exposing your sins and need for a Savior. Why?

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

You are not under the law anymore. What does this mean in a practical sense? It means that you are not made guilty anymore because of your failure to keep the law. The law could not save you because of the sin within your nature. But you are saved by faith in Jesus. He kept the law on your behalf. You cannot be punished for your sins because the law does not apply to you for punishment.

But, then, you may ask, “Have you not made Andy Stanley’s case for him? Does this not feed into his argument that the Ten Commandments don’t apply to us anymore?” You’d think so, unless you see that his error is in using the law in the life of the redeemed as if it were for the unsaved. For the unsaved, the Ten Commandments serves to show God’s righteous path and to declare the person guilty and under punishment.

For the saved, should the Ten Commandments be set aside? No. Look at how Paul himself states this:

“¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:15–18) (ESV)

If we are not obeying sin, then what are we obeying? God! And His righteousness! Where can we learn God’s righteous ways? His law! His Ten Commandments show us the righteous way to live. We are to live in obedience to these laws because of grace.

**We study the Ten Commandments so that we will see the wisdom of God,
so that we will understand the path of love.**

**We obey the Ten Commandments not in order to be made righteous
by obedience to them, but because we have been made righteous by faith.**

What has changed for the believer is that his obedience is not as one under law, fearing punishment. Rather, he obeys the law from the heart! The Ten Commandments are not written in the heart because the Spirit of God lives within us. Our motive for obeying has changed, as has our power to obey! We now do not obey out of fear, but of love of what is good. We now operate not on the power of our disobedient flesh, but by the power of the Holy Spirit within!

Look at these texts because they show us our spiritual position in relation to obedience:

“⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin...¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus...¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6) (ESV)

The cross of Christ is the means by which we can now obey the commands of God. The Ten Commandments still apply to us, but not as a means of becoming righteous. Rather, we obey the commands because we are living out the righteousness of God!

The second error that Stanley makes is that he comingles the Ten Commandments with the ceremonial laws of the Jews. He even says, “² Thanks to the new covenant, we aren't required to sacrifice animals to stay on speaking terms with God. Skim through Leviticus and you'll discover a whole lot of things we aren't required to do.”

He is correct that we are not to sacrifice animals anymore, but we continue to forsake idols, to avoid adultery, to honor our mother and father, and to not bear false witness. The Old Testament laws can be divided several ways. They can be divided into ceremonial laws, civil laws and moral laws. The ceremonial laws have to do with religious ritual. The civil laws have to do with the criminal justice system of the nation of Israel in ancient times. Both are limited. The ceremonial laws have been completed, finished in Jesus. The civil laws are limited to the nation of Israel before the coming of Jesus. But the moral laws are not limited.

Stanley speaks as if he does not know this, making an argument that exploits the ignorance of his followers.

Take Jesus as an example. Jesus points out that the time of the ceremonial laws will end in this exchange:

*“The woman said to him, ‘Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘**Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers***

will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’”
(John 4:19–24) (ESV)

The woman wanted to know whose religion was better: The Samaritans or the Jews. Jesus said that the Jews were the ones doing right, but that soon the religious rituals of the priesthood and the temple would be extinct because worship would be done within.

Jesus showed that the civil laws of the Jews were limited even under the rule of the Romans. He told the Jews not to stone a woman taken in adultery. He told the Jews to pay taxes to the Romans. The time of Israel being an earthly kingdom had come to an end.

What about the moral laws? Did He set those aside? No. In fact, He doubled down on them. Look at this:

“¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven ...’
²¹ ‘You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.” ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, “You fool!” will be liable to the hell of fire.’” (Matthew 5)

Not only did Jesus affirm the commandment, “You shall not murder,” but He made it even harder to obey.

Stanley correctly cites Jesus’ command to “love one another as I have loved you,” as an “all-encompassing command.”² But he seems not to have noticed that both Jesus and Paul go to great trouble to define what that love looks like.

Conclusion

Andy Stanley foolishly confuses people by carelessly dismissing the Ten Commandments. We will not follow his lead. For my money, I’d rather listen to J. I. Packer, who says:

“We too are wonderfully made, complex physically and even more so psychologically and spiritually. For us, too, there is a maker’s handbook — namely, God’s summary of the way to live that we find in the Ten Commandments. Whether as persons we grow and blossom or shrink and wither, whether in character we become more like God or more like the devil, depends directly on whether we seek to live by what is in the Commandments or not. The rest of the Bible could be called God’s repair manual, since it spells out the gospel of grace that restores sin-damaged human nature. But it is the Commandments that crystallize the basic behavior pattern

²Ibid.

that brings satisfaction and contentment, and it is precisely for this way of living that God's grace rescues and refits us."³

To prepare for this series, I ask that you do two things.

One, go back to Exodus 20, read the commandments, and begin to pray about them to Jesus. Ask Him to show you His wisdom and goodness.

Second, if you have not placed your faith in Jesus, but instead have put your faith in your own ability to be good, repent of that sin, and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins!



³Packer, J. I. Keeping the Ten Commandments. Crossway. Kindle Edition.