

LAW, LOVE, and LIFE!



Exploring the Meaning and Application

of

“The Ten Commandments!”

By

Ron Christian

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LAW, LOVE, AND LIFE!"

NOTES

FIRST COMMANDMENT

*"I am the LORD thy God,
which have brought thee
out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of bondage.*

*Thou shalt have
no other gods before me.*

EXODUS 1: 1-3

SCRIPTURE: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6: 4-9)

TEXT: "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20: 3)

"NO OTHER gods BEFORE ME!"

INTRODUCTION

G. Campbell Morgan says, "All life is worship. There may be a false God at the center of the lie; but every activity of being, all the energy of life, the devotion of powers – these things are all worship. The question is whether the life and powers of man are devoted to the worship of the true God or to that of a false one." (The Ten Commandments; pgs. 18, 19)

What is a god? "Whatever is esteemed or loved, feared or served delighted in or depended on, more than God that we do in effect make a god of." (Matthew Henry) Wrote Luther, "In what thing soever thou hast, thy mind's reliance and thine heart fixed that is beyond doubt thy God."

PROPOSITION

In the Bible, idolatry is considered above all other sins, most heinous. "The heinousness of the sin of idolatry is in our text, "I am Jehovah your God who liberated you from slavery in Egypt." (Exodus 20: 3)

In considering this first commandment, let us consider: (1) God is eternal, limitless; (2) Man is a God-breathed creature, made for God; (3) Man is seeking to fill his god-shaped vacuum with the gods of this world, none of which can fill that vacuum; (4) Worship of the True God gives deep satisfaction to the worshipper.

I. GOD IS ETERNAL - LIMITLESS

In introducing the Ten Commandments, "God said, I am Jehovah!"

The word 'Jehovah' is a word that means "He that will be, He that is, He that was." Thus, by reason of, God's eternal nature, God demands man's supreme worship. No other God

can claim an existence with no beginning, and an existence into the future upon which the forces of nature have no degenerating power. This God is the eternal 'I Am', not subject to time and space. It is this God, that is the, Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. God created man for himself: preserves man for His glory, and will someday destroy the world by fire. Such a God must be respected for His character and His ultimate Power!

II. MAN IS GOD-BREATHED; A CREATURE MADE BY AND FOR "GOD."

God created man in God's own image, as personal, intelligent, volitional being. Man was first made by God; and is like God, in that he is a personal and rational being. However, God is infinitely greater than man is.

MAN

GOD

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Limited by time, birth, and death.</p> | <p>1. Never had a beginning or an end.</p> |
| <p>2. Man's spirit presently contained in a physical body.</p> | <p>2. Spirit of God permeates all the space of the Universe (Omnipresent).</p> |
| <p>3. Strength limited and feeble.</p> | <p>3. Strength unlimited. (omnipotent) God brought universe into being by simply speaking.</p> |
| <p>4. Little knowledge (at best). (Ill. of Trueblood who said that man at best knows so little). Small percentage of total earthly known by any one man, and if all world's knowledge could be known, even then only small part of total reality.</p> | <p>4. Total knowledge belongs to God (Does God know about radar? God knows the end from the beginning; Time is no factor to God. See every sparrow that falls. Has the hairs of your head numbered.</p> |
| <p>5. Blurred, partial understanding of right and wrong and a sense of justice based on that partial understanding of the moral law of the universe.</p> | <p>5. God has perfect knowledge of right and wrong, and thus his judgments are true and right altogether.</p> |
| <p>6. Man's love at best is imperfectly expressed (limited and specific).</p> | <p>6. God's love is without alloy and is always perfectly and unselfishly expressed, (unlimited and universal). Gave His, very own Son to the world.</p> |

It is this kind of God – eternal, almighty, omnipresent, all knowing, holy, righteous, just, and all loving – that has created man, for the purpose, of glorifying the Eternal God. "A scoffer once taunted a simple Christian: What sort of a God is this in whom you believe: is He great, or is He small? The believer replied: My God is both great and small, My God is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and so small that He dwells in my little heart." (Maurer; pg. 6)

This God-shaped vacuum has room for none other than the true and living God. Man is restless until he finds his rest in God. "Man was made for the God who declares that His creatures shall have none other God before Him. He will be the God and the center of every man, and the very nature of man's being makes the demand a reasonable one." (Morgan; pg. 23)

"When we reflect how fearfully, and wonderfully we are made, and that in God alone we live and move and have our being. Surely, it is plainer than plain, even without the Law, that we have no higher obligation, or duty, than to yield ourselves unreservedly to God, to look to Him for all good, and to let Him be the Joy of our heart and our Portion forever." (Maurer; pg. 8)

The true and Eternal God is declared; 'Thy' God – showing that God is right fully possessive of man, for God made man for Himself and sustains man by Divine energy. By right of Creation, by right of the Support of life, by right of redemption – God demands man's sole worship.

III. FALSE gods FAIL TO FILL THE GOD-SHAPED VACUUM.

All men at one time knew about the true and living God, but the sheer rebellion of sinful, fallen human nature soon drove man away from the true God to worship false gods.

"Claiming themselves to be wise without God, they became utter fools instead. And then, instead of worshipping the glorious, ever –living God, they took wood and stone and made idols for themselves, carving them to look like mere birds and animals and snakes and puny men." (Romans 1: 22, 23, Living Bible)

A. THE god OF MATERIALISM IS INADEQUATE.

"The lust for gold is getting such a hold upon the hearts of men today that it is time the "First Commandment" is preached with new emphasis. The worship of the god of gold is cursing the age." (G. Campbell Morgan, pg. 20)

There is nothing wrong with money; what is wrong is setting your heart upon money. Jesus' words ought to be, heeded. *"Don't store up treasures here on earth where they can erode away or be stolen. Store them in heaven where they will never lose their value, and are safe from thieves. If your profits are in heaven your heart will be there too."* (Matthew 6: 19)

A story was told of a miser, who buried his gold in a field. "He went out every night to look at it. One night a servant and the money were missing. A friend said, 'You haven't really lost anything, for the money was doing no good. Still you have the hole. So, pretend that the gold is there, and look at it every night.'" (Sermon Builder; August 1970; pg. 8)

It is not money that is wrong as money, can be converted into, projects of eternal value. The "love of money" is the "root of all-evil."

"But people who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil – minded and finally send them to hell itself. For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows. Tell those who are rich not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone, but their pride and trust should be in the living God who always richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment." (I Timothy 6: 9, 10, 17; Living Bible)

A group of tourists who were visiting the enormous estate of a wealthy man asked a servant, 'How much is this estate worth?' The servant said, 'I don't know how much it is worth, but it cost my master his soul.' (Ibid; pg. 32)

"A boy was bringing home a loaf of bread; and one said; 'What have you there?' 'A loaf'; 'Where did you get it?', 'From the baker'. 'Where did the baker get it?' 'He made it'. 'Of what did he make it?' 'Flour'; 'Where did he get the flour?' 'Where did the flour come from?' 'From the miller'. 'Where did he get it?' 'From the farmer;' 'Where did the farmer get it?' Then the truth dawned upon the boy's mind, and he replied, 'From God.' 'Well, then, from whom did you get that loaf?', 'Oh, from God!'

Here is a boy who, in the last resort, acknowledges God to be the Giver of good. In this materialistic age, a man says, 'My business supports me and my family.' It is a lie; God supports him and his family." (Morgan; pgs. 1, 22)

B. THE god OF HUMANISM IS INADEQUATE

Humanism is simply making Man his own god. Humanism says there is nothing higher or more splendid than Man is that Man is god. One leading humanist said, "The sovereign for us is just ourselves when we co-operately insist on providing what we ourselves want." (George Coe; quoted in the Ten Commandments; James Coffman)

The folly and stupidity of worshipping the god of Humanism is described by Robert Flint: "Humanity must be blind to its follies and sins, insensible to its weakness and miseries, and given over to the madness of a boundless insanity, before it can raise an altar and burn incense to itself!" (Ibid; 25) Man is not inherently good. (He is a sinner by choice as well as by nature). Men cannot save himself. (Jesus said, "*Without me, you can do nothing*").

C. THE god OF SCIENCE IS INADEQUATE.

Those who worship science declare that there is no reality except what one can scientifically verify with the physical senses. Those who worship at the shrine of science believe that scientific discoveries and progress is the hope of a bright future for humanity.

A man by the name of Comte, who lived one and a half centuries ago and may be considered, the father of modern scientism – that is, the worship of science. Comte believed – as many do today – that the last stage of man's mental development would be the Scientific Stage, at which future time man would no longer attempt to explain the Cause of Reality, but simply explain, through the scientific method, the relationships and associations of social entities. All reference to God or abstractions will be swept aside, and all of life and institutions will find their origins and meaning in the scientific approach. At this ultimate stage of development, no longer will the 'Whys' of life be asked, but only the 'Hows'.

Science worshipped, is science grossly and dangerously misused. Says Joy Davidman, "All our sciences are no more than tools to increase our power of getting whatever we already want. They are an extension of what happened when the first savage made the first club. And unless the supreme authority of God tells us how to use our new tools, we shall use them exactly as the savage used the club – to beat out our neighbor's brains." (Coffman; pgs. 22, 23)

Science can tell one the 'Hows' of life built, but it cannot tell one the 'Whys' of life. Man is built to ask the 'Whys' of life, and only God who created a predicable universe in which the scientific method is possible, and who transcends that universe, can answer the 'Whys' of life.

Therefore, the God-shaped vacuum, is not made to be filled with Science, but only with the one and true God who makes Science possible.

D. THE god OF ASTROLOGY AND MYSTICISM IS INADEQUATE

Reacting to the cold, rational, dogmatic demands of the priests of Scientism, many have thrown rational thought overboard and have taken refuge in the

mysticism of astrology. We are living in a day when thousands have accepted astrology – worship of the stars – as a way of life. Unable to accept the cold, calculating claims of Science as a final explanation of life, and yet unable to logically refute its claims, masses of people have sought emotional comfort and solace in the mysterious ‘influences’ of the stars. ‘Chance’ and Lucky Charms’ and ‘Fate’ and ‘Determinism’ have become the oft-used terms within the sanctuary of astrological worship.

Although thousands have become adherents of astrology, let it be quickly recognized that the, god-shaped vacuum in the lives of such adherents, has not yet been filled.

Man is an intelligent, rational creature and this god robs man of his intellectuality, and leaves man an emotionally unstable, suspicion-ridden pagan. Let us remind ourselves that history gives evidence that pagan man’s first worship was the worship of the stars.

E. THE god OF SENSUALISM AND SELFISH PLEASURE IS INADEQUATE

Those who worship the God of sensualism are those whose life motto is “Eat, Drink, and Be Merry for tomorrow we die.” The priests of the god of sensualism advocate that you do what comes naturally, making a mockery of purity, virginity, and uprightness in morals. The Bible speaks of “pleasures of sin for a season.”

The so-called new morality (relative ethics) is really the old immorality in new garb. Sin is still sin. The Ten Commandments are either absolute or obsolete. Those who advocate they are obsolete and are lightly regarding God’s commands, are not really breaking the Commandments; the Commandments are breaking them. People do not break the law of gravity by disregarding it; the law of gravity breaks them.

Disregard for God’s law is nothing new. Mankind in the beginning ‘did their own thing’ and paid the same penalty as they are paying now – the penalty of self-destruction.

“So God let them go ahead into every sort of sex sin, and do whatever they wanted to – yes, vile and sinful things with each other’s bodies. That is why God let go of them and let them do all those evil things, so that even their women turned against God’s natural plan for them and indulged in sex sin with each other. And the men, instead of having a normal sex relationship with women, burned with lust for each other, men doing shameful. Things with other men and, as a result, getting paid within their own souls with the penalty they so richly deserved...And we know that God, in justice, will punish anyone

who does such things as these." (Romans 1: 24, 26, 27; 2: 2; Living Bible)

Man is pleasure-obsessed. Solomon went down this dead-end and disillusioning road:

"I explored in my heart to stimulate my body with wine...and to lay hold of frivolity...I acquired singers, both men and women, and the delights of men – mistresses galore." (Ecclesiastes 2: 3, 8)

Yet Solomon declared, ***"Futility of futilities, all is futile."*** "Pleasure is like dope; gradually we must increase the dose with more excitement, more thrill, more sensation, until, eventually, we find ourselves groping among the tombstones of our dead passions. It is like making our meals out of pickles and pepper. One of our greatest temptations is to put pleasure before God." (Charles Allen; God's Psychiatry; pg. 46)

One characteristic of the last days is men who will be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Men forget that true and lasting contentment comes through a love relationship with Christ, not in a vain pursuit of worldly pleasure.

To make pleasure your god is to court eternal disaster.

"Their future is eternal loss, for their god is their appetite: they are proud of what they should be ashamed of and all they think about is this life here on earth." (Philippians 3: 19)

An illustration is of a girl who said (if she had only six months to live, would seek to do the things she always wanted to do regardless of what others thought; reminiscent of the time of the Judges in Old Testament, when it is said that "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes".

An example of the self-centeredness of Americans: "We spend in America more money on cosmetics, and then we spend on the entire program of the Kingdom of God." (God's Psychiatry; pg. 46)

Living only for self-results in self-destruction:

"...If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who keeps his life for himself shall lose it; and anyone who loses his life for me shall find it again." (Matthew 16: 24, 25)

Time does not permit us to speak of many of the other popular pagan gods of America – the god of Nationalism, the god of power and popularity, or many other gods – none of which fills man's inner spiritual vacuum.

Idolatry in its advanced stage is blatant worship of Satan. Ultimately, the question is "Will I serve God or will I serve Satan?"

CONCLUSION

Hear what Solomon wrote after he had attempted in vain to fill the God-shaped vacuum through the worship of money, pleasure, power, fame, etc.

"Here is my final conclusion; fear God and obey his commandments, for this is the entire duty of man. For God will judge us for everything we do, including every hidden thing, good or bad." (Ecclesiastes 12: 13, 14)

To obey God's Commandments, a man must tear from his heart every idol and on throne Christ as Lord, of all. When one makes Christ his Lord, then the Love of God is spread abroad in ones heart and consequently he is able to keep God's commandments. Have you made Christ the Lord of your life? If not, why not? You can do so just Now!

Notes Barclay: "A man's god dictates a man's conduct, consciously or unconsciously. The Christian believes in the God who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God whose mind and heart and character is seen in the life and death of Jesus and for that very reason the Christian Ethic might well be said to be the invitation of Christ." (The Ten Commandments, pg. 18)

Worshipping the true God:

- (1) Give one a sense of personal significance and importance.
 - (a) Because of man's special creation.
 - (b) Because of man's wonderful redemption. (Transferring grace)
 - (c) Because of man's glorious resurrection.

- (2) Give one a sense of personal fellowship.
 - (a) Because Jesus has reconciled sinner, to God through the cross.
 - (b) Because the Holy Spirit has come to lives, written the heart and life of every true believer.

- (3) Because God's Purpose for existence, was been revealed through, the concern of Jesus, and through the revelation of Scripture.
 - (a) Because God's Purpose for existence; has been revealed through the "Coming of Jesus", and through the revelation of Scriptures.

- (b) Because God has a purpose and plan for each person, and God has given each believer special gifts that enables each believer to develop a ministry of service in a needy world.**

SECOND COMMANDMENT

**“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 parents
to the third and
fourth generation of
those who hate me”**

Exodus 20: 5

SCRIPTURES: "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You 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 parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20: 4-6)

"²¹Woman," Jesus replied, "Believe me; a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (John 4: 21-24)

TEXT: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." (Exodus 20: 3)

"WORSHIP WITHOUT IMAGES!"

INTRODUCTION

The first commandment forbids the worship of any other gods. The second commandment forbids the making of any images to represent the one true God. "God says, in the first commandment, 'I am your God, worship Me; He says in the second, 'Come directly to Me, and let no supposed help intervene between us.' There is to be nothing but direct communication between the soul and God." (Morgan; pg.30)

PROPOSITION

'Jehovah' is the name of the one true God and 'Jehovah' means "He that will be, He that is, He that was." The true God is the eternal God, so great that no earthly image can properly represent Him. This one and only true God must be worshipped directly and simply, in spirit and in truth.

I. MEANING OF THE COMMANDMENT

"Essentially, the meaning of God's second, commandment is that we are to worship God not as we imagine Him to be, but as He has revealed Himself as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit." (Robert Kopp)

Representations or symbols of religious things are permissible, but these must never become objects of worship. "What is condemned is the use or worship of material things." For example, in "the present day, there is a great danger of making the Lord's Supper something more than a simple memorial service; and every such attempt is fraught with peril. Only recently, some men, loved and respected, have given utterance to the statement that the Lord's Supper has in it some sort of mystic element that assists the soul in worship. The soul is assisted just as far as Christ is remember, as He commanded in the memorial feast spread upon the table, and great risk is run when anything more than that is read into that simple service. (Morgan; 31)

"Our deepest thoughts about the world and God are incapable of personification by any aesthetic true God in the spirit; whereas those who have never had their spiritual consciousness awakened, need to resort to an image or representation of God which is bound to be false and inadequate. God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; and therefore no image can substitute for the true God. God by nature is transcendent thus in one sense incomprehensible. Thus, the highest concept that man has of God does not adequately describe God, and if a concept cannot even fully represent God, certainly no image can. Limitlessness lies at the heart and center of the thought of God, and the moment a man makes an image, he denies the essence of God. For that reason God forbade that there should be the making of any images; for, not only is the image false, it is misleading." (Morgan; 28)

II. WHAT THE COMMANDMENT FORBIDS

Why is this commandment so important? Its importance can be seen when one has a basic understanding of the history of man's religious worship and forms.

Man originally knew the true and living God, but because of man's rebellious nature, man forgot God and began to worship objects in nature.

"Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." (Romans 1: 20-23)

The next step in the degenerating process of false worship was to make Nature itself god. Thus, the Greeks worshipped Nature with all its vast and complex intricacies. Thus, Nature was substituted for the God of Nature, as the object of worship.

Men today worship an image of God – either a physical image or a false conceptual image – rather than worshipping the one and true God.

Think of some of the false images that people have today – images that distort true worship of the true God. J. B. Phillips has written a book entitled, Your God Is Too Small and in this, book points out many of the false images and concepts that people have regarding God.

Some people have distorted the true concept of God by claiming that Conscience is their God. Conscience takes the place of God and to such people conscience, at worse, spoils their pleasures, and, conscience, at best, negatively keeps them on the path of virtue. Those who substitute Conscience for God, fail to realize that Conscience is largely a product of one's upbringing and training. For instance, a child of vegetarian parents would well say, "Eating meat is a sin" but such a conviction is not given by the true God, but rather learned in childhood. Conscience can only judge something to be right or wrong, as conscience resorts to an objective standard, namely God, by which actions can be truly judged. If Conscience were God, then God would be a different being to different people, for each man's conscience dictates in a different way, depending upon the kind and quality of training received in childhood. Conscience is a poor substitute for God, for conscience, as a guide is only reliable to the extent that it has been trained and shaped by the eternal God.

Some people think of God as a Grand Old Man. Some people are worshipping a false image - they are not worshipping the true god. Many people imagine God to be old-fashioned and out-dated, not quite able to cope with modern-day living. They picture God as an old man in a rocking chair with a long white beard, taking his celestial rest from all of his ancient labors, and too weary and old to be concerned with the fast-moving, complex age of the 21st century.

"In order to test whether this 'old-fashioned' concept was persisting in modern young people, a simple psychological test was applied to a mixed group of older adolescents. They were asked to answer without reflection, the question: 'Do you think God understands radar?' In nearly every case, the reply was 'No', followed of course by a laugh, as the conscious mind realized the absurdity of the answer. But, simple as this test was, it was quite enough to show that at the back of their minds these youngsters held an idea of God quite inadequate for modern days." (Phillips, pg. 20)

Some people's concept of God is shaped by the couplet that they learned in their childhood:

**"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child."**

To think of Jesus as 'mild' turns off many red-blooded youth. A mild person is one who has a placid temperament, undisturbed by evil around him, one "who would let sleeping dogs lie and avoid trouble whenever possible." (Phillips; pg. 24)

To think of Jesus as 'mild' leads many to think of God as sentimental - indeed a false conceptual image of God. To think of Jesus as 'mild' tends to debase God's love, making His love mere sentiment. To hold a false image of God results in making false responses toward God, which in return produces a false character in the life of the worshipper. "Man becomes like the thing that he puts in the place of God. If man gets a false notion of God, through his idol or image, he becomes as false as his god does. Here then is the tremendous reason for this enactment. It is not a merely capricious commandment; but like all the commands of God, is based upon eternal principles. In effect God says to man, 'Thou shalt not attempt to liken Me to anything, because every effort of that kind must result in failure, and must react upon man to his abiding injury.'" (Morgan; pg. 29)

Jesus was not mild. To say He was is to take away His red-blooded humanity. Think of Jesus challenging the hypocritical Pharisees. Think of Jesus walking unafraid and boldly through a murderous crowd. Jesus was even considered a public danger to the authorities of His day. This could not be said of a 'mild' man. A mild man does not use a whip to drive materialists out of the Temple. Jesus went steadfastly to Jerusalem, even when he knew it would mean his death.

This is not to say that Jesus was not humble, selfless, and utterly devoted. However, these qualities can hardly be qualities of a 'mild' man. Jesus was meek – a term of strength and manliness – but Jesus cannot be called mild – a term of sentimentality and escapism.

Some people's false concept of God could be best described (as J.B. Phillips terms it) as a "God-In-A-Box". That is to say, some people's concept of God cannot be separated from their particular denomination. The characteristics of their denomination, they ascribe to God. They think of God as the 'Party Leader' of their particular group or movement or Church, and some way they feel that God just could not be as real to someone of another Church. Thus, their view of God is reduced to an image. An image that is limited, cramped, and confined to their little theological concepts. Such people fail to realize that God is transcendent, eternal, and the author of all knowledge, scientific as well as theological, and the Lord of all people: Catholic as well as Protestant, Presbyterian, and also Baptist, etc. Jehovah God is not confined to a Church, but is the Lord of the Universe. God's success is not dependent upon the success of any one Church or group. No one group has a unique revelation of God or an 'edge on God'. God is no respecter of persons, or of groups.

Some people's concept of God is either heightened or lessened, depending upon the degree of ecclesiastical, statistical success in their Church. It is perilous indeed and an outright breaking of the second Commandment – to build one's concept of God upon the concept of one's Church. Jesus is the Lord of the Church and ordained it, but Jesus is infinitely greater than the church.

Some people conceive of God as the 'Managing Director of the Universe'.

"It is to think that the God who is responsible for the terrifying vastness of the universe cannot possibly be interested in the lives of the minute specks of consciousness which exist on this insignificant planet." (Phillips; pg. 41)

When a psychiatrist told a nervous man that all he needed was to learn to pray, the nervous man replied as such, "Me, me pray to that one up there. That is about like telling me to swallow the Milky Way Galaxy." This man's concept of God was very inadequate.

Those who conceive of God as the Managing Director of the Universe who is far too busy to care personally for the individual – those persons hold a very false conceptual image of God and these people break the second Commandment.

"A scoffer once taunted a simple Christian: What sort of a God is this in whom you believe? Is He great, or is He small? The believer replied: My God is both great and small, My God is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and so small that He dwells in my little heart." (Maurer; pg. 6)

III. CALL TO SINCERE WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD

To make replica of God or entertain a false concept of God, is to break the 2nd Commandment, and to break the second Commandment by creating graven images as substitutes for the true God, is to incur the wrath and jealousy of Jehovah God.

"Even as a good mother is jealous of evil influences which threaten her children, so God is jealous when, instead of purity and right, there is idolatry and uncleanness."

It is evil to make a graven image. It is evil for it degrades the true God. It is evil for as it degrades the worshipper, for "man becomes like the thing that he puts in the place of God." (Morgan pg. 29) It is also evil to make a graven image because such practice provides a bad example to the children of the false worshipper. By the wrong way, a parent worships God, or by the parent holding a false concept of God, the parent can mislead his child. When a man puts something, as the object of his worship, in the place of God, he passes on the same practice to his offspring. What a terrible heritage he is thus handing down to the child." (Morgan, pg. 34)

"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." (Exodus 20: 5)

Those who teach their children the true spiritual worship of Jehovah God, pass on to their children a wonderful heritage that brings the blessing and mercy of God.

"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God...shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20: 6)

Jesus said that they that worship God must worship Him in "spirit and in truth." To worship God 'in spirit' is to worship Him in reality, in contrast to worshipping God through the media of a false literal image or false conceptual image. Paul sought to teach the Greek philosophers of his day of the true God.

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said,

"Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God, that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;...Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17: 22-25, 29-30)

To worship God 'in truth' is to worship God in sincerity, without pretense, hypocrisy, or self-deception. Excessive ritualism does not guarantee true worship.

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6: 6-8)

True worship issues forth in a life of sincerity, justice, love, mercy, and humility. "Essentially, the meaning of God's second commandment is that we are to worship God not as we imagine Him to be but as He has revealed Himself as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit." (Robert Kopp)

CONCLUSION

"God calls men into His own presence, to immediate worship. They worship, not when they listen to preaching, not when they are attentive to the form and fashion of music, not when they are thinking of a table upon which the emblems are spread, but when they pass through the preaching, and when they pass beyond the emblems, and when they are face to face with God. Whenever a man stops short of that face-to-face worship of the Eternal God, he is working ruin to his own character, because he is breaking the commandment of God." (G. C. Morgan; pg. 35)

"Idolatry is carving out things to represent God and then pretending that these things are God or that they contain God...Idolatry occurs when the symbol of Deity is confused with the Reality of Deity and evolves into the object of our praise and adoration." (Robert Kopp)

We must constantly guard against all forms of idolatry. The last verse of the first letter of John is this: *"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols."* (I John 5: 21) What is idolatry? *"Idolatry is the practice of ascribing absolute value to things of relative worth. Under certain circumstances money, patriotism, sexual freedom, moral principles, family loyalty, physical health, social or intellectual preeminence, and so on are fine things to have around, but to make them your masters, to look to them to justify your life and save your soul is sheerest folly. They just aren't up to it."* (Quote from Frederick Buechner, quoted By Robert Kopp in Back to Basic).

