

CHAPTER 7

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS - PROOF THAT YOU AND I ARE SINNERS, NOT JUST OTHER PEOPLE

I have included this chapter to address the problem many people have. When 'sin' or 'sinners' are referred to, they assume somebody else is being spoken about, not themselves. Most of the people I have ever spoken to have believed that they are good. But they aren't. We are all sinners, including me and you. If any further proof is needed, that you and I are sinners, let us look at the Ten Commandments as an exercise. The Law of Moses actually contains 613 commandments from God to the Jewish people. But among those there are the ten main ones which Moses was given by God on Mount Sinai. You could say that these ten sum up all of the others. Let us look at them, just as examples, and work out whether or not you have broken them and if so, how often.

However, please note that the Jewish Law of Moses, of which the Ten Commandments are a part, does not apply any longer. That is because Jesus has fulfilled the Law of Moses and we are not now subject to it. However, nine of the ten commandments were specifically *restated* in the New Testament. That means that they do apply to us today. The only one not restated was the fourth commandment about the sabbath day. We are therefore still bound to obey the other nine, not as part of the Law of Moses, but because they are restated in the New Testament.

The Ten Commandments which God gave to Israel:

- 1) ⁷*"You shall have no other gods before me.*
- 2) ⁸*"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in Heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
- 3) ¹¹*"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*
- 4) ¹²*"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁴but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. ¹⁵Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.*

(NB Remember, this fourth commandment about the sabbath was not restated in the New Testament so it does not apply to us today).

- 5) ¹⁶*"Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*

- 6) ¹⁷ *"You shall not murder.*
- 7) ¹⁸ *"You shall not commit adultery.*
- 8) ¹⁹ *"You shall not steal.*
- 9) ²⁰ *"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.*
- 10) ²¹ *"You shall not covet your neighbour's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbour's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."*

Deuteronomy 5:7-21 (NIV)

Are you guilty of breaking these commandments?

Possibly you feel you are not guilty of breaking any of them? Or perhaps you assume that you have only broken them to a slight extent and therefore that you are doing relatively well. However, let's look at each of the nine commandments that still apply to us and consider whether you are innocent or guilty. I am doing this because, in my experience, so many people just cannot see, or will not admit, that they are sinners.

I hope that by the time we get to the end of this chapter there will no longer be any argument about this and that you will accept that you have sinned in more ways than you have realised, and that you are just as guilty as I am. By the way, I am not saying that these are the only sins that you and I are guilty of. There are many more besides these, such as pride, selfishness, cruelty, callousness, rebellion, lack of love etc etc. These nine commandments are just examples to prove the general point. The true extent of our sinfulness is far wider than this.

1. Do you put other gods before God?

The first commandment - "You shall have no other gods before me'.

Deuteronomy 5:7 (NIV)

The word "gods," spelled with a small "g", refers to a number of things. Firstly it means the worship of gods in polytheistic religions such as Hinduism, where they have a multitude of gods. Likewise in the religions of ancient Greece, Rome and Scandinavia, they had very many gods such as Diana, Jupiter, Thor, Woden, etc. The Bible tells us that in reality, behind all such false gods or idols, there are demons.

For most of us who are from the West, the idea of worshiping false gods such as this, whether demons or otherwise, is alien. You might imagine therefore that you are innocent of this sin and that you do not worship any gods ahead of God Himself. However, you can make anything into a god. Your own god could be yourself, your career, family, money, comfort, a house, pleasure, car, hobby, pop star or a football team.

It is anything that you value more highly than God Himself and to which you give greater emphasis and importance than to Him. When you put it that way, you will quickly realise that you have probably got several 'gods' in your life that you actively worship. Take money for example. How much time do you spend thinking about money as compared to thinking about God Himself? Do you love God as much as you love money? You may have never even considered such a question. Alternatively, ask yourself about your career or some other ambition. If you are honest with yourself

you will admit that you have, on countless occasions, and in many different ways, elevated something or someone to a higher place than God. I certainly have.

The point of the first commandment is that God alone is to be worshiped. Nothing else and nobody else is ever to be worshiped. This commandment does not sound very serious to our Western ears. Yet God sees it as crucial. He will not accept anything other than first place in your life. Therefore to give anything else first place is to make that thing a god instead of, or ahead of, Him.

He refuses to share His place as the God of the universe and as your God. It is therefore a dreadful insult to put any god before Him. This is worth reflecting upon at length until you can see where you have been committing this sin. It may not be obvious to you at first. But once you dwell upon it you will see that you have done it all your life and are probably still doing it now.

2. Are you guilty of idolatry?

The Second Commandment - ⁸"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in Heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Deuteronomy 5:8-10 (NIV)

The first commandment, forbids us to have any gods in place of God Himself. The second forbids us to have any idols. An idol is any statue, object, thing, person or institution that we idolise. We are not to idolise or worship any created thing. We are only to worship God Himself. You may protest that you do not do this, but perhaps you do. If you come from a Roman Catholic background or from the Greek or Russian Orthodox churches, you will have almost certainly done so. Those churches all have statues or icons which people venerate and even pray to.

