

5. Commandments of God

God's moral law is theonomous, meaning that it is both internal and external, inscribed in our hearts and revealed to us during the course of salvation history. God's law reveals God's will for humanity and is an instrument of grace that heals the weakness of human nature caused by the Fall and restores (and even transforms) what humanity lost as a result of this primal fall from grace. The Decalogue, the ten moral precepts of the Old Covenant, pertain to both God and neighbor. Jesus summarizes the whole of the law and the prophets by drawing an intimate connection between love of God and love of neighbor. Jesus' commandment of love can only be lived if it is lived in the Spirit.

I. Introduction: How Do We Know God's Commands? We Have Several Means by Which We Know God's Commands; Theonomy: God's Word; Inscribed; Revealed; Ten Commandments: Natural Law; Revealed Law

Purpose of Divine Revelation: To Reveal God's Love; Humanity's Fall from Grace (Original Sin: CCC 390); Effects on Human Nature; Weakness of Mind; Weakness of Will; Unruly Passions; Social Unrest; Death; God's Restorative, Redemptive Love

Chesterton's Image of the Playground: "Chesterton's image of the playground fence erected around the children on top of the mountain so that they could play without fear of falling off the side. That's why God gave us his law: not to make us worried but to keep us safe so that we could play the great games of life and love and joy."
- Peter Kreeft, "Discernment: How Can I Learn God's Will for Me."

II. Commandment and Covenant: Etymology of the Word "Commandment" 1. Hebrew: "Mitzvah" - Divine Commandment;

- (i) Expression of Divine Will;
- (ii) Not Meant to Be Burdensome
- (iii) Seen As Opportunity to Express Gratitude to God for Gift of Life
- (iv) Commandments and Covenant
- (v) Divine Gift
- (vi) Human Response

Theology of Covenant in the Bible: The Old Covenant: Torah - Covenant of Sinai 1.613 "Commandments," or Divine Words, in the Torah; 248 Positive Commands 365 Negative Commands; Types of Law: Decalogue: Ten Commandments;

Relating to God and Neighbor; Commandments 1-3: Relate to God a) First - Respect for God; Second - Respect for God's Name; Third - Respect for the Lord's Day

Commandments 4-10: Relate to Neighbor; Fourth - Respect for Elders; Fifth - Respect for Life; Sixth - Respect for Marriage and Sexuality; Seventh - Respect for Property; Eighth - Respect for Truth; Ninth - Respect for One's Desires (Sexuality) Tenth - Respect for One's Desires (Goods); Judicial: Relating to Justice; Ceremonial: Relating to Worship

Old Covenant/New Covenant; Covenant with the Jews Not Abolished (Still Holds) Fulfilled in Jesus; The New Covenant: Jesus is the Son of God, The Word of God Made Flesh; He is Fulfillment of the Law; His Law Is the Law of Love 4. God is Love: Trinity: Communion of Love; The Christ Narrative

The Greatest of the Commandments (Matthew 22:36-40): Love of God (Deuteronomy 6:5); Love of Neighbor (Leviticus 19:18); Summarizes the Entire Law in Two Commands

III. The Ten Commandments: More Should Be Said About the Ten Commandments; Revealed Law; Natural Law: According to Aquinas, the Ten Commandments Are Recognizable by Reason After Only a Modicum of Reflection

The Law of Grace: Grace Perfects Nature; The Commandments Are Not Impossible to Keep; With God All Things Are Possible; The Spirit Empowers Us to Embrace and Follow Them

The New Law: From Commandment to Beatitude; Content (Matter) of the New Law: The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-22); Form of the New Law: The Grace of the Spirit (Aquinas, ST MI, q. 106, a. 1, resp.); The Ten Commandments are Subsumed into the Beatitudes (Read Mt 5: 3-12).

Conclusion: God's Commandment Is Fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ 1. Commandment of Love; Love One Another As I Have Loved You" (John 13:34) Live in Love; Live in the Spirit.

Reflection Questions

1. How do we come to know the commandments?
2. Is it possible for us to follow them?
3. Why should we follow them?