Never allow the symbol to be confused with the Reality for which the symbol stands. Never allow the means to become the End. Never allow the aid to worship to become the object of worship.

THIRD COMMANDMENT

*"Thou shalt not take the
name of the Lord Thy
God in vain;
for the Lord will not hold
him guiltless that taketh
his name in vain!"*

(Exodus 20:7)

"CLEAN LIPS AND A CLEAN LIFE!"

INTRODUCTION

No one wants his personal name used contemptuously. Have you ever heard someone say, "Joe Blow couldn't be on time if his life depended on it?" Alternatively, have you heard someone say, "He has as many brains as a sparrow?" When you profane a person's name you profane a person's character for "a person and his name are so closely associated and related that we ourselves feel that our personal honor is involved in the use that is made of our name." (Maurer; pg. 20) If that is true humanly speaking, how much more true is that of God who is even more sensitive of the way His name is used? "Surely, God will not have feelings less tender than ours." (Maurer; pg. 20) Use the names 'Lord', 'God', 'Jesus' carefully. Avoid substitute words that sound like these sacred words.

"The ancient Hebrews held the name of God in such high esteem that they would not even pronounce it." (Stewart) Travelers in heathen lands tell us that one never hears the names of pagan deities carelessly; used their worshipers fear them too greatly for such use." (Maurer; pg. 20)

PROPOSITION

The name of God represents the character of God; therefore, we should give God's name the deepest respect that we can – not only by the clean words that we speak but also by the clean life that we live, that is, the genuine life of true devotion to God.

In Walt Disney's *Bambi*, there is a character named Thumper. One of Thumper's rules of social interaction is this: "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all", Note Dr. Kopp, "And if you've got to be a crank, don't bring God's name into it."

This commandment is broken in several ways.

I. ONE PROFANES GOD'S NAME BY PROFANE WORDS

"A profane word is one you would not use in church, and that is a mighty good way to judge the language we use." (Allen: 53)

It takes no intelligence to use profane words. Profane words are the same words that thieves, prostitutes, and murderers use.

Profane words are used by men of all classes now – not just the down-and-outers, but also the up-and-outers. The otherwise decent man often uses gutter language. "There

are intelligent men and women who swear as if they had been to hell for their schooling and had had the devil himself for their schoolmaster." (Chappell; pg. 43) "Someone has said that what America needs is a national mouthwash with strong soap water in an attempt to shock it into unthinking and frivolous cursing."

The word 'Hell' is so frequently used. People say that something is as 'Hot as hell' or as 'Cold as Hell' or 'It is raining like hell', or something is as 'Good as hell', etc. One man used the word right when he came to a minister's office and said, 'I'm in a helleva shape!' Hell is a degenerating place and those bound by sin's habits are in a degenerating, hellish condition. One psychiatrist said that the widespread use of this word demonstrates a widespread subconscious fear of going to the real place called 'hell'.

"An expression made use of with terrible frequencies is 'God damn you'. A man is annoyed in some way by another, and gives ready tongue to this oath. It is taking God's name in vain, because the man who says it does not mean it. There is not a man who says it who would like to see it carried out with respect to his fellow man in all its terrible meaning. It is trifling with the name of God, invoking Him to do something, which it is never intended He shall do. That is not the most shocking aspect of the vain use of the name of God in that particular expression, for men are not only asking God to do something which they do not wish Him to do, but to do something that He never does. God never damned a man. The idea is an awful heresy. God's work is the work of salvation, and if a man is lost, it is the man's own suicidal act. God is not casting men away into eternal loss. The awful passing out into utter darkness of the man who is without God, and who is therefore lost, is the man's own fault. No man goes into that darkness except by his own act. God is not doing it. The idea that He damns men is being thrust into the minds of men by their own profanity of language, and it is a libel upon the love of God and upon all the Excellencies of His character. The false idea involved in the profane phrase already mentioned takes its effect upon those who hear it as regards their thought of God, and this effect is demoralizing and debasing." (G. C. Morgan; pgs. 39, 40)

Scores of other profane words are used today. The character of wives and mothers are smeared by some popularly used profane words. How infinitely worse to use the word 'God' in vain – profanely, insincerely, and thoughtlessly!

Charles Allen says that while there are all kinds of maniacs today, the most common type in America is 'swear maniacs'. (Widespread use of profanity in common speech). Says Myron Boyd, "People have lost their minds and their tongues are loose at both ends." Coffman says, "Profanity is a sin without temptation. It alleviates no pain, gratifies no appetite, and is not held to be desirable or attractive by either good or evil men. Profanity is simply a tongue gone berserk, and intelligence out of gear." (pg. 43)

James wrote, "With the tongue bless we God even the Father and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

"A young man nicked his chin while shaving. He cursed. His three-year-old daughter asked 'Isn't God here? I can't find Him. Call Him again, Daddy, and maybe He will come.' The father knelt and said, 'Darling, God is here and everywhere. How sinful I was to use His name in vain.'" (Sermon Builder; Sept. 1970; pg. 27)

What we need in America is millions of people falling on their faces and saying, "How sinful I was to use His name in vain." The Father of our Nation, George Washington, sought earnestly to curb the use of profanity in the army, which he led. General George Washington issued an order on July 4, 1775, in which he said, "The General most earnestly requires and expects a due observance of those articles of war, established for the government of the army, which forbid profane cursing, swearing, and drunkenness." Nineteen years earlier, he had written; 'Witness how much I have, both by threats and persuasive means, endeavored to discountenance gaming, drinking, swearing, and irregularities of every kind.' (Coffman; pg. 42)

"Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them." (Ephesians 4: 29)

"Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God." (Ephesians 5: 4)

II. ONE PROFANES GODE'S NAME, WHEN HE REFUSES TO SUBMIT TO THE REVELATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER AS SHOWN IN HIS NAME.

"The name of God, in Scripture, is always a revelation. By every title in which God made Himself known to man, He revealed some attribute of the Divine character." (Morgan; 36)

A. GOD'S NAME IS CREATOR

One defames God as Creator when one is not filled with 'wonder, love, and praise' as he beholds God's creation; then he is taking God's Name in vain!

B. GOD'S NAME IS FATHER

Therefore, to honor that name one must submit to the Fatherhood of God. This means trust in God's Fatherly care. When one is anxious or fearful, he is not trusting God as Father and is then profaning that name.

Said Jesus, "Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat: or, what shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6: 31-34)

"Remember that worry or fear is a kind of atheism. A person who worries says, 'I cannot trust God; I'll take things in my own hands.'...Worry says, 'God doesn't care, and so He won't do anything – I'll have to worry it through.' Faith says, 'God does care, and so He and I will work it out together. I'll supply the willingness, and He will supply the power – with that combination we can do anything.' You remember the story of Luther. One morning, when he was blue and discouraged his wife appeared in black. At Luther's inquiry as to what the mourning meant, she replied, 'Haven't you heard? God is dead.' Luther saw the absurdity – and so should you. God lives – so will you!" (Abundant Living; pg. 74)

Treating brothers and sisters in God's family coldly profanes the name of 'Father'. 'Fatherhood' of God presupposes the 'brotherhood' of man. Therefore, to treat our brothers harshly or to hold grudges toward our fellowmen, instead of forgiving and restoring fellowship, is to profane God's name as 'Father'.

"¹ Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?² Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose." (Philippians 2: 1-4)

"³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. "³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4: 31-32)

C. GOD'S NAME IS SAVIOUR

Therefore, to honor that name one must come to know God personally through saving faith. There are those who use God's name in their humanitarian efforts, but who don't know Him personally as Saviour. Jesus spoke of such people:

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7: 22, 23)

There are popular, so-called 'Gospel singers' who don't know Christ as personal Saviour, but who cash in on Jesus' name and make money singing about his name. Such use of God's name must be a great blasphemy to God. (That same thing happens every Sunday when people sing of the wonderful name of Jesus, and then go from the sanctuary and profane the name in word or in deeds.)

Through Isaiah, God revealed that Israel was at times a *"...people who draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me."* (Isaiah 29: 13)

D. GOD'S NAME IS KING

Therefore, to honor that name one must submit to God's Kingship. As King, Christ asks for obedience from His subjects. Those who talk of the Royalty of God but don't submit to God's Kingdom Rule are using God's name in vain.

"The form in which this third Commandment is broken must completely, most awfully, most terribly, is by perpetually making use of the name of the Lord, while the life does not square with the profession that is made." (Morgan)

III. ONE PROFANES GOD'S NAME WHEN JOKING ABOUT GOD OR JOKING ABOUT SACRED THINGS, OR USING GOD'S NAME TO COVER INSINCERITY OR LYING.

Jesus was good humored, and laughter of the proper type is like medicine to the soul. *Proverbs 17* says:

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." Jesus was a Joyous Companion to all he was around, in spite of the great sorrows He experienced. He was the type of man that people liked to invite to weddings and parties, and suppers. However, the merriment of Jesus was as different from the coarse joking of some people, as night is different than day. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks." (Ephesians 5: 3, 4)

There are those who make light of the Holy Ghost or of the Holy Communion, or of the Church, or of Ministers, or of the Holy Bible, or of Holy Matrimony (marriage) or some other Holy thing or person or ordinance. "Such tales should be shunned as men would shun the fire of hell." (Morgan; pg. 41)

The world is full of illustrations of people who make light of God, in joking. An actress said, "I knew there were five, not four, going back in that jeep. Who was the fifth one? It was good old God." "God wants, allows, and even commands respectful intimacy with Him." (Kopp) However, Jesus did not address God as a buddy, and He knew God well.

A guest on a variety show quoted a renowned bandleader as saying, 'I talk to that cat, Jesus Christ, every night.' (Sermon Builder; pg. 26; Sept. 1970) Never talk of God as "The Man Upstairs".

Such joking and lightness must be extremely blasphemous in God's sight.

"The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." (Exodus 20: 7) "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 5: 6)

Using God's name lightly, that is, profanely, is referred to in Isaiah:

"Hear this, you house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel, you who spring from the seed of Judah; who swear by the name of the Lord and boast in the God of Israel, but not in honesty or sincerity..." (Isaiah 48: 1; NEB)

"Another common abuse of God's name is this that men who are prone to exaggerate will resort to careless oaths to cover up their stretching of the truth. It is a common device of those who delight to tell tales. Perhaps you have had this experience. Someone deals very carelessly with the truth in making some tale interesting to you. Before long he notices a look of skepticism on your face, and then, to create the impression of utter truthfulness, he will resort to a careless oath, for instance, 'God knows I am telling the truth' and the name of the God of truth is used to hide his lying. In such oaths, to say the least, the greatest disrespect is shown God." (Maurer; pg. 22)

Clovis Chappell gives a personal illustration of how God's name was used in vain, by a man with whom he had an experience: "Sometime ago, for instance, a man came to my home in search of help. Though it was night, and though I had no money with me, I went with him to a neighboring drug store, cashed a check, and gave him the sum for which he asked. His appreciation knew no bounds. 'I will do anything for you', he declared with abounding gratitude. 'I will come in the morning and wash your car.' 'All right', I answered, with not much enthusiasm. 'Come in the morning and wash my car'. 'I will be there', he answered earnestly, 'I will certainly be there'. Then I turned upon him with this unkind word. 'Good', I said, 'be sure that you come; because if you do, you will be the first man that has ever come, under similar circumstances, during the twenty-five years that I have been helping men of your kind. I do hope that you will break the record.' Of course, I should not have spoken so harshly. It was not only bad psychology, but cruel as well. In fact, my words pained him so that the big tears ran down his cheeks and dropped upon the pavement. 'I will surely be there', he protested earnestly. Then to

make his coming an absolute certainty, he lifted his right hand, and took this solemn oath: 'I hope God will strike me dead if I am not there in the morning to wash your car.' Moreover, evidently that is what happened, for I have not seen him since. This commandment is a positive call to tell the simple truth." (pgs. 47, 48)

(My illustration with the man (a Nominal Jew) who 'Promised' to give me the fifty dollars back through Registered Mail – His last words were "Peace be with you). (Shalom) (I never received the money.)

"This is a condemnation of the man who takes a pledge in God's name to do something, and who then breaks his pledge."

Acts 5: 1-12: " ¹Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge, he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. ³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God." ⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. ⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." ⁹ Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." ¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Rash Vows – Ecclesiastes 5: 2, 4: " ² Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few." " ⁴ When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow."

Swearing Falsely - Zechariah 5: 1-4: " ¹ I looked again and there before me was a flying scroll. ² He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a flying scroll, twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide." ³ And he said to me, "This is the curse that is going out over the whole land; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according to what

it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished. ⁴ The LORD Almighty declares, 'I will send it out, and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of anyone who swears falsely by my name. It will remain in that house and destroy it completely, both its timbers and its stones.'"

Never use God's Name to justify our own actions – when those actions are selfish. "We are not to use God's name falsely, insincerely, by calling Him to witness to a lie." (Chappell; pg. 46)

In addition, we are not to use God's name to make our own human opinions more acceptable to people, if those human opinions are not the same as the clearly divinely revealed commands of God's Word. There are some domineering persons – professed Christians – who attempt to command someone else to do something by saying, "God told me to tell you to do a certain thing!" This is what the cultic leaders (like Jim Jones) have done, and such a use of God's name to make their own opinions more authoritative is a gross sin. Such a practice of using God's name to advance one's own selfish purposes not only defames the name and character of God, but it also hurts and hinders weak and gullible souls. Such modern-day hypocrites (like as in the case of the hypocritical Pharisees of Jesus' day) will suffer the punishment of God.

"The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." (Exodus 20: 7)

CONCLUSION

"There were those among the ancient Jews to whom the name of God was so high and holy that they never spoke it with their sinful lips. Without going to that extreme, we shall do well to form this firm resolve, that just because so many carelessly offer insult to God's name, we will be all the more zealous and faithful in tendering it due honor in prayer and praise and giving of thanks." (Maurer; pg. 24)

FOURTH COMMANDMENT

**“Remember the Sabbath day
by keeping it holy.
Six days you shall labor and
do all your work, but 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
male or female servant, nor
your animals, nor any
foreigner residing
in your towns. For in six
days the LORD made
the heavens and the earth,
the sea, and all that is in
them, but he rested on the
seventh day. Therefore the
LORD blessed the Sabbath
day and made it holy.”**

(Exodus 20: 8-11)

"FOCUS ON WORSHIP AND THE CHURCH!"

INSIGHTFUL COMMENTS IN AN ATTEMPT PROPERLY TO INTERPRET THIS TRUTH!

The following quotations are from 'Light for the Journey,
Living the Ten Commandments' by Ernest J. Lewis.

It is important for us to establish the fact that God gave us this law as he did the others because he loves us. If we could but establish this as part of our understanding of God's law, we would be halfway home. God did not give the law because he was punitive or mean, or wanted to spoil our fun. He gave us the law that we might find order and meaning and design and purpose – fulfillment – in this created order that he fashioned. (pg. 71)

Jesus came to establish a new fellowship, a new society, and give us a completely new frame of reference for all of life. And this life as freedom and joy - not a slavery to nit-picking rules. (pg. 73)

We need time to reflect and time to worship. To violate this basic law of God is to jeopardize our physical well-being. We become overanxious and compulsive. (pg. 73)

The important thing is for us to go in God's flow - rest for the physical activity and worship for the spiritual. (pg. 75)

You've probably never bothered to count, but a person twenty-one years of age has had three years of Sabbaths in his lifetime. At age thirty-five, we have had five years of Sundays. And by age seventy, we have experienced ten years of Sundays – ten years of Sundays in which to develop a spiritual life. God anticipated our needs long before we had them, and he gave us this law of the Sabbath because he loves us and wants us to know and understand him better. He wants us to be enriched and to enjoy life to the fullest by following his design and being in step with his rhythm for us. Oh, the wonder of it all is that this great God, in his love for us, created a universe where we alone can say 'thank you' and can discern. It is an intriguing, exciting thought to realize, with all the color and the beauty to be seen in our day, how full and rich life can be. If we find the balance between engagement by work and all of the joy it brings, and the time of rest and quiet, of unhurried contemplation of God is being – his worship, his world, his work and his will – then we will discover how to be whole persons. We will know that this law is a law of love. By keeping the Sabbath holy, we keep ourselves whole. (pgs. 75, 75)

The following quotations are from 'The Ten Commandments Will Not Budge', by B.A. Maurer.

Love, if it be love, demands and thrives on fellowship and communion; and so God most naturally asks His believing children that they take time to fellowship with Him in the prayerful use of His Word and Sacraments. (pg. 25)

God gave His ancient people six days to do all their work and the seventh day was to be set aside for Him. Surely, the Giver of all our days is most reasonable in His demands. (pg. 26)

Man is both a physical body and a living spirit, and each part of our make-up has its needs and wants that must be supplied if it is to live and function and thrive normally. (pg. 26)

This complete rest was prescribed that the Children of Israel might have time and opportunity for worship, to seek God's face, to frequent God's house and to meditate on God's Law. (pg. 28)

Jesus abolishes the Old Testament Sabbath. He puts it on the same plane with the temporary, purely Jewish laws concerning permitted and forbidden food and drink, which were binding only on the Jewish people, and on these only up to the coming of Christ. As those passed away with Christ's coming, so also the temporary Old Testament Sabbath, that was so misused to torture consciences, has been abolished by Jesus, its Lord. And in its place He now makes it the responsibility of the grace-filled Christian heart to set its own time and prescribe its own way for fellowship and communing with God in His Word and in Sacraments and in prayer. The outward shell has been discarded the kernel remains. The form has dropped away, the substance abides. No law any longer drives us to God, but a heart that rejoices in His sin-forgiving grace cannot be kept away from Him. In its love for Him, it will take time, and it will find and make a way of pressing into His presence and laying at His feet its adoration and praise. We no longer have any Sabbath law, but Christ-loving hearts will freely yield to God much more than any law demanded of their time and praise, thanks, and adoration. Without a law, we love God for His love; and loving Him, we seek His face because we are happiest in His presence...Without command we rejoice that the Great God condescends to meet and fellowship with us on the level of His Word and Sacraments and prayer. (pg. 29)

We want to begin each week with a celebration of His resurrection triumph, a pledge of our own through His power. When we meet with our beloved Lord, our minds drinking in His saving, life-giving truth, our hearts warmed by His love, our wills yielded to His, no day could be more happily or profitably spent, and no week started under circumstances that are more auspicious. (pg. 30)

The following quotations were taken from 'Ten Rules for Living', by Clovis G. Chappell.

How, then, are we to use Sunday? It is to be a day of rest...While work is an unmeasured blessing; man is not to work all the time. He needs one day in seven upon which to rest. This case whether he works with hand or brain. Man can do more in six days than he can in seven. To disregard this fact is to lower vitality and efficiency. It is to bring on frayed nerves, broken bodies, and premature death. A friend told of seeing two groups of donkeys at a certain mountain resort. These donkeys were used to take sightseers to the top of a lofty mountain. 'One group,' he declared, 'looked well kept, but the other was lean and weary, with no seeming interest in life.' Why the difference? One man sent his donkeys up the mountain seven days a week; the other refused to work his more than six days. The difference in their appearance indicated that even a donkey knows that one day in seven should be used as a day of rest. (pg. 69)

How, then, are we to use Sunday? It is to be a day that offers an opportunity for worship. It is through worship that we come into the realization of those unseen values that abide. It is as we worship that our strained lives are made clean. It is as we worship that we are recommissioned and rededicated to high aims and purposes. (pgs. 69, 70)

The following quotations are from 'The Ten Commandments Yesterday and Today' by James Burton Coffman.

Christ's attitude toward the Sabbath was emphatic. He proclaimed Himself "...Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). He defended His disciples against the charge of Sabbath-breaking and declared that the Sabbath was subordinate to man and not the other way around.

"²³One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? ²⁶In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." ²⁷Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." (Mark 2: 23-28)

Jesus also advocated a spiritual rather than legalistic view of the time-honored Jewish institution. (pg. 51)

God rested; so should man. The literal Sabbath is gone, but man's need for rest and worship, in the rhythmic pattern of successive Lord's Day, is perpetual. (pg. 51)

His resurrection, subsequent appearances to the apostles, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, along with the wondrous enthusiasm of Pentecost, all occurred on Sundays. By almost universal consent, Sunday is the Lord's Day. (pg. 53)

The following quotations are from 'The Ten Commandments for Today' by William Barclay from Chapter 4.

One thing has become completely and inescapably clear. The Sabbath day and the Lord's Day are different days and commemorate different events. The Sabbath is the last day of the week and commemorates God's rest after the toil of the week of creation; the Lord's Day is the first day of the week and commemorates the Resurrection of our Lord. Here we must be very plain and very definite. For the Christian the Sabbath has ceased to exist. The Sabbath is simply a day, which he does not observe, and to speak, for example, of a Sabbath School is quite wrong, because for the Christian there is no such thing.

Again, to put it very plainly and very definitely, this fourth commandment is not binding on the Christian at all, for there is no evidence in Scripture that the rules and regulations, which govern the Sabbath, were ever transferred by divine authority to the Lord's Day. The Sabbath is not a Christian institution, the Lord's Day is. To this day, the Jews observe the Sabbath, on our Saturday, and, from the point of view of Jewish religion, correctly so. However, the Christian has his own day, commemorating the greatest even in his faith, that is, the Resurrection. This means we are not asking: How ought I to keep the Sabbath? We are asking, How ought I to keep the Lord's Day? The Lord's Day is not primarily and essentially a day when this, that, or the next kind of work and action is prohibited, which is what the Jewish Sabbath is. The Lord's Day is primarily and essentially a day when we remember that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and is alive forever more, and therefore with us here and now. Every time we become involved in arguments about what may or may not be done on the Lord's Day we are, in fact, being Jewish instead of Christian, and we are, in fact, turning the Lord's Day into the Sabbath again. So then, our real question is not: How shall we keep the Sabbath? But, how shall we keep the Lord's Day?

(I) The prior question is Ought we to observe and keep any special day at all. It was clearly Paul's point of view that the really strong Christian would observe all days alike.

"¹ Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ²One person's faith allows them to eat anything,

but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³ *The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.* ⁴ *Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.* ⁵ *One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.* ⁶ *Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God."*
(Romans 14: 1-6)

But he also knew human nature well enough to know that to observe all days alike, would in all probability, simply mean to observe none at all. In theory, we can argue that no special day is necessary and all days are God's days, but in practice, we need a special day on which to focus our thoughts on God and on our risen Lord.

(ii) What then shall be the purpose of this day? In the first instance, a day of rest is still a necessity. As the old Greek proverb had it, the bow that is always bent (that is, always stretched taut) will soon cease to shoot straight. In the days of the French Revolution the revolutionaries abolished everything that had to do with religion, and they abolished Sunday, only to find that they had to bring it back again, because the health of the nation was suffering because there was no day of rest. It is a known fact, confirmed by those who study the technique of work, that, if a worker is working really hard, his efficiency diminishes towards the end of the week; and his efficiency is restored by the day of rest. It is proved that a day of rest is a social and industrial necessity without which health and work inevitably suffer.

It is just exactly here that we run into trouble. There is no difficulty at all in getting almost, if not quite, everyone to agree with this general principle; the difficulty lies in the practical application of it. We have the principle that the Lord's Day should be a day of rest. But it is entirely necessary to define what rest is.

When the commandment itself was laid down, it was laid down in a society where almost all work was physical work. A man tilled the soil, reaped the harvest, fished in the lake, or watched the flock. He would come to the end of the week with aching muscles and a body exhausted, physically weary and tired, and for such a man rest was undoubtedly a time in which he did nothing, in which he lay back and eased the tired limbs. But the modern

situation is quite different. There is much less work, which is purely physical work, and there is much more work which is done with more or less no physical effort at all.

One of the great problems of the modern health situation is that too many people take too little exercise, and many of the modern occupational diseases are the direct result of too little active use of the body. For the man engaged in a sedentary office job, or in a profession at which all his work is done in a chair at a desk, real rest will not be immobile inactivity; it will be some kind of action. For such a man a day of rest will be a day when he actively uses his body, and by so doing, preserves his health.

And for that very reason, no man need have a guilty conscience if on the Lord's Day he plays some healthy game, or swims in the sea, or climbs the hills, or walks in the country. It is to be carefully noted that this is not an argument for watching sport and for organized sport on the Lord's Day. This is not what this kind of rest involves at all. But it is to say that the golf course and the tennis court, and the cricket pitch, and the sea, and the hills, are not forbidden to a Christian who is observing a day of rest.

In a situation in which a man can, so to speak, sit and eat himself into a thrombosis, a day of rest will be a day when he exercises his body as well as his soul. For the modern man, in the civilization and the way of life in which he lives, inactivity is not rest; it is the very thing which is ruining his body. Let a man interpret the word rest as his needs demand. If the end of the week finds him with a body, which needs activity, more than anything else, let him not fear to take it.