For example, in the Catholic Church, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is elevated and prayed to in ways which are unbiblical and inappropriate. Likewise a host of different "saints" are prayed to. By saints they mean dead people who are alleged to have been especially holy. Many of them are made into statues, ornaments or pictures and are prayed to. Those who do this usually protest that they are not praying *to* Mary or the saints, but merely asking them to pray *for* us. That is the basis on which they usually seek to justify it. However, even if that was true, it is still not valid. In presenting our prayer to or through Mary or a 'saint', and/or in venerating a statue or image, we are making an idol of them. The second commandment forbids that.

However, even the explanation that people give for it is not true. Very few people limit themselves to asking Mary or some other saint to pray for them. I know from my own experience and from many people I have known, that people do, in fact, pray directly *to* Mary and the saints. That is certainly what I was taught to do when I was young.

Here are some examples of the kind of prayers that are made. Just look at the words. How can anybody deny that these prayers are to Mary or the saints, not mere requests for them to pray for us. Let's look first at a short prayer to Saint Anthony, supposedly the "patron saint of lost things". People pray directly to him in these words when they need to find a lost item of property:

"Saint Anthony, Saint Anthony, please come around. There's something that's lost that's got to be found."

Now consider this description of Mary:

"Mary, the Mother of God, to whom all the faithful fly for protection in all their dangers and needs."

These words could only be validly spoken of God, not of a mere human being. It indicates that Mary is being viewed as if she was on the same level as God. But, even more alarmingly, look at this prayer *to Mary*. It was written by Pope John Paul II:

"Comfort, guide, strengthen the whole of humanity. Sustain us O Virgin Mary on our journey of faith and obtain for us the grace of eternal salvation."

That prayer cannot mean anything unless one assumes that Mary has powers that only God has. If not, then how could she possibly answer a prayer like that? Lastly, and worst of all, consider this prayer. It comes from the Catholic book *'Devotions in honour of our Mother of Perpetual Help'*:

"Come then to my aid, dearest Mother for I recommend myself to thee. In thy hands I place my eternal salvation and to thee do I entrust my soul. For if thou protect me, dear Mother, I fear nothing; not for my sins because thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of them; nor from the devils because thou art more powerful than all Hell together; nor even from Jesus my Judge himself because by one prayer from thee, he will be appeased. But one thing I fear, that in the hour of temptation I may neglect to call on thee and thus perish miserably. Obtain for me then the pardon of my sins".

How can we describe that as anything other than a prayer *to Mary*? Again, it obviously elevates her to the level of God. Even more seriously, it misrepresents Jesus. It portrays Him as our accuser, when in fact He is our advocate and Saviour. It gives to Mary Jesus' role as our advocate and implies that Jesus is reluctant to save us and would not do so without Mary's intervention. That is all blasphemy.

However, it goes further. Within Roman Catholicism, the Pope is also widely idolised. There is no other word for it. He is elevated to a place which only God can be in. He even takes to himself titles reserved only for God, which the Bible never authorises any man to use of himself. Some examples of this are as follows:

- a) *"Holy Father"* - this is a phrase Jesus used in the Bible, but only of God the Father – (John 17:11). The Pope has no right to use that title for himself and we must never call any pope by that title.
- b) *"Vicar of Christ"* – *"vicar"* means *"in place of"* Christ i.e. that the Pope is the bodily representative of Jesus on this earth. How can he presume to take such a title to himself? There is nothing in the Bible to support such a title for any man, whether he is a pope or not.
- c) In 1894 Pope Leo XIII said that as Pope he held on Earth the place of God Almighty!
- d) Pope Pius X (1903-1914) said that when the Pope speaks it is Jesus Christ Himself speaking and that the Pope is the one hope for the world!
- e) Pope Pius XI (1922 – 1939) said that because he was Vicar of Christ, he was *"God on Earth"*.
- f) Pope Boniface VIII said that unless people submit to the Pope they cannot be saved.

There are many other such examples. However, one only has to see the way in which the recent Polish Pope, John Paul II, was venerated by huge crowds to see that he was an idol to them. It is blasphemous for those popes, who are just ordinary, sinful men, to take such titles or to make such claims for themselves. That is something they will have to answer for personally. However, your

responsibility is not to join in. You must not idolise them, even if you have been taught to do so. You must choose either to obey the traditions of the Catholic church or to obey the Bible. You can't do both.

Before I go on, let me emphasise again that I am not picking on or singling out the Catholic Church. It is just that I happen to know it well, due to my background. Thus I find it easier to think of examples from Catholicism.

