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God's Special Message

Of the 31,072 verses of Scripture that compose the Holy Bible, only fifteen verses were written directly by God. All the rest of the Bible was written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21, RSV).

God had a very special reason for not committing the writing of these fifteen verses to man. This small portion of the Bible is so important that God Himself came down to this earth, spoke these words in tones of thunder, and then with His own divine finger wrote them on tables of stone. These fifteen verses of Scripture are the Ten Commandments. Of all the Holy Scriptures the Decalogue is the only portion of the Bible that God personally wrote word for word. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them" (Exodus 24:12). "And He gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, table of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18).

The Ten Commandments form God's constitution. They are a perfect law - short, clear, and comprehensive. Of all the codes and laws that have existed, no document ever written has so influenced society as have the Ten Commandments. This law has outlived the centuries. Empires have come and gone, but it endures. It has withstood more attacks than any other piece of literature ever written. Its most caustic critics have failed to discover one flaw in it, and it still speaks with the same authority as when first given to man.

This law is all inclusive. It embodies three great principles or attributes of God: holiness, justice, and goodness. In no other law can all three of these great principles be found. The apostle Paul speaks of the Ten Commandments in these words: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). Paul found in the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue the holiness, justice, and goodness of God.

Another Bible writer, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Psalm 19:7). It is a perfect law because it came from a perfect God, and if you practice its instructions, it will develop perfection in your life through the grace of Christ.

When the Constitution of the United States was written, it contained provisions whereby this great document might be changed if conditions and circumstances should arise which made such changes necessary. Experience has taught that with all human laws, changes in conditions often necessitate a change in the law. Recognizing this great principle, the framers of the Constitution made it possible that changes or alterations might be made in this great document. Time has proved the wisdom of this provision. Certain amendments have been made to the Constitution which have made it more valuable. But when the law of God - the Ten Commandments - was given, God made

no provision for changes or the making of amendments. The reason is obvious: It is a perfect law. To change a thing that is perfect would make it imperfect. Perfection cannot be improved upon.

The law of God is not only perfect, it is timeless. It never goes out of date. It applies to all men in all places at all times. It speaks with the same authority today as when given on Mount Sinai. As long as time shall last, the Ten Commandments will continue to speak to the hearts of men. This moral code will always be the standard of conduct among men and the law by which all will be judged in the end.

There are two parts to the law of God. The first four commandments deal with man's love and duty to God; the last six refer to love and duty to his fellowmen. A lawyer in Christ's day summed up these two great principles in the following words: "And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:27).

There is a false impression among some Christians that the Ten Commandments are not binding upon men this side of the cross. They have been taught to believe that the Ten Commandments have been either changed or abolished. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those fifteen verses of Scripture are just as binding today as when spoken by God on the mount.

Jesus knew that some would attempt to claim that He had changed or abolished the Ten Commandments while He lived on earth. That is why He told them, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19). No better authority could be found than Christ Himself for setting forth the binding claims of the law. Said He, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets." Not for one minute are we to think that the great constitution of God - His Ten Commandments - has been abolished or changed. This law will outlive the earth: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." Over and over Christ spoke of the binding claims of the law. In the Sermon on the Mount, where He set forth the principles of His church on earth, He warned, "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Matthew 5:21,27). From where are these commands quoted? From the law of God. They form part of God's constitution, the Ten Commandments, which He wrote with His finger.

When here on earth Jesus taught men to keep His law. Instead of doing away with the law, Christ said, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." The word "fulfill" means "to bring to pass," "to manifest completely." Instead of doing away with the law as some have thought, Christ kept it and taught others to do likewise. He showed by His life how this law should be observed.

Isaiah, writing several hundred years before Christ came to this earth, said that when He did come, He would "magnify the law, and make it honorable" (Isaiah 42:21). Christ did this very thing. He taught the dignity and beauty of this law. It was in His heart. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). There is a great deal of difference between magnifying a thing and changing it. When a thing is

magnified, it is neither abolished nor changed. When a magnifying lens is placed upon an object, it simply reveals some of the hidden things that the natural eye cannot see. It makes the object stand out more clearly. When Christ walked among men, He magnified the law by living out its principles in His daily life. He made the law honorable by honoring it in His life day by day.

Christ used the strongest language that could be found to emphasize the unchanging character of God's law. "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). A "jot" is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. A "tittle" is a point or period. Christ said that not so much as the dotting of an "i" or the crossing of a "t" is ever to be changed in the law of God. By this we are to see just how particular God is regarding those fifteen verses of Scripture that He wrote with His own finger. This law is not to be tampered with by man, but it is to be left in its original state as God gave it to Moses on the mountain.

Christ, who is our example and authority in all things spiritual, not only kept the law Himself, but taught that others should do likewise. "And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16). This young ruler echoes the language of our own heart. Every sane person has had at some time in his life a desire to be saved, to live eternally and enjoy the things that God has prepared for them that love Him. The answer Christ gave the young man showing him how he might have eternal life is still the answer to this question. Christ's answer cannot be misunderstood. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). Nothing could be clearer or more plain - "Keep the commandments." Surely, this does not sound as if Christ had any intention of doing away with them. On the contrary, He spoke a truth that will stand as long as men ask, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

Lawyers are good at asking questions. "Behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). Although he was not sincere in what he asked, yet in answering a question of such importance Christ spoke the truth in all sincerity. Eternal life is not a trifling matter. "He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (verse 26). Christ directed this man who asked how to inherit eternal life to the law. It would show him how much he needed God.

The test of love is obedience. Urged Jesus, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). In no other way can we show our love for God. "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Galatians 5:14). Obedience to God's law is evidence of our love and loyalty to Him and our brethren. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:2,3).

John the disciple denounces those who claim to know God but disregard His law: "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3,4).

There is real joy and delight in obedience to God's law. It brings man into harmony with God's kingdom. "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

Paul loved God's law. He declared, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22). David expressed his regard for God's law in these words: "O how I love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). The spiritual giants of the Bible all loved and kept God's law. It was to them the voice of God. To obey it was their joy and delight.

The Ten Commandments will be the standard by which men will be judged. "If you really fulfill the royal law, according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' said also, 'Do not kill.' If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are judged under the law of liberty" (James 2:8-12, RSV).

These texts reveal these truths: First, we must keep the whole law. To ignore any one command is breaking the law. Second, this law is a "law of liberty." Obedience gives liberty and freedom. It does not condemn those who keep it. Third, it will be God's standard in the judgment. All we say and do will some day pass under the X-ray of God's law. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."

Solomon summed it up with these words: "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).