(iii) For a third thing, the Lord's Day will surely be a family day. No faith sets a higher value on the family than Christianity does. In the ancient times, the family did live together on the farm, in the fishing boat, and in the village. Day and daily they lived, worked, ate, and slept together. Even when the children grew up and married, they remained within the clan. However, in modern conditions it can happen that the members of the family rarely see each other through the week. They have their own work during the day; they have their own studies or activities in the evening; in many families not even, the midday meal is eaten together.

When the children grow up and marry, they do not stay in the old home; they leave it and go their own ways. In such circumstances the Lord's Day can be, and ought to be, the family meeting day, the day when the members of the family meet as a family, the day when the sons and daughters who have gone out come back home again. The day when the grandchildren meet their grandparents, the day when the family circle, so interrupted and broken by modern life, comes

together again. Even to this day, there is a certain symbolism in the Sunday midday meal. It can become a kind of sacrament of the home.

We have thought of the Lord's Day as the day of rest, not necessarily in the sense of inactivity, but in the real sense of the term. We have thought of the Lord's Day as the day of the meeting of the family. But the Lord's Day goes much deeper than that, and we must go on to see its still greater meanings and its values that are still more precious. We, therefore, now turn to look at the things, which belong more to what may be called the divine side of the day.

(iv) The Lord's Day was always the day when God's people met and assembled together, and if we can work out the reasons why they did meet together, then we will go far towards finding the most important uses of the Lord's Day.

When we read these descriptions of the early Christian Lord's Day services, certain things emerge, and these things make a pattern.

(a) They used the Lord's Day for *study*. In both Justin and Tertullian, the reading of Scriptures is stressed. In fact, it is so stressed, that it seems to be, the main part of the service. The Christian should always use the Lord's Day to find out a little more about the faith he professes. It may be by listening to a sermon or taking part in a Bible school or Bible class; it may be by being one of a group who meet to talk and to discuss; it may be by the listening to what radio and television can give; it may be by the deliberate reading of a teaching book. One way or another, the Lord's Day should be a teaching or a learning day.

(b) They used the Lord's Day for *prayer*. This is too saying they used it to get to know God better. On the Lord's Day, they took life and laid it before God. Prayer too was an unvarying part of the pattern of the early Christian Lord's Day. If the Lord's Day is nothing else, it must be the day when we stop and remember God. It must be a day when we take our own needs, when we take all kinds of people, and lay all before God.

(c) They used the Lord's Day for *fellowship*. It was on that day, week by week, that they had their Love Feast, to which they came together in a togetherness, which overcame all social barriers and made them one united band of brothers in Christ. The Church has lost and gained many things in the course of the years; it is one of the tragedies that it lost the Love Feast, and never really gained anything to put in its place. In a curious way, to have eaten together is the way to unity.

(d) They used the Lord's Day to *make that fellowship practically effective*. Part of the unvarying pattern is the voluntary offering for those in trouble and in need. This goes right back to the New Testament. When Paul was writing to the Corinthians and reminding them of the collection he was taking for the poor of the church at Jerusalem, he said: *'On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper'*. (I Corinthians 16: 2) The Lord's Day must surely always be used to help those less fortunate than we are. It may be that in the days of the week we do not have time to think of others; the Lord's Day is the day on which we remember. Moreover, today in the modern world that remembering may well be best done by, not dropping a coin or even a note in a collection plate by paying a visit or extending an invitation to someone who is old or lonely or a stranger in a strange place.

(e) They used the Lord's Day for *praise*. Both, the heathen Pliny and the Christian Tertullian, noted how the Christian congregations sang. That too goes right back to the New Testament, for again in the Letter to the Corinthians Paul speaks about the man who comes to the Church's worship with a hymn (*What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.* I Corinthians 14: 26) 'Let us sing to God's praise and glory', is a fit opening to any Christian assembly.

(f) They used the Lord's Day to strengthen the moral fiber of life. Even the heathen Pliny tells of the pledge the Christians took to live the good life. Both Justin and Tertullian tell of the exhortation delivered; and Tertullian tells of the Christian discipline exercised on those who lived unchristian lives. Their aim was to use the Lord's Day to emerge on the beginning of the new week morally strengthened and spiritually uplifted.

To know more about the faith we hold, to come nearer to God and nearer to our fellowmen, to remember others and to help them, to declare our praise to God. Walk with firmer steps the way to life – these were the aims of the early Christians in their use of the Lord's Day – and they are aims just as valid as ever they were.

(v) For the Christian the Lord's Day should be used for worship. The word worship is a very wide word. Worship is worth-ship, and to worship is to confess and to experience the supreme worth of God. It

is through some means or other to find the presence of God, and through that discovery to find the inspiration and the strength to live a life, which is fit for the presence of God. William Temple's definition of worship places worship in the wider context, which it ought to have. 'To worship,' Temple wrote, 'is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.'

We must clearly, and willingly, admit that there are many ways to worship. However difficult it is for the conventional religious mind to recognize it or to admit it, the church is not the only place in which worship in the real sense of the word is possible.

There are those for whom nature itself is the cathedral of God. Wordsworth writes of this experience of nature in 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey':

I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

There is no doubt that this is a description of worship, and unquestionably a man can worship in nature; it would be strange if we could not meet God in the world that God has made.

A man can worship in music. When Handel was asked, "How he had succeeded in writing the music of his *Messiah*?" he answered: 'I saw the Heavens open, and God sitting on his great white throne,' and it is just that same experience that music can bring to some.

A man can worship in beauty. F. R. Barry in his life of that great bishop, Mervyn Haigh, repeats a story about Haigh that Dean Hedley Burrows told him. Burrows said that, when he was Dean of Hereford, Mervyn Haigh came to see him on one occasion. Burrows goes on: 'He (Haigh) took me into the cathedral and led me to a certain point in the north nave aisle from which he could see the fifteenth-century vaulting in the south transept, and he said, "It was that light which

decided me to be ordained". It was through beauty that God spoke to Mervyn Haigh.

It may well be that in this modern world a man may find his worship in the services that come to him on the air on radio and television. One of the strangest experiences in broadcasting is that, if one is taking part in a well-established programme, which has been running perhaps for many years. A programme such, for instance, as the People's Service, one is acutely aware of an unseen fellowship; there is the clear consciousness that one is in the midst of a worshipping community which one cannot see but which one can vividly and intensely feel.

It may well be true that for the large majority of people worship must be a corporate act within a Church; it may well be that at least some of us hesitate, or refuse, to recognize anything else as worship. However, if worship is the realization and the awareness of the presence of God, and of God's greatness, and the dedication of life to him, then there are many kinds of worship, and a man must find his own way to God. He must somehow use the Lord's Day to rediscover, to realize and to remember that God is very near.

In the Lord's Day, the Christian has a great possession. The Lord's Day is not the Jewish Sabbath and must not be confounded with it. The Lord's Day is a day of rest. However, rest must be interpreted, according to the needs of the individual. The Lord's Day is the day of the meeting of families and friends. The Lord's Day is the day when we seek to enter more deeply, in learning, in reading, in study, in discussion into the meaning of the faith; the Lord's Day is the day when we remember those who are lonely and in need and who are less fortunate than we are. The Lord's Day is the day when in worship we realize the presence of God in order to go out and to walk in it through all the days of the week.

(William Barclay from Chapter 4; took the above extensive quotations from "The Ten Commandments for Today")

FIFTH COMMANDMENT

***"Honor your father and
your mother,
so that you may live long
in the land
the LORD your God is giving you.***

(Exodus 20: 12)

*SCRIPTURE: "1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—
3 "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6: 1-4)*

"HONOR THY PARENTS!"

INTRODUCTION

A child learns to love God as he first learns to love his parents. "A small girl was asked if she would like to be like Jesus. 'I don't know', she answered, 'But I would like to be like Mother and Daddy.'" (Service Builder; pg. 23; Nov. 1970)

"Our modern version of this rule is not, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right', as Paul states it. It is rather, 'Parents, obey your children, for you can't afford to be bothered.'" (Chappell; pg. 73) Disrespect for parents is one of the most gross and widespread sins of our day, a sin that will be punished by God, if not repented of. In the Old Testament days, everyone who curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.

⁹ *"Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their own head. (Leviticus 20: 9)*

¹⁷ *"If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride price for virgins." (Exodus 22: 17)*

PROPOSITION

The Fifth Commandment introduces the man-to-man relationships that are to exist between human beings, and there is no better place to start than in the home, for the home is the training ground for all other proper relationships. This commandment talks about Honor, honorable parents, and children who exercise honor for their parents. The parent who desires honor from his child must live honorably.

I. PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

The parent is to live an honorable life – setting proper, godly example – that instills a love and respect in the heart and life of a child.

An honorable example produces a child who honors and obeys. "The surest way to insure that children shall honor parents is for the parents to live the life before them which reflects the glory and grace of God." (Morgan; pg. 59)

What kind of parent is honorable?

A. One Who Reads the Bible Regularly in the Home, to the Children.

(Call to Family Worship, and need for Bible Stories in the language of the child). I recall my childhood days of falling asleep when mother read the stories.

B. Are you one who Prays With Family, regularly, and not just during crisis.

As a parent, do you resort to God last or first? Does your child hear you pray and see you pray? Or do you just have your child say his bedtime prayers, and be through with it?

C. Are you one who takes his Children to Church Services, instead of just sending them?

"Statistics reveal that eighty percent of those children whose parents take them to church remain faithful in adulthood, while only twenty percent of those who are sent to church remain faithful. 'Wait until I get away from home,' say many such children, 'I won't go to Church then.' (Sermon Builders; Nov. 1970; pg. 19)

D. Are you One Who Honors God's Name in the Home?

A child who early uses bad language, only shows and unveils what he has learned by example from his parents in the home. If a parent speaks disrespectfully of God's House, or God's Book, or God's people, or God's minister, then you can expect your child to likewise speak disrespectfully. These values of the parents are soon passed on or unconsciously absorbed by the children. (Example: One layman who made a practice of having "roast preacher" for every Sunday Dinner, became very disillusioned later in life when his children left the Church and became hardened towards the Church and towards ministers. The father who was a faithful Church attendee is just as much at fault as the wayward children. Another layman made it a practice to speak of the good Sunday service and sermon at the dinner table on Sunday, and his children are now active Christian laymen in the Church.)

E. One who Exercises Firm, but Fair and Loving Discipline in the Home.

"A poll at Purdue University revealed that 93,913 out of 100,000 high school students claimed that their parents were not strict enough!" (Sermon Builder; Nov. 1970; pg. 19)

"When our small boy makes up his mind to play with your razor instead of his toy dog, then what? When he insists upon drinking Lysol instead of sweet milk, upon eating mud instead of spinach, what about it? When he decides that he does not believe in education, and therefore refuses to go to school, what course do you pursue? Well, you talk it over with him and explain the wisdom and rightness of your position. If he fails to listen, then you resort to other means. You may even try a bit of kindly compulsion. It would be at once criminal and silly to do otherwise. That is, you will not allow a child unlimited choice as to food, playthings, or school, knowing that he has not sufficient data upon which to go. The necessity for wise and kindly discipline in another realm is equally needful. It has become the fashion among certain parents to refuse to give their children any religious training, leaving them to reach their own conclusions. This is just as deadly in the realm of the spiritual as it would be in the realm of the physical. A bit of wholesome constraint toward religion is vastly helpful, in spite of that mythical character that never goes to Church today because he was forced to go when he was a boy. He may exist, but he is about as rare as those who cannot read because they are forced to attend school in boyhood. Those who are carrying on the work of the Church today are those who, either willingly or unwillingly, attended as boys and girls. I believe, therefore, in the right kind of discipline for the forming of right habits...Every child needs to learn obedience because there is no happiness without it. One can put it down as a fundamental fact that no child is ever happy whose will is never crossed." (Chappell; pg. 79)

Tragedy of undisciplined child who gets his way all the time – collision in marriage; collision with State; Disrespect for Law, leading to Crime. Says the late J. Edgar Hoover, "Religion and Home Life are supplementary. Each strengthens the other. It is seldom that a solid and wholesome home life can be found in the absence of religious inspiration." (Service Builder; Nov. 1970; pg. 41)

F. One who can give a kind, listening Ear to child's problems.

A good parent feels for his child and never belittles the problems that the child is facing, regardless of how small and insignificant the problems appears to the parents. The child needs sympathy and understanding. This does not mean the parent should try to solve every problem for the child, but instead be a sympathetic friend who can help the child to solve his own problem.

G. One who Instills Confidence in the Child.

Paul wrote, "*And, ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" (Ephesians 6: 4) "There appears to be evidence that Paul experienced harsh treatment from his own father, and was disinherited by his family." (Coffman; pg. 67) The parent is not to be

indulgent, but the parent is also not to be domineering, autocratic. A parent is to encourage the child. "Luther used to say: 'Spare the rod and spoil the child – that is true; but beside the rod keep an apple to give him when he has done well.' Benjamin West tells how he became a painter. One day his mother went out leaving him in charge of his little sister Sally. In his mother's absence, he discovered some bottles of colored ink and began to paint Sally's portrait. In the doing, so he made a very considerable mess of things with inkblots all over. His mother came back. She saw the mess, but she said nothing. She picked up the piece of paper and saw the drawing. 'Why', she said, "it's Sally!" And she stooped and kissed him. Ever after Benjamin West used to say, 'My mother's kiss made me a painter.' Encouragement did more than rebuke could ever do."

H. One who is Generous and Liberal and Thoughtful of Others.

My father gave 'Santa' to a friend of mine who was desperately in need of clothes, without my friend ever knowing the source of his gifts.

I. One who is willing to sacrifice for Children.

"Such parents and their name are legion, are entitled to the highest place or loving honor in the human soul, second only to that belonging to the Deity." (Coffman; pg. 81)

My own dad gave his life toward raising his four children. (Early in morning until late at night, my dad worked so hard – during War Years at small-town grocery store; my mother labored hard to raise us kids, - taking care of us – (my brother with polio, etc.)

II. CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITY

A. Obedience in Young Life (Childhood)

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." (Colossians 3: 20)

Jesus' Examples:

Loyalty to parents – submission and obedience. (Jesus spent 10/11 of his life in a village home at Nazareth. (Until he was 30 years old) Probably, Jesus took care of his mother younger brothers and sisters.

Response to godly teaching (Temple incident).

Adult respect (disciples were as members of his family) and care for mother in hour of his death.

"An old school master said one day to a clergyman who came to examine his school: 'I believe the children know the catechism word for word.' 'But do they understand it? That is the question' said the clergyman. The schoolmaster only bowed respectfully, and the examination began. A little boy had repeated the fifth commandment, 'Honor thy father and thy mother', and then he was asked to explain it. Instead of trying to do so, the lad blushing said, 'Yesterday I showed some strange gentlemen over the mountain. The sharp stones cut my feet, and the gentlemen saw they were bleeding, and gave me some money to buy me some shoes. I gave the money to my mother, for she had no shoes either and I thought I could go barefoot better than she could.'" (Boyd; pgs. 23, 24)

B. Respect (Honor) in Adult Life

- 1. Keep in touch with parent's regularity.**
- 2. Care for widowed mother – "The Church should take loving care of women whose husbands have died, if they don't have anyone else to help them. But if they have children or grandchildren, these are the ones who should take the responsibility, for kindness should begin at home, supporting needy parents. This is something that pleases God very much." " ³ Take care of ¹ any widow who has no one else to care for her. But if she has children or grandchildren, their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God." (I Timothy 5: 3, 4; Living Bible)**
- 3. Greatest way to honor parent is to live consecrated life of service to God and man. A child can never repay his parents – either monetarily or in many other ways.**

C. What is the result of keeping this commandment?

- (1) One's chance of living and enjoying a long and prosperous life is greatly increased – this is the first commandment given with a promise.**
- (2) One will keep the other commandments. "It is true that all the following commands are included in the fifth. Children that honor their parents will be saved from murder, impurity theft, slander, and covetousness."**

- (3) "The history of the centuries proves that, under stress of swift proved invulnerable, by the memory and conscious influence of a godly father and sainted mother." (Morgan; pg. 64)

"The greatest honor that any person can do his parent is to live a consecrated Christian life of service. That will build a monument more enduring than stone." (Coffman: pg. 64)

CONCLUSION

We are responsible to honor our parents, and seek to live an honorable life that our future children will be able in turn to honor us and to pass on the heritage.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not murder."

Exodus 20: 12

"THOU SHALT NOT MURDER!"

INTRODUCTION

Declares God in this Sixth Commandment, "Hands Off! Untouchable! Forbidden Ground! I gave this life; I alone have the right to recall it; let no one trespass on My divine prerogative of setting the bounds of life; let no one decrease by so much as a single hour the life span I allot him." (Maurer; pg. 38

PROPOSITION

This commandment applies to both physical and spiritual suicide, and to both physical and spiritual murder of others.

I. PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL SUICIDE

Wrote Paul, "Don't you realize that all of you together are the House of God, and that the Spirit of God lives among you in his house? If anyone defiles and spoils God's home, God will destroy him. For God's home is holy and clean, and you are that home." (I Corinthians 3: 16, 17)

This Scripture refers to both physical and spiritual suicide. God says, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price – the price of Jesus' blood." Life, to God, is sacred and is not to be destroyed, whether that destruction is self-destruction or destruction of another, or whether that destruction is physical or spiritual

A. PHYSICAL SUICIDE

It is said that the leading cause of death among people aged 15-26 is suicide. Self-destruction is born out of despair or self-loathing many times, and is basically selfish, for this act results in leaving further burdens to be borne by relatives and friends.

A few commit immediate physical suicide; many more are committing gradual physical suicide. "To indulge in any pleasure at the price of premature death is wrong, however innocent that pleasure may seem." (Chappell; pg. 89)

What are some of the common ways in which people commit gradual suicide?

- (1) **Overeating.** Benjamin Franklin said, "Eat to live; Don't live to eat." The Scriptures make it clear that Christians are to eat and to drink to the glory of God. The great Christians throughout the ages have disciplined

themselves in the area of eating. "William Law was inflexible in his fasting habits. He said that almost every ill-temper, every hindrance to virtue, every clog in our way of piety and the strength of every temptation, chiefly arose from the state of our bodies." (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 89)

States a medical authority: "It is no new doctrine that gluttons have a relatively high morbidity and mortality from vascular disease." (McMillan; ph. 85) What can one do about overweight? "One of the most successful control devices is to see yourself as you want to be and then work towards that vision of yourself as you wish to be." (Peale; Sin, Sex, Self-Control; pg. 161)

(2) Alcohol. "Alcohol not only robs a man of his brains and his health, but it robs his pocketbook." (McMillan; pg. 26) "Because alcohol produces areas of atrophy in the brain, a large percentage of drinkers are actually committing a slow suicide of their, personalities." (Ibid; pg. 25) Said Shakespeare; "O God! That men should put an enemy in their mouth to steal away their brains." The social drinker can cause devastation to the weaker friend or to his children. Almost every alcoholic was first a social drinker. "We can kill by exercising our weaker brother to needless temptation. 'I killed him' His blood is on my hands.'" (Chappell; pgs. 92, 93)

(3) Smoking. One man said to a minister, as he was lighting a cigarette, "I have a tobacco heart. My doctor has told me that if I do not quit smoking it is going to kill me. I did quit for a while, but I missed it so much that I made up my mind that I would rather die sooner than to deny myself the pleasure of smoking." (Chappell; pg. 89)

It is one thing to acknowledge the harmfulness of smoking and drinking; it is quite another to quit. One woman who gave up both smoking and drinking tells how she did it: "Every time I took a drink or lit a cigarette, I asked myself this question: 'Are you gaining control, or losing it?' It was pretty obvious to me that after one drink I had less power of choice when it came to deciding about another drink. I was losing control, not gaining it. As for cigarettes, when I felt a strong urge to light one, and gave in to that urge, I was surrendering my freedom of choice again. I finally decided that life is complicated enough without these petty tyrants interfering with your freedom and pushing you around. So I made up my mind to get rid of them altogether and I did!" (Sin, Sex, and self-Control; [g. 159)

(4) Lack of Physical Exercise. The body is made tough but to remain tough the physical requires regular strenuous exercise of the heart and

lungs. The brain also needs re-creating. Physical exercise will accomplish many things: Enable you to relax better, enable your muscles to function more adequately, enable your blood-stream to circulate better, enable you to have a better general outlook on life, and increase the likelihood of added years to your life.

(5) Worry. It is a well-known fact that excessive worry can cause physiological problems and even trigger off diseases. Wise is the person who learns to trust in the Lord, casting every care on God, and rejoicing in God's Fatherly protection. When worry strikes, read Psalms 23 and meditate on it.

B. SPIRITUAL SUICIDE

One can immediately commit spiritual suicide by denying Christ outright. However, few do that. There are far more who commit spiritual suicide gradually, through slow but sure drifting away from God. One time while I was driving one of my tires that lost air gradually and then all of a sudden I found it flat – there was great potential danger in that tire losing air gradually. If I had been travelling fast and that tire would have suddenly come off the rim, I could have had a serious accident. There is danger in gradually drifting away from God (neglecting more and more the 'Means of Grace') resulting eventually (unless the trend is reversed) in spiritual suicide.)

Many are gradually committing spiritual suicide by disregarding or taking lightly God's laws. To disregard the law of gravity will probably eventually mean physical catastrophe. One may not outrightly disregard the law of gravity and yet one may lightly regard it – that is, recognize the law, but not seriously observe it or see the serious consequence resulting from breaking it.

There are many who acknowledge the existence of commands in God's Word, but these same people still only lightly regard these commands.

(1) There are those who lightly regard God's command to pray, and such people who do little or virtually no daily praying are courting spiritual disaster. E. Stanley Jones says, "Most of the casualties in the spiritual life are found at the place of a weakened prayer life. When the prayer life is toned up, the whole of the rest of the life is toned up with it. Prayer is pivotal. I find I am better or worse as I pray more or less. If prayer fades, power fades. When I pray I'm like an electric bulb put into the socket, full of light and power. When I don't pray I'm like that same bulb pulled out of the socket – no light, no power. It is as simple as that. And in addition, it

works with a mathematical precision. In prayer our weakness is linked to Almightyness, our ignorance linked to Infinite Wisdom, our finite self to the Infinite Self. When every other way is closed, the way of prayer is open." (Christian Maturity, pg. 302)

- (2) There are those who lightly regard tithing. To neglect this practice is to invite personal spiritual trouble. The motivation for tithing however should not be obligation but rather delight. "God loveth a cheerful giver."

Says God, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3: 8-10)

Failure to observe God's command regarding tithing results in robbing God and bringing the curse of God's displeasure upon you.

- (3) Those who continue to neglect the public Church services and the regular reading of the Holy Scriptures invite spiritual disaster for themselves. Hebrews 10: 25 says, *"Let us not neglect our Church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near."* The Psalmist said, *"Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee."*
- (4) Possessing an unloving spirit not only harms others, but also harms oneself. When I injure others, I injure myself and degrade myself. When differences arise between true Christians, an immediate reconciliation ought to be made, if at all possible. Wrote Paul to two Christian women who had a difference between them: *"And now I want to plead with those two dear women, Euodias and Syntyche. Please, please, with the Lord's help, quarrel no more – be friends again. And I ask you, my true teammate – to help these women, for they worked side by side with me in telling the Good News to others."* (Philippians 4: 2, 3; Living Bible) *"Be kind to one*

another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4: 32)

- (5) Possessing a worldly spirit can lead to spiritual suicide. "To be governed by carnal attitudes, to manifest a carnal spirit of selfishness, pride, envy, covetousness, hatred is spiritual suicide. To say evil things about a brother or sister for the purpose of injuring their reputation in the eyes of another is spiritual suicide and murder." (Boyd; pg. 30) "Love not the world, neither the things in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

II. PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL MURDER

A. PHYSICAL MURDER

The command obviously speaks against the wrong of taking another man's physical life. God gave life to all men and thus God alone has the authority to take life. The only time that it would conceivably be right for one man to take another man's life would be in the name of God-ordained civil authority; or as a part of an army seeking to stop the onslaughts of godless, robber aggressor nations; or (in rare cases) in self-defense. All other killing of human life is strictly forbidden, and is looked upon as a malicious taking of a God-created being. The blood of the innocent (like the blood of Abel) will cry out to God for vengeance.

Abortion is nothing less than murder! Notes Stott: "We reject as totally false and utterly abhorrent the notion that the fetus is merely a lump of jelly or blob of tissue, or a growth in the mother's womb, which may therefore be extracted and destroyed like teeth, tumors, or tonsils." He notes further, "The occupant of the mother's womb is not a 'product of conception' or 'gametic material', but an unborn child. Even 'pregnancy' tell us no more than that, a woman has been 'impregnated', whereas the truth in old-fashioned language is that she is 'with child'. How can we speak of 'the termination of a pregnancy' when what is terminated is not just the mother's pregnancy but the child's life? Moreover, how can we describe the average abortion today as 'therapeutic' (a word originally used only when the mother's life was at stake), when pregnancy is not a disease needing therapy, and what abortion effects nowadays is not a cure but a killing? And how can people think of abortion as no more than a kind of contraceptive, when what it does is not prevent conception but destroy the conceptus? We need to have the courage to use accurate language. Induced abortion is feticide, the deliberate destruction of an unborn child, the shedding of innocent blood." (Involvement; pgs. 193, 207, 208)

The man who extinguishes the life of another can never restore that life, and thus this sin is one of the most serious of all crimes. However, even this sin can be forgiven, as shown by God's forgiveness of David who was a murderer. However, the Bible makes it clear that the unrepentant murderer will find his place in the 'lake of fire'.

"⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Revelations 21: 8)

Jesus gave a broader interpretation of the Old Testament Law and said that carnal anger, which desires to destroy another, is equal to murder.

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder,^[1] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^[1] will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,^[1] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. (Matthew 5: 21, 22)

The only solution to carnal anger and hatred is love. The man who is destroying both himself and others through hatred can be healed by God's imparted love. If you are now experiencing carnal anger and hatred, realize the seriousness of this and open your life to the Holy Spirit who can fill your life with love for even the unholy and hateful.

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." – Therefore, we can love even those who spitefully use us. (Romans 5: 4)

B. SPIRITUAL MURDER

Some parents are guilty of spiritually murdering their children – either immediately or more often, gradually. "One young lady after a long discouraging battle took poison. She left a note in which she said: 'Goodbye Dad, I'll see you in hell'." (Boyd; pg. 30)

Parents who fail to teach their children the Scriptures, or fail to pray with their children, or fail to take their children to Church regularly, are spiritually murdering their children. Take that last – taking their children to Church. "Statistics reveal that eighty percent of those children whose parents take them to Church remain faithful in adulthood, while only twenty percent of those who are sent to Church remain faithful." (Sermon Builder; Nov. 1970; pg. 19)

William Sangster tells of trying to comfort a father whose child had gone wrong. "His boy had broken his father's heart; broken his own heart as well. Socially, morally, and spiritually, the lad had made a mess of things, and ended by taking his own life. 'I can't make it out', said the distraught father. 'I never denied him anything. I even sent him to Church.' He had sent him to Church, as a boy of course. He did not take him. He had been too busy to spare an hour a week for worship. Yet he shared the common idea that Sunday school and Church are good for children, and he sent the boy to Church. When the lad was twelve, he insisted no more. After all, he had to attend chapel at his public school. During holidays, the lad could please himself. There is an enormous difference between sending a child to Church and taking him. If you go with him, he realizes (even as a small boy) that it means something to you. If you never go yourself, he comes to think that Church is just 'kid's stuff', and takes it as a sign of maturity when he is allowed to give it up. We don't go to Church primarily to be made moral. We go to worship God. But sincere worship has glorious consequences." (Daily Readings from William Sangster; pg. 292)

It is possible to "spiritually murder" the people around us. One of the most common and most tragic ways of murdering people spiritually is indifference to their physical, social, and spiritual condition. It is possible for Christians to find themselves in the shoes of the Levite or priest who were too busy with their religious duties and therefore "passed by on the other side", leaving destitute humanity in the ditch to suffer. Where are our Good Samaritans – love filled, compassionate men, willing to sacrifice personal comfort, personal convenience, and even personal financial means to care for the one who is dying physically and morally?

An article that got a hold of me, reads like this, "Listen Christian! I was hungry and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger. Thank you." "I was naked, and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance." "I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for your health." "I was homeless and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God." "I was lonely and you left me alone to pray for me." You seem so holy; So close to God. But I'm still very hungry, lonely, and cold."

CONCLUSION

WHAT WILL YOU DO? "Of course, it is not enough that we refrain from doing our brother actual bodily harm. A corpse or a wax figure could be obedient after that fashion. We can obey this rule in the Christian sense, not by merely driving out anger, hate, and indifference, but by bringing in their opposites. We can obey this rule only by possessing a good will toward our fellows that is active, aggressive, and sacrificial." (Chappell; pgs. 97, 98)

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

*"Thou shalt not
commit
adultery."*

Exodus 20: 14

"BE CLEAN!"

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' He meant it! Yet, there are many today (even some professing Christians) who want to take exception to Jesus' absolute rules. Excuses abound for pre-marital or extra-marital sexual relationships."

There is a story of a certain minister who made his way to a cabin far in the mountains of East Tennessee. It was summertime and door was propped open by a sacred and battered book. The minister saw that this book was a masterpiece of the bookbinder's art, though it was now ugly and tarnished. The contents of this book amazed him even more, for it was the Bible. Yet these people could find no better use for this work of art, for the words of the prophets, the songs of the poets, the story of the cross, than to use it to prop open the door of a tumbledown cabin. Christianity braces us for clean living by calling us to respect ourselves as the temples of the Holy Spirit." (Chappell; pg. 114)

Some people's attitude toward this commandment and the Bible in general is about like the attitude of the man who used (or misused) the Bible as a prop to keep open the door of a tumbledown cabin.

"Jesus declared, '...the scripture cannot be broken...' (John 10: 35). In the cosmic sense, there are never broken commandments; only broken men, broken hearts, broken lives, broken dreams, broken nations, and broken civilizations! The inviolate nature of God's will prompted the statement of the Master: 'Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust...'. (Luke 20: 18) Men may seem to break God's laws, but it is they themselves who are broken." (Coffman; pg. 91)

The Ten Commandments are not obsolete, but are absolute and relevant for this day. The fact that this commandment is so often broken shows that it is extremely relevant. "Socialists estimate that, in some areas of America, sixty percent of the brides go the marriage altar having experienced the marriage relationship. Some psychiatrists estimate that about fifty percent of the married couples in the United States have been untrue to their wedding vows. Divorces are granted for the most insignificant reasons...A divorce was granted in Indianapolis, recently, because of an argument over green stamps. A Supreme Court justice (sixty-seven-years-old) divorces his wife to marry a girl (twenty-four-years-old) whom he divorces later to marry another...still younger." (Sermon Builder; pg. 331; Jn. 1971)

"Many of our movies are too suggestive and filthy for decent people to look at. The obscene joke and filthy story are regarded as sophistication, and one out of every three American marriages ends in divorce. As a result, juvenile delinquency, which is largely parental delinquency, is at its highest peak, and more than a million American children, for the most part innocent victims, are forced to grow up in broken homes, or in institutions. Altogether it is so dark a picture that every thoughtful American can only view it with alarm, and every Christian American can only beg God on bended knee to withhold for a time His avenging anger." (Maurer; 49)

Some may ask the question: 'Just why is adultery wrong?' Many reasons can be given, but the more obvious reasons include these: "Since adultery hurts by leaving a sense of guilt; by dogging our steps with fear, since it robs us in some measure of our chances to marry, and of our chances to make a success of marriage. Since it wars against the home, against childhood, and against society as a whole it is a wrong. And since it is a wrong, we have no right to indulge in it." (Chappell; pg. 111) Gibbons, in his great history of the Fall of Rome, lists as the number one reason for the fall of Rome, – the steady increase in sexual immorality, divorce, and the breakup of the home.

PROPOSITION

Adultery is always wrong and is the enemy of the 'Clean Life'. Both physical and mental adultery should be avoided like the plague.

I. MARRIAGE – INSTITUTED OF GOD

A. EXAMPLE FROM NATURE

"There are some animals and some birds, naturalists tell us, whose mating is monogamous and for life. Surely, we human beings should not have lower ideals of mating than some of the animals!" (Maurer; pg. 46)

B. INSTITUTED BY GOD

"He which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Matthew 19: 5)

Marriage is considered to be most sacred to God. "So highly does God think of marriage as He wants it to be that He frequently uses it as a picture of His own relation to His covenant people." (Maurer; pg. 46)

Further, the marriage relationship is considered so sacred that it is used as an analogy to describe the intimate relationship between Christ and His Church.

"²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in every-thing. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the Church." (Ephesians 5: 23-29)

C. MEANT TO BE PERMANENT

Said Jesus, *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."* (Matthew 19: 6)

D. FOR PROPAGATION OF THE RACE

"And God blessed them (the human couple) and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." (Genesis 1: 28)

E. FOR PROVIDING WARM, LOVING ATMOSPHERE FOR THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

F. NO INSTITUTION CAN REPLACE THE INSTITUTION OF THE FAMILY, HOWEVER HARD MAN HAS TRIED.

The family is the basic unit of society; when the family crumbles all else will crumble. Our society is as strong as its families are strong.

II. ADULTERY – CONDEMNED BY GOD

A. ADULTERY – WAY OF THE SIMPLE-MINDED

"But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul." (Proverbs 6: 32)

There are those who foolishly throw off all Biblical restraints in the attempt to be free. Such only find bondage. "There is a Jewish legend about a leaf on a tree

that wanted to be free to fly like a bird. He wiggled free from his branch and went floating through the air. 'I'm free, I'm free!' he called to the other leaves. But the next day when the sun came out he began to lose his color. As life oozed out of him, he called to the other leaves, 'Don't do as I have done! This is not freedom! This is death!'" (Servant Builder; pg. 31; Jan. 1971)

Sex is a beautiful gift from God to be used within the context of marriage to express true love and to procreate the race. All other uses lead only to bondage and misery.

B. ADULTERY – INCITES TERRIBLE VENGEANCE

"²⁷ Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? ²⁸ Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? ²⁹ So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished. ³⁰ People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. ³¹ Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house. ³² But a man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroys himself. ³³ Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away. ³⁴ For jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. ³⁵ He will not accept any compensation; he will refuse a bribe, however great it is." (Proverbs 6: 27-35)

C. ADULTERY – INCURRED DEATH PENALTY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TIMES.

"And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." (Leviticus 20: 10)

D. ADULTORY - SIN AGAINST BODY AND SOUL OF SELF AND OTHERS.
(Proverbs 5: 1-14)

"¹ My son, pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ear to my words of insight, ² that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. ³ For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; ⁴ but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. ⁵ Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. ⁶ She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths wander aimlessly, but she does not know it. ⁷ Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. ⁸ Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, ⁹ lest you lose your honor to others and your

dignity to one who is cruel,¹⁰ lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich the house of another.¹¹ At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent.¹² You will say, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction!¹³ I would not obey my teachers or turn my ear to my instructors.¹⁴ And I was soon in serious trouble in the Assembly of God's people."

E. ADULTERY – LEADS TO GATE OF HELL. (NOTE PROVERBS 7: 6 - 27)

²⁴ "Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say.²⁵ Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths.²⁶ Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng.²⁷ Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death."
Proverbs 7: 24-27

F. ADULTERY – MENTAL AS BAD AS PHYSICAL.

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5: 27-28) "When the unclean desire is welcomed, brooded over, and only fails to become an act for lack of opportunity, this is to be guilty of adultery." (Chappell; pg. 104) There is a close relationship between thought and action. What we ponder, we will perform. Meditation leads to action. A mental blueprint precedes every invention. Impure thoughts lead to impure acts. A mental landslide goes before a moral landslide.

It must be pointed out however that there is a difference between evil thoughts and thinking about evil. Every saint of God has evil thoughts and suggestions. Satan suggests evil thoughts and tries to get the Christian to meditate upon them. It is only when a Christian entertains, enjoys, digests, and begins to delight in the evil thoughts and suggestions that he is thinking evil. There is a difference between temptation and yielding to temptation. No Christian can keep the birds from flying over his head, but he can keep the birds from making a nest in his hair.

A Christian cannot help the evil suggestion, but he can keep from yielding to the evil suggestion. There are wholesome sexual feelings that most saints experience. These are not sinful. It is when one deliberately seeks those things that excite, stimulate, and titillate his sexual desires, outside of the proper context of marriage, that he becomes defiled.

G. ADULTERY – CAN BE FORGIVEN.

To the accusers of the woman who was taken in adultery, Jesus said, "*You who are without sin, cast the first stone.*" All the accusers left. Then Jesus said, "*Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*" (John 8: 11b)

Notes Dr. Moody: "There is hope for you, adulterer. God will not turn you away if you truly repent. No matter how low down in vice and misery you may have sunk, you may be washed, you may be sanctified, you may be justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of Our God."

What are the purposes and right uses of sex?

- (a) For Procreation. *God commanded man to replenish the earth* (Genesis 1: 28)
- (b) For Recreation and Pleasure. (God intends sex to be a source of great delight and pleasure, within the sacred bonds of marriage!)
- (c) To Express Love and to Deepen Love Between Marriage Partners.
- (d) To Symbolize the Believer's Union and Deep Fellowship With Christ. A Christian couple who participates in the sexual act should remember that sex symbolizes the total self-giving of one's self to God. Sex can be an act of dedication to Christ!)

III. THINGS TO PREVENT TO MAINTAIN A CLEAN MIND AND LIFE.

A. PREVENT LOOKING AT LUST-PROVOKING PICTURES OR SIGHTS.

Christians must avoid the second look. We can't help the first look, but we don't have to take the second look. To gaze at pornography on newsstands, licentious pictures on billboards, or sexily dressed women, is to commit the sin of lusting. "The Jewish Rabbis well knew the way in which the eyes can be used to excite and to stimulate the wrong desire. They had their sayings. 'The eyes and the hand are the two brokers of sin.' 'Eye and heart are the two handmaids of sin.' 'Passions lodge only in him who sees.' 'Woe to him who goes after his eyes for they are adulterous.'" (Barclay's Matthew; pg. 144)

B. PREVENT EVIL COMPANIONS, WHICH SEEK TO CORRUPT YOU THROUGH EVIL TALK, AND SINFUL JESTING AND JOKING.

Evil companions corrupt good manners. If one who is wearing a white suit goes down into a dark and dirty coalmine, he cannot expect to come out with a white suit. One who buddies around with an immoral company cannot expect to be anything but immoral. The Scripture says, "*Come away from among them and stay away; touch not their evil things.*" (11 Corinthians 6: 17, Living Bible)

C. PREVENT PLACES OF ENTERTAINMENT THAT TEND TO LEAD ONE INTO LUSTFUL THINKING AND ACTIONS.

D. PREVENT IMMODEST DRESS.

Don't be guilty of causing someone a spiritual struggle. Let there be no dress that tends to be suggestive. Dress beautifully, wholesomely, and in a Christ-honoring fashion.

E. NEVER ENGAGE IN HEAVY PETTING.

F. ALWAYS PREVENT MAKING A PLAYTHING OF THE SACRED THINGS OF LIFE.

Sex is not a commodity to be consumed like candy. Sex is sacred and is not to be exploited. Never use people as playthings – people are sacred to God. Young people, respect yourself enough to reserve yourself clean for your future partner. Be the same kind of person that you would want your future marriage partner to be (if you are now unmarried)

CONCLUSION

"It is said that in South Africa a man stopped one day to witness a marble game that was being played by a group of boys. He noticed that those marbles flashed and sparkled in the sunlight. His curiosity was aroused. Upon investigation, he found, to his amazement, that the boys were playing marbles with diamonds. Thus the South Africa diamond mines were discovered." (Chappell; pgs. 113, 114)

Diamonds are not to be used as marbles to play with. Human beings are like diamonds – valuable and to be cherished and not to be played with carelessly. Don't play around with the sacred things of life. Sex is not a Toy!

Remember –

- (1) Marriage is instituted of God and that there is no more important unit than the family.**
- (2) Adultery (that is, illicit relationships and thoughts before and outside of marriage) is strictly forbidden by God, for man's welfare.**
- (3) There are certain things that should be avoided in order to help guarantee a positive, happy life.**

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not steal."

Exodus 20: 15

"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!"

INTRODUCTION

"The Sixth Commandment stressed the sanctity of life; the Seventh Commandment spoke of the sanctity of marriage; and now the Eight Commandment points to the sanctity of property." (Turnbull; ph. 59)

This *commandment* assumes the right to private ownership. "Jamestown Colony, in 1603, tried to bypass the institution of private property with state control of production and distribution. There was a common storehouse. The system did not work. 'It miserably failed, because men would not work, and produce. Thomas Dale, the new English governor, came over and started free enterprise. He saw that the previous four years had fully proved that the colony could not survive under socialism. Men just did not have any initiative or incentive. They would not work. Between 1815 and 1870, there were literally scores of such experiments in North America alone. The undeniable conclusion to be drawn from a study of these endeavors is that the abolition of private property also constitutes the abolition of virtues such as industry, thrift, ambition, and prudence." (The Ten Commandments; Coffman; pgs. 93, 94)

Why is stealing wrong? Because it infringes upon ones rights. Because it is getting something that we want for nothing, at the expense of someone else.

This commandment forbids a whole variety of crimes. "Outright theft, fraudulent schemes, double dealing, dishonesty, larceny, cheating, swindling, embezzlement of funds, is misappropriation of funds, violations of trust, robbery. Watering of stocks, excessive charges, padded expense accounts, misrepresentative tax returns, double bookkeeping, sale of damaged or worthless goods under false pretenses, non-payment of debts, crooked auctions, lotteries, bingo games, gambling, purloining, shoplifting – these are only a few of the crimes forbidden by the eighth commandment." (Coffman; pg. 98)

Wrote Martin Luther "If all who are thieves though they are unwilling to admit it, were hanged on the gallows, the world would soon be empty, and there would be a shortage of both hangmen and gallows."

PROPOSITION

Time would not permit us to consider all the various forms in which this commandment can be broken, but let us consider this commandment in terms of two broad categories;

(1) Stealing is outright robbing from another, (2) Stealing is withholding what belongs to another.

I. STEALING IS OUTRIGHT ROBBING FROM ANOTHER

A. THERE IS THE ROBBING OF TANGIBLES, WHICH EVEN CIVIL LAW PUNISHED. SHOPLIFTING HAS BECOME SO SERIOUS TO SOME STORES THAT IT HAS RESULTED IN CAUSING THEM TO GO OUT OF BUSINESS.

Scripture: "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need."
(Ephesians 4: 28)

There is a type of stealing that can be done within the limitations of law that is just as bad. "For instance, one of the most despicable characters in the Old Testament, when he first comes upon the scene, is Jacob. He prides himself on the fact that he can live by his wits. One day his big hungry brother comes in from the chase. Jacob is cooking dinner. The savory odor of these steaming lentils comes to the nostrils of Esau with a compelling appeal. "Feed me that red stuff", he begs. 'All right', says the wily Jacob. 'But first, sell me your birthright.' 'Take it', says Esau. 'I am about to die.' He then sits down and eats, drinks, and rises up and goes his way. But this same Book does not count Jacob as having bought his brother's birthright. It rather counts him as having stolen it. But he was never arrested. He stole within the law." (Chappell; pg. 123)

It is said that John D. Rockefeller became in his day, the richest man on earth and the world's only billionaire, through unbelievable hard work, resulting in not only great riches but broken health. "His weekly income was a million dollars, but his digestion was so bad that he could eat only crackers and milk." By the time he was fifty-three, it was generally agreed "that he would not live another year, and newspaper writers had his obituary written and ready in their files." "Lacking in consideration for others, he had often crushed the helpless into the mire in his lust to make bigger profits. So hated was he in the oil fields of Pennsylvania that the men whom he had pauperized hanged him in effigy and he had bodyguards day and night. Then John D. began to do some thinking in the long nights when he couldn't sleep. One night he made a startling discovery: he would not be able to take even one of his thin dimes with him into the next world! For the first time in his life, he recognized that money was not a commodity to be hoarded but something to be shared for the benefit of others. In the morning he, like Scrooge, lost no time in transforming his money into blessings to others. It would require a book to describe the benefits that resulted from the many hundreds of millions of dollars that he showered on universities, hospitals, mission work, and millions of underprivileged people." He regained his health, became happy, and lived to be 98 years old!

In the earlier part of his life, a case could be made to show that he stole from others, and yet broke no laws (civil). But in the latter part of his life he "gave to those in need." (28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. (Ephesians 4: 28) (Business exploitation anything like Church exploitation, sheep stealing?)

B. THERE IS THE ROBBING OF INTANGIBLES.

Wrote Shakespeare:

"Who steals my purse steals trash,
But he who filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
Yet leaves me poor indeed."

Before repeating something bad about another person, ask yourself these three questions: Is it true? Is it necessary for me to tell it? Is it kind to tell it? (Allen: pg. 73) I knew an old saint of God, who if he could not say something good about someone, did not say anything at all. (John Jones)

There have been those who have stolen the most valuable possession from another – one's invisibles supports – one's faith. "David Hume thus robbed his mother of her faith. When she came to old age, she was utterly desolate. We can rob another of expectation and of hope." (Chappell, pg. 124) "When Mark Twain married Olivia Langdon she was a very devout Christian. He was so unsympathetic with her faith that gradually she gave up her religious practices. Later, there came into her life a very deep sorrow. He urged, 'Livy, lean on your faith.' Sadly, she told him: 'I can't. I haven't any left.' To his dying day he was haunted by the fact that he had taken from her that which had meant so much." (Allen; pgs. 72, 73)

J. B. Phillips tells as one of the main reasons for writing his book Ring of Truth, the following: "What triggered off my anger (righteous, I trust) against some of our 'experts' is this. A clergyman, old, retired, useless if you like, took his own life because his reading of the 'new theology', and even some programs on television, finally drove him, in his loneliness and ill-health, to conclude that his own life's work had been founded upon a lie. He felt that these highly qualified writers and speakers must know so much more than he that they must be right. Jesus Christ did not really rise from the dead and the New Testament, on which he had based his life and ministry, was no more than a bundle of myths. That made me angry, and I remembered the terrible words of Jesus which, in effect, say that a man would be better off dead than cause one of 'his little ones to stumble.'"

(Foreword of Ring of Truth) To steal one's faith is to steal the most valuable possession one has.

II. STEALING IS WITHHOLDING WHAT BELONGS TO ANOTHER.

Stealing is not only aggressive taking of what belongs to another (tangible or intangible), but it is also passive withholding what belongs to another. Time again, would not permit a full discussion of this point, but perhaps this truth can best be understood by citing a few examples to illustrate the truth.

- A. A PARENT WHO WITHHOLDS LOVE FROM HIS CHILD IS ROBBING THE CHILD OF A VITAL NEED. PARENTS WHO ARE PASSIVE IN THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE THEIR CHILDREN REGULARLY TO RELIGIOUS SERVICES, ARE AGAIN STEALING SOMETHING VALUABLE FROM THEIR CHILDREN.

"Statistics reveal that eighty percent of those children whose parents take them to Church remain faithful in adulthood, while only twenty percent of those who are sent to Church remain faithful. 'Wait until I get away from home,' say many such children, 'I won't go to Church then.'" (Service Builders; Nov. 1970; pg. 19) A parent who simply sends their child to Sunday School instead of taking them, is stealing from that child, for he is withholding something valuable that belongs to that child.

- B. A COUPLE WHO WITHHOLDS LOVE FROM ONE ANOTHER IS STEALING LOVE IN EVERY WAY – BUT CERTAINLY IN THE PHYSICAL REALM AS IN WELL AS IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM.

"The husband must give the wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due. The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwards you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan." (I Corinthians 7: 3-5, NEB) "Let each man of you (without exception) love his wife as (being in a sense) his very own self; and let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband - that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly." (Ephesians 5: 33; Amplified) Never withhold love from one another. To do so is to steal from your companion.

- C. A PASTOR OWES LOVE, COUNSEL, PROTECTION, GUIDANCE TO HIS PEOPLE, FOLLOWING THE GREAT EXAMPLE OF JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd came that they may have life, and has it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep." (John 10: 10-13) How tragic that there are so-called pastors who don't really care for the sheep. Such a pastor is a thief! There are false prophets! "I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who steal my words from one another for their own use. I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who concoct words of their own and then say, 'This is his every word'. I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who dream lies and retail them, misleading my people with wild and reckless falsehoods. It was not I who sent them or commissioned them, and they will do this people no good. This is the very word of the Lord." (Jeremiah 23: 30-32, NEB)

D. A Congregation owes love and respect to the church leaders and officers; to withhold love and respect is to rob the Church of its most valuable possession – Unity.

Wrote Paul, "We beg you, brothers, to acknowledge those who are working so hard among you, and in the Lord's fellowship are your leaders and counselors. Hold them in the highest possible esteem and affection for the work they do. ¹²Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you." (1 Thessalonians 5: 12, 13, NEB)

E. SELFISHLY TO EXPLOIT NATURE'S RESOURCES IS TO ROB FROM NATURE AND TO ROB FROM A FUTURE GENERATION.

"A gentleman", said Bernard Shaw, "puts more into life than he takes out of it." Or exploiting the Community for selfish advantage is equally to rob. "A young husband and father said the other day, 'I never go to Church. I never contribute anything to the Church.' He said it as if it were a positive virtue. Those who know him realize that he could say the same thing about the Community Chest, and about all other enterprises of common interest. He seems to flatter himself that while others are paying their fare, he is managing to ride on a pass. Thus he glories in what should make his face burn with shame." (Chappell; pg. 121)

Those who live only to themselves and for themselves are robbing God, the Community, and the Church from the possibility of a positive influence. Selfishness essentially is robbery.

**"They live in the spirit of the little girl who said:
I gave a little party this afternoon at three;**

**'Twas very small, three guests in all, just I, myself and me.
Myself ate up all the sandwiches, while I drank up the tea,
And it was I who ate the pie, and passed the cake to me."
(Allen; pg. 73)**

F. EXPLOITATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL BY THE STATE IS GROSS ROBBERY.

There are certain inalienable rights, which the State finds itself grossly guilty if it infringes upon. "In the super-state, this theft is carried out to its logical conclusion by the theft of the individual himself who becomes a chattel of the state, unable to exist or change his address without the permission of his overlords. In such a condition, the right to vote is the right to vote as one is commanded. The right to work is the right to toil when and where commanded for wages utterly subject to the option of the state. The right of resistance is the right to sudden and brutal death." (Coffman; pgs. 100, 101) How tragic it is for a super-state to steal the Holy Scriptures from its people. The vast majority of Russian people have never owned a personal copy of the Bible.