Idolatry is by no means limited to the Catholic church. It exists all over the world, for example in Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam. For many people it could even be the national flag of their country. There is no sin in being patriotic. In fact it is a virtue, because it was God who created each nation and He wants us to love our own country and to be loyal to it. However, there are people whose devotion to their country and its flag reaches the level of worship, or comes close to it. Whatever form the god or idol takes, God is appalled by it:

*They will be turned back and be utterly put to shame,
Who trust in idols,
Who say to molten images,
"You are our gods."*

Isaiah 42:17 (NASB)

So, I am by no means picking on Catholicism alone. Even so, it affects around one billion people, and it happens to be my own personal background so, let me give another example of where idolatry arises there.

Transubstantiation

Let us turn now to the belief within the Roman Catholic Church that the communion bread and the wine are the actual, real body and blood of Jesus. This is called "*transubstantiation*". Roman Catholics are taught to worship the host or wafer, i.e. the physical piece of bread, as being Jesus' literal and actual body. Instead of just *representing* Him, they believe it *actually is* Him. They mean well by it, and are sincere, but that belief is plainly wrong. That is not what Jesus meant when He took the bread and wine and gave it to the apostles at the last supper, on the night before His crucifixion. Apostle Paul explains this very well:

²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NIV)

When Jesus said "*This is my body*" He was saying that the bread and wine represented His body and blood and that when we eat and drink them we are to remember Him. He did not want us to worship or make an idol of the physical bread and wine themselves. They were only symbols, just as Jesus used symbolic speech when He said "*I am the door*" or "*I am the vine and you are the branches*". Indeed, how can He have meant that the bread He was holding was His real body, when He Himself was there holding it? It makes no sense at all and is obviously not what Jesus meant.

Yet, within Roman Catholicism and amongst some "High Anglicans," the bread and wine have ended up being made into idols. The physical bread and wine are literally worshiped on the basis that they *are* Jesus, not that they are a symbol to remind us of Him. That is precisely the kind of thing that God

wanted us to avoid doing, which is the very reason for the second commandment. I could give many more such examples but let it suffice to say that we are forbidden to make any idols or images of Mary, or saints, or the Pope, or the bread and wine, or of any other thing or person. When we do those things we are dishonouring and disobeying God, even if we genuinely mean well by it. Consider what the apostles Paul and John said about this:

*Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry
1 Corinthians 10:14 (NIV)*

*Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.
1 John 5:21 (NIV)*

But look how the prophet Ezekiel is even more emphatic about how God views idolatry:

*"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations.'
Ezekiel 14:6 (NASB)*

3. Do you misuse (or take in vain) the name of the Lord?

The Third Commandment - "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name"

In the King James Bible this commandment reads slightly differently saying **"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain..."** It mainly relates to disrespecting or abusing God's name by what we say. It also means living in any way that brings Him and His name into reproach or dishonour. That is a sobering thought, because many more of us are guilty of that than of directly insulting God's name in our speech.

There are many ways in which we can break this third commandment. It is common to hear people openly using God's name as a swear word and to say the most blasphemous things. Blasphemy means disrespecting God or His name or to mock Him in any way. How many times have you said or heard people say *"Christ!"* as a way of expressing surprise or concern? Equally, people say *"God!"* or *"Oh my God!"* or *"OMG"*.

The one that grieves me the most is when people exclaim *"Jesus Christ!"* Yet, consider what it means. It is taking God's precious and Holy name and using it as an expletive to express surprise or anger. That is profoundly disrespectful and there will be a consequence for all who do it:

***Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.
Galatians 6:7 (NIV)***

If you cannot see why this matters so much, imagine your work colleagues deciding that from now on, when they wish to swear or express abuse, they will use the names of your family. Imagine someone who has just dropped a hammer on their foot using your mother's name as an expletive, or even your own name. How would you feel?

We are also forbidden from using God's name flippantly, or joking about Him. It's no coincidence that God's name, and in particular the name of Jesus, are routinely blasphemed. It is a deliberate satanic strategy to undermine God's name. It's almost certain that you've never heard anybody insulting the name of Buddha, Mohammed, Allah or any of the Hindu gods. It's never done, because Satan doesn't want it done. He therefore doesn't cause it to be done. He only encourages people to mock God's name. He leaves every false religious figure alone.

The very fact that the attack is exclusively against the names of God and Jesus demonstrates that they are true and that the others are not. Satan will never attack any false religion. He wants them all to prosper and to attract people. It is solely Christianity, and especially the name of Jesus Christ, that he hates.

What the third commandment can also mean, even for believers, is to presumptuously express a view, presenting it as God's view when it isn't. So if you have an opinion, then don't use God's name to justify your view and to make out that He agrees with you. You must not attribute views to God which He does not hold, or misuse His glorious name as an authority for things which He has not said.