G. A CHRISTIAN WHO WITHHOLDS THE TITHE FROM GOD IS ROBBING FROM GOD.

***"Will man rob God"? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How are we robbing thee?' In your tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you."* (Malachi 3: 8, 9)**

"It is a clear law of God that we return unto Him ten per cent of all He permits us to possess, and it is a fearful thing to come before Him in judgment with His money that we had kept or used for ourselves." (Allen; pg. 74)

H. TO WITHHOLD YOUR PRESENCE FROM THE PUBLIC CHURCH SERVICES IS TO ROB OTHERS OF BLESSINGS THAT YOUR LIFE CAN BRING.

***"And let us not hold aloof from our Church meetings, as some do. Let us do all we can to help one another's faith and this the more earnestly as we see the final day drawing ever nearer."* (Hebrews 10: 25, Phillips) I am my brother's keeper. I am to minister the grace and love of God to others through my association with others. We cannot encourage and warn each other if we alienate ourselves from the congregation of God's people. We come not to Church simply to receive but to give – to give our insights, to give our understanding, to give our joys and sorrows, to give our talents and influence, to give our love. By failing to come regularly to worship services, he is stealing what rightfully belongs to others - his positive influence and encouragement.**

"He would be limiting, moreover, his own Christian growth. He would be cut off from the grace, which comes through the sacraments, worship, and Christian fellowship. God has as many avenues to a man's mind as the man has friends who are friends of God: but, if he is trying to be a Christian in isolation, he makes it more difficult for God to help him." (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 302)

CONCLUSION

Suppose we find ourselves robbing? What do we do? The same as Zacchaeus did: he confessed his wrong to Christ and made restitution, and began living a Christ-oriented life. This is still the answer: get Christ into your life through confession of every sin and by putting your entire trust in a loving God. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

NINTH COMMANDMENT

*“Thou shalt not bear
false witness
against thy neighbor.”*

Exodus 20: 16

SCRIPTURE: ¹ "Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. ³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water." (James 3: 1-12)

"SPEAKING THE TRUTH!"

INTRODUCTION

"There is a curious story of a nobleman of olden times who one day said to his butler: 'John, tonight I should like to have the best thing in the world.' The hours passed; dinnertime came. The butler set before his master a covered platter. He lifted the silver cover, and there, on the platter, was a cooked tongue. 'Good', said the nobleman, 'you have done well. But now go and find for me the worst thing in the world.' At dinner the next evening, the silver platter was again brought in with the cover lifted, and there was another cooked tongue. Yes, the tongue is both the worst and, if used for God, the best member of the human body." (Gabelein; the Practical Epistle of James; pgs. 79, 80)

Says Charles Allen: "Those of great minds discuss ideas, people of mediocre minds discuss events, and those of small minds discuss other people." (God's Psychiatry; pg. 75)

The Ten Commandments guard the sanctity of human relationships.

Fifth – Sanctity of Parenthood

Sixth – Sanctity of Life

Seventy – Sanctity of Marriage

Eighth – Sanctity of Property

Ninth – Sanctity of Reputation

"As to whether there is such a thing as a white lie – well, no one has yet devised a rule of conduct that can be applied to every imaginable case, and the rule against lying is no exception. Here, as elsewhere, charity and common sense must be our guides. If a man comes to my door waving a gun and announcing that he'll shoot his wife the minute he finds her, I shall certainly tell him I have not seen her for a week, even though I've just finished hiding the poor woman in my closet. And it would be an uncharitable sort of truthfulness that, when asked, told a dotting mother exactly what it thought of her small son's fiddle-laying. All the same, it is possible that most of our white lies are told, not for charity, but for laziness and for cowardice – to save the work of thinking up a real answer, or to avoid a trivial social discomfort. The great problem, however, is not the reluctant occasional social lie, but the habitual and automatic lie – the false witness borne unblushingly for personal advantage, until lying becomes a way of life." (Smoke on the Mountain; Joy Davidman; pgs. 109, 110)

Lies will eventually be exposed and revealed for what they are. Do any of you like the Mutt and Jeff stories? Perhaps your grandparents told you about them when you were a child? One story has it that "Mutt and Jeff conspired to become rich and famous by building a soundproof room. After building this 'soundproof' room, Mutt told Jeff to go inside of it so that they could test it out. After Jeff was securely within the soundproof room, Mutt yelled out, 'Can you hear me, Jeff?' And Jeff yelled back, 'No!' (Quote from sermon by Robert Kopp; 'A Day In Court')

We need to teach our children not to be careless with the truth, but to be accurate with the facts. Noted Dr. Johnson, "Accustom your children constantly to this (telling the truth); if a thing happened at one window and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from the truth will end." (Quoted by Barclay in 'The Ten Commandments for Today; pgs. 190, 191)

PROPOSITION

Truthful speech and pure speech are borne out of love. False speech comes from a heart that is corrupted. To bear false witness is to do great harm to both the object and to subject.

It is important to understand certain definitions.

CHARACTER: What the person really is, independent of what others think he is. It is of irreplaceable worth. Importance (employment, credit, friends, social position depends on this.)" However, man looks on the outward appearance, while God looks on the heart.

WORDS: Man's unique God-given gift – necessary for social communication – potential for good or bad. "Words are like arrows; once they have left the bowstring, they cannot be recalled. You may experience a change of heart immediately, you may wish with anguish of heart that the anger or bitter word might not have been spoken. But once it has crossed the lips, like an arrow it speeds on its way and does its deadly work, and no power of man can alter its course." (Maurer; Ten Commandments; pg. 67)

TONGUE: Small member with potential of causing either happiness or great harm and sadness.

HEART: Source of thoughts, intents, motives, desires. Words, conveyed by the tongue, are merely an expression of the true nature of man. Words tell what a person really is and thus unmask a person of pretense. Heart is the source of all evil.

³³ "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶ But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12: 33-37)

REPUTATION: This is the estimate which others form of him.

1. Lie of Fear (to protect self-interest, Simon Peter).
2. Lie of Carelessness (inaccurate with statements).
3. Lie of Boasting (Not telling truth about ourselves).
4. Lie for Profit or Lie of Propaganda. "Freedom of the Press does not mean freedom to bear false witness, whether by outright lie or slanted story." (Coffman, pg. 110)
5. Lie which is half-truth (Cults or False Prophets).
6. Lie to Self (self-deception resulting from Rationalization.)
7. Lie to God.

¹ Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. ³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God." ⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. ⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." ⁹ Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." ¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. (Acts 5: 1-11)

A. SLANDER – "Lie Distributed with Malicious Intention."

Illustration: "He stole that money" when all the evidence points in the direction that he did not steal it. Result; a reputation of dishonesty. Lying is strictly forbidden in the Bible. "A man who deceives another and then says, 'It was only a joke', is like a madman shooting at random his deadly darts and arrows." ¹⁸ Like a maniac shooting flaming arrows of death" (Proverbs 26: 18) No Christian has any right to lie. "Stop lying to one another, now that you have discarded the old nature with its deeds and have put on the new nature, which is being constantly renewed in the image of its Creator and brought to know God." (Colossians 3: 9; NEB)

"A false witness that speaketh lies..." (Proverbs 6: 19) is listed as one of the seven things God hates, one of the things said to be an abomination in His sight. The scriptures say that those who love and practice deceit will find their place in the lake of fire. (Revelations 22: 16)

Slandering can ruin one's reputation, but it can even cause one to lose his fine character. "It has been well said that if one gives a dog a bad name, he will justify it. How many folk go wrong because nobody expects anything better of them?" (Chappell; pg. 141)

B. TALE-BEARING – “Repetition of Report without Careful Investigation.”

Illustration: “Did you hear that Jones stole that money?” - Different Jones than he knew. That results in temporary reputation of thievery. The Corinthian Christians were saved from gross paganism and were carnal until they received the cleansing of the Holy Spirit. The description of this carnality is not pleasant: Listen to Paul, as he writes to this Church; *“O fear that when I come I may perhaps find you different from what I wish you to be, and that you may find me also different from what you wish. I fear I may find quarrelling and jealousy, angry tempers, and personal rivalries, backbiting, gossip, arrogance, and general disorder. I am afraid that, when I come again, my God may humiliate me in your presence, that I may have tears to shed over many of those who have sinned in the past and have not repented of their unclean lives, their fornication and sensuality.”* II Corinthians 12: 20, 21; NEB)

“Slander cost James G. Blaine the presidency of the United States. In the closing days of the campaign of 1884, Blaine’s political opponents accused him of endorsing the slogan, ‘Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion,’ which alienated the vote of New York on the final day of the campaign. It was not Blaine’s statement, nor was there ever any proof that he approved it.” (Coffman; pgs. 107, 108)

C. FALSE IMPRESSION – “Implying another’s Guilt.”

Illustrations: “She seems to be friendlier now.” “I saw him driving by the school last night when it was robbed!”; “Was she out on a date with him that late?” The mate of a steamship wrote, “The captain was sober today” (when perhaps he is almost always sober).

D. SILENCE. “Failure to Defend Someone Against An Untruth.”

Illustration: A person who knows and hears the untruth of the following statement says nothing in defense. “He was awarded athlete of the year because he was the son of the Superintendent.” This results in a reputation of privileged character.

“The receiver of stolen goods is just as guilty as the thief. Years ago in one of our colleges, authorities broke open a young man’s trunk and found some sixty watches. I wonder if our premises were searched, how many stolen reputations would be found. To listen is to share the guilt of the liar.” (Chappell; pg. 143)

E. IMPUTATION OF MOTIVE – “Attributing an Ulterior Motive To A Person.”

Illustration: “She stayed in the home economics room to help clean up, simply to get ‘Brownie points’ from the teacher.” Results in reputation of ‘goodie-goodie and favorite’.

F. **FAULT-FINDING** – "Focus on Fault to Overlook Strengths." (Results from jealousy or covetousness)

Illustration: "He is a good basketball player all right and student body president, but he always is late to meetings, forgetful, and always has to pay library fines." Joking can originate in jealous heart and harsh words be excused on the basis of 'joking'. (Cite personal experiences of running track and glasses steam over and, instead of seeing the beautiful eastern sunrise, all I can see is the brown grass, dirty snow, running dogs from the side of my glasses. Some people's vision is distorted, for all they can see is the fault in another person, instead of the beauty.

"What does the vulture find when he flies over a landscape? Perchance a dead possum under a thorn bush. This does not mean that bit of carrion is all of which this landscape can boast. It may be green with grass and colorful with flowers. It may be a sparkle with dew and sweet with the song of birds. But the vulture misses all of these, because he is looking only for something that is rotten. We may look with similar eyes upon our fellows. But, if such is the case, in so doing we are sure to bring back a false report." (Chappell; pgs. 139, 140)

"We must not be conceited, challenging one another to rivalry, jealous of one another." (Galatians 6: 1)

*"If you see a tall fellow ahead of the crowd,
A leader of men walking fearless and proud,
And know of a tale whose mere telling aloud
Would cause his proud head to in anguish be bowed,
It is a pretty good thing to forget it."*

G. **RUMOR** – "Circulation of Story without Certainty of Facts." (Gossip)

Illustration: "I heard that he got into the basketball game free last night, by going into another door."

*"A whisper broke the air,
A soft light tone, and low,
Yet barbed with shame and woe;
Now, might it only perish there,
Nor further go!
Ah me! A quick and eager ear
Caught up the little-meaning sound;
Another voice has breathed it clear,
And so it wandered round,
From ear to lip, from lip to ear,
Until it reached a gentle heart,*

And that – it broke."

We should all be reminded of the old adage:

"There is so much good in the worst of us,
And so much bad in the best of us,
That it ill behooves the best of us,
To talk about the rest of us."

(The game of 'Gossip' may be fun, but the act on Real Life is Tragic Indeed!)

H. Flattery. "Saying untrue things to inflate the ego."

(Illustration: "He is the best worker that I have ever had." (Person is really average) (Results in reputation of exceptional ability, harming the person when he goes to another job, and harms the future employer.)

There is need for honest praise and expressions of appreciation. This is not flattery. All of us thrive on honest expressions of faith and confidence. The world need this, but it does not need flattery.

Wrote Paul: *"Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; nor did we seek glory from men;"* (I Thessalonians 2: 4-5)

II. BREAKING THE COMMANDMENT HURTS SELF

A. PHYSIOLOGICALLY.

Says one prominent M.D. "Running people down does not keep us free from a host of disease of body and mind. The verbal expression of animosity toward others calls forth a host of diseases of body and mind. The verbal expression of animosity toward others calls forth certain hormones from the pituitary, adrenal, thyroid, and other glands, an excess of which can cause disease in any part of the body. Many diseases can develop when we fatten our grudges by rehearsing them in the presence of others." (None of These Diseases; pgs. 71, 72)

B. SOCIALLY. (What cannot be spoken in love must not be spoken at all.)

Said Jesus, *"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you*

again." Jesus said, *"By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned."* Says Chappell: "If we are harsh in our judgments of our brother, the chances are that he is going to be harsh in his judgments of us. As a general rule, we get what we give. If your hand is against every man, every man's hand is likely to be against you. Complaining that no man ever has a kind word to say of you, is another way of saying that you never have a kind word to say of another." (pg. 143) Words carelessly spoken cannot be recalled – like blaming a dandelion which 'has gone to seed'. One cannot recall the words.

C. SPIRITUALLY.

"The more keen we become to the faults of others, the more dead we become to our own." "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying, 'Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye. (Luke 6: 41, 42)

Only as we judge ourselves and cleanse ourselves daily, can we continue to make spiritual progress and growth. The one who refuses to repent of his deception and lying will finally die eternally! ⁸ *"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."* (Revelation 21: 8)

CONCLUSION

We can use our tongue to bless others, or to curse them. "Your words", said one of Job's friends, "have kept men on their feet." So may our words be. *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."* (Psalms 19: 14) Said Luther, "Defend thy neighbor, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything."

"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one." (Colossians 4: 6) (Tasteful, edifying, wise, appropriate)

The secret to right talking is right thinking, Wrote Paul, *"Here is a last piece of advice. If you believe in goodness and if you value the approval of God, fix your minds on whatever is true and honorable and just and pure and lovely, and praiseworthy."* (Philippians 4: 8; Phillips)

1. Lies crucified Jesus.

TENTH COMMANDMENT

*"You shall not covet your
neighbor's house.*

*You shall not covet your
neighbor's wife,*

*or his male or female
servant,*

his ox or donkey,

*or anything that belongs
to your neighbor."*

Exodus 20: 17

"THOU SHALT NOT COVET!"

INTRODUCTION

Today we talk about the last of the Ten Commandments – ‘Thou shalt Not Covet.’ As we have noted several times during the last several weeks, the first four commandments deal with man’s vertical relationships (Man and God):

- Commandment 1. Supreme Worship of The One True God – *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”*.
- Commandment 2. Worship Without Images – *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images”*.
- Commandment 3. Clean Lips and a Clean Life – *“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain”*.
- Commandment 4. Keeping God’s Day Holy – *“Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy”*.

The last six commandments deal with man’s horizontal relationships (Man to Man).

- Commandment 5. Honor Your Parents – *“Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” Guards Sanctity of Parenthood.*
- Commandment 6. *Thou Shalt Not Murder – Guards Sanctity of Life.*
- Commandment 7. Be Clean – *“Thou shalt not commit adultery - Guards Sanctity of marriage.*
- Commandment 8. *Thou Shalt Not Steal – Guards Sanctity of Property.*
- Commandment 9. Speaking the Truth – *“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor”. Guards Sanctity of Reputation.*

PROPOSITION

Think (with me) of the consequences of covetousness, the causes of covetousness, cure for covetousness.

The commandment before us today (the last commandment, for forbidding covetousness) has to do with wrong desires while the other five commandments regulating man-to-man relationships have to do with wrong actions. The last

commandment is thus fundamental and basic to the others. Wrong desire is at the base of wrong actions. Most of the other commandments are broken because man first possessed wrong desire (coveted).

"To covet refers to the inner desire that often leads to stealing – and to many other deplorable things. To covet is to want something you can't have (or shouldn't have) and want it so much that the very desire prevents your finding happiness with what you do have and in what you truly are!" (Vernard Ellen)

There is nothing wrong with desiring to have the same thing that someone else possesses, as long as one obtains that possession legitimately, without one obtaining that selfishly and without hurting someone else.

The essential meaning of the word is "to set the heart on", very literally, "to pant after." (Morgan; pg. 108) The covetous person thinks the grass is greener on the other side.

Adam Clarke defined the Tenth Commandment as "A most excellent moral precept, the observance of which will prevent all public crimes." "He who feels the force of the law that prohibits all inordinate desire for anything that is the property of another, can never make a breach in the peace of society." (Coffman; pg. 118) Covetousness breeds social disharmony and is the cause of wars.

Matthew Henry's illuminating comment on it is "The Tenth Commandment strikes at the root. It implicitly forbids all desire of doing that which shall be an injury to our neighbor, and all inordinate desire of that which shall be gratification to ourselves. 'Oh that such a man's house was mine! Such a man's wife! Such a man's estate!' This is certainly the language of discontent at our own lot and envy of our neighbors; and these are the sins forbidden here. God give us all to see our face in the glass of this law and to lay our hearts under the government of it." (Ibid; pg. 119) "The last commandment is the source of all sin, or one might say it is the preparation for all sin." (Edith Schaeffer)

I. DISOBEDIENCE TO THIS COMMAND DESTROYS THE GREAT PERSONAL QUALITIES OF LIFE. (Fruit of Spirit)

"Instead of love, there will be suspicion and hatred; instead of joy, sorrow, heart-ache; instead of peace, feverish unrest; instead of long-suffering, impatience; instead of kindness, cruelty; instead of goodness, miserliness; instead of faithfulness, infidelity; instead of meekness, arrogance; instead of self-control, self-assurance." (Morgan; pgs. 110, 111)

Thus, this commandment, which exposes the sinful desires of the human heart, is given in order to drive man to the Saviour for inner cleansing of sinful Nature, and thus purify the heart and perfect the Fruit of the Spirit in his life.

Covetousness destroys contentment. Writes Clovis Chappell: "When I was a boy I used to feed the hogs. I would carry out a basket that contained at least a hundred ears of corn, and pour it all upon the ground. The supply was ample for the needs of all. But there was almost always one silly hog that would grab an ear and take up the hillside as if running for his life. How stupid! But what was more stupid still was this: another hog would at once turn his back on ninety-nine good ears and pursue his fleeing fellow. This he would do with squeals and whines as pitiful as tears. Being thus covetous, he was wretched in the presence of plenty. What a human hog!" (pg. 156) The covetous man seeks what belongs to another person, whereas God has supplied enough for all!

II. DISOBEDIENCE TO THIS COMMAND DESTROYS THE GREAT SOCIAL QUALITIES OF LIFE. (Love and harmony between men)

The covetousness of Achan brought great harm to Israel and to his own family. (Read Joshua 6 and 7)

Carefully notice Ephesians 5: 5 – *"For be sure of this, that no person practicing sexual vice or impurity in thought or in life, or one who is covetous – that is, who has lustful desire for the property of others and is greedy for gain – for that in effect is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

Why is covetousness ranked along with the list of great sins in Ephesians 5: 5? ⁵ *"For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

Covetousness is the spring of idolatry, for the covetous man greedily aspires to possess more things, thus making things his idol and god.

The discontented, covetous person steals from others to satisfy his lust; thus covetousness is the root cause of stealing. Murder results sometimes when a covetous man does not get what he wants.

"Gambling is another indulgence in which this covetous spirit predominates." (Turnbull; pg. 72)

Is it any wonder that God hates coveting? *"For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth."* (Psalms 10: 3)

Covetousness destroys the social harmony within a church. Covetousness within a Church results in division and jealousy. In the Corinthian Church there were carnal Christians who were more interested in displaying spectacular and flashy gifts for self-glory than in quietly and humbly using gifts for the glory of God and the edification of the entire Church. Such a carnal spirit resulted in contention, competition, conflict, party spirit, division, and jealousy. Paul had to remind these baby Christians – carnal believers – that any gift which they enjoyed was sovereignly given to them by God – not for self-

display but for glorification of Christ the head of the Body and for edification of every other member of the Body. *"What do you have but what you first received?"* asked Paul of them. *"What place is there then for boasting?"* There is None! This covetous, contentious, comparative, competitive, carnal attitude of the Corinthian Christians to be cleansed from their lives. The greatest gift of all which was available – and, indeed, needed by all was divine love. *"Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way."* (I Corinthians 13)

A compassionate, complementary, cooperative, caring spirit must replace the covetous spirit. Only the divinely imparted love of God could do this.

III. BREAKING THIS COMMAND DESTROYS THE GREAT SPIRITUAL QUALITIES OF LIFE. (Godly, eternal priorities)

Lusting or coveting anything short of God is to degrade life to the level of instincts, passions, and earthly pleasures. Man is made for God and remains restless until he rests in God. To attempt to fill the God-shaped vacuum with anything less than God is to add anguish to frustration. *"Men's eyes are entertained by the glitter of things, their ears dulled by the noise of things, their throats choked with the dust of things, their appetites sated with the feast of things, their energies expended in pursuit of things, their minds occupied by the thoughts of things. Materialism has overwhelmed humanity."* (Coffman; pg. 116)

Jesus said, *"Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."* Man cannot live by bread alone. A covetous person is a greedy, grasping person, who puts things ahead of God. Such a person reverses God's commands to *"seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness and these other things will be added to you,"* and instead seeks material things first.

Tragically, the man who seeks only material things is never truly satisfied with earthly possessions and he also forfeits the satisfaction that eternal life alone can bring. The man who is living for only one world – the world of the material – not only loses the material world but also loses the spiritual, eternal world. Double Loser!

The covetous man is the man with misplaced values. He values the transitory world more than the eternal world. He values gold more than God. He values the saving of money more than the saving of souls. He values the glory of men more than the gifts of God. Thus covetousness is not only the destroyer of the great personal qualities (fruits of Spirit) and the destroyer of the great social qualities (love and harmony), but covetousness is the destroyer of the great spiritual qualities (godly, eternal priorities).

God disallows the covetous spirit that 'pants after' the possessions of others, but God actually demands one to covet (or 'pant after') spiritual qualities. Wrote David: *"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."* (Psalms 42: 1) *"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."* (Colossians 3: 2) God doesn't mind coveting, it's WHAT I covet that concerns Him. Because man is overbuilt for this life and created with aspirations that can only truly be fulfilled outside the realm of time, therefore God commands man to set his affections (that is, covet) on the things above. *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."* (Matthew 6: 19, 20)

The Scriptures further say, *"Covet earnestly the best gifts."* (I Corinthians 12: 31) Just as there is an over-abundance of sun energy to give an innumerable company of people on earth a full sun tan, so there is a super-abundance of grace and gifts in God to fully bless every person on earth, without anyone robbing gifts from another. One can rightly covet God's gifts, graces, and spiritual fruits, for this type of coveting harms no one, but, indeed, results in helping others. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who coveted righteousness: *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness or they shall be filled."* As Boyd so well says, *"We should all covet the knowledge of God, the smile of God's in approval, the rich blessing of God, the likeness of God, the eternal home of God. If we fail to have such strong desires, it is a sign of moral and spiritual sickness. Such sickness finally leads to death."* (Boyd; pg. 14)

It is right and just for a man to covet the right to *"work under conditions as wholesome as possible, and for a living wage."* (Chappell; pg. 149) The fulfillment of this desire can result in a better society. Further, there is no sin in coveting knowledge, for knowledge tempered with wisdom produces great good for mankind. There is a good coveting and a very evil coveting.

How can one conquer the carnal, deadly type of covetousness? Be careful what you set your heart upon. *"Above all else, guard your affections. For they influence everything else in your life."* (Proverbs 4: 23, Living Bible) *"Refuse to look longingly at that which you cannot have...More than once I have desired a thing intensely. But having found that it was not for me, I have ceased to look at it, and have thus forgotten it completely."* (Chappell; pg. 160)

IV. FIND THE CURE FOR COVETEUSNESS: TRANSFORMING POWER OF GOD AND MAN'S RENEWED MIND.

What's the cure for covetousness?

1. Not accepting yourself as God made you, and feeling that others are more acceptable or more favored than you are. This feeling that you are not as

good as someone else or that you should have what someone else enjoys, is the 'breeding ground' for covetousness. To covet is to wish to have what someone else has, or wish to be what someone else is.

Discontent with your own God-given gifts and your own God-appointed place leads to wrongful desire to have what properly belongs to someone else – either his property or his personality or his achievements.

Discontent with who you are and discontent with what you have is one leading cause of covetousness.

2. Closely related to discontent is pride. People who proudly think they are better than others are the same ones who tend to believe they should have what belongs to others – whether it is other's physical possessions or whether it is positions of importance.

The Bible tells us to be content with what things we have. If we have enough basic food and clothing, with these simple things we ought to be content. Contentment with our God-given place saves us from envying others who have more than we do. One cannot be grateful to God and, at the same time, be carnally envious towards others. Contentment and humility are closely related. The Bible tells us not to think more highly of ourselves than what we ought to think, and it also tells us to honor one another and to consider others better than ourselves.

The humble person is grateful for his God-given lot in life, and he is also grateful for the place and the position and the possessions that God has given to other persons. He is grateful to all – to God and his fellowmen and he is grateful for all – for all that God has given to him and for all that God is making out of him.

The covetous person, described as the discontented and proud person, is a person who is loveless – loveless in his response to God's grace and loveless in his response to other's rightful place and possessions. "Ultimately to desire, and to try to obtain, the property of another is to be dissatisfied with what God has given, and thus to show lack of faith in His love. Further, the envy which this encourages will lead sooner or later to the hurt of one's neighbor, and this is inconsistent with the primary duty of love." (R. Alan Cole, quoted by Robert Kopp)

3. A covetous person is not only the discontented, the proud person, and the loveless person; but he is also the person who is earthly-minded rather than heavenly-minded. If a person thinks that there is no existence except earthly existence, he tends to look at his fellowmen as opponents

to overcome, rather than as partners with whom to share and to cooperate.