You will be held equally accountable for every word you say about God or on His behalf. That ought to make every church leader or preacher tremble. We all need to be so careful what we say about God. In the book of Job, God rebukes the three friends of Job who misrepresented God in the things they said. They told Job, a righteous man, that his afflictions and sufferings were a punishment from God because of some sin in Job's life. That was not true. You might not consider that to be the worst falsehood that you have ever heard being said about God. However, look how seriously God takes it. He is very angry at having His actions and motives wrongly portrayed:

It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has. Job 42:7 (NASB)

Therefore, be very very careful what you say about God, or about His actions, motives or views. Even if you mean well you could misrepresent Him, which is a very serious matter indeed.

Lastly, taking God's Name in vain can mean that in the way we live we are a 'poor witness' or a poor advert for God. Our sin or hypocrisy can easily discredit God's name. That possibility worries me. I do not want my sin ever to bring God's name into disrepute.

In short, we need to be very careful as to when and how we use His Name at all. It should only be spoken with great respect and reverence, never with flippancy or casualness. We need to live as ambassadors, knowing that if we claim to be a believer then we will be taken to represent Him. If so, then we will be answerable for the impression we give, whether intentionally or unintentionally. We should reflect on that sobering responsibility. Therefore examine yourself now as to whether you have ever broken this commandment in any of the ways described above. Almost inevitably, the answer will be yes, and on countless occasions.

4. Observing the sabbath day

This is the only one of the Ten Commandments which no longer applies to us. We are no longer under an obligation to observe a particular day of rest. However, it's still a very good thing to have a day of rest. The Jewish people were commanded to refrain from working on the sabbath, i.e. Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. That commandment was not restated in the New Testament, whereas the other nine were.

Thus the other nine commandments still apply, even to Christians, but the commandment about the sabbath does not, because we are not bound by the law of Moses. We are only bound by those parts of it that were restated in the New Testament, or which our own consciences tell us to obey. However, in that case, it is your conscience you would be obeying, not the Law of Moses itself. So, I will now move on to the Fifth Commandment.

5. Do you honour your Father and Mother?

The Fifth Commandment - "Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you. Deuteronomy 5:16 (NIV)

Few people even know about this commandment, let alone take it seriously. Respect for parents is not a widespread feature of British society. This commandment is not only for young children. It is equally about how adults treat their middle aged or elderly parents. God has created the very concept of parenthood to teach us something about Him. We would have no way of knowing what the word "Father" means if He had not created human fatherhood as a model.

That is one reason why it is so tragic when children are abused or mistreated by their parents. It can give them a warped view of what a human father is. That then creates a negative image of what God the Father must be. God's ideal is for every parent to reflect to their children something of what He is. Then every child can later look upon God the Father in a positive light and grasp the concept of God's Fatherhood.

God wants us to learn respect for our human father and mother so that we can develop the ability to respect our Heavenly Father. If we do not have respect for our human parents, then we will never have a proper respect for God the Father either. You have both or you have neither. So, the way we treat our human parents is a training ground. It is where we begin to learn how to have a right relationship with God the Father.

Moreover, if we dishonour our human parents we also dishonour God Himself. He created the family unit as the building block of human society. The family is of great importance. It must work vertically, between parents and children, but also horizontally, between siblings, and members of the wider family too. If family life is not honoured and valued then society will disintegrate. That is what we are seeing happening in the Western world now.

There has probably never been so much crime, degradation and chaos as we see now. It principally flows from two things: the abandonment of Christianity and the breakdown of family life. Where there is no respect for parents, then family life as a whole will also break down. Once that goes beyond a certain point, then society in general breaks down. That is what we are seeing now, with promiscuity, divorce, abortion and dysfunctional families.

For all these reasons God wants us all to honour our parents, not only when we are very young but throughout our lives. Even if we are in our seventies, we are still under a solemn duty to honour our elderly parents, to the very end of their lives. The final years of frailty and dependency, when elderly parents need your help most, can be a time of great blessing. Yet it is increasingly resented as an unwelcome burden, which should be avoided, even by euthanasia.

The final years of an elderly parent can be your God-given opportunity to serve them and honour them in ways you may have neglected to do when they were younger and fitter. Take that chance gladly. Make the most of it. Cherish those final years. God will bless you for everything you do to honour your parents.

The question therefore is do you do this? Do you honour your parents now, and have you honoured them in the past? It is not just a question of buying them cards on Mothers' Day or Fathers' Day or visiting them from time to time. It is much deeper than that. We are to actively honour our parents in practical ways, and to make it a priority to do so. We are to go out of our way to respect and care for

our parents. Do you do that? Moreover, it is not only our own parents, but all elderly people who should be honoured:

***“Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD
Leviticus 19:32 (NIV)***

However in Britain today there are huge numbers of elderly people who live alone and who never receive a visit from anybody for months on end. Many more are in nursing homes and rarely, if ever, receive visitors. Obviously, there are many families where things are done well, and great care is taken of elderly parents. But in some families elderly parents and relatives are not well cared for. That is one reason why there is a growing movement to legalise euthanasia. If we do, and it seems inevitable, then it will be disastrous for our society.

In many families children, both as teenagers and adults, show contempt, disrespect and disregard for their parents. They take them for granted, receive without giving back, and fail to show gratitude for all that their parents have done for them. One of the most painful things we ever have to experience is ingratitude. The pain of that is multiplied according to the closeness of the relationship. The ingratitude of an acquaintance hurts far less than that of a close work colleague. Even that hurts far less than the ingratitude of a family member. However, the ingratitude of one's own child is the ultimate. Few things can be more painful than that.

It may be that even looking into this subject is painful, because your family background may not have been a happy one. Alternatively, maybe it was happy but you now know, as you look back, that you have not honoured your parents as you should? Have you thanked your parents meaningfully and adequately? Do you repay them? Do you care for them now and put yourself out financially, and in terms of time and effort, to look after them?

It is common to see people focusing upon their expected inheritance from their parents rather than on what they can give to their parents, especially in their old age. In fact, caring for them ought to be the emphasis. The 'social security' system throughout history has always been based on the family. It is the job of all children, when they grow into adulthood, to care for their parents and to make sure that all their material needs are fully met.

Our society, in the West at least, has delegated that duty to the state so that we have now lost the habit. It does not even occur to many of us to care for our elderly parents. In fact, a peculiar thing happened to me some time ago. It serves as a useful illustration of this point about who is primarily responsible for our parents. A man rang my law firm when I was in practice and was put through to me as he wanted to speak to a Christian Solicitor. He said that his parents were elderly and were retired missionaries. His father had started to develop dementia and he wanted his parents to be given advice and help with drafting powers of attorney and generally arranging their affairs.

He then said, very revealingly. *"But my parents don't have any money. That's why I'm looking for a Christian firm to act for them"*. He explained that he wanted it to be done free of charge. It seemed to me that he was making two inaccurate assumptions:

- a) that a Christian Solicitor should feel an obligation to act for someone else's parents without charging anything.
- b) that *he himself* had no duty even to consider paying the legal fees of his own parents and could validly offload that burden onto me.

It's only when you pause and press the replay button that the full significance of that second assumption hits you. That man saw nothing wrong or unusual in what he'd said to me. His mind had

never formed the thought that his parents' welfare was primarily *his own* obligation, rather than mine. But see how Apostle Paul speaks about this:

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8 (NASB)

When I was in practice as a lawyer, I was always very willing to donate the time of myself and of my staff in a good cause. But that is not the issue here. The point is that he did not want to give his own money to provide what his own parents needed. In fact, such an idea was so unthinkable that he had never thought of it. He wanted me to be generous to them instead of him being so.

I wish I could say that men like him were rare, but they are not. His was a very typical view. There are multitudes of people, even amongst Christians, who think the same way. They have never even considered whether there could be anything wrong in that. I have focused on our duties to our parents at some length because it is not a well-known commandment. Even those who are aware of it find it difficult to believe they have broken it. Yet, you may now realise that you have, perhaps, broken it many times?

By the way, have you noticed that this is the only one of the Ten Commandments that also carries a promise: “...so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land...” So, those who do what God requires and honour their parents were promised long life and success/security. Although we are no longer operating under the Law of Moses, I believe God still honours that principle today. That should give you all the more reason to take it seriously.

6. Are you a murderer?

The sixth commandment – “You shall not murder”
Deuteronomy 5:17 (NIV)

You are, perhaps, seeing a pattern here such that, so far, you are guilty of breaking all of the commandments. But, when it comes to murder perhaps you will protest and say that at least on that count you are innocent. However, Jesus has clarified the meaning of murder and has broadened its definition. Jesus said that even where we feel hatred or sinful rage towards another person then it is as if we have committed murder:

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of Hell.

Matthew 5:21-22 (NIV)

Apostle John went further in his first letter, saying that if we hate our brother, we are a murderer. By 'brother' he meant fellow believers, not just our natural brothers:

¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. ¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.
1 John 3:14-16(NIV)

If we use Jesus' definition of murder, or apostle John's, then we are all murderers. We need to take that as seriously as they do and repent of hate and rage and confess them to be sins. That said, for

many people, the murder they have been involved with is real and literal, not just figurative. Let us consider the tragic situation in the Western world with regard to abortion. Every year in Britain 200,000 unborn children are killed deliberately. Almost always, this is done for purely social or economic reasons and has nothing to do with anybody's medical condition, (not that that would make it right even if medical factors were involved). In the vast majority of cases the mother simply does not want to have the child due to her career, education, lifestyle or finances being at stake.