"When you know you're going to heaven, you're not obsessed with the 'things' of this world. You know there is more. Forgetting our fantasies is the only way to live happily with who we are and what we have." (Robert Kopp)

Alternatively, as Joy Davidman wrote, "There is, in the last analysis, only one way to stop covetousness and the destruction of body and soul that springs from covetousness, and that is to want God so much that we can't be bothered with inordinate wants for anything else."

The real cure of covetousness is deep and fundamental. Nothing less than the conversion of the human soul through the power of the Resurrected Christ can cure the sickness of wrong desire. Out of the heart of man proceeds all evil, therefore the heart needs a drastic change. Christ alone can do that:

"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!" (II Corinthians 5: 17; Living Bible)

This Scripture, just cited, speaks of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy regarding God's power and mercy:

"I will put a desire into their hearts to worship me, and they shall never leave me." (Jeremiah 32: 40b)

"And I will cleanse away all their sins against me, and pardon them." (Jeremiah 33: 8)

"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 11: 19, 20)

CONCLUSION

In fact, the secret of keeping God's Commandments is a new heart and a new nature. The Ten Commandments were given to show God's standards and, at the same time, man's inability to keep the commandments by his own strength and ability. Thus, the result of studying the Ten Commandments should be to drive us to our knees before

God in repentance, confession, and faith. The Broken Heart becomes the Transformed Heart – the Heart to which God imparts His power and love.

"⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13: 9-10, Living Bible)

The whole secret to keeping the 10 Commandments is a Baptism of God's Love in your life. Remember, we are able to *"feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.."* (Romans 5: 5, Living Bible)

Have you allowed the Holy Spirit to cleanse your heart and fill you with love? If not, why not? You can be filled with divine love today! How?

- (1) Confess any hidden sin: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* (I John 1: 9)
- (2) Surrender your total self to your Creator. Remember you are not your own; you are bought with a price - the price of Jesus' blood. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which belong to Christ: *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."* (Romans 12: 1, 2)
- (3) By Faith invite the Holy Spirit to take control of every part of you - emotions, intellect, and will and ask the Holy Spirit to Baptize you with love.

CHAPTER 11

"GOD'S RULES -
LIBERATING OR
ENSLAVING?"

SCRIPTURE: ¹ And God spoke all these words:

² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ 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 parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷ "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but 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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. ¹² "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. ¹³ "You shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ "You shall not steal. ¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." ¹⁸ When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance. (Exodus 20: 1-18)

TEXT: Love does no wrong to anyone, so love satisfies all of God's requirements." (Romans 13: 10)

"GOD'S RULES – LIBERATING OR ENSLAVING?"

INTRODUCTION

How would you feel if, while you were playing basketball or football, the rules were changed in the middle of the game? Worse yet, how would you feel if, all of a sudden, in the middle of a game, all the rules were eliminated? Suppose the officials were suddenly taken off the field, and it was announced over the loud speakers to all the players on the field "For the next hour, there are no rules. Everyone is simply to do whatever he feels like. Everyone is to play by his own rules. No flags will be thrown and no penalties will be exacted. Every player is to play by his own instincts and desires."

I can hear your reply now! I would not be surprised if you said, "But it is impossible to play any game if there are no rules or limits or expectations or standards! If everyone played by his own rules, the game would be totally unpredictable and completely 'unfair'." But, if there are no objective, written rules by which the game is played, no one can say any action on the part of the players is 'unfair' or 'unjust'. Actions of self-centered players who are guided by their own desires might be considered 'inconvenient' or 'painful', but they could not be considered 'unfair' or 'unjust'. To say any action is 'unfair' or 'unjust' or 'unlawful' is to assume the presence and the reality of an objective set of rules which all the players respect and seek to follow. A harmonious and meaningful game can only be played if there are clearly defined and consistently enforced rules! Without rules, there will be disharmony, unpredictability, hollering match with tempers flying, and an eventual dissolution of the game!

It is also true that without the reality of God's Rules and without submitting to God's rules for life, there can be no meaningful dialogue, no praise for so-called 'good' behavior, and no 'blame' for so-called 'bad' behavior. In fact, without rules there is no such thing as 'good' or 'bad'. Without rules, everything is subject to personal taste, preference, and desires. Life becomes a shouting match, a battle involving everyone trying to get his or her own way. Everyone does that which is right in his own eyes! Total confusion and ultimate anarchy will eventually result! The 'game of life' will shut down. Just as there can be no happiness or harmony or meaning without rules in a common game like football or basketball, so there can be no happiness, harmony, dialogue, or meaning in life and in relationships without the recognition of God-given, objective moral laws and standards.

PROPOSITION

The Ten Commandments compose God's guidelines for living, God's rules for harmonious and happy relationships in the so-called 'game of life'.

We must recognize the consequence of moral subjectivism, i.e., an attempt to live without God's Ten Commandments. We must understand the essence – the true meaning- of the Ten Commandments, as they are reduced to their simplest possible attitude for right living. Let us, with these statements in mind, look at: (1) The Importance of the Ten Commandments, (2) The Meaning of the Ten Commandments, and (3) The Motivation to Keep the Ten Commandments.

I. IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Liberation)

How important are the Ten Commandments? Are the Ten Commandments outdated, irrelevant, and impractical? Are the Ten Commandments still relevant, important, compelling, and essential for abundant living? Are God's rules 'Liberating' or are they 'Enslaving'? Are the Ten Commandments 'Obsolete' or are they 'Absolute'?

In his Commencement Address, delivered at Duke University in May 1987, Ted Koppel made the following statements about our modern-day moral 'scene'. "We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. Shoot up if you must, but use a clean needle. Enjoy sex whenever and with whomever you wish, but wear a condom. No! The answer is No! Not because it isn't cool or smart, or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward, but No because it is wrong. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It's a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions." (Flyleaf of Turning Point'; Marvin Olasky)

Have the 'Ten Commandments lost their punch', their power to influence our modern society? Have we turned the 'Ten Commandments' into the 'Ten Suggestions'?

What is the consequence of ignoring or denying the 'Ten Commandments'? The very last statement in the Biblical Book of Judges, is a description of our modern-day moral (or better stated, immoral) scene. "In those days...everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21: 25) Moral relativism – a situation in which people live by their own selfish instincts, rather than by the objective moral laws of God! No 'blacks' and no 'whites' only 'grays'. Notes Swindoll, "Do your own thing" is not some modern motto. It began in the days of the Judges. They were adrift in a sea of shifting feelings and carnal impulses. Each person did what felt good. And so, in light of that, we should not be surprised to read these words earlier in the book: "The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord". (Judges 6: 1) "When folks are free to choose the path of least resistance, wrong doing becomes commonplace – it's the direction must choose to go." (Living Beyond The Level Of Mediocrity; pg. 243)

What are the consequences – corporately and individually – when God’s moral laws (The Ten Commandments) are ignored, denied, or rejected?

(1) **Social Chaos.** Everyone does that which is right in his own eyes! No order in society! Selfishness rules! No respect for the rights of others! No restraints to the expression of lust! Undisciplined society! Might makes right! The poor are neglected, the weak are destroyed! Society is topsy-turvy! “The challenge we face is the tidal wave of militant anti-Christian belief engulfing society and the chaos it leaves in its wake: the AIDS epidemic, the dissolution of the family, the abortion holocaust, growing economic weakness, the crisis of judge-made law, teen pregnancy, wide spread financial fraud. These difficult problems and many others are largely the by-product of the humanist idea that man is the measure of all things and that all ethical standards are relative.” (Turning Point; Marvin Olasky; pg. 7)

(2) **Moral License.** When there are no standards, by which to judge wrong behavior, people tend to take the path of least resistance. They tend to live by their passions. Sexual immorality is rampant. They tend to live for mere physical pleasure, guided by their own hedonistic motto: “If it feels good, do it!”

If there are no moral absolutes by which one ought to guide his behavior, but if instead all decisions are the results of one’s own subjective ideas and physical drives, then no one can condemn any sexual practice. Whether it is what most consider gross and debased acts, such as homosexual acts, or whether it is the widespread practice of fornication and adultery. “If subjectivism in ethics is sound philosophy, i.e., if there is no objective moral order in reference to which the act of the individual is right or wrong, then complete permissiveness is reasonable. If I believe that there is no objective moral order, I have no rational justification for objecting, on moral grounds, to anything that any man chooses to do to me. I may be able to strike him, or to shout at him (if he tries to rape me, or tries to sexually abuse my daughter, or if he callously spreads AIDS) (added by R. Christian), but I cannot rationally enter into dialogue with him, because according to our premise, there is nothing to talk about. If subjectivism is accepted, the other man’s desire to harm me is the end of the story, so far as rational discourse is concerned.” (The New Man for Our Time; Elton Trueblood; pgs. 206-107)

(3) **Mental Confusion** – Unless there is a clearly defined objective standard, not subject to man’s changing ideas, there will be a great mental confusion regarding the values of life or relationships. For instance, if there is no set of objective moral standards, then anyone’s ideas are as ‘valid’ as anyone else’s ideas. Hitler’s idea regarding a super-race is ‘valid’ on the battlefield of ideologies, if one denies the Biblical revelation, which clearly states that God loves everyone equally. B. F. Skinner’s conception that man is merely an

environmentally-determined animal is a 'valid' option in the marketplace of ideas, if one denies the biblical declaration that man is a free- moral-agent.

To deny the objective law of God and the divinely-revealed truths of God is to fall into the quagmire of 'mental confusion'.

(4) **Selfish Violence** – "As a man thinks, so is he." If one thinks that man is merely a product of a long evolutionary process, that man is simply a complex animal with no eternal spirit and with no inherent or eternal worth, then it is not hard to see why humans are treated as "'cogs' in a machine or as 'pons' in the hands of a totalitarian government, or as disposable military tools in the hands of an aggressor power. If man has no eternal value, if he is merely a speck of matter on an insignificant planet that came into existence by mere chance, then it is not difficult to understand why that all that came into existence by mere chance, then it is not difficult to understand why the individual has no 'inalienable rights' to be honored. It is not difficult to understand why this chemically - determined creature can easily be eliminated in one of many ways: on the front lines of battlefield, through an abortion before he ever sees the light of day, by starvation as an older person (euethanasia, or by neglect or abuse as an unwanted child (infanticide)

If one denies the reality of objective Moral Laws (as The Ten Commandments), then why should one say that the democratic ideas of Abraham Lincoln were any better than the philosophy and practices of Adolf Hitler? If there is no God-revealed law that says, "*Thou shalt not murder*", then one cannot pronounce any moral condemnation against Hitler! If there is no God-revealed standard, which states, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself", then one cannot praise Abraham Lincoln for his love of the black slaves and for his "Emancipation Proclamation"! Without the reality of God-revealed, objective moral standards and values, there is no basis, morally speaking, for either blame or for praise, in terms of ideas and behavior.

Notes Elton Trueblood, "If we propose to operate on the basis of ethical subjectivism, we have no right to claim that anything, anywhere, is really wrong. The systematic tolerance that recognizes both 'your truth' and 'my truth' leaves no room for dialogue...What was to keep Hitler from claiming that persecution of the Jews was his truth? But, if rational dialogue is logically impossible, what then? All that remains is the capacity to shout the other fellow down, or to hit him over the head with a chair, and this in fact, is what occurs. Violence is inevitable if reason is undermined." (The New Man for Our Time; pgs. 107, 108)

II. MEANING OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Respect)

Recognizing the practical and the terrible implications of the philosophy of 'ethical subjectivism', is one way of increasing one's appreciation of and commitment to God's 'Ten Commandments'. Without recognition of obedience to The Ten Commandments, society will eventually be reduced to total anarchy, or it will fall into the hands of a totalitarian dictator whose 'might makes right'!

If The Ten Commandments are this important, then what, in essence, is involved in 'keeping' The Ten Commandments?

The essence of The Ten Commandments is found in one word: Respect.

- (1) Respect for God's place in your life. "You shall have no other gods before you". God is sovereign. He is Lord and Master. He must have the same place in your life as He has in His great Universe – first place!
- (2) Respect for God's nature in your understanding. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything." Jesus said that they that worship God must worship Him 'in spirit and in truth'. To worship God 'in Spirit' is to worship Him in reality, in contrast to worshipping God through the media of a false literal image or false conceptual image. "Idolatry is carving out things to represent God and pretending that those things are God or that they contain God. Idolatry occurs when the symbol of Deity is confused with the reality of Deity and evolves into the object of our praise and adoration." (Robert Kopp)
- (3) Respect for God's Name which represents His character. "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." When you misuse or profane a person's name, you really profane a person's character. Why? For "a person and his name are so closely associated and related that we ourselves feel that our personal honor is involved in the use that is made of our name." (Maurer)
- (4) Respect for God's special Day, which, for Christians, is the First Day of the week – Resurrection Day. When believers gather together each Sunday to worship corporately, they are witnessing their belief in the reality of the resurrection of Christ and their faith in the power of God to save sinners from death and for everlasting life!
- (5) Respect for Parents as God's special gift to children. "Honor your father and your mother." Respect for a parent's personhood and a parent's loving discipline is the first and the most fundamental

respect that a child can learn. Wrote Paul, *"Children, obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you. Honor your father and mother. This is the first of God's Ten Commandments that ends with a promise. And this is the promise: that if you honor your father and other, yours will be a long life full of blessings."* (Ephesians 6: 1-3, Living Bible)

- (6) Respect the sanctity of life. "You shall not murder." Life to God is sacred and is not to be destroyed, whether that destruction is self-destruction (suicide) or destruction of another, or whether that destruction of another is physical or spiritual.
- (7) Respect for the person and body of others. "You shall not commit adultery." Marriage is instituted of God, and sexual relations are to be confined alone to the context of a loving relationship between a husband and wife who are committed for a lifetime – 'till death do us part'. To engage in sex outside of marriage is to involve yourself in the selfish act of enjoying another's body without committing yourself to that other person's spirit and soul. The use of another's body without commitment for life to that person's total being is to exploit another for one's own temporary satisfaction. From a Biblical viewpoint, this is not 'love' but 'lust' and lust is the opposite of respect! Wrote the writer of Hebrews, *"Honor your marriage and its vows, and be pure; for God will surely punish all those who are immoral or commit adultery."* (Hebrews 13: 4, Living Bible)
- (8) Respect for another's property. "You shall not steal." Why is stealing wrong? Because it infringes upon someone's rights. Because stealing is getting something that one wants for nothing, at the expense of someone else.
- (9) Respect for another person's reputation. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." There are many ways to destroy another person's reputation: intentionally distributing lies (slander), repetition of a report without careful investigation (tale bearing), implying another's guilt (false impression), failing to defend someone against an untruth which is stated 'behind his back' (silence), attributing an ulterior motive to a person (imputation of motive), circulation of a story without certainty of facts (rumor).
- (10) Respect for proper desires, which brings honor to God. "You shall not covet". Notes Matthew Henry: "The Tenth Commandment strikes at the root. It implicitly forbids all desire of doing that

which shall be an injury to our neighbor and all inordinate desire of that which shall be gratification to ourselves."

III. MOTIVATION FOR KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (Love)

Jesus did not come to destroy the Moral Law, but He came to fulfill the Moral Law. How is the Moral Law fulfilled? When God's love is imparted to the human heart! God promised, through Jeremiah, that the day would come when God would establish a 'New Covenant' with His people.

³¹ "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them" declares the LORD. ³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Because of the atoning work of Christ on the cross, God is able to forgive mankind's sins. The laws of God are now written on the heart of the repentant believer, not on mere tablets of stone as in the days of Moses! When God changes the human heart, the new nature desires to keep God's Laws. The expulsive power of a new affection! "When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!" (II Corinthians 5: 17, Living Bible)

Love is the fulfillment of all the Ten Commandments, and it is the Holy Spirit who imparts God's love to the surrendered heart of the repentant sinner and of the humble believer!

Is Christianity a list of demands and laws, or is Christianity a reservoir of resources, and offers? Christianity is not a list of demands and prohibitions! Christianity is a life of love and joy because of a personal relationship with Christ.

We are not saved by law keeping, but if we are saved, we will obey God's laws and we will serve God's Christ!

Freedom does not come from throwing off all restraints and 'doing your own thing'. Freedom comes through surrender to the person of Christ and by obedience to the laws

of God. The Laws of God are laws of safety. Learning what is hurtful to mankind, we can avoid the painful and the destructive, and follow the way of health and happiness.

Do you remember the old-fashioned 'floor furnaces' of your childhood? Your parents laid down the law regarding these 'floor heaters', "Don't step on the heater with bare feet, or your feet will be blistered!" That law was given by your parents, not to restrain your freedom, but to give you true freedom. The law 'Don't step on the heater' was meant to safeguard children against hurt and injury and burns. The Laws of God are not meant to take away one's freedom, but to define one's freedom. Knowing where not to step, one has been given assurance of where he can step. There is no such thing as unlimited and absolute freedom. There is only freedom within certain clearly defined boundaries. The Ten Commandments define those boundaries. Knowing what we are not to do allows us knowledge as to what we can do. The Ten Commandments tell us where the 'floor heaters' are in life, where the places are that we ought to avoid in order not to be hurt spiritually. The Ten Commandments are thus 'safeguards'; our guidelines to freedom!

The 'Christian Way' is the way to live! The right thing morally is always the healthy thing physically, mentally, economically, socially, and spiritually.

The Ten Commandments are not meant to be seen as something negative and forbidding. The last word of Christianity is not denunciation but affirmation, not sacrifice but salvation, not sorrow over sins, but joy over redemption. It was not the purpose of the Ten Commandments to enslave humanity but to free humanity.

We are saved by faith, not by works. But a saving faith is a working faith. Without works, faith is dead. Faith is more than mental affirmations. Faith is active obedience to God's guidelines and rules and laws. Not that we are saved by merely trying to keep laws. We are saved by Jesus Christ whose power to transform human nature enables the disobedient to become obedient, the vile to become pure, the rebellious to become submissive, the proud to become humble. Keeping God's Commandments is a natural outcome of a heart, which has responded to God's call to repentance and faith. The man without Christ has no ability to obey the Ten Commandments. The non-believer may give an artificial consent to the rightness of the Commands and even try hard (as a moralist and Pharisee) to obey the commands. However, without Christ's presence and power within one, can only at best keep the commandments externally. The internal spirit of the Ten Commandments, the spirit of love, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. (*And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.* Romans 5: 5) In order for one to keep the Ten Commandments, he must have his nature changed. Jesus taught that the Ten Commandments can only be kept as the nature of man is changed. Only one who is love-saturated can observe the internal spirit of the Ten Commandments. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that the attitude of man is just as important as the actions of man. Lust is condemned along with adultery. Hate is condemned along with murder.

Covetousness is condemned along with stealing. Jesus taught that love is the fulfillment of all Ten Commandments. The Christian answer to keeping the Ten Commandments is a transformed nature – a nature controlled by the Holy Spirit and a life that has received the gift of God's love. One great saint said, "Love God and do what you like." Loving God supremely and loving your neighbor as yourself enables one to look at life from a totally different perspective, a perspective no longer of selfish exploitation, but a perspective of genuine respect for God, respect for yourself, and respect for others.

So, what is the answer to keeping the Ten Commandments? First and foremost, let God change your nature. Allow God to change your motivations and affections and desires. Let God give you a new 'want to'. If you love God supremely and if you love your neighbor as yourself, you will respect God, yourself, and others. The Ten Commandments will then not be seen as negative prohibitions, which you find impossible to observe, but the Ten Commandments will be seen as a wonderful exposition of the lifestyle of a transformed believer. The first step to take in order to keep the Ten Commandments is to surrender your life totally to the lordship of Christ, and to allow the Holy Spirit to shed abroad God's divine-like love in your heart. If you have not been born again, do so today! If you have not become filled with the Spirit (as a believer), then surrender to the Christ of love today. Let Christ have full control of your inner life.

Jesus said that we are to love God supremely, and to love our neighbor as ourselves! What God commands, love, and what my nature demands, love, God supplies – love! *"We feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His Love."* (Romans 5: 5b, Living Bible)

Further, the love-filled person desires to respect and to care for his fellow human beings. Not only does divinely imparted love guide him in his worshipful - attitudes towards God's place and God's nature, and God's name, and God's special day (the first four Commandments), but this divinely imparted loves guides him in his horizontal relationships with his fellow human beings.

Notes Paul, *"If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself, you will not want to harm or cheat him, or kill him or steal from him. And you won't sin with his wife or want what is his, or do anything else the Ten Commandments say is wrong. All ten are wrapped up in this one, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love does no wrong to anyone. That's why it full satisfies all of God's requirements. It is the only law you need."* (Romans 13: 9, 10; Living Bible)

CONCLUSION

The love-filled person is not proud in his attempts dutifully to keep a list of God-given commandments. Rather, a love-filled person (i.e., a person who loves God supremely and who loves his fellowmen sincerely) is humble in his acknowledgements that he fails daily

to love as fully and as consistently as he could and as he should. The love-filled person feels he can never meet all the needs of his fellow human beings. Thus, the love-filled person is constantly focusing on God's perfect standards of holiness, and, because he realizes his moral and human weaknesses in failing fully to keep God's holy laws, he finds himself regularly confessing his sins and failures and weaknesses to God. "Lost in wonder, love, and praise", he humbles himself before God, uttering prayers of thanksgiving to God and confessing openly his need for mercy and forgiveness from God and from his fellow men whom he serves imperfectly.

Love is the great motivation to keep God's laws the best the believer knows how, and love is the great humbler that keeps the believer striving "to better serve others". The loved filled person constantly feels that he is a debtor to both God and to man.

CHAPTER 12

**"LIVING BY RULES,
WITHOUT RULES, OR
BEYOND RULES!"**

SCRIPTURE: *"17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5: 17-20)*

TEXT: *"Love does no harm to its neighbor...Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13: 10)*

"LIVING BY RULES, WITHOUT RULES, OR BEYOND RULES"

INTRODUCTION

Do you primarily guide your life by rules or do you go to the other extreme and disregard rules and live without rules altogether? There is a third alternative which is the best way to live: living beyond rules. The legalist tends to reduce the Gospel to rules and regulations. The antinomian says that law does not matter since one is saved by grace alone. The man of faith takes into account the importance of some definite rules, but primarily guides his life by the all-encompassing principle of love.

Notes Donald Bastian: "Mature Christians know you cannot live without rules any more than a truck driver can drive a truck or a manager can operate a store without special regulations. Mature Christians also know that it is folly to try to live by rules. To do so is to court legalism. For mature Christians it is neither a matter of living without rules nor by rules. The object is to live beyond rules." (Adventures in Church Membership; pg. 142)

PROPOSITION

Every man must choose between the way of antinomianism, the way of legalism, and the way of love. *"Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."* (Romans 13: 10)

I. LIVING BY THE RULES (The Way of Legalism)

Living By Rules – the way of legalism – is living a life which is characterized by a focus on Externalism, Traditionalism, and Exclusivism.

A. THE WAY OF LEGALISM – Externalism

The person who lives exclusively by rules is rigid, inflexible, intolerant, and ultimately inconsistent. Life is reduced to a system of dull and unattractive 'Do's' and 'Don'ts'. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were given over to a life which was guided by thousands of petty and minute laws and regulations. "The scribes and Pharisees saw religion in terms of obedience to rules and regulations, to rituals and to ceremonies; Jesus saw religion in terms of love to God and love to man." (The Mind of Jesus; Barclay; pg. 157)

A life of externalism can be illustrated as follows: "The most precious thing the Jews had was the law. The Jew said, 'Oh how I love thy law!' Moreover, he did. The Jew uses the word 'law' in two senses. First, he uses it to mean the written law in the Old Testament, namely the Ten Commandments and the first five books of the Bible. Now the law in the Old Testament does not have a multitude of rules and regulations; what it has is great wide principles, and it lays on the individual man, on each and all, the responsibility of fitting these principles to every individual case that comes up. But the Jewish theologians and leaders thought this far too risky. They wanted rules and regulations to meet the needs of every man in every situation – to be able to say this, this, this; in each particular situation. And so, out of the principles they began to extract literally thousands and thousands of rules and regulations; after all, the law was the Word of God, therefore, complete and perfect, and therefore, everything is in it – if not explicitly, then implicitly, and one has to dig it out.

"Take the case of carrying a burden. We all know the question without my telling: 'What is a burden?' Moreover, we get a long list - pages and pages of it: anything the weight of a dried fig; enough paper to write 'Hear, O Israel, enough wine for one swallow; enough oil to anoint a small member (what is a small member? – it is the little toe of a baby three days old!) and on and on and on. Therefore, they argued. Can a man go out with a wooden leg on the Sabbath, or is he carrying a burden? Can a woman go out with false hair on the Sabbath or is she carrying a burden? Or can a man pick up a child on the Sabbath or is he carrying a burden?" No, he can pick up the child all right, but not if the child has a stone in his hand – it is a burden then. But – what is a stone? Anything that is big enough to throw at a bird. On and on it goes." (The Life of Jesus for Every Man; Barclay; pgs. 31-33)

It is interesting how Paul describes the characteristics of the legalistic life-style. He points out the features of the legalistic life-style, and he shows at the same

time the futility of such a life-style – by declaring his own utter failure as a rigid and legalistic Jew, before he became a Christian.