Our society has convinced itself that there is nothing wrong in this. We go out of our way to use euphemisms like "*termination of pregnancy*" instead of "*killing the baby*" or "*foetus*" instead of "*child*". Yet, if we reflect on this, we must conclude that Britain is guilty of systematic mass murder on an industrial scale.

In Great Britain alone, about 7,000,000 babies have been killed so far since it was legalised in 1967. That represents more than 50 Hiroshima atom bombs. It is bigger in number than the holocaust, when 6,000,000 Jews were killed by the Germans. And that is just in Britain alone. Imagine the number of abortions if you were to calculate it worldwide!

Consider how God views that. He sees the unborn baby as a child. He is not fooled or deflected by our politically correct language. Abortion is murder, not "*termination of pregnancy*". That means that 200,000 murders of unborn children are happening every year in Britain alone. There are about five times as many in America. They legalised it in 1973. God will not just stand by and let all of that happen. His judgment will come. Indeed, it is already coming.

Moreover, bear in mind that any mother, father, boyfriend, husband, doctor, nurse, counsellor, sister, grandparent, friend or relative who advises someone to have an abortion, or assists in it, is guilty too. All of them are accomplices in it and stand guilty before God, just like the woman who has the abortion. Indeed, they could perhaps be even more guilty if they persuade or pressurize her into agreeing to it.

I realise that those are strong statements. Some may view them as condemning. However, I personally am not condemning anybody, either for this sin or any other. I have no authority to do that. I merely state the obvious and express what the Bible says about what we are doing in our society. Abortion will inevitably bring God's judgment upon every nation that practises it. Indeed His judgment has already begun, and it will continue. Look at how God viewed the practice of child sacrifice in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. Note the severity of the judgment that God said was coming on them:

⁴Because the people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place by burning incense in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, ⁵and have built the high places of Ba'al to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Ba'al, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind; ⁶therefore, behold, days are coming, says the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter. ⁷And in this place I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem, and will cause their people to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth. ⁸And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at; every one who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters.

Jeremiah 19:4-8(RSV)

When you add up all the people who have been involved in abortion, directly or indirectly, then there could be perhaps 30 million people in Britain who have played a part in it in some way at some time. Even an indirect involvement makes a person guilty. It is just as it would be if you were indirectly

involved in an armed robbery where a guard is shot dead. If you were a lookout, or drove the van, or provided the gun, or hid the proceeds, then you would be part of it. The same is true with abortion. That means it may possibly involve half of the British population. Yet, we tend to blank it out of our minds and deny our own guilt. We need to stop deluding ourselves and openly confess to God where we have done things, or assisted in things, which have caused abortion to happen.

If you have been involved in abortion, either now or long ago, whether directly or indirectly, you need to repent and seek God's forgiveness, just as with any other sin. Until you do, you will never be free from the burden of guilt and pain that abortion causes. People know in their hearts that it is wrong but they suppress the voice of their own conscience. Therefore, if this applies to you, confess it now and you can receive God's cleansing and forgiveness. It is fully available to you.

God is ready and willing to forgive the mother, the father, the husband, the boyfriend, the doctor, the nurse, the anaesthetist and all the relatives and friends who assist and co-operate. He also wants to heal and restore them all. But He first requires us to admit to ourselves, and to Him, that abortion is murder, and to stop calling it by any other name. Until we do, we cannot get free of the guilt and the pain that abortion causes.

The pain of abortion goes very deep and does not go away. I remember once speaking in an Anglican Church where I was a guest speaker. I referred to abortion, sensitively but openly. An old lady in her seventies got up in the aisle and literally waved her walking stick at me, and shouted abuse. She was letting out her pain and grief over something in her life. I spoke to her later but never got to the heart of what was troubling her. So, I do not condemn her, or anyone else, but I must tell the truth. We are all sinners and we do not help ourselves by denying it, whether in regard to this sin, or any other sin.

7. Are you an adulterer?

The seventh commandment - "You shall not commit adultery". *Deuteronomy 5:18 (NIV)*

It could be that you have literally committed adultery. Alternatively, you might think that on this one you are in a strong position because you have never physically done this. If so, you need to think again, because Jesus also clarified and broadened this commandment for us:

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5:27-28 (NIV)

What Jesus meant was that it is not enough simply to avoid literal physical adultery. He said that merely to look upon a woman lustfully is adultery. In other words, even to look upon a woman (or a man) lustfully is regarded by God as being adultery, even if it does not go as far as anything physical. I do not suppose that there is a person anywhere who has never '*committed adultery in their heart*' by looking lustfully upon a member of the opposite sex.

It is widespread, which is precisely why businesses base so much of their advertising on using sexual imagery. They know very well that every customer is prone to committing adultery in their heart and that this powerful motivation can be used to sell products. I hope that you will accept that you, like me, are guilty of this.

I should add that this also involves fornication (i.e. pre-marital heterosexual sex), pornography and homosexuality. The sin of adultery is a broad one and is not restricted solely to married people. Any sex, or even lustful thought, is sinful unless it is within heterosexual marriage and is with or towards one's own spouse. God, fully approves of sex within marriage. Remember, it was He who invented

sex. Thus we must not get the wrong idea and think that God disapproves of sex. He just reserves it for heterosexual married couples. Our society has largely abandoned that view over the last 40 years, and especially in the last 20 years. But it remains true and it is how God sees it. Consider what apostle Paul says about any misuse of our bodies for sexual sin, whether outside marriage or before marriage:

¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. ¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 (NIV)

Look too at what the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says:

Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

Hebrews 13:4 (NIV)

That is how seriously God views it. Our society has grown so used to adultery, fornication, vulgar speech, pornography, sexual promiscuity, and now homosexuality, that it is no longer able or willing to see that there is a problem. But there is. What we do with our bodies and our minds does matter. God will judge us for it. We are not free to do as we wish with our own bodies. That is because they do not actually belong to us. They belong to God, because He made us. Therefore He owns us and is fully entitled to tell us what we can and cannot do.

8. Are you a thief?

The eighth commandment - "You shall not steal".
Deuteronomy 5:19 (NIV)

Go back throughout your life and ask yourself honestly whether you have ever stolen anything, however small, from a shop or a person, or fiddled a tax return or expenses claim. Alternatively have you ever received wages for work that was not actually done or not properly done? Or have you ever spent time in your working day doing things for yourself on the internet, or texting, or on the telephone, or shopping when you should have been working for your employer? If you have then, at the very least, you have stolen time and wages from that employer, not to mention his phone bill. That alone makes you a thief and a lawbreaker, even if you have only ever done it once:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.
James 2:10 (NIV)

James' point is that to do a thing even once means that you have broken the law. If so, then you are a 'lawbreaker' overall. In God's eyes it is as if you have broken the whole law. In case you are still insisting that you have never stolen, what about failing to give your money or possessions to God, or to a person whom He wants you to help? To fail to give away what God wants you to give is equal to theft, because you would be robbing God. The book of Malachi shows this principle:

⁸"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. Malachi 3:8-10 (NIV)

See also what God says about giving to the poor and the attitude we are commanded to have towards those in need:

⁷ If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. ⁸ Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. ⁹ Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. ¹⁰ Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. ¹¹ There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 (NIV)

You might argue that these verses are from the Old Testament and that they perhaps do not apply to us now if we are Christians. That would be a mistake. The New Testament still teaches the need to give, and to give generously. All that has altered is the way in which the level of our giving is to be calculated. If anything, the duty to give is even higher now. In the Old Testament the Jewish people had to give "tithes and offerings". (A tithe means a tenth of your income.) The duty to tithe no longer applies to us, but the duty to be generous still applies. Indeed, whatever it meant to be "generous" back then, I would think that God expects more of us now than He expected of the people of the Old Testament.

So, the mere fact that we do not have to tithe does not necessarily mean that we should give any less. Many of us ought in fact to give more. Even more importantly, God wants us to be cheerful as we do it. That's a tall order and, so far as I can tell, not many people seem to manage it. Giving should be something we enjoy and look forward to with relish. Instead of finding out the minimum that we are obliged to do, we should be volunteering cheerfully to give more. Look at what apostle Paul has to say on this:

⁶Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (NASB)

Are you generous to the poor? Do you give sacrificially, to the point where it really costs you something and you have to go without? Or, are you hard-hearted and tight-fisted? Be honest with yourself. Many people are mean and stingy. Otherwise why would the Bible have to correct us on this point so frequently? Even if you imagine yourself to be innocent concerning this commandment, or any of the others, you probably aren't. You are probably just blind to your own sin if you think that. Look at what the Psalmist says about people who can't see their own sin:

**¹ An oracle is within my heart
concerning the sinfulness of the wicked:
There is no fear of God
before his eyes.**

*² For in his own eyes he flatters himself
too much to detect or hate his sin.
Psalm 36:1-2 (NIV)*

9. Are you a liar?

Ninth commandment - "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour"
Deuteronomy 5: 20 (NIV)

Translated in more simple terms, this means 'you shall not lie'. But have you ever told a lie? If you look at it frankly and try not to kid yourself, then you will accept that you have lied on many occasions. Human beings lie to each other daily at work, in their marriages, in their families and everywhere else. We do it both directly and indirectly. Lying and deception are endemic in all societies. But, if you have ever told a lie, even once, then you are 'a liar'. Remember that according to the book of James, that makes you a lawbreaker across the board. However, the reality is that you have not lied just once, but countless times. I have too. You even lie to yourself. Our very hearts are crooked. Look how the prophet Jeremiah puts it:

*The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?
Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)*

10. Do you covet?

Tenth Commandment - "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbour's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

Deuteronomy 5:21 (NIV)

This is a commandment about something which few people consider even to be a sin. Yet it catches everyone. It even caught the apostle Paul. He spoke in his letter to the Romans about how, before he became a Christian, he was trying with all his might to obey the commandments. Yet he eventually realised that he was covetous. He was doing quite well, or so he thought, in obeying the other commandments. But he discovered that he was definitely guilty of this one:

⁷What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." ⁸But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.