³ For we who worship by the Spirit of God¹ are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort,⁴ though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!⁵ I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law.⁶ I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.⁷ I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. (Philippians 3: 3-7; Living Bible)

Humanly – speaking, Paul, as a devout Jew, had a long list of outstanding credentials - hereditary, religious, and moral credentials – but he declares that none of his legalistic attempts to gain a right standing with God were successful. He had to count all of his human attainments as utter loss, in order that he might gain Christ!

Paul declares that the way of legalism is the way of futility because of its exclusive focus on Externalism. Outward religious performance becomes the standard for righteousness rather than inward relationship with God. In the case of these Jews, the fact that one had received the physical mark of circumcision in the flesh proved that one was acceptable to God. There are still those today who depend on religious performance to bring them acceptance by God. Reading so many chapters in the Bible daily, or saying so many prayers, or doing so many good deeds, or knocking on so many doors (Jehovah's Witnesses), or being baptized, etc.

B. THE WAY OF LEGALISM – Traditionalism

Tradition, in and of itself, is not necessarily bad. The past is to be cherished, and lessons from the past can be beneficially applied to the present – day situations. However, Paul, as a legalist before he became a Christian, trusted in his past heredity and heritage exclusively as the means by which he gained a right standing with God.

There are still those today who, in a limited degree at least, are like Paul before he became a Christian. Some depend on their birth into a Christian home as their

'passport' to heaven. Some unconsciously, if not consciously, believe that the fact that they are an American gives them a special and favorite place in God's evaluation. Because they believe in democracy and freedom and justice and equality – American ideals – they think that they are 'Christian' automatically. Some, like Paul, stress the absolute purity of their race or of their special and unique descent, or of their elite aristocratic ancestry, believing that such an heredity brings them special treatment from God.

There are some, like Paul, before his Christian conversion, depends upon their own achievements. Such as worthy credentials, to present to God, in order to earn God's acceptance: such as Religious achievements, moral and social achievements educational, cultural and professional achievements. There are those yet who mistakenly think that certain things will save them, such as morality, religion, baptism, Church membership, natural birth, charitable deeds, or mere sincerity.

C. THE WAY OF LEGALISM – Exclusivism

"The Pharisees regarded ordinary people who did not keep the whole scribal law as unclean. Even to touch the garment of such a person was to be defiled. A Pharisee was forbidden to receive a non-Pharisee as a guest or to be the guest of such a person; a Pharisee would never dream of entering the house of such a person, of sitting at meat with such a person. Their one aim was to have nothing whatever to do with the sinner; the one aim of Jesus was to get alongside the sinner and to woo him back to God. The Pharisees narrowed the love of God until it included only themselves; Jesus widened the love of God until it reached out to all men, saints, and sinners alike. There can be no common ground between a religion which sees the sinner as a man, to be avoided at all costs, and a religion which sees the sinner as a man to be sought out at all costs, between a religion which sees the sinner as a man to be saved and a religion which sees the sinner as a man to be destroyed." (The Mind of Jesus; Barclay; pgs. 157, 158)

II. LIVING WITHOUT RULES (The Way of Antinomianism)

A. DEFINITION OF ANTINOMIANISM

During the period when judges ruled over Israel, it is written that during this time "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." It is little wonder that this period was a period of chaos and crime. The lawless society is the corrupt and crumbling society. If the way of law is barren, the way of lawlessness is also barren. Neither is adequate, but between the two, the way of law is far better than the way of lawlessness. In a society without law, every person becomes his own law, and such a society has fallen into the mucky marsh of relativism. The religious person who lives without law is an antinomian. "The result where antinomianism prevails is high profession of grace matched by low moral

achievement. This error, in fact, has in extreme cases encouraged immorality."
(Donald Bastian)

"Today you have only to cross the hall in your apartment house and the people on the other side may live in an utterly different world; a world in which there is no God, no divine law, where only self-interest, animal instincts, and the 'survival of the fittest' rule." (Sermon Builder; July 1971; pg. 38) Such people are living essentially without rules to guide their lives.

If the way of Legalism is a perversion of true faith, the way of Antinomianism is also a perversion of true faith. If legalism is "living by rules", Antinomianism is "living without rules". These ways are two opposite and extreme ways to live – both of which lead to eternal death!

What is the way of Antinomianism? Philippians 3: 18-19 describes this futile way of life.

¹⁸ "For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth." (Living Bible)

Legalists, "debase grace by mixing works with it; the antinomians pervert grace by divorcing it from behavior." (Paul Rees)

Legalists are those who fall into the folly and futility of salvation by works, and the antinomians are those who, on the opposite end of the continuum, fall into the folly and futility of professing a salvation which makes light of works, resulting in them ending up in a state of lawlessness and anarchy.

Antinomians are those who want liberty without restraint, privileges without responsibilities, and grace without law. "The antinomians were those who denied that there was any law at all in the Christian life. They declared that they were within the grace of God, and that, therefore, it did not matter what they did; God would forgive they were quite safe; no further discipline and no further effort were necessary. There were those who distorted the principle of Christian liberty into unchristian license, and gloried in giving their lusts and passions full play. There were those who distorted the Christian doctrine of grace. They said that grace was wide enough to cover every sin and stain; that the love of God was great enough to forgive any sin; therefore, let a man sin as he liked and not worry; it would make no difference to the all-forgiving grace of God." (Barclay's Philippians; pgs. 83, 85)

B. DEFINITION OF ANTINOMIANISM

(1) Antinomians are Enemies of the Cross of Christ.

Wrote Paul, "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the Cross of Christ." (Philippians 3: 18)

Antinomians don't realize the seriousness of sin and the high cost to God to forgive sins through the bloody death of Christ on the Cross. Anyone who 'trades' on the mercy of God treats the Cross of Christ lightly – and therefore is an enemy of the Cross of Christ.

(2) Antinomians are self-indulgent.

They live to gratify the desires of their flesh, with no desire to sacrifice for others or for Christ. They are very self-centered; food and pleasure are their gods! Of such people, Jude wrote, *"When these men join you at the love feast of the Church, they are evil smears among you, laughing and carrying on, gorging and stuffing themselves without a thought for others."* (Jude: 12)

(3) Antinomians are earthly-minded, instead of heavenly-minded.

They have a wrong set of values. They value the material instead of the spiritual. They live only for the world of time instead of the world of eternity. They are spiritually short-sighted, and pleasure-obsessed! The accumulation of things preoccupies their sole attention!

(4) The future of antinomians is eternal loss.

Why? Because antinomians make light of sin and practice sinning against God. They thoughtlessly break God's laws.

The Bible says: *"The wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6: 23) Wrote Jude: *"Some godless teachers have wormed their way in among you, saying that after we become Christians we can do just as we like without fear of God's punishment. The fate of such people was written long ago, for they have turned against our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. They are not only dead, but doubly dead, for they have been pulled out roots and all, to be burned. Ahead of them is the everlasting gloom and darkness that God has prepared for them."* (Jude 1: 4, 12b, 13b)

Paul encountered the problem of antinomianism in Romans 6: 1. Said Paul to the antinomians: *"Well then, shall we keep on sinning so that God can keep on showing us more and more kindness and forgiveness"* (Living Bible)

Some antinomians might be heard to say this: *"If I sin, so what! I am a Christian! I am saved by grace and grace alone. The degree of my sinning in no way affects*

my relationship with Christ. If I once was saved, I am always saved, regardless of my sinning. Grace covers all my sins. Did not Paul write, *'Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds!'*?"

Such reasoning – the reasoning of an antinomian – is the reasoning of a person who wishes to sin and at the same time be guaranteed safety from sin's consequences. Paul tells us in Romans 6 that the reign of grace and the reign of sin are totally incompatible. To be saved by grace is to be saved from sinning! It is utterly absurd to reason as follows: *"In light of God's great power to forgive, it is therefore safe – and even virtuous – to sin, for my sinning gives God a chance to exercise His great grace in forgiveness!"*

Paul refutes such reasoning: *"Anyone who lightly regards sin, also lightly regards the meaning of union with Christ, and lightly regards the call to holy and righteous living!"* In other words, willful, habitual sinning is a perversion of God's grace! It is a tragedy to presume upon the mercy of God and to pervert the grace of God.

Paul would warn us against a trivial attitude toward sinning – the kind of attitude the antinomians have regarding sinning. Paul would urge us never to take God's grace and mercy for granted! Realize the seriousness of sin, confess it quickly, and turn from it decisively. To engage in willful, habitual sinning is a total perversion of God's grace. To practice sinning is to deny the operation of God's grace in one's life. Paul would agree with John who states that he who is practicing sinning is he who is not in a present state of knowing Christ. *"The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."* (I John 3: 8)

There are antinomians that are very perverted in their thinking. *"The more we sin, the more grace will abound. Sin does not matter, for God will forgive anyway."* *"Heine the great German philosopher was dying. He had not been a Christian and he had not bothered much how he lived, but he was not in the least worried. Someone asked him why he was taking it all so calmly. 'God will forgive and there will be no trouble and it will be quite all right.'"* (The Old Law and the New Law; Barclay; pg. 63)

If the antinomian is even aware of sin, he makes a virtue out of sinning: *"Sin is an excellent thing because it gives the grace of God a chance to operate."* The conclusion of such an argument is that sin produces the greatest thing in the world!

To use this type of antinomian reasoning is about like saying (to use a very simple illustration) that it is a good thing for basements of houses to be filled

with rain water, for this gives a chance for the pumps to show their power in pumping water out of the basements!

Alternatively, it is like saying, "It is a good thing to have an accident, for the accident gives the doctor a chance to prove his medical skills." On the other hand, "It is a good thing to have a rebellious child, for this situation gives the parent opportunity to exercise his love and grace in forgiveness!"

III. LIVING BEYOND RULES (The Way of Love)

The mature, Bible-centered Christian does not disregard some basic rules, but essentially goes beyond the realm of rules to the realm of principles by which he seeks to guide his life. There is a big difference between rules and principles, between the way of law (or lawlessness) and the way of love!

A. DIVINELY-GIVEN (Not Humanely-Achieved)

'Agape' love finds its source in God alone. No man, independent of God, can create, produce, or manufacture this divine-like love. It is God who "has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us." ⁵ *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*" (Romans 5: 5)

B. OBEDIENT (Not Complacent)

In contrast to the way of antinomianism (living without laws), the way of love is the way of obedience. Jesus said, *"If you love me, keep my commandments."* Wrote John, *"This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God."* (John 3: 10)

William Barclay illustrates this principle: "In the same way, if we are loved by someone, we should not use that as a reason for doing what we like. If a young person is loved by his parents, he should not say, 'I'll do what I like. No matter what I do, they won't throw me out. Whatever I do, they will still look after me.' He ought to say, 'I love my parents and they love me; and I must do my very best not to hurt them or disappoint them or cause them anxiety.'" Barclay continues, "Love is not a reason for doing what we like; it is a reason for doing nothing to grieve those who love us." (The Old Law and the New Law; pgs. 54, 65)

C. HUMBLE (Not Proud)

The man of love never takes pride in his own achievements, for he knows that without the Lord's strength he could do nothing! It is not his own glory, which he seeks, but it is the Glory of God alone which he seeks. He knows that he is always on the receiving end, and that God is always on the giving end. He is 'lost in

wonder, love, and praise', for he acknowledges "God is the Giver of all good and perfect gifts." He knows that he deserves nothing but the judgment of God, and he knows further that he needs nothing but mercy of God. Realizing that he can never repay God for His gifts of love and forgiveness, he exclaims with the hymn writer:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

D. ACCEPTING (Not Condemning)

The man of love never condones the sin in others, but the man of love never condemns or rejects the sinner himself. He knows that, if God has forgiven him of his own sins, God can forgive the sins of anyone else. He does not compromise with sin for he takes God's Ten Commandments most seriously, but he, nevertheless, accepts warmly the sinner who is breaking the Ten Commandments. The man of love follows the example of Jesus who, as the sinless Son of God, never tolerated sin, but who, nevertheless, was the 'friend of sinners'.

Notes E. Stanley Jones: "If morality was based on the Commandments of God rather than on communion with God, it would be hard, legalistic, unattractive morality. However, based as it is on fellowship with God, its special characteristic is love. Hence, the maturity is moral, but it is a winsome morality. It loves the immoral without standing over them as a frowning Sinai, saying, 'Thou shalt', and 'Thou shalt not'. Its morality is based on 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'" (Christian Maturity; pg. 65)

E. FORGIVING (Not Vindictive)

The man of love will always find a way to forgive those who sin against him. The man of love understands something of the grace – the 'unmerited favor' of God - and therefore he knows that if God has forgiven him, he has an obligation to forgive those who have sinned against him. The man of love knows that if God has forgiven him the 'big sins' – the very kind of sins which helped crucify Jesus – then he ought always to be able to forgive the relatively 'smaller sins' which others have committed against him

F. DYNAMIC (Not Static)

The man of love knows that he has a long way to go before he reaches his goal of full maturity, and that he has unlimited potential for further growth. He is future-oriented, not past-oriented! He is never satisfied with past accomplishments or with the status quo. He is constantly on the stretch for

further progress in the spiritual life. He guards against resting on the 'laurels of past accomplishments'.

The man of love adopts the same attitude which Paul expressed when he wrote, *"So, whatever it takes, I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead. I don't mean to say I am perfect, I haven't learned all I should even yet, but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be. No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us."* (Philippians' 3: 11-14, Living Bible)

G. CREATIVE (Not Rigid)

"Love always finds a way" – a way to overcome obstacles and adversities which hinder one in showing his love to others. Without compromising moral standards, the man of love is nevertheless 'bendable', 'adaptable', 'tolerant', and understanding of special 'circumstances'. His objective is not rigid obedience to impersonal law, but his objective is to express redemptive compassion within the context of warm human relationships. The man of love knows that there is more than one way to accomplish his goal of finding the lost and of serving the found.

The way of strict law is the way of inflexibility; the way of compassionate love is the way of adaptability. There is a big difference between the way of law and the way of grace, between rigid rules and adaptable principles. "A rule resembles the command of a superior officer to be carried out literally with an eye on the law rather than on the situation. A principle is a policy of action to be interpreted and applied in line with a general purpose and in relation to particular situations. The distinction is observable in the work of a physician. He has certain rules in his practice, to be sure. But when he comes into a sick-room, it is principles rather than rules which guide him most. The individuality of the patient, the peculiar phases of the particular case may cause him to alter his rules in pursuing his principles of healing. Similarly, Jesus the Physician emphasized principles as above rules." (The Paradoxes of Jesus; Sockman; pgs. 30, 31)

H. CORRECTABLE (Not Perfectionist)

The man of love seeks always to obey the Commandments of God, but, at best, he knows that he 'comes short' of perfect obedience. He does not practice deliberate sinning, for his will is 'set' to do God's will only, but, nevertheless, he knows that he needs God's daily forgiveness.

Forgiveness for 'sins of omission', (failure to do all the 'good' that one was capable of doing within the span of a day and within the context of a particular situation).

Forgiveness for 'sins of ignorance', (failure to do God's entire will because of inexcusable ignorance regarding a dimension of God's will).

Forgiveness for 'sins of prayerlessness' (failure to pray for God's power and wisdom in a particular situation because of an over-dependence on 'human strength').

Forgiveness for 'sins of lovelessness', (failure to be 'a good Samaritan') and failure to express heartfelt compassion towards a hurting person whom God brought across one's pathway).

Forgiveness for 'sins of commission', (failure to keep the explicit commands of God because of intentional moral rebellion or because of spiritual slothfulness).

I. INVOLVED (Not Isolated)

It is said that love has the ability to 'go down' – to go down to the low level of human misery, to minister the healing ointment of God's love to the wounds and hurts of lost mankind. The love-filled person is the highly involved person – involved in the 'messy' business of lifting the fallen, of healing the sick, of befriending the lonely, of strengthening the weak, and of guiding the confused. Wrote Edward Hale: "I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something: and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

In her study of the early Methodists, Dr. Mary Alice Tenney observes "Perfect Love operates in two directions: vertically, toward God, horizontally toward man. Early Methodists really loved men. They did not sign a check for Community Chest Drives; they went into dirty garrets and nursed sick old women. Even noblemen did that sort of thing, denying themselves luxuries in order to do it. It got right down among the needy, the evil, even the criminals, and showed them what real friendship and compassion are. People still need friends more than clothing. More than money, they need the news that inner resources are theirs for the asking. The usual social worker knows nothing about this. A twenty dollars a week contribution leaves the hungry essentially hungry as before, for the heart is still starving. If Love could be allowed to work in the world today among the Great Hungry here and overseas, as it was released by the Methodist Revival, the ground work for world change would be laid." (Living in Two Worlds; pgs. 112, 113)

The theology of the great Wesleyan Movement is the theology of love. Practical love – love that 'goes down, down, down' to reach lost mankind! Notes Walter F.

Mueller: "The power of the Wesleyan spirit projected itself into a purification of morals, a revision of penal laws, the abolition of slavery, popular education, a new spirit of philanthropy, and eventually into the great labor movement. While its contribution to concrete reforms like anti-slavery and temperance, have been great, its contribution through the persistent feeding of moral vitamins into the social organism has been even greater."

When a modern-day saint, Toyohika Kagawa, first became acquainted with Christianity, he cried out, "O God, make me like Christ!" To follow Christ's example, Kagawa went to live in the slums of Japan, although he himself had tuberculosis. He lived in a six-foot-by-six-foot hut in a Tokyo slum. Cecil Northcott tells what Kagawa did. "On this first night he was asked to share his bed with a man suffering from contagious itch. That was a test of his faith. Would he go back on his point of no return? No. He welcomed his bedfellow. Then a beggar asked for his shirt and got it. Next day he was back for Kagawa's coat and trousers and got them too. Kagawa was left standing in a ragged old kimono. The slum dwellers of Tokyo laughed at him, but they came to respect him. He stood in the driving rain to preach, coughing all the time. 'God is love. Where love is, there is God.' He often fell down exhausted, and the rough men of the slums carried him gently back to his hut."

J. OTHERS-ORIENTED (Not Self-Centered)

Love is outgoing – 'reaching out in love' to others. Love concentrates on the needs of others, not on the desires of self. The love-filled person is others-oriented, not self-absorbed! God's outpoured love is the great healer of the universal disease of 'self-centeredness'. The love-filled person thinks little about himself and much about others. His others-oriented thinking reflects itself in more prayers for others (Intercession) and less prayers for self (Petition), and reflects itself in a sacrificial lifestyle. Notes John Howard: "We must learn to give up our luxuries to supply the comforts of others, our comforts to supply their necessity, and even our necessities to supply their extremities."

A humble Scottish woman had lived for many years on porridge that she might give to missions the cost of her comforts and luxuries. One day a friend gave her a coin to 'buy a chop', he said. She looked at it awhile, and then said, "I have got on very well on porridge so far, and I think I'll stick to it." Therefore, the coin went for missions. A minister was telling this at a missionary breakfast, and a comfortable-looking woman got up and said, "Well, I never have done without a chop for Christ's sake, so I shall begin today to sacrifice by giving \$1,000 to missions." Others followed suit, and before that breakfast was, over \$12,000 had been contributed to missions.

K. ATTRACTIVE (Not Repulsive)

There is a type of 'Christianity' which is critical, harsh and legalistic. As in Jesus' day, there are still religious people who are adept at manifesting a rough spirit, all in the name of morality and justice. Such people would never offer a shoulder for you to weep upon!

Make no mistake about it; there are times when love must be expressed in forms of discipline, as when Jesus drove out the moneychangers with whips! However, more times, it is not whips, but words of tenderness and forgiveness, which Jesus used to draw people to the heart of God.

We must never lose our ability to be indignant with holy love, and we must be able to whip our will into a holy campaign against sin when the occasion demands it. But too many times we find it easier to identify with the critical, self-righteous crowd who wanted to stone the condemned adulterous woman, than we do to identify with the kind-hearted Christ who spoke words of love and forgiveness to the guilty woman.

¹ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8: 1-11)

The stones could have broken her body, but Jesus' love broke her heart. "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." Those were the kind words. Here is the sweetness of Jesus' temper which put the woman at ease and which shrank back from causing her needless pain. The pain of her shame and guilt was enough to drive her to repentance. No need for the infliction of the cruel pain of self-righteous judgment. Jesus' kindness healed the woman! The kindness of Jesus' followers will also heal the broken-hearted today!

There are still those professed followers of Jesus-followers in name rather than in spirit—who are more concerned about the letter of the law than about the spirit of the law, more concerned about justice than about mercy, more adept in inflicting pain than in applying the salve of healing.

It is true there is no place for compromise with sin, but it is also true that there is no place for discourtesy with sinners. While hating sin intensely, let us love sinners tenderly, and treat sinners with that courtesy which befits the Christian gentleman.

“Agape’ love is kind without being morally soft and disciplined without being morally rigid. Notes William Barclay: “Real Christianity must always attract and never repel. There is such a thing as a hard, austere, unlovely and unlovable goodness, but such a goodness falls short of the Christian standard. In all his efforts to be good, in all his striving toward moral holiness, the Christian must never forget the beauty of holiness.” (New Testament Words; pgs. 156, 157)

L. UNCALCULATING AND OPEN-ENDED (Not Calculating)

We must continue to emphasize, “There is a big difference between the way of law (and the way of lawlessness) and the way of love. “Think of it this way. If we are obeying the law, there is a definite limit to what we have to do. Suppose we buy something in a shop, we owe the shopkeeper the cost of the article. When we have paid the cost, we do not owe him anymore. He has no further claim on us at all. But could we ever repay what we owe to our parents? We can by payment satisfy a legal obligation; nothing we can do can ever pay for being loved. You can always satisfy the claims of the law; if you give everything you have, you have not paid for being loved.” (The Old Law & the New Law; Barclay; pg. 65)

Let us note further examples between laws and love, between rules and principles. Think of a child’s nurse. She may conceivably complete her duties to the child. Think in contrast of the child’s mother. The mother out of love – not mere responsibility – carries on her responsibilities to her child. Her job is never completed. One may pay the debt of law; the debt of love can never be paid. A servant has specific responsibilities to be carried out and completed. A friend has both defined and undefined responsibilities of love to be carried out in an uncalculated manner. It is no wonder that Jesus raised the status of his disciples, from servants to friends. ¹⁵ *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”* (John 15: 15)

Love is uncalculating in its response of forgiveness. The law of the Rabbis would command one to forgive three times. Peter expanded on this and asked Jesus if he should forgive seven times. Jesus, pointing to the way of love and guided by

principle rather than by rule, said that a true Christian should forgive seventy times seven, in other words, an unlimited number of times.

M. CHALLENGING (Not Easy)

Greater challenge has no man than this: to consistently live a life of love patterned after Jesus' life of love!

"Consider (as an example) the employee whose hours and rules are prescribed. Later he becomes the head of the business, responsible to his stockholders, his employees, and the public. No time schedule and no code of rules are laid down for him. He is simply expected to follow one central principle, that of doing the best he can to make the most of the business. But if he is a conscientious man, his sense of responsibility will prove far more exacting than any set of rules held over him. It is safe to say that many a time he will look back longingly to the period when he had someone to tell him what to do and how to do it." (The Paradoxes of Jesus; Stockman; pg. 34)

It is often much easier to live by rules than it is to live by principles. I heard a minister who said that, after he had pastored for several years, he worked on another job for two years. This 'secular employment' had definite working hours and specific rules and regulations that he must carry out. He said that it was so tempting to remain on that job instead of returning to the pastorate, for he said, on the pastorate, he felt his work was never done. Even at night, after a long day he would tend to feel that his job was not finished. Living by principles ("Doing the best he can to make the most of his call") was much more difficult for him than living by law. (Working a job that had clearly, defined expectations and specific working hours).

Let us take this same idea and apply it to a person who is seeking to live the Christian life, on the basis, of principles rather than on the basis of laws. Suppose that all that was necessary in living the Christian life was to carry out certain rules: (1) Attend Church twice a week; (2) Give one-tenth of income to the Lord's work; (3) Read one chapter from the Bible each day. These rules would be relatively easy to keep. However, the mature Christian life is lived primarily, not based on rules, but based on principles. Note, for instance, one of the many principles that is adopted by those who become members of a particular Church: "I will show goodness and mercy to all men, and especially to the household of faith, both to their physical and spiritual needs as I have ability." Will anyone even dare to suggest that the aforementioned principle of love and mercy is easy to apply at all times?

Principles require far more than any set of external rules could require. Rules usually can be kept without too much trouble, but rules seldom touch the most important part of life, namely, internal attitudes and motives. Living by principles

throws the responsibility upon the individual conscience to determine the rightness and the wrongness in special kinds of circumstances. The mature Christians, living by principles instead of by rules, are "those who through constant practice have their spiritual facilities carefully trained to distinguish good from evil." ¹⁴ *But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*" (Hebrews 5:14b; Weymouth)

N. BROAD AND ALL-INCLUSIVE (Not Narrow and Exclusive)

Living by love, rather than by law (or in lawlessness) enables one to exercise tolerance without compromise towards those who differ from him, both in the areas of doctrinal controversy and in the areas of behavioral expectations. All Christians do not see 'eye-to-eye' with each other, either in the area of Biblical interpretation or in the area of personal moral convictions. "Because we apprehend truth with varying degrees of clarity, Christians differ in areas where the scriptures do not speak explicitly." (Donald Bastian) How should such differences between Christians be resolved? How can the unity of the Church be maintained when strong-willed leaders in a church strongly disagree with each other? Without compromising one's own personal convictions, how can one accept those who think and who live differently than he thinks and lives? 'Love' is the 'oil' in the 'machinery of human relationships', enabling the fellowship of believers to remain strong and undivided.