Romans 7: 7- 8 (NIV)

Covetousness means inappropriately and unhealthily desiring those things that are not ours. We do this about money, property, houses, cars, jobs or even other people's wives. It means to crave for that which is not yours and not meant to be yours. It is not wrong to desire something in a healthy and proper way. Thus, it is alright for you to desire to get a promotion or to buy a new house. What is wrong however is to crave for it in an unwholesome, unbalanced and excessive way.

The essence of covetousness is that you are allowing your fleshly, carnal cravings to direct your life. Then you long for possessions, or positions, and are not content with what God has given you. Look

at what Jesus says about this when speaking to a young man who came asking Him to make his brother divide an inheritance with him:

***¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."
¹⁴Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."
¹⁶And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'
¹⁸Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'
²⁰But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' ²¹This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."***

Luke 12:13-21 (NIV)

Look closely at what Jesus says in verse 15 above: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions". All of us are, in one way or another, guilty of this sin. We all yearn for things which are not meant to be ours. And we are not content with what God has given to us. But contrast this with apostle Paul's attitude, as shown, in his letter to the Philippians:

¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:11-13 (NIV)

The right attitude for each of us to have is simple and sincere contentment with whatever we have, in our job, home, savings, car, and so forth. It is right for us to work hard and to ask God to bless us with good things and, if we get good things, then to enjoy them. Yet, if we do not have those things, or if the things we have are not as good as we would like them to be, we are to practice the art of contentment. We must not be consumed with striving to acquire more, or better, things.

All of us know that we are, or have been, guilty of this. That is especially so in our materialist European and American societies. The debt crisis which engulfed the world in 2008 illustrates how damaging and corrosive the sin of coveting really is. The world would not be in this financial mess if it was not for our covetousness.

I have covered nine of the commandments, but there are so many other things that we do wrong as well, besides breaking the Ten Commandments. What about ingratitude? None of us fully appreciate or thank God for all that He has done for us. Also what about pride? And what about selfishness?

Which of us would even attempt to deny that we are proud and selfish? How could we? We know it's true. Remember that it was pride which caused Satan to fall from his position as God's most senior angel. Pride is the most dangerous and corrosive sin because it leads us into every other sin. It also prevents us from repenting.

Likewise, selfishness is what we are at the core of our character. It also causes an infinite number of other sins and enables us to justify more or less anything to ourselves. Self-interest has become our main guiding principle, instead of conscience. Thus let's admit to pride and selfishness and many other sins too. Let's also recognise that our sinfulness extends far beyond breaking the Ten Commandments, which we have looked at only as a starter.

Conclusion

I hope you will by now accept that you have, like me, broken all nine of the commandments we looked at, and are also guilty of pride, selfishness and a host of other sins too. Perhaps you will argue, however, that you have not done so very often, and that you are not guilty of “many” sins. However, imagine that you have only sinned once per day, which is totally unrealistic. Over say 60 years, that would be $365 \text{ sins} \times 60 \text{ years} = 21,900 \text{ sins}$! When viewed as a whole, you could hardly call that combined total trivial, or deny that that makes you well and truly a sinner.

But, think how many times you must really have sinned each day of your life. You could probably multiply the above figure ten-fold, or a hundred-fold, in order to be more realistic. That gives a better picture of the true scale of your sin and mine. Hopefully it will persuade you to abandon any lingering hope that you can justify or excuse yourself.

Most Christians find that as they grow in maturity and understanding, their ability to see their own sin increases. That is still the case even if they are actually less sinful in their behaviour. God causes us to get more and more sensitive to sin as we mature. That means that the battle against our sinful nature is lifelong. It will not go away, even in a real believer, until the day he dies.

I have dwelt at length on the question of sin and the sinful nature of man. I have also tried to prove that it includes you. I have done so to prove to you beyond all doubt that you, just like me, have got a real problem. There is no way that you will ever accept God’s solution, (which is found through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ) unless you first recognise that you truly do have a major problem. If you don’t accept you have a sin problem, and that there is no other way out of it, why would you want, or need, Jesus to save you?

But if you can admit that you are a sinner then it follows that the inevitable consequences of judgment, Hell and then the Lake of Fire lie in store for you. That is everyone’s position until and unless they find salvation in Jesus Christ. We shall come to that wonderful process of salvation shortly. But for now, let us look at judgment, Hell and the Lake of Fire in closer detail. Then we can see even more clearly how desperate our problem is.