Love allows one to be both strong in the maintenance of his own convictions and yet teachable and tolerant in his attitude towards others who differ from him.

In forming personal convictions, the mature believer knows he must go beyond rules to principles. Donald Bastian notes that, in making decisions in the 'gray' areas of life, Romans 14 gives basic principles:

- (1) Principle of Right Influence – 'Will this be an offense to others?'
- (2) Principle of Accountability – 'How do I feel about this matter in the light of my coming appearance at the judgment seat of Christ?'
- (3) Principle of the Lordship of Christ – 'Can I really do this unto the Lord?'
- (4) Principle of a Clear Conscience – 'Is my own mind clear and settled?'

Love covers a multitude of situations! Love is broad in application! Love is all inclusive, not narrow or exclusive!

CONCLUSION

The principle of love requires thoughtful creativity, unceasing effort, and unlimited growth. When Jesus gave principles rather than rules, Jesus took off the upper limits of what was expected of his followers.

Living by rules is legalism. Living without rules is antinomianism. Living beyond rules is living by love. Wrote Paul, *"Pay all your debts except the debt of love for others - never finish paying that! For if you love them, you will be obeying all of God's laws, fulfilling all His requirements. If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself you will not want to harm or cheat him, or kill him, or steal from him. And you won't sin with his wife or want what is his, or do anything else the Ten Commandments say is wrong. All ten are wrapped up in this one, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love does no wrong to anyone. That's why it fully satisfies all of God's requirements. It is the only law you need."* (Romans 13: 7-10, Living Bible)

CHAPTER 13

**"CHRISTIAN'S
RELATIONSHIP
TO LAW!"**

SCRIPTURE: " 17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5: 17-20)

TEXT: "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us." (Romans 8: 3-4)

"CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO LAW!"

INTRODUCTION

In Jesus' Sermon The Mount, Mathew 5 is a discussion of the Christian's relationship to the Old Testament Law.

PROPOSITION

Let us look carefully at this subject. As a background for our study of the Christian's relationship to the Law, we will first discuss the Law's Temporary Ministry. We will then talk about the Christian's Standard of Righteousness, and then finish by talking about The Christian's Source of Righteousness.

I. LAW'S TEMPORARY MINISTRY

The relationship between Law and Grace is a much-talked-about and yet little-understood subject. In seeking to understand the purpose of the Old Testament Law, we will briefly discuss the (A) Law's Introduction, (B) Law's Necessity, and (C) Law's Limitation.

A. LAW'S INTRODUCTION

When God gave promises to Abraham, the Law had not yet been given. In fact, the Law was not given until the time of Moses, over four hundred years later. *"¹⁷ What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise."* (Galatians 3: 17) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived under Grace – not Law.

The Israelites were delivered out of Egyptian bondage because of God's grace and mercy. After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and had seen God's miracle of deliverance, the Israelites, at times, became despondent, ungrateful, and murmuring. *When the Israelites came to Marah, they murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"* (Exodus 15: 24) *A little later they murmured because of lack of food and said: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full for you have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."* (Exodus 16: 3) On another occasion, they murmured for water. ³ *But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"* (Exodus 17: 3)

These references illustrate Israel's presumption of God's mercy. Israel took God's grace for granted. Israel needed to realize the seriousness of its sins. The sin of murmuring and the sin of presuming upon God's mercy. Therefore, the Law had to be introduced.

B. LAW'S NECESSITY

Israel entertained a shallow conception of sin and possessed a self-sufficient attitude in regards to her ability to obey God. How dull and lacking in understanding Israel was! She had failed to obey God while Grace and Mercy alone prevailed. How could Israel think that she could obey God under Law? And yet when the idea of Law was introduced to Israel as the new standard for obedience, Israel presumptuously and self-sufficiently said, *"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."* (Exodus 19: 8)

Israel felt that she could obey the dictates of the Law. In giving His perfect Law to Israel, God showed Israel that she was unable to keep the Law. In fact, this is one reason for the Law's introduction upon the human stage of history – to show man's inability to obey God. *"No man can justify himself before God by a perfect performance of the Law's demands – indeed it is the straightedge of the Law that shows us how crooked we are."* (Romans 3: 20; Phillips)

The Law is like a mirror – *reflects human sin. "Without the mirror man did not see himself as he really is. But that is all a mirror can do – show the filthiness of the face, and the need for cleansing. It cannot do the washing. To take the mirror*

and try to use it for a washcloth will only smear the dirt and spread it all over your face. To rub the mirror over your soiled complexion will only make matters worse. We must turn from the mirror to soap and water. Therefore, too, with the ministry of the law – it was given to show man his true condition and his need for cleansing, but beyond this it cannot go. We must now turn to the grace of God and in true repentance and confession of our guilt seek for cleansing by the water of the Word and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.” (Law or Grace; by DeHaan; pg. 30; No. 1) Thus, the Law reflects sinful human nature and shows man that he needs a source of help outside of himself – a help much greater than the Law. The Law only shows the need for cleansing; the Law itself cannot cleanse.

The Law shows the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

“Where then lies the point of the Law? It was an addition made to underline the existence and extent of sin until the arrival of the ‘seed’ to whom the promise referred.” (Galatians s 3: 19; Phillips)

“Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ should come, when we should be justified through faith; and not that faith has come, the tutor’s charge is at an end.” (Galatians 3: 24, 25; NEB)

“Now we find that the Law keeps slipping into the picture to point the vast extent of sin.” (Romans 5: 20)

“It can scarcely be doubted that in reality the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, fair and good. Can it be that something that is intrinsically good could mean death to me? No, what happened was this. Sin, at the touch of the Law, was forced to expose itself as sin, and that meant death for me. The contact of the Law showed the sinful nature of sin.” (Romans 7: 12, 13; Phillips)

C. LAW’S LIMITATION

We have already noted, in passing, that while the Law may be able to expose sinful nature like a mirror is able to expose a dirty face, yet the Law is no more able to cleanse from sin than a mirror is able to cleanse away dirt from a filthy face. That is to say, the Law is unable to change the desires of the human heart.

As M.R. DeHaan well illustrates this: “The law can restrain and discourage sin, but it cannot remove the desire to sin. If the penalty for an infraction of the law is made severe enough, it will inhibit and reduce infraction of the law, but cannot change the desires...Prohibition could forbid the manufacture and use of intoxicants. But it did not stop it or change man’s desire for it. It merely drove it underground in an effort to escape the penalty of the law. The law prohibiting

liquor under penalty might stop the practice for some, but it could not stop their thirst, and the law failed to put an end to the perverted appetites of men, and it blossomed out in an age of bootlegging, 'blind pigs', and flagrant violations." (Law or Grace; Pgs. 24, 25)

The introduction of the Law into human history showed that goodness cannot be legislated. All men are born with a depraved nature, and thus no man has ever kept the law. "Everyone, however, who is involved in trying to keep the Law's demands fall under a curse, for it is written: *'Cursed is everyone which continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them.'*" (Galatians 3: 10; Phillips)

Wrote the Psalmist, *"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one."* (Psalms 14: 2, 3)

As DeHaan says, "The law is holy; therefore unholy sinners cannot keep it. The law is just; therefore, it condemns the unjust sinner. The law is good; therefore, it condemns the evil, wicked heart of the natural man. It was given to reveal the sinfulness of sin, not to enable man to get rid of his sin." (Law or Grace; No. 1; pg. 28)

II. CHRISTIAN'S STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Considering the high demands of the Law and man's low failure in fulfilling those demands, Jesus' following words gain startling significance: *"¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5: 19, 20)

A. PHARISEES' EXTERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted in teaching and keeping what was called the Scribal Law. The Scribal Law was that system of man-made rules and regulations, designed to regulate every area and possible situation of life. The Scribal Law contained hundreds and even thousands of minute regulations, most of which were petty and senseless. One example will illustrate this. One of the Ten Commandments says that no work is to be done on the Sabbath. The Jewish legalists said that to carry a burden on the Sabbath was work. The Scribal Law proceeded to define a burden. A burden is: "Food equal in weight to a dried fig, enough wine for mixing in a goblet, milk enough for one

swallow, honey enough to put upon a wound, oil enough to anoint a small member, water enough to moisten an eye-salve, paper enough to write a customer's house notice upon, ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet, reed enough to make a pen" etc., etc. (Barclay's Matthew; pgs. 124, 125)

The Christian life is not a system of legalistic 'Do's' and 'Don'ts'. The Pharisees were strongly denounced by Christ. He called them hypocrites, fools, blind guides, whiten sepulchers full of dead men's bones.

Although these petty rules and regulations of the Scribal Law are to be strongly denounced and denied, yet there are certain aspects of the Pharisees' religion that every Christian must practice.

As Wesley points out (Sermons; v. 1; pgs. 229, 230), the Pharisees were singularly good in externals. There were no obvious sins of the flesh to be seen in them. The very least standard for a Christian is separation from the obvious, open sins of the flesh. The Pharisees used all means of grace. They fasted regularly, and so should Christians. They daily read the Scriptures and so must Christians. They listened and participated in the expounding of the Word at the synagogue, and so must Christians. They prayed regularly, so must Christians. They tithed and so must Christians. In all of these last named external religious practices, Christians must come up at least to the standard of the Pharisees.

B. CHRISTIAN'S INTERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. The Pharisees' religion was external and formal. The righteousness of a Christian is not simply external. It is primarily internal with mere external manifestations. The Christian's religion is a religion of the heart. To the Pharisees, Jesus said, "*Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.*" (Luke 16: 15) *Jesus said that it is out of the heart that all evil proceeds.* (Matthew 15: 19) "*The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*" (I Samuel 16: 7b) Says Lloyd-Jones, "What a man does with his own solitude is what ultimately counts. The things that are within, which we hide from the outside world because we are ashamed of them, these proclaim what we really are." (Pg. 204)

The Pharisees were more concerned with ceremonial observances than they were with moral and ethical qualities in religion. It is still possible to go through a form of religion and yet fail to have a change of life.

The Pharisees were more concerned with man-made rules than they were with understanding God's overriding principles and standards. We have already noted

the Pharisees' external adherence to the Scribal Law, which Jesus so roundly condemned.

The Pharisees' righteousness was a self-righteousness. They were satisfied with their religious observances and felt that they were God's favorites, in contrast to the slum of the earth as exemplified in the publican. The righteousness of a Christian is not a righteousness of his own.

III. CHRISTIAN'S SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Pharisees failed in their rigorous endeavor to make themselves righteous through the observance of rules and regulations. If the Pharisees were unable to gain God's favor through their rigorous self-effort, how can a man possibly attain God's standard of righteousness, which is much greater than the Pharisees' standard of righteousness? There is only one way that God's standard of righteousness can be reached. That is through Christ.

A. CHRIST'S SIGNIFICANT LIFE AND DEATH

How is Christ's life and death significant in the light of the Old Testament law?

1. Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law's Requirements.

The Law is perfect and therefore only a perfect man could fulfill its demands. Christ alone did that. The Law is holy and therefore only a holy man could keep it. Christ did that. The Law is just and, while it condemns all other men, it never condemned Christ. Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law, showing that He alone is divine – the Son of God. Said Jesus, *"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."* (Matthew 5: 17, 18) Jesus perfectly fulfilled or realized in Himself every part of the law – the ceremonial, the judicial, and the moral.

2. Christ revealed the true nature of sin.

Just as the Law was once the greatest mirror to reflect the ugliness of sinful human nature, so now the Cross of Christ is the most vivid mirror to reflect sin's tragedy. "To be sure, the law still stands to condemn the sinner, but we now have a much more convincing demonstration of the true nature of sin. It is seen not at Sinai, but at Calvary. After sixteen hundred years of the thundering of the law, not one single individual to whom the law was given ever kept it, but instead at the end of those

sixteen hundred years they committed the capital crime of the ages by nailing the Only One who ever kept the law perfectly, to the Cross of Calvary and condemned by nailing the Only One who ever kept the law perfectly, to the Cross of Calvary and condemned Him to die as a criminal and a law-breaker. Mark this fact well – after living for centuries under the law, they ended up by committing the crime of all crimes, crucifying the Son of God. Ah, my friend, if you really want to see what sin is in all its naked depravity, then come with me to Calvary." (Law or Grace; No. 1; pg. 32)

3. Christ fulfilled the Law's punishment for sin.

The wages of sin is death. Sin must be punished. The justice of God must be satisfied. Someone must die for sin, if sin is to be forgiven and if the sinner is to be changed. If the Law could save, there would have been no need for the Son of God to come to earth to die on a Cross. However, there is no way to God, other than the way of the Cross, which stands for sacrifice and suffering, and atonement for sin. The Law brings condemnation and death; the Cross brings forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ met the Law's demands, therefore a Christian does not have to meet the Law's demands. By accepting what Christ has done, a man is made righteous in God's sight.

B. CHRISTIAN'S LIFE OF LOVE

Wrote Paul, "The Law never succeeded in producing righteousness – the failure was always the weakness of human nature. But God has met this by sending his own Son, Jesus Christ to live in that human nature which causes the trouble. And, while Christ was actually taking upon himself the sins of men, God condemned that sinful nature. So that we are able to meet the Law's requirements, so long as we are living no longer by the dictates of our sinful nature, but in obedience to the promptings of the Spirit." (Romans 13: 9, 10; RSV)

Paul wrote in the same letter, "The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet', and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does not wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13: 9, 10; RSV)

Love is fulfilling of the Law, and it is Christ who imparts this love to us. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." (Romans 5: 5; RSV)

This love is the essence of the New Covenant, as prophesied by Jeremiah. *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."* (Jeremiah 31: 31-34)

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the Law was introduced for the purpose of showing man's sinfulness and his inability to save himself. The law is holy, but man is unholy, therefore the best the law can do is to show man's pollution. The law cannot save or change man's heart. Neither can the Pharisees' strict observance of the Scribal Law save man. Christ alone can save man. Only through Christ can man be made righteous. Christ fulfilled the Law's penalty for sin. Christ died that death might die and man might live.

CHAPTER 14

“THE GREATEST
COMMANDMENT
OF
ALL!”

SCRIPTURE: 37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."¹ 38 This is the first and greatest Commandment. 39 And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22: 37-40)

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet,"¹ and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13: 13-10)

TEXT: Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. . (Romans 13:10)

"THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT OF ALL!"

INTRODUCTION

Let me ask you a basic question: "What in life is 'real' to you?" "To materialism, things are real only if you can perceive and measure them; thus, for instance, a man's thoughts are somehow less real than the block of metal he is thinking about, even if his thoughts show him how to blow that block of metal into electronic smithereens. And popular misunderstanding often confuses real with solid – thus many people found it hard to believe in electricity and radio-activity until they saw what these impalpable forces could do to solid objects." (Smoke On The Mountain; Joy Davidman; pg. 131)

What is 'real' to you? Only what you can 'see' and 'touch' and 'smell'? "To put it bluntly: will the average American high school graduate easily believe that a God who is not solid and measureable can nevertheless deliver more horse-power than the most thoroughly souped-up hot rod? Or does he think it indecent to imagine God delivering horsepower at all?" (Ibid: 132)

How 'real' is God to you? You cannot 'see' or 'touch' Him. He is not a solid. He is not measureable. Is God as real to you as your house or your car or your clothes or your furniture or your gadgets and tools?

Has it occurred to you that what you can't see and what you can't measure or analyze is nevertheless the most 'real' of all – namely, God and love? How can you measure God? How can you weigh love? God is not a 'noble abstraction', 'a tendency of history', 'a goal of evolution', 'a concept useful for organizing world peace', 'a good thing as an idea'.

PROPOSITION

Love for God, issuing forth in love for others, is the essence of reality and the fulfillment of all Ten Commandments and the very heart of the will of God for mankind. Loving God supremely and loving others genuinely is the key to reality and the purpose of life.

Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22: 37-40)

If love is the 'key' to life (and the Bible says it is), then we must take a close look at 'love' today. We will look at 'love' in four ways: (1) Perfection of love, (2) Principles of love, (3) Power for love, and (4) Practice of love.

I. PERFECTION OF LOVE (Excellency of 'Agape')

There are four Greek words for love. There is 'eros' which means love between the sexes – sexual love. There is 'storge', which means family affection. There is 'philia', which means deep friendship love. There is 'agape' which means sacrificial, self-giving love.

It is 'agape' – the highest type of love - which is the subject of our message today.

Why is 'agape' love so excellent?" Because agape, as we read in Romans 13: 8-10, is the essence of all the Commandments. "Love fulfills them all. If man's heart is full of love for God, there will not possibly be found room for another god. If man's love for God is supreme, no object, graven or otherwise, will stand between him and God. Because of love, God's name will be hallowed; and there will be no place for blasphemy and hypocrisy. The Sabbath will be welcomed as the time when love finds expression in worship and service. Love is the only sufficient motive for obeying and honoring parents. Love's flame will purge out the hate that leads to murder. The grossness of unchastity and the crime of adultery are in violent contrast to love which is divinely approved. Theft is impossible in the light of true love for one's neighbor. Love guards the thought life so that every word of witness can harm the reputation of any neighbor. Love alone finds satisfaction in God and satisfies heart hunger; it prevents all coveting. The law of love then expresses the intention of every commandment and perfectly states the one law that includes the many." (Light and Life teacher; pg. 63; 1966 – July, August and September.

The coming of Jesus to earth was not for the purpose of abolishing the moral laws of God as outlined in the Old Testament; rather Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament laws and to give power to fulfill the essence of the Law in the lives of His followers. Said Jesus, *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."* (Matthew 5: 17) How did Christ 'fulfill' the Law and the Prophets? By perfectly keeping the essence of the Law in His own life, and by providing, not only a moral example for people to follow, but by providing moral power to enable people to live a life of love which, by so doing, results in Jesus' followers fulfilling the essence of the Law.

II. PRINCIPLES OF LOVE (Description of 'Agape')

The 'excellence' or perfection of agape is seen in the fact that love is the fulfillment of all the moral laws of the Old Testament and is the essence of life itself.

How can this most excellent of all virtues – love - be described or defined? What is the meaning of agape? The supreme passage for the interpretation of the meaning of agape is Matthew 5: 43-48.

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor¹ and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

"We are there bidden to love our enemies. Why? In order that we should be like God. And what is the typical action of God that is cited? God sends his rain on the just and the unjust and on the evil and the good. That is to say – no matter what a man is like, God seeks nothing but his highest good. Let a man be a saint or let a man be a sinner, God's only desire is for that man's highest good. Now, that is what agape is. Agape is the spirit which says: 'No matter what any man does to me, I will never seek to do harm to him; I will never set out for revenge; I will always seek nothing but his highest good.' That is to say, Christian love, agape, is unconquerable benevolence, invincible good will. It is not simply a wave of emotion; it is a deliberate conviction of the mind issuing in a deliberate policy of the life; it is a deliberate achievement, conquest, and victory of the will. It takes all of a man to achieve Christian love; it takes not only his heart; it takes his mind and his will as well. If we seek nothing but a man's highest good, we may well have to resist a man; we may well have to punish him; we may well have to do the hardest things to him – for the good of his immortal soul. But the fact remains that whatever we do to that man we will never be purely retributory; it will always be done in that forgiving love which seeks, not the man's punishment, and still less the man's annihilation, but always

his highest good. In other words, agape means treating men as God treats them – and that does not mean allowing them unchecked to do as they like." (New Testament Words; Barclay; pgs. 21-23)

Paul describes this agape love in I Corinthians 13: 4-7. Note this description (as given in Phillips' translation): *"This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience – it looks for ways of being constructive. It is not possessive; it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of his own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails."*

'Agape' (love) is more than a mere feeling or emotion or good intention. Love means careful obedience to God and practical compassion for our fellowmen.

Love is proven by obedience. *Said Jesus, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." (John 15: 10) "You are my friends if you did what I command." (John 15: 14)*

Love is proven, not only by obedience to God, but by practical service towards one's fellowman. On three different occasions, when Jesus asked Peter if Peter loved Jesus, Peter responded in the affirmative. When Peter replied that he loved the Lord, Jesus said (in so many words) to Peter, "if you really love me, then feed my lambs, feed my sheep!"

¹⁵ *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. (John 21: 15-17)*

In other words, "Serve my people in compassionate and in practical ways."

III. POWER FOR LOVE (Source of 'Agape')

Perhaps, by now, it is assumed that the ability to love God and to love others is a divinely-given gift rather than a humanly-achieved attainment. As someone said, "The idealist who tries to love man directly soon makes the shocking discovery that men are not loveable as they are – they don't fit his ideals...Try to love Johnny Jones by the road, without asking God to help you, and you will discover that your defects and Johnny's

both get in the way. If you're like most of us, you will overlook your own and concentrate on removing Johnny's; and he will return the compliment. Good advice will pass into argument, argument into insult – and the end is a fight, or a silent feud that may be worse...The difficulty is to love men for what they are – members of yourself in the eternal body of mankind – and at the same time to make them better than they are, through love. Minds darkened by original sin...cannot by an act of will achieve charity; we must acknowledge the failure of our will and ask God for help." (Smoke On The Mountain; Davidman; pgs. 136, 137)

Jesus commands us to love Him with all the strength of our hearts (emotional response) with all the strength of our souls (volitional response), with all the strength of our minds (intellectual response). Human nature is made to love and to be loved. It is interesting, therefore, that what human nature demands – love -, God commands – love – and, further, God supplies – love!

Jesus is the Way – providing strength to enable us to love God with our will (volition). Jesus is the Truth – providing strength to enable us to love God with our mind (intellect). Jesus is the Life – providing strength to enable us to love God with our heart (emotions). What human nature demands and what divine law commands, God's resources provide. Christianity, therefore, turns out to be, not a list of impossible moral demands; but a 'reservoir of divine resources'!

From whence comes this special kind of love, called agape? From God Himself! *"God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."* (Romans 5: 5) *"A man can only exercise this universal benevolence, he can only be cleansed from human hatred and human bitterness and the natural human reaction to enmity and injury and like, when the Spirit takes possession of him and sheds abroad the love of God in his heart."* (New Testament Words; Barclay; pg. 22)

To love in a supernatural way, one must be changed in his human nature. God prophesied, through His prophets, that unregenerate man would be divinely transformed in his heart. Through Ezekiel, God promised, *"I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give a heart of flesh."* (Ezekiel 11: 19) Only the Spirit of God can give a man a new nature – a heart of flesh'. Christ is the one who can make all things new! *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* (II Corinthians 5: 17)

IV. PRACTICE OF LOVE (Life of 'Agape')

The source of love is God Himself. God sheds abroad divine-like love in the heart of the surrendered believer. It is God who replaces the 'stony heart' with a 'heart of flesh' – a heart made tender and receptive to the wooing of the Holy Spirit and to the woes of hurting persons. The Spirit-filled believer, filled initially and daily with God's love, is prepared to live a life of love. Living a daily life of love encompasses so very much. It

means obedience to God. It means practical service to others – giving to those in need. *“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”* (I John 3: 17-18) Love means doing good to all persons, especially to fellow believers. *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”* (Galatians 6: 10) “This springtime of love, once it gets into a human heart, must express itself. Love is restless and inventive. It will do the big thing if possible. If not, it will do the small thing grandly. It will beautify a palace if it has an opportunity. If not, it will transform a cottage.” (Ten rules For Living; Chappell; pg. 174) Love always finds a way – a way to express itself meaningfully and concretely!

Love not only means obeying God explicitly and serving others practically, but love also means forgiving others openly.

Extending forgiveness to others even when they are unwilling to accept your forgiveness, is another way of saying that you are ‘returning good for evil’. *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse...Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay’, says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’”* (Romans 12: 14-17).

Forgiving those who harm you is following no less of an example than the example of Jesus Christ! *“But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this, you are called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”* (I Peter 2: 20-23)

CONCLUSION

Jesus said, *“By this shall all men know that ye are my friends, if you have love one for another.”* *The final test to determine genuine believers is the ‘love test’! He who loves in a self-giving and selfless way, patterned after God’s love, is without doubt a true follower of Jesus! For no one can love like God loved, unless God dwells within him!*

Love (agape) is altogether excellent because love is the fulfillment of all of the Commandments and is the key to the meaning of life and of relationships. *“Love is the fulfillment of the law.”* (Romans 13: 10)

Love (agape) can be defined as 'unconquerable benevolence, invincible good will' towards all persons. The one who experiences agape in his heart and life, wishes nothing but the very best for all other persons, regardless of how others treat him.

Love (agape) is divinely imparted gift. God's love is shed abroad in the heart of all true believers.

Love, while it is a divinely given gift, is nevertheless an expression of the believer's moral effort. God enables and the believer exercises! A believer must daily exercise his own divinely-empowered will, in order that he, as a believer, may 'reach out in love' to act and to react in Christlike ways. The believer exercises obedience to God, service to needy saints, and forgiveness to naughty sinners.

Love is the 'royal law' of God – the way of righteousness and holiness. *"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself', you are doing right."* (James 2: 8)

Love – 'sweet love', God's 'sweet love' – that is the most precious gift of God to man. Will you today allow God to shed abroad that 'sweet love' in your heart? To be full of love is to be full of God, for 'God is Love'!

He who loves in a self-giving and selfless way, patterned after God's love, is without doubt a true follower of Jesus.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

¹ And God spoke all these words, saying: ² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ "You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

⁷ "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you. ¹³ "You shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ "You shall not steal.

¹⁶ "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

¹⁸ Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off."

Exodus 20: 1-18; King James Version